

Gramsci and the German Crisis, 1929-34
A Historical Interpretation of the *Prison Notebooks*

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by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how far the political theory of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1929-35) had its immediate origins in the crisis going on in Germany at the time he wrote them. The crisis was a matter of burning interest to all European communists for whom the whole future of the revolutionary project started in 1917 depended on what happened in Germany. The thesis reconstructs the historical context of the *Prison Notebooks* year by year and identifies a series of notes - the 'German' notes - in which Gramsci theorises about questions suggested by current events in Germany. A few of these notes are in a concrete state and their German content is readily identified but many were written in general terms which must be decoded before their 'practical origins' in the German events become apparent. The method of decoding Gramsci's notes is to contextualise them.

The order of chapters is chronological and each has three levels: (i) an account of Gramsci's personal drama - his moral struggle in the context of his deteriorating conditions of health - based largely on the *Prison Letters*. These letters are the outstanding human document of the European resistance to fascism, including resistance to *German* fascism at the hour of its victory; (ii) a reconstruction of Gramsci's knowledge of the German events based on a systematic reading of the political periodicals and newspapers he received on subscription in prison. These provided Gramsci with continuous news and comment on German affairs, the full extent of which has not been investigated (Appendix 2); (iii) a critical commentary on the 'German' notes following the chronological order established by Professor V. Gerratana in the critical edition of the *Quaderni del Carcere* (1975). The technical difficulties of determining the precise dates of the notes are sometimes considerable and have been a matter of scholarly dispute. Where the dates of the 'German' notes discussed in this thesis present particular problems, they are dealt with separately (Appendix 1).

The conclusion draws together the conceptual threads running through the German notes and summarises the main features of Gramsci's interpretation. His theory of the rise of Hitler differs from those of other marxists inside and outside the Comintern for two reasons: firstly, his assimilation of concepts of non-marxist origin such as Weber's concept of the *charismatic leader* and Sorel's concept of the *historical bloc*; secondly, his rethinking from its Hegelian origins of marxism itself, which enables him to conceptualise aspects of the German crisis neglected by other marxists, notably the historic crisis of the *traditional intellectuals*, the counter-

revolutionary effects of *civil society*, and the role of the *bureaucratic caste*.

In Gramsci's interpretation, Hitler comes to power in the context of a *crisis of hegemony* marked by the breakdown of the 'ruling ideas'. The *traditional intellectuals*, the Prussian nobles, are unable to provide leadership in politics or culture. Despite the catastrophic nature of the economic crisis after 1929, it does not develop into a revolutionary situation because of the resistance presented by the superstructures of *civil society* (private armies, newspaper concentrations, and other elements), a complex network of 'trenches' which make up the *ideological front* of the dominant class. The crisis is solved by the transformation of traditional into charismatic authority through the sudden appearance of a "man of destiny". The charisma of Hitler depends on reinventing tradition, a process most visible in the 'symbiotic' dependence of the parties and ideologies of the German Right. The element of race, a subordinate element in traditional nationalist ideology, now becomes the nucleus of a new utopia - the 'Third Reich'. Gramsci regards the Third Reich not as a revolution (which it claimed to be) but as a dynamic *restoration* founded on the traditional solidarity of the dominant agrarian-industrial bloc. Despite this, his final word on the 'monstrous' phenomenon of Hitlerism, written in 1935 in response to the first laws of the racial State, unmistakably registered the shock of the new.

Preface

This thesis has taken longer to research, think out, and write than I ever imagined. My interest in Gramsci began in 1968 as a research student at York under the inspiration of a magical Welsh teacher, the late Gwyn A. Williams, who had written about Gramsci in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* in 1958 when few people outside Italy had heard of him. At the time I was interested in other questions, particularly in Gramsci's relation to his 'master' Croce and how this influenced his reading of Marx. However, the discovery of Gramsci's notebooks and letters in the original Italian stimulated a sort of brainstorm which rendered me completely unfit to write anything useful about him. It was not until much later during a term in Cambridge in 1992, in calmer times and 'other worlds', that I began writing an entirely different thesis about Gramsci's response to the German crisis of 1929-33. My research on his periodicals, mostly conducted in the national libraries in London and Rome, was well advanced by this time and I had a clear idea of the structure and content of the work, but I still found it difficult to grasp how exactly his dialectic worked and I was still far from clear whether his German notes added up to an 'interpretation'. Then circumstances diverted me into doing an MA in which I pursued an interest in modern German historiography and wrote a short thesis on explanations of the Holocaust. This was not entirely unrelated to my work on Gramsci's 'German' notes, but the fact remains that what I fondly imagined would take eight weeks in Cambridge took nearer eight years: contrary to the academic spirit of the times, it was a job for a tortoise not a hare. Given the moral and intellectual quality of the man, however, I never doubted that it was worth the time and effort.

The Question

Throughout this time the original question remained the same. What did Gramsci say in the *Prison Notebooks* (1929-35) about the contemporary crisis in Germany which saw the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich and, with them, the defeat of Europe's strongest communist party? At first sight the notes appeared to contain little about these crucial events, but this was strange in view of the fact that for European communists Germany was "the key to the international situation". The policy of the Comintern was 'modelled' on the German situation and in Comintern

circles the future of the revolutionary project started in Russia in 1917 depended crucially on what happened in Germany. I started reading some of the 20-25 periodicals Gramsci received on subscription in prison to find out what he knew about the German events. This soon disposed of the myth that he knew little about what was going on: on the contrary, the periodicals provided him with a continuous flow of news and comment about events in Germany from a variety of ideological perspectives and on a regular basis (see Appendix 2). The question now became a puzzle. If he knew so much, why did he seem to write so little?

The obvious answer was the prison censorship which, I assumed, scrutinised every page he wrote. Gramsci was not allowed to *read* works of "political agitation", so I inferred that he was not allowed to *write* about such matters either. However, there is no evidence that the prison authorities attempted to regulate what he could *write*. The assumption that Gramsci's elliptical mode of expression in the notebooks was due to the repressive effects of the censorship on his writing does not stand up to scrutiny. There is no evidence that the prison authorities read, let alone censored the notebooks although the prison governor was at liberty to do so at any time. True, the notebooks were stamped on every page by the prison censor and signed by the prison governor, but this was *before not after* Gramsci wrote anything in them and not a word of the notebooks (unlike the letters) was ever cancelled by the censor.¹ This fact did not exclude the possibility of Gramsci exercising a prudential *self-censorship*, of course, especially on the few occasions when he writes about the politics *of his own side*. Nevertheless this discovery complicated the puzzle still further. Perhaps Gramsci's disguise was due more to intrinsic than extrinsic factors, perhaps it was explained by his method of thinking rather than by the regime he worked under.

Decoding the Notes

The puzzle was pieced together note by note until, in time, the theoretical 'mirror image' of the German crisis in Gramsci's notes unfolded. As I got to know what he knew about the German events, week by week, month by month, I began to read his notes differently, in the first place chronologically, and to compare what he

¹ The notebooks were stamped and signed *on coming into the prison*, not after Gramsci wrote in them. The procedure is described in a letter to Tatiana on 23 February 1931 (LCII p.398). This explains why we often find the prison stamp on *blank pages* (see Professor Gerratana's 'Description of the Notebooks', QCIV pps 2369-2441)

knew with what he wrote at any one time. It was not until a later stage, after passing through a phase of fanatic pedantry about the dates of the notes and when I had a better understanding of how his dialectic worked in particular notes, that I realised that Gramsci's theory resulted from an "elliptical comparison" similar to that used by Machiavelli in *The Prince* .

The habit has been formed of considering Machiavelli too much as the man of politics in general, the 'scientist of politics', relevant in every period. Machiavelli should be considered more as a necessary expression of his time, and as closely tied to the conditions and exigencies of his time.....He is influenced by the examples of France and Spain, states which have achieved a strong territorial unity; he makes an "elliptical comparison" (to use Croce's expression) and deduces the rules for a strong State in general and a strong Italian State in particular ²

Perhaps it is time to change our habit of thinking about Gramsci too and to deliver *The Modern Prince* from the political scientists who have so far monopolised it into the hands of historians. For even though he was isolated in a remote prison in Bari Gramsci remained, like Machiavelli, closely tied to the conditions and exigencies of his time, including those of the watershed years 1929-33. Contrary to what is commonly assumed, Gramsci's notes were not only, or even mainly, based on the political experience prior to his arrest in 1926. His thinking was influenced, for example, by events in Germany in the years 1929-35 although the "elliptical comparison" took in the experience of other countries as well, notably Britain. It is therefore a question of seeing how far his general rules of politics, written with Italy specially in mind, "approximate" to German (and British) politics in those years. By comparing the text with the context, I found that they corresponded time and again and that the text bore the "imprint" of the context. The scholarly controls safeguarding against reading "into" the notes what was not really there were the dates and sources of the notes, but the text matched the context too often to be a figment of the imagination.

The puzzle can be understood better when it is approached from the practical instead of the theoretical side. When Gramsci called marxism "the philosophy of praxis" he meant theory is practical in its origin and intention. It therefore becomes a question of discovering the "practical origins" of his theory in the current struggles. To take a typical example: the electoral successes of Hitler's party in the summer of 1930 (as reported in the periodicals) coincided with Gramsci's first attempt to analyse the phenomenon of charismatic leadership in modern politics

² First draft §1.10, QCI p.8-9 /second draft §13.13, QCIII p.1572. For the convention used in referring to the prison notes, see 'Dates of the Notes' below).

(§2.75i). The *past* example of Mussolini is discussed but the *timing* of this note indicates that its practical origin was the appearance of a new charismatic leader in Germany comparable to Mussolini. It was the reports from Germany which put the question of charismatic leadership on Gramsci's agenda and gave his theory its currency or *attualita*. But there is no mention of Hitler in this note: the effect of the "elliptical comparison" was to hide the immediate practical origin of his theorising behind a "mask of generalisation" (Perry Anderson), which typically presents itself to us in the sybilline phrase: "*In the modern world*, the so-called 'charisma' of which Michels speaks....." etc. By contextualising this note, however, we discover in Gramsci's theory the abstract imprint of German politics in the summer of 1930 as the charismatic Hitler began his meteoric rise. Thus, when Gramsci writes that the appearance of the charismatic man "coincides with a primitive phase in the development of mass parties", the mass expansion of Hitler's party in 1929-30 *currently* testified to what he meant.

The puzzle does not end there, however, for there is a further layer to Gramsci's disguise. The mask of generalisation is the mask of Janus: it faces left and right at once. This had to do with his conception of the scientific or objective validity of theory. If theory had its origin in the practical struggles of the day and was meant to solve the problems these presented, Croce would say that it must be an "error", since it must be tainted with the partisan "passion" which animated these struggles. According to this doctrine the political theory of a communist like Gramsci could have no claim to scientific or "objective" validity. Gramsci's answer to this doctrine of the 'passional' origin of error was to conceive the political struggle dialectically and to formulate rules of politics which were objectively valid for opposite sides. This was

the double interpretation of Machiavelli: by the tyrannical men of State who want to preserve and strengthen their domination and by the liberal tendencies who want to change the forms of government. This second tendency is expressed in Foscolo's verses [about Machiavelli] "who, even as he strengthens the sceptre of rulers, plucks away the laurel leaves and *reveals to their peoples*" etc. Croce writes that this demonstrates the *objective validity* of Machiavelli's positions, which is absolutely right (*giustissimo*)³

By critical analysis of the politics of the Right, Gramsci formulated rules of politics which were useful for the Left. Objectivity depended on identifying *elements of politics* in the current situation which were common to both sides. The charismatic

³ First draft §4.04, QCI p. 425.

leader, for example, was an element of the politics of the Right, but in the past it had also been an element of the politics of the Left. The 'charismatic' Mussolini celebrated in the writings of Michels, for example, began his career on the Left before passing over to the Right and the sorcerer of fascism was deeply indebted to the knowledge gained from his apprenticeship in the "class struggle". Conversely, 'bureaucratic centralism' in parties and States was an element of the politics of the Left to which Trotsky drew attention in his polemics of 1923-24, but in the cabinet formed by Papen in the summer of 1932 Gramsci found that this phenomenon was also a feature of the politics of the Right. In his reflections on these and other *elements of politics*, Gramsci synthesises the experience of Left and Right in the quest for objectivity. This explains the constant sensation of "ambiguity" in his generalisations which the most percipient readers of the prison notes have noticed.

Direct and Indirect Sources

The sources used by Gramsci in compiling the prison notes are catalogued in the fourth volume of Professor Gerratana's critical edition of the *Quaderni*, the awesome 1000-page "critical apparatus". Scholars who have applied themselves to the huge mass of discrete detail it contains will perhaps know it as the "infernal apparatus". Nevertheless, it is important to note its limitations. For understandable reasons, the critical apparatus for the most part gives details only of the *direct* sources, ie, the articles and books directly cited by Gramsci in the notes. But these are not an exhaustive record of his reading, nor do they give the full picture of his background knowledge of events. Gramsci followed domestic and foreign affairs in the years 1929-35 closely, but the direct sources do not give much idea of the continuous flow of information at his disposal. Yet his whole dialectic depended on this. The key principle of his marxist historicism was defined as follows:

If it is necessary in the perennial flow of events to fix concepts without which reality cannot be grasped, it is also necessary, and indeed indispensable, to keep firmly in mind that reality in movement and the concept of that reality, although logically distinguishable, must be conceived historically as an inseparable unity ⁴

Gramsci's thinking "adheres" closely to the reality of the time. It proceeds not from concept to concept but *from reality to concept*. Its connecting threads lie *outside* the notes themselves in the movement of reality, and the notes are a series of

⁴ §10.II.01, QCII p.1241.

snapshots of this movement taken at different times.

To return to the question of sources: when, for example, Gramsci refers at the end of 1931 to the crisis of parties which "has happened especially in Germany with the expansion of Hitlerism" (§7.77), he does not directly cite a source for this, but the comment implied that he had followed the development of the German situation at least since the breakthrough of Hitlerism in the elections of September 1930. To find out where this knowledge came from and to try to reconstruct it, we must look to Gramsci's *indirect* sources - the news contained in sources *not* cited in the notes. A reconstruction of Gramsci's knowledge of German affairs from *indirect* sources will at best be an "approximation": at worst there is the danger to which Gramsci wittily refers in a letter to Tatiana: "From a tiny bone Cuvier could reconstruct a megatherium or a mastodon, but it can happen that with a piece of mouse's tail you end up reconstructing a sea-serpent". The German notes examined in this thesis are like the tiny bones of a mastodon; the fact that we have a collection of such bones not just a single artefact should ensure that our reconstruction of Gramsci's background knowledge resembles more or less accurately the original creature.

Primary and Secondary Sources

The German background has been reconstructed from the primary sources - Gramsci's periodicals and newspapers. However, knowledge of the secondary sources has inevitably coloured my reading of the primary sources and influenced what I have selected from them in constructing a narrative of the German events. The historiography of Nazi Germany is "a moment of modern culture" as Gramsci would say, and has profoundly shaped our moral and intellectual consciousness. Several aspects of interest to Gramsci have since been the subject of research by historians: given the depth and intensity of the work on this period, it would be very surprising if they were not. Where this is the case, I have referred to relevant secondary works in the footnotes and a select bibliography of such works is provided at the end. Occasionally it seemed appropriate to discuss the secondary literature in the text itself by way of bringing a critical perspective to bear on some of Gramsci's inquiries. Where I have crossed the "shadow line" from primary to secondary sources, I have tried to make this clear. Gramsci was very conscious of

the “non-definitive” status of his inquiries on the intellectuals which were to be confirmed or falsified by further research. He had no hesitation in saying that further research might show the very opposite of what he was saying was true. It is entirely in Gramsci’s spirit of open-minded inquiry, therefore, to examine his ideas in the light of later findings whenever possible.

Organisation and Presentation

The attempt to reconstruct the historical-political context of the prison notes poses a number of technical problems of organisation and presentation. To deal with these, the following conventions have been adopted: (i) The ‘German’ notes are presented as far as possible in chronological order in the *third* section of each chapter. Some adjustments have been made - usually by grouping notes - to enhance thematic coherence and readability. To follow the threads of Gramsci’s thinking it is sometimes necessary to dilute strict chronological purism with a dose of common sense. In each case the ‘target’ note is quoted in *bold type* to denote its place in the chronology. To understand the place of the target note in the *process* of Gramsci’s thinking, however, it is sometimes necessary to refer to notes written at an earlier or, more rarely, at a later stage. Since the latter are quoted out of chronological order, they are presented in *plain type*. Where this kind of internal contextualisation is needed, it is usually indicated by the rubric “past and present”. (ii) the German background of the notes based on material from Gramsci’s periodicals is reconstructed separately in the *second* section of each chapter. To present the sources and notes together would have been unmanageable and the notes would have been submerged by the sources. To remind the reader of the relation of certain notes to their context, however, it is sometimes necessary to quote material from the periodical sources in the *third* section of the chapter. This is particularly the case in the dramatic early months of 1933 when Gramsci’s writing was more than usually “close” cognitively and temporally to his sources. Where source material is quoted in this section, it is always presented in *plain type* to denote a clear distinction between what Gramsci was reading (ie, *by someone else*) and what he was writing at the time.

The Dates of the Notes

Although the dates of Gramsci's notes, especially the *first* drafts, are vitally important in this thesis, I do not intend to enter into the rather unproductive dispute about them.⁵ It is fair to say about the technical problems of dating the notes what Gramsci once said about the finer points of philology: "They are the sort of problems about which Heine wrote: 'they are so boring that I fell asleep, but such was the boredom that it woke me up again'". Suffice to say, I have generally accepted the authority of Professor Gerratana in this matter and followed the parameters *positively* (as distinct from *conjecturally*) established by him in the critical apparatus.⁶ Where I have narrowed down the dates more precisely, the evidence or arguments for doing so are given in Appendix 1. Occasionally I have traced notes to periodical sources not given in the critical edition: the details are given in the footnotes.

The numbering of the notes follows that of the 4-volume critical edition: the symbol § is followed by the number of the notebook, then the number of the note. The volume and page number of the critical edition (QCI-IV) are then given to indicate where it can be found. To avoid misunderstanding it should be noted that the *numerical order* of the notes in the critical edition does not necessarily denote their *chronological order*. Because Gramsci usually wrote in several notebooks at a time, and because he sometimes started blank notebooks from the centre pages, it often happens that notes with higher numbers were written *before* those with lower numbers: for example, §3.34 was written *before* §2.75; §8.171 was written *before* §8.55, etc.

All translations of Gramsci's sources and notes are mine. Wherever I am indebted to other translations, even if do not 'agree' with them, this is duly acknowledged. Wherever I have translated *part* of a note or letter (either for the sake of economy or focus) which has been translated in its entirety elsewhere, references to translations of the whole passage are provided.

*

⁵ The dispute starts from Gianni Francioni: *L'officina gramsciana. Ipotesi sulla struttura del 'Quaderni del Carcere'* (Bibliopolis, Napoli, 1984).

⁶ See the acidly incisive comment in Valentino Gerratana: *Gramsci. Problemi di metodo* (Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1997) p.147.

I would like to thank the staff of the following libraries for their assistance in finding and/or copying series of Gramsci's periodicals for the prison years:- the British Library, London; the University of Cambridge; the University of Reading; the Gramsci Institute, Rome; the Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome; the Library of Modern and Contemporary History, Rome; the German Institute, Rome. I would also like to thank the fellows of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, for enabling me to start work on this thesis during a term as a schoolteacher fellow there in 1992.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Gwyn Alf Williams, one time Professor of Modern History at York University. I am only sorry that he is not here to read it, but I hope it is worthy of his inspiring example in teaching and learning.

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Abbreviations

Gramsci's Writings

- QC I-IV = Quaderni del Carcere, 4 Vols
A cura di Valentino Gerratana (1975)
- LC I-II = Lettere dal Carcere, 2 Vols
A cura di Antonio Santucci (1996)
- PN I = Prison Notebooks, Vol.1
Edited by Joseph Buttigieg (1992)
- PL I-II/RR = Prison Letters, 2 Vols
Edited by Frank Rosengarten and translated by Raymond Rosenthal (1994)
- PL/HH = Prison Letters
Translated by Hamish Hamilton (1988)
- SPN = Selections from the Prison Notebooks
Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971)
- FSPN = Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks
Edited and translated by Derek Boothman (1995)
- SCW = Selections from Cultural Writings
Edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1985)
- SPW = Selections from Political Writings 1921-26
Translated and edited by Quintin Hoare (1977)

Periodicals and Newspapers

- GER = Gerarchia
- CF = Critica Fascista
- EF = Educazione Fascista
- POL = Politica
- NA = Nuova Antologia
- CC = Civiltà Cattolica
- RSE = Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera
- MGW = Manchester Guardian Weekly
- LM = Labour Monthly
- CdS = Corriere della Sera

Introduction

We know that Gramsci wrote an analysis of the postwar crisis in France before 1929 which he called *Notes on French National Life*.¹ However, he also produced an analysis of the *succeeding* crisis in Germany *after 1929* which could then be compared and contrasted with the French model. These 'German' notes have passed entirely unnoticed in spite of the wealth of critical writing on the notebooks. They are scattered across some 30 notebooks and were never put together into a single coherent whole. What kind of analysis do they contain and why has it gone unnoticed?

It was not a *history* of the German events in the usual sense. His notes on the German crisis were written *as it was happening* not after it was over. He did not have the hindsight of a historian for whom knowledge of the outcome of events (ie, *what* exactly needs to be explained) organises the whole conception of them, determining the key elements to select, describe, and analyse. Gramsci's position was more like Trotsky's who also attempted to analyse the German crisis as it unfolded and whose articles on Germany are a classic Marxist analysis of "history in the making".² But there are significant differences between them. Trotsky's angle of vision was clearer than Gramsci's and he wrote directly about the German events in an attempt to influence their outcome. As a prisoner of Fascism Gramsci could neither influence the course of events nor even write directly about them, at least not very freely. Being powerless to change the world, he wanted to write something *for eternity* but this did not mean that he turned his back on current events. He wanted to write a modern version of *The Prince* in which history, especially "history in the making", would be studied in order to extract general rules of politics. Some of the most interesting of these notes, usually written under the heading '*Machiavelli*', had their "practical origin" in the German events, but their origins are disguised by what one critic referred to as Gramsci's "mask of generalisation".³ The main reason why Gramsci came to adopt this mask was

¹ They were included in the Notebook 13 on Machiavelli as §13.37. *Notes on French National Life*, QCIII p.1635-1650. The first drafts of these notes were written very early, by the end of 1929 or start of 1930. A translation of these first drafts can be found in *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks*, Volume 1 (hereafter PN1), edited and introduced by Joseph A. Buttigieg (Columbia University Press, 1992).

² Leon Trotsky. *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (Penguin, 1971). Note the list of newspapers and journals available to Trotsky on p.498-499.

³ Perry Anderson: 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review*, No.100, November 1976-January 1977, p.20.

intrinsic not extrinsic: it was not because of the scrutiny of the prison censor as is usually assumed (although this was not immaterial) but because of his idea of what thinking about politics “scientifically” meant. However, by reconstructing what Gramsci knew about events in Germany, mostly from the periodicals he regularly received in prison, it is possible to penetrate the mask and see the “practical origins” of his generalisations. It is important to trace the German origins of Gramsci’s theory for it can be argued that no attempt to write a modern *Machiavelli* would be complete which did not grapple with the big questions of history and politics posed by the rise of Hitler and the advent of the Third Reich.

A ‘Crisis of Hegemony’

Viewed in their totality, we might say that the originality of Gramsci’s notes is to interpret the German crisis of 1929-33 as a “crisis of hegemony”, which would thus be their organising concept. However, it is important to remember that the concept of hegemony which is now synonymous with Gramsci’s name was far from being fully-formed when he started writing in 1929. In its one-dimensional meaning the crisis of hegemony simply meant the breakdown of parliamentary government, ie, of the ‘normal’ form of governing with the consent of the governed. In the first drafts of his notes on France Gramsci had already worked out a model of the *general phenomenon* of “crisis of hegemony” in this sense before the end of 1929.⁴ However, the most interesting dimensions of the concept of hegemony, which have to do with the structures of *civil society* and the function of the *intellectuals*, were still embryonic at this early stage. We must first sketch the origin of these concepts in Gramsci’s thinking and the way in which he related them to the ‘parliamentary’ crisis of hegemony. This will indicate how he attempted to organise his first observations on the crisis in Germany which were written at the turn of 1929-30 before Hitler appeared to be significant. Gramsci started by synthesising the elements of French and German experience of the time, much as the young Marx did in giving birth to the new conception in the years before 1848.

⁴ §1.48. *The reverse Jacobinism of Charles Maurras*, QCl p.58-64. Starting from the elements of French political history Gramsci moves to a description of the *general phenomenon* of hegemony and its breakdown in the postwar period, before returning again to “The crisis in France” (p.58-60). (Translation in PN1 p.155-161).

The Conceptual Starting-Points

(i) Civil Society

Gramsci tells us directly in the notes that his concept of civil society comes from Hegel.

§6.24. *Encyclopaedic Ideas.Civil Society* .It is necessary to distinguish between civil society as it is understood by Hegel and *in the sense in which it is often used in these notes* (ie, in the sense of the political and cultural hegemony of a social group over the entire society, as the ethical content of the State) from the sense in which it is used by the Catholics for whom civil society means, instead, political society or the State, in contrast to family society and the Church...⁵

The reference was to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* where "civil society" features as one of the moments of the "ethical life", lying between the preceding moment of the family and the succeeding moment of the State. We notice that Gramsci gives no hint of the original "speculative" form in which Hegel expressed his philosophical thought. He assimilates the concrete substance of Hegel's concept, discarding its speculative form: this substance was "the political and cultural hegemony of a social group over the entire society".

Gramsci learned how to separate the content from the form of Hegel's philosophy by studying the original process of thought by which the young Marx "transformed" Hegelianism. According to a famous metaphor of Marx, Hegel stood history on its head and it was necessary to put it back on its feet. Marx started this process of "transforming" Hegel from a critique of his political philosophy, the *Philosophy of Right*, which was also Gramsci's starting-point in the prison notes. A key moment in the process according to Gramsci's reading of it was the moment of synthesis of German philosophy and French politics which the young Marx expressed in a number of early texts with which he was familiar.⁶ By alleging that the concepts of German philosophy could be "translated" into the language of French politics or (to put it another way) that German theory was equivalent to French practice, the young Marx stripped *the German ideology* of its mystery and brought it down to

⁵ §6.24, QCII p.703. My italics.

⁶ Gramsci recalls this moment in §1.44, at an early stage of the notebooks: "(cf. Marx's analysis in *The Holy Family* according to which the phraseology of the Jacobins perfectly corresponded to the formulas of classical German philosophy, which is recognised today as being much more concrete and which has been the origin of modern historicism)" QCI p.51.

Gramsci's reading of the 'Young Hegelian' Marx predates the prison notebooks. By way of illustration (not reconstruction) note the use he makes of *The Holy Family* in the article *Critical Criticism* of 12 January 1918, where Bruno Bauer typifies the habit of "getting concepts and reality mixed up". *Scritti Giovanili*, p.153-155. This suggests that he had grasped the principle of "transformation" of idealist philosophy early on.

earth. Impressed by the creative possibilities opened up by this principle of "translation", Gramsci starts the notes by attempting a 'Franco-German' synthesis of his own which was designed to bring Marxist theory up to date with political reality as it had developed since 1848. This brought the concept of civil society into a pivotal position in the field of play of his own theory. Gramsci's synthesis can be traced in two notes written together around the end of 1929.

§1.47. *Hegel's doctrine of association.* Hegel's doctrine of the parties and the associations as the 'private' network of the State. *This derived historically from the political experiences of the French Revolution* and was intended to give constitutionalism a more concrete character. Government with the consent of the governed, but this was organised consent not the generic and vague consent expressed in the moment of elections. The State has and demands consent but also 'educates' it by means of the political and syndical associations which are, however, private organisms, left to the private initiative of the ruling class. Thus, in a certain sense Hegel already went beyond pure constitutionalism and theorised the parliamentary State with its regime of parties.⁷

§1.48. [Notes on French National Life]. The development of Jacobinism [in its content] was formally perfected in the parliamentary regime whereby the urban class, during the period when 'private' energies in society were most abundant, achieved its hegemony over the whole population *in the Hegelian form of government with permanently organised consent* (in which the organising is left to private initiative and therefore has a moral or ethical character since the consent in one way or another is voluntary).⁸

The equivalence between German philosophy and French politics, Hegelian political theory and Jacobin democracy, was based on the perception that both contained in embryo the same "element of politics", ie, the modern parliamentary State with its regime of parties. We notice that the *term* civil society is not used, probably because Gramsci was mainly trying in this note to situate theoretically his concept of the *political party*, but the *concept* of civil society is clearly there in "the private network of the State". This private network is the same thing as Hegel's "ethical State" since consent given freely is ethical in character. But the scope of civil society in Europe by 1929-30 had developed far beyond the associations mentioned by Hegel and "consent" was now more permanently entrenched.

We may debate how far this Franco-German synthesis "solicited the texts" but this is not at issue here. The key point to hold on to is the 'French' principle of transformation, ie, of bringing German theory down to earth. To do this it was necessary to break off from theory altogether and to study the concrete political reality it was meant to describe. Thus Gramsci began by studying the concrete

⁷ QCI p. 56-57. My italics. (translated in PN1 p.153-154).

⁸ QCI p.58. My italics. (Translated in PN1 p. 155).

elements of German civil society. In fact, he shows more interest in these early notes in the symptoms of hegemonic crisis in civil society than in the arena of parliament and the political parties. This may have been for prudential as well as scientific reasons since writing directly about German politics, about matters of immediate “political agitation”, was potentially sensitive as far as the prison authority was concerned.⁹ There were two elements of civil society in Germany which particularly interested Gramsci in 1929-30: the para-military associations or “shock troops” of the German Right (§1.133-134)¹⁰ and the ownership and readership of German newspapers (§2.26)¹¹. As different kinds of “private association”, the study of these elements enlarged and refined the *concept* of civil society itself. Moreover, insofar as both the elements played a key role in attempting to change “the equilibrium of force and consent”, they gave concrete substance to Gramsci’s “crisis of hegemony”.

(ii) The Intellectuals

Gramsci tells us directly in the notes that the concept of the “intellectuals” also comes from Hegel but it is harder to tell how since, unlike “civil society”, the “intellectuals” do not appear in Hegel under that name. Moreover, in the note in which Gramsci tells us this Hegel’s “intellectuals” meant something quite specific.

§8.187. *Intellectuals*. The position assigned by Hegel to the intellectuals should be accurately studied. It has had enormous importance not only in the conception of political science but in the whole conception of cultural and spiritual life. With Hegel thinking in terms of the ‘castes’ or the ‘estates’ begins to give way to thinking in terms of the ‘State’, whose ‘aristocracy’ are precisely the intellectuals. The ‘patrimonial’ conception of the State (which is the mode of thinking in terms of ‘castes’) is the conception which Hegel immediately had to destroy (scornful and sarcastic polemics against von Haller). It is impossible to understand anything (historically) about modern idealism and its social roots without this ‘validation’ of the intellectuals by Hegel.¹²

⁹ Italian and German fascism had already begun to draw closer together by this time. For example, the Nazi party congress at Nuremberg in 1929 welcomed the Italian representative with loud applause and shouts of “Viva l’Italia Fascista”. Hitler told the congress that “any possible enemy of France must be considered a probable ally of Germany” and therefore called for the promotion of closer friendship with Italy. See the reports of the congress in RSE, 13,20 August 1929, p.1818-1819 and p.1866-1867, discussed in chapter 1 below.

¹⁰ §1.133. *Military and Political Art*, QCI p.120-122. (Translated in PN1 p. 217-218 and in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (hereafter SPN), edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Lawrence and Wishart, 1971) p. 231-233, starting from “The relationship which existed in 1917-18.....”).

¹¹ §2.26. *The German Newspapers*, QCI p.182-183. (Translated in PN1 p.274-275).

¹² §8.187, QCII p.1054.

On this evidence Gramsci's "intellectuals" come from the same text of Hegel which gave him "civil society". The polemic against von Haller is found at the start of the section on 'The State' in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, immediately after the section on 'Civil Society'.¹³ This textual reference again brings to mind the young Marx's "transformation" of Hegel. We know that Gramsci was actively engaged in "the study of Marx's Hegelianism" at an early stage of the notebooks¹⁴ and probably knew that he started from the *Philosophy of Right*. Even without the text of Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, however, Gramsci seems to have studied the same paragraphs on 'The State' to which Marx first applied his 'transformative' criticism. These included the paragraphs on the civil service, Hegel's "universal class". The context of this note suggests that Gramsci was no more inclined than Marx to accept Hegel's description of the civil service as the "universal class" and that he had a firm grasp of the difference between concept and reality.

In the context of 1932 when Gramsci wrote this note, Hegel's "intellectuals" referred specifically to the civil service, the State bureaucracy, since this was linked to his perception of its pivotal role in German politics in 1932. The patrimonial conception of the State with its outmoded way of thinking in terms of "caste" described the mentality of the civil and military bureaucracy which effectively ruled Germany after the breakdown of parliamentary government in 1930. This way of thinking was characteristic of Germany's "traditional intellectuals", the Prussian Junkers, who resembled "a priestly-military caste". Gramsci suggests that the particular tradition they were heirs to was Haller's philosophy of the State not Hegel's. Hegel's "aristocracy" was an aristocracy of talent not of birth. The civil service was "a career open to the talents", that is, open to the brightest and best of "the middle class" (Hegel's term). This is what Gramsci meant by the "social roots" of modern idealism. Haller's State, on the other hand, was the patrimony of the Prussian aristocracy, exclusively reserved for those of

¹³ The polemic against von Haller is in the Addition to §258 of the *Philosophy of Right*. See *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, translated by H.B.Nisbet and edited by Allen W.Wood (Cambridge University press, 1991) p.278-281.

¹⁴ See §1.152. *Marx and Hegel*. "In the study of the Hegelianism of Marx, it is necessary to remember....." etc, QCI p.134-135. The specific reference to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* in the letter to Tatiana on 19 May 1930 (LCI p. 331) indicates that Gramsci was reading it at the time this note was written, ie, shortly after 20 May 1930 (for the date of §1.152, see Professor Gerratana's observations in QCIV p.2373). Gramsci was reading it in the Italian translation by F.Messineo published by Laterza in 1913: see 'Libri e opuscoli di autori conosciuti', QCIV p.3055.

noble birth.¹⁵ Gramsci perceived that this was how President Hindenburg and his circle regarded the German State in 1932: it was *their* State.

However, Hegel's conception of the "intellectuals" embraced not only political science but "the whole of cultural and spiritual life". In other words, Gramsci's transformation of Hegel's idealism went beyond the State in the strictly political sense. To understand the scope of his transformation, we must go back to its starting-point.

What did Marx mean by saying that Hegel stood history on its head and that it was necessary to put it back on its feet? Gramsci's answer was to transform Hegel's Idea into "the ideas of men", and thence into "the intellectuals".¹⁶ However, he did not simply see the intellectuals as they saw themselves. Gramsci explains that the intellectuals tend to see themselves as an independent category who represent "the uninterrupted continuity of history", who represent, in other words, the "tradition" which survives historical changes. This subjective conception on the part of the "traditional" intellectuals as he calls them, corresponded to "the uninterrupted continuity of history" represented by Hegel's Idea, which also led a shadowy life of its own outside of history. Gramsci understood that the transformation of Hegel's Idea into the intellectuals was not complete unless they are seen as part of the "system of forces" prevailing in civil society - unless they are seen, that is, in a "sociological" perspective. This was not without difficulty since Marx's sociology was almost universally interpreted in positivist terms and the positivist "mechanics" of the system of forces left little or no room for the "active principle" represented by the intellectuals. Nevertheless, it was only by showing the position of the intellectuals in the social structure and their role in the social system that Hegel's Idea could be brought fully "down to earth".

¹⁵ For an account of von Haller's philosophy of the State, see Robert M. Berdahl: *The Politics of the Prussian Nobility. The Development of a Conservative Ideology 1770-1848* (Princeton University Press, 1988) p.232-246.

¹⁶ In his early writings on Marxism, Croce was extremely interested in the problem of Marx's transformation of Hegel but never satisfactorily solved it. He argued that "Hegel's Idea (and Marx knew this perfectly well) is not the same as the ideas of men; and to turn the Hegelian philosophy of history upside down cannot give us the statement that ideas arise as reflections of material conditions. The inverted form would logically be this: history is not a process of the Idea, or of some transcendent rational reality, but a system of forces.....". Gramsci solved the problem by situating "the ideas of men" within "the system of forces". See Benedetto Croce: *Materialismo storico ed Economia Marxista* (Laterza, 1961) p.5

The scope of the activity of Gramsci's "intellectuals" corresponds to the forms in which Hegel's Idea manifests itself in history. In Hegel's philosophy of history the Idea or Spirit (*Geist*) comes down to earth in history, where it differentiates and manifests itself in various peoples as their National Spirit (*Volksgeist*). Hegel calls this national spirit "the principle of a people", ie, the principle which unifies a people and holds it together. But what *form* does this unity take? The usual interpretation of Hegel is strictly political, ie, that the principle of a people is embodied in its political organisation, the State, but Gramsci was also interested in the other interpretation according to which the principle of a people is embodied in its *culture*. It has even been argued that the meaning of 'State' in Hegel has nothing to do with political organisation at all and refers exclusively to culture¹⁷, but since by culture Hegel means not only the "art, religion, science" etc of a people but also (especially in *The Philosophy of Right*) its "institutions, laws, morals" etc, it seems clear that the cultural and political forms of the *Volksgeist* cannot be neatly separated. This interrelation corresponds to the complex configuration we find in Gramsci's notes between the cultural and political forms of intellectual activity.

The prison notes start from the premiss that the cultural and political forms of the *Volksgeist* correspond "concretely" to the activity of the intellectuals in the spheres of *civil society and the State*. The so-called *Volksgeist* is a sort of complex paradigm of a nation's tradition which is invented and formed by the intellectuals through their cultural and political activity. According to Hegel the subjective reality of the *Volksgeist in the political sense* is the sentiment of "patriotism".¹⁸ No one would deny the *reality* of this sentiment but relatively little attention is paid to how it *becomes* a reality. The patriotic spirit is formed, in the first instance, through the schools system where the State takes direct responsibility as the educator of this particular form of "consent". However, the deeper roots of the *Volksgeist* lie in civil society, the realm of the "ethical State", because consent is ethical when it is given voluntarily out of moral and intellectual conviction and when it is given permanence in a great variety of cultural forms, of which *the political parties* are one. When the intellectuals or "leaders" of civil society and the leaders of the State promote the same *Volksgeist*, the same complex of ruling ideas, we

¹⁷ For example by Leon J. Goldstein: 'The Meaning of 'State' in Hegel's *Philosophy of History*', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, XII, 1962, p.60-72.

¹⁸ On Hegel's concept of patriotism as a *political* disposition see §267-269 of *Philosophy of Right* cit., p.288-289.

can say that a state of normal equilibrium exists since the people give their consent to their leaders by freely accepting the “official” national paradigm. But what happens when the official national paradigm breaks down?

Gramsci's notes on Germany start from this point. He read an article about contemporary German writers and summarised its contents in §3.03, significantly entitled *German Intellectuals*.¹⁹ This literature told him something about the crisis of the *national spirit* in Germany. In his summary he referred to this as a crisis of “the principle of authority” in Germany which meant something similar to Hegel's “principle of a people”. For he tells us that in one writer, typically,

the principle of authority...is attacked in all its forms: religious dogma, monarchical power, official teaching, the military State, the marriage bond, paternal prestige, and above all the justice which protects all these transitory institutions and merely coerces, constrains, arbitrarily deforms public life and human nature. Man is unhappy and bad as long as he is shackled by the law, by custom, and by traditional ideas.²⁰

The violent crisis of the national spirit reflected in these German writers corresponded to the crisis in the parliamentary arena at this time where the Nationalist party began splitting up.²¹ This was due to the tactics of its new leader, Alfred Hugenburg, who joined with Hitler and the “racists” in the autumn of 1929 in absolute opposition to the republican system. In other words, the ‘official’ *Volksgeist* in both its cultural and political forms was disintegrating and the old ruling class, the “traditional intellectuals”, were losing the consent of the people. Such was Gramsci's first perception of the crisis of hegemony in Germany.

The Guiding Threads

Although the ‘German’ notes do not add up to a fully integrated interpretation of the German crisis written with the benefit of hindsight, nevertheless it is possible to identify a number of *guiding-threads* running through them so that we can at least speak of recurring *lines of inquiry*. There are two main threads which we may call the *political* and the *historical* and which correspond in his thinking to the two

¹⁹ §3.03, QCI p.286-288. This note is related to what Gramsci says about the influence of Freudianism in Germany in his letter to Julia of 29 December 1929. “This has given birth to a new form of intellectual disorder which is very interesting”. To Julia, LCI p.302.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.287.

²¹ The splitting of the German National People's Party (the ‘Nationalists’), the first of several in the course of 1929-30, was reported in *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera*, 17 December 1929, which Gramsci received regularly throughout the period of the notebooks.

'moments' of Germany's development, past and present. To simplify a complex and subtle pattern of thought, we may say that most of the German notes are particular elaborations of one or other of these main threads.

(i) The Political Thread

The political thread is defined by the crisis of the political parties and of the whole parliamentary regime in Germany. This was a *general phenomenon* of the postwar period although its significance differed from country to country. This phenomenon is first described in §1.48, one of the first drafts of the notes on France. Written at the end of 1929, it marks the start of the political thread.

The 'normal' exercise of hegemony on the now classic ground of parliamentary government is characterised by a combination of force and consent in equilibrium, without force outweighing consent too much. Indeed, force appears to be supported by the consent of the majority as expressed through the so-called organs of public opinion (which are therefore artificially multiplied in certain situations).....

In the post-war period the apparatus of hegemony disintegrates and hegemony becomes increasingly difficult to exercise. The phenomenon is described by various names and from various standpoints, the commonest being "crisis of the principle of authority", "dissolution of the parliamentary regime". Naturally enough the main symptoms of this phenomenon, in the arena of parliament and government, are the only ones ever described and these are explained in terms of the failure of the parliamentary 'principle', of the democratic 'principle' etc, but not the failure of the 'principle' of authority (this failure is proclaimed by others). On the practical level, the crisis is reflected in the increasing difficulty of forming governments and the increasing instability of governments themselves. Its immediate origin lies in the multiplication of parliamentary parties and in the (permanent) internal crises of every party (ie, every party experiences what parliament as a whole experiences: difficulty in governing).²²

The instability of parliamentary regimes is the most obvious symptom of the postwar crisis of hegemony, ie, the breakdown of "the equilibrium of force and consent" which had become the 'normal' basis of political leadership in Europe since 1848. The first line of enquiry is therefore Gramsci's observations on the crisis of political parties in Germany. The results of the German elections held almost continuously at one level or another between 1929-33 provided him with much factual data on the parties and with evidence of the changing (or unchanging) state of "equilibrium" (see §9.62, for example).²³ There are a number

²² QCI p. 58-59. The periodical source of this note was the report of the protracted ministerial crisis in France following the fall of Briand's ministry in October 1929, in Virginio Gayda: 'Variazioni su una tema francese. Il Parlamento contro lo Stato', *Gerarchia*, November 1929.

²³ §9.62. *Machiavelli*. [The theorem of fixed proportions] where Gramsci uses the example of "elections for the President of the Republic, for the Diets of the Lander, for the Reichstag, for the communal councils and so on right down to the factory councils". QCI p.1132-1133. Second draft translated in SPN p. 191-192.

of strands in this political thread which are conceptually significant .

The comparative perspective. Since the breakdown of hegemony was a general phenomenon, the political crisis in Germany was seen in *comparative perspective* which is not usually the case even among historians who have since written so much about it. The main terms of comparison were Italy where the parliamentary regime was slowly strangled and finally given the *coup de grace* in 1926 and Britain where the crisis was resolved by 'normal' parliamentary means in 1931. Thus, the election of the National Government in Britain in October 1931 was a significant moment in his thinking about the crisis of political parties *in Germany* (§4.69 and §7.77).²⁴

The focus on the right-wing parties. For scientific as well as prudential reasons the focus of Gramsci's enquiry was on *the parties of the Right* not the Left, except insofar as the "overall" relation of forces was taken into account. In particular, Gramsci says very little in the notes about the German Communist Party. In view of his position as a prisoner of a Fascist regime it is not difficult to see why, although his prudence was a more complicated affair than this since he disagreed with the policy of his own side. In any case, the most significant feature of the crisis of political parties after 1929 was the appearance of *the charismatic leader*. This is a key strand in the political thread, especially as the "charismatic" precedent set by Mussolini in Italy provided the basis for a comparative analysis. Gramsci starts to elaborate this strand in the summer of 1930 (§2.75(i))²⁵ , and after the 'breakthrough' of Hitler in the elections of September that year he returns to it at different stages of the crisis (§2.75 (ii), §6.97, §4.69)²⁶ . The notes on Caesarism (§9.133/136)²⁷ , for example, written at the turn of 1932-33, are part of the same strand as those on the charismatic leader since the phenomenon of Caesarism arose on account of the same fundamental difficulties of "equilibrium".

²⁴ §4.69. *On the Parties*, QCI p.513, and §7.77. *The Intellectuals. The Political Parties*, QCII p.910. These are the first drafts of §14.23. *Observations on Some Aspects of the Structure of Political Parties in periods of Organic Crisis*, QCIII p.1602 (Translated in SPN p.210)

²⁵ §2.75. R.Michels etc, QCI p.230-239. (Translated in PN1 p. 318-326). Despite the change of handwriting, it has not been noted that this note was written in two halves, the first in the summer of 1930 the second in the late summer of 1931. For the method of dating, see text of thesis.

²⁶ §2.75. The second half of 1931 starts from: "The charismatic leader can belong to any kind of party, whether authoritarian or anti-authoritarian...."; §6.97. *Past and Present. Great Ambition and Petty Ambitions*, QCII p.771-772 (note the reference to "what Michels has called the 'charismatic' leader..."); §4.69. *On the Parties*, QCI p.513.

²⁷ §9.133 & §9.136. *Machiavelli. Caesarism*, QCII p.1194-1195 and 1197-1198. (Second draft translated in SPN p. 219-223).

The crisis of tradition. The observations on the charismatic leader, interesting though they are, are not perhaps the most original aspect of his perspective on the German crisis, however. The clue to this lies in Gramsci's *historicism* which is more intuitive and concrete than other varieties, including Croce's. As far as the political parties in Germany are concerned, Gramsci applied his intuition particularly to the crisis of the Nationalist party which, as "a monarchist party in a republican regime" (§1.18, §2.75)²⁸, was particularly interesting because it stood for a tradition which was opposed "in principle" to the very political system in which it now had to operate. The crisis of monarchism was one element of the much wider "crisis of authority" to which Gramsci often refers (§1.48, §3.03, §3.34, §4.22)²⁹. The point was that those on the Right who stood for this principle and attacked the republican regime for its lack of "authority", could not offer a realistic alternative since their own principle was in crisis. Perhaps the most original dimension of the crisis of hegemony as Gramsci perceived it lay in this *crisis of tradition* in Germany and the Nationalist party provided a concrete focus at the level of the parties for this wider and longer perspective. At the start of 1933 Gramsci wrote about the "symbiosis of parties" of the German Right (§14.03).³⁰ This concept accurately described their tactical partnership during the crisis of 1929-33 but, more importantly, it also defined in a certain way the relation between the coming of Hitler and the crisis of the German "tradition". The symbiosis was a *historical* as well as political concept, defining a relation between past and present, old and new.

The political role of the bureaucracy. The weakening of the political parties is directly related by Gramsci to the strengthening of the political role of the civil and military bureaucracy (§4.69)³¹ whose centre of power was the circle around President Hindenburg. The crisis therefore temporarily reproduced a state of affairs 'similar' to that analysed by Max Weber in a famous critique of the government of imperial Germany written shortly before its overthrow in November 1918. Gramsci initially cited Weber's analysis for the purpose of comparison with the working of

²⁸ §1.18. *Maurras' Error. Notes on the French Monarchist Party*, QCI p.14-15 (Translated in PN1 p.108-109). It is important to note that Gramsci's French notes start from "the monarchist party in a republican regime" since this *element of politics* formed the basis of comparison with Hugenburg's German monarchist party (ie, the Nationalists). The comparison 'Maurras-Hugenburg' is made explicit in the second draft in QCIII p. 1646. This type of party is also discussed in §2.75 (i), QCI p. 235.

²⁹ §1.48 cit.; §3.03. *German Intellectuals*, QCI p.286-288; §3.34. *Past and Present*, QCI p.311-312 (translated in SPN p. 275-276); §4.22. *Croce and Marx. The Value of the Ideologies* QCI p.442.

³⁰ §14.03. *Machiavelli. Centre*. QCIII p.1656-1657.

³¹ §4.69 *On the Parties*, cit.

government in Liberal Italy (§3.119)³² but Weber's account of the rule of the high bureaucracy - the "State-Bonapartist party" as Gramsci calls it - also served to define and focus for Gramsci a specific element of Germany's *tradition* (§12.01)³³. *Structure-superstructure : the 'resistance' of civil society*. Was the crisis of hegemony purely a phenomenon of the superstructures? What relation did it have to the crisis of the *structure* in Germany after 1929? It is important to ask this question in view of Gramsci's reputation as "the theorist of the superstructures". As far as the *political* thread is concerned, the answer lies in Gramsci's "anti-economism" and his classic justification of it in §7.10. *Structure-superstructure* which was, in fact, an explanation of the German election results of September 1930.³⁴

Although anti-economism is a seminal theme in Gramsci's Marxism, the structure-superstructure *relation* remains the central problematic. Gramsci began writing the notes at virtually the same time as the Wall Street Crash and his many notes on the relation "structure-superstructure" must be read in the context of the world capitalist crisis as it developed after October 1929. His basic thesis is that economic crises, including "catastrophic" ones, do not *automatically* have political and ideological effects, especially not *revolutionary* ones. The "potential" of such crises must be transformed by the political parties before we can speak of their political and ideological "effects" and this depends on a complex set of cultural and political preconditions which have nothing directly to do with economic processes. The most important of these relate to the superstructures of *civil society* which, as we know, Gramsci compared to "the trench systems of modern warfare": they are "very resistant to catastrophic 'irruptions' of the immediate economic element".³⁵ This was based on observation of the crisis in Germany and was confirmed, as he saw

³² §3.119. *Past and Present. Agitation and Propaganda*, QCI p.388. Gramsci refers to the Italian translation of Weber's *Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order. Towards a political critique of officialdom and the party system* published by Laterza in 1919. He added that "the translation is very imperfect and imprecise", suggesting that he knew it well. A recent translation is in *Weber's Political Writings*, edited by Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp's130-271.

³³ §12.01. The Intellectuals...QCIII, p.1527 (Translated in SPN p.19 note), where Gramsci refers to Weber's work again in the context of describing the Prussian nobility, the "traditional intellectuals" in Germany.

³⁴ §7.10. *Structure and Superstructure*, QCII p.858-860, written in December 1930 in the form of a critique of Rosa Luxemburg. (Second draft translated in SPN p.233-235, starting from: "On the subject of parallels..."). For the precise context and "double" meaning of this note, see text of thesis.

³⁵ §7.10 cit. p. 860.

it, by the results of the Reichstag election of September 1930. From Gramsci's standpoint this was a victory not for the "attacking" forces led by the Communists (as the Comintern claimed) but for the "defending" forces now regrouping behind the Nazis. This was not to deny that Germany showed all the cultural and political symptoms of a crisis of hegemony (or "crisis of authority", in German language), but the election results showed that the dominant class had plenty of reserve strength and was far from finished in spite of the terrifying force of the capitalist crisis. The crisis had the effect of spurring the ruling class into restoring its hegemony before the revolutionary class could fully exploit its breakdown.

Gramsci's anti-economistic position put him at odds with the Comintern which had switched to an "offensive" tactic in 1929-30 in response to the capitalist crisis. This placed him in the "impossible" position (§3.32)³⁶ of being a prisoner of Fascism whilst disagreeing with the official policy of Communism. Not surprisingly he discloses very little about his political position in the notes. There were two exceptional moments, however, when he defined his position in relation to the Comintern. The two notes were written in response to events in Germany, always regarded in Comintern thinking as the main arena of the European class struggle: the first was written in the light of the results of the Reichstag election of September 1930 (§7.10), the second after the Reichstag election campaign of February-March 1933 in which the German Communist Party was destroyed (§14.68).³⁷

The question of 'parasitism'. The question of Gramsci's political position (or *positions*) cannot be discussed in further detail at this point as it is not relevant to the crisis of hegemony. However, when his disagreement first became known to his comrades in prison in a series of conversations in November-December 1930, they felt that he had underestimated the severity of the world economic crisis and asked

³⁶ §3.32. "*Rendre la vie impossible*", QC1 p.310. This note must have been written shortly after the visit from his brother Gennaro on 16 June 1930 informing him on behalf of the leadership in exile of the PCI of the change in the party's tactical line. Gennaro's testimony that Gramsci thought the new tactic was a mistake is confirmed by the following note §.3.33. *Some Causes of Error*, QC1 p.310-311.

³⁷ §7.10. *Structure and Superstructure* cit.; §14.68. *Machiavelli*, QCIII, p.1728-1730., the only one of Gramsci's notes to refer to Stalin (Giuseppe Bessarione) (Translated in SPN p. 240-241). Written in the first half of 1933, the timing of this note is partly indicated by the following §14.70. *Machiavelli*. *When it can be said that a party is formed and cannot be destroyed by normal methods*, QCIII p.1732-1735.

him to prepare a study of it.³⁸ Although he gathered material on the economic crisis during 1931, he never produced the study asked of him. This was for reasons of method as well as opportunity since the study of the economic crisis could result all too easily in making deterministic or “predictive” assumptions in forecasting political outcomes.

A structural phase can only be studied and analysed *after* it has completed its entire process of development not during the process itself. The only method in this case is to proceed by hypotheses and by making it perfectly clear that they are only hypotheses. 39

However, the financial panic in Europe during the summer of 1931 inspired the first of an interesting sequence of notes inquiring into the causes of the economic crisis (§6.123, §9.61, §15.05).⁴⁰ A main strand in his thinking regarded it as a “crisis of saving” caused not by the high wages paid to the workers but by the quota of national income consumed by “parasitic” classes with no essential function in production. The older a country’s history, the more significant these parasitic classes left over by the country’s “tradition” were (§1.61).⁴¹ But to see how Gramsci thought this hypothesis might apply (or not apply) to Germany, we must turn to the historical thread in his thinking.

(ii) The Historical Thread

If Gramsci’s “crisis of hegemony” meant no more than the breakdown of parliamentary government in Germany there would be nothing very original about it apart from the use of a novel terminology. But, as we see, when he interweaves the political and historical threads of his thinking the scope of the crisis of hegemony starts to become apparent. For it is clear that Gramsci’s hegemony refers to the State as a *cultural* not just a political form. This was a product of

³⁸ According to Athos Lisa’s report of the conversations of November-December 1930, Gramsci’s analysis “took no account of the interdependence of the Italian economy and other capitalist countries or of the consequences inherent in the sharpening of the world economic crisis”. In fact, Gramsci fully appreciated the gravity of the 1929 crisis - which he called “a catastrophic ‘eruption’ of the economic element”) - but at the end of 1930 he did not foresee its *duration and scope*. He thought it might be another “sudden eruption” like the German inflation of 1923. Lisa wrote his report in 1933 when the scope and duration of the 1929 crisis had become apparent.

³⁹ §7.24. *Structure and Superstructure*, QCII p.872. My italics.

⁴⁰ §6.123. *Past and Present*. Observations on the Crisis of ‘29-30-?, QCII p.792-793; §9.61. *Past and Present. England and Germany*, QCII p.1131-1132; §15.05. *Past and Present. The Crisis*, QCIII p.1755-1759. The first was written in 1931, in the context of the financial crisis; the second in 1932, in relation to the peaking of the unemployment figures; the third in early 1933, in relation to the new political conjuncture.

⁴¹ §1.61. *Americanism*, QCI p.70.

Germany's past.

The historical thread in Gramsci's notes is defined by the function in German history of the Prussian nobility, the Junkers. The start of this thread can be found in §1.44, also written near the end of 1929, where he analyses "the political leadership of a class before and after it comes to power". In the course of this analysis we find a comparative sketch of how "the process by which the bourgeoisie takes power in France, Germany, Italy (and England) differs". This thumb-nail sketch gives us the first reference in the notes to the concept of the nobility as "the bourgeoisie's *intellectuals*".

The phenomenon is the most complete, the most rich in political elements, in France. The German phenomenon is similar in some respects to the Italian, in other respects to the English. In Germany 1848 fails because the bourgeoisie is not very concentrated (the Jacobin-type slogan in Germany in 1848 is provided by Marx's formula of 'permanent revolution') and because the issue is mixed up with the national question. The wars of 1864, 1866, and 1870 solve the national question and result in an intermediate type of solution to the class question: the bourgeoisie gets control of economic-industrial affairs but the old feudal classes remain as the ruling stratum (*ceto governativo*) with a great many caste privileges in the army, the state administration, and on the land. But for all their enduring importance and despite keeping all these privileges, at least these old classes in Germany do have a function: they are the bourgeoisie's "intellectuals" with a particular temperament of their own inherited from their class origin and from the tradition.....

The correct explanation why the Junkers and Kaiserism stayed in power in Germany in spite of the large-scale capitalist development is indicated by Antonio Labriola: the class relationship created by the development of industry persuades the bourgeoisie, as soon as the limit of bourgeois hegemony has been reached and the circumstances of the progressive classes have been transformed, not to fight to the death against the old world but to leave part of its facade standing as a disguise for its own domination. 42

Gramsci elaborates this thread in his notes on the *Intellectuals*. The first draft of these was §4.49, written at the time the Reichstag election of 1930; the second was §12.01 written around the time of the presidential elections of 1932. A further trace of this thread can be found shortly after Hitler came to power in 1933 (§15.18).⁴³ Although the notes on the Intellectuals are regrettably short, for Gramsci the investigation of this question was the most exciting enterprise of the notebooks. There is abundant testimony in the letters to its special importance to him and of his personal struggle to order his thoughts and discipline his imagination on this

42 §1.44. *Political leadership of a class before and after becoming the government*, QCI p.53. (Translated in PNI p.150).

43 §4.49. *The Intellectuals*, QCI p.480-481; §12.01. *The Intellectuals.....*, QCIII p.1526-1527; §15.18. *Past and Present*, QCIII p.1775-1776.

question.⁴⁴ His frustration at being unable to undertake the necessary scholarly research, his "excessive methodological scruples", his constant reservations and misgivings about the results of his thinking - all this suggests that the question of the intellectuals was Gramsci's 'big idea' and there is no doubt that the final expression of his thoughts fell far short of the subject's potential as he conceived it. Since there are (with one possible exception⁴⁵) no significant conceptual changes between the first and second drafts, we quote the relevant passage on the "traditional intellectuals" from the second draft of 1932. He begins by comparing their function to that of the English landowning class.

The latter, long after losing its economic supremacy, preserves its political-intellectual supremacy and is assimilated by the new group in power as 'traditional intellectuals' and as leadership stratum. The old landowning aristocracy joins up with the industrialists by a kind of suture which is precisely what joins together the traditional intellectuals and the new dominant classes in other countries.

The English phenomenon also appears in Germany where, however, it is complicated by other historical and traditional elements. Germany, like Italy, was the seat of an Institution and an ideology of a universalistic, supra-national character (the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation). It supplied a certain number of personnel to the medieval cosmopolis which impoverished its own internal energies and aroused struggles which distracted from the problems of national organisation and perpetuated the territorial disunity of the Middle Ages. The development of industry took place within a semi-feudal framework which lasted until November 1918 and the Junkers maintained a political-intellectual supremacy far greater than that of the corresponding English group. They were the traditional intellectuals of the German industrialists but with special privileges and a vigorous awareness of being an independent social group based on the fact that they kept a significant measure of economic power on the land, which was more 'productive' than in England. The Prussian Junkers resemble a priestly-military caste with a virtual monopoly of directive-organisational functions in political society, but at the same time possessing an economic base of their own and not having to depend exclusively on the liberality of the dominant economic group. Moreover, unlike the English landed nobility, the Junkers constituted the officer corps of a large standing army which gave them solid organisational cadres favouring the preservation of their esprit de corps and their political monopoly.

(In Max Weber's book *Parliament and Government in the New Order in Germany* can be found many elements showing how the political monopoly of the nobles impeded the elaboration of an extensive and experienced bourgeois political personnel and was at the root of the continual parliamentary crises and of the fragmentation of the liberal and democratic parties. Hence the importance of the Catholic Centre and of Social Democracy which managed during the imperial period to build up to a significant degree a

⁴⁴ Thus, in the first plan of study set out in the letter to Tatiana on 19 March 1927, he writes: "The subject is full of possibilities (*argomento suggestivo in sommo grado*) although, of course, I could only sketch the broad outlines as there is no chance of my consulting the immense mass of material which is necessary", LC I, p.56. And he was referring only to the *Italian* intellectuals.....

⁴⁵ In the first draft the big landowners (*latifondisti Junker*) are described as being "allied with the petty-bourgeoisie" but this is dropped in the second draft. Since the description appears to be historically accurate in view of the Junkers' leadership of the Farmers League, the omission of this important detail in the second draft is puzzling. It could be that Gramsci thought that history needed to be reconsidered in the light of current politics, especially the success of Hitler's party which may have suggested to him that the "subaltern class", the petty-bourgeoisie, had now become an independent political movement.

parliamentary and directive stratum of its own).⁴⁶

This brilliant synopsis sets out an entire agenda for *historical* research as Gramsci was probably aware. Unfortunately this agenda cannot be explored further here⁴⁷, but some comment on the question of German “peculiarities” is merited in the light of Gramsci’s *comparative* perspective and some clarification of the term “intellectuals” is needed in view of its unlikely application to the Junkers.

The comparative perspective. As we see, from the start of the notes Gramsci’s perspective on modern German history is defined by the ruling function of the big Prussian nobility (*latifondisti Junker*), and their conception of themselves as the carriers of the German “tradition”. Gramsci seems to take the same route which German historians will later call the *Sonderweg* although it is worth remembering that he was writing in 1932 without knowing that it led to the Third Reich. Moreover, we should not lose sight of the main features of his route map. In the first place his perspective on Germany’s bourgeois revolution is comparative - “similar in some respects to the Italian, in other respects to the English” - so the route is far from being entirely “peculiar”: the only peculiarity seems to be to describe the nobility as “intellectuals”. Again, his perspective presupposed the large-scale development of industry and the fundamental dominance of the bourgeoisie. This meant that the bourgeoisie were the ‘hegemonic’ class of civil society in Germany for his very concept of ‘bourgeois revolution’ implied that the bourgeoisie, through a multitude of private initiatives, organised its own leadership of civil society. The most important regional variation in the pattern of civil society was east of the Elbe, although it might be argued that bourgeois social relations predominated even here if we accept Weber’s definition of the Junkers as mostly “a rural middle class with a feudal stamp”⁴⁸. Even if we narrow our definition of the Junkers to the nobles in the strict sense, ie, the old aristocratic families still in possession of hereditary *latifundia*, it would not be entirely accurate to describe them as a “pre-capitalist” class since the big estates could be regarded as a capitalist form of production, albeit with a peculiar set of social relations. The problem is that histories of the bourgeois revolution in Germany have paid very little attention since Max Weber’s pioneering investigations in the 1890s to the social or “historical

⁴⁶ §12.01. The Intellectuals.....QCIII p.1526-1527. (Translated in SPN p.18-19).

⁴⁷ See works on the ‘traditional intellectuals’ listed in the bibliography.

⁴⁸ Weber’s description, made in the context of comparing them with the English landowning class, is in *General Economic History* (London, 1927), p. 110, a translation of Weber’s *Wirtschaftsgesichte* (1923), a series of lectures delivered at Munich in 1919-20 just before his death.

bloc" east of the Elbe.

The Junkers as "traditional intellectuals" . What exactly did Gramsci mean by calling them "intellectuals"? On the face of it this description looks distinctly unpromising since the prestige of the Junkers was scarcely based on their intellectual cultivation, but Gramsci is obviously not using the term in this conventional bourgeois sense. A passing comment in a later note (§7.43) nicely makes the point . Gramsci refers to the most famous but least typical of the Prussian Junkers - Bismarck. In a polemical comment on a piece by Boris Souvarine ('Liefscitz') he says that

Liefscitz thinks of the political man more as the great intellectual in the literary sense than as the great politician. But who was the greater intellectual: Bismarck or Barres? Who actually "realised" greater changes in the world of culture? Liefscitz doesn't understand such questions at all..... 49

The nature of leading the State was quintessentially practical but to fail to recognise the intellectual capacity demanded by political leadership was stupid. We may well question whether or not the "bureaucrats" who succeeded him brought to the function of leadership the specifically *political* capacity so prodigiously displayed by Bismarck, especially as the victorious wars of German unification proved that the nobility's "genius" - which would thus become the "national" genius - lay in the field of military art and science. This question was posed by Weber in 1917 when Germany was losing the war and when there was a good prospect that the Junkers' monopoly of the ruling function would come to an end. But leaving aside this important question for the time being (not to mention the question of whether the Junkers of Pomerania read French novels), we are still left with Gramsci's apparently implausible description of them as "intellectuals".

In general terms Gramsci's "intellectuals" are defined by their social function. He differentiates between "productive" and "intellectual" functions in line with the pivotal distinction between structure-superstructure (the extent to which the Prussian Junkers as a social group combined *both* functions is thus central to any historical-political analysis of them). The concept of the intellectuals could thus be assimilated to historical materialism even though it could not be found in the classic statements by Marx, Engels, and Labriola, at least not in anything like this form.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ §7.43. *Reformation and Renaissance* , QCII p.891-892.

⁵⁰ Notwithstanding Gramsci's references to Engels' *Utopian and Scientific Socialism* and to Antonio Labriola's writings on *The Materialist Conception of History* , as if to 'legitimise' his insertion of the concept of the intellectuals into the historical materialist 'tradition'. §1.44, QCI p.53-54.

However, there is obviously more to the concept of the "traditional intellectuals" than this purely functional difference.

As we suggested, Gramsci's intellectuals are a "transformed" version of Hegel's *Volksgeist* or "national spirit", a distinctive cultural-political form (ie, 'State') created and shaped not by the *Geist* but by the "intellectuals". In this sense the peculiar priestly-military spirit of the Junkers is regarded by Gramsci as significant as far as their leadership of the State is concerned, particularly after the fall of Bismarck. This spirit was personified more by Moltke (and by Hindenburg between 1929-33) than by Bismarck. Gramsci made a note of precisely this point when he was reading Emil Ludwig's biography of the Kaiser:

It should be remembered that Bismarck, following in the footsteps of Clausewitz, maintained the superiority of the political over the military moment, whereas William II (according to Ludwig's account) was furious with a newspaper which reported Bismarck's opinion: thus the Germans brilliantly won almost all the battles, but lost the war.⁵¹

If we study the language of his successive notes on the nobility we see that the whole tendency is to differentiate the peculiar spirit of this "priestly-military caste" (echoes of Weber?) from the spirit of the bourgeoisie, whose "intellectuals" they were. The configuration of Gramsci's concept of hegemony seems to raise the question how far the spirit of this ruling caste permeated the whole of *civil society* in Germany, which is precisely what the classic definition of "militarism" seems to mean⁵², but it is more plausible (especially in the context of the Kaiser's Germany) to follow Hegel's suggestion that the national spirit in the strictly political (ie, *not cultural*) sense is the sentiment of "patriotism". This was not only more superficial but also more artificial, and could be manufactured more readily than the national spirit in a deeper cultural sense. The "patriotic" pressure groups of Wilhelmine Germany can thus be understood *theoretically* without implying that they represented the German "national spirit".

For if the bourgeoisie were the hegemonic class of civil society, the nobility remained the leaders of the State. We know from Max Weber that recruitment of the sons of the bourgeoisie to high office in the civil and military bureaucracy depended on ritual forms of initiation to the caste, such as possession of Prussian reserve officer status and membership of an exclusive student fraternity at

⁵¹ §19.28. Political-Military Leadership of the Italian National Movement, QCIII p.2052. First draft §1.117, QCI p.111.

⁵² By Alfred Vagts in *A History of Militarism*. See the introduction to Karl Liebknecht: *Militarism and Anti-Militarism*, translated and introduced by Grahame Lock (Cambridge Rivers Press, 1973) p.xxiv.

university.⁵³ The spirit of these “traditional intellectuals” consisted essentially in their claim to represent the “uninterrupted continuity” of German history - ie, the German “tradition” - even though the reality was that this continuity had been “interrupted” by the bourgeois revolution. Their ownership of productive land gave them “a vigorous awareness of being an independent social group” even though the bourgeois revolution had effectively turned them into “the bourgeoisie’s intellectuals”, changing their main function from a ‘productive’ to a ‘governing’ one. It seemed that their aristocratic claim to exclusive ownership of the nation’s tradition and to be the country’s “natural” rulers was strengthened not weakened by historical change.

The main question now must be what bearing did this historical perspective have on the crisis of hegemony between 1929-33? What was the relation between past and present? As we said, Gramsci’s historicism works intuitively rather than ‘systematically’. The *immediacy* of his intuitions means that what appears valid at one point of the crisis may not appear valid later on: this applied particularly to estimating the political weight and life-expectancy of the “traditional intellectuals”. However, this does not affect the underlying consistency of his interpretation.

The crisis of the German ideology. When Gramsci uses the expression “crisis of authority” he refers specifically to the crisis of hegemony as it affected the German Right for whom authority meant “tradition”, ie, the fundamental source of *legitimacy* in conservative ideology (§3.34).⁵⁴ As we said, in the early stages he was more interested in the *ideological forms* of the crisis in Germany even though the multiple splits in the Nationalist party in 1929-30 provided plenty of evidence of the crisis at the corresponding parliamentary level. For example, he was particularly intrigued by the influence of Freudian analysis on German writers for whom “the revolt of the sons against the fathers” was a typical theme of the time as historians have since shown (§3.03).⁵⁵ According to Gramsci these writers had invented a new type of “noble savage” similar to that of French literature of the eighteenth

⁵³ See Weber’s comments on the student fraternities in *Suffrage and Democracy in Germany* (1917) in *Political Writings* op.cit. p.115-117. See also Eckart Kehr: ‘The Genesis of the Royal Prussian Reserve Officer’ in *Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy*, edited and introduced by Gordon A.Craig (University of California, 1977), p.97-108.

⁵⁴ §.3.34. *Past and Present*, QCI p.311, where the “crisis of authority” means that the “traditional ideologies” have lost their hold on the masses.

⁵⁵ §3.03. *German Intellectuals*, QCI p.286-288. On this particular theme see first of all, Peter Gay: *Weimar Culture* (Penguin, 1974), chapters 5 &6, and more generally Walter Lacquer: *Weimar. A Cultural History 1918-1933* (New York, 1974).

century⁵⁶ although whether the new hero stood for a 'restoration' or a 'revolution' of some kind was far from clear. The revolt of the sons against the fathers was closely connected with the several notes on the "youth question" (§1.127, §3.34, §14.58, §15.66)⁵⁷ where he describes an unusual "crisis of generations" in which the "old" abdicate their responsibility for educating the "young" and adopt an attitude of "*apres moi le deluge*". The outcome of this was unforeseeable in 1930 when the crisis as Gramsci saw it was still at a stage when "the old is dying and the new cannot be born".⁵⁸ However, the Reichstag election of September that year marked a further stage in the "decomposition of parliamentarism" in Germany and the birth of Hitlerism clearly indicated how the crisis of authority might be resolved (§4.22).⁵⁹

The elements of civil society. The study of literary movements was one way of examining the crisis of hegemony in Germany but Gramsci knew perfectly well that he could not rely on analysis of ideology alone: he therefore turned his attention to studying the "material structure" of German ideology where he found that the traditional forms were still deeply "entrenched". In the field of private organisations, ie, civil society, the traditional forces took the initiative in organising and defending their "front" in two particular ways: the first took the form of private military organisations which proliferated in post-war Germany (§1.48, §1.133/134)⁶⁰ and were particularly active in 1929-30; the second was in the area of private newspaper ownership which had a key role to play in the whole organisation of the

⁵⁶ Letter to Giulia, 29 December 1929, LC I, p.302.

⁵⁷ §1.127. *The Youth Question*, QCI p.115-116; §3.34. *Past and Present*, QCI p.311; §14.58. *Past and Present*, QCIII p.1717-1718; §15.66. *Past and Present*, QCIII p.1829-1830. On the relation between classes and generations, see the interesting account in Robert Wohl: *The Generation of 1914* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980) p. 80-84. "This comparison of generations to classes helps to explain the function and appeal of the generational concept in Weimar Germany - and in postwar France and other European countries as well".

⁵⁸ §3.34, QCI p.311.

⁵⁹ §4.22. *Croce and Marx. The Value of the Ideologies*, QCI p.442. This was written at the time of the Reichstag election of September 1930 and "the current phenomena of the decomposition of parliamentarism" refers to this. See also the second draft of 1932 which amplifies the point: "The way in which this decomposition is presented in order to hide the reactionary tendencies of certain social groups is extremely interesting". §10.41, QCII p.1322-1323. Gramsci means the way in which the National Socialists used "revolutionary" phraseology to hide their reactionary tendencies.

⁶⁰ The "question of the shock troops (*arditi*)" is first mentioned in §1.48, QCI p.60, as a point of contrast between the crisis in France and "other countries" (ie, Italy, Germany), and then followed up in §1.133 and 1.134, QCI p. 120-123.

“ideological front” of the traditional classes (§2.26, §3.49).⁶¹ The function of the para-military organisations and the right-wing press was precisely to change the equilibrium of force and consent which was the fundamental reason for the crisis.

From time to time Gramsci studied other elements of German civil society: he took a special interest in the organisation of Catholic Action in Germany (§5.22, §5.59, §8.129 etc)⁶², for example, where the memory of Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* continued to define the relation between past and present. After the political parties were swept away in June 1933 Gramsci turned his attention to the most important element of civil society in Germany, the Catholic Church, which signed a Concordat with Nazi Germany the same month. Rosenberg’s “struggle for the Weltanschauung” launched in 1934 meant that the Catholic Church had more reason than ever to fear another *Kulturkampf* (§16.11, §20.04).⁶³

The ruling caste. The historical and political threads also intersected in Gramsci’s mind when it came to the role of the bureaucratic elite, both civil and military, whose centre of power was the Head of State, Field Marshall Hindenburg and his circle. Gramsci’s description in §12.01 of the Junkers as resembling “a priestly-military caste” was explored in a number of collateral notes also written in 1932 (§8.55, §8.81, §9.68).⁶⁴ This was because the ascendancy of this elite and its special “caste” character were particularly apparent to Gramsci in 1932 when the presidential contest between Hindenburg and Hitler tended to expose its inner workings to the light of day. However, this particular element of the German ideology - “the corporate-military spirit” - was not confined to the ruling caste: it also permeated the private para-military organisations of the Right including “delinquent associations” (§8.81)⁶⁵ like Hitler’s Storm Troops. The controversy

⁶¹ §2.26. *The German Newspapers*, QCI p.182-183, which is linked to the concept of the “ideological front” in §3.49. *Questions of culture. Ideological material*, QCI p.332-333.

⁶² §5.22. *Catholic Action in Germany*, QCI p.556-557; §5.59. *Catholic Action in Germany*, QCI p.592; §8.129. *Catholic Action*, QCII p.1019. (Translated in *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, translated and edited by Derek Boothman, Lawrence and Wishart, 1995 (hereafter FSPN), p.107-110.

⁶³ §16.11. *Relations between Church and State*, QCIII p.1865-1874 (Translated in FSPN, p.60-70) ; §20.04. *Integral Catholics, Jesuits, Modernists*, QCIII, p.2088-2103, especially p.2094 (Translated in FSPN, p.76 passim).

⁶⁴ §8.55. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. Self-Government and Bureaucracy*, QCII p.974-975; §8.81. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. The Spirit of Solidarity*, QCII p.986-987; §9.68. *Machiavelli. Organic and Democratic Centralism*, QCII p.1138-1140 (especially the paragraph on “bureaucratic centralism”).

⁶⁵ The expression is used in §8.81 cit.

stirred by the presidential ban on the Storm Troops in April 1932 was exploited by Hitler precisely to strengthen the *esprit de corps* of his troops.

The change of ideological elements . Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of his historicist analysis of the past and present of the German Right is the “change of elements” from the old to the new form of the German ideology. Gramsci's account of this process in the notes is hard to excavate but it seems to start from his observations on “the importance of utopias and of confused, rationalistic ideologies” in the early stages of movements trying to form a collective will (§8.195)⁶⁶ . This can be putatively related to the parallel discussion in the prison letters at this time on anti-semitism which, as Gramsci appreciated, had become the key element of the new combination. ⁶⁷ A further instalment of this change of elements from the old to the new form of the German ideology is his account of “partial and total conceptions of the world” (§15.06)⁶⁸ written shortly after Hitler and the National Coalition came to power in 1933. Gramsci predicts that the new form of the German ideology will become total once it sheds its “symbiotic” features, ie, its dependence on the old form.

Another very interesting strand in this type of analysis is constituted by his investigation of the “feudal origins” of racist thought (§7.51, §14.39, §17.43)⁶⁹ which he traced back to French historiography of the Restoration. He started from “the element of racial struggle (*l'elemento di lotta di razza*) grafted on to the class struggle in France by Thierry” and asked “what importance it had, in France, in determining the nationalistic colouration of the movements of the subaltern classes?” (§7.51). As always the line of enquiry starts from an element of French history, “the richest in political elements”, but the discussion of Thierry and (after 1848) Gobineau is entirely to do with current German politics, especially when we remember the way in which Gramsci's ‘Franco-German’ turn of mind worked.

⁶⁶ §8.195. *The proposition ‘that society does not pose problems for itself unless the material preconditions for their solution already exist’*, QCII p.1057-1058. (Second draft translated in SPN p.194-195)

⁶⁷ The very tense correspondence with Tatiana on this question, into which Piero Sraffa was drawn, started on 13 September 1931 (LCII p.464) and ended on 21 March 1932 (LCII p.550-551). For a full account, see text.

⁶⁸ §15.06. *Machiavelli. Global and Partial Conceptions of the World and Practical Approaches*, QCIII p.1759-1761 (Translated in SPN p.157-158).

⁶⁹ §7.51. *History of the Subaltern Classes*, QCII p.897; §14.39. *Popular Literature. Manzoni and ‘the Humble’*, QCIII p.1696 (Translated in Antonio Gramsci *Selections from Cultural Writings*, edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Lawrence and Wishart, 1985, p.294); §17.43. *Problems of Culture. Racism, Gobineau and the historical origins of the philosophy of praxis*, QCIII p.1943-1944.

Moreover, the analysis of the feudal origins of racism was meant to suggest how, in view of the “feudal” stamp given to the national tradition by the eastern aristocracy, the element of racism had the potential to dominate the German ideology completely. With the advent of the ‘Racial State’, of course, this is precisely what it did. But it follows from Gramsci’s analysis of its origins that in the dialectic of “revolution-restoration”, this State was a form of “restoration”.

The dialectic of revolution-restoration. This dialectic and the related concept of “passive revolution” is first mentioned by Gramsci in the context of his studies of the Risorgimento (§8.25)⁷⁰ but he also applies it to his analysis of German politics. The starting-point for this is the notes on Caesarism (§9.133/136)⁷¹ written in the winter of 1932-33 during the transition from Schleicher to Hitler, where he recommends the dialectic as an analytical tool for breaking down the schematic difference between progressive and reactionary forms of Caesarism. When the new Caesar came to power at the end of January 1933, the composition of the coalition government suggested that the element of ‘restoration’ predominated over that of ‘revolution’ and Gramsci’s notes of the time reflect this way of seeing it (§14.03).⁷² Moreover, his reflections of early 1933 on the strength of agrarian parties (§14.53)⁷³ and on the relations between agrarians and industrialists (§15.06)⁷⁴ must be seen in terms of his perspective on the “traditional” function of the nobility as the “intellectuals” of the industrialists. The reason why this ‘intellectual’ function of the landed nobility seemed to persist for so long was ultimately related to their ‘productive’ function, ie, “to the fact that in rural areas all the elements involved in agricultural production continue to form a bloc, which is often under the leadership of the most reactionary of these elements”.⁷⁵ If the German notes of 1933 seem to underestimate the element of ‘revolution’ compared to that of ‘restoration’; that is, if they attribute too much political weight to “the force of tradition”, this was ultimately because Gramsci knew that the “historical bloc” east of the Elbe had survived the

⁷⁰ §8.25. *Risorgimento*, QCII p.957.

⁷¹ §9.133/136. *Caesarism*, QCII p.1194-1195/1197-1198. For the precise dating of these notes, during the chancellorship of Schleicher, see text.

⁷² §14.03. *Machiavelli. Centre*, QCIII p.1656-1657. Written in early 1933 just after Hitler came to power, Gramsci asks whether in the new coalition government Hitler’s party would merely serve the interests of “the ‘historical’ party of Hugenburg-Papen”, who are “the extremists”.

⁷³ §14.53. *Machiavelli. The Strength of Agrarian Parties*, QCIII p.1712.

⁷⁴ §15.02. *Machiavelli*. The question whether the big industrialists have a permanent political party of their own, QCIII p.1750-1751.

⁷⁵ §14.53 cit.

crisis, no thanks to Schleicher's "agrarian Bolshevism". Indeed, the question of the survival of this "historical bloc" was fundamental to the whole "crisis of hegemony" in Germany.

Structure-superstructure: Americanism in Germany. Although the crisis of hegemony was mainly a superstructural phenomenon, relating to the cultural-political form of the State, we have seen that Gramsci did not entirely neglect its structural aspects. As far as the historical thread is concerned, we must look to what little he says about the history of the structure in Germany. The most interesting insight into his perspective can be found in his many notes on Americanism, which are related to what some historians have called "the crisis of modernity" in Germany and even to what others have called "the politics of cultural despair".⁷⁶

Gramsci's analysis of the reaction of "traditional" Europe to Americanism is particularly interesting in relation to Germany where the introduction of Americanism in the 1920s went furthest. The European "tradition" is defined as consisting of numerous classes with no essential function in the world of production, ie, "absolutely parasitic classes". The older a country's history, the more numerous these "residues of idle people" left over by the past. Before Americanism could be introduced there must be a "rationalisation of the population" whereby these "pensioners of economic history" ceased to exist.

Gramsci seemed to think that this brutal process of "rationalisation" was now happening in Germany. In one of his early notes (§3.11)⁷⁷ he noted with interest Pirandello's remark in an interview given in April 1929 (ie, pre-Wall Street Crash) that Berlin was more open to Americanism than Paris, because "the very structure of the city offers no resistance". At first Gramsci took Pirandello's "structure" seriously, to mean social-economic structure, and offered the following explanation of Berlin's reception of Americanism:

In Berlin the middle classes were already ruined by the war and the inflation and German industry was more highly developed than the French. By contrast the French middle classes did not suffer (occasional) crises like the German inflation nor an organic crisis, much more rapid than normal, arising from the introduction and (sudden) diffusion of a new method of production

⁷⁶ Notably Detlev J.K. Peukert in *The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (Penguin, 1993), especially chapter 9 'Americanism versus Kulturkritik' p.178-190. Peukert refers to Fritz Stern's conception of "the politics of cultural despair".

⁷⁷ §3.11. *Americanism*, QCI p. 296-297.

Gramsci was obviously referring to the “rationalisation” movement in German industry in the 1920s, which was the ‘structural’ aspect of Americanism. But this is interpreted as an “organic crisis” which, following on the war and inflation of 1923, contributes further to the trauma and ruin of the middle classes. Thus beneath the glamorous surface “what is called Americanism today is to a very large extent a phenomenon of social panic, dissolution, and despair of the old strata who are destined to be crushed by the new order....”.⁷⁸ Thus Gramsci saw Americanism as an affair of dying classes “left over by the European tradition” who, faced with the inexorable process of *modernisation*, had given up all “resistance” and sunk into despair. When he updated these notes in 1934, in the light of the Third Reich, his perspective changed. The reference to the rationalisation movement of the late 1920s gave way to simply “the organic crisis of 1929”. This only strengthened his perspective on the ruin (if not despair) of the Berlin middle classes, but Pirandello’s suggestion of April 1929 that the structure of the city seemed to offer no “resistance” to Americanism looked decidedly different in the context of Nazi Germany. Thus Gramsci added in parenthesis: “(Today [ie, 1934] Pirandello could no longer say the same thing, so it must be understood that he meant the Berlin of the night clubs)”.⁷⁹ At the risk of “soliciting” the texts, from these few indications we can say that the cultural and political reaction of “traditional” Germany to Americanism was part of Gramsci’s wider “crisis of hegemony” which came to a head after 1929.

⁷⁸ §3.11 cit., p.296.

⁷⁹ §22.15. *American and European Civilisation*, QCIII p.2178-2180. (Translated in SPN p.316-318).

Chapter 1

October 1929-September 1930

From the Death of Stresemann and the Wall Street Crash to the Nazi 'Breakthrough'

The Letters

"I am becoming a real fakir...." ¹

In the autumn of 1929 Gramsci got to work in earnest on the *Prison Notebooks*. His health was stable and contact with his family was good: in November he was visited by his brother Carlo, in December by his sister-in-law Tatiana. Although he faced a prison sentence of over 20 years, his morale was initially high and he did not feel entirely powerless. Exploiting the few legal rights accorded him by the penal statute, he had obtained permission to write in his cell and to be sent books and periodicals. His confident state of mind at this juncture is captured in the sermonising tone of his advice to Carlo who had recently lost his job and now found himself, like his older brother Gennaro, unemployed. Gramsci warned him to avoid sinking into "those vulgar and banal states of mind called pessimism and optimism". This was timely advice in view of the feeling of insecurity engendered by the 'Great Crash' on Wall Street a few weeks earlier.

What you say about Nannaro in your letter is interesting but surprising. The two of you have been through the war. Nannaro's war experience was quite exceptional; as a miner working underground he could hear through the wall dividing his own tunnel from the Austrian one the enemy beavering away to lay explosives which would blow up his tunnel and send him sky-high. It seems to me that a man cannot put up with these conditions for years and go through these psychological experiences without developing the greatest degree of stoical serenity, without becoming profoundly convinced that man's moral fortitude is completely rooted in himself, in his own energy, his own willpower, in the iron logic of the ends he sets himself and the means he deploys to achieve them. Such a man will never again fall into despair, or into those vulgar and banal states of mind we call pessimism and optimism.

My mind synthesises these two sentiments and supersedes them: I am a pessimist of the intellect and an optimist of the will. In every circumstance I think of the worst possible scenario and then mobilise all my reserves of willpower to defeat the obstacle ahead of me. I never entertain illusions or suffer from delusions. Above all, my strength has always been an infinite patience, not patience which is passive or inert but animated by a spirit of perseverance.

I don't doubt that there is a very serious moral crisis today, but there have been even more serious ones in the past and there is a difference between now and then....[six lines cancelled by the censor].....So I'm inclined to be a bit indulgent towards Nannaro and I'd ask you to be the same. I've seen for myself that he can be strong and it is only when he is on his own that he loses his head and gets downhearted. Perhaps I'll write to him next time²

¹ "I am becoming a real fakir. I'll soon be able to swallow swords and walk barefoot on razor-blades courtesy of Gillette". To Tatiana, 4 November 1929, LCI p.287.

² To Carlo, 19 December 1929, LC I p. 297-299.

The lines cancelled by the censor in the context of “the very serious moral crisis today” apparently referred to the Wall Street Crash in October 1929. ³ Gramsci had certainly read about the Crash in his reviews ⁴ but, if this indication is correct, there is no suggestion that he immediately saw the Crash as a historical turning-point. His dialectic tended to diminish the proportions of the present by viewing it in the perspective of the past, but the shock-waves released by the Crash, particularly in Germany, would soon correct this perspective. Twelve months later in November 1930 Gramsci admitted that the Wall Street Crash had been a bad day for vulgar optimists. Tatiana asked him if he was familiar with Ford's writings against the Jews - a timely enquiry in view of the latest success of the Nazi Party in the German elections. Gramsci replied that he had not read them and added:

Who knows how much greater Ford's hatred [ie, of the Jews] is now that the two crises on the New York stock exchange have put a brake on the making of automobiles! All the optimism of his industrial vision has been destroyed at one blow and it will be hard to recover it. ⁵

This was certainly true of Germany where, of all the countries of Europe, the Fordist mania of the 1920s had gone furthest.

His older brother's experience of underground warfare was no doubt seen by Gramsci as a metaphor for his own political resistance to Fascism from his prison cell. His disdain for such “vulgar states of mind as optimism and pessimism” brings to mind Piero Gobetti's perception that in Gramsci “suffering has taken on such an intimately aristocratic character that it can deride all the self-indulgences of bourgeois morality” ⁶. The attitude of stoical serenity which he proudly professed to Carlo would be thoroughly tested in the years ahead as his physical health disintegrated and the worst possible political scenario became a reality in Germany.

Already this attitude of mind proved fragile in a number of areas. In November 1929 Tatiana had taken it upon her herself, without consulting him, to press Gramsci's lawyer to seek a revision of his sentence. Although he recognised her good intentions, her initiative made him angry beyond measure and he warned her in

³ See *Lettere dal Carcere*, a cura di Sergio Caprioglio e Elsa Fubini (Einaudi, 1968) p.311 note.

⁴ See, for example, RSE 12 November 1929, under the rubric on the United States: 'La crisi borsistica di Wall Street' p.2552-1553 and 'La crisi borsistica. Le ripercussioni in Europa' p.2574-2576.

⁵ To Tatiana, 4 November 1930, LCI p. 361-362

⁶ Profile of Gramsci originally appearing in *La Rivoluzione Liberale*, 22 April 1924. It is translated in *Gramsci's Prison Letters*, translated and introduced by Hamish Hamilton (1988) p.25-28.

severe terms never to do anything again, least of all with legal implications, without his consent. It is not difficult to see where his anger came from given his belief that "man's moral fortitude is completely rooted in himself, in his own energy, in his own willpower" etc, for Tatiana's action threatened what little autonomy was left to him to control his own fate. Even when he was most in earnest, however, his capacity for self-parody never entirely deserted him. Aware of how hard he was being on her, he did not forget to send himself up: "I am becoming a real fakir. I'll soon be able to swallow swords and walk barefooted on Gillette razor-blades"⁷.

The other circumstance to test his stoicism was the lack of news from his wife Julia who lived in Moscow with their two little boys, Delio and Giuliano. Although he learned that she was suffering from a depressive illness, he suspected that her silence was also due to political intervention. The prison censorship made it impossible to discuss this supposition openly in the letters, but Gramsci felt that he had been unofficially 'condemned' by his own side and seems to have attributed Julia's silence partly to this possibility. The possibility that the "invisible tribunal" in Moscow as he called it⁸ had also condemned him was not implausible in view of the negative reaction there to his famous letter criticising the leadership of the Russian Communist Party in October 1926 shortly before his arrest. Even when he learned more about Julia's illness, which would explain the irregularity and vagueness of her letters, he continued to be haunted by the impression that her letters to him were little more than a "bureaucratic exercise" (*una pratica burocratica*)⁹. The difficulty was that under the circumstances Gramsci could not openly discuss his suspicions about how he was regarded politically by the Russian leadership and whether this had anything to do with Julia's silence.

I could have anticipated the blows of enemies I was fighting against, I couldn't have anticipated blows descending on me from other quarters, from where I least expected them (metaphorical blows, you understand, but even the penal code distinguishes between crimes of commission and omission, ie, omissions are also blameworthy, and may constitute blows)..... the thing is very, very complicated and difficult to explain fully (also because of the question of the non-metaphorical walls). To be honest, I'm not very sentimental and I'm not tormented by sentimental questions. Not that I'm insensitive (I don't want to appear cynical or shallow); It's rather the case that even sentimental

⁷ To Tatiana, 4 November 1929, cit.

⁸ On the "invisible tribunal" see §3.32. '*Rendre la vie impossible*' quoted below.

⁹ To Tatiana, 27 February 1933, LCII p.689. "I am convinced to this day that in my relations with Julia there exists a certain equivocation, a false bottom, an ambiguity that prevents us from seeing clearly and being completely frank; my impression is that I am set aside, that I represent so to speak "a bureaucratic dossier" to be annotated and nothing more" (Translated in LP2, p.275).

matters in my experience are combined with other elements (ideological, philosophical, political etc) with the result that I really couldn't say where sentiment ends and one of these other elements begins, I probably couldn't even say which one of all these elements is the key because they are all combined in an indivisible whole and in a single experience. Perhaps this is a strength; perhaps it is also a weakness since it leads me to analyse others in the same terms and thus perhaps to misjudge them. But I won't go on because I am writing a dissertation and it appears that it is better to write nothing than to write dissertations.¹⁰

The feeling of being condemned by his own side was intensified by the unexpected visit of his older brother Gennaro on 16 June 1930. Gennaro had been sent by Togliatti to inform Gramsci of the latest change in the political line of the Comintern and the disciplinary measures taken against those who disagreed with it. We know from Gennaro's testimony that Gramsci disagreed with the new tactic. Although doubt has been cast on his testimony, corroboration can be found where no one has thought to look, ie, in the prison notes themselves. For the change in the Comintern's tactic was the "practical origin" of §3.33. *Some Causes of Error* which must have been written not long after he got the news.¹¹ Gramsci now found himself in the 'impossible' position of being held captive by his enemies and, at the same time, in disagreement with his friends. He expressed his situation in the preceding note, §3.32. *'Rendre la vie impossible'*, a quotation from a biography of Goya he was reading at the time.

There are two ways of killing: one is frankly designated by the verb to kill, the other usually remains implicit as in the delicate euphemism 'to make life impossible'. This mode of assassination, which is slow and obscure, embraces a whole crowd of invisible accomplices. It is an auto-da-fe with no tumbril and no flames, perpetrated by an inquisition with no judge and no sentence....'. Eugenio D'Ors *Life of Goya*, Gallimard p.41. Elsewhere he calls it a 'diffused inquisition' .¹²

In addition to the atmosphere of "diffused inquisition", there were more palpable factors which contributed to making his life impossible. The heat of the summer months at Turi and the noise of the prison guards at night took their toll on his health. In August he was plagued by chronic insomnia and headaches, which were doubtless aggravated by his heavy smoking. In September his stoicism was further tested as his teeth began to fall out. Nevertheless, his sense of humour had not deserted him. He made a fresh attempt to get a "dialogue" going with Julia and found just the right touch of humour to engage her.

¹⁰ To Tatiana, 19 May 1930, LCI p. 332-333.

¹¹ See Chapter 2 below, section headed Past and Present.

¹² QCI p.310. Gramsci compares his situation to a prisoner of the Spanish Inquisition in the above letter to Tatiana of 19 May.

I'm reminded of a Scandinavian folk tale. Three Norse giants live as far away from each other as great mountains. After thousands of years of silence the first giant shouts to the other two: 'I hear the lowing of a herd of cattle'. Three hundred years later the second giant declares: 'I've heard the lowing too'. After another three hundred years have passed the third giant gets his word in: 'If you go on making a row like this, I'm leaving' ¹³

"...this business of the reviews..."

In spite of being in prison Gramsci was not cut off from news of current political affairs. He had many 'windows' on the outside world: some were opened from time to time while others were closed, some let in a better quality of light than others, again some afforded a broad angle of vision, others only a partial view of events. These 'windows' were his periodicals. Their vital importance to him is clear from a letter to Tatiana at the start of 1932 when the subscriptions were up for renewal.

You know how important this business of the reviews is to me. Just lately there have been further restrictions on what I'm allowed to read. I'm always afraid of some kind of muddle resulting in the loss of what still remains available to me, which would only impoverish my life even more.¹⁴

As Gramsci indicates, the possibility of subscribing to periodicals depended in the first instance on his legal rights under the penal regulation which changed at various stages of his imprisonment. Until 1931 his position was governed by the old Zanardelli criminal code of 1891, which was then replaced by a new criminal code drawn up by Alfredo Rocco, the Fascist Minister of Justice. What was his legal position in this first phase of 1929-31? When Gramsci was *on remand* at San Vittore prison in Milan, before his trial by the Special Tribunal in May-June 1928, he was allowed to read newspapers and to subscribe to periodicals. He read six newspapers a day and organised his whole day around this.¹⁵ He also received regularly on subscription a number of periodicals. After sentence by the Special Tribunal and transfer to Turi di Bari, his legal position changed. Under the old prison regulation *convicted* prisoners were not allowed to read newspapers. For the next three years Gramsci had no newspapers and, with the exception of one or two notes entered later, the first six notebooks were written without them. However, the old regulation said nothing about periodicals and so Gramsci began building

¹³ To Giulia, 6 October 1930, LCI p.358.

¹⁴ To Tatiana, 25 January 1932, LCII p.528: "Sai che questo affare delle riviste mi sta molto a cuore"

¹⁵ "I get five newspapers during the day: *Corriere*, *Stampa*, *Popolo d'Italia*, *Giornale d'Italia*, and *Secolo*....I also buy certain reviews and *Il Sole*, the economic-financial paper of Milan", letters to Tatiana, 19 February and 4 April 1927, LCI pp's 46-47 and 65.

up his subscriptions.¹⁶ At their peak in 1931 he was receiving about 25 periodicals on subscription including six foreign-language reviews.¹⁷ In this first phase he relied entirely on these to follow the thread of political and economic events. When Gramsci lost his newspapers (all six of them!) he did not suddenly lose his appetite for news.

¹⁶ Many of Gramsci's subscriptions were taken out before the Turi di Bari period and simply continued after his transfer there in June 1928. They included the most important periodicals as far as political and economic news was concerned [dates in brackets are the earliest dates he is known to be receiving the review], ie, *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera* (1927), *Nuova Antologia* (1927), *Civiltà Cattolica* (1928), *Gerarchia* (1928), *Critica Fascista* (1928), *La Riforma Sociale* (1928). Other subscriptions did not continue into the Turi di Bari period: for example, *Rivista d'Italia* (1927). New subscriptions taken out in 1929-30 included *La Nuova Italia* (1930, the successor to *Leonardo* which folded in 1929). See the dates of the periodicals listed in the material sent to his relatives in Notebook 2, QCIV p.2377-2379; the 'Indice dei periodici citati nei Quaderni', QCIV p.3143-3160; and the letters to Tatiana before the Turi period (for example, letters of 9 January and 19 March 1928, LCI pp's 150, 173).

¹⁷ The full list is set out in the second petition to Mussolini in October 1931, QCIV p.2391, although this included two periodicals he was not receiving at the time (*Educazione Fascista* and, in all probability, *Politica*)

The Periodicals

The 'Transformation of Nationalist Psychology', 1929-30

On 3 October 1929 Gustav Stresemann, Germany's foreign minister, died. He was the leader of the small right-wing German People's Party, the successor to the National Liberals of the imperial era. As chancellor and then foreign minister he had steered the German republic out of the inflation crisis of 1923 and through the years of 'stabilisation' which followed. He had just returned from the Hague where he had negotiated new terms for the payment of German reparations, the Young Plan, in return for a French pledge to evacuate the Rhineland in June 1930. The agreement was consistent with his foreign policy which aimed to pursue German national goals whilst 'fulfilling' the terms of the Versailles Treaty. Stresemann was preparing to do battle in the Reichstag to secure ratification of the Young Plan when he died unexpectedly of a stroke.

Gramsci learned about the death of Stresemann at the time from his periodicals where it was extensively reported¹, but it was not until later on in the notebooks that we find any reference to it being a *turning-point*. In a brief note written in early 1931 in *Notebook 5* we find the following observation:

§5.118. Stresemann. Francesco Tommasini's article 'Il pensiero e opera di Gustavo Stresemann' in *Nuova Antologia* 16 November 1929 is interesting for the study of post-war Germany and for the change in the psychology of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists.²

When we scrutinise Tommasini's article, however, we find nothing about the psychological change mentioned here. So what did Gramsci mean? Writing in early 1931, he was describing what had happened not before but *after* Stresemann's death. For in the twelve months since then "the psychology of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists" in Germany did indeed go through a rapid 'molecular' change. The political 'catharsis' of this process was the unexpected breakthrough of Hitler and the National Socialists in the elections of September 1930. Looking back at developments in Germany since October 1929, Gramsci saw this change in nationalist psychology as the defining feature of the period *after* Stresemann's death. As always, Gramsci's *historicist* mode of thinking connected the past to the present.

¹ RSE 8, 15, 29 October, 5 November 1929; also CC (Cose Straniere) 19 October 1929

² QCI p.638.

The Political Conjuncture in October 1929

The first reports of Stresemann's death in Gramsci's periodicals were accompanied by general talk of "the crisis of the European democracies" - a favourite theme of Fascist propaganda. In answer to the question whether such a crisis really existed, a sympathetic French observer noted that the "dictatorships" were too varied in nature to be classified in the same way except that they all had one thing in common: "Their origin is the incapacity of the parliamentary regime, its proclaimed and established impotence to overcome exceptional difficulties".³ The ministerial crisis in France soon after seemed to confirm this.⁴ On 22 October Aristide Briand's ministry lost a vote of confidence in the Chamber and resigned. There followed a prolonged bout of bargaining for ministerial posts in which France was without a government for eighteen days until a new ministry headed by Andre Tardieu was formed on 9 November. Briand returned to office as foreign minister. His inclusion did not prevent the new ministry from winning a vote of confidence in the same Chamber which had voted him out eighteen days earlier. The leading fascist periodical, *Gerarchia*, did not miss the chance to score a general ideological point by announcing that this latest French 'farce' merely showed that parliamentary government itself had lost all *raison d'etre*, not only in France but also Germany:

The latest French ministerial crisis has been resolved after 18 days, but this certainly does not mean that the deepening crisis of the parliamentary system which caused it has also been resolved. There could perhaps be no better example than this latest episode in France of the irreversible decadence of parliamentary custom which now stands in sharper contradiction than ever before to the principles on which it was originally founded and which ought to sustain it.....

The main feature of the decadence of the parliamentary system is this: the splitting of parties, the speed with which they are formed and adopt positions, the constantly uncertain situations this creates; coalition governments based on compromises which are designed to guarantee their survival in parliament rather than to protect national interests. Any vision of general interests disappears, programmes are emptied of any content, personalities become more important than collective actions and needs.

In France and Germany (where after only 10 years the parliamentary regime is already on its last legs) there are numerous parties which at every new political conjuncture split up into a right-wing, left-wing, and centre.....The variety of parties is shown not only by their twelve different names.....Every party in France and Germany is defined more clearly by its leader's name than by its political title....There are always dissident factions which alter the calculations and make the outcome of every parliamentary vote uncertain. 5

³ See under the rubric 'Problemi generali', the report on 'La crisi delle democrazie Europee', in RSE, 8 October 1929.

⁴ As discussed under the rubric 'Cronache del mese' by Virginio Gayda: 'Variazioni su una tema francese. Parlamento contro lo Stato', GER November 1929.

⁵ Ibid.

There was a realistic core in these observations about the parliamentary system which Gramsci disentangled from the the fascist 'spin' given them by *Gerarchia*. According to §1.48 the difficulty of forming governments was one of the main 'practical' symptoms of the general disintegration of hegemony, ie, of government by consent. Nevertheless, Gramsci regarded this latest ministerial crisis in France as a routine affair in which the survival of the French republic was not at stake. Despite the general instability of parliamentary government in the post-war years, his argument in §1.48 was that bourgeois hegemony in France had great "reserve strength". But could the same be said of Germany?

The Monarchist Party in a Republican Regime

In fact, Gramsci also found evidence in Germany of the general disintegration of hegemony, only the practical 'difficulty' was manifested at this time not in the forming of governments (the collapse of the Weimar Coalition in early 1930 would soon provide evidence enough of this) but in the governing of parties. More to the point, Gramsci observed that the anti-democratic parties were having as much 'difficulty' as the democratic ones. This was the internal crisis of the main anti-republican party, the Nationalists, now 'governed' by Alfred Hugenburg. The party's defeat in the Reichstag election of May 1928 resulted in the election of the chairman as new leader of the party. Hugenburg now rejected "parliamentary" tactics altogether and led the Nationalists into "absolute" opposition to the Republic, but what kind of alternative did they represent? The leading organ of Italian Fascism, *Gerarchia*, was sufficiently impressed by the "extra-parliamentary" forces of the German Nationalists to call them "fascists", but not without considerable reservation. Commenting in August 1929 on a recent rally of the Stahlhelm, the para-military association of the Nationalists, it noted:

In fact, you only have to look at the names of the leaders of this movement, who are all officers of the Wilhelmine period, to realise that they do not represent - as in Italy - the popular mass consecrated by the sacrifice of war but a military caste which has misgoverned Germany for centuries, leading to the disaster of Versailles, and which now seeks to regain the political ground and the economic supremacy it has lost by means of nationalist propaganda which completely masks its own self-interest..... You have only to see the names at the top of the lists of those demanding a revision of the constitution: they are all former ruling princes, even including one of the Kaiser's sons! So-called German fascism, therefore, is working in a void: its organisation is good but it has no leaders. If it found itself tomorrow at the head of a movement, it would end up for lack of ideas by recalling Wilhelm II.⁶

⁶ Alberto Spaini, op.cit.

Although “the so-called German fascists” were well-organised, therefore, *Gerarchia* thought they had no leaders and no ideas - no “intellectuals”, in fact. What did Gramsci think about this?

To trace Gramsci's thinking about *Germany* in the notes we must follow what he writes about *France*. The starting-point of his political theory was the history of France since this was “the richest in political elements”, but the *theoretical* point of these political elements (*elementi di politica*) was that they were not exclusive to France. Gramsci starts his notes on political parties from a critique of the *Action Francaise* led by Charles Maurras but the “element of politics” in this case, ie, “the monarchist party in a republican regime”, could also be found in Germany.⁷ The study of this type of party was particularly instructive because it had to operate *in practice* within a constitutional framework, a form of State, to which it was fundamentally opposed *in principle*. The absolute programme of Hugenburg, like Maurras' in France, was a monarchist *restoration* (another ‘element of politics’ drawn from French history), but the consequence of this ideology with its roots in the past or in “tradition” was that the party increasingly lost touch with reality and its programme became increasingly impractical. In attacking the republic from a monarchist standpoint, Hugenburg presented to Gramsci the same “comical” spectacle as Maurras, ie, of being “a demagogue who doesn't know how to be one”.⁸

Hugenburg was apparently aware, however, of his deficiencies in demogogy. The new political conjuncture marked by Stresemann's death coincided with his tactical alliance with the leader of the “fascists” or “racists”, Hitler, in order to campaign against the Young Plan which Stresemann had negotiated just before his death.⁹ The violent plebiscitary campaign which ensued led democratic

⁷ §1.18. *The Error of Maurras. Notes on the French monarchist party*, QCI p. 14-15. The element of politics is defined as: “The monarchist party in a republican regime, like the republican party in a monarchist regime and the nationalist party in a regime of national subjection.....” etc. Gramsci thought that the ‘German’ counterpart of Maurras was Hugenburg not (as historians later suggested) Hitler. See for example Ernst Nolte's *Three Faces of Fascism* (1965) which dealt particularly with ideology, the author being more intoxicated than asphyxiated.

⁸ §1.48. *The Reverse Jacobinism of Charles Maurras*, QCI p.59. “The thing becomes comical when the demagogue doesn't know how to be one, ie, when he operates in practice as though he really thinks that the habit is the monk, that the cap is the brain. Machiavelli and Stenterello”.

⁹ The nationalist campaign against the Young Plan was reported in RSE, 8, 29 October, 5, 12 November 1929 (result of the plebiscite). Note the equivocation from one foreign report to another on how to distinguish Hitler's party from the other elements of the extreme Right. The *Temps* of 19 November described the Nazis as “ultra-reactionary” and “ultra-revolutionary” in the same report (RSE, 26 November 1929)

observers to speculate on whether or not the nationalists were preparing an imminent *coup d'etat*. The *Berliner Tageblatt*, for example, warned of "possible coup d'etats and putsches against the leftist government" but judged that such attempts would be useless since "by now the parliamentary idea is too deeply rooted in the German people". Writing about the newly formed Hugenburg-Hitler front and the anti-Young Plan campaign, the editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*, Ludwig Bernhard, lamented the fact that the State prosecuted the communists whilst allowing the nationalists free play and questioned whether it had any "authority" left.¹⁰ During the agitation there was a bomb attack on the Reichstag building, yet "the right-wing newspapers have not uttered a single word of condemnation of these attacks". But what alternative to the Republic did the Right offer? A coup d'etat in 1929 was likely, for lack of a realistic alternative, to end in the same kind of abject failure at the decisive moment as demonstrated by the *Action Francaise* in 1925. Why should the German monarchists in 1929 be any more successful than the French monarchists had been in 1925?

The violent agitation against the Young Plan was too much for the 'respectable' elements in Hugenburg's party and precipitated, after the party congress in November, the first of a series of splits. Reporting the party congress on 23 November, *The Times* commented:

Mr. Hugenburg would find himself in a better position in his own political camp if it were not for the alliance he has made, for the purposes of his campaign against the Young Plan, with the National Socialists [the party of Hitler: editor's note] who are not socialists but those extreme nationalists who are more appropriately described as 'fascists'. There is no doubt that without their help he would not have obtained the minimum of votes necessary to go ahead with the referendum and Germany would then have been saved all the discontent and bitterness which had to be stirred up by Mr. Hugenburg in order to persuade more than half of his voters to vote against the Young Plan. But the enthusiastic allies of Mr. Hugenburg have complained contemptuously of the Nationalists' lack of zeal. They have done something even worse: they are supplanting the Nationalists. In the recent elections at both state and municipal levels the 'fascists' have captured seats at the expense of Nationalist candidates. This cannot have given much comfort to the leader of the party or to the more moderate elements among his followers.¹¹

¹⁰ RSE, 8 October 1929, p.2264 and, for the following reference, p.2265.

¹¹ Report from the *Times* in RSE, 3 December 1929, p.2714. Note the editor felt it necessary to explain who the National Socialists were. On the subsequent split in the parliamentary group of the Nationalist Party, see the lengthy reports in the foreign press of the Reichstag debate on the anti-Young Plan motion in RSE, 17 December 1929.

The splitting of the Nationalist party was the main parliamentary symptom of the disintegration of hegemony in Germany at the end of 1929. The sources show that it formed part of Gramsci's field of knowledge even though it is not directly tracable in the notes themselves. Gramsci's description of the *general* breakdown of hegemony in §1.48 was based in fact on a *synthesis* of French and German politics in the closing months of 1929. However, the notes indicate that he was more interested at this time in the *cultural* than in the political symptoms of the crisis of hegemony in Germany. For Gramsci found symptoms of the crisis of *the German ideology* outside the arena of parliamentary politics altogether.

The Wall Street Crash

Nor did the Wall Street Crash on 29 October leave any discernible imprint in the notebooks at this time. Apart from a conjectural reference to it in the letter to Carlo on 19 December ¹², Gramsci did not comment directly on the Crash until a year later, after the election of September 1930, when its effects at the level of the political superstructures in Germany had become apparent (§7.10). His silence should not be taken to mean ignorance, however, since the Crash was prominently reported in his periodicals and undoubtedly formed part of his general field of knowledge.¹³ The possible impact of the Crash, which occurred in the middle of the ministerial crisis in France, may have coloured his evaluation of this crisis in §1.48. For although this was a routine episode in the postwar politics of France, "reflecting more than anything else a normal displacement of the masses (*not due to economic crisis*)" ¹⁴, he suggested that it might be the harbinger of "big struggles to come".

¹² Editor's note in LC p.311. I presume this conjecture was based on the date of this letter since the prison censor would hardly leave legible the six lines he had cancelled.

¹³ See in particular, under the rubric for the United States: 'La Crisi Borsistica. Le Ripercussioni in Europa', RSE 12 November 1929, p.2552, and 24-31 December 1929, p.2574; Siro Fusi: 'Osservazioni sulla crisi di Wall Street', GER December 1929; Alfonso de Pietri-Tonelli: 'Wall Street', NA 1 December 1929 (Gramsci mentions this article later in §2.127: "comments in very general terms on the crisis of the American stock-market at the end of 1929: necessary to look at it again to study American financial organisation", QCI p.268).

¹⁴ QCI p.61

The Intellectual and Moral Climate

In §1.48 Gramsci hinted that the breakdown of hegemony in post-war Europe was a more complex phenomenon than simply the general instability of parliamentary regimes. In the case of the German republic the breakdown was perceptible in the country's *cultural* as well as political life, although he preferred to describe this 'intellectual and moral' aspect by another name: ie, as a "crisis of authority". The change of nomenclature was not simply a matter of looking at the crisis of hegemony from a different angle: as we will see, it also implied an alternative ideological standpoint from that of the fascist organ *Gerarchia*. Where the latter argued that the crisis was due to the functional failure of *election*, Gramsci argued that its roots lay in the functional failure of *tradition*. It was the cultural aspect of the German crisis - the symptoms of 'intellectual and moral' instability - which most interested him in the autumn of 1929.

How did Gramsci learn about this aspect of the German crisis and what particular themes interested him? More often than not, attempts by fascist writers to describe the cultural climate of Germany at this time tended to generate more fog than light¹⁵; they merely filled the atmosphere with what Gramsci would later call "asphyxiating gases". However, Gramsci was not entirely dependent on his fascist periodicals. He also subscribed until the end of 1931 to a number of foreign-language periodicals including two French literary reviews, Gide's *Nouvelle Revue Francaise* and *Les Nouvelles Litteraires*. In an issue of the latter for 19 October 1929 he came across an article by Andre Levinson on themes in contemporary German writing. He made a summary of it at the start of Notebook 3.¹⁶ Gramsci was struck by Levinson's observations about the influence of Freudian ideas on contemporary German writing, particularly the theme of rebellion of the sons against the fathers, against paternal authority. He mentioned this in a letter to Julia at the end of the year in which he discussed his philosophy of education and how it should be applied to the 'formation' of their son Delio. His perspective evidently differed from the 'Rousseauist' approach of his wife :

¹⁵ See for example J.Evola: 'Aspetti del movimento culturale della Germania contemporanea', NA, 1 January 1930.

¹⁶ Andre Levinson: 'Jacob Wassermann et le proces de la Justice', in *Les Nouvelles Litteraires*, 19 October 1929 (see QCIV p.2575)

This mode of conceiving education as the unwinding of a pre-existing thread had its importance in the days when it was propounded in opposition to the Jesuit school - that is, when it negated a philosophy which was still more harmful - but today it has in turn been superseded. To refuse to 'form' the child merely means allowing him to pick up the motifs of life chaotically from his general environment and letting his personality develop in a haphazard way.

It's strange and interesting that Freud's psychoanalysis is now creating, especially in Germany (as far as I can gather from the reviews I have read), tendencies similar to those which existed in France in the eighteenth century; it is well on the way towards forming a new type of 'good savage', corrupted by society - that is, by history. The result of this is a new kind of intellectual disorder which is really exceedingly interesting.¹⁷

The fictional heroes of these German writers were all expressions of the myth of the "good savage". All were engaged in a struggle against authority in one form or another, paternal authority being the main one. In §3.03 Gramsci was particularly struck by the apologetic treatment by these writers of the Freudian theme of *parricide* in which the savage action of the son in killing the father or the father-figure was justified by "a monstrous moral postulate", as he called it. This was the first, but not the last time that Gramsci used the term "monstrous" to describe what was going on in the intellectual and moral life of Germany at this time.

But what does this cultural aspect have to do with the crisis of authority in the political arena? If authority is understood to mean not merely the material power to coerce but the legitimate right to rule, then this authority derived either from *election* or from *tradition*, ie, the right to rule claimed by the nation's traditional or 'natural' rulers. Later in Notebook 2 Gramsci considered the third derivation of authority (as Weber defined it), ie, *charismatic* authority, but this was in the summer of 1930 after the profile of Hitler in his periodicals had risen much higher. In the meantime, the question in his mind in the autumn of 1929 was this: what if authority cannot be obtained by either of these two means, election or tradition? It seemed to Gramsci that such was the case with Germany's 'natural' rulers, the nobility, who are given the somewhat unlikely description in §1.44 of Germany's traditional *intellectuals*. Unable or unwilling under the Republic to obtain the right to rule by election, neither could they rely any more on the legitimacy conferred by tradition. It was this aspect of the crisis of authority in Germany, ie, the breakdown of the nation's *tradition* and of its legitimising function, which particularly interested him. The theme of rebellion of the sons against the fathers in contemporary German writing was seen by Gramsci as an *ideological* expression of this crisis of the national tradition.

¹⁷ LCI p.301-302 (I have used the translation in HH p.105).

The Question of the Shock Troops

A marked feature of the political scene in Germany in 1929 was intensified activity by the para-military organisations of the Right. A big rally of the Nationalist *Stahlhelm* at Magdeburg in March calling for the "removal of the disastrous influence of Parliament on the public life of the nation" was followed by a similarly 'impressive' parade of Storm Troops at the Nazi Party congress at Nuremberg in August.¹⁸ In the autumn the two parties combined forces for the plebiscitary campaign against the Young Plan causing widespread speculation in the press that a *coup d'etat* was being prepared by the extreme Right, timed to coincide with the plebiscite in November. On a daily basis these nationalist para-militaries were used for the purpose of political offense, violently disrupting the political activities of the Left as in the municipal election in Berlin. By this time street-fighting between Left and Right had become a routine feature of the German political scene, particularly on Sundays, the workers' day of rest.

For spirits are not the only things over-excited in Germany these days: so are the armed bands. Steel Helmets and Reichsbanner, Communist, Hitlerite, and nationalist armed bands dedicate themselves every Sunday to the dangerous sport of civil war. It is a difficult sport to investigate because the police and the army are too few in number compared with the private squads fully organised on military lines.¹⁹

Such were "the current struggles" referred to in Gramsci's discussion of the military and political use of 'shock troops' (*arditi*) in §1.133. *Military and Political Art*, written in the opening months of 1930. The practical question which these German struggles immediately suggested to him was the use of shock troops by *both sides*: should the Left imitate the tactics of the Right as they appeared to be doing in Germany? The most important aspect of this note, however, is his analysis of the function of these *private* armies in the wider context of the breakdown of hegemony, which was maintained precisely by the *private* initiatives of the ruling class. The inability of the old ruling class to obtain consent (as shown by the electoral disintegration of the Nationalists under the leadership of Hugenburg) was commensurate with the increasing use of force - or 'political-military pressure' as Gramsci describes it - by their extra-parliamentary forces. If the old ruling class could not obtain consent, it could still prevent its enemy from obtaining it. But how

¹⁸ The *Stahlhelm* rally at Magdeburg was reported in Alberto Spaini: 'Il labirinto tedesco', *GER* August 1929. The Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg was extensively reported in *RSE* 13, 20 August 1929.

¹⁹ Alberto Spaini, cit.

would the resulting deadlock be resolved?

Gramsci perceived that crucial to the task of 'reorganising the State' under modern conditions was the problem of *legality*, to which public opinion was particularly sensitive. To be sure, Hugenburg was far from indifferent to public opinion: as the controller of Germany's biggest press group - the Hugenburgpress - he had all the resources necessary to "manufacture" it. However, the possibility of a right-wing *coup d'etat* could be ruled out unless it could be made to appear legal.

Hugenburg's hopes of reorganising the State centred on the ambivalent position of President Hindenburg, the symbol of the 'legal' State but also, as Field Marshal, the personification of the German 'tradition'. The passage from democracy to dictatorship might be legally accomplished by invoking Article 48 of the republican constitution which gave the president the power to suspend parliamentary government "when the political situation impeded the regular and continuous functioning of Parliament". The extra-parliamentary agitation of the extreme Right might well help to create such a situation.

Now the main supporter of Article 48 (or at least his enemies accuse him of being) is Mr. Hugenburg. The left-wing press has denounced sensational plots going on between him and certain important leaders of the Reichswehr who are known to be close to Field Marshal Hindenburg and to have influence with him. The only sensational aspect of the question, however, is that Hugenburg has not so far bothered to deny these rumours.....Is it feasible that the men around Hindenburg would lend themselves to such a dangerous manoeuvre?²⁰

The suspicions of the left-wing press appeared more plausible in the light of the fact that President Hindenburg was also honorary president of the Nationalist *Stahlhelm* which openly demanded the reorganisation of the State itself. The embodiment of the 'legal' State, however, must avoid being openly associated with their illegal activities.²¹

Underground Warfare

Gramsci's observation of the para-military activity of the German Nationalists also surfaced in the discussion of "underground" warfare in §1.134. *Political Struggle and Military Warfare*. Here the question of legality was seen from a different angle,

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ See the reports in RSE, 15, 29 October 1929, on the acrimonious dispute between President Hindenburg and the Social Democratic government of Prussia which ordered the dissolution of the *Stahlhelm* in the Rhineland on account of its illegal 'frontier defence' preparations. The President of the Republic thus found himself protecting an anti-republican organisation found to be engaged in illegal activity.

ie, from the standpoint of the relation between Germany's internal politics and her external relations with France, a recurring theme in Gramsci's 'German' notes. The regime imposed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty put the Nationalists in the position of being what Gramsci calls "a nationalist party in a regime of national subjection". Since an open breach of legality might entail French intervention, resistance to this regime must be kept "private".

The Stahlhelm was not in itself an illegal organisation but its activities frequently were. They included the secret storage of weapons and military training of civilians in contravention of the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty. These activities were carried out in close collaboration with the Reichswehr under the guise of 'frontier defence'. In the eastern provinces of Prussia near the frontier with Poland these illegal activities were hard to monitor, especially as they were carried out with the connivance of the local Junker estate owners. However, it was Stahlhelm activities on the western frontier, in the demilitarised zones of the Rhineland, which caused most alarm in Germany and France at the end of 1929.

In negotiating Germany's agreement to the Young Plan Stresemann had obtained from Briand a French pledge to evacuate the Rhineland by June 1930, five years ahead of schedule. In anticipation of the French withdrawal the Stahlhelm stepped up its illegal preparations for frontier defence in the demilitarised zones. This provocative activity was an affront to French nationalist opinion and threatened to wreck Stresemann's diplomatic success by giving the French an excuse to change their mind. It also made the question of 'sanctions' the French priority when the Hague conference reopened in January 1930, for there was every prospect of German non-compliance with Versailles if a nationalist *coup d'etat* brought the likes of Hugenburg to power.²²

Apart from their effect on French opinion the Stahlhelm's activities were perceived as an internal threat by the Socialist government of Prussia, which kept them under constant vigilance. The threat hinged precisely on the Reichswehr's collusion in these activities. As long as it collaborated with anti-republican organisations like

²² See the reports on Franco-German tension over the Rhineland evacuation in RSE 12,19,26 November and 3,10,24-31 December 1929, including the interview with Defence Minister General Groener in answer to accusations in the French Chamber about German rearmament. On the issue of possible sanctions against Germany at the Hague Conference, see RSE 21,28 January 1930. Later notes confirm Gramsci's interest in the close interplay between the 'internal' politics of the German Nationalist Right and 'external' French reactions to it.

the Stahlhelm and relied upon them for its recruits, the threat of a right-wing *coup d'état* remained. These were the circumstances which led the Prussian government to order the dissolution of the Stahlhelm in the Rhineland-Westphalia in October 1929. This decision stirred the President out of his passivity. As the Stahlhelm's honorary president, Hindenburg now intervened personally on its behalf and an acrimonious dispute followed with the Prussian authorities who refused to lift the ban at the President's behest.²³ Thus the President of the Republic took the side of an anti-republican organisation banned for its illegal activity. The whole episode revealed the official hypocrisy of the State which was the nub of Gramsci's analysis of the political use of shock troops in §1.133 and §1.134.

As it happened, it was only when the French finally evacuated the Rhineland in June 1930 that the suspected illegal military organisation came out into the open. President Hindenburg used the occasion of the celebrations accompanying this event to extort from the Socialist government in Prussia the lifting of the ban on the Stahlhelm in Rhineland-Westphalia. This allowed the Stahlhelm to hold a rally in Coblenz, in the French occupied zone, which was calculated to cause maximum provocation to the French.²⁴

The Campaign of the Hugenburg Press

The unexpected death of Stresemann in October 1929 removed the principal restraint on the forces of German nationalism, which now began a radical realignment. Alfred Hugenburg, the leader of the Nationalists, now joined with his junior partner Hitler in the self-styled 'National Opposition', which attempted to seize the political initiative by means of an all-out propaganda campaign against the Young Plan.²⁵

²³ See the reports on the dissolution of the Stahlhelm in RSE 15,29 October 1929.

²⁴ See the extensive reports on French evacuation of the Rhineland in RSE 3,10,24 June 1930 and on German celebrations including Hindenburg's triumphal tour in RSE 8, 15, 22, 31 July and 5 August 1930.

²⁵ The right-wing referendum campaign against the Young Plan was continuously reported in RSE from 8 October to 12 November 1929, the latter issue carrying the result. See also CC (Cose Straniere) 7 December 1929.

The instrument of this campaign was Hugenburg's powerful and extensive media machine which he had built up since the war years for strategic political purposes.

²⁶ By 1929 this included a publishing house (Scherl), a string of national and provincial newspapers, a syndicated news agency (the Telegraph Union), a news service (Wipro) which supplied ready-made moulds with articles of interest to local newspapers, an advertising company (Ala), and Germany's largest film-producing company, Universum Film AG (Ufa). The key to Hugenburg's power lay in the ability to control and manipulate the *provincial* press, especially under conditions of economic insecurity. This was done indirectly through Hugenburg's so-called 'newspaper banks', which supplied capital to provincial newspapers in trouble and offered newsprint at reduced rates.

Such was the extent of Hugenburg's news machine by 1929 that he had no need to artificially 'multiply' the organs of public opinion (to use Gramsci's expression) but only to 'orchestrate' them. The man chosen to do this was the leading luminary of the *volkisch*, anti-semitic Right - Adolf Hitler. The press campaign against the Young Plan has not been analysed with the detailed attention it deserves in spite of its cardinal importance in transforming Hitler's political fortunes in the course of 1929-30.²⁷ For it was largely thanks to the sustained national coverage given to him by Hugenburg's 'opinion factory' that the initiative in German politics passed not to Hugenburg, but to his junior partner Hitler who now appeared to many 'small-town' Germans as the charismatic 'coming man' of German politics. The national 'breakthrough' of Hitler and the National Socialists in the Reichstag elections in September 1930 owed much to this perception.

²⁶ The classic study of the Hugenburg press, Ludwig Bernhard's *Der 'Hugenburg-Konzern'* (Berlin, 1928), has still not been translated, not even in the age of Murdoch. The following is based on the summary in Modris Eksteins: *The Limits of Reason. The German Democratic Press and the Collapse of Weimar Democracy* (Oxford, 1975) pp's 78-82, which is based on Bernhard. Later studies are by Valeska Dietrich: *Alfred Hugenburg* (Berlin, 1960); John A. Leopold's *Alfred Hugenburg* seems to ask the wrong questions.

²⁷ This was pointed out long ago. In the six months from October 1929 to March 1930 "every speech made by Hitler and the other Nazi leaders had been carried with great prominence by the Hugenburg chain of papers and news agencies. To millions of Germans who had scarcely ever heard of him before Hitler now became a familiar figure, thanks to a publicity campaign entirely paid for by Hugenburg's rival party". A. Bullock: *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny* (1962), p.149.

The nationalist campaign against the Young Plan was well reported in Gramsci's periodicals.²⁸ The contribution of the Hugenburg press was commented upon by democratic observers at the time. The *Times* of London, for example, observed that Hugenburg's success in getting the 10% of the electorate's votes needed for the referendum against the Young Plan was due to his "control over a powerful group of important newspapers and significant cinematographic interests".²⁹ The Social Democratic Minister of the Interior, Severing, was sufficiently concerned by the violence of the right-wing press to introduce a 'Law for the Protection of the Republic' in December 1929 asking for the power to ban newspapers in order to combat "the demogogy of Hugenburg".³⁰

This significantly affects our understanding of §2.26. *The German Newspapers* written in the first half of 1930. The empirical data contained in this note were taken from an article by Paolo Vita-Finzi in the *Rivista d'Italia* for May 1927 and were therefore, strictly speaking, 'out of date' by the time he came across them.³¹ However, the right-wing press campaign against the Young Plan gave the question of the political power of the press in Germany fresh currency or *attualita* and this is probably why Gramsci selected and noted any 'relevant' facts he could find, even if they were dated. For Gramsci the press was the most 'dynamic' part of the "ideological front" of the ruling class (§3.49): the latest offensive of the Hugenburg press against the Young Plan showed what an "ideological front" meant in reality.

The Rising Profile of Hitler

Although Gramsci had known of Hitler since the time of the Munich putsch in 1923 and had referred in passing to a government of the 'Hitler-Mussolini' type³², there is no evidence in the notes written around the turn of 1929-30 that he attached any special importance to him. At what precise point, then, did Gramsci's perception of

²⁸ The issue of RSE for 8 October 1929 which carried the first news of Stresemann's death also included the first reports of the violent agitation now launched by the extreme Right to defeat the new reparations plan (ie, the Young Plan) Stresemann negotiated before his death: "Demonstrations of political protest are being staged by the various nationalist parties whilst the right-wing press conducted a lively battle against the government". See also CC (*Cose Straniere*) 2 November 1929.

²⁹ RSE, 17 December 1929.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Paolo Vita-Finzi: *Lettere dalla Germania: l'enciclopedia a quattro soldi (La stampa politica tedesca)*, *Rivista d'Italia*, 15 May 1927 (see QCIV p.2546). Note that this issue of the *Rivista d'Italia* was listed in the material dispatched to his brother Carlo on 15 June 1930. See the list in QCIV p.2377.

³² See the article 'Bonomi e I Suoi Amici' in *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 15 March 1924, written at the time of Hitler's trial for his part in the Munich putsch. CPC p.171.

Hitler's potential begin to change? To establish this we must follow Hitler's progress through Gramsci's periodicals.

In August 1929 the *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera* reported at length the annual congress of the National Socialist Party at Nuremberg. The congress gave a particularly warm welcome to the representative from Italy who was greeted with applause and shouts of 'Long live Fascist Italy'. In his keynote speech Hitler said that "the National Socialists consider it necessary to oppose Stresemann's mistaken pro-French policy by reaching an understanding with France's natural enemy, Italy, and that it was therefore their task to prevent exciting public opinion in Germany against Italy and in Italy against Germany". The following day Hitler reviewed a parade of Storm Troops and announced from the rostrum his movement's claim to the German *tradition* : "A Reich which denies the military spirit of 1914 has no reason to exist and must give way to a new Reich armed with the extreme will to restore Germany to itself, to its civil and military traditions".³³

The Nuremberg party congress of August 1929 was a 'media event' which attracted a certain amount of national and international publicity but it was not until Hitler joined forces with Hugenberg in September that he moved from the fringe into the main arena of national politics and started to get continuous press coverage. Although the press reports in the *Rassegna settimanale* associated the agitation against the Young Plan primarily with Hugenberg, by the start of November precedence was being given to reporting Hitler's contributions rather than Hugenberg's. The success of the National Socialists in the municipal elections in Berlin and the split in the Nationalist party caused by Hugenberg's tactical alliance with the "racists" indicated that the anti-Young Plan campaign was changing the relation of forces on the German Right³⁴. Thus the *Temps* of Paris reported (19 November):

There is no doubt that the results of the municipal elections in the major centres show that the Nationalist party has suffered significant losses to the advantage of the populists and above all the 'racists'. An extreme, ultra-revolutionary, demagogic, and imperialist Right has thus been reconstituted in Germany with tendencies which had virtually disappeared from German politics in recent years. This is manifestly the result of the direction in which Mr. Hugenberg has taken the party which he claims to lead like a dictator and which he has foolishly launched into a campaign of agitation for the plebiscite against the Young Plan without leaving himself any way out. 35

³³ RSE, 20 August 1929, p.1866.

³⁴ The results of the municipal elections in Berlin and the split in Hugenberg's party were reported in RSE 29 November and 17 December 1929

³⁵ The *Temps* of Paris reported in RSE, 26 November 1929

The Times of London (23 November) also commented on the shift taking place, although it needed the help of the political dictionary:

Mr. Hugenberg would find himself in a much better position in his own political camp but for the alliance he entered into, for the purposes of his campaign against the Young Plan, with the National Socialists [The party of Hitler: editor's note] who are not socialists but extreme nationalists who are more appropriately defined as 'fascists'. It is certainly true that without their help he would not have obtained the minimum number of votes needed to hold a referendum. Germany would then have been spared all the rancour and bitterness inevitably provoked by Mr. Hugenberg's efforts to persuade a majority of his electors to vote against the Young Plan. However, in their enthusiasm Mr. Hugenberg's allies have poured scorn on the Nationalists' lack of zeal. They have done even worse: they are starting to displace the Nationalists. In the recent elections at both the state and municipal levels the 'fascists' have won seats at the expense of the nationalist candidates. This cannot be at all agreeable to the party's leader or to its more moderate supporters.³⁶

The beginning of a realignment of the German Right was reflected in the first article on Hitler to appear in *Gerarchia* in December.³⁷ The German contributor who was obviously a Nazi himself reported on "a movement which is daily gaining ground in Germany". He wanted to correct the false impression left by an earlier article in August which suggested that Hugenberg not Hitler was the leader of the 'fascists' in Germany.³⁸ The article was consistent with Hitler's agenda at Nuremberg of fostering a better understanding with Fascist Italy. However, the task was not without difficulty in view of the radical importance which, by this account, the National Socialists attached to "the value of race" - an element which played no part at this stage in the ideology of Italian fascism. Moreover, the memory of Hitler's past association with Ludendorff might have created the impression that his movement was merely "legitimist" and favoured a restoration of the Hohenzollern monarchy. "Serious people" like Hitler did not even consider this possibility, he observed. Not that Hitler was hostile in principle to the monarchy, any more than Mussolini was: merely that "he considers the question of the form of the State as less important than that of the internal structure of the State".

Once Hugenberg's 'law' against the Young Plan had been presented to the Reichstag in December 1929, and emphatically rejected, the Plan began its passage through parliament. The nationalist campaign against it now moved from the plebiscitary to the parliamentary phase (January-March 1930). Gramsci's periodicals had little to report about Hitler and the National Socialists until their

³⁶ *The Times* reported in RSE, 3 December 1929

³⁷ Geert von Schwochau: 'La Germania e Hitler', GER December 1929

³⁸ Alberto Spaini: 'Il labirinto tedesco', GER August 1929

tactical alliance with the Nationalists was ended after ratification of the Young Plan in March.³⁹ Instead, they concentrated on the further splits in the Nationalist party which developed at this point over the issue of the party's attitude to the new government of Brüning.⁴⁰ The agrarian faction led by the former leader von Westarp joined the new government in order to secure more protection for eastern agriculture whilst Hugenburg's faction remained in 'absolute' opposition. The disarray in the leadership of the Nationalist party accelerated the disintegration of its mass base, which began to move towards the National Socialists. The latter's success in the elections in Saxony in June 1930, largely at the expense of the Nationalists, made a big impression and raised Hitler's profile again in the periodicals⁴¹. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* (24 June) attributed the Nazi victory to three main causes:

The whole National Socialist movement is above all a movement of feelings. Such a movement does not spring from a single cause but has several roots. The first and deepest root is the outcome of the war, the enormously deep injustice imposed on the German people by the Versailles Treaty. The second root is the so-called crisis of parliamentarism. This institution is not sick but what the parliamentary representatives have made of it is to some extent unhealthy. The third root, and possibly the most important at this moment, lies in economic conditions. The enormous pressure weighing on the masses, the unemployment, the insecurity, the terrible competition with so little opportunity - all this has radicalised vast sections of the bourgeois classes as well. They [the National Socialists] are not socialists in the usual sense of the word but they do have a certain anti-capitalist orientation. Naturally other causes have contributed as well: anything, so to speak, is useful to a movement in its initial stage.⁴²

The victory in Saxony was followed by news of a challenge to Hitler's leadership by Otto Strasser over the ideological question of the party's 'socialism'. Hitler moved immediately to expel Strasser from the party, thus protecting his position as the "infallible pope" on questions of the party's ideology. According to the interpretation of Strasser's revolt in the *Bayerische Kurier* of Munich (4 July) "the enterprise 'Nationalsozialismus' has been unmasked by his (Strasser's) declaration that its socialism is nothing more than a means to justify the end"⁴³. The *Regensburger Anzeiger* (8 July) recognised the danger to the movement arising from competition for the leadership: "Rivalry for the leadership of the party will always be its most

³⁹ On relations between the two parties at this point, RSE 15 and 29 April 1930, pp's 799-807 and 924-925.

⁴⁰ RSE, 6 and 13 May 1930, p.1011-1015 and p1050-1052.

⁴¹ On the Nazi victory in Saxony, RSE 1 and 8 July 1930, p.1435-1442 and p.1495-1496.

⁴² RSE, 8 July 1930, p.1495.

⁴³ RSE, 22 July 1930, p.1623-1626

vulnerable point and might prove dangerous one day, especially the day when Adolf Hitler closes his eyes"⁴⁴. The sharpest commentary on Hitler's leadership at this point, however, came from the Catholic paper *Germania* (8 July):

The special mark of the National Socialist movement is above all its complete lack of scruples in fighting its political enemies. The programme of the movement itself, on the other hand, is of such secondary importance that its effect on the masses is hardly noticeable. This is precisely the difference between National Socialism and other parties. There is one other difference, though: it is exclusively the work of one single man, Hitler. Whoever wants to understand the nature of National Socialism, therefore, must first of all get to know the character of its founder. He is essentially a man who hates whatever gets in his way..... True, he is filled with a real passion for the greatness of his country and is determined that it shall become a strong State. Nevertheless, his own greatness is revealed in two ways: he knows the psychology of the masses in depth and displays an unlimited brutality. He looks at the masses as they really are, ie, from the point of view of feelings. Fanaticism and brutality are in a certain sense the fundamental concepts of his theory of propaganda; its practical principles include concentration on a single point and the utmost patience in waiting for the effect. The psychology of Hitler is simple and clear, as we see, and this is precisely the secret of his influence on the masses. ⁴⁵

These reports in the *Rassegna settimanale* on the rise of Hitler and the National Socialists in Germany in the summer of 1930 formed the immediate background to the first part of §2.75 which was written at this time. ⁴⁶ This was a summary with critical commentary in two parts, written at different times, of Robert Michels' writings on political parties. Gramsci's interest in this first part centred on the concept of the 'charismatic leader' in politics which Michels claimed to have 'discovered' - a claim which he questioned, attributing the concept to Weber instead. Although Gramsci directly considers the case of Mussolini, who was cited by Michels as an example, he makes no direct reference to Hitler. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the currency (*attualita*) of this note was provided by the emergence in the summer of 1930 of another 'charismatic leader' in Germany. This interpretation is confirmed, as we will see, not only by the date of §2.75 but also by its content.

The 'Dictatorship' of Brüning

In July the Reichstag voted against Brüning's programme of financial measures to deal with the deepening economic crisis. The chancellor now carried out his threat to dissolve the Reichstag and, failing a new majority, to govern by presidential

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.1626.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.1625.

⁴⁶ §2.75, QCI p.230-234

decree under article 48 of the German constitution.⁴⁷ This marked a new phase in the crisis of hegemony in Germany which was now to be governed without the consent of parliament.

As the election campaign got under way in August, Gramsci wrote §3.119 under the rubric 'past and present'.⁴⁸ Here he sought to explain the weakness of the political parties *in Italy* throughout the period from the Risorgimento to Fascism. He was particularly interested in one political element, "the so-called *dictatorships* of Depretis, Crispi, and Giolitti" [Gramsci's italics] in which the government stood above the political parties and indeed deliberately acted to disintegrate them. The result was that Italy was effectively governed by the bureaucracy, which took over the function of the political parties and became a kind of political party in itself - "the State-Bonapartist party" as he called it. At the end of the note Gramsci's mind turned again to Weber's writings, notably his famous critique of post-Bismarckian Germany which described "a 'similar' state of affairs in the Kaiser's Germany". However, this was more than simply a lesson in the pre-war histories of Italy and Germany: the currency of §3.119 must be understood against the background of the new phase of the German crisis which now opened, the so-called *dictatorship* of Brüning.

The Battle of Ideas:
the Reichstag Election Campaign

The Reichstag election campaign in the summer of 1930 was fully reported in Gramsci's periodicals. The battle of ideas in Germany was fought out against the background of the accelerating economic crisis triggered off by the Wall Street Crash. As the Comintern's change of tactic showed, this circumstance had strengthened conventional Marxist wisdom on the economic determinants of political movements. It was characteristic of Gramsci's turn of mind, however, to choose this moment to pose the question of "the value of the ideologies" in Marxist theory, ie, the role of ideological 'forces' as against economic ones in determining political outcomes. This he did in a series of notes in Notebook 4 written at this point.⁴⁹ These notes implicitly challenged the 'economistic' prejudice underlying

⁴⁷ On the dissolution of the Reichstag, RSE 22 and 29 July 1930, p. 1623 and p.1660. See also CC (*Cose Straniere*), 2 August 1930.

⁴⁸ §3.119, QCI p.386-388

⁴⁹ §4.15, §4.20, §4.22, §7.19, §7.21 in QCI p.436-437, p.441, p.442 and QCII p.868-869.

the new tactic of the Comintern which assumed, consciously or unconsciously, that the political outcome of the new capitalist crisis was “predetermined” in favour of the Communists. The reports Gramsci read in his periodicals at this time about the mass expansion of the ideology of National Socialism told him otherwise.

A main theme of the reports Gramsci read was the crisis of the ‘middle’ parties in Germany and their unsuccessful efforts to form a bloc; another was the various attempts on the eve of the election to launch new parties, notably the State party. However, it was the advance of the extreme parties, the Communists and the Nazis, which elicited most comment. One French paper predicted that in view of their recent electoral successes in Saxony, Thuringia, and East Prussia Hitler and the Nazis would probably win about 50 seats in the coming elections.⁵⁰ Another, referring to the recent advance of the “supernationalists” in the state elections, predicted that the mass exodus from Hugenburg’s party to Hitler and the ‘racists’ would continue in the national elections.⁵¹ The changing relation of forces on the German Right was a clearly definable trend, although no one predicted the full extent of the shift. Judging by the variations in the names given to the new mass movement - ‘supernationalists’, ‘fascists’, ‘racists’ etc etc - political commentators were even less certain how to define the elements of change and continuity in the transformation of nationalist ideology.

The electoral expansion of the Nazis prompted a number of attempts to analyse the party’s ideology and to explain its mass appeal. The most perceptive of these were the articles in the *New Statesman* (16 and 30 August 1930).⁵² In common with other reports the *New Statesman* saw the Nazi movement as filling the ideological vacuum created by the disintegration of the traditional ruling ideas. Gramsci called this disintegration the “crisis of authority” and related these notes on the value of the ideologies to his earlier notes on this theme.⁵³ In the last of these, Gramsci ruled out the possibility of a ‘restoration’ but “not completely”, and went on to refer to the possible appearance of a new ‘combinations’.⁵⁴ This new ‘combination’ in Germany was National Socialism.

⁵⁰ *Matin* quoted in RSE, 19 August 1930, p.1826.

⁵¹ *Homme Libre* quoted in RSE, 19 August 1930, p.1827.

⁵² Reported in RSE, 26 August and 9 September 1930, pp’s 1908-1909 and 2018-2019.

⁵³ §4.22, QCI p.442.

⁵⁴ §3.34, QCI p.311.

The ideas, feelings, and traditions of the German conservatives are completely confused. The development of the National Socialist movement is part of this process of disintegration. The National Socialists (they are sometimes called fascists and not without reason since they have little or nothing in common with socialism even though they have an anti-capitalist tendency) will certainly make gains in September. They had twelve seats in the last Reichstag and the forecast is that they will have 30 to 60 deputies in the next parliament. They could have almost the same number of seats as the Communists.....

The National Socialists have progressed mainly at the expense of the Nationalists. The latter are strong especially east of the Elbe where the Junkers are still powerful. They attract the greater part of what is left of the aristocracy, at least in Prussia, and also that part of the middle class which is still traditionalist and monarchist. As for the monarchy itself, there is no such thing in German politics. There are monarchists and a certain idea of monarchy, which is fast disappearing, but there is no monarchist movement. It is often said that the German republic needs a conservative democracy. There was a time when the Nationalists seemed to be moving in this direction but the largest of the four groups into which the party has split is now moving in the opposite direction, along a parallel path to the National Socialists although there is little love lost between them. There are several reasons for this but the main one is Dr. Hugenburg. 55

What exactly were the elements of this 'combination' and what held it together?

The *New Statesman* was clear that 'revolutionary' anti-Semitism was the organising element of Nazi ideology but this raised deeper issues about the rationality of ideology itself. The logic of Hitler's anti-Semitism was clear to see but was "beyond belief". It could only be explained as a lie, useful for tactical reasons.

The National Socialist Workers Party demonstrates that political parties are held together and spurred to action by catchphrases and expressions which stir the people rather than by logical and carefully considered arguments. Otherwise it would be impossible to explain the undeniable progress of the fascists in Germany since their ideology is a mixture of vague theories about race, anti-Semitism and 'true' socialism, and it would be hard to explain why whole groups of people are so convinced by it that they become absolutely fanatical followers of the party.

The thing that really holds the ranks of Germanic Fascism together is an ancient, innate instinct: anti-Semitism. Having had to suffer so much during and after the war, the German people wanted to lay the blame on a scapegoat of some kind. The Jews, who have a relatively good standard of living, arouse a lot of envy; they have never been regarded as true Germans but more or less as foreigners, and once again they are now "the real cause of Germany's misfortunes". It is said that they were the secret allies of France and Britain, that they betrayed the German army and brought about the revolution.

The expressions 'Judenrepublik' and 'Judenregierung' are used all the time nowadays by the National Socialists in speaking of the Germanic State. Anyone who knows the character of the Germans will not be surprised that they believe these ridiculous accusations. Of course, stirring up these anti-Semitic instincts is only a tactic on the part of Hitler and the other party leaders. I cannot believe that Hitler is seriously thinking of crushing Germany's 600,000 Jews. He is obviously using this as a popular method of attracting vast masses of people to his other political ideas. The outcry against the Jews can be launched in order to create the warlike state of mind needed to establish fascism.

The party has also understood the necessity of adopting a so-called revolutionary attitude. Although this is no more than a thin coat of varnish, the phraseology of the National Socialist party could easily be taken for that of the Socialist and even the Communist party. A distinction is made between

capitalists who 'work' (Christians) and capitalists who 'gain' (Jews) and the aim is to emancipate the German people from the clutches of international Jewish capitalism and to establish a national socialism for the benefit of the poorer classes. The fact is that this bears no resemblance to socialism in the Marxist sense but it seems that the German worker, disillusioned with the Socialists and the Communists, is drawn increasingly to this form of revolutionary movement. 56

Perhaps the passage of most interest to Gramsci, however, was the *New Statesman*'s comparison of the purely negative politics of the two extreme parties, the Communists and the Nazis. This resulted in an essential difference between the two ideologies which may have stimulated the dialectical analysis of the concept itself which we find in Gramsci's notes.

There is no reason why the extreme parties, as such, must always act negatively. The German Communists act this way mainly because their leadership has very little ability and because they are a Russian not a German party, in the sense of being completely dominated by Moscow which takes no account of the internal affairs of Germany. The Communists could do a lot for the German workers and a lot for Russia but they do nothing for anyone. Naturally, they are against the present German system. This might not be a bad thing but they are against any compromise with this system. Now, granted that there is no possibility of overthrowing this system and granted that social progress in Germany is not possible without making compromises, the Communists have no achievements to their credit. Although they are a revolutionary party, the effect of their strategy is anti-revolutionary. Even if there was another German revolution it would not be led by the Communists or even influenced by them.

The National Socialists are just as negative. True, they are not bound by orders from outside but they are dominated by a kind of fantasy world filled with the most vulgar superstitions. At least the Communists have a clear dogma and certain basic conceptions containing a core of reality, but the National Socialists combine strong racial prejudice with a pseudo-Christianity. Their writings and speeches are full of vivacity but cannot be translated into any other language. Their followers come above all from the most impoverished groups of the middle class who are full of nostalgia for the glories and privileges which vanished in the defeat and revolution; who maintain that the Jews, pacifists and others are to blame for Germany's misfortunes; and who, seeing themselves reduced to the economic level of the working class but at the same time sticking to what they believe is their social and racial superiority, surrender themselves to violence, kindled by a terrible rancour..... 57

We can only speculate how the *historicist* Gramsci might have read this account of National Socialism. The 'old' element of the combination consisted of the "nostalgia for the glories and privileges of the past which vanished in the defeat and revolution". The popular appeal of this element in the growing constituency of the Nazis east of the Elbe could be readily understood. The appeal of the 'new' element was probably harder for Gramsci to understand. In the first place, far from being new anti-Semitism was an 'ancient instinct', but post-war conditions in Germany provided a culture in which anti-Semitism was born again in a new 'revolutionary' form and became the organising element of a political ideology. The

56 RSE, 26 August 1930, p.1908.

57 RSE, 9 September 1930, p.2019.

'terrible rancour' of the impoverished middle classes gave the new ideology its revolutionary 'force'. In §6.35 we see that Gramsci thought that the success of the National Socialists in the latest elections testified to the greater appeal of 'racism' in Germany than in Italy, but his attempt to explain this phenomenon in terms of comparative history was only a tentative sketch which unfortunately he did not return to.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ §6.35. *Italian Culture*. Does any "racism" exist in Italy?, QCII p.710.

Notebooks 1-3

§1.48: The Crisis of Hegemony

The historical-political crisis in Germany between 1929-1933 was conceived by Gramsci as a "crisis of hegemony" and his perception of the German events was organised in terms of this concept. What did he mean by it?

Its origin in the notebooks can be traced to §1.48, one of the first drafts of the *Notes on French National Life* which were written very early, by the end of 1929. Starting from first principles, Gramsci returned to the roots of Marxism and rethought the young Marx's famous synthesis of German philosophy and French politics which attended the birth of Marxism in the years before 1848. He suggested that in Hegel's doctrine of the private associations and in the political-journalistic organisation of the French Jacobins can be found in embryo the same "element of politics": ie, the modern parliamentary State which developed in Western Europe in the years after 1848, in which the consent of the governed was organised by the "private" initiative of the bourgeoisie and given permanence by the political parties. No doubt Gramsci wanted in these *Notes on French National Life* to add a further chapter to Marx's classic analyses of French politics in 1848-51, bringing the analysis up to date with the political realities of the post-1848 period.

From this starting-point Gramsci proceeded to describe the complex process of construction of the parliamentary State in France after 1848. Extrapolating from the history of France, "the richest in political elements", he arrived at a general model of the parliamentary State designed to represent the "normal" state of affairs.

The 'normal' exercise of hegemony on the now classic ground of parliamentary government is characterised by a combination of force and consent in equilibrium, without force outweighing consent too much. Indeed, force appears to be supported by the consent of the majority as expressed through the so-called organs of public opinion (which are therefore artificially multiplied in certain situations). Between force and consent lies corruption-fraud (which is typical of certain situations where hegemony is hard to exercise but where the use of force is too risky). This involves intimidating and paralysing the opponent or opponents by cornering their leaders - normally by secret means, but openly when danger threatens - in order to throw their ranks into confusion and disorder.¹

This definition of the "norm" by a leading Communist intellectual might be considered surprising since Gramsci's conception of the political history of Western Europe since 1848 included the postwar period when the "norm" was fundamentally challenged not only by Fascism but also by Communism. It was

¹§1.48, QCI p.59 (PN1 p.155-156)

particularly timely in 1929 when Italian fascism, which was originally “not for export”, was developing universal pretensions and claiming that in superseding the “universal principles” of 1789 it marked the start of a new epoch. In 1929 there were no few democrats as well as anti-democrats in Europe who were partly or wholly persuaded by this claim and, if anything, their number increased rather than decreased after the advent of German ‘fascism’ in 1933. Gramsci’s anti-fascism did not draw him into a simple-minded defence of the “norm”, however. As we see, government by consent is presented in §1.48 not in terms of the universal principles of 1789 but in terms of the realities behind the ‘normal’ exercise of power in a parliamentary democracy, such as the manufacture of public opinion and the corruption of political opponents. For all this, the fact remains that Gramsci was very conscious of the anti-French orientation of Italian fascism and his decision to ground his ‘communist’ political theory in the elements of French democratic history and culture was an ideological as well as scientific choice.

In the postwar period when extension of the suffrage made government by consent universal, the parliamentary State runs into increasing difficulties. Gramsci applies the same spirit of realism in disentangling the “difficulties” from the various ideological standpoints from which they were presented in his periodicals.

In the post-war period the apparatus of hegemony disintegrates and hegemony becomes increasingly difficult to exercise. The phenomenon is described by various names and from various standpoints, the commonest being “crisis of the principle of authority”, “dissolution of the parliamentary regime”. Naturally, the main symptoms of this phenomenon, in the arena of parliament and government, are the only ones ever described and these are explained in terms of the failure of the parliamentary ‘principle’, of the democratic ‘principle’ etc, but not the failure of the ‘principle’ of authority (this failure is proclaimed by others). On the practical level, the crisis is reflected in the increasing difficulty of forming governments and the increasing instability of governments themselves. Its immediate origin lies in the multiplication of parliamentary parties and in the (permanent) internal crises of every party (ie, every party experiences what parliament as a whole experiences: difficulty in governing).

To some extent this phenomenon also takes the form of corruption and moral decay. Every internal faction is convinced it has the recipe to halt the deterioration of the whole party and is prepared to use any means to take over the leadership, just as [the party] in parliament is convinced it is the only party which should form the government or at least, in return for supporting the government, should have the biggest share of the posts. Hence the quibbling and petty bargaining among personalities which inevitably appears scandalous. Perhaps in reality there is less corruption than one thinks. The fact that those who want to resolve the crisis on their own terms pretend to believe in the ‘corruption’ and ‘dissolution’ of a ‘principle’ might even be justified: everyone is free to be the best judge in choosing the most appropriate ideological weapons for the aims he wants to achieve and demogogy could be regarded as an excellent weapon.

But the whole thing becomes comical when the demagogue doesn't know how to be one, that is, when he proceeds in practice on the assumption that the habit is the monk, the cap is the brain. Machiavelli and Stenterello.²

This account of the disintegration of hegemony was based on a synthesis of French and German experience in the autumn of 1929. We saw that the events which gave this note its immediate currency were the fall of Briand in France in October and the split in the Nationalist party in Germany in November caused by Hugenburg's alliance with the "racists" and the demagogic campaign against the Young Plan. These events provided Gramsci with the main symptoms of disintegration on the "practical" level, ie, the increasing instability of governments and the splitting and multiplication of parties. The German dimension is particularly important since Gramsci's point is that the *anti-democratic* parties were "disintegrating" as well as the democratic ones. Thus, the leading fascist periodical *Gerarchia* reported the ministerial crisis in France only in order to proclaim the failure of the democratic principle, but ignored the splitting of the Nationalists in Germany which showed that the anti-democratic principle, ie, "the principle of authority", was also in crisis. Gramsci says in brackets that the failure of this principle was proclaimed by "others": who were they? For the answer we must turn to his non-fascist periodicals where he found further evidence of the crisis of hegemony on the "ideological" level. Gramsci summarised this evidence in §3.03 which we will come to shortly.

Meanwhile we are left to ponder Gramsci's final reference to "the demagogue who does not know how to be one" and who thus bears more resemblance to Stenterello than Machiavelli. He appears to be thinking of the leader of French monarchism, Maurras, but the immediate context suggests that he was also thinking of his German equivalent Hugenburg who, precisely at this juncture, was "the demagogue who does not know how to be one". For this German Stenterello seemed to recognise that "monarchism" is not the best ideological weapon of the demagogue and so joined forces with the leader of German "racism", the real demagogue Hitler. The latter had much better credentials for the role of Machiavelli but whether Gramsci recognised this at the end of 1929 seems doubtful. Possibly he was being more ironic than he knew.

² *ibid.*, p.59-60 (PN1p.156)

§1.18, §1.48. The Monarchist Party in a Republican Regime

We said that to trace Gramsci's thinking about *Germany* we must follow what he writes about *France*. His comparative (ie, 'Marxist') method of thinking starts by selecting "elements of politics" from the experience of France which were a feature (or not a feature) of the experience of other countries. Gramsci starts the notes by selecting the following political element:

§1.18. *The error of Maurras. Notes on the French monarchist party.* The monarchist party in a republican regime, like the republican party in a monarchist regime and the nationalist party in a regime of national subjection, cannot but be a party *sui generis*: that is, if it wants to have relatively quick success, it must be the centre for a federation of parties, more than a party characterised by all the particular details of its government programme. The party of a general system of government and not the party of a particular government.....Every party is founded on a class, and the monarchist party in France is founded on the remnants of the old landed nobility and a small number of intellectuals. On what do the monarchists count in order to take power and restore the monarchy? They count on the collapse of the bourgeois-parliamentary regime and on the inability of any other existing organised force to be the political nucleus of a military dictatorship which is expected or which they themselves have prearranged. Their social class forces could not attain power in any other way. 3

What does this note tell us about Germany, or rather, what "element of politics" in German experience does it correspond to? In Germany the "monarchist party in a republican regime" was the German National People's Party led by Alfred Hugenburg, together with the *Stahlhelm*, Germany's largest association of ex-officers and front-line soldiers, with which it was closely associated. At first sight, the *differences* between the parties of Maurras and Hugenburg, let alone between the two men, seem more striking than the similarities: for one thing, in view of the regime imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, it was possible to describe Hugenburg's party, seen from a different angle, as "a nationalist party in a regime of national subjection" and compare it (as Gramsci does in §1.134) with similar parties in other countries, including colonial regimes. Maurras' *Action Francaise* was also ultra-nationalist, but not in the same state of "national subjection". Gramsci was not unaware of these differences but for theoretical purposes he started from the *similarities*. On the practical level, the first similarity was the policy of "abstention" from electoral-parliamentary politics. This was deduced "logically" from its ideology. Since the monarchist party was opposed in principle to a republican regime, abstentionism, renunciation of electoral politics as such,

³ §1.18, QCI p.14-15 (PN1 p.108-109)

followed from its a priori principles. However, if political parties exist to win the consent of the masses, how did the monarchist party expect to achieve its aims if it renounced this essential task?

When Hugenburg took over the leadership of the German National People's Party in 1928 after its defeat in the Reichstag elections, he led the party into "absolute" opposition to the German republic. The political significance of the change of leadership lay precisely in the change to "abstentionist" tactics. In practice this meant a purely negative politics. Under his leadership the party now renounced positive electioneering in the country at large and adopted purely obstructive tactics in parliament. Instead, he now relied on "extra-parliamentary" forms of agitation, for which he had ample private resources. The most striking features of his first big initiative, the campaign against the Young Plan, were extra-parliamentary: the presence of the storm troops in the streets and the violent campaign of the Hugenburg press. The propaganda against the new regime of "debt-slavery" enabled the party to appear in the more appealing guise of "a nationalist party in a regime of national subjection", but it remained all the same "a monarchist party in a republican regime". The nationalist and anti-republican elements of the party's ideology were closely connected, of course, since emancipation from the regime of "national subjection" was only be possible by getting rid of the republic. Consequently it was not surprising to find that the campaign against the Young Plan was accompanied by speculation about a possible *coup d'état* by the Nationalist Right.

This brings us to another element in common between the parties of Maurras and Hugenburg. The monarchist party in Germany, as in France, counted on the collapse of the bourgeois-parliamentary regime and saw itself as "the political nucleus of a military dictatorship", which would then restore the monarchy. But could the monarchy be restored by force alone, by a *coup d'état*, without the consent of the masses? One of the implications of Gramsci's concept of hegemony was that this kind of "revolution" was not possible any more, either for the Right or for the Left. The parliamentary crisis in France in 1925 provided evidence for this. The *Action Française* deluded itself into thinking that the Republic was going to collapse and invited Caillaux to form a military dictatorship. An essential ingredient of the delusion was the faith that rural France would somehow rally to the call to restore the monarchy.

Maurras' defeat is certain: it is his conception which is false, because of its excessively logical perfection. Besides, Maurras sensed defeat at the very beginning of the crisis with the Vatican which coincided with the French parliamentary crisis of 1925. While the ministers succeeded one another in rotation, *Action Française* publicly announced that it was ready to assume power. An article was published in which they went so far as to invite Caillaux to collaborate - the same Caillaux whose execution by firing squad was always being called for. The episode is classic: the rigidified and rationalistic politics typified by Maurras, the politics of a priori abstentionism, of cosmic natural laws that govern society is bound to end up fading away, collapsing, and abdicating at the crucial moment. It then becomes obvious that the great masses of energies do not flow into the reservoirs artificially created for them but follow the paths traced by history, changing direction in line with the parties which have always remained active. Apart from being foolish enough to believe that the Republic could collapse in 1925 because of the parliamentary crisis (intellectualism leads to such monomaniacal hallucinations), there was also a moral collapse, if not on the part of Maurras (who may well have remained in his state of apocalyptic illumination), on the part of his group which felt isolated enough to appeal to Caillaux.⁴

In October 1929 Gramsci could only wait to see whether the German republic would prove to have as much "reserve strength" in a future crisis as the French republic obviously had in 1925. The German *precedent* was the crisis of 1923 when the republic had survived a pathetic attempt to overthrow it by self-styled "revolutionaries" of the Right (not to mention the real revolutionaries of the Left), but the precedent was misleading since the catastrophic inflation of that year had used up whatever "reserve strength" the republic could count on and thus reduced its chances of surviving a second crisis.

Nevertheless, if the ideology of its main enemy was anything to go by (as Gramsci was firmly convinced it was), the prospects of the German republic in October 1929 were far from hopeless. In §1.48 Gramsci analysed the ideology of *Action Française* in detail and isolated the elements which accounted for its relative popularity. One of these was its "rationalistic" character.

(Maurras') relative popularity derives precisely from this: his method is appealing because it the same method of reasoning reason which gave rise to Encyclopaedism, the Enlightenment, and the whole of French masonic culture. The men of the Enlightenment had created the myth of the [noble] savage, or some such thing: Maurras creates the myth of the French monarchist past, except that this myth was once 'history' and its intellectualistic distortions are all too easily corrected.⁵

Thus Maurras' myth was relatively popular because it substituted for the Enlightenment faith in progress a sort of reverse faith in "regress", whereby the monarchy appeared predestined by the laws of French history to be restored. But this "rationalistic" element was rooted in French culture and was peculiar to the

⁴ §1.48, QCI p.63-64. (PN1 p.161)

⁵ Ibid. p.61 (PN1p.158-159)

French monarchist myth. It was difficult for the likes of Hugenburg to invent a similar myth of the German monarchist past. For one thing, the history of the German monarchy ended too recently (and ignominiously) to inspire a political mythology and any attempt to create one could be “corrected” merely from living memory. But Gramsci also suggests that the French myth was successful because it had its roots in the national culture. If the German Right was to create a successful political myth, it must have its own cultural imprint, but there was little sign that it was able to do this at the end of 1929.

§ 3.03. Fathers and Sons: the Intellectual and Moral Disorder

Who were the inscrutable “others” in §1.48 who proclaimed the failure of the principle of authority? The answer is in another note written around this time based on an article in one of the French literary reviews Gramsci received, *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*. This was about trends in recent German writing, so the expression “crisis of authority” often used in Gramsci’s notes referred to *Germany* in the first instance. So far we have reconstructed his Franco-German synthesis from the method, the sources, and the context of his thinking: there has been little trace of it in the notes themselves. The German dimension now surfaces in the notes for the first time. In §3.03. Gramsci explores contemporary expressions of the *German ideology*. He discovered that “myth-making” was thriving in Germany, in the literary more than the political field. Moreover, to his ‘Franco-German’ way of thinking there appeared to be nothing peculiarly German about the myth: it resembled the “noble savage” of French culture mentioned in the context of Maurras’ ideas. Moreover, the fact that the main inspiration behind this myth was the ideas of Freud tended to confirm its descent from Enlightenment thinking. Nevertheless, this new “noble savage” of German fiction seemed a more “romantic” than “rationalistic” creation.

To return to the political field for a moment, the reason why Hugenburg - the German ‘Stenterello’ - appeared ridiculous in the role of demagogue was that the principle of authority in its traditional forms had lost its magic and appeared increasingly old-fashioned. Evidence of this failure of traditional German ideology was provided by modern German writers who attacked the old principle of authority in all its forms. Judging from these writers, there was an unusual “crisis of

generations" going on in Germany which was leading to a new form of intellectual (and moral) disorder. The fathers were unable to educate the sons, not even by means of legal coercion, and had abandoned their paternal responsibility completely. Gramsci found this ideological phenomenon "extremely interesting" and mentioned it in a letter to Julia on 29 December.

It is strange and interesting that Freud's psychoanalysis is now creating, especially in Germany (as far as I can gather from the reviews I've read), tendencies similar to those which existed in France in the eighteenth century; it is well on the way towards forming a new type of 'good savage', corrupted by society - ie, by history. The result is a new kind of intellectual disorder which is really exceedingly interesting.⁶

Considering Gramsci had not studied Freud, his analogy with the 'savage' of the French Enlightenment was a remarkably good guess. In his *Introductory Lectures* (1916-17) Freud was fond of citing Diderot as one of the literary sources of his theory of the oedipus complex.

More than a century before the emergence of psychoanalysis the French philosopher Diderot bore witness to the importance of the oedipus complex by expressing the difference between the primitive and civilised worlds in this sentence: 'If the little savage were left to himself, preserving all his foolishness and adding to the small sense of the child in the cradle the violent passions of a man of thirty, he would strangle his father and lie with his mother' ⁷.

Freud's appeal to Diderot indicated that he was engaged in the same *rational enterprise* of teaching the little savage to understand his violent emotions and, by learning to cope with them, to grow up into a civilised man. However, Gramsci perceived that this Freudian literature in Germany was a far cry from the Age of Reason for the manner in which some of these writers resolved the oedipal neurosis of their heroes was neither rational nor moral. In §3.03 he makes this clear in more detail:

§3.03. German Intellectuals. 1) Hans Frank, *The Law is the Injustice*. Nine stories each illustrating the thesis that *summum jus, summa injuria*. Frank is not a young writer fascinated by paradoxes. He is 50 years old and an anthology of his stories of German history has been published for schools. A man of strong convictions. He is an opponent of Roman law, the *lex dura*, not just of this or that inhuman and antiquated law but of the very idea of the juridical norm, of an abstract justice which generalises, codifies, defines the crime and prescribes the punishment.

⁶ Letter to Julia, 29 December 1929, LCI p.301-302 (Translated in HH p.105). See also §1.33. *Freud*, QCI p.26.

⁷ Quoted in Peter Gay: *Freud for Historians* (1986) p.94

Hans Frank's book is not an isolated case but symptomatic of a state of mind. A defender of the West would see it as the revolt of 'German disorder' against Latin order, the revolt of sentimental anarchy against the rule of Intellect. But German authors understand it instead as the restoration of a *natural* order on the ruins of an *artificial* one. Not for the first time, personal analysis sets itself against the principle of authority, which is attacked in all its forms: religious dogma, monarchical power, official teaching, the military State, the marriage bond, paternal prestige and above all the justice which protects these transitory institutions and which merely coerces, constrains, and arbitrarily deforms public life and human nature. Man is unhappy and bad as long as he is shackled by the law, by custom, and by traditional ideas. He must be freed from all this if he is to be saved. The creative virtue of destruction has become an article of faith.

Stefan Zweig, H. Mann, Remarque, Glaeser, Leonhard Frank.....

2) Leonhard Frank, *The Reason*. The hero assassinates his former professor because the latter had disfigured his soul. The author supports the innocence of the killer.

3) Franz Werfel. In one of his novels he maintains that it is not the murderer but the victim who is to blame. There is nothing of de Quincey in him [ie, the hero]: his is a moral act. A father, an imperious and brutal army general, ruins the life of his son by making him a soldier for which he has no vocation. Has he not committed a crime by showing such inhumanity? He must be sacrificed for his double usurpation, as a leader and as a father. Thus the theme of *parricide* and the apology for it arises, the absolving of Orestes not on account of contrition for the tragic guilt but by virtue of a categorical imperative, a monstrous moral postulate.

Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, the hatred of the father - as master, role-model, rival, first expression of the principle of authority - is made part of the natural order of things. Freud's influence on German literature is incalculable: it has become the foundation of a new revolutionary (!) ethic. Freud has given a new twist to the eternal conflict of fathers and sons. The emancipation of the sons from paternal tutelage is the fashionable thesis among today's novelists. The fathers abdicate their 'patriarchal role' (*patriarcato*) and make honourable amends to their sons who, in their moral immaturity, are only capable of breaking this tyrannical and perverse social contract, of abolishing the constraints of a hypocritical duty (cf. Hauptmann, *Michael Kramer*, Jacob Wassermann's story *A Father*).

4) Wassermann, *Der Fall Mauritius*: typical of the anti-justice theme »

Peter Gay observes that "writers agreed neither on the meaning of the father-son conflict nor on its proper outcome"¹⁰. In this sense it posed what Gramsci would call "intangible questions". The son's revolt against the irrational authority of the father could be supported as a rational bid for freedom, but it could also be represented as a regression to a state of savagery devoid of any moral order. As we see, it was this last mode of resolving the conflict which Gramsci found "extremely interesting".

But what kind of 'evidence' did Gramsci think he was dealing with in §3.03? Given the conservative nature of the rules of evidence by which historians operate, they might well be inclined to dismiss Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex as more

⁹ §3.03, QCI p.286-288.

¹⁰ Peter Gay: *Weimar Culture* (1974) p.121

pertinent to the realm of fiction than fact.¹¹ Gramsci approaches the fictional father-son conflict in German writing as an *ideological fact*, to be treated as no less positive and weighty by historical materialists as economic facts. Moreover, his dialectic of past and present, of history and politics, may have connected up this ideological fact with the historical perspective sketched in §1.44 of Germany's "intellectuals". For were not the principles under attack by these writers - "religious dogma, monarchical power, official teaching, the military State, the marriage bond, paternal prestige, and above all the justice which protects these transitory institutions and merely coerces, constrains, and arbitrarily deforms public life and human nature" - precisely the values of Germany's traditional ruling caste, the Prussian Junkers? To be sure, the latter's monopoly of power had been broken by the defeat and revolution of November 1918 but the dissolution of the *ruling ideas* was a slower process. The election of Hindenburg as president of the Republic in 1925 - the very embodiment of "the principle of authority" in its traditional form - testified to the residual longing of many Germans in the twenties for the old certainties. Nevertheless, the longer the republic proclaimed in November 1918 survived, the more the alternative of a restoration of the *ancien regime* lost all credibility. Despite the disintegration of parliamentary government in Germany in 1929-30, it was far from clear to Gramsci at the time of writing these notes what alternative the old ruling caste could plausibly offer. This much was clear to him: the disintegration of the main anti-republican party under Hugenburg's leadership suggested that the German monarchists were no more credible an alternative to the republican regime than Maurras and the French monarchists were in France. So what was Gramsci's perception in late 1929 of the alternative? The German writers reviewed in §3.03 offered few clues, for the 'restoration' they called for - ie, "the restoration of a *natural* order on the ruins of an *artificial* one" - had more to do with destruction of the moral and legal order than with the restoration of old political forms. Indeed, since this natural order was founded on Freud's oedipus complex - ie, the hatred of the father - there could be no question of interpreting it to mean a restoration of traditional forms of political authority. But what kind of alternative "natural order" were these German writers proposing? Although the conflict of fathers and sons was an 'eternal' question (in Croce's sense), Gramsci noted that

¹¹ For a discussion of this question see Peter Gay: *Freud for Historians* (1986) pps 93-99.

the particular form it took in these writers was far removed from the moral order of classical Greek tragedy. Their treatment of this eternal conflict was “strange”, their claim to be working out a new “revolutionary ethic (!)” obviously bizarre, their attempt to morally justify parricide nothing less than “monstrous”. Gramsci himself clearly inhabited a different moral order. We can see from the letter to his wife in December that in spite of being in prison he had no intention of abdicating his paternal responsibility to educate his own sons. This was the “natural order” of things. The alternative natural order proposed by these German writers was really a new form of intellectual and moral *disorder*.

§1.127. The Struggle of Generations and Classes

Gramsci followed up these observations on the “fathers-and-sons” crisis in §3.03 with his reflections on “the youth question” in §1.127 and §3.34. The theme of rebellion of the sons and abdication of the fathers reappears in §1.127 together with a further evocation of the “morbid forms” this rebellion takes. However, the conflict of generations is now seen in marxist terms as Gramsci schematically defines its relation to the class struggle. He suggests that the crisis of fathers-and-sons can be resolved on a class basis, but this solution becomes difficult when the phenomenon takes on a “national character”.

§1.127. *The Youth Question.* There are many youth ‘questions’ but two are particularly important in my view: (1) The education of the ‘young’ is *always* the work of the ‘old’ generation. There will be conflict, discord etc but these are superficial phenomena inherent in any educational and disciplinary task as long as the class difference does not come into it. The *is* when the ‘young’ (or a significant part of them) of the leading class (understood in the broadest sense, ie, not just in the economic but in the political-moral sense as well) rebel and pass over to the progressive class which has become historically mature enough to take power. But in this case the ‘young’ pass over from the leadership of the ‘old’ class to the leadership of the ‘old’ of another class. The ‘young’ still remain subordinate in reality to the ‘old’ as a generation for all the differences of temperament and vivacity mentioned above.

(2) When the phenomenon takes on a so-called ‘national’ character, - ie, when the class difference does not come openly into play - then the question becomes complicated and confused. The ‘young’ find themselves in a permanent state of rebellion because the profound causes of their rebellion persist without the possibility of being analysed, criticised, and resolved (not in abstract, conceptual terms but in a real, historical sense). The ‘old’ are dominant in fact but..... ‘*apres moi le deluge*’: they fail to educate the young and to prepare them to take over. Why?

This means that the time has come when the ‘old’ of another class *must* lead these young people but are prevented from doing so by extrinsic factors, by political-military pressure. The normal open expressions of the struggle being suppressed, it attacks the structure of the old class like a devouring cancer making it feeble and rotten. The struggle assumes morbid forms like mysticism, sensualism, moral apathy, pathological degenerations of a

psychological and physical kind etc. The old structure fails to contain and satisfy the new demands. The permanent or semi-permanent unemployment of the so-called intellectuals is one of the typical symptoms of this failure and is particularly harsh on the youngest who are left 'with no future'. Moreover, this situation leads to 'closed ranks' of a feudal-military character, which merely sharpens the problems which it cannot find a way to resolve. ¹²

The thematic affinity between §3.03 and §1.127 indicates that the *ideological origin* of these generalisations was the 'father-and-sons' crisis in Germany. Gramsci may have written them in such a way that they could also apply to Italy even though the political conjuncture there was quite different. But how did the political conjuncture in Germany at the turn of 1929-30 shape these general ideas?

The answer appears to be that Germany (not for the first time in its history) was precisely where the phenomenon had taken on a "national character". The economic difficulties following upon the Wall Street Crash were likely to pose the *class question* in Germany more sharply than ever before, particularly in the minds of the "sons" now facing the prospect of permanent unemployment and "no future". Instead the burning political issue at the end of 1929 was the *national question*. The demagogic campaign of the ultra-nationalists against the Young Plan put the *national question* at the top of the political agenda and threw the *class question* into confusion. The 'National Socialist' movement which moved to centre-stage at this point was precisely the political expression of this "confusion" of the two questions, although we do not know if Gramsci was thinking specifically of the Nazis. The strong appeal of this new movement to the younger generation, particularly in the universities, impeded the kind of class-based solution to the 'fathers-and-sons' crisis which Gramsci proposes. A further impediment was "political-military pressure". The 'fathers' of the progressive (ie, revolutionary) class are prevented from leading the 'sons' of the ruling class by political-military pressure. This probably refers to the political action of the storm troops of the Right, especially as he goes on to discuss this shortly afterwards in §1.133. By disrupting the political activities of the Left, the storm troops were forcibly suppressing the "normal" open expressions of the struggle.

Gramsci's analysis gives no hint that the "youth question" was common to *both sides* of the political spectrum, the Right and the Left. In fact, the age-profile of their membership suggests that the divisions between the two main parties of the Left and the Right in Germany - Social Democrats-Communists, Nationalists-

¹² §1.127, QCI p.115-116 (PN1 p.212-213)

Nazis - corresponded to a “generational” divide.¹³ If the sons of the ruling class were in revolt against their fathers, the age-composition of the Communist party suggests that the ‘sons’ of the working class were also in rebellion against their ‘fathers’ in the Social Democratic party. In other words, the ‘young’ rejected the leadership of the ‘old’ on both sides of the political spectrum. How far was Gramsci aware of this?

It is important to note that the “scientific” principle of Gramsci’s political theorising was based on studying elements of politics common to “both sides”, so that analysis of one side was potentially instructive to the other. For example, moving from §1.127 we find Gramsci asking shortly afterwards, in §1.133, whether the Left should employ the same tactic of using shock troops as the Right. He answers this question negatively, but the dialectical process or “turn of mind” is clear enough. Gramsci may have selected the “youth question” in §1.127 knowing that like the question of shock troops in §1.133 it was an “element of politics” common to both sides. We know that ever since 1923, if not even earlier, Gramsci had a poor opinion of the political-intellectual capacity of the leaders of the German Communist party but we would not expect him to discuss such matters in the notes.¹⁴ Instead, in the notes Gramsci’s dialectic usually starts by studying elements of politics on *the other side* in the hope of offering instruction to *his own side*. Judging by his poor opinion of the German leaders, his own side was clearly in need of instruction where leadership of the young was concerned.

Meanwhile, for Gramsci the youth question is another way of seeing the crisis of hegemony with particular focus on the “moral crisis” of the young. In describing the morbid expressions of their rebellion, he evokes the same kind of “moral disorder” which he found in German writing, as in the apologetic treatment of parricide. He associates this with the permanent unemployment of “the so-called intellectuals” -

¹³ See Detlev Peukert: *The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (1993) p.151-152, although in the absence of systematic studies of the membership structures of the two parties of the Left, the author strikes a cautionary note by observing that he is presenting “an ideal-type dichotomy”.

¹⁴ “So far as the German situation is concerned.....the two groups which are competing for the party leadership are both inadequate and incapable”: thus Gramsci’s circular letter of 9 February 1924 to Togliatti, Terracini and others, in Palmiro Togliatti: *La formazione del gruppo dirigente del partito comunista italiano 1923-1924* (Editori riuniti, 1969) p.188. (Translated in SPW 1921-26, p.192); see also his further letter to Terracini of 27 March 1924: “The German situation is still not very clear it seems to me, either in the party or in the country. Obviously it is necessary to support the left which represents the real movement of the revolutionary masses: but has the left found its appropriate political and ideological expression in the current leaders? This, it seems to me, is the essence of the problem : it could result in acute and profound crises as yet unknown to the party and could even bring it to the edge of catastrophe”. *ibid.*,p.262.

where “intellectuals” appears to mean the same as it did in §1.44 where Gramsci calls the “ruling stratum” [*ceto governativo*] “intellectuals”. In this context, he seems to be referring to the university students - the “superfluous generation”, as they were called¹⁵. With the onset of the Depression the job prospects of the ‘sons’ vanished and the ‘fathers’, fearing for their own jobs in the traditional field of the civil and military administration, “closed ranks”.

More by instinct than knowledge, it seems, Gramsci put his finger on a key aspect of the political conjuncture at the end of 1929. It was still too early to tell which way this “superfluous generation” would turn politically. Gramsci presents us with a picture of the dying of the old ruling class, its structure devoured by the “cancerous” rebellion of its own sons. There is no suggestion at this stage that Hitler and the Nazis would somehow ‘rejuvenate’ this structure and provide this dying class with a final period of remission. However, this process had already begun, probably without Gramsci knowing its full details. The violent nationalist campaign against the Young Plan mobilised the university students, the “intellectuals”, who now led the way in reorganising the entire “ideological front” of the ruling class. The process can be followed in the succession of Nazi victories in elections to the *student unions* of one university after another in the course of 1929-30, largely at the expense of the Nationalist candidates¹⁶. The fact that the university authorities put up so little resistance to this process was concrete testimony to what Gramsci called the ‘abdication of the fathers’.

§3.34. ‘Interregnum’ and ‘Restoration’

In the last of this series of notes, probably written in June-July 1930, Gramsci returns to the post-war ‘crisis of authority’ first mentioned in §1.48 where (it will be recalled) it was described as a breakdown in the normal combination of force and consent by which the ruling class usually exercises its hegemony. However, the configuration of Gramsci’s thinking alters again as he now tries to put the crisis of authority into a *historicist* perspective apparently using political elements drawn from English historical experience: “interregnum-restoration”. The crisis is now redefined in historicist terms as an “interregnum” during which “the old is dying and the new cannot be born”: the morbid phenomena described in the earlier notes

¹⁵ On the ‘superfluous generation’ see Peukert cit., p.89-95, especially p.94-95.

¹⁶ The process is described by Karl Dietrich Bracher in *The German Dictatorship. The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism* (1973) p.210-213.

are now seen as characteristic features of this 'interregnum'. The key question is how will this interregnum end.

§3.34. Past and Present. The aspect of the modern crisis which is deplored as a 'wave of materialism' is connected with the so-called 'crisis of authority'. If the dominant class has lost the consent, ie, if it no longer 'leads' but merely 'dominates', exercising nothing more than coercive force, this means that the broad masses have lost faith in the traditional ideologies and no longer believe what they used to believe etc. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born: morbid phenomena of all kinds can be observed during this interregnum.

This paragraph should be linked to what has been written about the so-called 'youth question' which is caused by the 'crisis of authority' in the leadership of the older generations and the mechanical prevention of those able to lead from carrying out their mission. The problem is this: can such a serious rift between popular masses and dominant ideologies as that which has occurred since the war be 'healed' merely by applying force to prevent new ideologies from taking hold? If a historically normal solution of the crisis is prevented in this way, must the interregnum necessarily end in favour of a restoration of the old? The character of the ideologies ought to rule this out, but not absolutely.

Meanwhile the physical depression will lead in the long-term to widespread scepticism and a new 'combination' will be born in which, for example, Catholicism will become the purest Jesuitism etc. From this too it can be concluded that highly favourable conditions are being created for an unprecedented expansion of historical materialism... The death of the old ideologies takes the form of scepticism towards all general theories and formulae; of application to purely economic facts (earnings etc), and to a form of politics which is not merely realistic in fact (as it always is) but cynical in its immediate manifestation... 17

To pinpoint the question which interests him, Gramsci asks two questions which invite the answer "no". Can the crisis of authority be resolved purely by using force? If force alone cannot solve the crisis, must it be resolved by restoring the old ideologies? Gramsci rules out this second possibility because of the "character of the ideologies" themselves. The ideology of *monarchism*, for example, like other expressions of "the principle of authority", had lost all credibility as an alternative to the republic in Germany (and in France). Meanwhile, during the interregnum falling living standards ("the physical depression") will result in general scepticism towards the ruling ideology (for example, "Catholicism") and in any new "combination" (ie, of force and consent)¹⁸ the ideology will degenerate further into pure deceit ("the purest Jesuitism"). This general failure of the ruling ideology in the context of falling living standards was creating favourable conditions for an

17 QCI p.311-312 (Translated in SPN p.275-276). I have not been able to trace the exact expression "wave of materialism" in Gramsci's periodicals at this time, including *Civiltà cattolica* and Croce's *La Critica* which seem the likeliest sources of this moralistic-sounding phrase.

18 Gramsci's new "combination" must mean a combination of "force and consent" since it makes no sense to speak of a combination of Catholicism and Jesuitism. He was probably thinking of the combination of Fascism (the State, ie, force) and Catholicism (the Church, ie, consent) established by the Concordat of 1929.

unprecedented expansion of communism (“historical materialism”).

Gramsci wrote this note shortly after his brother Gennaro told him of the change of tactic on the part of the Italian Communists in line with the Comintern’s directive to all European parties to prepare for the revolutionary “offensive”. He not only told his brother that the change of tactic was a mistake, he wrote it down in the note immediately preceding this one, ie, §3.33. *Some Causes of Error*, although its practical origin was hidden by Gramsci’s familiar “mask of generalisation”.¹⁹ But whilst he had no hesitation in immediately declaring that it was a mistake *as far as Italy was concerned*, he was probably prepared to give the new tactic the benefit of the doubt as far as Germany and other countries were concerned, at least until he had evidence to show that it was a *general* mistake. This evidence was provided by the results of the Reichstag election on 14 September 1930.

Meanwhile, Gramsci’s analysis of “the death of the old ideologies” in this note is entirely consistent with what he had written so far in §3.03 and §1.127 about the German crisis, ie, “the ‘crisis of authority’ in the leadership of the older generations and the mechanical prevention (ie, “political-military pressure”) of those able to lead from carrying out their mission”. But his hypothesis on what might happen at the end of the interregnum, ie, “an unprecedented expansion of historical materialism”, is new. It seems that as long as the interregnum lasted, Gramsci gives the leaders of the Comintern the benefit of the doubt and in line with the ‘official’ perspective looks forward to a “revolution” rather than a “restoration” at the end of the interregnum. For the time being “pessimism of the intellect” was suspended in favour of “optimism of the will”. Indeed, Gramsci applies his intellect in this note to justifying the Comintern’s optimistic perspective as plausibly as he can without surrendering to the pure “economism” on which it seemed to be based. Even so, Gramsci could never entirely suppress his pessimism of the intellect: a restoration could be ruled out, but “not absolutely”.

Political Struggle and Military Warfare

(I) §1.133: the Question of the ‘Shock Troops’

We have seen that the *science* of politics founded by Machiavelli consisted in the fact that its practical rules could be useful to ‘both sides’ to any conflict: Gramsci

¹⁹ §3.33. *Some Causes of Error*, QCI p. 310-311. For the place of this note in Gramsci’s thinking see chapter 2 below.

agreed with Croce that this demonstrated the 'objective validity' of such rules.²⁰ This conception was applied by Gramsci to the politics of the class struggle which was fought at its most general level between two sides, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the ruling and the revolutionary classes. An essential feature of his political 'theorising' therefore is the moment of 'synthesis' in which the two sides are compared to one another in terms of a common element of politics. This explains the impression of 'ambivalence' left by so many of the notes, where what Gramsci writes appears to be applicable to *opposite* sides. The purpose behind this approach was fundamentally *pedagogic*, to educate the revolutionary class politically by revealing how the ruling class rules. Naturally, it would be a mistake to conclude from this that *knowing* the enemy necessarily means *imitating* him: since the structural position of the revolutionary class is different from that of the ruling class, it cannot simply imitate the latter's methods. Thus, the moment of synthesis is accompanied in Gramsci's theorising by the moment of *distinction* which differentiates between the two sides. But this is not to deny that studying the methods of the ruling class will be 'useful' to the revolutionary class in developing its own methods of struggle.

Gramsci's notes on "the question of the shock troops" provide an example of the moment of distinction. He first raised this question in the context of his analysis of the post-war crisis of hegemony in France which he contrasted in this aspect with the experience of "other countries", a reference no doubt to the fascist squads of post-war Italy.²¹ He then developed his analysis in §1.133 and §1.134 some months later in January-March 1930 where he compares the tactical use of shock troops in military warfare with their similar use in political struggle. But by now the currency (*attualita*) of the question was given by the experience of Germany in 1929 where (as Gramsci learned from the periodicals) shock troops were currently deployed by *both sides* in the political struggle, including the communists. He clearly considered this a tactical error on their part.

²⁰ The scientific principle is first formulated in §4.04. *Machiavellism and Marxism* and repeated in §4.08. *Machiavelli and Marx* in QCI p.425 and p.431.

²¹ The relevant reference in §1.48 is: "The question of shock troops. The crisis of ranks, the large number of reserve officers. In other countries the shock troops represented a new volunteer army, a selection of military cadres which had a basic tactical function. Contact with the enemy was made solely by the shock troops, who formed a sort of veil between the enemy and the conscript army (like the flaps of an envelope)" QCI p. 60.

§1.133. The relationship which existed in 1917-18 between the shock troops and the army as a whole can and has led political leaders to draw up erroneous plans of campaign. They forget: 1) that the shock troops are simple tactical units and presuppose an army which is not very effective to be sure, but which is not completely inert. For even though discipline and fighting spirit have slackened to the point where a new tactical deployment is advisable, they still exist to a certain degree - a degree to which the new tactical formation precisely corresponds. Otherwise there would have been instant defeat and rout. 2) that the use of shock troops should not be considered 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.....

Another point to keep in mind is that in political struggle you must not imitate the methods used by the dominant classes, otherwise you will easily be ambushed. In the current struggles, this is what often happens. A weakened State structure is like a flagging army ; the shock troops - ie, private armed organisations - enter the field and have two tasks: to use illegal methods, whilst the State appears to remain within the framework of legality, to reorganise the State itself. It is stupid to imagine that this private illegal action can be countered by similar action, that shock troops can be fought by using shock troops. Quite apart from the other differences in the conditions of the two sides, this assumes that the State will remain passive throughout, which is never the case.

The class difference is fundamental. Only a class with ample financial resources whose members are not all tied down by having to work fixed hours every day, can have permanent specialised assault organisations. These organisations, which have since become professional, can catch the enemy off guard at any hour of the day or night and strike decisive blows. Hence the tactical use of shock troops cannot be as important for some classes as for others" 22.

The importance of §1.133 and §1.134 in the notebooks is that they inaugurate the whole comparison between political struggle and military warfare in Gramsci's process of theorising. Although he suggests that the comparison must be taken with "a pinch of salt" it results in some of the most sophisticated metaphors in his political theory. By tracing the origins of these metaphors we see that their success was essentially due not to the vitality of Gramsci's language or the vigour of his imagination - important though these are - but to their close adherence to real experience. What experience did he have in mind in this case?

The question of shock troops was first introduced in §1.48 where Gramsci described the general crisis of hegemony in post-war Europe. This consisted in the difficulty of the State in obtaining the consent of the governed, a task which depended on the *private* initiative of the ruling class who normally formed political parties for this purpose. This is what Gramsci means here by a 'weakened State structure', ie, weakened by the *lack of consent* of the ruled who are likened to a "flagging army". Since the mass of the troops lack 'fighting-spirit' and will not willingly fight, the ruling class turns to the shock troops - *private* armed organisations whose fighting spirit conceals the relative demoralisation of the

22 QCI p.121. (Full translation in SPN p.232).

'conscript' army as a whole. Thus Gramsci sees their deployment not as a sign of strength but of the underlying weakness of the ruling class who have to rely more on force than consent to maintain their position.

This analysis matches very accurately the situation of the German Right as it appeared at the turn of 1929-30. The private initiative of the German ruling class was represented by the Nationalist party which under Hugenburg's leadership since 1928 continued to disintegrate. The leading group split into factions and the rank and file continued to desert the party. This was the reality behind the Nationalists' show of 'strength' in the 'impressive' rallies of the Stahlhelm and in the noisy propaganda campaign against the Young Plan. Moreover, the propaganda 'concentration' staged by their junior partners the National Socialists at the Nuremberg party congress merely concealed the lack of mass support for the party at the polls although, as we see, Gramsci did not altogether discount their discipline and fighting-spirit. He gives no suggestion at this stage of the huge 'reserve strength' which the ruling class had at its disposal if only it could find the right leader.

(II) §1.134: Underground Warfare

There remains the question of *legality*. Gramsci says little about this in §1.133 other than to distinguish between the State's public observance of legality whilst 'privately' having recourse to illegality. Here he takes us into the domain of 'appearances' and shows how the 'mask', which most marxists would be only too eager to 'strip away', is crucially important in itself. Again, the analysis works because it is based on real experience - in this case, the secret preparations for 'frontier defence' being undertaken by the Stahlhelm in the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland. In §1.134 he compares the different forms of political struggle to three types of warfare - war of movement, war of position, and underground warfare, the latter including "the secret preparation of weapons and combat troops". Germany's political struggle against France is an example of "underground warfare"; if Germany allowed the pretense of legality to slip, it would play into the hands of France.

Thus it would suit France if the German Nationalist Right were to be involved in an adventurist coup d'état which would oblige the suspected illegal military organisation to come out into the open prematurely and so permit an intervention which would be very timely from the French point of view »

²³ QCI p.123. (The full text is translated in SPN p.229-231).

§ 2.26, §3.49: The 'Ideological Front'

Comparisons between political and military tactics and strategy were, of course, a commonplace of the language of the Comintern. Gramsci suggested that such metaphors should serve "to stimulate thinking" but by 1929-30, the year of Stalin's tactical 'turn', they featured in the Comintern's reports and resolutions more as a *substitute* for thinking and showed little appreciation that political struggle was "enormously more complex". The most "stimulating" metaphor of this type in Gramsci's repertoire is the suggestion that the superstructures of civil society are like the trench systems of modern warfare. This was first presented in §7.10 in December 1930 and was based on the results of the Reichstag elections a few months earlier. By tracing its origins in the notebooks we find it started from Gramsci's observations of the life of civil society in Germany at this time although he applied it to the countries of Western Europe generally.

To gain a more concrete idea of this metaphor, we must first turn to §2.26. *The German Newspapers* written in May-June 1930. This was a careful summary of an article on the German political press in a back number of *Rivista d'Italia* for May 1927 which he read before dispatching it to Tatiana on 15 June²⁴. Like many of the notes in Notebook 2 it was not much more than a piece of research material compiled without critical comment. ²⁵ It is not until we come to §3.49 that we find the concept or framework which 'organised' this material in Gramsci's mind: this was the metaphor of the 'ideological front' of a ruling class.

The currency (*attualita*) of this concept depended, however, on recent developments in Germany where the right-wing press of Hugenburg had carried on an orchestrated propaganda offensive against ratification of the Young Plan. As we see, Gramsci's research material extended beyond the Hugenburg press to include the papers of the democratic press groups, but the right-wing press at this time was the most 'dynamic' part of this "ideological front".

²⁴ Paolo Vita-Finzi: 'L'Enciclopedia a quattro soldi (La stampa politica tedesca)', *Rivista d'Italia*, May 1927.

The date of §2.26 is based on the following proof: the preceding notes §2.05 - §2.18 were based on back issues of *Nuova Antologia* for 1927 sent to Tatiana on 20 May 1930 (QCIV p.2372-2373). §2.19-§2.31 were based on back numbers of *Rivista d'Italia* for 1927 sent to Tatiana on 15 June 1930 (QCIV p.2377). This would indicate that Note 2.26 was written between these dates.

²⁵ The only addition Gramsci makes to the details contained in this article is to note that the *Berliner Tageblatt* was edited by Theodor Wolf.

§ 2.26. *The German Newspapers.* Three big press groups, Ullstein, Mosse, and Scherl - the first two democratic, the third right-wing (the Hugenberg press). The Ullstein group [includes]: the *Vossische Zeitung*, for the educated public, low circulation (40,000 copies) but of European importance, edited by George Bernhard (thought to be too Francophile); the *Morgenpost*, Berlin's and possibly Germany's biggest circulation paper (possibly 500,000 copies) read by the petty-bourgeoisie and the workers; the *Berliner Allgemeine Zeitung* which concentrates on municipal issues; the *Berliner Illustrierte* (like the *Domenica del Corriere*), very widely read; the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, a sensationalist paper which reaches 100,000 readers daily; the *Uhu*, the *Querschnitt* (the Crossroads), *Die Koralle*, of the same type as *Lettura*; and other publications to do with fashion, commerce, technical subjects etc. Ullstein is linked with the *Telegraaf* of Amsterdam, the *Az Est* of Budapest, the *Neue Freie Presse* (of Vienna), (and the *Corriere della Sera* relies on Ullstein for its news from Berlin).

The Rudolph Mosse publishing house publishes the big democratic daily *Berliner Tageblatt* (300,000 copies) edited by Theodor Wolf, with 17 supplements (Bellagen) and special editions for abroad in German, French, and English, expensive and hard to read for ordinary folk; the *Berliner Morgenzeitung*, the *Berliner Volkszeitung*, popular in style but with the same political orientation. *La Stampa* of Turin relies on the Mosse group.

The Scherl publishing house: the *Lokal Anzeiger*, favourite reading of the shopkeepers and petty bourgeoisie still loyal to the old imperial Germany; the *Tag* for a more select public; the *Woche*, the *Gartenlaube* ('Pavillon').

Newspapers from right to left: the *Deutsche Zeitung*, ultra-nationalist but small circulation; Hitler's *Volkischer Beobachter*, small circulation (20,000). The *Neue Prussische Zeitung*, still called the *Kreuzzeitung*, also with a small circulation (10,000): It is the classic organ of the Junkers (Prussian latifundists), aristocratic ex-officers, monarchists and absolutists who have kept their wealth and solidarity based on landed property. On the other hand, the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, organ of the Bund der Landwirte (Farmers' Association), has a circulation of 100,000 copies; It is read by the small farmers and farm managers and helps to keep public opinion in the countryside loyal to the old regime.

German national [papers]: *Lokal Anzeiger* (180,000); *Schlesische Zeitung*; *Berliner Borsen Zeitung* (right-wing financial paper); *Tagliche Rundschau* (30,000) but important because it was Stresemann's official mouthpiece; *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, organ of heavy industry, also popular-German in character. Other popular-German papers - that is, moderate right-wing papers giving conditional support to the present regime and read by the industrialists are: the *Magdeburgische Zeitung*, the *Koelnische Zeitung* (52,000) with a European reputation based on its authority in foreign policy matters, the *Hannoverscher Kurier*, the *Munchner Neueste Nachrichten* (135,000) and the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* (170,000).

Newspapers of the centre: the *Germania* (10,000) but the Catholic provincial papers like the *Koelnische Volkszeitung* have a very big readership.

The democratic papers are the best produced: the *Vossische Zeitung*, the *Berliner Tageblatt*, the *Berliner Borsen Courier*, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. The Social Democrats produce a humorous paper, *Lachen links* (Laugh Left).^a

There are two technical points to make about this summary. Firstly, in a footnote to the circulation of Hitler's paper, the author of the source noted that "all these figures are arrived at inductively and are broadly approximate". They were taken from the yearbook of the German press published by Mosse which "never fails to give the circulation of the newspaper of Kotschenbroda but does not give accurate

circulation figures for the really important papers". As far as Hitler's paper was concerned, the figure of 20,000 for 1927 seems to have been quite an accurate guess. 27 In any case, these particular figures were out of date by the time Gramsci wrote this note and their accuracy was not essential for his purposes. Secondly, although the author reviewed the main political papers "proceeding from right to left", the left-wing press was dismissed in a single paragraph with passing references to the Social Democratic *Vorwaerts* (70,000) and the Communist *Rote Fahne* described as "almost unreadable like our own defunct *Unita* and full of theses, counter-theses, clauses, premisses, paragraphs, hypotheses, corollaries, orders, appeals and proclamations from Moscow". Whatever Gramsci thought of this comment, this would explain why the political spectrum he describes did not extend to the left-wing press.²⁸

The 'organising' concept of this empirical material is in §3.49 written shortly after in June-July 1930.²⁹ Gramsci now framed the press in terms of the military metaphor of an "ideological front" although his vision of this front looked far beyond the front-line where the press was situated.

§3.49. Questions of Culture. Ideological Material. A study of how the ideological structure of a dominant class is actually organised, i.e. the material organisation designed to maintain, defend, and develop the theoretical or ideological 'front'. The most conspicuous and dynamic part of it is the press generally: publishing houses (which have an implicit and explicit programme and are founded upon a given philosophy), political newspapers, reviews of all kinds (scientific, literary, scholarly, popular knowledge etc), the whole range of periodicals down to parish news-sheets. Such a study would be gigantic if done on a national scale, so a study of one city and a series of studies of several cities could be done. For a newspaper reporter, such a study ought to provide a general framework for his work; in fact he ought to do a study like this for himself. Imagine how many fine leaders could be written on this subject!

The press is the most dynamic part of this ideological structure but not the only part. It embraces everything which directly or indirectly influences or might influence public opinion, ranging from libraries, schools, circles and clubs of every kind, to architecture, the arrangement of streets, and street names. The position which the Church has kept in modern society cannot be explained without knowing the persistent and patient effort it

²⁷ Oron J. Hale's *The Captive Press in the Third Reich* (1964), p.59, cites the figure of 17,800 as the combined circulation of the three daily papers of the Nazis in 1927.

²⁸ A good study of the democratic press is Modris Ecksteins op.cit., with a useful appendix on the political orientation of the German press which compares circulation to voting figures, p.312-313. A useful study of the communist press in the Weimar era is Helmut Gruber: 'Willi Munzenberg's German Communist Propaganda Empire, 1921-1933', *Journal of Modern History*, September 1966.

²⁹ The dating of §3.49 rests on the following proof: the preceding §3.19-§3.27 were based on material sent to Tatiana on 15 June 1930 (QCIV, p.2377). Subsequent notes in the series §3.54-§3.63 were based on issues of various reviews for June, July, August 1930 (QCIV p.2597-2599). This would indicate that §3.49 was written after 15 June but probably not later than 1 August.

makes to keep developing its own section of this material structure of ideology. If it is done properly, a study like this would be quite important; apart from supplying a living historical model of such a structure, it would encourage a more careful and exact calculation of the active forces in society.

What can a revolutionary (*Innovatrice*) class set against this formidable network of trenches and fortifications of the dominant class? The schismatic spirit, ie, the growing consciousness of its own historical personality. This schismatic spirit must progressively expand until it embraces not only the class which is the protagonist of change but also the classes which are potentially its allies. All this demands a complex ideological effort which must start from an exact knowledge of the area to be evacuated of the human mass it contains"³⁰

The internal relation between the factual material in §2.26 and the organising ideas in this note is clear enough. The three publishing houses of Ullstein, Mosse, and Scherl would thus be parts of the vast material structure which forms the "ideological front" of the ruling class. The newspapers they publish would be the "trenches and fortifications" which make up this front. The circulation figures and the sociological profiles of their readers give a more exact knowledge of the "human mass" contained by these trenches etc. We might add that such phenomena as the multiplication of newspapers (mentioned in §1.48), changes in ownership, circulation battles and drives, press campaigns etc would be evidence of the "dynamic" character of this section of the front. However, the "depth" of the front extends far beyond the press to slow-moving institutions like the Church which still remains an "active force" in society.

The empirical data summarised in §2.26, therefore, provided Gramsci with a concrete foundation for the theoretical argument presented in §3.49. There are two further aspects of §2.26 worth noting.

Firstly, a significant principle of selection was Gramsci's special interest in those sections of German public opinion which remained loyal to the old imperial regime. One reason why the old ideologies were slow in dying was because a 'network of trenches and fortifications' existed to maintain and defend them: this included the *Lokal Anzeiger* - "favourite reading of the shopkeepers and petty-bourgeoisie loyal to the old imperial Germany" - and the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, which "is read by the small farmers and farm managers and helps to keep public opinion in the countryside loyal to the old regime". The most obvious expression of this ideological continuity was the *Prussische Zeitung*, "still called the *Kreuzzeitung*, the classic organ of the Junkers (Prussian latifondists), aristocratic ex-officers, monarchists, and absolutists who have kept their wealth and solidarity based on landed property". Thus, the thread started in §1.44 about Germany's 'traditional

30 QCI p.332-333.

intellectuals' surfaces momentarily here in this survey of the German press. The ideas and values of the old ruling class were deeply embedded in German culture regardless of the trivial circulation of their newspaper, but it remained to be seen how these ideas and values would be 'transformed' under conditions of crisis. In Gramsci's historicist perspective it was not essentially an economic or political crisis but an existential crisis of Germany's 'traditional intellectuals', although it was not yet clear in 1929-30 what the outcome would be.

Secondly, in summarising the material of §2.26 Gramsci was obviously struck by the large number of *provincial* newspapers in Germany (he lists Magdeburg, Cologne, Hanover, Munich, Leipzig, Frankfurt as examples, apart from the Catholic provincial papers) in addition to the Berlin dailies. He comes back to this shortly after in §3.83, albeit in a different context:

In Italy there are no centres like Paris, London, Berlin etc which absorb thousands of journalists who constitute a real professional category of economic significance, and average salaries in Italy are very low. Moreover, in Germany the number of newspapers published throughout the country is impressive and the concentration [of papers] in Berlin is matched by an ample stratification nationwide. 31

The amplitude of the German provincial press was probably what he had in mind when he remarks in §3.119 below that the life of *civil society* was richer in Germany than in Italy. Whatever the case, the ample 'stratification' represented by the German provincial newspapers was just as important a part of the 'ideological structure of the dominant class' as the newspapers of the capital, especially when we consider the full extent of Hugenberg's penetration of the provincial press by this time. We might add that *provincial* publishing houses also had their place in this 'ideological structure': consider, for example, the influential role of the Munich-based publisher Lehmann during the Weimar period in promoting 'racial values' and giving academic respectability to 'racial science'.³²

Gramsci's oblique perception of the importance of the provincial press in the ideological structure of the dominant class can be linked to what has been called

31 QCI p.363. The phrase "un'ampia stratificazione nazionale" in the first draft is changed to "una vasta stratificazione in provincia" in the second draft (QCIII p.2274-2275). This note was probably written before or during August 1930, which is the date of the source used in writing the later notes §3.101-§3.102.

32 See especially Gary D. Stark: *Entrepreneurs of Ideology. Neoconservative Publishers in Germany, 1890-1933* (University of North Carolina, 1981).

“the revolt of the provinces” in Weimar Germany.³³ This was more than merely a conservative backlash against ‘Berlin’ - the symbol of modernity: it was also a revolt against the traditional leaders of provincial society, which resulted in the ‘conservative’ Nationalists being displaced by the ‘radical’ Nazis. This changeover was part of what Gramsci calls a new ideological “combination” and its character is better described as “transformist” than “revolutionary”. In this context it is interesting to follow this transformism at the level of *language*, especially as Gramsci often starts from the vocabulary of politics to detect significant changes in ideology.

At the same time, it was not surprising that this revolutionary change was cloaked in an exaggerated display of antiquated ideological vocabulary. The figures who had been dominant in provincial politics found their traditional integrationist language being commandeered and taken to extremes by the new movements, which projected themselves as the sole trustworthy and consistent representatives of the beliefs for which the older generation had previously been the acknowledged spokesmen. The process was seen particularly clearly in the way in which the NSDAP displaced the DNVP. The further the DNVP conservatives moved to the right, the more they found that they were producing arguments for persuading people to make the full switch to their younger, more dynamic and more radical rivals.³⁴

As we see from notes on terminology written in 1932 and 1933, Gramsci did not regard National Socialism as having ‘revolutionary’ significance. But whatever interpretation is given to the secular historical trend ‘hidden’ beneath the language of National Socialism - whether ‘reactionary’ or ‘revolutionary’ or ‘modernising’ etc - Gramsci was determined to stress that far from being a mere ‘appearance’ waiting to be ‘unmasked’, ideology was an effectual political force in its own right. In this sense the expansion of National Socialism in Germany testified to what he called “the validity of the ideologies”.

Gramsci, Weber, and Michels

(i) §2.75 [first part]: Charismatic Leaders and Parties

Gramsci must have been familiar with Weber’s writings *on German politics* from the period before he went to prison. In §3.119 he cites Enrico Rota’s translation of Weber’s *Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order. A Political Critique of Bureaucracy and Party Life* published by Laterza in 1919. Since he did not have this work in prison, the precise bibliographical details he

³³ See Detlev J.K. Peukert: *The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (1991) p.230-236.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.234.

gives must have been taken from the publisher's catalogue.³⁵ However, his comment - "The translation is very imperfect and imprecise" - indicates that he had read this work, probably when it was first published.

Weber's ideas are mentioned in two notes written in July-August 1930: in the first part of §2.75 where a secondary reference is made to Weber's concept of the 'charismatic' leader in politics and in §3.119 where Gramsci refers to the above work containing his critique of bureaucratic rule in imperial Germany. Why did Weber's ideas on these questions come to the forefront of Gramsci's mind in the summer of 1930?

We have seen from the background that by the summer of 1930 Gramsci's periodicals carried regular reports of the reorientation of the parties of the extreme Right and the growing prominence of Hitler and the National Socialists in German politics. Gramsci read reports from the *Volkischer Beobachter* of the acquisition of the new party headquarters in Munich, the Brown House, of the extraordinary growth in party membership (Hitler claimed 250,000 by this time), and of "the incessant and vast development of the National Socialist party".³⁶ The party now boasted particularly of its success in attracting the "intellectuals", ie, professional people of all sorts - academics, officials, chemists, engineers, etc, above all university students.³⁷ People from all walks of life were rallying around the new "condottiere" Hitler. This rising tide was confirmed by further reports of the spectacular success of the party in the state elections in Saxony in June.³⁸ However, Gramsci also read about the so-called 'Strasser crisis' - the challenge to Hitler's leadership made at this time by Otto Strasser which threatened momentarily to stem the tide.³⁹ Strasser feared that the reorientation of Nazi propaganda towards the bourgeoisie in 1929-30 meant abandoning the 'socialist' elements of Nazi ideology. This in turn raised the question of Hitler's exclusive prerogative as leader of defining what the party's ideology was. Strasser was

³⁵ Professor Gerratana's conjecture in QCIV p.2614.

³⁶ See the reports in RSE, 24 June 1930, p.1387-1388.

³⁷ "The barrier is breached: the great bourgeois masses are turning to National Socialism to collaborate in the foundation of the new Third Reich. The best of the bourgeoisie, the young people, are already with us whether we like it or not. The triumph of the movement in the universities is unparalleled. In spite of warnings and sanctions, the academic youth are rushing to our side and, throwing away all the old ballast, are putting on the brown shirt". Quoted from *Volkischer Beobachter* of 7 June, RSE, *ibid*.

³⁸ RSE, 1 and 8 July 1930, p.1435 and p.1495-96.

³⁹ RSE, 22 July 1930, p.1623-1624.

immediately expelled from the party and Hitler reasserted his prerogative by making an 'infallible' statement of the party's aims. There is no mention of all this in §2.75 but it was in the periodicals. It seems highly likely from the timing of this note that the currency (*attualita*) of Gramsci's reflections on charismatic leadership was provided precisely by the political situation in Germany where a new charismatic leader had now appeared.

§2.75 is a long note written in two parts, the second being added a year later in the summer or autumn of 1931. Gramsci summarises the material of an article by Robert Michels on political parties adding his own critical interpolations in brackets.⁴⁰ The article appeared soon after Michels was appointed to a chair at the University of Perugia which Mussolini had personally offered him. Gramsci's main aim in this note was to investigate the phenomenon of charismatic leadership of political parties in order to determine whether or not it is correct to speak of "charismatic parties" as a distinct type. He saves his answer to this question - an emphatic "no" - until the second half of the note a year later. Meanwhile Michels supplied a lot of illustrative material on this question, although the conceptual content is mostly drawn from other authors, especially Weber.

According to Max Weber (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, III, 2nd edition, Tübingen 1925, pp 167,639) [the political party] originates from two kinds of causes: In particular, it originates as a spontaneous association for the purposes of propaganda and agitation which seeks power so that its active members (militants) will have the moral and material opportunities to achieve either objective ends or personal advantages or both. The general orientation of political parties consists, therefore, in *Machtstreben*, whether personal or impersonal. In the first case, personal parties are based on the protection of inferiors provided by a *powerful man*. Examples of this type are common in the history (?) of political parties.

Michels then proceeds to cite a number of examples from the history of political parties but the selection seems to be so random as to amount to rather less than "history" in Gramsci's eyes: this seems to be the point of his question mark. The fact that the socialist parties in Germany and France were named after their leaders (for example, the Marxists and Lassalleans in Germany between 1863-1875) is taken by Michels as proof that "the socialists have not broken with this bourgeois *tradition*" of charismatic leadership. Michels then moves from Weber's "powerful man" to his own cherished notion of the "charismatic leader", which gives Gramsci the first occasion to interrupt on Weber's behalf:

⁴⁰ R. Michels: 'Les Partis politiques et la contrainte sociale', *Mercure de France*, 1 May 1928, QCI p.230-234.

When the leader exerts an influence over his supporters because of qualities which are so exalted as to appear in their eyes supernatural, he can be called a *charismatic leader* (from the Greek, meaning gift from God, reward; cf. M.Weber, op.cit., p.140) [This note is numbered 4b, 1e, It was inserted in the drafts: certainly not because of the translation of the Greek but perhaps because Weber cites it. Michels has made a lot of noise in Italy on account of 'his' discovery of the charismatic leader which, in all probability, was already to be found in Weber (necessary to check this). Michels' book on Political Sociology of 1927 should also be consulted. Nor does he mention the fact that a conception of leadership by the grace of God already existed, and how!

For examples of charismatic leaders Michels returns to the case of Lassalle and the early history of the Socialist party in Germany. His description of Lassalle's style of leadership was interesting to Gramsci for what it told him about the "phases" of the development of political parties. The interplay between past and present in his mind seems obvious from his selection of material, for "Hitler's" party was *currently* going through a similar "primitive" phase of development, which was exhibited by his similar style of leadership.

He [Lassalle] took pleasure in boasting to his supporters of the worship accorded him by the delirious masses and by the virgins dressed in white who sang hymns to him and offered him flowers. This charismatic faith was not only the fruit of a somewhat megalomaniac psychology, but also corresponded to a theoretical conception. We must, he told the Rhenish workers as he explained his ideas on party organisation to them, forge all our scattered wills into a hammer and put it into the hands of a man whose intelligence, character, and aggression ensure that it strikes vigorously (cf. Michels, *Les partis politiques*, 1914, p.130; he does not refer to the enlarged Italian edition of 1924). It was the hammer of the dictator. Later on the masses demanded *at least a semblance of* democracy and collective power, groups of leaders began forming in increasing numbers who refused to accept the dictatorship of a single person.

It is tempting to suggest that in summarising this material on Lassalle Gramsci was really investigating the historical antecedents of "National Socialism" in Germany. In fact, Gramsci gave no credence to "National Socialism" as an ideology and, as we will see, preferred to describe the party's ideology as "Hitlerism".⁴¹ This was consistent with his understanding of the nature of charismatic leadership in which the party's ideology is defined solely by the leader. Had Hitler's party reached the "phase" when groups of leaders began forming "who refused to accept the dictatorship of a single person"? The recent expulsion of Otto Strasser suggested not: the party had not yet advanced beyond the "primitive" stage. Moreover, Strasser's challenge to Hitler's leadership confirmed to Gramsci that the 'socialism' of this self-styled 'socialist' party was strictly meaningless except as an

⁴¹ See the reference to "the expansion of Hitlerism" in §7.77. *The intellectuals. The political parties*, written at the end of 1931, in QCII p.910.

'instrument of rule'. This is what he will mean later in 1933 by saying that charismatic leaders, once they have achieved power, are "subject to the law of the turncoat" (*la legge del tornaconto*).⁴² In addition to the precedent set by Mussolini who betrayed the Italian Socialist Party in 1915, the expulsion of Strasser in 1930 over the socialist element of Nazi ideology helped to define this "law of the turncoat" in Gramsci's mind. As for the ideology of "Hitlerism" Gramsci tended in the notes to equate this with "racism" and later, in 1933, indicated the latter's particular antecedents quite accurately.⁴³ Meanwhile, what Gramsci is trying to arrive at in §2.75 is a *historicist* understanding of charismatic leadership which, he suggests, is characteristic of a *primitive phase* in the development of a political party. This was his perspective on Hitler's party in the summer of 1930.

This is the 'German' sub-text of §2.75 and the substance of its *attualita* at the time of writing in the summer of 1930. But there is one example of a charismatic leader so far missing from Michels' article, who was 'celebrated' by Michels in a far from 'scientific' spirit: this was Mussolini, to whom Michels had every reason to be grateful. Gramsci was more 'scientific' than the brand new professor when it came to analysing Mussolini as a leader of the charismatic type. For Mussolini had risen to power from "socialist" beginnings, only then to obey "the law of the turncoat": his successor Hitler, the 'German Mussolini', seemed to be doing the same. When Michels cites the example of Mussolini, Gramsci makes his most significant interpolation.

Thus Michels: Mussolini is another example of the party leader who combines something of the prophet and the believer. Moreover, he is not only the sole leader of a great party but also the sole head of a great State. He represents the fullest expression of the idea contained in the axiom 'I am the party' as far as the responsibility and burden of work are concerned". Thus Gramsci. [Historically inaccurate. Since then the formation of groups and all collective discussion have been banned because they proved to be disastrous. Mussolini uses the State to dominate the party and, up to a point, uses the party to dominate the State at difficult moments. Moreover, in the modern world the so-called charisma of which Michels speaks always coincides with a primitive phase in the development of mass parties in which its doctrine appears nebulous and incoherent in the eyes of the masses and needs an infallible pope to interpret and adapt it to the circumstances. The more this happens, the more the party originates and takes shape on the basis of incoherent and muddled ideologies as opposed to a coherent conception of the world which is rich in potential because it is the expression of a historically essential and progressive class. These ideologies are nurtured by feelings and emotions which have still not reached the point of dissolving because the classes (or the class) which express them, having arrived historically at the point of dissolution, still have a certain basis and cling to the glories of the past in order to shield themselves from the future].

⁴² §15. 07. *Machiavelli. Elections*, QCIII p.1761.

⁴³ §14.27. *Popular Literature. The Popular Origins of the 'Superman'*. ".....it is also necessary to examine the racist tendencies which culminated in Gobineau, and then in Chamberlain and in Pan-Germanism (Treitschke and the theories of 'power')" QCIII p.1685.

The interplay between *past and present*, between *Mussolini and Hitler*, is the key to how Gramsci's mind works. His ironic reference to the party's need for an "infallible pope" clarifies what he meant when he suggested that long before Michels' discovery of the charismatic leader "a conception of leadership by the grace of God already existed, and how!". But who is the infallible pope he has in mind here? Ostensibly he is talking about Mussolini, but as so often in the notebooks sybilline generalisations about "the modern world" or "the present time" alert the reader to the likelihood of something more current. In this case Gramsci was thinking of the recent split in the Nazi party precisely over its "incoherent and muddled ideologies" and of the role of Hitler, its infallible pope, who was called upon "to interpret and adapt it to circumstances". Moreover, the expulsion of Strasser for refusing to accept the dictatorship of a single person and for demanding at least a "semblance of democracy" was evidence to Gramsci's mind that the party was still in a primitive phase of development.

The 'German' significance of §2.75 is confirmed by the underlying *continuity* of Gramsci's historicism between this and the earlier notes we have examined. This is apparent, for example, when he refers to the feelings and emotions of those classes which, "having arrived historically at the point of dissolution, still have a certain basis and cling to the glories of the past in order to shield themselves from the future". What particular "classes (or class)" did he have in mind here? This might plausibly refer not only to the Junkers [Prussian latifondists] mentioned in §2.26 "who have kept their wealth and solidarity based on landed property", but also the small people mentioned in the same note, sometimes referred to by German historians as the old *Mittelstand*, ie, "the shopkeepers and petty-bourgeoisie" of Berlin as well as "the small farmers and farm managers" who remained loyal to the old regime. This suggests that Gramsci's historicist perception of "Hitlerism" at this point consisted in seeing it as the political expression of "dying classes" - a conception which made increasing sense in the context of the economic depression after 1929. Moreover, in §3.34 Gramsci did not entirely rule out the possibility that the interregnum might end in a "restoration". During the interregnum when the 'old' is dying and the 'new' cannot be born, new "combinations" of force and consent could be expected. In Germany it now appeared that this new "combination" was Hitlerism, whose "incoherent and

muddled" ideology was characteristic of the early phase of the new combination. However, in §3.34 Gramsci suggested that the new combination of the dying class would have less "ethical" content than ever - Catholicism being reduced, for example, to "the purest Jesuitism". The ideology of Hitlerism was, in fact, completely devoid of ethical content but not for the millions of Germans who were deceived by it, including the young "idealists" in the universities. Indeed, Gramsci scarcely suspected in the summer of 1930 that the ideology of a dying class would prove to be so "expansive". The Reichstag election of September 1930 would show that what lay at the end of the "interregnum", in fact, was an unprecedented expansion of Hitlerism, not Communism.

(II) §3.119. The Dictatorship of the Bureaucracy or 'the State-Bonapartist party'

The second reference to Weber's ideas at this time comes at the end of §3.119, probably written in August 1930. The note explains "the weakness of the political parties in Italy (except to some extent the Nationalist party) throughout the period of their existence from the Risorgimento onwards" (ie, until their suppression in 1926). This is then compared to "a 'similar' state of affairs in Wilhelmine Germany" as described by Weber in his articles of 1917-18 which appeared as the imperial era drew to a close and as the shape of the 'new political order' in Germany was being actively contemplated. But §3.119 is not simply a lesson in the comparative *history* of Italy and Germany. Gramsci places this note under the rubric 'Past and Present', raising the question of the interplay between the two 'moments'. The movement of his thinking in this note is as follows: it starts from the *element of politics* he sees in the present political situation in Germany; he then examines the political history of Italy in terms of the same element and suggests that according to Weber's analysis, a 'similar' element can be found in the political history of Germany; the comparison in turn serves to illuminate the present situation in Germany which now appears to be a kind of 'restoration' of this old element. The 'new' political order in Germany envisaged by Weber in 1918 appeared in 1930 in danger of being overtaken by old habits. Would the outcome of this situation be the same as in Italy, ie, the suppression of the political parties?

What is the *element of politics* in this note? This consists in the power struggle between the parliamentary parties and the State bureaucracy. Gramsci followed Weber in seeing that the weakening of the former strengthens the power position of

the latter. A government which stood "above the parties" - that is, which did not depend for its existence on a majority in parliament - amounted to rule by the *bureaucracy* even though its ministers may be drawn from the leading personnel of the parties. Gramsci selected this element from what he learned from his periodicals about the political situation in Germany at this time. With the fall of the 'Weimar Coalition' in March 1930 parliamentary government in Germany effectively ended and was replaced by the first of the 'presidential' cabinets headed by the parliamentary leader of the Centre Party, Heinrich Brüning. Of course, Gramsci could not have known what historians have since told us about the "concrete plans" of the presidential circle for an authoritarian government standing "above the parties"⁴⁴ but it is plausible to suggest that he read their authoritarian intentions accurately enough. In July the new Chancellor, unable to get a parliamentary majority to approve his programme of financial reforms, carried out his threat to dissolve the Reichstag and, failing a new majority, to govern the country by presidential decree. This was the immediate context in which Gramsci wrote §3.119.

Gramsci responded to this turning-point in German politics by turning his attention to the history of political parties in Italy. He argues that the main cause of their weakness is to be found in the lack of solidity (*deliquescenza*) of the economic classes in Italy, "in the gelatinous social and economic structure of the country", but this explanation was "somewhat fatalistic". Since the economic classes in imperial Germany could hardly be said to have lacked solidity, this would not explain a 'similar' weakness of the political parties there. Instead, his comparison between the two countries was based on the role of the State in relation to the parties.

§3.119 (extract) 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 is precisely what did not happen in Italy.....

The State-government bears some responsibility for this state of affairs (one can call it responsibility to the extent that it prevented the strengthening of the State itself - in other words, it demonstrated that the State-government was not a national factor). In fact the government operated as though it was 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 State's national life and interests, but so as to disintegrate them, to detach them from the broad masses and to have 'a force of non-party men linked to the government by paternalistic ties of a Bonapartist-Caesarian type'. This is the way the so-called *dictatorships* of Depretis, Crispi, and Giolitti and the parliamentary phenomenon of transformism should be analysed. Classes produce parties and parties form the personnel

⁴⁴ See in particular the observations of Karl Dietrich Bracher in *The German Dictatorship* (1973) p.218-220.

of State and government, the leaders of civil society and political society. There has to be a useful and fruitful relation up to a point between these manifestations and functions. There can be no formation of leaders where there is no theoretical, doctrinal activity of parties, where there is no systematic effort to discover and study the reasons for the existence and the development of the class they represent. Hence, scarcity of State and government personnel; squalor of parliamentary life; ease with which the parties are disintegrated, by corrupting and absorbing the few individuals who are indispensable. Hence, squalor of cultural life and wretched narrowness of high culture: instead of political history, bloodless erudition; instead of religion, superstition; instead of books and great reviews, the daily paper and scandal-mongering; instead of serious politics, the daily round of quarrelling and personalised 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 whose mental formation was purely rhetorical, not national. Thus the bureaucracy became estranged from the country, and via its administrative positions became a true political party, the worst kind of all, because the bureaucratic hierarchy replaced the intellectual and political hierarchy. The bureaucracy became precisely the State-Bonapartist party.

See the books which appeared after 1919 criticising a 'similar' state of affairs (but far richer in the life of 'civil society') in Wilhelmine Germany, for example Max Weber's *Parliament and Government in the New Order in Germany. A Political Critique of Bureaucracy and Party Life*. Translation and preface by Enrico Rusa, pp.xvi-200. 10.00 lire. (The translation is very imperfect and imprecise). ⁴⁵

In the context of 1930, this passage is *immediately* about the politics of Germany not the history of Italy. The clue to its sub-text is *the element of politics* common to the histories of Italy and Germany. This consists in the tradition in both countries of substituting government by the parliamentary parties with government by the 'State', which thus usurps the function of leadership which belongs to the parties. Gramsci brings this perspective to bear on the new political situation created by the collapse of the Weimar coalition in March 1930, which marked the *transition from parliamentary to bureaucratic rule* in Germany.

The Brüning cabinet appointed in April 1930 was selected by President Hindenburg and his circle of advisers. Although the ministers were drawn from the parliamentary parties, they were not chosen *as representatives of the parties*. On the contrary, this was an attempt to detach them from the parties and to create a government 'above the parties' - what Gramsci calls "a force of non-party men linked to the government by paternalistic ties of a Bonapartist-Cesarist type". This description⁴⁶ answers quite accurately to the 'paternalistic' ties between the old soldier Brüning and Hindenburg, although the most complete expression of this type of authoritarian government or 'dictatorship' would be von Papen's cabinet which succeeded Brüning's in May 1932.

⁴⁵ QCI p.387-388. (The full text is translated in SPN p.227-228, which I have followed apart from one or two changes).

⁴⁶ Gramsci's description is a quotation, which I have not been able to trace.

With little more than a bibliographical reference to go by, any attempt to retrace Gramsci's reading of Weber's book would be largely speculative but it is possible at least to suggest briefly how Weber's analysis 'aligns' with Gramsci's. The essence of Weber's critique was that the political leadership of imperial Germany was exercised not by party politicians but *by officials with no qualification or talent for political leadership*, these qualities being cultivated precisely by the life of the political parties. This was the legacy which Bismarck left to Wilhelmine Germany after his fall in 1890. Weber argued that the political parties in the Reichstag did not fail to produce political leaders after 1871 but that Bismarck deliberately acted to disintegrate the parties and to eliminate any leaders with sufficient intellectual independence and political talent to become his rivals. The 'classic' case was his disintegration of the National Liberals after 1878, which was particularly successful, but he applied this aim to all the parliamentary parties. His preferred technique was to 'behead' the parties by inviting their leaders to join the government which, under Article 9 of the imperial constitution, required them to resign their parliamentary seats. By thus detaching them from their parties, he turned them from potential leaders into mere officials.

As far as I am aware, there were personalities *fully* equipped with all the qualities needed for leadership in all the parties in Germany, without exception. Von Bennigsen, von Miquel, von Stauffenberg, Volk and others amongst the National Liberals, in the Centre Party von Mallinckrodt and Windthorst, the Conservatives von Bethusy-Huc, von Minnegerode, von Manteuffel, the Progressives von Saucken-Tarputschen and the Social Democrat von Vollmar - all these men were natural leaders with political qualifications. They all disappeared from view or left parliament, as von Bennigsen did in the eighties, because there was no chance of them achieving the leadership of affairs of state in their capacity as party leaders. When parliamentarians like von Miquel and Moller became ministers, they had first to abandon their political convictions in order to be fitted into ministries run purely by officials ⁴⁷

Weber seems unaware of the common 'aristocratic' provenance of the 'natural leaders' he selected from the political parties in the Reichstag, whereas for Gramsci the weakness of the political parties in Germany (except, as we will see, for the Centre and Social Democratic parties) was rooted precisely in the 'political monopoly of the nobility'. The effect of Bismarck's elimination of political talent, however, was to create a powerless parliament which engaged in purely 'negative politics'. A parliament without power failed to attract natural or 'born' leaders who,

⁴⁷ Weber: *Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order. Towards a political critique of officialdom and the party system*, in *Political Writings*, edited by Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, 1994) p.171-172.

instead, found an outlet for their ambitions in the life of *civil society* in Germany. As an example Weber chooses the career of a man whose views were diametrically opposed to his own: without directly naming him, the reference was to Alfred Hugenburg.

Does anyone believe that the present leader of the Krupp works, formerly a politician from the Eastern Territories and official of the state, was simply destined to direct the greatest industrial enterprise in Germany, rather than head one of the most influential ministries or a powerful party in parliament?. 48

Given the impotence of parliament and the purely official character of ministerial posts, however, a man with such a strong instinct for power found an alternative field of activity where his abilities and ambitions were welcomed - the field of large-scale private capitalist enterprise. Thus, the poverty of political life in imperial Germany resulted from this process of *negative selection*, whereby "all the men of this nation with any talent for leadership have been diverted down this path, into the service of private capitalist interests.....". As for their political ambitions, Weber referred to the latest field of private capitalist enterprise to absorb Hugenburg's energies, for "men of that type prefer to finance pan-German newspapers and to allow the litterateurs to churn out their nonsense in them". Weber died in 1920 and it was left to Gramsci to observe the next chapter of Hugenburg's career - as Germany's biggest newspaper baron and, after 1928, as the leader of a powerful party in parliament. However, in this capacity Hugenburg's strong instinct for power was matched only by his complete lack of talent for political leadership.

To summarise: from this analysis of the currency (*attualita*) of §2.75 and §3.119, we see that Gramsci's perception of the German situation in the summer of 1930 was guided by two threads drawn from Weber's thought: the emergence of a *charismatic leader* and the return to *bureaucratic in place of parliamentary rule*. Gramsci now waited upon further developments of the crisis before elaborating these threads in later notes.

48 *ibid.* p.172.

§4.22. The Importance of the Ideologies

During the summer of 1930 Gramsci wrote a cluster of notes in Notebook 4 under the heading *Croce and Marx* in which “the most interesting point to examine is the ideologies and their value (*valore*)”.⁴⁹ In the third of these notes he suggested that the question could be analysed empirically as well as conceptually:

§4.22. Croce and Marx. The value of the ideologies . The phenomena of the current decomposition of parliamentarism could serve as an example for the discussion about the value of the superstructures and of social morphology (question of the crisis of authority etc: see scattered notes).⁵⁰

Gramsci was immediately thinking of Germany where “the decomposition of parliamentarism” closely corresponded to the current situation. In fact Germany in 1930 showed all the symptoms of the general crisis of hegemony described in the seminal §1.48:

On the practical level the crisis is reflected in the increasing difficulty of forming governments and the increasing instability of governments themselves. Its immediate origin lies in the multiplication of parliamentary parties and in the (permanent) internal crises of every party (ie, every party experiences what parliament as a whole experiences: difficulty in governing).⁵¹

In March the Weimar Coalition had collapsed and was succeeded by the ‘dictatorship’ of Brüning (the background to §3.119). The country was now governed by presidential decree in the absence of parliamentary consent. In July Brüning dissolved the Reichstag and fixed new elections for 14 September. The bourgeois political parties continued to splinter and multiply: as the election campaign got under way in August, the creation of no less than three new parties was announced.⁵² In short, the disintegration of the apparatus of hegemony in Germany was more apparent than ever in the summer of 1930.

As we have seen, however, Gramsci was more interested in the crisis of the *German ideology* than of the German parliament, particularly the ideology of the German Right for whom “the principle of authority” was fundamental. Indeed, the ‘German’ origin of §4.22 is confirmed precisely by his reference to the scattered

⁴⁹ §4.15. *Croce and Marx*, QCI p.436, followed by §4.20, §4.22 with the same title, QCI p.441, 442.

⁵⁰ §4.22. *Croce and Marx*, QCI p.442.

⁵¹ §1.48, QCI p. 59.

⁵² See in particular RSE, 5 August 1930, p. 1712, reporting the start of the election campaign and the creation of new parties, ie, the Peasant party, the Conservative Popular party, and the State party.

notes he had written on “the crisis of authority”.⁵³ The fullest description of what he meant by this was in §3.03. *German Intellectuals* in which he noted the trend among contemporary German writers to attack the principle of authority in all its forms - “religious dogma, monarchical power, official teaching, the military state, the marriage bond, paternal prestige, and above all the [system of] justice which protects these transitory institutions”. By the crisis of authority, then, Gramsci meant the disintegration of the ideology of Germany’s old ruling class - a global crisis of the “ruling ideas”. But all this bore witness to the *failure* of the ideologies not to their *value*. The point about the crisis of authority was that the old ruling ideas had lost their value. So what did Gramsci mean by their “value”?

The theoretical question posed by Gramsci in these *Croce and Marx* notes corresponded to the ideological conjuncture in Germany in the summer of 1930 as the Reichstag election campaign got under way: the election campaign was a demonstration of “the value of the ideologies”. Gramsci argues that Marx’s doctrine of the ideologies was dialectical - two-sided, not one-sided. On the negative side the ideologies were appearances or “illusions” - that is to say, they were practical constructs, instruments with which the ruling class led the rest of society. Croce’s interpretation reproduced only this negative side of Marx’s doctrine. On the positive side, however, the ideologies - in the first place Marxism itself - were the means of liberation which destroyed the ruling “illusions” and taught men to become conscious of their revolutionary tasks. “Marx explicitly affirms that men become conscious of their tasks on the terrain of the ideologies, the superstructures, which is no small affirmation of “reality” ”.⁵⁴ Either way, the value of the ideologies was essentially practical or “concrete”.

The question in Gramsci’s mind as the German election campaign got under way was: would the election show that the German proletariat was conscious of its revolutionary tasks or would it show that the ruling class was still able to lead by inventing new “illusions”? It turned out that the only parties to make gains in the elections of September 1930 were the Communists and the Nazis, but Nazi gains were far more impressive and Gramsci was in no doubt about the significance of the result. By the time he wrote the second draft of §4.22 sometime in 1932, in the notebook on Croce, the mass expansion of “Hitlerism” was part of his perspective and the success of this new “illusion” was reflected in the second version.

⁵³ The previous notes on the “crisis of authority” were §1.48, §3.03, §1.127, §3.34.

⁵⁴ §4.15. *Croce and Marx*, QCI p.437.

§10.41.XII. Note 1. The phenomena of the modern decomposition of parliamentarism can offer many examples of the function and concrete value of the ideologies. How this decomposition is presented in order to hide the reactionary tendencies of certain social groups is of the greatest interest (del piu alto interesse). There are many scattered notes on these questions written in various notebooks (for example, on the question of the crisis of the principle of authority etc) which should be collected together and referred back to these notes on Croce. 55

In other words, Gramsci was particularly interested in the way the Nazis used a populist "revolutionary" phraseology borrowed from the Left - putting an end to the republican "system" etc - in order to disguise the "reactionary" tendencies of the Right, ie, of the agrarians and industrialists who together formed the traditional dominant bloc.

Postscript:

§6.35. 'Does any 'racism' exist in Italy?'

What exactly was this new German ideology? During the election campaign there were many attempts to explain it. As we saw, the most searching analysis of its "elements" was in the English review *New Statesman* but even so the reporter concluded that its mass appeal was emotional not rational. "Otherwise it would be impossible to explain the undeniable progress of fascism in Germany since their ideology is a mixture of vague theories about race, anti-Semitism, and 'true' socialism.....".⁵⁶ Gramsci called it "Hitlerism". This was in line with his conception of "charismatic" leadership which, it will be recalled,

coincides with a primitive phase in the development of mass parties when its doctrine appears nebulous and incoherent in the eyes of the masses and needs an infallible pope to interpret and adapt it to the circumstances. The more this happens, the more the party originates and takes shape on the basis of incoherent and muddled ideologies.....These ideologies are nurtured by feelings and emotions which have still not reached the point of dissolving because the classes (or the class) which express them, having arrived historically at the point of dissolution, still have a certain basis and cling to the glories of the past in order to shield themselves from the future.⁵⁷

Gramsci therefore named this muddled ideology after its infallible pope, Hitler, but he also recognised the "feelings and emotions" which nurtured it. The extraordinary success of the Nazis in the Reichstag election was an undeniably impressive demonstration of these feelings and emotions but Gramsci's first attempts to comprehend them met with little success. The most direct (but not the most

⁵⁵ §10.41. XII. "One of the most interesting points to examine in depth is Croce's doctrine of the political ideologies...", QCII p.1322-1323.

⁵⁶ The articles in the *New Statesman* were reported in RSE, 26 August 1930.

⁵⁷ §2.75. R.Michels..., QCI p. 233.

important) sign in the notebooks of the first impression made on Gramsci by the German election results can be found in the miscellaneous Notebook 6. This was started in November 1930 while he was still busy on Notebook 4. To understand the mass expansion of Hitlerism, Gramsci looked for equivalent elements of this German ideology in Italian culture, but he could only find 'abstract' rather than 'concrete' examples.

§6.35. Italian culture. Does any sort of 'racism' exist in Italy? There have been many attempts but they are all purely literary and abstract in character. Italy differs from Germany in this respect although there are some interesting, if extrinsic, similarities between the two countries: 1) the tradition of localism and consequently the belated achievement of national and state unity. (An extrinsic similarity since the origins of Italy's regionalism differ from Germany's. Two main elements contributed to it in Italy: (a) the reemergence of local races after the fall of the Roman Empire (b) the barbarian invasions first, the foreign conquerors later. International relations had an influence in Germany but not in the form of direct occupation by foreigners). 2) Medieval universalism was more influential in Italy than Germany where, during the Reformation, the Empire and the lay outlook triumphed much earlier than in Italy. 3) The domination into modern times of the propertied classes of the countryside although the [social] relations are very different. The German is more conscious of race than the Italian. Racism: the historical return to Romanism, not felt very much outside literature. Generic glorification of the race [*stirpe*], etc. The strange thing is that racism today is supported (in Italian *Barbara* [and *Arcitaliano*]) by Kurt Erich Suckert, an obviously racist and super-village (*strapaese*) name. Remember Arturo Foa's glorifications of the Italic race during the war, much the same as Suckert's.⁵⁸

Gramsci identifies racism as the key element of Hitler's ideology and assumes that the mass breakthrough of his party in the September elections concretely demonstrated the German consciousness of race. Whether he was correct in this hypothesis is questionable but it is interesting to see how he tried to build it into his wider framework of interpretation. In attempting to explain why "the German is more conscious of race than the Italian" we should note the sweeping perspective with which he compares the historical development of the two cultures or 'traditions'. This was consistent with the approach recommended at this time in §4.49. *The Intellectuals* (November 1930) for studying the history of the 'traditional intellectuals' whose origin and formation, he suggests, should be traced as far back as Roman times. It seems that Gramsci was trying to understand the "racists" as the latest product of Germany's cultural 'tradition'. A further clue to his line of enquiry

⁵⁸ §6.35. *Italian Culture*, QCII p.710-711. A further allusion to the success of the National Socialists in the recent election is in the following §6.42. *Tendencies in Italian Culture. Giovanni Cena* where Gramsci observes: "In writing *Che Fare?* Cena wanted to unite the nationalists with the filo-socialists like himself; but what did all this petty-bourgeois socialism in the style of De Amicis basically amount to? Wasn't it the embryo of that so-called national socialism (*socialismo nazionale, o nazionalsocialismo*) which has tried in so many ways to make headway in Italy and which has found a favourable terrain in the post-war period". QCII p.718-719.

into this question is provided by the third element of comparison between Italy and Germany, ie, "the domination into modern times of the propertied classes of the countryside". This general description could well apply to Germany's 'traditional intellectuals', the Prussian Junkers. The extraordinary success of the racists in the latest round of German elections was due to a large extent to winning over the masses of the eastern countryside who usually voted for the Nationalists, the party of the Junkers. The racist ideology of the Nazis - one thinks especially of *volkisch* ideas of 'blood and soil' - appeared to be particularly "concrete" for the rural classes of Germany. Moreover, Gramsci is clearly inclined to think of racism as a form of anti-modernism. The nearest equivalent in Italian culture as he saw it was the "super-village" current in Italian fascism represented by Suckert and others, although unlike its German "blood and soil" equivalent these ideas never had any 'concrete' value in Italy.

The fact that Gramsci chose to emphasise the importance of the *superstructures* at the moment of the deepest *structural* crisis in the history of capitalism - the crisis of 1929 - would seem to justify the description of him as "the theorist of the superstructures". However, the pivotal problem of Gramsci's theory remains the *relation* of structure-superstructures. In this same series of notes on *Croce and Marx* he made a further suggestion:

This argument about the concrete value of the superstructures in Marx should be thoroughly studied. Remember Sorel's concept of the 'historical bloc'. If men become conscious of their task on the terrain of the superstructures, this means that there is a necessary and vital nexus between structure and superstructures, just as there is in the human body between the skin and the skeleton..... ∞

This reference to the idea of the "historical bloc" explains Gramsci's obscure reference in §4.22 to "social morphology", which is the shape or structure of the historical bloc. But how might this concept apply to the example he recommends, ie, the decomposition of parliamentarism in Germany? In this case, we might say that the political party of the Junkers, the Nationalists, and the social classes of the eastern countryside constituted a historical bloc held together over a long period of time by the same traditional ideology. However, the decline of the Nationalists under Hugenburg's leadership and the progress of Hitler's party indicated to Gramsci that this historical bloc was, if not disintegrating, at least changing shape and complexion.

⁵⁹ §4.15. *Croce and Marx*, QCI p.437.

Chapter 2

September 1930-December 1931

From the Reichstag Election to the National Government in Britain

The Letters and Testimonies

"The world is vast and terrible and complicated....." ¹

The rift with his comrades (December 1930)

In November 1930 Gramsci started up an "organic cycle of conversations" with the other communist prisoners at Turi during the exercise periods in the prison yard.² The timing of his initiative was probably due to the arrival in the autumn of many new communist prisoners. These comrades had been "activated" by the party's new tactical policy but in trying to carry it out had exposed themselves to arrest by the Fascist security police. Gramsci's initiative was singularly ill-timed. He wanted to dispel the "economistic" illusions of those comrades who believed that the capitalist crisis of 1929 would soon bring about the collapse of the Fascist regime in Italy, and to encourage a greater spirit of realism by explaining the full complexity of the revolutionary task which still lay before them. By this time Gramsci knew the results of the recent elections in Germany.³ These strengthened his scepticism towards the "miracle-working" political effects of economic crises, even "catastrophic" ones. However, his lessons in political realism were not what the comrades wanted to hear. Although he was careful to avoid direct criticism of the party's new tactic, which fostered the very economistic illusions he wanted to destroy, it was obvious to everyone that he disagreed with it. The atmosphere of "diffused inquisition"⁴ now spread to his comrades in prison who questioned his loyalty to the party. When Gramsci learned that some of them were discussing the question in a sectarian spirit, accusing him of "deviating" in one way or another, he broke off the collective conversations immediately. He did this for political reasons, not out of personal pique: with his strong sense of communist "discipline", he

¹ "The world is vast and terrible and complicated and the wisdom we are learning will become proverbial....By now I must be wiser than Lao-Tse who, when he was born, had the knowledge and composure of a man of eighty". To Julia, 18 May 1931, LCII p.423.

² The political conversations are described by Fiori cit., p.253-258 and by Spriano cit., p.65-71. The best primary sources are Athos Lisa: *Memorie* (Milan, 1973) and Bruno Tosin: *Con Gramsci* (Rome, 1976). See also the section 'Il carcere' in the collection *Gramsci vivo nelle testimonianze dei suoi contemporanei*, a cura di Mimma Paulesu Quercioli, prefazione di Giuseppe Fiori (Milan, 1977).

³ The Reichstag elections were held on 14 September. The earliest report of the results in Gramsci's periodicals was in *RSE*, 23 September 1930, p.2097-2098.

⁴ The phrase used in §3.32. "*Rendre la vie impossible*", QCI p. 310, written soon after his brother's visit in June to inform him of the party's new tactic.

wanted to avoid being the cause of "factionalism" in the party at all costs. The atmosphere can be judged from the hostility of some comrades who thought that "we should denounce his disruptive influence on the party, and that we ought to begin by excluding him from our company and driving him out of the exercise yard".⁵ Such was the situation when Bruno Tosin arrived at the beginning of December. "The differences of opinion led to such a sharp disagreement that he decided to suspend the conversations. This is how the situation arose where Antonio was, as far as I could see, isolated from the majority of the other comrades"⁶. It is important to note the date of this rift, December 1930, which has a significant bearing on the meaning of §7.10. Gramsci remained on speaking terms with individual comrades, including some like Athos Lisa who supported the party line, but the break-up of the communist 'collective' only confirmed the idea expressed in §3.32, ie, that his disagreement with the party had "rendered life impossible". Unable to discuss the reasons why the tactical policy was a mistake, he wrote them down in the notebooks. They can be found in a famous note, §7.10, written precisely in December 1930. Here Gramsci found a way of telling the truth under "impossible" circumstances.

Meanwhile, Gramsci's need for closer contacts with his family was growing stronger in the autumn of 1930. He was relieved to get detailed news about the condition of Julia's mental health from his friend Piero Sraffa who had visited her at the sanatorium on the Black Sea where she had gone for a psychoanalytical cure⁷. The news encouraged him to make a fresh attempt to get a dialogue going with her. He also reached out to his family in Sardinia. In a letter to his mother just before Christmas, he described his spiritual state after four years in prison. He professed the same stoical serenity he had described to his brother Carlo a year earlier. While his moral fortitude was as strong as ever, however, the past year at Turi had taken its toll and the self-confident, sermonising tone had given way to a more sober, even vulnerable tone of voice.

Darling mamma, this is the fifth Christmas since my arrest and the fourth that I am spending in prison.....But don't imagine that my serenity is any less than it was. It's true I am four years older, I have many grey hairs, I have lost my teeth, I don't laugh as easily as I used to, but I think I have grown wiser and my experience of men and affairs is richer. What's more, I haven't lost my taste for life, I am still interested in the wide world...And so I haven't grown old yet, have I? We only become old when we begin to fear death and

⁵ Quoted in G.Fiori's *Antonio Gramsci - Life of a Revolutionary* (1970)p. 257.

⁶ Bruno Tosin, *Con Gramsci* (1976) p.98.

⁷ To Julia, 4 November 1930, LCI p.362-363.

when we are displeased to see others doing what we can no longer do ourselves. In this sense, I'm sure you haven't grown old either in spite of your age.....⁸

The agonies of communication with Julia continued, however. Her letter to him in January began cryptically: "When I think of writing, every day, I think of what makes me stay silent; I realise that my weakness is new to you.....".⁹ Gramsci tried "to get their relationship on a normal footing, making sure that you don't feel any inhibitions and restraints in writing to me".¹⁰ The intriguing question is whether or not there was a 'political' dimension to Julia's silence. Was the 'hidden' element in Julia's letters which Gramsci could never fathom, due to political censorship, to 'external' interference by the "invisible tribunal" in Moscow? Did not political censorship come into play in an exchange of letters between fascist and communist states, including private letters? If this was only a suspicion lurking in Gramsci's mind, it was at least a plausible one. For the moment, Gramsci was inclined to attribute Julia's illness to her sense of "communist duty". Sceptical about the value of a psychoanalytic cure, he thought her depression was connected with "a social environment which permanently demands an extremely strong tension of the will"¹¹ - a reference, surely, to the "oppressive" atmosphere in the Soviet Union created by the First Five-Year Plan of 1929; "it seems to me that you are at present obsessed with the feeling of your own responsibility, which makes it seem that your strength is inadequate to the duties you want to perform".¹² When Julia first met Gramsci back in 1922 he was writing to Trotsky about Italian Futurism whilst she, a musician, dreamed of transforming the world by music in the romantic spirit of Romain Rolland. Now in 1931 it seemed to Gramsci that Julia was a casualty of the extreme utilitarian ideology of "socialist construction" with its overwhelming emphasis on material values. Stalin's Plan brought out the streak of fanatical utilitarianism which had long been an element in the Russian revolutionary tradition and which had no place for "useless people" like musicians. As the terrible 1930s began they both found themselves in conditions of "force majeure" but they must try to hold on to all the beauty of life, in the present as well as the past.

⁸ To mamma, 15 December 1930, LCI p.371-372. [Translated in HH,p.129-130].

⁹ To Julia, 9 February 1931, QCII p.392.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.393.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.394.

¹² Gramsci did not know that Freud's latest work, *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930), dealt precisely with the crushing sense of duty imposed on individuals by modern civilisation. Again, for all his scepticism Gramsci was more in tune with Freud's thinking than he knew.

In any case, you are right, in our world, mine and yours, every weakness is grievous and every strength a help. I think that our greatest misfortune is that we were together too little, and always in abnormal general conditions, cut off from the real and concrete life of everyday. Our task now, in the conditions of *force majeure* in which we find ourselves, is to make up for these deficiencies in the past so that we may preserve all the moral stability of our union and salvage from the crisis all the beauty that there certainly was in our past, and which lives on in our children...You must help me to get to know the children better and to share in their life, in their formation, in the way they affirm their personalities. In this way my 'fatherhood' will become more real and will always be a thing of the present: it will become a living 'fatherhood', not just a memory in an ever-receding past.¹³

To make his fatherhood a living thing, he usually included something for the children in his letters; these are Gramsci's best moments. In April he commented on Delio's early efforts at handwriting, wondering "why he should start writing from right to left and not from left to right. However, I'm glad he writes with his hands: that's something anyway. If he had taken it into his head to start writing with his feet, that would undoubtedly have been a good deal worse".¹⁴ In August, on learning that the boys were keen on catching frogs, he drew upon his childhood knowledge of natural life to tell them how to distinguish edible frogs and to catch and prepare them for eating. "I think Delio and Giuliano could easily pass into the history of Russian culture, even at their present tender age, by introducing this new foodstuff into popular usage; they would thus realise several millions of roubles' worth of new human wealth, wresting it from the monopoly of crows, ravens and grass snakes".¹⁵

The health crisis of August 1931

On 3 August 1931 the steady deterioration in Gramsci's health reached a dramatic turning-point. He told no one about it for a fortnight.

It started like this. At one in the morning on 3 August - a fortnight ago to the day - all of a sudden I coughed up blood. It wasn't anything like a real continuous haemorrhage, the irresistible flow I've heard described by others: I felt a gurgle in my breathing like the feeling you have when you get catarrh. An abrupt cough followed, and my mouth filled with blood. The coughing was not always violent, wasn't even particularly pronounced; it was exactly the sort of cough you get when you've got something or other in your throat; it came in isolated throws, without any continuous fits or paroxysms of coughing. This lasted until about four. In these three hours I coughed up over half a pint of blood. After four I got no more mouthfuls of blood, but at intervals I coughed up catarrh mixed with gouts of blood.....Before coughing up the blood I had suffered exceptionally from the

¹³ *ibid.*, p.395. (Translation in HH,p.133-135).

¹⁴ To Tatiana, 20 April 1931 [Gramsci wrote 'March' by mistake), LCII p.413-414.

¹⁵ To Julia, 31 August 1931, LCII p.455.

heat of the season, and sometimes found myself bathed in sweat, especially at night time. These nocturnal sweating bouts lasted until five or six days ago, then they stoppedI think I've given you all the essential information. I ought to add that this hasn't weakened me to any appreciable extent, nor has it had any psychological repercussions¹⁶

It is interesting that he waited a fortnight before reporting this event to Tatiana. Although it happened in the early hours of the morning, there was no hint of it in the letter he wrote to her later that same day, 3 August, except for a proud assertion of his will to survive "even under the worst conditions". Gramsci said that the physical crisis had had no "psychological repercussions", but these can be judged from the letter he wrote that day. This contains one of the great moments of 'truth' in the prison letters when Gramsci contrasts the life of the 'affections' with the life of the 'will'. What Gobetti called "the intimately aristocratic character" of Gramsci's suffering is there to see but he was far from being blinded by his own pride.

You need never fear that the feeling of being personally isolated may plunge me into depression, or into some such state of mind smacking of high tragedy. In point of fact I have never felt the need of any external reinforcement of moral strength to help me live my life with courage even under the worst conditions; so I'm even less in need of such reinforcement today, now that I feel that my strength and my will have reached an even higher degree of solidity and worth. But while in the past, as I have said, I felt almost proud to find myself isolated, today instead I feel the meanness, the aridity, the shabbiness of a life which is founded on nothing but the will. This is my state of mind at the present time.¹⁷

Gramsci knew that he had passed a turning-point in his physical health. He acknowledged this in November when his will-power had almost succeeded in winning another battle, not unconnected with the haemorrhage he suffered in August.

As a matter of fact, in the period from July to today I have not only succeeded in reducing the amount of tobacco smoked to a mere 40 per cent of what I smoked before.....but I think I'll manage to cut it down even more in the future. Indeed, my belief is that eventually I shall cut my smoking down to the minimum, even if I don't succeed in giving it up altogether. It's true, though, that the amount you smoke depends on the amount of brainwork you have to do; I read little and think less, so my intellectual effort these days is slight. The result is that I smoke less. I can't manage to concentrate my attention on any subject; I feel myself as stultified intellectually as I am worn out physically. This state of affairs will probably last for at least the whole winter; my strength will therefore be just about sufficient to keep me from going further downhill, but not enough to give me any chance of recovery.¹⁸

¹⁶ To Tatiana, 17 August 1931, LCII p.444-445 [Translated in HH p.155]

¹⁷ To Tatiana, 3 August (Gramsci writes 'July' by mistake) 1931, QCII p.440.

¹⁸ To Tatiana, 9 November 1931, LCII p.492-493.

As far as the 'life of the affections' was concerned, his children remained a constant source of inspiration. In December he learned from Julia that there was an 'animals corner' at the boys' school. The natural pedagogue in him wanted to know more and made an evocative contribution of his own.

For example, I might tell Dello of my childhood experiences with living creatures; or perhaps it would seem like a fairy tale to him when I say that I have seen hares dancing - or rather jumping, though the country people see it as dancing - in the moonlight, or a hedgehog family (father, mother and the little hedgehogs) going on an expedition to collect apples by the light of the autumn moon?¹⁹

The 'business of the reviews':
the new penal code of 1931

Gramsci had better access to *non-fascist* sources in 1931 than at any time before or after. At the start of the year on Piero Sraffa's advice, Tatiana took out subscriptions on his behalf to two English-language reviews, the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* and the *Labour Monthly*.²⁰ As a high-quality source of current political facts and analysis, the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* was particularly important to Gramsci's work in 1931. Tatiana also sent him some issues of a bimonthly French review, *La Critique Sociale*, and in July he asked her to take out a subscription.²¹ Two further items important for current affairs, were the Russian supplement of the *Economist* of November 1930 giving a detailed account of the progress of the Soviet Five-Year Plan and the issue of *Economia* for March 1931 devoted entirely to the causes of the world economic depression. In a letter to Tatiana on 29 June 1931, Gramsci conveys the difference made by the opening of these English-language 'windows' on the world:

You can tell Piero that I am making fast progress in reading English. I find it much easier than German. I read quite rapidly although the dictionary I have is not good enough and lacks many words of a technical nature or more closely connected with current usage. I read the extract from the *Economist* on the Five-Year Plan in two or three days and I don't think a single word escaped me.²²

The fact that these foreign-language, non-fascist periodicals passed the prison censor is surprising especially in view of their content. *Labour Monthly* and

¹⁹ To Julia, 14 December 1931 (Gramsci writes 'November' by mistake), LCII p.510-511. [Translated in HH p.185].

²⁰ To Tatiana, 26 January 1931 (Gramsci writes '1926' by mistake), LCII p.389.

²¹ To Tatiana, 27 July 1931, LCII p.436-437.

²² To Tatiana, 29 June 1931, LCII p.432.

Critique Sociale were both marxist reviews, the former edited by the British Communist R. Palme Dutt, the latter by the French 'Trotskyite' Boris Souvarine. In 1929 the lawyer attached to the Special Tribunal had specified that Gramsci was not allowed to receive "books of political agitation"²³ but, quite apart from the problem of defining what these were exactly, this was only "advisory" and there was nothing in the penal regulation saying that prisoners could not receive foreign-language reviews, whatever their political content. This legal loophole was removed by the introduction of Alfredo Rocco's new criminal code in 1931. Alert to the difference this could make to his work, Gramsci immediately asked for the text of the new regulation: "I would like to have the recent issue of the *Rivista di diritto penitenziario* where the new prison regulation is published" (27 July 1931).²⁴ The new regulation specifically listed six reviews to which prisoners were allowed to subscribe which, not surprisingly, did not include any foreign-language reviews. The new regulation was all not all bad news, however, since it removed the old prohibition on political newspapers and prisoners were now allowed to receive these by formally requesting permission of the prison governor, who could withdraw it at any time. Gramsci immediately took advantage of this: "Dearest, I have received the prison regulation and will forward the request to be allowed to read one or two political newspapers, if and as it is allowed" (17 August 1931).²⁵ Permission was duly granted and Tatiana took out a quarterly subscription to *Corriere della Sera* which Gramsci began receiving in October 1931.²⁶ He was disappointed by the quality of the *Corriere*'s news reporting, especially its lack of continuity, but when the subscription came up for renewal at the end of December he saw no alternative but to renew it and no point in subscribing to a second paper.

The latter's [*Corriere*'s] defects must be symptomatic of a sickness which has spread through the entire press at the present time. The lack of continuity [*nessuna organicità*] in the news; the discussion of events referring to preceding events which haven't been reported, as if the reader ought to know about them (ie, as if the reader reads several papers or reads foreign papers). The lack of comment on facts of the first importance like the conversion of the Banca Commerciale or the creation of Credito Mobiliare, merely

²³ See text of Gramsci's petition to Mussolini, September 1930, in QCIV p.2375.

²⁴ To Tatiana, LCII p.437.

²⁵ To Tatiana, LCII p.447.

²⁶ See 'Indice dei periodici citati nei Quaderni', QCIV p.3146, where the first issue of *Corriere della Sera* for 1931 to be cited in the notes is for 15 October.

reproducing comment and news in the foreign press: these defects cannot be limited just to the *Corriere*. So what would be the point of having a second paper which would be nothing more than a poor copy of *Corriere* and full of mistakes? ²⁷

Meanwhile, the new penal regulation only listed six reviews. The consequences of losing all but six of his reviews, including the foreign-language ones, were serious enough to persuade Gramsci to petition Mussolini directly for permission to continue receiving all of them. The petition, which was sent in October 1931, is a useful inventory of Gramsci's periodicals at their peak:

The recent ministerial arrangements regulating the possibilities granted to prisoners to subscribe to periodical reviews lead me to apply to you, Sir, who about a year ago gave a favourable reply to a petition of mine similar to this one. The new arrangements establish a list of reviews generally permissible and this list includes only some of the reviews to which I have subscribed for the past four and half years with the permission of the Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State. I would automatically be deprived of these other reviews.

The reviews I am reading which are included in the list are: 1. *Nuova Antologia* 2. *Gerarchia* 3. *Critica Fascista* 4. *Pegaso* 5. *Educazione Fascista* 6. *Politica*. The reviews not included in the list are: Formaggini's *L'Italia che scrive* 2. *Rassegna della stampa estera* produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 3. *La Nuova Italia*, Florence 4. *La Reforma Sociale*, Turin 5. B.Croce's *La Critica* 6. *La Civiltà Cattolica* 7. *La Cultura* 8. *La Nuova Rivista Storica* 9. *Il Marzocco* 10. *L'Italia Letteraria* 11. *Nuovi Studi di Diritto, Economia e Politica* 12. *Leonardo* 13. *I Problemi di Lavoro* 14. *Das Deutsche Buch* 15. *Nimm und Lies!* (two German bibliographical reviews) 16. *Labour Monthly* (monthly publication of the Labour Research Department) 17. *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 18. *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, Larousse 19. *Nouvelle Revue Française*, Gallimard 20. *La Critique Sociale*, Marcel Riviere.²⁸

When the reply to this petition came in December, Gramsci was granted permission to receive only the Italian-language reviews. Consequently, the subscriptions to the six foreign-language reviews were cancelled at the end of the year.²⁹ As far as political news and analysis were concerned, the loss of the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* was particularly grievous and the *Corriere della Sera* scarcely compensated in view of its poor quality. With the marginal exception of the Jesuit review *Civiltà cattolica*, from the start of 1932 Gramsci was entirely dependent for political news on fascist or "fascistised" sources.

²⁷ To Tatiana, 28 December 1931, LCII p.514. See also the comment on the poor quality of *Corriere* in his letter to Tatiana of 16 November 1931, LCII p.494.

²⁸ Text of petition to Mussolini, October 1931, in QCIV p.2376-2377.

²⁹ To Tatiana, 14 December 1931, LCII p.508.

The Periodicals and *Corriere della Sera*

The German Elections, 14 September 1930

The earliest report of the German election results in Gramsci's periodicals was in the issue of *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera* of 23 September 1930.¹

On 15 September the German newspapers gave the complete election results as follows. Out of 35 million voters:

Social Democrats 8,572,016
 State Party 1,322,608
 German Nationals 2,458,497
 Economic Party 1,379,359
 Centre 4,128,929
 Bavarian Centre 1,058,556
 Communists 4,587,708
 National Socialists 6,401,210
 Populists 1,657,757
 Combined German-Hanoverian Peasants/Popular Conservatives 1,562,843
 Peasant Party 339,072
 Christian Social Party 867,072
 Agrarian League 193,899

Given this number of voters and given these votes, there will be 83 more deputies in the new Reichstag than in the previous one and the total number of deputies will increase from 493 in the previous Reichstag to 576. These 576 mandates will be distributed as follows:

Social Democrats 143 seats, from 153 in the old Reichstag
 German Nationals 41 seats, from 78
 Centre 68, from 61
 Communists 76, from 54
 Populists 30, from 45
 State Party 20, from 25
 Economic Party 23, from 23
 Bavarian Centre 19, from 16
 National Socialists 107, from 12
 Schiele's Peasant Party 18, from 13
 Hanoverians 3, from 0
 Popular Conservatives 5, from 0
 German Peasant Party 6, from 13
 Christian Social Party 14, from 4
 Agrarian League 3, from 0

¹ RSE, 23 September 1930, p. 2097-2098.

Gramsci could check the accuracy of this data against the reports of the results given in other periodicals.² They were prominently reported under the headline 'Hitler's Triumph' in the September issue of the leading Fascist review *Gerarchia*, but Gramsci did not receive this issue or any others from August 1930 onwards until months later and was unable to explain why.³ When the back numbers eventually arrived in February 1931, Gramsci signalled to Tatiana that he did not think that the German elections had anything to do with the delay. The signal was disguised in the following piece of plausible-seeming nonsense often encountered in his letters to her:

It seems to me that the service has not been bad even if some incident happens from time to time, and that *there is no reason to think ill of the Germans, who have nothing to do with it in any case*, since the manager of the bookshop is Italian and the owners are Italianised Swiss. Perhaps you didn't know that there was a period in Italian cultural history when the booktrade was virtually a monopoly of Swiss entrepreneurs who did us a great service especially in Milan and Turin.....etc, etc.⁴

The extraordinary success of the Nazis (or 'Hitlerites') and the advance of the Communists were immediately singled out as "the distinctive features of this set of results".⁵ The reaction of the foreign press was far-reaching and dominated the press reports on German affairs in the *Rassegna settimanale* for weeks to come.⁶ The issue of 7 October alone, for example, contained no less than 30 pages of foreign press comment on the German elections. Given the scarcity of news from communist sources, the reports of Moscow's reaction must have been read by Gramsci with special interest. However, the elements of political judgement they contained about the German situation cannot have inspired much confidence:

² For example in NA, 1 October 1930, under the rubric 'Rassegna Politica', p.390-393; in CC, 4 October 1930, under the rubric 'Cose Straniere'. See also, but note that Gramsci did not receive the issues of *Gerarchia* for the second half of 1930 until February 1931.

³ Giuseppe Bevione: 'Il Trionfo di Hitler', *GER*, September 1930. To Tatiana, 29 December 1930, LCI p.377. The mysterious delay of *Gerarchia* can be traced in the letters to her of 22 September, 29 December 1930, 26 January, 23 February 1931. LCI p.355, p377, LCII p.389, p.397-398.

⁴ To Tatiana, 23 February 1931, LCII p.397. [Translated in HH p.136].

⁵ RSE, 23 September, p.2098.

⁶ For press reaction to the election results, see the issues of RSE for 30 September (p.2175), 7 October (p.201 and p.2208), 14 October (p.2291), 21 October (p.2320 and p.2350); for further comment on the National Socialist movement, see RSE, 11 November (p.2525), 18 November (p.2576).

An editorial in *Isvestiya* of Moscow on 16 September commented on the elections in Germany as follows:

'The German elections could be described as an 'earthquake' of far-reaching importance which has been coming for some time. The growing discontent in the country since the massive crisis, the panic of the petty-bourgeoisie and the rise in the revolutionary spirit of the working class masses have risen to the surface and have destroyed the equilibrium of the German democratic republic for good. The result of the elections indicate that Germany has reached a turning-point in its post-war history and has entered upon a phase of acute class struggle.

The huge number of votes cast for the German fascists must be seen as an expression of no confidence in Germany's present political system. The votes cast for the National Socialists are not really votes for Hitler and his company but votes of no confidence and desperation, an expression of the panic which grips the country and an illustration of the seriousness of the German crisis. In contrast the votes cast for the communists are votes of confidence in the party of the proletariat and show that the German working class is ready for the class struggle and the decisive battle against the bourgeoisie' 7

Isvestiya saw two possibilities in the new Reichstag, neither of which showed very much insight in Moscow into the German situation: either a return of the 'Grand Coalition' with Social Democratic participation or a government of the Right. "In the second hypothesis all the power would be in the hands of the National Socialists but they would compromise themselves in the eyes of the masses all the more rapidly and the resulting disillusion would be sudden and disastrous". The revolutionary tactic of the German Communists depended increasingly on this deeply fatalistic perspective, which Gramsci would describe in 1933 as "the policy of so-much-the worse, so-much-the-better" (*la politica del peggio*).⁸ The lack of objectivity was even more apparent in the political judgement of *Pravda*: in spite of "the huge increase in the fascist votes", the result was proof of "the maturing of a revolutionary crisis".

Another editorial in the Moscow *Pravda* the same day said: 'The German elections are of historic importance. They mark the first stage in the development of the world economic crisis, they have shaken the capitalist stabilisation of Europe again, and finally they indicate how far the German proletariat has been revolutionised'.

The paper therefore celebrated at length 'the magnificent victory of the Communists', emphasising 'the successes in individual regions' and especially 'the great success in Berlin'. Acknowledging 'the huge increase in the fascist votes' the paper sought to explain it by 'the deception practiced on the petty-bourgeois and working masses who voted to change their lives'.

The paper then addressed itself to the economic conditions of Germany saying: 'The logical consequence is that we must expect decisive social movements. The main significance of the elections lies in the maturing of a revolutionary crisis. But since the process of maturing will not happen inevitably we advise our 'fraternal' communist party to go on organising the masses, taking the lead in strike actions, guiding the revolutionary movement according to the directives of the Third International which have been proved correct by the very result of the German elections. The German

7 RSE, 7 October, p.2223-2224.

8 §15.06. *Machiavelli. Total and Partial Conceptions of the World and Practical Orientations*, QCIII p.1760. This is similar to "the infantile theory of "so much the worse, so much the better" referred to in §14.33. *Machiavelli*, QCIII p.1690, written around the same time.

Communist party was never as near to achieving its task of winning over the working masses as it is today. This imposes on it an enormous historical responsibility.

The victory of the fascists imposes on the communist party the struggle for the hegemony of the working class. It is necessary to organise and lead the economic strikes which will certainly break out in the coming months, it is necessary to lead the action of the unemployed, it must try to transform the economic struggle into a political battle. It is necessary for our party to pay the utmost attention to the rural proletariat. It must tell the German proletariat the story of how the Russian proletariat freed itself from foreign debts and imperialist slavery. 'Historic possibilities' lay open to the German communist party. It must make every effort to lead the German masses in the struggle against capital and against fascism.⁹

The last months of 1930, immediately after the German elections, were the most theoretically creative phase of the prison notebooks. The evidence of this creativity is in the "immense" Notebook 4 and its sequel, Notebook 7. Three interconnected series of notes can be distinguished: on the validity of the ideologies¹⁰, on the structure-superstructure relation¹¹, and on the intellectuals¹². What was the connection between the German elections and these lines of inquiry?

As we saw from the political background, the question of "the value of the ideologies" corresponded to the conjuncture in Germany at the time of the election campaign in the summer of 1930, when Communists and Nazis fought out "the battle of ideas". In §4.22 Gramsci thought that the current situation in Germany could offer a case study of "the value of the ideologies". The first traces of the election result were in the 'miscellaneous' notes §6.35 and §6.42. These were about its ideological significance. In §6.35, in answer to the question "Does any racism exist in Italy?" Gramsci concluded that "Germans are more conscious of race than Italians" - a statement made on the strength of the election result. In §6.42 Gramsci investigates the Italian antecedents of "national socialism" (the text reads: *socialismo nazionale o nazionalsocialismo*) which "has met with a favourable response in the post-war years" - again, a statement now confirmed by the election result. It seems that "the huge number of votes cast for the German fascists" carried more weight in Gramsci's mind than it did in the Soviet press.

In the second series of notes on the structure-superstructure relation, Gramsci sees the German election result in the perspective of the catastrophic economic "irruption" of the Wall Street Crash a year earlier. This is the perspective of the

⁹ *ibid.*, p.2224.

¹⁰ The series on the value of the ideologies is: §4.15, §4.20, §4.22, §4.35, §7.19, §7.21.

¹¹ The series on the structure-superstructure relation is: §4.12, §4.38, §4.45, §7.10, §7.24

¹² The first draft of the notes on the intellectuals is §4.49, written in November 1930.

famous note, §7.10, written in December 1930. Gramsci argues that it was a mistake to assume that such crises will automatically revolutionise the 'attacking forces' and automatically demoralise the 'defending forces', causing the latter to lose faith in their strength and in their future. His evidence for this was the 6,400,000 voters in Germany who had now turned to Hitler as their last hope. However, the significance of §7.10 was not purely theoretical. For the current tactic of the Comintern was based precisely on this mistake. The mistake was discernible not only in Moscow's interpretation of the German result, but also in the "economistic" illusions of Gramsci's communist comrades in prison. Unable to convince them of this mistake, however, Gramsci committed his reasons to paper in §7.10: the immediate context shows that this note is a critique of the current tactic of the Comintern in an 'orthodox' disguise.

There was no *immediate* or direct connection between the German elections of September 1930 and Gramsci's first notes on the intellectuals. The fact remains that Gramsci wrote the sketch of the "traditional intellectuals" in Germany in §4.49¹³ immediately under the impression of the success of the Nazis in the latest elections. Two threads in the German notes tend to converge at this point, corresponding to the two moments of past and present, history and politics: the notes on "the crisis of authority" referred to in §4.22 are followed by the sketch of the "traditional intellectuals" in §4.49. Gramsci thus tended to relate the expansion of 'Hitlerism' to the crisis of Germany's traditional intellectuals.

The Financial Panic, July 1931

We saw that Gramsci broke off the 'cycle of conversations' at the end of November because his comrades would not listen to any suggestion that the current tactic of the party rested on mistaken 'economistic' assumptions. It seemed that Gramsci was confronted with a crisis of authority of his own. His *anti-economistic* argument in the conversations was then synthesised in §7.10. *Structure and Superstructure*, written in December 1930. According to Athos Lisa's report, however,

the analysis of comrade [Gramsci] took no account of the interdependence of the Italian economy and those of other capitalist countries, of the consequences inherent in the sharpening of the world economic crisis, of the symptoms of radicalisation of the working class, of the crumbling of the social categories forming the base of some other pseudo-proletarian political parties (social democracy), of

¹³ The date of these notes is certain since Gramsci writes directly in §4.49: "I am writing in November 1930". See QCI p.482.

the influence of the development of the Soviet economy, etc: for he started from the belief that the objective conditions for the proletarian revolution had existed in Europe for over 50 years ¹⁴

Not satisfied on these points, Lisa and the other comrades who disagreed with him asked him "to make a provisional survey of the national and international scene *from an economic standpoint*".¹⁵ If Scucchia's testimony is to be believed: "He answered us jokingly: 'I'm a student of economics, not an economist. So if you want news about economic matters, you'll just have to get it from the reviews and the data we have available". ¹⁶

Given the material difficulties of the task, it is hardly surprising that Gramsci never made the provisional survey asked of him.¹⁷ The nearest approach to it in the notebooks was the an outline for a comprehensive research project on the Italian economy in §6.96. *Review Models: the Economy. Review of Italian Economic Studies*. ¹⁸ The first section was to be "Italy in the world economy" for which it would be necessary to consult "general works in which the Italian economy is examined in the context of the world economy. Books like Mortara's *Economic Prospects*, the *League of Nations' Economic Yearbook*, the publications of the Dresdner Bank on world economic forces etc". There followed a detailed survey of the elements of the national economic 'terrain' in their international setting, which was to include "the world economic crises and their repercussions in Italy". This survey of the Italian economy, however, did not address the *current* crisis and its possible consequences (which his comrades had asked for) but was written 'for eternity' - the outline of a project to be undertaken sometime in the future. For traces of the current crisis, we must look to other notes in the same series in Notebook 6.

The volume of analysis and comment in Gramsci's periodicals on the current economic crisis increased enormously in the course of 1931. The academic economists had now got the new phase of the world crisis starting in October 1929

¹⁴ Athos Lisa: *Memorie* (Milan, 1973) p.89.

¹⁵ Angelo Scucchia in *Gramsci Vivo nelle testimonianze dei suoi contemporanei*, a cura di Mimma Paulesu Quercioli (Feltrinelli, 1977). p. 220. My italics.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p220.

¹⁷ But note the principle stated precisely at this time in §7.24. *Structure and superstructure*: "A structural phase can only be concretely studied and analysed *after* the whole process of development has been completed not during the process itself, unless one proceeds by hypotheses and by making it perfectly clear that they are only hypotheses" QCII p.872. My italics.

¹⁸ §6.96, written in the summer of 1931, in QCII p.770-771.

sufficiently in their sights to attempt to analyse its nature and causes. Prodded by his comrades, Gramsci began to collect material on the crisis. In February he asked for the new edition of Mortara's *Prospettive Economiche* for 1931¹⁹ and, soon after, Tatiana sent him some numbers of the review *Economia*, including the issue for March 1931 entirely devoted to 'The World Economic Depression'.²⁰ The review contained the replies to a questionnaire about the causes of the crisis sent by the editor, Prof. Gino Arias, to leading foreign and Italian economists, together with a critical summary by Arias himself. Gramsci took a particular interest in Arias' views on the crisis which were well publicised at this time. In May Arias represented Fascist Italy at a special session of the League of Nations in Geneva attended by economic experts to discuss the causes of the crisis. Arias' report to the conference put forward what he described as a "decisively anti-conjunctural, organic interpretation" of the crisis, which he then propagated in articles in the leading Fascist review *Gerarchia*.²¹

Gramsci's critical engagement with Arias' interpretation of the crisis is in §6.123 and §6.130. However, the immediate stimulus behind these notes came from the real world. In his report to the special session in May Arias raised two questions: "Are the present signs of recovery, as we hope, the precursors of a new favourable conjuncture? If the present crisis is a crisis of the structure, of the whole economy, however, can the favourable conjuncture which seems to be imminent be regarded as a definitive end of the crisis?". The real world has a way of proving experts wrong, however 'brilliant' their use of language. No sooner had Arias gone into print about "the favourable conjuncture which seems to be imminent" than the world crisis arrived at a distinctly unfavourable conjuncture: the financial crisis of the summer of 1931.

The crisis began in May (as the economic experts met in Geneva) with a 'run' on the Creditanstalt bank of Austria and spread rapidly to Germany where Chancellor Brüning reported "a disastrously developing financial situation". The volume of withdrawals from the larger German banks increased throughout May, June, and

¹⁹ To Tatiana, 23 February 1931, LCII p. 398.

²⁰ See §6.123 based on the issue of *Economia* for March 1931, QCII p792-793.

²¹ Gino Arias: 'il significato storico della crisi economica', GER, June 1931, and 'Problemi economici mondiali', GER, August 1931.

July. In June Brüning's announcement of new economy measures and President Hoover's declaration of a one-year moratorium on debt repayments did nothing to restore confidence. In early July news that one of the big four German banks of deposit, the Danat, was on the brink of failure threatened to trigger a general run on the banks, including the savings banks. On 13 July Brüning issued an emergency decree ordering a general closure of the banks. Gramsci could follow the unfolding financial crisis in Germany through the periodicals; we know, for example, that he was following the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* closely at this time. Under the headline 'Grave Financial Crisis in Germany', the issue of 17 July gave a day-by-day account leading up to the moment of panic on 12-13 July:

12 July. The situation has taken a turn for the worse at the weekend. There has been a record exodus of foreign capital - yesterday's total alone is over 90,000,000 marks (£4,500,000). The German public, hitherto very steady, particularly during the anxious fortnight when the Hoover moratorium was held up, has begun to show signs of nervousness. The flight of foreign capital is now accompanied by a flight of domestic capital. It is particularly in the provinces that there has been a run on gold and foreign currency at the banks.....

13 July. The Danat Crash. The closing today of the Bourse and of the Danat (Darmstadter and National Bank), the biggest of the German private banks, brought the seriousness of the financial crisis home to the German public with a sudden shock. It has long been known that the bank was in difficulties..... There has been a considerable run on all banks, particularly the savings banks. The latter fulfilled all requirements this morning, but in the afternoon no sums bigger than 100 marks (nominally £5) were paid out here in Berlin. (Some of the provincial savings banks paid sums up to 300 marks). The run on the Berlin savings bank was so great that the staff was unable to cope with the crowd of customers, and shutters were lowered at one o'clock. Post office savings, according to a statement by Herr Schatz, the Postmaster General, are in no danger at all.

14 July. [Referring to the *Institut für Konjunkturforschung*'s predictions of the economic effects of the crisis, including intensified competition on world markets, bankruptcies of firms, increased unemployment etc, the report continued:] The purge that must now come will, it is feared, be a cruel one. Whether it will shake the German social structure or not depends largely on whether the new hardships that seem to be impending are equally distributed or not. Politics are very much in the background at the moment, but they can hardly remain so much longer.²²

The public mood was still precarious at the end of the month as 3 August, the day scheduled for ending the restrictions and reopening the banks, approached. In spite of the government's deflationary policies, the trauma of the 1923 inflation still haunted the public memory. The reopening of the banks, especially the savings banks, was the decisive test of public confidence.

²² 'Grave Financial Crisis in Germany', MGW, 17 July 1931. See also the reports of the financial crisis in Germany in *RSE*, 21, 28 July (pp's 1610,1630) and 11 August 1931 (p.1748).

To appreciate the difficulties of the German Government and of the Reichsbank it must be remembered that in Germany inflation is not merely a term to be found in the textbooks of economics, but a grim reality like a war, or some desolating epidemic. The fear has certainly diminished, for the difference between inflation and deflation has been manifest. But there is still a chance that it will flare up again, all the more so as the Nazis and the Communists have done all they can to keep it smouldering throughout the crisis.

As for the savings banks, only a very small fraction of their total deposits could be paid out over the counters without disastrous results. Will there be a run on the savings banks or not? Probably not, but there can be no certainty and even a partial run would be dangerous. Nor can anyone tell whether deposits turned into cash will be hoarded or converted into goods. Whether there will be another scare, economic or political in origin, or whether the cash, after being kept for a while, will be redeposited - all this depends on the state of the public mind, and that is a thing no one can assess with any certainty even if the general symptoms are reassuring. ²³

A superficial 'trace' of the financial crisis in Germany can be found in §6.90. *Psychology and Politics* in which he comments on the frequent use "especially in periods of financial crisis" of the word 'psychology' to explain certain phenomena. However, its influence went deeper than this. In the first place, Gramsci felt compelled by the financial crisis to attempt a first analysis of the causes of the world economic crisis. This was §6.123. *Past and Present. Observations on the Crisis, 1929-1930-?* in which he takes issue with the 'historical' explanation offered by Arias. The following note §6.130 on the exact meaning of the term "conjuncture" which Arias was 'flashing' around in *Gerarchia* at the time is connected with this. The critical encounter with Arias led Gramsci to adopt a new set of terms in analysing the structure-superstructure relation. In his first statement of this question in §4.38 he distinguished between "occasional" and "permanent" movements of the economic structure: the first were useful in judging the action of political personalities and groups, the second in judging the action of whole social groups. This fundamental distinction in his theory remained unchanged, but after the financial crisis of 1931 he adopts the terms 'conjunctural' and 'organic' used by Arias, but not before he had redefined them for himself. However, his whole mode of analysing structural phenomena continued to serve political purposes, ie, to judge political personalities and movements. As the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* observed, politics in Germany could hardly remain in the background for long.

²³ 'Renewed Crisis in Germany', *MGW*, 31 July.

The Revolt of the Berlin SA and the Prussian Plebiscite

The principle that occasional or 'conjunctural' movements are more closely linked to immediate political agitation was applied by Gramsci in observing political events in Germany at this time. For alongside the reports of the financial panic in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* during July and August 1931, Gramsci was reading about the plebiscitary campaign of Hitler and the Nazis in Prussia at this time. The plebiscite calling for the dissolution of the Prussian Landtag was due to be held on 9 August. To trace the 'imprints' of this campaign in the prison notes, however, we must briefly recapitulate its stages.

In February 1931 the right-wing parties walked out of the Social Democratic-dominated Prussian Landtag and began organising another petition. If sufficient signatures were collected, a plebiscite would be held on whether or not to dissolve the Landtag. The petition was submitted and a plebiscite was duly authorised for 9 August. The constitutional procedure afforded Hitler and the Nazis the opportunity to launch another demagogic campaign similar to that against the Young Plan the previous year, from which they reaped such impressive rewards in the September elections. Before the new plebiscitary campaign could gather momentum, however, it was rudely interrupted by another challenge to Hitler's leadership from within his own movement. The revolt was provoked by his order to the Storm Troops in February to stop street-fighting in compliance with an emergency decree of Brüning's government curbing political violence. It was led by Walter Stennes, leader of the Berlin SA, who challenged not only Hitler's tactic of 'legality' but his whole authority as leader. According to the report in *Gerarchia* :

Hitler reacted violently against these tendencies and left no doubt that he, as founder of the movement, would remain its supreme leader.....The mass of supporters and those leaders like Dr. Goebbels who were most concerned about public opinion understood that Hitler was right and were prepared to accept discipline and obey his orders. In this way the Stennes revolt enabled Hitler to consolidate and strengthen his position as supreme leader, to increase his popularity and at the same time to win a decisive victory for the party's idea of national unity.....Having rid himself of certain tendencies (Stennes has joined Strasser in forming a National Socialist revolutionary group), the movement has resumed its forward march behind its condottiere. Whether the movement will proceed in a peaceful or violent way only the future will tell ²⁴

²⁴ Giuseppe Renzetti: 'Hitleriani Dissidenti', *GER*, June 1931. The SA revolt was also reported under the rubric 'Cose Straniere' in *CC*, 2 May 1931.

The spreading financial panic in July threatened to coincide with the climax of the Prussian plebiscitary campaign fixed for 9 August. On 17 July the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* observed: "It is possible that the Nazi leaders might attempt a revolution. Such an outcome is perhaps unlikely in view of the admirable restraint shown by the German people in these trying days, but it would be foolish to rule it out entirely".²⁵ On 24 July under the alarmist headline 'Dangers in Germany. Political passions rising to fever heat', the *Weekly* reported the threat by the Communist Party to vote with Hitler and the right-wing 'National Opposition' in the plebiscite - a threat described as a piece of 'demogogy' worthy of the tactics of the extreme right. Speculating on the possible fall of the Brüning government, the paper observed that "the political calm of the last few days has been broken and political emotions have begun to rise very high. The extremist papers are full of the wildest threats, libels, and falsehoods".²⁶ A week later on 31 July the *Weekly* reported that public fear of another inflation had subsided "but there is still a chance that it will flare up again, all the more so as the Nazis and Communists have done all they can to keep it smouldering throughout the crisis".²⁷

In fact the financial situation began to stabilise before the Prussian plebiscite on 9 August. By this time the crisis had started to spread from Germany to Britain. Its most important political outcome would be not a Nazi 'revolution' in Germany but the fall of the Labour government in Britain. Nevertheless, as the day of the plebiscite approached the *Weekly* kept the political options open. On 7 August it reported that public confidence was returning: there was no run on the banks when they reopened. However, the outcome of the plebiscite remained uncertain and the Berlin correspondent had not ruled out the chance of a Nazi seizure of power: "The extremists - that is to say those who are for direct action for the German counterpart of a 'March on Rome' - are gaining ground. Whether Hitler is with them or not is uncertain - in all probability he is undecided".²⁸ The result was reported on 14 August: the right-wing National Opposition, joined by the Communists, were defeated, polling 10,000,000 votes against the required 13,300,000. The paper blamed the defeat on the defection of the Communist vote: "It is clear that the

²⁵ Under the rubric 'Comment and Criticism', *MGW*, 17 July 1931.

²⁶ 'Dangers in Germany. Political passions rising to fever heat', *MGW*, 24 July.

²⁷ 'Renewed Crisis in Germany. Good chances of recovery', *MGW*, 31 July.

²⁸ 'Confidence returning in Germany. The referendum in Prussia', *MGW*, 7 August 1931.

Communist rank-and-file have stood by their class and have refused to act as the agents of the German counter-revolution. They will not go into action as instruments of the Nazis and of the potential White Terror even if Moscow wishes it".²⁹ The failure of the Prussian plebiscite relieved the immediate political tension and encouraged the paper to think that the advance of extremism of the Left and the Right had been halted, if not reversed. This cautiously optimistic prognosis was based on the alleged failure of either the Nazis or the Communists to take advantage of the worsening economic situation in 1931:

Germany's economic situation has grown steadily worse since last September and it promises to grow even still worse. But there has not been a corresponding growth in political radicalism.....The explanation probably lies in the complete absence of any real leadership in the radical parties - the Nazis have not yet a single leader of anything more than demagogic ability, while the Communists have not even got a leader who can make a stirring speech. ³⁰

The most obvious trace of the plebiscitary campaign in Prussia in the prison notes can be found in §6.97. *Past and Present. Great Ambition and Petty Ambitions.* ³¹ This note may have been suggested by the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*'s comment comparing the "demogogy" of both sides, the Communists and the Nazis. The notebooks give no clue about what Gramsci thought of the tactic of the German Communists in the Prussian plebiscite, but it would probably have confirmed the dim view he had long since taken of the political capacity of the German Communist leadership. Whatever the case, Gramsci's account of the "inferior type" of demagogue in §6.97 undoubtedly refers to Hitler and the plebiscitary campaigning essential to his style of leadership. However, the most significant effect of the Prussian plebiscite campaign was to prompt Gramsci to return to the critique of Michels concept of 'charismatic parties' started a year earlier in Notebook 2.³² His observations on 'demogogy' were, in fact, a continuation of his thoughts on 'charismatic' leadership. The continuity of the prison notes may have been interrupted due to the hemorrhage he suffered on 3 August which left him temporarily unable to write. However, sometime in August or September he wrote

²⁹ 'The Referendum in Prussia. Failure of dissolution campaign', *MGW*, 14 August 1931. See also the reports on the failure of the Prussian plebiscite in *RSE*, 18-25 August (p.1799), 1 September (p.1886), 8 September 1931 (p.1915)

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ §6.97, *QCII* p. 771-772.

³² §2.75(ii). Robert Michels....., *QCI* p.234-239. The second part starts from : "Il capo carismatico puo appartenere a qualsiasi partito....."etc. For the dating of this second part, see below.

the second half of the two-part note, §2.75, which confirms that the question of charismatic leadership of political parties remained the guiding-thread of his thinking about the rise of Hitler.

The Catholic Bishops' Warning on Nazism

The unexpected success of the Nazis in the September elections aroused great anxiety among the Catholic bishops in Germany who issued a succession of statements at the close of 1930 and in early 1931 warning Catholics of the dangers of this new ultra-nationalist movement. The latest of these was the instruction issued on 5 March 1931 in the name of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Cologne and the bishops of the Rhineland province. This was reported in an important article in the Jesuit review *Civiltà Cattolica* for 16 May 1931.³³ It was the first authoritative account of the National Socialist movement in Germany including a biographical profile of its "condottiere" Hitler, a complete translation of the party's 25-point programme, and a survey of early Catholic reactions to the movement. The instruction of 5 March expressed regret that the Nazi leaders had not responded to earlier requests by the Catholic bishops to clarify the aims and principles of the movement and thus to remove the legitimate doubts and anxieties on the part of the Catholic population. Indeed, they had done nothing to prevent "the growing confusion of ideas and the spread of errors contrary to Catholic doctrine", nor had they expressed any disapproval of "the irreverent language and downright crude insults used by the National Socialists against the ecclesiastical authorities". After reminding the faithful of the condemnation pronounced by the Holy Father, Pius XI, against the *Action Française* movement, "which is obviously similar in certain key points to the errors of the (German) National Socialist leaders", the bishops issued "the most solemn warning with respect to National Socialism insofar as the political ideas and doctrines it supports are irreconcilable with Catholic doctrine". Two particular aspects of the movement's nationalism were singled out as being irreconcilable with the universality of Catholic doctrine: firstly since the revelation of Christ was for all the peoples and tribes of the earth, "as Christians we Catholics do not recognise any *religion of race* [italics in original]"; secondly as the word Catholic means universal, "we

³³ 'Il Nazionalsocialismo in Germania', CC, 16 May 1931, p.309-327. All subsequent quotations are taken from this article. See also the report "I socialnazionalisti, la repubblica e la Chiesa" in *RSE*, 9 June 1931, p.1239.

Catholics do not recognise any purely national church".

The bishops' warning stopped short, however, of an outright condemnation of the National Socialist movement based on Pius XI's pronouncement against *Action Francaise* even though its 'errors' were much the same. Why was this? The Church's reluctance to extend the papal condemnation of *Action Francaise* to National Socialism no doubt depended on calculation of the movement's political prospects which had been transformed by the election of September 1930. There was now a much greater possibility of Hitler coming to power in Germany than there ever was of Maurras taking power in France. This disturbing possibility led the Church to clutch at straws. Its hopes rested on a perceived difference of attitude towards Catholicism between Hitler and the other Nazi leaders, especially the party ideologue Rosenberg:

As far as the religious aspect is concerned, the book [*Mein Kampf*] avoids attacking the Catholic Church. Adolf Hitler takes a favourable view of several elements of Catholicism - the unity, the firm faith in dogma (amidst the continual fluctuation of the data of science), the celibacy of priests, from which stems, as he says, "the wonderful youthfulness, the spiritual flexibility and potent energy of this gigantic organisation". He rejects the struggle against 'ultramontanism' because it causes conflict between Catholics and Protestants from which only the Jews profit. Hitler is resolutely anti-Semitic. Hence those who would throw the nationalist movement into a crisis due to religious struggle are judged to be worse enemies than the Communists. But as the document of the Rhineland episcopate mentions, on this point the movement's practice suggests otherwise.

In fact, apart from Hitler the movement has several leaders and writers who stoke up the fire against the Catholic Church. One of these is Alfred Rosenberg, editor-in-chief of the party's main organ the *Volkischer Beobachter* [National Observer], who is well-known for his furious hostility against the Church and against any Christian sentiment.....³⁴

Although the German bishops clearly repudiated what they called "the religion of race", it seemed that the Jews were the best guarantee the Catholic Church had that Hitler (in spite of Rosenberg's hostility) would not launch a new *Kulturkampf* if he ever came to power in Germany.

When Gramsci read this account of National Socialism in *Civiltà Cattolica*, what was the guiding-thread of his thinking? Gramsci approached the question from the French rather than the German side. He was still working on Notebook 5 at the time compiling notes from back numbers of his reviews, including *Civiltà Cattolica*. One of these was §5.141. *Integral Catholics, Jesuits, Modernists* taken from an article of September 1929 on 'The long crisis of *Action*

³⁴ 'Il Nazionalsocialismo in Germania', cit., p. 311-312.

Francaise and its causes'.³⁵ At the end of this note he remarked that "a suggestion for the rubric 'past and present' could be taken from this note". What did he have in mind? It is likely that the connection lay in the possibility now raised by the German bishops that the papal condemnation of *Action Francaise* might be extended to National Socialism. This putative link between the two movements in Gramsci's thinking is confirmed by the additions he made when he rewrote this note in 1934.³⁶ By this time the Vatican had signed the Concordat with Nazi Germany (June 1933) thus settling for an 'Italian' rather than a 'French' solution to the Nazi problem. Nevertheless, it seemed from the Nazis' anti-Catholic campaign of 1934 that the Concordat was no guarantee that Hitler would not launch a new *Kulturkampf*. Gramsci expressed surprise at the Catholic Church's attitude to Hitlerism given that its anti-Christian tendency was plain to see long before he came to power.³⁷ He probably remembered the warning of the German bishops in 1931.

The Growing Climate of Anti-Semitism

The account of the National Socialist programme in *Civiltà Cattolica* stressed that the essential foundation of the movement was anti-semitism.

The Jewish spirit is 'putting private interest before public interest' and its material means are the Jewish system of banks, loans, and credit management. Hence every National Socialist must be an anti-semite, but not every anti-semite is a National Socialist. For there is a merely negative anti-semitism which aims to exclude the Jews from the life of the State and from the economy but keeps the Jewish spirit and its methods. National Socialist anti-semitism, however, is positive and constructive insofar as it wants to eradicate the Jewish spirit and its methods completely.....³⁸

Nazi anti-semitism may have found a more receptive public audience after the financial panic of the summer of 1931. The financial crisis seemed to testify to Nazi claims about the priority of "private interest", the reality of "interest slavery", and the prevalence of the "Jewish spirit". Meanwhile, evidence of Nazi anti-semitism in

³⁵ §5.141. *Integral Catholics, Jesuits, Modernists*, QCI p.671-673. Redrafted in 1934 in §20.04, QCIII p. 2100-2103.

³⁶ Note in particular: "The truth is that the Pope, and thus *Civiltà Cattolica* likewise, have steered well clear of identifying and 'punishing' with the same sanctions those individuals or groups which in other countries have the same tendencies as Maurras and do not attempt to hide them". QCIII, p.2101 (Full text translated in FSPN, p.88-92).

³⁷ §20.04, QCIII p.2103.

³⁸ 'Il Nazionalsocialismo in Germania', cit. p. 319.

action was provided by the footsoldiers of the movement whose riotous action in the streets of Berlin on 12 September was reported in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*.

The Nazi disorders are the worst anti-Semitic excesses there have yet been in Germany. It has now become difficult to give any assurance that Germany is a country safe for Jews. That this is a very grave matter indeed hardly needs emphasis. It is not made any less grave by the efforts of the German Conservative press to minimise what has happened. ³⁹

This was the general background to Gramsci's exchange of letters with Tatiana on the question of anti-semitism. In early September 1931 she wrote to him about a film she had recently seen by the German director E.A. Dupont, *Two Worlds*, about anti-semitism in pre-war Poland. Gramsci feared that she really believed in the existence of the "two worlds" (ie, of Jews and Gentiles) and tried to rescue her from "a way of thinking worthy of the Black Hundreds, the Ku Klux Klan, or the German swastikas".⁴⁰

The British General Election, 27 October 1931

In the second half of July the financial crisis spread from Germany to Britain. This was initially due to technical reasons rather than a loss of confidence in sterling: Germany's introduction of exchange control on 15 July caused foreign depositors to withdraw their money from London to restore their lost liquidity. However, the publication of the report of the May Committee on 1 August with its alarmist projections of a future budget deficit transformed the liquidity crisis into a crisis of confidence in sterling.

The confidence of the domestic depositor apparently remained unshaken: there was no run on the banks in Britain as there was in Germany. Nevertheless, the Labour Government of Ramsey MacDonald now came under strong pressure to balance the budget, to prove that it was firmly against inflationary policies which might lead to a devaluation of the pound. Apparently unable to get cabinet agreement on the necessary economies, MacDonald announced the resignation of the Labour government on 24 August and the formation of a 'National' Government with Liberal and Conservative participation under his own leadership.⁴¹

³⁹ 'Anti-Semitic Riot in Berlin', MGW, 18 September 1931.

⁴⁰ To Tatiana, 5 October 1931, LCII p.475.

⁴¹ 'A National Government in Office', MGW, 28 August 1931.

Snowden's budget on 10 September failed to stop the run on the pound and on 21 September Britain abandoned the gold standard.⁴² Up to this point MacDonald had resisted the growing pressure of the Conservatives to call a general election, reassuring the Liberals (who strongly opposed the idea) that an election was unthinkable in the midst of the gold standard crisis. Now that the gold standard was abandoned, he capitulated to Conservative demands. Confidence would be restored by the election of a National Government with a popular mandate to take harsh measures to tackle the crisis. Parliament was dissolved on 5 October and a general election called for 27 October.⁴³

The election campaign of the National 'bloc' deliberately fanned the fears of the ruinous consequences of the re-election of a Labour Government. In a controversial radio broadcast on 17 October Snowden denounced the Labour manifesto as "Bolshevism run mad"⁴⁴ whilst MacDonald scared an election audience by brandishing a handful of German banknotes from the 1923 inflation. The Liberal Runciman warned the depositors of the Post Office savings bank that Labour would squander their hard-earned savings to pay for the dole.⁴⁵ In short, every effort was made to mobilise the panic of the British middle classes in support of the 'National' cause.

For news of the British election campaign Gramsci probably relied on the reports in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* although this was now supplemented by the *Corriere della Sera* which he began receiving in October 1931. The extraordinary result was reported in the English weekly on 30 October under the headline 'Government Majority 500. Labour Party submerged'.⁴⁶

⁴² 'Britain Suspends the Gold Standard' and the editorial 'Off the Gold Standard', MGW, 25 September 1931.

⁴³ 'Parliament appeals to the Country', MGW, 9 October 1931; 'Le elezioni inglesi previste per il 27 ottobre', CS, 7 ottobre 1931. Further reports on the British election campaign CS 9, 10, 14, 15, 18, 20, 21, 25, 27 ottobre 1931.

⁴⁴ 'Mr. Snowden's Attack on Labour', MGW, 23 October 1931. See also the report of Snowden's broadcast in 'Tutta la tecnica mobilitata per la campagna elettorale inglese', CS, 20 ottobre 1931.

⁴⁵ Editorial: 'The Savings of the Poor', MGW, 30 October 1931.

⁴⁶ MGW, 30 October 1931. Gramsci directly refers to this issue in §7.94. *English Labourism*, QCII p.923, confirming that this was the source he used for the election results. See also MGW, 6 November 1931, for the final state of the parties in the new Parliament.

See also: 'Grande vittoria nazionale in Gran Bretagna' under the rubric 'Recentissime', CS, 28 ottobre 1931, and 'Completa disfatta del laburismo britannico', CS, 29 ottobre 1931. The British election result was also reported in *RSE*, 3 November 1931, p.2370.

The Party StrengthsGovernment

Conservatives	470
National Labour	13
National Liberals	33
Liberal Nationals (Simon Group)	31
Independent	<u>4</u>
Total	551

Opposition

Labour	51
Liberals	5
Independent Labour	1
New Party	0
Communists	0
Irish Nationalists	<u>2</u>
Total	59

The aggregate vote was:-

For the Government	14,150,915
Against the Government	7,215,915

With five results to be declared in the next few days,
the alignment of parties is:-

	Seats	Gains	Losses	Net Gain	Net Loss
Government	551	221	5	216	-
Opposition	59	5	221	-	216

Under the headline 'The Tory Parliament' the editorial commented:

The result of the election of 1931 has no parallel in our political history.....The Conservative vote has been solid; the Liberal vote has gone almost unitedly for the Government; at least 10 per cent, and in many places a great deal more, of the Labour poll of 1929 has turned against its party. More than anyone could have thought possible party distinctions have been sunk for the sake of returning the candidates who protested most loudly that they were the true supporters of the 'National Government'

Gramsci's response to the British election results of 1931 was to compare them with the German election results of 1930 to see what had happened to the political parties in the two countries. His observations were set out in two notes, §4.69 and §7.77.⁴⁷ These were later brought together and redrafted as §13.23. *Observations on Some Aspects of the Structure of Political Parties in Periods of Organic Crisis*.⁴⁸ Although he does not refer directly to the British election, it is probable that the phenomenon described in §4.69 of the "fusion of a class under a single leadership in order to solve a dominant, life-or-death problem" refers to the crushing victory of the National Government in Britain. Gramsci called this parliamentary solution of the crisis "organic" in contrast to the solution by means of the "providential man" which was under preparation in Germany.

⁴⁷ §4.69. *On the Parties*, QCI p.513; §7.77. *The Intellectuals. The Political Parties*, QCII p.910.

⁴⁸ §13.23, QCIII p.1602-1605.

Whilst the headlines in Gramsci's sources presented the result of the British election as a historic defeat for the Labour Party, later notes indicate that he was more interested in the fate of the Liberal Party. We know this from a direct reference in §15.02. *Machiavelli*, written in 1933.⁴⁹ Gramsci argued that the industrialists do not have a permanent political party of their own but "make use of all the existing parties at one time or another". This might explain why traditional 'industrial' parties like the English Liberal party or the French Radical party - which do not "represent a single big class, but a nexus between big classes and small classes" - appear and disappear from time to time. He referred back to what had happened in Britain after October 1931 "where the Conservative party has devoured the Liberals who traditionally claimed to be the party of the industrialists".⁵⁰ The fact that this note was written at the time of the German election of March 1933, however, suggests that Gramsci thought of the disappearance of "middle parties" as a general phenomenon which included Germany.

Public Opinion 'Booms':
the political use of radio and the 'yellow press'

The use of the radio during the British election campaign was a new aspect of political 'technique' which was remarked upon in both the British and the Italian press.⁵¹ A week after the results were declared, an editorial in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* put the question in a wider perspective and expressed serious misgivings about its potential use in elections "to manufacture public opinion with unprecedented rapidity".

There is, first, the question how unanimity is obtained, whether by fair argument or by the unscrupulous arts of the demagogue. A hundred years ago it was natural to see in bribery and intimidation the main hindrances to the free exercise of the franchise. Those dangers have almost disappeared but more insidious ones have taken their place. Of these the chief is the possibility of clouding the mind of the electorate by sudden appeals to emotion. The danger developed with the popular press and has now been enormously reinforced by broadcasting. The Khaki election of 1900, the Chinese slavery cry of 1906, the 'make Germany pay' election of 1918, the anti-Communist scare of 1924, and the scare about the pound in 1931 are the most conspicuous examples. It will be noticed that on the last two occasions it was an appeal to panic which created the conditions favourable to mass movements of opinion. A general sense of fear is very easy to spread and extraordinarily difficult to remove except as time may show the causes of fear to be imaginary. Nobody now believes that

⁴⁹ §15.02, QCIII p.1750-1751.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.1750.

⁵¹ See, for example, the editorial comment on 'Politics by Wireless' in MGW, 25 September 1931; and 'La radio e il grammofofono aiutano l'oratoria elettorale inglese' under the rubric 'Recentissime', CS, 23 October 1931.

there is, or was in 1924, a serious Communist menace in this country, or that the Zinovieff letter ever had more than the smallest intrinsic importance. Probably not one person in a hundred now remembers what the Zinovieff letter was about. The scare about the pound was not so obviously manufactured as the scare about the Zinovieff letter, but the public's fears were played upon more persistently and with even less regard to probability, or scrupulous regard for the whole truth, than in 1924. A decisive verdict at the polls under such circumstances is evidence not of fitness for democratic government but of fresh difficulties which must be surmounted before democracy can be said to be safe. The fact that the mass mind can be created so easily and so quickly out of so little is occasion not for rejoicing but for serious misgivings⁵²

The editorial thought that the National Government's crushing majority was a serious danger to democracy. The publicity system had combined with the electoral system to produce a distorted result. The government was given "dictatorial powers" and was warned against acting as "the agent of single class".

The scales are weighted wrongly in two ways. We have, firstly, a publicity system which makes it possible to manufacture public opinion with unprecedented rapidity, and an electoral system which gives exaggerated representation to the majority thus manufactured. If what is wanted is firm and stable government, this is not the way to go about it. If distortion occurs in one direction it will occur in the opposite direction later on, and government will oscillate between extremes. That, indeed, is the most probable outcome of the present situation. But it holds a clear threat to the future of democracy in this country. The government has acquired dictatorial powers. It will be almost free from the restraining influence of Parliamentary criticism and debate. So long as it uses its powers with discretion and restraint the tyranny may be masked. But if it ever begins to act as the agent of a single class or interest it will arouse such resentment as, in the absence of all constitutional outlet, may even threaten the foundations of democratic government.

In §1.48 Gramsci had pointed out the key role played by "the so-called organs of public opinion" in maintaining the 'normal' equilibrium of force and consent on which the hegemony of the dominant class depended. In §7.83 and §7.103 he takes the concept of "public opinion" a step further in the light of the British election campaign, traces of which can be detected in both notes. He invents the notion of public opinion "booms", ie, "stimulating on the spur of the moment bursts of panic or artificial enthusiasm as a means of achieving certain goals, for example in elections". As the British election showed, the radio had played a special role in manufacturing the necessary 'boom'.

The Harzburg Front

In spite of the failure of the plebiscite in Prussia, the German Right kept up the momentum of its campaign against the 'system'. On the eve of the reopening of the Reichstag in October, the forces of the National Opposition met at Harzburg.

⁵² Editorial 'A Democratic Triumph?', MGW, 6 November 1931.

The liberal *Manchester Guardian Weekly* was struck by the anachronistic aspect of the 'Harzburg Front' which it compared to a scarecrow with the sawdust running out. It doubted whether the assorted elements making up this so-called 'front' could ever be an effective political force:

The Hitlerites, the Stahlhelmers (Steel Helmets), Hugenburg's Nationalists, Dr. Schacht, General von Seeckt, the handful of industrial magnates, and the odds and ends of princes and generals of the old regime are too incongruous a medley to feel, or think, or act in concert. The 'National Opposition' spent itself in quarrelling for precedence - the Nazis wanted to march ahead of the Stahlhelmers, and the Stahlhelmers at the head of the Nazis. Cheers for Hugenburg were drowned by counter-cheers for Hitler..... 'Harzburg' has become a symbol, a kind of scarecrow wearing a spiked helmet, and holding the colours of Imperial Germany - black, white, and red - in one hand and the Nazi red flag with the white disk and anti-Semitic swastika in the other.⁵³

It was not the petty rivalry between the Nazis and Nationalists that impressed Gramsci but the way in which the new "intellectuals" of the German Right, the Nazis, publicly associated themselves with the traditional intellectuals. Their public collaboration with these 'reactionary' elements, however, did not prevent them from being presented by fascist writers as 'revolutionaries'. A further article on the Harzburg Front in the fascist *Nuova Antologia* in December observed that the failure of the Prussian plebiscite was only an episode in the ongoing siege of Social Democratic-Centre stronghold in Prussia, and looked forward to the coming year when fresh elections for the Reich Presidency and for the Prussian Diet were due. The writer illustrated the way in which fascists appropriated the "revolutionary" imagery of the communists. With obvious schematism it argued that just as the Social Democrats were being outflanked by the 'revolutionary' Communists, so the Nationalists had now been overtaken by the 'revolutionary' Nazis. Under Hugenburg's leadership the Nationalists with "their empty dreams of restorations and of impossible returns" had lost touch with the new realities. Their purely negative politics had

suddenly led to the unexpected upsurge of National Socialism which assumed such gigantic proportions in the elections of 14 September 1930 that it has taken over the leadership from and almost swamped the old German-National Right, and together with them is pushing at the doors of the State; meanwhile the progressive embourgeoisement of the Socialists has ended up by pushing the masses in increasingly big cohorts, step and step in the last three general elections, towards Communism which has also rapidly swelled to gigantic proportions. Thus the two "revolutions" have emerged, the National Socialist and the Communist. The gloomy twilight of the hybrid social-bourgeois republic of Weimar is played out between these two poles.⁵⁴

⁵³ Under the headline 'German Chancellor hits out', *MGW*, 16 October 1931. For the Harzburg Front see also under the rubric *Germania*, *RSE*, 20 October 1931 (p.2252 and p.2281).

⁵⁴ Giuseppe Piazza: 'La crisi tedesca e il fronte di Bad Harzburg', *NA*, 1 December 1931

Notebooks 4-7

§7.10. Structure-Superstructure

In November 1930 Gramsci began a new series of notes on the structure-superstructure relation. This included the famous §7.10. *Structure and Superstructure* in which he began to develop the implications of his analysis of this problem for political tactics and strategy. This note (and its 'twin' §7.16) is often taken with some justification to be a synthesis of Gramsci's whole theory. A study of the historical-political context of §7.10, however, throws fresh light on its meaning. There are three aspects which have not been fully recognised or appreciated.

Firstly, the note is an attempt to explain the general implications for tactics and strategy of the results of the latest *German elections of September 1930* in which the relatively modest gains made by the Communists were far outweighed by the dramatic advance of Hitler and the National Socialists.

Secondly, the note is a critique of the *current tactic* of the Comintern - the tactic of the 'third period' after 1929 - although Gramsci chose, for complex prudential reasons, to give his views an impeccably orthodox disguise. Under the circumstances, his disagreement with the Comintern's policy placed him in an 'impossible' position: condemned by the fascist tribunal in Rome, he now faced condemnation by the "invisible" tribunal in Moscow. In §7.10 Gramsci found a way of telling the truth under impossible circumstances.

Thirdly, the note was deliberately intended to have a *double meaning*. This was entirely consistent with his fundamental conception of the objective or 'scientific' status of political theory. The political theory is cast in the form of an elaborate military metaphor based on the experiences of the First World War, but when he describes the 'attacking' and 'defending' forces we cannot be entirely certain which side is which, the Left or the Right, since attack and defence may pertain to both sides. This ambiguity is the main *strength* not the main weakness of Gramsci's thought (as some have argued). In this case, the ambiguity is particularly useful in analysing the two faces of Fascism as both 'attack' and 'defence', both 'revolution' and 'restoration'.

Past and Present: 1923 and 1930

The Circular Letter, February 1924

To understand the synthesis contained in §7.10 we must trace the history which it "recapitulates". For there is a complex "symmetry" of past and present in Gramsci's thinking in this note. The symmetry is between two events which we will call the German 'October' of 1923 and the German 'September' of 1930: the first refers to the failure of the revolutionary attempt by the Communists in Germany in October 1923, the second to the breakthrough of the Nazis in the German elections of September 1930. The election results convinced Gramsci that the international tactic of "frontal attack" was as mistaken in 1930 as it proved to be in 1923, but in 1930 the mistake had the *opposite political significance* from what it had after 1923.

The origin of §7.10 can be traced back to the circular letter Gramsci sent from Vienna in February 1924 to the other members of the new leading group of the Italian Communist party.¹ The letter was written in the context of the debate going on in the Comintern about the lessons of the failure of the revolutionary attempt in Germany in October 1923 - the so-called German 'October'.² The decisive testing-ground of the international tactic was Germany, so what happened in that country was crucially significant for every other European party, including the Italians. Gramsci appreciated that "the key to the international situation" in 1930 was Germany just as it had been in 1923, and the tactical argument of §7.10 - war of position or war of manoeuvre? united front or frontal attack? - depended primarily on the *current* situation in Germany.

The agenda of Gramsci's circular letter was set by Terracini who invited him to give his views on two interconnected questions:-

Firstly, what were the implications of the German defeat of 1923 for the current tactic of the Comintern, namely, the tactic of the united front adopted after the Third Congress in 1921 in place of the tactic of frontal attack? The implications were

¹ Gramsci to Togliatti, Terracini, and others, 9 February 1924 [the 'circular letter'] in Palmiro Togliatti: *La formazione del gruppo dirigente del Partito comunista italiano nel 1923-1924* (1969) p.185-201 (Translated in SPW p.191-203).

² It was at Trotsky's suggestion that the revolutionary attempt in Germany in 1923 should coincide with the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in October 1917: hence the German 'October' expressed Trotsky's "schematic" thinking, which failed to differentiate tactically between East and West.

spelled out in a report headed *Lessons of the German Events and United Front Tactics* written by Zinoviev and approved by the Praesidium in January 1924.³ Terracini, who was then in Moscow, sent Gramsci a copy. The essence of the tactical question was this: did the defeat in Germany show the failure of the united front or the failure of frontal attack? Gramsci thought the united front tactic was correct and blamed the defeat on the leaders of the German Communist party who did not apply it in practice. The defeat of October 1923 was a repeat of the defeat of March 1921 ("a new March 1921") which led to the adoption of the united front tactic in the first place. It therefore strengthened the case for sticking to this tactic, only making sure that it was properly applied in practice. Gramsci often remarked on "the absence of leaders which is characteristic of Germany".⁴ He thought that the leading groups of the left and the right of the party were "both inadequate and incapable".⁵ In a further letter to Terracini Gramsci repeated his pessimistic view of the political capacity of the left which now took over the leadership of the German party:

Obviously it is necessary to support the left which represents the real movement of the revolutionary masses, but has the left found its true political and ideological expression in the present leaders? This is the crux of the problem, it seems to me. It could lead to acute and profound crises as yet unforeseen by the party; it could even bring the party to the edge of catastrophe.⁶

His view of the leaders of German Communism had not changed two years later. Giovanni Farina, an Italian delegate to the Sixth Plenum in Moscow in February-March 1926, recalls:

On returning to Italy I had a conversation with comrade Gramsci. I gave him my impressions of some of the people in the German delegation attending the Plenum (Rosenberg, Ruth Fischer, Urbans, and some others). I still remember what Gramsci said: "The German proletariat is like a very deep and well-contained sea and all these people are just floating corks. They have no links with the masses..... We'll have to see where the storm will carry them".⁷

³ G. Zinoviev: 'Lessons of the German Events and United Front Tactics' in *The Communist International* (Monthly Organ of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, published simultaneously in English, Russian, French and German), No.2, February 1924, p.84-103.

⁴ Circular letter, in Togliatti cit., p.188.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.188.

⁶ Gramsci to Terracini, 27 March 1924, in Togliatti cit., p.262.

⁷ Giovanni Farina: 'Gramsci come l'ho conosciuto', in *Gramsci: Scritti di Togliatti etc* (Societa Editrice L'Unita, Roma, 1945)

What was the relation between past and present on the question of tactics? In 1929 the Comintern reversed its tactic, from united front back to frontal attack. Gramsci knew immediately this was a mistake as regards Italy since "frontal attack" simply could not be applied in the current situation. But the elections in September 1930 showed that it was not right for Germany either: this was obvious not only from the electoral breakthrough of the fascists but also from the solidity of the social democratic vote. The German 'September' of 1930 indicated that the tactic of frontal attack was likely to end in defeat, just as it had done in the German 'October' of 1923: this was the first element of 'symmetry' in §7.10.

Secondly, Terracini asked Gramsci to explain why he refused to sign Bordiga's *Manifesto of the Communist Left* issued in December 1923.⁸ The manifesto reviewed the differences of the Italian Communists with the Comintern since the Third Congress of 1921. Bordiga argued that the Comintern's tactical policy was useless internationally because it was "too Russian". Judging from the timing of the manifesto, he must have thought that the latest defeat in Germany was due to this. Gramsci summarised Bordiga's position as follows:

He thinks that the tactic of the International reflects the Russian situation, ie, was born on the terrain of a backward and primitive capitalist civilisation. For him this tactic is extremely voluntaristic.....He thinks that for the more developed countries of central and western Europe this tactic is inadequate or even useless. In these countries, the historical mechanism functions according to all the approved schemes of Marxism. There exists the historical determinism which was lacking in Russia, and therefore the overriding task must be the organisation of the party as an end in itself.⁹

Gramsci took a different view. He agreed that there was a difference between the relatively primitive capitalist civilisation in Russia and the more advanced capitalist countries of Europe ('East' and 'West'), but the German defeat of 1923 showed that the essential difference was not structural but *superstructural*.

I think that the situation is quite different. Firstly, because the political conception of the Russian communists was formed on an international and not a national terrain. Secondly, because in central and western Europe the development of capitalism has not only determined the formation of the broad proletarian strata, but also - and as a consequence - has created the higher stratum, the labour aristocracy, with its appendages in the trade union bureaucracy and the social democratic groups. The determinism, which in Russia was direct and drove the masses on to the streets for a revolutionary uprising, is complicated in central and western Europe by all these political superstructures created by the greater development of capitalism. This makes the action of the masses slower and

⁸ On Gramsci's response to Bordiga's manifesto and his exposition of the differences between them, see Paolo Spriano: *Storia del partito comunista italiano. Da Bordiga a Gramsci* (Einaudi, 1967), p.304-313.

⁹ Circular letter cit., p.196-197.

more prudent, and therefore requires of the revolutionary party a strategy and tactics altogether more complex and long-term than those which were necessary for the Bolsheviks in the period between March and November 1917.¹⁰

This passage contains the second element of 'symmetry' in §7.10: the complicating effects of the superstructures in the West. In 1923 the structural determinism in Germany (ie, the catastrophic inflation) could not have been more compelling, but far from "driving the masses on to the streets for a revolutionary uprising" the action of the German proletariat was "complicated by all these political superstructures". Gramsci saw that the structural crisis of 1929 was just as catastrophic as that of 1923, but the German 'September' of 1930 showed the complicating effects of the superstructures, only Gramsci had now extended the scope of the 'terrain' to include the superstructures of civil society as well as political society. In view of the complex network of superstructures in the advanced countries, which he compared in §7.10 to the "trench systems of modern warfare", Gramsci saw no reason for a change of tactic. The tactic appropriate to the 'Western' front was the united front, not frontal attack.

This brings us to the third element of symmetry between past and present. Bordiga's criticism of Russian leadership of the Comintern recalled Lenin's last speech at the Fourth Congress in 1922. Lenin's admitted that the policy on organisation adopted at the previous congress had been a "mistake" because the European comrades (he specifically referred to the Italians) had been unable to implement it in their own countries. As Lenin put it, the policy could not be "translated" into European languages because it was "too Russian". Gramsci had attended the Fourth Congress in person and was deeply impressed by Lenin's last speech. He recalled his words in §7.02 at the start of the same series of notes as §7.10 and §7.16.

§7.02. *Translatability of scientific and philosophical languages.* In 1921, on questions of organisation, Vilici said and wrote: "we have not been able to 'translate' our own language into 'European' languages"¹¹

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ §7.02, QCII p.854. Gramsci mistakenly gives the date of the Third Congress in 1921 whereas the speech to which he refers was to the Fourth Congress in 1922. In this connection, note Lenin's remark to Clara Zetkin during the Third Congress in 1921: "You once wrote to me that we Russians should learn to understand western psychology a little and not thrust our hard, rugged methods upon people all at once. I took notice of that". Clara Zetkin: *Reminiscences of Lenin* p.28.

The third element of symmetry was Lenin's definition of a "mistake". Gramsci made a note of Lenin's words because he regarded the Comintern's current tactic of frontal attack as a mistake. It could not be "translated" into European languages. This was because Stalin, the current international leader, was "too Russian". In §7.16 Gramsci implied this without directly saying it, but direct confirmation of his intention can be found in the oral not the written record.

Trotsky's Lessons of October, September 1924

In the circular letter of February 1924 Gramsci disagreed with Bordiga that the policy of the Comintern was too Russian since "the political conception of the Russian communists was formed on an international not a national terrain". Gramsci was thinking of Lenin *and Trotsky*. Indeed, Trotsky's theses on the united front (1922) were an attempt to solve precisely the problem raised by Lenin of "translating" Russian thinking into European languages. The German defeat of 1923 showed that the "translation" in Lenin's sense of the word, ie, translation *from theory into practice*, was far from successful, but Gramsci blamed this on the political deficiency of the German leaders. When we turn to the prison notes, however, the *contrast* in "the political conception of the Russian communists" could not be sharper: where Lenin was "profoundly national and profoundly European" in §7.16, Trotsky was now "superficially national and superficially European". Why did Gramsci change his judgement of Trotsky?

The appearance of Trotsky's *Lessons of October* in September 1924 raised doubts in Gramsci's mind about Trotsky's knowledge of European languages, in Lenin's sense of "practical" knowledge. Trotsky argued that the German communists had missed the revolutionary moment in 1923 because they stuck to the official tactic of the united front instead of making "a brusque tactical turn" in sufficient time to seize the revolutionary opportunity which had suddenly arisen. Had they shown the same tactical flexibility as Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917 they could have taken power. Although he agreed with Trotsky about the political shortcomings of the German leaders, Gramsci's explanation of the German defeat was already more complicated than this. In particular, the 'retarding' effects on the German proletariat of the political superstructures, especially social democracy, made any attempt to use Russia as a 'model' for Germany - as in Trotsky's German 'October' - far

more problematical than Trotsky's argument seemed to recognise. Indeed, Gramsci had already concluded in February: "This makes the action of the masses slower and more prudent and therefore requires of the revolutionary party a strategy and tactics altogether more complex and long-term than those which were necessary for the Bolsheviks in the period between March and November 1917".¹² In fact, Gramsci's thinking about the lessons of the German defeat was already set on a divergent path from Trotsky's, and so it was not entirely an exercise in communist 'discipline' when he supported the official criticism of the *Lessons of October*.¹³ It was on the strength of Trotsky's position *after* the German 'October' of 1923 that Gramsci would later describe him in the notebooks as "the political theorist of frontal attack *in a period* when it only leads to defeat". However, by this time his sharp criticism of Trotsky was outdated and gratuitous - unless, that is, the current situation in 1930 had given it an entirely new meaning.

In fact, the criticism of Trotsky was a fourth element of symmetry between past and present. In ordering a change to "frontal attack", Stalin was now making the same error for which Trotsky had been 'officially' condemned at an earlier stage. Gramsci wrote §7.10 and §7.16 in the form of critiques of the revolutionary theories of Luxemburg and Trotsky respectively: his orthodoxy in these notes can only be described as "impeccable". But the political context in which he wrote them shows that Gramsci's orthodoxy was a machiavellian "disguise".

The Mistakes of 'Luxemburgism' and 'Trotskyism', 1925

In April 1925 Gramsci went to Moscow to participate directly in the work of the Fifth Plenum of the Comintern. The campaign of criticism sparked by Trotsky's *Lessons of October* still filled the atmosphere and was echoed in the official document which emerged from the Plenum, the *Theses on the Bolshevisation of Communist Parties*.¹⁴ The German defeat of 1923 was attributed to the theoretical errors of 'Luxemburgism' and 'Trotskyism' which were now officially defined and denounced. The relevant thesis ran as follows:

¹² Circular letter cit., p.197.

¹³ The article 'Come non si deve scrivere la storia della rivoluzione bolscevica. A proposito del 1917 di Leo Trotzki' originally appeared in the *Pravda* and was translated and published in *l'Unita* on 19 November 1924. See Gramsci's 'heading' to the article in CPC, p.211-212.

¹⁴ See *The Communist International: Documents*, Volume II 1923-1928, selected and edited by Jane Degras (London, 1971) p.188-200.

Among the most important mistakes of the Luxemburgians of practical significance today are: (a) the unbolshevik treatment of the question of 'spontaneity' and 'consciousness', of 'organisation' and 'the masses'. Their false ideas on this question.....prevented them from appraising correctly the role of the party in the revolution; (b) underestimation of the technical factor in preparing insurrections was, and is in part today, an obstacle to the correct treatment of the question of 'organising' the revolution; (c) mistakes in regard to the attitude to the peasantry.....

Trotskyism is a particularly dangerous deviation from Leninism; it is a variety of menshevism combining 'European' opportunism with 'left-radical' phrases which frequently conceal its politically passive character. Trotskyism is not an isolated deviation towards menshevism but a year-long system of struggle against Leninism. Nor is Trotskyism a purely Russian phenomenon; it is international in character. To achieve Leninism in the Comintern means to expose Trotskyism in all parties and to liquidate it as a tendency¹⁵

Whatever reservations he may have had about their form, Gramsci must have agreed with the *substance* of these criticisms. Indeed, the official criticisms of Luxemburg and Trotsky are deliberately echoed in §7.10 and §7.16. But the whole political context had changed by 1930-31 and this changed their political meaning. As Gramsci perceived that past heresy had now become present orthodoxy. The official criticism of the errors of 'Luxemburgism' and 'Trotskyism' provided Gramsci with an impeccably orthodox disguise with which he could 'safely' commit to writing what he thought of the Comintern's current "error".

The Tactical Mistake of 1929-30

At the end of 1929 the Comintern made a 'tactical turn' which coincided with the new phase of economic crisis triggered by the Wall Street Crash. The resolution adopted by the Comintern Executive in Moscow in February 1930 launched a new slogan, first invented by the "heretic" Rosa Luxemburg: the *political mass strike* :

11. In those countries which have entered the phase of crisis, the expansion of the revolutionary surge is revealed not only in the sharper character of the strikes themselves but also in the variety of the forms of struggle.....The slogan of the political mass strike is the order of the day.

14.iv. The development of industrial struggles.....imposes on communist parties the task of popularising the slogan of the political mass strike.¹⁶

The new policy was immediately adopted by the Italian Communist party and announced by Togliatti the same month:

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.191-192.

¹⁶ 'Resolution on the Economic Crisis and Unemployment', February 1930, in *The Communist International. Documents*, Vol.3 1929-1943, selected and edited by Jane Degras (London, 1971) p.107-108.

As the vanguard we must pursue this directive and energetically launch the propaganda for the general strike, and for the *political general strike* ; both our own organisations and the masses must start preparing for the general strike.¹⁷

As we saw, Gramsci was informed of the change of tactic by Gennaro in June 1930. "It was an extraordinary novelty, for which I was completely unprepared".¹⁸ He immediately thought the tactical change was a mistake as far as Italy was concerned. This was the "practical origin" of §3.33. *Some Causes of Error* , which must have been written shortly after hearing the news.

§3.33. *Some Causes of Error*. A government, or a politician, or a social group adopts a political or economic line. They draw general conclusions from it, interpreting present reality and forecasting its future development, far too easily. They do not take sufficient account of the fact that the policy being applied, the initiative being promoted etc, may be based on a miscalculation and may not correspond therefore to any "concrete historical activity". In historical as well as in biological life there are, along with live births, such things as abortions. History and politics are inseparable, they are in fact the same thing, but it is still necessary to discriminate in judging historical facts and political facts and actions. In history, given the breadth of perspective on the past and given that the very results of actions are proof of their historical vitality, fewer errors of judgement are made than in judging political facts and actions still in course. The great politician must therefore be 'highly cultivated', that is, he must 'know' as many elements of present-day life as possible. He must know them not in a 'bookish' or 'erudite' way but in a 'living' way, as the concrete substance of his political 'intuition'. (Still, if they are to become the living substance of his 'intuition' he must also learn them 'from books').¹⁹

This note corresponds to Gramsci's negative reaction to the news reported by Gennaro. The change of tactic was a mistake because it did not correspond to any "concrete historical activity" in Italy. The politician who made this mistake was not "highly cultivated", otherwise he would have known this. If he had known anything about the "elements of present-day life" in Italy, for example, not to mention other countries, he would not have made this mistake. Indeed, it seems that this politician did not know the first thing about the concrete elements of life outside his own country since he did not even read books about them. Gramsci leaves us to speculate about who the politician in question was, but were not these the characteristics of the present leader of the international movement, Stalin, who does not compare with the "great politician" Lenin or even the "bookish" Trotsky?

¹⁷ Quoted in Paolo Spriano: *Storia del partito comunista italiano. Gli anni della clandestinità* (Einaudi, 1969) p.244 and note. From a speech by Togliatti published as an editorial under the title 'Necessità di una svolta' in *Lo Stato Operaio*, 2, February 1930

¹⁸ Letter to Tatiana written the same day, 16 June 1930, LCI p.339.

¹⁹ §3.33, QCI p.310-311.

The German 'September', 1930

The results of the elections in Germany persuaded Gramsci that the international tactic was *generally* mistaken. He must have been particularly interested in what the results revealed about the *speed* of the political process. The analysis he had made after the German crisis of 1923 regarding the *slower tempo* of the revolutionary movement in the West was vindicated by the results. The relatively modest shift of working-class support from the Social Democrats to the Communists confirmed that the 'determinism' set in motion by the economic crisis of 1929 was indeed 'complicated' by the political superstructures, making the action of the masses 'slower and more prudent'. But if this was true of the forces of the Left, could the same be said of the Right? The most remarkable feature of the results was the unexpected *speed* with which the forces of the Right realigned themselves behind Hitler and the National Socialists. This altered the whole relation of forces and convinced Gramsci that what was maturing in Germany was not a revolutionary crisis, but the possible catastrophe of the German Communist party which he had feared since 1923. Far from proving the directives of the Third International right as the Soviet press claimed, the German election results proved them wrong.

The Political Conversations, November 1930:
the Question of "Lightning Speed".

Gramsci kept his disagreement to himself until November when he started up the cycle of conversations with the other communist prisoners at Turi. He wanted to educate the comrades to be more realistic in their thinking and to dispel the false hopes which the new line encouraged that the fall of Fascism in Italy was imminent. The *speed* with which they thought this was going to happen was positively *Russian*. According to Giuseppe Ceresa:

He was offended by the superficiality of certain comrades who, in 1930, would habitually assert that Fascism was on the point of collapse (*two or three months more.....by the winter at the latest*, these glib prophets would say).....Gramsci fought against these mechanical, abstract, anti-Marxist positions, mostly founded on the idea that economic 'misery' would be the decisive factor in propelling the masses into a proletarian revolution. He used to point out that hunger and misery can provoke uprisings, revolts, which may even shatter the existing equilibrium of the social order, but that many other conditions must be fulfilled before capitalism will be destroyed ²⁰

²⁰ Giuseppe Ceresa: 'In Carcere con Gramsci' in *Gramsci: Scritti di Togliatti* etc (Paris, 1938) p.110. My italics.

As we saw, the attempt to combat these illusions met with little success. By the time Bruno Tosin arrived at the start of December, Gramsci had terminated the conversations and the communist 'collective' had broken up amidst accusations that his position was not communist. However, the revelation by Tosin that the leaders of the party shared this 'Russian' illusion of speed seems to have been the immediate catalyst in getting Gramsci to synthesise his thoughts in §7.10.

The news which he [Tosin] passed on to us was not very different from what we already knew but what astonished us was the assertion that *the party leadership predicted the revolution by the end of the year*. We did not hide from Tosin our disbelief at this rosy prospect and invited him to tell Gramsci what he had told us. ²¹

I [ie, Tosin] made no secret of my belief that the continued presence of the party in Italy, the growth of wage demands and strikes which were spreading to many regions, could lead *in a short time* to broader movements, to a general strike which would bring down Fascism. ²²

*

This complex history was now synthesised in §7.10. Written as a critique of Rosa Luxemburg's theory of revolutionary spontaneity in *The Mass Strike*, it was really a critique of the Comintern's *current* tactic which had now adopted the universal slogan of *the political mass strike*. Gramsci's perception that past errors had become present orthodoxy meant that §7.10 has a "double-meaning". Moreover, this was entirely consistent with his conception of the scientific status of political theory which depended on its objective validity for opposite sides. Disguised as a critique of Luxemburgism, its credentials were impeccably orthodox. What Gramsci put on paper could neither be potentially exploited by the Fascist tribunal as anti-communist propaganda nor used by the 'invisible tribunal' in Moscow, if it ever reached their eyes, as evidence to indict him for heresy. The critique rested on a categorical denial of the element of "lightning speed" with which a catastrophic economic crisis was supposed to revolutionise the masses. This economic illusion was directly encouraged by the new policy as he discovered from talking to his comrades. The results of the German elections in September 1930 were decisive evidence in support of his critique, which was strikingly consistent with the conclusion he drew from the German 'October' of 1923 on the effects of the political superstructures in the West in retarding the revolutionary movement of the workers.

²¹ Athos Lisa: *Memorie* (Milan, 1973), p.96-97. My italics.

²² Bruno Tosin: *Con Gramsci* (Rome, 1976), p. 96. My italics.

Remember Rosa's little book translated by Alessandri in 1919-20 whose theory was based on the historical experiences of 1905 (not studied very closely, it would appear, since Rosa neglected the voluntarist and organisational elements which were far more extensive than she credited but which she tended to ignore, without realising it, because of her 'economistic' bias). In my view this little book is one of the most significant attempts to apply the theory of war of manoeuvre to historical science and political technique. The immediate economic element (crises etc) is seen as the field artillery whose task was to open a breach in the enemy's defences - a breach sufficient for one's own troops to rush in and obtain a strategic success which, if not final, at least brought final success nearer. Of course, in historical science the effect of the immediate economic element was far more complex than the effect of field artillery in the war of manoeuvre, because it was conceived as being twofold: 1) it opens a breach in the enemy's defences after throwing him into disarray and causing him to lose faith in himself, in his forces, and in his future; 2) in a flash it organises one's own troops and creates the necessary cadres, or in a flash it at least puts the existing cadres (formed up to that moment by the general historical process) in a position where, from being scattered, they can be concentrated; and in a flash it creates the necessary concentration of ideology and objectives to be achieved. It was a form of iron economistic determinism with the aggravating factor that these effects were conceived as happening with lightning speed in time and space. It was thus out and out historical mysticism, the awaiting of a sort of miraculous illumination ²³

Picking up a suggestion of Krasnov, an ex-Tsarist general whose novel he was just reading, Gramsci examines the role played by the war of movement on the Eastern front in 1914-17. He observes that the successful incursions of the Russian army in both the Austrian and German sectors of the front, were brilliant but ephemeral: they did not alter the fundamentally positional nature of the war.

The war of position, in fact, is not simply constituted 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 and notably by the rapid fire-power of artillery, machine-guns, and rifles and by their concentration (not to mention by their abundance, whereby material lost after a breakthrough can be swiftly replaced) ²⁴

When this passage is read in its immediate *political* context, the concrete meaning of the metaphor starts to become clear. In describing the capacity of the enemy in "the German sector" to swiftly replace and concentrate material lost after a breakthrough, Gramsci is evolving a metaphor for the class war in Germany at that point. The surprisingly massive vote for the National Socialists in the recent elections demonstrated the strength of the enemy's reserves and his capacity to

²³ §7.10. *Structure and Superstructure*, QCII p.858-860. The date of this note, December 1930, is based on the reference to Krasnov's novel which had been sent to Gramsci but withheld by the prison authority (see the list of forbidden books in the petition to Mussolini, September 1930, in QCIV p.2375). When Gramsci received a favourable reply to his petition *at the start of December* (Letter to Tatiana, 1 December 1930, LCI p.370) Krasnov's novel was handed over. Note that this coincided exactly with the rupture in relations with his comrades in prison over the party's tactic, as confirmed by Bruno Tosin when he arrived at Turi *at the start of December*.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.859.

'concentrate' them rapidly at a particular point. But to convey the key idea of the *depth* of these defences, of "the whole organisational and industrial system of the territory to the rear of the army in the field", Gramsci looks beyond the political parties and their relative strengths in the elections to the superstructures of *civil society* in Germany which he had studied during the past year, since the 'eruption' of October 1929 in fact.

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 resistant to catastrophic 'eruptions' of the immediate economic element (crises, depressions etc). The superstructures of civil society are like the system of trenches in modern warfare. It would happen that a furious artillery attack against the enemy trenches seemed to destroy everything when, in reality, it had only destroyed the surface defences and when the moment came to advance the attacking forces found themselves confronted by defences which were still in tact. The same thing happens in politics during the great economic crises. The crisis does not have the effect of organising the attacking troops with lightning speed in time and space, still less does it fill them with fighting spirit. On the other hand, the defenders do not get demoralised, nor do they abandon their defences even amidst the ruins, nor do they lose faith in their own strength or their own future. Of course, things do not remain just as they were, but they do not develop with lightning speed and there is no definitive forward march as anticipated by the strategists of political Cadornism. The events of 1917 were the last occurrence of this kind. They marked a decisive turning-point in the history of the art and science of politics. It is therefore a question of studying in depth which elements of civil society correspond to the defensive systems in the war of position. I say 'in depth' advisedly because they have been studied but only from a superficial and banal standpoint..

The continuity in Gramsci's structure-superstructure theory from the circular letter of 1924 to this text of 1930 is striking and in both cases events in Germany are the decisive catalyst. The catastrophic crises of 1923 and 1929 were prevented from developing into communist revolutions by the complicating effects of the superstructures. In this text Gramsci develops the theory in two new ways.

Firstly, the metaphor of trench warfare enables him to see the positions of *both sides* of the 'Western' front at once - dialectically, that is - whereas the original analysis had been solely concerned with the Left. Judging from the election results the main political superstructure of the German proletariat, the Social Democrats, proved remarkably resistant to the economic eruption of 1929 and there was no massive surge of support for the Communists, but Gramsci shows little inclination in the notes to take up arms against Social Democracy and has nothing to do with the current theory of 'social fascism'. The fact that he broke off the conversations after being accused by some comrades of taking up a 'social democratic' position was

evidence enough of the internecine passions dividing the Left and of the difficulty of discussing the current 'offensive' tactic in the dispassionate spirit which he was committed to in the prison writings. The trenches of the enemy presented a different picture, however. The economic eruption of 1929 hastened the disintegration of the political superstructures of the German bourgeoisie, but the massive surge of support for the National Socialists in the election showed the capacity of the enemy to swiftly replace its losses. Far from being demoralised and abandoning the defences, the German bourgeoisie demonstrated by voting for Hitler and the National Socialists that they "had not lost faith in their own strength or their own future". The interesting element of the analysis was precisely the "lightning speed" with which this occurred. In a relatively short time the National Socialists had achieved the very degree of "concentration of ideology" which the Communists dreamed of. It seems that lightning speed was denied the attackers but not the defenders. Moreover, the sudden breakthrough of the 'charismatic' Hitler suggested that the possibility of "miraculous illumination" in politics could not be ruled out entirely.

Secondly, whereas the earlier analysis turned on the complicating effects of the *political* superstructures, Gramsci now introduces the superstructures of *civil society*. This Hegelian concept made its way into his thinking in the course of 1929-30. It greatly enlarged his vision of the struggle, enabling him to see beyond the 'surface' defences and take in the full 'depth' of the defensive system behind the lines. To some extent he had already obeyed his own injunction to study these superstructures in depth: the factual data he collected in §2.26. *The German newspapers* and his observations on the constituent elements of the "ideological front" of a ruling class is an obvious example of what was meant by the defensive system in a war of position. The campaign of the Hugenburg press against the Young Plan helps to explain the relatively sudden "concentration of ideology" demonstrated by the massive vote for the National Socialists. Less obviously, his observation of themes in the contemporary German novel in §3.03. *German intellectuals*, notably the impact of Freudian ideas, can be seen as an investigation of another "superstructure" of civil society. However, at the time Gramsci probably did not foresee that the comprehensive attack by German writers on the traditional

ruling ideas - the "crisis of authority" - was preparing the ground for a very different 'revolution' from the one anticipated by the Communists.

We said that §7.16 has a double meaning because attack and defence in the war of position may pertain to both the Left and the Right. This is the 'scientific' core of Gramsci's observations. Read as he certainly intended, ie, as a critique of the Comintern's offensive tactic after 1929, by the 'attackers' he meant the Communists; but it could not have escaped his attention that the 'defenders' led by the National Socialists developed the sort of 'momentum' normally reserved by revolutionary theory for the attackers and that their victory in the elections looked more like an offensive 'breakthrough' than a rearguard action. The attraction of Hitler and the National Socialists, particularly to the younger generation, owed much to their image as a dynamic 'revolutionary' movement. Their victory in the election was therefore proof of what Gramsci called "the value of the ideologies", by which he meant that Marxists are wrong to discount the ideologies as "mere appearances" simply because a political movement is not really what it claims to be for these "appearances", as the National Socialists showed, are powerful instruments of political rule.

§7.16. War of Position-War of Movement [Russian Mentalities]

We saw that the failure of the German 'October' of 1933 was officially blamed on the theoretical errors of Luxemburgism and Trotskyism. We also saw that Gramsci's critique of Luxemburgism in §7.10 had a 'double meaning' arising from the relation of past and present, according to which past errors had become present policy. §7.10 must therefore be read as a critique of the Comintern's current tactic disguised in an impeccably orthodox form. This critique was decisively substantiated by the results of the recent German elections.

A similar relation of past and present might explain why Gramsci also recalled the errors of Trotskyism in §7.16, written at more or less the same time.²⁵ Given the close connection between the two notes, we are bound to ask: does §7.16 also have an *implied* meaning? No less an authority than the late Paolo Spriano

²⁵ The date of §7.16 is based on the reference to Trotsky's autobiography. Gramsci had petitioned to be allowed to read it and, after getting a favourable reply, asked Tatiana at the start of December to send him a copy (To Tatiana, 1 December 1930, LCI p.370), which he confirms having received at the end of the month ("I have received from the bookshop the books I ordered through you": to Tatiana, 29 December 1930, LCI p.377). This places §7.16 exactly at the turn of 1930-31.

remarked on a striking paradox in Gramsci's notes on Trotsky, but he dismissed the possibility of any relation between past and present and was completely confident about Gramsci's intentions.

Here in fact [in the *Notebooks*] the judgement on Trotsky always appears critical, whether based on his reputation as a Marxist, or on his political position, to such an extent that Gramsci sometimes seems hasty in accusing Lev Davidovitch of superficiality and schematic thought. The reasons why Gramsci showed himself very much opposed in 1925-26 to the Russian oppositions are not in fact replaced by others in the notes. Here too Gramsci seems ready to reaffirm the line of continuity between Lenin and Stalin, especially regarding the correct treatment of the peasants. At most, one might observe, Gramsci's judgements can all be referred to an earlier situation, whether they are of Trotsky as 'political theorist of frontal attack in a period in which it only leads to defeats' (ie, 1921-26), or see in Trotsky the expression of the most coercive, 'administrative', Bonapartist tendencies. The paradox is that, both for the theory of the 'third period' as for that of forced collectivisation in the countryside begun in 1929-30, the criticisms of Trotsky can also apply to Stalin! However, this is certainly not the reference Gramsci intended to make in the prison notes on these issues ²⁶

The most reliable guide to Gramsci's *intention* in the prison notes is the principle that political theory is 'scientific' insofar as it applies to opposite sides. We should therefore *expect* Gramsci's notes to have double meanings since this dialectic is the key principle of his mode of theorising. Moreover, the possibility that he *meant* his criticisms of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution to apply currently to Stalin is not to deny that he *meant* what he wrote about Trotsky. Indeed, in conversation with Bruno Tosin in December Gramsci made it clear that his own disagreement with the current line did not imply any support for the 'Trotskyist Opposition' and the sharp criticism of Trotsky in §7.16 emphasises this position. Nevertheless, the context of Gramsci's criticism suggests that he intended it to apply to both sides. Stalin is conspicuous by his absence in §7.16, it is true, but he is present in Gramsci's conversations. Remarks about his 'mentality' made to Tosin and Riboldi at this time show that Gramsci was prepared *to say*, but not *to write*, what he thought about the shortcomings of Stalin's international leadership. In §7.16 Gramsci compares them *both* with Lenin, Trotsky explicitly and Stalin implicitly, and found that both fell short of the 'model' for different reasons. The exemplary character of Lenin's international leadership was defined in §7.02, at the start of this series of notes, where he recalls the moment in Lenin's last speech to the Comintern admitting that they had made a mistake because "we have not been able to 'translate' our own language into 'European' languages"²⁷. Lenin had set an example to his successors not only in his admission of fallibility but also in his

²⁶ Paolo Spriano: *Antonio Gramsci and the Party: the Prison Years* (London, 1979) p. 66-67.

²⁷ §7.02. *Translatability of scientific and philosophical languages*, QCII p.854.

recognition of the danger of being “too Russian” in international policy, for the result was that the European parties could not put the Comintern’s resolutions into practice - the most serious mistake ‘Marxists’ could make. Thus, Gramsci’s Lenin is “profoundly national and profoundly European”, the two sides of his mentality being interdependent.

What of Lenin’s successors? Trotsky had obviously made a mistake in the German ‘October’ of 1923 but judging by the *Lessons of October* he stubbornly refused to admit it. By refusing to see that Russian revolutionary tactics and strategy could not be implemented in an advanced country like Germany at that time, he was *both* “superficially national and superficially European”.

It should be seen whether Bronstein’s famous theory about the *permanent* character of the movement is not the political reflection of the theory of war of manoeuvre (recall the observation of the Cossack general Krasnov) - ie, 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 - ie, superficially national and superficially Western or European. Ilitch on the other hand was profoundly national and profoundly European.

By deliberately echoing the theses of 1925 accusing Trotsky of “ ‘European’ opportunism”, Gramsci insured himself against the charge of ‘Trotskyism’. But why did he recall the past mistake of Trotsky at this point, the turn of 1930-31, when he had just let it be known to his comrades in the political conversations that he thought *the current* tactic of “frontal attack” was a mistake? The context of this note clearly suggests that, contrary to Spriano’s view, it is about past *and present* . In fact, it is about the *current mistake* .

As we said, the leader responsible for the current mistake, Stalin, is conspicuous by his absence in §7.16, but the empty space is “logically” filled by Gramsci’s off-the-record remarks to Tosin and Riboldi at this time.

[Tosin]. When I spoke to him about the debates which had taken place at the Seventh Plenum of the International [November 1926-January 1927] he was obviously very concerned about the consequences for the leadership of the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern. In his view the collegial leadership of the Comintern was paralysed or at least weakened as a result. For this reason he regretted the fact that in the past Stalin had never had the opportunity of living abroad and working in the international field in contrast to Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders, since this necessarily restricted his vision of the development of the world movement as a whole.

[Tosin p.102]

The logic was that the ‘Russian-European’ nexus which to Gramsci’s way of thinking defined the nature of Lenin’s and to a lesser extent of Trotsky’s

internationalism, was broken by Stalin altogether. Stalin was purely and simply "too Russian". Not knowing the first thing about European "languages", his so-called international policy was untranslatable. This was the mistake Lenin had warned about in his last speech to the Comintern.

In another conversation with Riboldi, probably sometime before May 1931, Gramsci went much further in his criticism of Stalin as international leader, but the logic remained perfectly consistent. The sharpening of Gramsci's attitude may have been because of something that he read in the meantime in his periodicals: this was Stalin's famous speech of February 1931 justifying the ever-increasing tempo of the Five-Year Plan by the urgent needs of national defence. In the key passage of the speech, Stalin articulated his vision of Russian history:

To slow down the pace means to remain behind. Those who remain behind are beaten. We do not, however, wish to be beaten. No, we do not. The history of the old Russia consisted in the fact that it was continually beaten owing to its backwardness. It was beaten by the Mongolian Khans, it was beaten by the Turkish Beys, it was beaten by the Swedish feudal lords, it was beaten by the Polish-Lithuanian pans, it was beaten by the English and French capitalists, it was beaten by the Japanese barons. It was beaten owing to its backwardness, on account of its military backwardness, of its cultural backwardness, its political backwardness, its industrial backwardness, its agricultural backwardness. It was beaten because one could do so with impunity and obtain advantage from it.....
In the past we had not and could not have any fatherland. Now, however, as with us the workers are in power, we have a fatherland and shall defend its independence. Do you want our socialist fatherland to be beaten and to lose its independence? If you do not want this you must liquidate this backwardness in the shortest possible time and develop a real Bolshevik tempo in the promotion of the economy. There is no other way. Therefore Lenin said during the October days: 'Either death or catching up with and passing the advanced countries'. We are 50 or 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must cover this distance within ten years. We must either do that or be trodden under foot.²⁸

Stalin's speech was addressed to Soviet industrial managers responsible for achieving the targets of the Five-Year Plan, not to foreign communists gathered in Moscow for the next session of the Comintern. But to European communists like Gramsci inclined to think that the policy of the Comintern was too Russian, it provided a penetrating insight into the 'Russian' mentality of the present international leader. Gramsci's intellectual and, especially, moral reaction on reading this speech is a matter of speculation: it must have been very complex especially in view of the sentimental ties binding him to his Russian wife and children and the sense of responsibility he felt for their future. Whatever the case,

²⁸ English translation of the full text published in *Labour Monthly*, March 1931. When Gramsci did not receive any issues of a review to which he subscribed, as a general rule he always mentioned it in his letters to Tatiana. There is nothing in the letters to indicate that he did *not* receive this issue.

an exchange of words with Riboldi at this time may reflect the impression this speech made on Gramsci of Stalin as “international” leader

[Riboldi]. ‘And Stalin? How does he measure up in this respect? Does he follow the tradition of Lenin?’
 [Gramsci]. ‘You have to remember that Stalin’s mentality [*habitus mentale*] is quite different from Lenin’s. Lenin lived abroad for many years and so possessed an international vision of political-social problems. This cannot be said of Stalin who stayed in Russia all the time and kept the nationalist mentality which is expressed in the cult of the ‘Great Russians’... Also in the International Stalin is first a Russian and then a communist: we have to be careful [*bisogna stare attenti*]’²⁹

Two years later in 1933 Gramsci would try to defend Stalin from exactly the accusation of “nationalism” which he himself had levelled against him in conversation with Riboldi in 1931 - an accusation which, he would then say, “does not get to the heart of the question”.³⁰ But for the moment Gramsci had no ‘second thoughts’ about describing the mentality revealed in Stalin’s speech as “the nationalist mentality which is expressed in the cult of the ‘Great Russians’”.

Apart from the differences in the ‘mentalities’ of the Russian leaders, the *substance* of Gramsci’s critique of permanent revolution in §7.16 was meant to apply to the *current tactic* of frontal attack in Europe. Gramsci argued that the war of position was the only possible one in Europe at this time and that the united front was the appropriate tactic for this kind of warfare. Significantly he invokes Lenin in support of his view, suggesting that this was the ‘Leninist’ line. Gramsci did not believe that the capitalist crisis of 1929 marked the start of a *new period* (the ‘third period’) and did not justify a change in international tactics. Any doubts he had on this score were removed by the results of the German election. The overall relation of forces revealed by these results “imposed” on the revolutionary class a defensive war of position for which the united front was the correct tactic. Gramsci again cites Krasnov mentioned earlier in §7.10, to describe the nature of the war of position in Europe, but Krasnov’s observation that “armies could rapidly accumulate endless quantities of munitions” in the West was essentially a *metaphor for politics*. Did not the massive and sudden vote of the petty-bourgeoisie for Hitler and the Nazis in the German election demonstrate how, in politics as well, “armies could rapidly accumulate endless quantities of munitions”?

²⁹ Ezio Riboldi: *Vicende Socialiste* (Milan, 1964) p.182. The sequence of Riboldi’s recollections suggests that this exchange was before May 1931.

³⁰ §14.68. *Machiavelli*, QCIII p.1728-1730. For a contextual analysis of this note, see Chapter 4.

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' seems to me to 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 ³¹

Gramsci understood that the rise of fascism in Italy in 1921-22 imposed a change of international tactics and therefore marked the start of a new 'period'. Now, the rise of fascism in Germany in 1929-30 showed that the nature of the period was unchanged and so to change tactic at this stage was a mistake. Contextual analysis shows that his criticisms of the mistakes of Luxemburg and Trotsky had the *opposite* political significance from what they appear to have: they were really criticisms of Stalin.

§7.19, §7.21. The Validity of the Ideologies

After the German elections Gramsci continued his parallel investigations of the significance of the ideologies and the relation of structure-superstructure. An important link between the two lines of inquiry was established by the question: when can an ideology be called a "superstructure"? The answer depended on its relation to the structure. There is reason to suppose that behind "the mask of generalisation" Gramsci was thinking of the two ideologies which had met with success in the elections, communism and fascism or (more to the point) "Hitlerism". Both were seen as expressions of a "collective will" in the process of formation, but their significance differed from a structural standpoint. The collective will represented by communism was grounded in the modern-day structure, in the world of production, which was, potentially, the foundation of a new civilisation: the collective will represented by Hitler was more antique in origin and was a phenomenon frequently observed in the past. In §7.12 Gramsci begins to evolve

³¹ §7.16, QCII p.865-867 [Translated in SPN p. 236-238].

a “historicist” distinction between the two ideologies, Communism and Hitlerism, behind the familiar mask of generalisation.

§7.12 (Extract). Tendency to conformism in the contemporary world, wider and deeper than in the past: [the] standardisation in the mode of thinking and acting becomes national or even continental in scope. The economic base of the collective man: big factories, Taylorisation, rationalisation etc. But did the collective man exist in the past or not? He existed under the form of charismatic leadership, as Michels would say: that is, a collective will was obtained through the impulse and the immediate suggestion of a “hero”, a representative man; but this collective will was due to extrinsic factors and was continually forming and disintegrating. Instead, today’s collective man is formed essentially from the bottom upwards, on the basis of the position which the collective occupies in the world of production. The representative man still has a function even today in the formation of the collective man but much less than in the past, so much so that he can disappear without the collective cement crumbling and the whole construction collapsing.

It is said that “western scientists consider the psychology of the masses to be nothing other than the resurgence of the ancient instincts of the primordial horde and thus a regression to cultural stages left behind long ago”; this statement should be referred to the so-called “psychology of the crowds”, or of the casual multitudes; it is pseudo-scientific, linked to positivist sociology ³²

Further on in §7.19 we find Gramsci putting the same question in a different way. Here he argues that the Marxist concept of ideology gets distorted because “the name ideology is given both to the necessary superstructure of a particular structure and to the arbitrary elucubrations of particular individuals”

§7.19. Ideologies....

It is therefore necessary to distinguish between historically organic ideologies, ie, those which are necessary to a given structure, and ideologies that are arbitrary, rationalistic, ‘willed’. To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity that is ‘psychological’; they ‘organise’ human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc. To the extent that they are arbitrary they only create individual ‘movements’, polemics, and so on (though even these are not completely useless, since they function like an error which by contrasting with truth, demonstrate it).³³

Which of these alternatives did he apply to Hitlerism? The question was directly related to Gramsci’s developing analysis of the charismatic leader in politics. To describe the ideology as ‘Hitlerism’ implied that it merely consisted of “the arbitrary elucubrations of a particular individual”. Indeed, Gramsci had earlier observed that a specific feature of the charismatic leader was that he was the “infallible pope” of

³² §7.12. *The man-individual and the man-mass*, QCII p.862. The quotation was taken from Rene Fuloop-Miller: *Il volto del bolscevismo* (See Professor Gerratana’s note to §7.12 in QCIV p.2751-2752), one of the books which Gramsci had successfully petitioned to be allowed to read and which was sent to him by Tatiana at the end of December 1930. Gramsci’s analysis implied that, contrary to the meaning intended by the author, the statement was more appropriately applied to fascism than to communism.

³³ QCII p.868-869.

the movement's ideology, reserving for himself alone (as the Strasser case of 1930 demonstrated) the role of arbiter in all questions of ideology. What could be more 'arbitrary' than that? Yet how could the 'arbitrary' ideology of an individual have such wide 'collective' social appeal in the September elections? Didn't this suggest that it was, after all, "the necessary superstructure of a particular structure"? The tendency of his analysis was to deny that Hitlerism had any "permanent" structural basis or validity: the essential feature of this type of collective will was its "impermanence", it was continually forming and disintegrating. But how did it form in the first place?

Gramsci did not deny the "psychological" validity of Hitlerism and its power to "organise" the human masses: the election result was proof enough of that. Indeed, it was precisely at this time that Gramsci was writing in another notebook about "the transformation in the psychology of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists" in Germany since the death of Stresemann in 1929. This formulation seemed to give the change of psychology "permanent" social significance, but if Hitlerism was seen as the expression of "dying classes" its foundations were less permanent than they appeared. On the other hand, the psychology of crowds, which certainly played a key role in the mass appeal of Hitler, was considered a "transitory" phenomenon, to do with the "casual multitudes".

A further aspect of the validity of the ideologies was the question of their "solidity". In §7.21 Gramsci starts to develop this aspect by returning to the arsenal of concepts contained in Marx's writings. His purpose was to probe the solidity of the popular "belief" in Hitler and to assess what difference this popular belief, which had formed with such lightning speed, now made to the analysis of the situation in Germany, ie, to the material relations of force.

§7.21. *Validity of the Ideologies.* Remember the affirmation frequently made by Marx about 'the solidity of popular beliefs' as a necessary element of a particular situation. What he says more or less is 'when this way of conceiving things has the force of popular beliefs' etc (Look up these quotations and analyse them in the context in which he expressed them). Another of Marx's affirmations is that a popular conviction often has the same energy as a material force or something of the kind, which is extremely significant. The analysis of these propositions tends, I think, to reinforce the conception of *historical bloc* in which precisely the material forces are the content and the ideologies are the form, although this distinction between form and content has a purely didactic value since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual whims without the material forces.³⁴

³⁴ QCII p.869.

These notes raise more questions than they answer, but the questions give a clear enough idea of the tendency of Gramsci's thinking. Whilst acknowledging that Hitlerism had become a "material force", Gramsci is sceptical about how long it will last. He does not think that it is a "historically organic ideology" because it has no permanent, structural basis; unlike communism it was not the necessary expression of a class with an essential function in production. Its "psychological" validity has more to do with the transitory psychology of crowds, of the "casual multitudes" who had fallen temporarily under spell of a charismatic "hero".

§6.90, §6.97. Demogogy In a time of Financial Panic

During the summer of 1931 Gramsci studied the movements of structure-superstructure in Germany with an eye to the possible relation between them. He applied the first principles set out in §4.38 and §7.24. According to the first of these there are two kinds of structural 'movement' which should be taken into account in assessing superstructural phenomena: the occasional and the permanent. "The occasional leads to political analysis and is useful for judging political groups and personalities; the permanent leads to social-historical analysis and is useful for judging the big social groups".³⁵

The financial crisis in Germany in the summer of 1931 was an example of an 'occasional' movement of the structure. It started in Austria in May, then spread to Germany in June-July, before moving on to Britain in August-September where it brought down the Labour Government. The most obvious 'trace' of this crisis in the notes is §6.90. *Psychology and Politics*.

§6.90. *Psychology and Politics*. The word 'psychology' is often used, especially in periods of financial crisis, as if it was the effective cause of certain marginal phenomena. Psychology (loss of confidence, panic etc). But what does 'psychology' mean in this instance? It is really a fig-leaf for politics, ie, for a certain political situation. Since 'politics' is usually understood as the action of the parliamentary factions, parties, newspapers, and generally any course of action which is carried on in a planned and public way, the word 'psychology' is used to describe elementary mass phenomena which are neither planned nor organised nor visibly directed and which expose a break in the social bloc between the rulers and the ruled. By 'psychological pressures' like these the latter express their lack of confidence in the leaders and demand that the people in charge of financial (and therefore economic) affairs and their policies be changed. Savers do not invest their savings or withdraw them from certain ventures which seem particularly risky etc; they are content with minimum interest and even with no interest at all; sometimes they prefer to lose some of their capital in order to safeguard the rest. Can these general crises of confidence be prevented by 'education'? They are symptomatic precisely because they are 'generalised' and it is hard to instil new

³⁵ §4.38. *Relations between structure and superstructures*, QCI p.455.

confidence when they are 'generalised'. The frequent succession of these psychological crises indicates that an organism is sick, ie, that the society as a whole has lost the capacity to produce capable leaders. Hence we are dealing with political crises or rather socio-political crises of the ruling group ³⁶

The connection between 'occasional' and 'permanent' structural movements is indicated by Gramsci's concluding remarks. If occasional crises are frequent and generalised, they are symptomatic of a permanent, "organic" crisis. An organic crisis means that the social bloc between rulers and ruled is breaking up and that the ruling group can no longer produce leaders who inspire confidence.

What links did Gramsci see between the financial crisis and "immediate politics"? The crisis coincided with the plebiscitary campaign initiated by the Nazis to dissolve the Prussian parliament, the fortress of German social democracy. In fact, by the time the plebiscite was held on 9 August the financial panic had begun to subside and a calmer mood was returning. The plebiscite failed to gather sufficient votes to achieve its goal but not without inflicting further damage on the increasingly fragile democratic system: some 10 million Germans had voted 'yes' to the Nazi initiative. An interesting trace of the Prussian plebiscite can be found in the observations on 'demogogy' in §6.97. *Great Ambition and Petty Ambitions*.

These observations about ambition could and should be linked up with others about so-called demogogy. Demogogy means several things: in the perjorative sense it means using the popular masses, by knowingly exciting and feeding their passions, for one's own petty ambitions (parliamentarism and electioneering provide a favourable terrain for this particular kind of demogogy which culminates in Caesarism and Bonapartism with plebiscitary regimes). But if the leader does not regard the masses as a servile instrument, useful to achieve his own ends and then to be discarded; if he aims to achieve organic political aims, which the masses themselves must necessarily accomplish, if he carries out constructive 'constituent' work, then the demogogy is of a higher order. The masses have to be helped to raise themselves up by raising up single individuals and entire 'cultural' strata. The inferior type of demagogue presents himself as irreplaceable, creates a desert around himself, systematically crushes and eliminates possible competitors, seeks direct contact with the masses (plebiscites etc, great oratory, spectacular stunts, the whole hallucinatory, choreographical apparatus: this is what Michels has called the 'charismatic leader') ³⁷

The context suggests that Gramsci's remarks about "the inferior type of demagogue" referred to Hitler. The financial crisis was interpreted as expressing the masses' lack of confidence in the present government and its policies. They were demanding a change of leaders. The plebiscitary campaign gave the

³⁶ §6.90, QCII p.767-768.

³⁷ §6.97, QCII p. 771-772.

'demagogic' Hitler the opportunity to offer himself as the solution to the leadership crisis of the ruling group. However, the plebiscite failed and the possibility mentioned in Gramsci's sources that Hitler might use the plebiscitary campaign to launch a German 'March on Rome' did not materialise.

§6.123, §6.130. Conjunctural or Organic Crisis?

Gramsci's studies of the economic crisis in 1931 led him to change the terminology he used for 'occasional-permanent' movements of the structure and to introduce the terms 'conjunctural-organic' crises. The catalyst for this change was the articles of Gino Arias, editor of the review *Economia*. In May Arias had represented Fascist Italy at a special session of the League of Nations to discuss the causes of the world economic crisis. In an article in the June issue of *Gerarchia* written before the financial crisis, Arias summarised the "decisively anti-conjunctural, organic interpretation" of the current crisis which he had put forward at the League of Nations conference.

The description of the 'cyclical phase' or 'conjuncture', however accurate, is only the starting-point of the study of the crisis. But we must then ask: is the world suffering from a cyclical depression analogous to those which occurred many times before the war or are we faced instead with an organic or 'structural' crisis, a real crisis of the whole economy (*organismo economico*)?³⁸

Arias pointed out that structural crises develop over a long period - "about a generation" - and invest all aspects of the economy. "Perhaps it is too soon to say, but I am fully convinced that the present crisis appears to be the most acute phase of a real *structural* crisis, the start of which can be traced back to the immediate post-war period. I would not like to say whether it will be resolved rapidly or slowly".³⁹ Although his long-term prognosis for recovery was quite pessimistic, Arias was quite optimistic about the short-time prospects: "Are the present signs of recovery, as we hope, the precursors of a new favourable conjuncture? But if the present crisis is a crisis of the structure, of the whole economy, can the favourable conjuncture which seems to be imminent be regarded as a definitive end of the crisis?"⁴⁰

³⁸ Gino Arias: 'Il significato storico della crisi economica', *GER*, June 1931, p.482.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.482.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.484.

Gramsci must have noted Arias' untimely error of judgement in suggesting that a 'favourable conjuncture' was imminent at the very moment when the European financial crisis was beginning. The error served to focus Gramsci's attention on Arias' confusing use of the term 'conjuncture' which at one point was taken to mean the same as 'cyclical phase' and at another was used to mean something like 'favourable moment'. We know from §7.41, which was written at this time, that Gramsci regarded the slipshod use of terminology as the hallmark of the "pseudo-theoretical affirmations of Gino Arias" and his school.⁴¹ Gramsci now adopted the same pair of terms as Arias, 'conjunctural-organic' crisis, but not before he had redefined them more exactly for his own analytical purposes. In particular, observation of the financial crisis during the summer months had impressed on him the rapid speed and short duration of the 'conjuncture'.

§6.130. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. Conjuncture* . Origin of the expression: this helps to understand the concept better. In Italian it equals economic fluctuation. It is connected with the phenomena of the post-war period which occurred very rapidly in time. (In Italian the term 'congiuntura' still has the meaning of 'favourable or unfavourable (economic) moment'. What is the difference between 'situation' and 'conjuncture'? The conjuncture would be the whole complex of immediate and transitory features of the economic situation: the latter concept must therefore be understood as referring to the most fundamental and permanent features of the situation itself. Hence the study of the conjuncture is more closely linked to immediate politics, to tactics (and to agitation), whilst the 'situation' is linked to strategy and to propaganda etc)

Gramsci's critical encounter with Arias was not limited to matters of terminology. In a further article in the August issue of *Gerarchia*, this time written in the light of the financial crisis in Germany, Arias remained undeterred by his mistake and restated his structural or 'organic' interpretation of the current crisis.

I have already observed.....that the economic and financial vicissitudes of Germany in the past decade are rooted in a phenomenon which predates the current crisis by far and is one of its causes even though few economists have paid much attention to it: ie, the disequilibrium which still exists today between saving and consumption, or rather between the quota of income which is saved and the quota consumed. In a certain sense, the world crisis can be defined as a crisis of over-consumption, and its moral causes are all too apparent (on this see Jannaccone's 'Reply to the questions about the crisis' in the March issue of *Economia*). In the countries ruined by the inflation this phenomenon assumed huge proportions and virtually created a new mentality which still exists today and won't easily disappear ⁴³

Gramsci accepted Arias' invitation. He turned back to the articles in the March issue of *Economia* devoted entirely to 'The world economic depression' which had

⁴¹ §7.41. *Economics*, QCII p.890.

⁴² §6.130. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. Conjuncture*, QCII p. 797.

⁴³ Gino Arias: 'Problemi Economici Mondiali', *GER*, August 1931, p.647.

already been sent to him and wrote §6.123. *Past and Present*. Observations on the Crisis of 1929-30-? ⁴⁴ This was Gramsci's first attempt in the notebooks to analyse the causes of the economic crisis. He did not redraft it but instead made a second attempt at causal analysis later in §15.05, written at the start of 1933. In view of his reputation as the 'theorist of the superstructures', it is of particular interest to see how Gramsci approached this task.

He started by stating Jannaccone's view that the crisis arose not from under- but from over-consumption. The crisis was caused by

a profound and probably far from transitory disturbance in the *dynamic* equilibrium between the quota of national income consumed, the quota of national income saved, and the rhythm of production needed to maintain unchanged or to progressively raise the standard of living of a population which is increasing at a given rate of net increase. The breakdown of this equilibrium can occur in a variety of ways: expansion of the national income consumed at the expense of the quota saved and reinvested for future production; decrease in the rate of productivity of capital, increase in the rate of net growth of population. In other words, at a certain point average individual income becomes constant instead of increasing, then progressively decreases instead of remaining constant. This is the point when crises break out. The diminution of the average income brings about a contraction of consumption, both absolutely and relatively, and consequently further contractions of production etc

The world crisis was therefore a "crisis of saving" and could only be overcome by increasing the quota of national income saved for investment. Gramsci found Jannaccone's observations "undoubtedly acute". His analysis of the economy as a "dynamic equilibrium" between a number of competing "tendencies" answered to Gramsci's strongly anti-economistic understanding of Marxism. The main thrust of this note, however, was his refutation of the "purely tendentious and partly silly" conclusions which Arias drew from Jannaccone's thesis. In answer to the question "what is the reason for this over-consumption?" Arias argued that it was due to the policy of high wages followed by a number of countries, above all the United States. Gramsci questioned this:

Can it be proved that the working masses have raised their standard of living to such an extent that it represents overconsumption? In other words, has the relation between wages and profits become catastrophic for profits? This could not be demonstrated statistically, not even for America.

Gramsci then came to his own 'hypothesis' about the causes of the structural crisis. Whilst accepting Jannaccone's view of the "crisis of saving", he argued (in accord with first principles) that its origins were historical in nature:

⁴⁴ §6.123, QCII p.792-793. All quotations from this source.

Arias 'neglects' a 'historical' element of some importance: in the distribution of national income, especially via commerce and the stock exchange, has it not happened that a category of 'withdrawers' (*prelevatori*) has appeared in the postwar period (or at least increased in comparison with the preceding period) which does not have any necessary or indispensable productive function yet absorbs a considerable quota of national income?

Gramsci immediately runs into difficulty, with one parenthesis after another, as he tries to identify and define this category. For example, to describe this category by the most general term, "the non-wage earners", failed to account for "the category of [wage-earning] workers employed in the service of the social categories which are absolutely unproductive and parasitic". Even accepting the general heading of "the non-wage earners" Gramsci recognised the difficulty of measuring statistically the quota of national income absorbed by them. The most positive idea for measurement he suggests was a statistical 'snapshot' of the economically active population. "A relation between 'employed' workers and the rest of the population would provide the image of the 'parasitic' weight which rests on production". Without really resolving these difficulties, Gramsci nevertheless concluded:

The category of unproductive parasites, in both the absolute and relative sense, has grown enormously in the postwar period and this is the category which devours savings. In European countries it is even greater than in America etc. The causes of the crisis therefore are not moral (enjoyments etc) or political in nature but socio-economic, ie, of the same character as the crisis itself: society creates its own poisons by having to provide a living for masses of the population (not just unemployed wage-earners) who impede savings and thus break the dynamic equilibrium.

Again, Gramsci's thesis raises more questions than it answers. For example, how appropriate was it to categorise a mass of the population as 'parasitic' whilst rejecting the view that the causes of the crisis were 'moral' in nature? How could the category of unproductive parasites be defined with any degree of rigour if their parasitism was 'relative' as well as absolute? How could the thesis be 'tested' without specifying which social categories were parasitic and without knowing what quota of national income they consumed? Whilst acknowledging in a later note that "the concept of 'parasitic' needs to be accurately defined", it was central to his thinking from the very start of the notebooks.

Past and Present

The Ruin of the Middle Classes in Germany

The thesis tentatively put forward in §6.123 stems from Gramsci's first notes on *Americanism* in Notebooks 1 and 3. In these he analysed the attempts in postwar

Europe to introduce 'rationalised' systems of production as theorised by Ford, Taylor, and others in relation to the automobile industry. The precondition of Americanism according to these notes was

'the rationalisation of the population', ie, that numerous classes with no function in the world of production, ie, absolutely parasitic classes, do not exist. The European 'tradition' is characterised precisely by the existence of such classes made up of social elements like the civil service, the clergy and intellectuals, landed property, commerce. The older a country's history, the more these elements have left behind over the centuries residues of idle people who live off the 'pension' left by their ancestors. Statistics of these social elements are very difficult to work out because it is very hard to find the 'heading' which can cover them all. ⁴⁵

Gramsci convincingly identified and analysed these parasitic elements in Italian society but added that "this situation is not only found in Italy but to a considerable extent throughout Europe, more so in southern less so in northern Europe".⁴⁶ How, then, did this analysis apply to the countries of northern Europe?

The case of Germany is interesting because this was where the introduction of 'Americanism' in the postwar period seemed to go furthest, ie, where the brutal precondition of 'rationalising the population' and hence of eliminating the unproductive classes left over by 'tradition', seemed to become a real process. In this connection Gramsci was interested in an impression of Pirandello's in an interview of April 1929 (ie, before the Wall Street Crash) on the alleged opposition which Americanism encountered in Paris in contrast to its immediate, enthusiastic reception in Berlin. "In Berlin you do not feel the gap between the old and the new Europe because the very structure of the city offers no resistance".⁴⁷ At first Gramsci took the remark at face value and offered the following 'structural' explanation for Berlin's supposed lack of 'resistance':

In Berlin the middle classes were already ruined by the war and the inflation and German industry was more highly developed than the French. By contrast the French middle classes did not suffer (occasional) crises like the German inflation nor an organic crisis, much more rapid than normal, arising from the introduction and (sudden) diffusion of a new method production.⁴⁸

Gramsci's explanation seemed to suggest that the war and the inflation, by ruining the middle classes, had broken down the resistance of the German 'tradition' to

⁴⁵ §1.61. *Americanism*, QCI p.70

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p.71.

⁴⁷ §3.11. *Americanism*, QCI p.296. Gramsci's source was 'Pirandello parla della Germania, del cinema sonoro e di altre cose' (corrispondenza da Berlino di Corrade Alvaro) in *L'Italia letteraria*, 14 April 1929. QCIV p.2577.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.297.

Americanism. They would therefore have been a sudden, traumatic way of "rationalising the population", destroying the 'old' unproductive classes and creating the conditions for Americanism. By this he meant the 'rationalisation movement' in German industry in the 1920s financed by American capital.⁴⁹ This would explain why Gramsci could assert that "what is called Americanism today is, to a very large extent, a phenomenon of social panic, dissolution, and despair of the old strata who are destined to be crushed by the new order.....".⁵⁰

Pirandello could not tell the difference, however, between the ideology and the reality of Americanism in Germany. When Gramsci redrafted these notes on Americanism in 1934 (ie, after the advent of the Third Reich) he was more sceptical about the reality of Pirandello's remark, adding in parenthesis: "(Pirandello could not say the same today, so it must be understood that he is referring to the Berlin of the nightclubs)" and dropping his reference to the rationalisation movement of the 1920s.⁵¹ The correction implied that the "resistance" of the German "tradition" to Americanism was greater in reality than Pirandello's superficial impression of 1929 had suggested. The advent of the Third Reich was testimony to this.

Gramsci probably realised that his perspective on the 1920s, linking inflation with rationalisation, was too schematic and too 'German'. Nevertheless, his view of the "revolutionising" social effects of inflation was constant. This can be seen by contrasting the fate of the German and the British middle classes in the post-inflation period. An interesting insight into his perspective on this can be found in an observation in §5.86. *England* where Britain had avoided the crisis of 'tradition' experienced by Germany:

Besides, the immediate return to the Gold Standard meant that England avoided the social crises caused by the transfers of property and the lightning ruin of the petty-bourgeois middle classes. In a traditionalist, conservative country like England, with its ossified social structure, what would have been the results of the phenomena of inflation, fluctuation, and devaluation of the currency? Certainly, much more serious than in other countries. ⁵²

Gramsci's remarks on the reaction of 'traditional' Europe to Americanism raise many interesting questions. As far as Germany's "reaction" is concerned, they

⁴⁹ The reality of the "rationalisation boom" in German industry in the 1920s is discussed in the section 'The mania about the rationalisation mania' in Harold James: *The German Slump. Politics and Economics 1924-1936* (Oxford, 1987) p.146-161.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.296.

⁵¹ §22.15. *American and European Civilisation*, QCIII p.2178.

⁵² §5.86. *England*, QCI p.615-616. Written November 1930-March 1931.

involve a number of questionable assumptions. How far could the German middle classes be equated with 'old strata' left over by the German 'tradition'? How far were the German middle classes ruined by the inflation, which wiped out debts as well as savings? How far did the enthusiastic reception of Americanism in Berlin determine an even stronger reaction against it in 'small town' Germany? The answer to these questions depended on defining the German 'middle classes' but Gramsci conspicuously avoided doing this.⁵³ Perhaps this was no accident given the highly differentiated character of the German middle classes, including the so-called 'old' and 'new' *Mittelstand*, and given their disintegration in this period as a homogeneous class. The few indications about Germany in Gramsci's notes on Americanism do not amount to anything like a theory, but they do point in the direction of the classic interpretation of National Socialism as an expression of the "crisis of modernity".

§2.75 (II), §4.69, §7.77: The Crisis of Parties

On 3 August Gramsci reported to Tatiana having received and read Mortara's *Prospettive Economiche* for 1931 but noted that "this year's volume seems to me to mark a change of approach by the author compared to previous editions. The economic crisis with all its frightening, unpredictable consequences must have contributed to Mortara's new attitude. Whatever the case, such a radical change from one year to another is scientifically scandalous" ⁵⁴

His passing comment on "the frightening, unpredictable consequences" of the economic crisis caught the climate of financial panic in the summer months of 1931. The same atmosphere was captured in his analysis of the charismatic party §2.75 (ii) which he returned to at this time probably under the impression of Hitler's plebiscitary campaign in Prussia. Gramsci now resumed the critical commentary on Michels' *Political Parties* which he started a year earlier. He now decided that there was no such category as charismatic 'parties', only charismatic 'personalities'.

The charismatic leader can belong to any kind of party, whether authoritarian or anti-authoritarian (granted that anti-authoritarian parties exist, as parties. Indeed, it often happens that anti-authoritarian, anarchist, anarcho-syndicalist 'movements' become

⁵³ Cf. §5.119. *Encyclopaedia of political, philosophical concepts etc. Middle Class*, QCI p.638-639, where the meaning of the term in English, French, and Italian, but not German is examined.

⁵⁴ To Tatiana, 3 August 1931, LCII p.441. [Gramsci wrote "July" by mistake. He was writing on the day of the first big crisis of his health, when he coughed up a lot of blood].

'party' because the group comes together around personalities who are organisationally 'irresponsible', in a certain sense 'charismatic'). Michels' classification of parties is very superficial and dogmatic, being based on external and generic features: 1) 'Charismatic' parties, ie, groups forming around certain personalities with rudimentary programmes, and which are based on the faith and authority of one individual.

(There's no evidence of any parties of this type. At particular moments certain more or less exceptional personalities represent and express certain interests. At certain moments of 'permanent anarchy' caused by the static equilibrium of the conflicting forces, one man personifies 'order', ie, the breaking of the deadlock by exceptional methods, and all the 'frightened ones', all the 'rabid sheep' of the petty-bourgeoisie flock to his side. Nevertheless, he does have a programme, however vague: indeed, it is vague precisely because it merely aims to restore the external political casing of a society in crisis. The crisis it is passing through is not a real constitutional crisis but merely a crisis arising from having too much discontent. The sheer numbers of discontented, and the simultaneous (but mechanically simultaneous) demonstration of discontent throughout the nation, makes them difficult to control") ⁵⁵

The guiding thread of this analysis - the notion of "the man of order" who breaks the deadlock by exceptional methods - derived from Marx's classic analysis of the 'similar' political situation in France in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Gramsci was not the only marxist, of course, to apply the concept of 'Bonapartism' to the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany but in his case the 'exceptional' solution is integrated into a wider dialectical conception, first outlined in §1.48, of the breakdown of hegemony 'normally' exercised via the parliamentary regime. The specific emphasis of this analysis is that exceptional force cannot be used any more unless public consent is first prepared.

The success of Hitler and the Nazis in the elections of September 1930 indicated that the crisis in Germany would be resolved by exceptional methods. Events now provided Gramsci with the chance to contrast this with the 'normal' method of solving the crisis. This was the British general election on 27 October 1931. As we saw, Gramsci followed the election campaign in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* which reported the result on 30 October. The massive victory of the National Government which was returned to power with a majority of 500 may have been unprecedented, but Gramsci regarded this 'parliamentary' solution of the crisis of parties as normal. The contrast - Germany-September 1930 - Britain-October 1931 - was theorised in §4.69. *On the Parties* .

At a certain point in the historical process classes break away from their traditional parties; in other words the traditional parties, given their particular organisational form and the particular men who personify and lead them, cease to represent their class or fraction of their class. This is the most delicate and dangerous kind of crisis because it opens the door to providential or charismatic men. A situation arises in which the

⁵⁵ §2.75 (ii) R.Michels... The second part starts from the paragraph: "il capo carismatico puo appartenere a qualsiasi partito....." QCI p.234-239.

representatives and the represented are at odds with each other, and when something like this occurs in the province of private organisations (parties and trade unions), it cannot but be reflected in the State where the power of the bureaucracy (in a broad sense: military and civil) is consequently strengthened to a formidable degree. How then does such a situation arise?

The process differs from one country to another although its content is the same. The crisis is dangerous when it spreads to all the parties and all the classes, when, in other words, the rank-and-file of one or more parties does not pass over very speedily to a party which better expresses their general interests. The latter is an organic (normal) phenomenon even if the speed with which it happens is extremely rapid in comparison with normal periods: it signifies the fusion of a class under a single leadership in order to solve a dominant life-or-death problem. If the crisis is not solved in an organic way like this but by means of the providential man, it means that a static equilibrium exists. This is when no class, neither the conservative nor the progressive, is strong enough to win and even the conservative class needs a master⁵⁶

While the fascist sources played up the size of the defeat suffered by the Labour Party, Gramsci was just as interested in the crisis of the Liberal Party. A week before the election the editorial of the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* argued that the outcome lay in the hands of the Liberal voter who faced “the difficult duty of making up his mind between voting Labour and voting (in effect and without disguise) Tory”.⁵⁷ With the result declared it was clear that in spite of the editor’s advice to vote Labour, “the Liberal vote has gone almost unitedly for the Government”.⁵⁸ In other words, Liberals voted for Conservative candidates in ‘National’ disguise.

Gramsci theorised the result of the British general election as “the fusion of a class under a single leadership to solve a dominant, life-or-death problem”. He meant the fusion of the British middle class under the leadership of the National Government with a “doctor’s mandate” to take all necessary measures to deal with the economic crisis. This fusion was ‘organic’ in the sense that the new leadership was the political expression of the interests of the class it represented. This was in contrast to the solution by means of the charismatic leader who (as we learned from §6.97) does not pursue ‘organic’ political ends but “regards the masses as a servile instrument, useful to achieve his own ends and then to be discarded”.

Past and Present

The ‘Elective Dictatorship’ in Britain

The massive majority of the National Government in Britain was not only due to the blurring of party differences by the ‘National’ label but also to the absence of

⁵⁶ §4.69, QCI p. 513.

⁵⁷ Editorial ‘The Liberal Vote’, *MGW*, 23 October 1931.

⁵⁸ Editorial ‘The Tory Parliament’, *MGW*, 30 October 1931.

proportionality in the British electoral system, in marked contrast to the German system. Gramsci was already familiar with the mechanics of Britain's 'elective dictatorship' from an article by the historian Ramsey Muir, the Liberal party chairman, which had appeared in November 1930 when the electoral reform bill came before Parliament. Gramsci found the liberal critique of elective dictatorship interesting and began to link it with the marxist concept of Bonapartism.

§6.40. *Past and Present. The English government*. An interesting article by Ramsey Muir on the English system of government appeared in the issue of *Nineteenth Century* for November 1930 [reported in *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera*, 9 December 1930]. Muir argues that it is not possible to speak of a parliamentary regime in England because Parliament has no control over the government and the civil service; it is only possible to speak of a party dictatorship and, what is more, an inorganic dictatorship since power alternates between extreme parties. Discussion in Parliament is not what it should be, ie, discussion by [a] Council of State, but discussion by parties who compete for the support of the electorate at the next election either by promises on the government's part or by discrediting the government on the opposition's part. The deficiencies of the English system of government have been cruelly exposed in the postwar period with its great problems of reconstruction and adjustment to the new situation.....Muir traces the origin of the party dictatorship to the electoral system which has no alternative vote (*ballottaggio*) and, in particular, no proportional representation; this makes it hard to achieve compromises or to hold moderate opinions (or at the very least it forces the parties into an internal opportunism worse than parliamentary compromise). Muir does not comment on other phenomena: there is a small group inside the government which dominates the whole cabinet and also one personality who exercises a Bonapartist function⁵⁹

The electoral reform bill on which the Liberals pinned their hopes was lost when MacDonald's Labour government resigned in August. Now the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* observed that Labour must be regretting that it did not bring the Alternative Vote bill forward sooner.

And what is Labour thinking now of its scorn for electoral reform? It now finds itself in a much worse position than the Liberal Party did after the last election [ie, 1929]. Its representation in the House is ludicrously disproportionate to its strength in the country. For its 51 members it has a voting strength of close on 7,000,000. The Liberals at the last election got 58 members for 5,000,000 votes cast. Today the Liberals, for a little under 2,000,000 votes, secure 63 seats. A violent swing of opinion always exaggerates the inherent unfairness of the present electoral system.⁶⁰

The liberal critique claimed that Britain's electoral system produced an "inorganic" dictatorship since power alternated between "extreme parties" which did not represent the majority of 'middle England'. However, the passing of the Liberal rank-and-file into the Conservative camp in October 1931 seems to have

⁵⁹ §6.40, QCII p714-715. Note that Gramsci wrote this note on Britain between §6.35 and §6.42 in which we find the first traces of the election result in Germany in 1930.

⁶⁰ Under the heading 'Members and Votes', *MGW*, 30 October 1931

persuaded Gramsci (judging from §4.69) that the National Government was an “organic” dictatorship of the British middle class.

*

The crisis of parties was further examined in §7.77. *The Political Parties. The Intellectuals* , the ‘twin’ note of §4.69. Here Gramsci turns his attention from the mass base to the leaders, who are significantly described as “the intellectuals”. He introduces a new concept to describe an essential quality of leadership in times of crisis: this was *tempestivita* or *tempismo*, or the “ability to change with the times”.

One of the most important questions about political parties is their ‘ability to ride the storm’ (*tempestivita*) or ‘aptitude to change with the times’ (*tempismo*) or how they react against the spirit of ‘habit’ and the tendencies to become anachronistic and mummified. In practice parties arise (as organisations) after historical events of importance for the social groups they represent. But they are not always capable of adapting to new epochs or historical phases, they are not always capable of developing in step with the development of the global relations of force (and hence the relative relations) in the particular country or in the international field. This line of research must distinguish between: the social group; the party’s mass membership; the party’s bureaucracy or general staff. Force of habit is most dangerous in the last of these: if the party is organised as an autonomous, self-sufficient establishment, it will end up becoming anachronistic. This is when crises of parties occur, when all of a sudden they lose their historic social base and end up ‘suspended in mid-air’: this is what has happened in Germany especially as a result of the expansion of Hitlerism. The tendency of political organisations to become anachronistic can be studied most profitably in French parties: born as a result of the Revolution of ‘89 and the movements which followed, their leaders go on repeating an obsolete terminology which enables them to keep the old base in tact whilst they make compromises with forces of a quite different and often hostile character serving the interests of the plutocracy ⁶¹

The bureaucratic (or “oligarchical”) tendency of modern political parties was, of course, the main argument of Michels’ study of *Political Parties* , but the specific concept of *tempismo* probably came from Trotsky’s polemics of 1923-24, *The New Course* and *Lessons of October* . Trotsky attacked the bureaucratic spirit which was taking hold of communist parties everywhere, starting from the Russian party, and argued that the bureaucratic mentality, the spirit of habit, explained why the German communist leaders failed to change tactics and missed the revolutionary moment in 1923. Gramsci now turned *tempestivita* or *tempismo* , the leadership’s ability ‘to ride the storm’, ‘to change with the times’, from a polemical weapon into a *scientific* concept. He applied Trotsky’s concept used in relation to the German Left in 1923, to the German Right after 1929: in other words, he tested its ‘objective’ validity for both sides. How exactly did he apply it to the ‘other side’?

⁶¹ §7.77, QCII p.910.

Unusually Gramsci refers *directly* in this note to “what had happened in Germany as a result of the expansion of Hitlerism”, which enables us to read his mind more reliably. The Nazis or ‘Hitlerites’ responded more speedily than any other party in Germany to the new historical phase starting in October 1929. They showed exceptional ability “to ride the storm” of the crisis and to harness the mass movement which it set in motion. Their ability to improvise and adapt organisation and propaganda to rapidly changing circumstances on the ground and to a wide range of different social groups is well attested. In the Reichstag elections of September 1930 the other right-wing parties were left “suspended in mid-air”: the election data available to Gramsci indicated that mass support for these parties was halved and between them they lost some 3,000,000 votes to the Nazis.⁶² As far as the People’s Party (DVP), the moderate nationalists, were concerned, their failure to adapt to the new crisis could be attributed to the untimely death of their leader Stresemann whose “ability to ride the storm” had been proved during the inflation crisis of 1923. Gramsci’s thesis was primarily aimed, however, at the Nationalist Party (DNVP), the conservative nationalists, led by the ‘reactionary’ Hugenburg. On taking over the leadership in 1928, Hugenburg deliberately organised the leadership as an oligarchy, “an autonomous, self-sufficient establishment” which simply ignored the party’s ‘historical’ social base in the eastern countryside. Consequently the rank-and-file broke away from their “historical” party in the elections of September 1930 and turned to the Nazis for leadership, although when the expansion of Hitlerism reached its limit in the election of November 1932, the old historical bloc proved to be more permanent than it appeared to be in 1930.

Past and Present

As the title of §7.77. *The Political Parties. The Intellectuals* indicates, two main threads of Gramsci’s thinking converge in this note: his analysis of political parties and his account of the traditional intellectuals.

The analysis of political parties started from an element of French politics first mentioned in §1.18. *Maurras’ error. Notes on the French monarchist party* which was useful also for analysing German politics. This was a category of political party

⁶² See the table showing changes in the popular vote of the major parties between 1928 and 1930 in Giuseppe Bevilacqua: ‘Il Trionfo di Hitler’, *GER*, September 1930, p. 706. This was one of the issues of *Gerarchia* for the second half of 1930 which was unaccountably delayed but which Gramsci eventually received in February 1931.

which particularly interested him and which he did not find in Michels' typology, ie, "republican parties in monarchist regimes, like monarchist parties in republican regimes and nationalist parties in regimes of national subjection".⁶³ Gramsci made a study of Maurras' *Action Francaise* and thought of Hugenburg's party, "a monarchist party in a republican regime", as a party of the same type (although the imposition of the Versailles Treaty on Germany also made it "a nationalist party in a regime of national subjection"). The tendency to become 'anachronistic' was particularly marked in this type of party because its monarchist ideology necessitated 'opposition in principle' to the republican system in which it existed and operated. Whenever it tended to come to terms with the reality of the republican system and thus to "change with the times", it compromised its principles and consequently tended to split. On the other hand, whenever the leaders stuck rigidly to abstentionism or "opposition in principle" as Hugenburg did, they neglected the party's mass base whose real interests were best served by participating in the 'interest' politics of the republic. As a monarchist party in a republican regime, therefore, the "force of habit" in Hugenburg's party was rooted not only in the oligarchical tendency of the leading group but also in its stubborn attachment to a traditional ideology which was increasingly "anachronistic". The multiple splits in Hugenburg's party in 1929-30 were the most obvious symptom of the wider crisis of hegemony of the old ruling elite or 'traditional intellectuals'.

However, Gramsci realised that the residual power of the 'traditional intellectuals' in the German republic was located not in the political parties but in the State, in the military and civil bureaucracy. His awareness of this was expressed in 'Italian' language in §3.119 which, it will be recalled, was written during the transition to the 'presidential dictatorship' in Germany in 1930. Here he described a state of affairs whereby the State actively worked against the political parties, by disintegrating them and detaching them from the masses, in order to produce "a non-party force linked to the government by paternalistic bonds of a Bonapartist-Caesarist type". The disintegration of the political parties led to a situation where "the bureaucracy was estranged from the country and, through its administrative positions, became a true political party, the worst type of all, since the bureaucratic hierarchy replaced

⁶³ §2.75 (ii). "He [Michels] adds two other types of party to these three: confessional parties and national parties (it would be necessary to add monarchist parties in republican regimes and republican parties in monarchist regimes)", QCI p.235.

the intellectual and political hierarchy: the bureaucracy became precisely the State-Bonapartist party".⁶⁴ Seen in this perspective, Hugenburg's tactic of 'opposition in principle' was doing the State's work. It was deliberately calculated to wreck the whole party system of the German republic even at the cost of wrecking his own party. It is not surprising that Hugenburg was the leading advocate of a 'presidential dictatorship' under Article 48 of the republican constitution since this was entirely consistent with his 'wrecking' tactics. Even as the rank-and-file of his own party were breaking away and turning to Hitler, the presidential dictatorship he wanted was becoming a reality. This perspective explains what Gramsci meant in §4.69 by saying that the crisis of parties "cannot but be reflected in the State where the power of the bureaucracy (in the broad sense, civil and military) is, in consequence, strengthened to a formidable degree".

§7.83 and §7.103. Public Opinion 'Booms'

The liberal critique in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* of the National Government's election campaign in Britain prompted Gramsci to develop one of the threads of his original account (in §1.48) of the 'normal' exercise of hegemony in parliamentary regimes: this was the idea of the 'manufacture' public opinion by the State. Liberal thinking commonly assumes that this is exclusive to dictatorial regimes where the State has a monopoly of "the so-called organs of public opinion", but Gramsci's thoughts were immediately suggested by Britain, the parliamentary State *par excellence* where no such monopoly existed. So how does the State create public opinion in parliamentary regimes?

Gramsci now wrote a pair of notes on subject, the first abstract the second concrete. The first 'situates' public opinion conceptually, in terms of his organising dialectic of the State-civil society. This dialectic was based on his liberal interpretation of Hegel (in §1.47) in which, it will be recalled, "the State 'educates' consent by means of political and syndical associations which are, however, private organisms left to the private initiative of the ruling class".

§7.83. Encyclopaedic Ideas. Public Opinion. So-called 'public opinion' is strictly connected with political hegemony. It is the point of contact between 'civil society' and 'political society'. When the State wants to initiate a fairly unpopular course of action, it preventively creates the public opinion it requires, i.e. it organises and centralises certain elements of civil society.....

⁶⁴ §3.119, QCI p. 388.

Public opinion is the political content of the public political will. This could be divided and so there is a struggle for the monopoly of the organs of public opinion - newspapers, parties, Parliament - so that a single force shapes opinion and therefore the national political will, scattering the opposition voices like so many atoms of dust (*disponendo i discordi in un pulviscolo individuale e disorganico*)⁶⁵

The State, therefore, 'normally' educates consent by means of the political parties which are "permanently organised consent". But under conditions of political democracy the State, especially at election times, manufactures instant consent. The power to do this depended on the State's 'contact' with elements of civil society, such as private newspaper proprietors. According to the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, which was one of the 'opposition voices' in Britain scattered like atoms of dust in the earthquake of 1931, "we have, firstly, a publicity system which makes it possible to manufacture public opinion with unprecedented rapidity, and an electoral system which gives exaggerated representation to the majority thus manufactured".⁶⁶ This liberal critique of the British election now found its way into Gramsci's notes.

§7.103. Encyclopaedic Ideas. Public Opinion. Among the factors which have recently upset the normal control of public opinion by organised parties with well-defined programmes, the yellow press and the radio are of primary importance. They create the possibility of stimulating on the spur of the moment bursts of panic or artificial enthusiasm as a means of achieving certain ends, as in elections for example. All this is connected with the nature of popular sovereignty, which is exercised once every 3,4,5 years: it is enough to have the ideological (or better still emotive) upper-hand on that particular day to win a majority which will last for 3,4,5 years, even if, once the emotion is gone, the mass of voters split from their legal expression (the legal country not being the same as the real country). The organisms in the best position to prevent or contain this boom of public opinion are the free trade unions rather than the parties and this explains the effort to subordinate them to State control. Nevertheless, the section of public opinion which is unorganisable (especially women, where women have the vote) is so great that these booms and electoral coups are always possible wherever the yellow press and the radio (under monopoly control of the government) are widespread....⁶⁷

The use of the radio by the National Government was a matter of particular controversy during the British election. Snowden's notorious 'Bolshevism run mad' broadcast of 17 October fanned the fears of the middle classes about Labour's programme and spurred them into giving the 'doctor's mandate' which the National Government demanded. This was probably the example Gramsci had in mind when he wrote that "when the State wants to initiate a fairly unpopular course of action, it preventively creates the public opinion required". Snowden's broadcast

⁶⁵ §7.83. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. Public Opinion*, QCII p.914-915.

⁶⁶ Editorial: 'A Democratic Triumph?' in *MGW*, 6 November 1931.

⁶⁷ §7.103. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. Public Opinion*, QCII p.929-930.

raised questions about the BBC's independence, particularly about the government's claim to its monopoly use in times of supposed national crisis, but Gramsci's conception of the struggle to monopolise the organs of public opinion reaches beyond the question of the State's control of broadcasting and encompassed wider aspects of the control of public opinion: the tendency to monopoly ownership of the press, for example, the tendency of political parties to silence internal dissent, or the tendency to maintain an unreformed electoral system which delivered 'crushing' parliamentary majorities.

Although these notes on public opinion appear to be isolated, they are clearly part of Gramsci's integral investigation of the general crisis of political hegemony after 1929. Gramsci's original description of this phenomenon was based on France (§1.48) but the main terms of comparison in his subsequent investigation were the parliamentary regimes in Britain and Germany. The notes on public opinion booms were written immediately in response to British politics in 1931 but are closely related to other ideas developed in the course of 1930 in response to German politics, notably about the role of newspapers in the 'ideological front' of the ruling class (§3.34) or the demonstrable 'value of the ideologies' in the disintegration of parliamentary regimes (§4.22).

The Exchange of Letters on Anti-Semitism, 1931-32

In a short note written in August 1931 Gramsci asked a question about Augustin Thierry, a French historian of the Restoration period. The line of enquiry he suggests appears to be of purely scholarly interest until we realise that he was selecting a specific "element of politics" from the history of France, the privileged starting-point of his political theory.

§7.51. *History of the subaltern classes.* The element of racial struggle grafted on to the class struggle in France by Thierry had some importance. How important was it in France in determining the nationalistic tone of the movements of the subaltern classes? The 'Gallicism' of Proudhon's worker is to be studied, as the most complete expression of the democratic-Gallilist tendency represented by the popular novels of Eugene Sue ⁶⁸

He was already contemplating the use of this 'element' for comparison with other countries.⁶⁹ For the time being he said no more about it but it is worth noting that

⁶⁸ §7.51, QCII p.897.

⁶⁹ In the preceding §7.50 he notes that "for a certain time Manzoni accepted Thierry's conception (for France) of the struggle of races within the bosom of the people (Lombards and Romans, like Franks and Gauls in France) as a struggle between the humble and the mighty".

from the start the line of enquiry is concerned not with the intellectual origins of racism as such but with something much more specific, ie, the origins of the interrelation, or rather 'interference', between the 'struggle of races' and the Marxist 'struggle of classes'. From the start, Gramsci was probably thinking in classic Franco-German terms. Indeed, Thierry's conception of the struggle between the 'mighty' Franks and the 'humble' Gauls already implied a certain relation between Germans and French. Whatever the case, this element of politics (racial struggle+ class struggle) might be of particular use in analysing the Nazi movement in Germany which was also a movement of the "subaltern classes" with a nationalistic tone of its own.

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The following month, in September 1931, Gramsci had occasion to return to the question 'Does any 'racism' exist in Italy?' (§6.35) which he first raised in the aftermath of the Nazis' election victory a year earlier. Tatiana wrote to him about a film she had recently seen about anti-semitism in wartime Poland, *Two Worlds*, by the German director E.A. Dupont. Gramsci feared that Tatiana, herself half-Jewish, was persuaded to believe that Jews and Gentiles really inhabited two different worlds, and considered this "a way of thinking worthy of the Black Hundreds, the American Ku Klux Klan, or the German swastikas".⁷⁰ "The film is certainly of Austrian origin, a product of post-war anti-semitism". There followed a protracted and at times acrimonious exchange of letters with Tatiana, and latterly with Piero Sraffa, which went on until March 1932.⁷¹ Gramsci used all his formidable powers of logic, sparing neither sarcasm nor ridicule, to liberate Tatiana from a point of view "which led straight to anti-semitism".

Gramsci's letters provide an interesting analysis of anti-semitism, a subject which he mentions only rarely in the notebooks. They reveal all the impatience and at times frustration of a powerfully rational intellect forced to confront the question of 'race' which - "when that word is understood in anything other than a purely

⁷⁰ To Tatiana, 13 September 1931, LCII p.464.

⁷¹ These letters are translated in full in *Antonio Gramsci: Letters from Prison*, Volume 2, edited by Frank Rosengarten and translated by Raymond Rosenthal (Columbia University Press, 1994). The importance of these letters is noticed and discussed by Enzo Traverso in *The Marxists and the Jewish Question. The History of a Debate 1843-1943* (Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1994) p.159-166.

anthropological sense" - is all "false mysticism".⁷² On a number of occasions he tried to put an end to the exchange and say his last word on the subject: "As far as I'm concerned, that just about settles the question, and I'm not going to let myself be lured into starting others. The question of 'race', outside the realm of anthropology and prehistoric studies, doesn't interest me".⁷³ Despite this disclaimer, Gramsci was informed and perceptive on the subject. His observations are interesting in view of the Jewish tragedy which was about to unfold in Germany.

As we see, Gramsci did not differentiate at first between the anti-semitism of the 'German swastikas' and of the Black Hundreds of pre-revolutionary Russia. Both were expressions of what he called popular or 'classical' anti-semitism which, he argued, had long since disappeared in Italy. Summing up the whole exchange in March 1932 he wrote: "What I wanted to establish is this: that for some time now popular anti-semitism (which is classical anti-semitism, that which provoked and still provokes tragedies, and has some importance in the history of civilisation) has not existed in Italy.....".⁷⁴ Here Gramsci seems to acknowledge varieties of anti-semitism other than this 'classical' type. Whether or not he was thinking of the 'German swastikas', his reference in the same passage to the need to sterilise "the bacillus of racist romanticism"⁷⁵ suggested other varieties of more recent origin. In some ways his account of classical anti-semitism - the pogrom, the ghetto etc - prefigures the stages of the Jewish tragedy about to happen in Germany but he could not begin to imagine what the final outcome would be. Neither could Tatiana, of course, but her anxiety went deeper than Gramsci's logic.

28 September 1931. Gramsci's first point emphasised the extent to which the Jews had been assimilated in Italy.

I'm sorry you haven't yet enlarged on the subject of the Jews and the 'two worlds'. And I'm sorry that this old hoodoo has entered your head, especially seeing as there has been no anti-semitism in Italy for a long while now. Jews can become ministers of the crown (not to mention prime ministers, as in the case of Luzzatti); they can also reach the rank of general in the army. Marriages of Jews with Christians are very numerous, particularly in the big cities; and this is not only a working class phenomenon, for a number of girls of the aristocracy have married Jewish intellectuals. In what way does an Italian Jew (leaving aside a small number of Rabbis and traditionalist greybeards) differ from an

⁷² To Tatiana, 12 October 1931, LCII p.479.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p.480.

⁷⁴ To Tatiana, 21 March 1932, LCII p.550.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.550.

ordinary Italian of the same class? There's a much greater difference between such a Jew on the one hand and a Polish or Gallician Jew of the same class on the other. It's true there was a little bit of political anti-semitism against Toeplitz, the director of the Commercial Bank, and in 1919 *La Rivista di Milano* was founded: this was as fiercely anti-semitic as its circulation was limited....⁷⁶

5 October. Next Gramsci pointed out the danger of the widespread diffusion of this ideology among ordinary people like Tatiana. During the First World War the ruling classes had deliberately exploited this, launching ideological 'waves' (the equivalent in politics, perhaps, to offensives in warfare?).

....The fact that you have toned down your statements on this question of the so-called 'two worlds' does not alter the fundamental erroneousness of your point of view, and does not diminish the force of my assertion that we are dealing with an ideology which belongs, even if only marginally, to the same camp as the Black Hundreds. Of course, I understand perfectly well that you wouldn't take part in a pogrom; nevertheless, for a pogrom to be possible, it is necessary that the ideology of 'two impenetrable worlds', of races etc, should be widely diffused. This helps to create that imponderable atmosphere which the Black Hundreds can exploit, organising the discovery of a child's corpse drained of blood and accusing the Jews of having murdered him in ritual sacrifice. The outbreak of the World War showed how ably the ruling classes and groups know how to exploit these apparently innocuous ideologies, in order to set in motion the waves of public opinion. The thing seems to me so very surprising in your case that I would seem to myself lacking in love for you if I didn't try to liberate you completely from every preoccupation with this question.⁷⁷

Gramsci went on to observe that supposedly 'racial' characteristics were really the result of the long history of Jewish segregation.

The important thing to remember in connection with this question is that the Jews were not liberated from the ghetto until 1848, and that they remained in the ghetto segregated in every way from European society for almost two millennia. Since 1848 the process of assimilation in the Western countries has been so rapid and profound that one cannot help thinking that it was only the segregation imposed on them which prevented their complete assimilation in the various countries....In any case, it is worth noting that many characteristics which are taken as racial are actually the result of life in the ghetto. On the other hand, the system of ghettos was imposed in different ways in different countries with the result that an English Jew, for example, has almost nothing in common with a Jew from Galicia.⁷⁸

12 October. Given this "historicist" perspective on Jewish assimilation, Gramsci found the idea of nations or races having "eternal" characteristics ridiculous. He did not imagine in 1931 that the myth of the "eternal Jew", which belonged to popular novels and films, could become the founding idea of a modern State, animating all its policies and laws.

⁷⁶ To Tatiana, 28 September 1931, LCII p.472.

⁷⁷ To Tatiana, 5 October 1931, LCII p. 475.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.476.

I was certainly wrong to start an argument. It would have been better to make a joke of it and to counter your argument with the theory of British 'phlegm', French 'ardour', German 'loyalty', Spanish 'hauteur', Italian 'improvisation' and finally Slavic 'charm' - all things which are very useful for writing serial novels or making popular films. Or else I could have put to you the question: who is the 'true' Jew, or the Jew 'in general', or simply man 'in general'. He won't be found, I don't think, in any anthropological or sociological museum. Besides, what about their conception of God as the 'Lord of Hosts' ("*dio degli eserciti*") and all the language of the Bible about the 'chosen people' and the mission of the Jewish people, which sounds like the language used by Kaiser Bill before the war: what meaning does it have for today's Jews?⁷⁹

2 November. The rapid assimilation of the Jews in the countries of Western Europe, however, contrasted with their continuing segregation in the countries of Eastern Europe. Having denied the existence of the 'two worlds' in the West, Gramsci ends by acknowledging their existence in the East. Ironically, this is where Tatiana had started from since Dupont's film *Two Worlds* was set in wartime Poland.

If the Jewish question interests you, and you want to get to grips with it scientifically, there are two recent publications which I have seen quoted in a review, and which I would like to recommend to you. They are two reports that were read at the International Congress of Population Research recently held in Rome, and were later published as separate pamphlets. One is by Professor Livio Livi and deals with the entire Jewish population of the world; the other by Professor R. Bachi deals with Italian Jews in particular. Both seem to me, going by the summary given, to be very interesting and instructive. As far as Italy is concerned, it is only in Rome according to Bachi that one still finds a relatively compact Jewish nucleus: elsewhere in Italy the phenomenon of dispersion and absorption by the general environment is progressing. On a world scale the coherent Jewish nucleus is that of Eastern Europe; around this nucleus the other Jewish communities - those which are letting themselves be absorbed by their environment - form a sort of halo....In the agricultural countries of Eastern Europe the segregation of the Jews continues in fact, even without the ghetto.⁸⁰

Tatiana passed Gramsci's letters on to Piero Sraffa in Cambridge. In his reply to her dated 27 December 1931⁸¹, the relevant part of which she then passed on to Gramsci, Sraffa suggested that he may have lost touch since "what he says about the Jews in Italy is no longer entirely true today". Since the Concordat of 1929 the Jews as religious communities had been given certain advantages such as legal recognition of the Jewish universities which pleased the old rabbis and the young Zionists alike. However, the Jews continued to be excluded in fact, if not in law, from membership of the Italian Academy and with occasional exceptions from Parliament. Sraffa shrewdly noted that "both these apparently contrasting tendencies are evidently aimed at making the Jews an isolated community once

⁷⁹ To Tatiana, 12 October 1931, LCII p.478-479. [Translated in HH p.173]

⁸⁰ To Tatiana, 2 November 1931, LCII p.490.

⁸¹ Piero Sraffa: *Lettere a Tania per Gramsci*, introduzione e cura di Valentino Gerratana (Editori Riuniti, 1991) p. 41-42.

again".⁸²

8 February 1932. Tatiana passed on Sraffa's observations on 2 February. Gramsci was not convinced. The signs of nascent anti-semitism in Italy alleged by Sraffa could be explained by other reasons. However, there was one implication of the Concordat which, although it did not apply specifically to Italy's Jews, seemed to him highly significant : this was the possibility of "juridically instituting a category of civil pariahs". Why did he think this was so significant? Was it because he knew from their programme ⁸³ that the Nazis intended to deprive the Jews in Germany of their civil rights and thus reduce them precisely to "a category of civil pariahs"?

His observations are objectively very interesting but don't seem quite right to me. I don't think it is justified to infer that there is an 'evident' tendency 'to turn the Jews back into an isolated community'; this tendency seems to me to be rather the 'subjective' one on the part of the old rabbis and the young Zionists. The objective truth seems to be that the Concordat has left the Jews in the same position as the Protestants, but there exists or there will exist a social category that will find itself in a very unfortunate situation compared to the Jews and Protestants: this will be (or already is) the priests who have left the priesthood and the monks who have left the monastery, who will therefore be excluded from government positions, ie, degraded as citizens. The fact that it has been possible juridically to institute a category of civil pariahs like this seems to me far more important than the juridical position of the Jews and Protestants who have been granted, in the spirit of the law, legal rights which are anything but degrading.

I do not rule out the possibility that an anti-semitic tendency may yet develop here but I see no signs of it today. The signs that are taken to confirm its existence can be explained by other reasons and are, in any case, offset by other equally significant facts. But the important fact in my opinion is this: that some of the Jews approve of specific measures against other Jews. Professor Levi-Civita of Rome University got into trouble because he did not attend the official religious solemnities but it was the Rector Del Vecchio, himself a Jew, who caused the trouble for him; so it was not a question of race but a question of politics: a member of the ruling class must render homage to Catholicism as *instrumentum regni*, no matter what his faith. In the same way the line drawn by the Academy or Parliament proves nothing: world famous scientists who aren't Jews have found and will find themselves excluded. The position filled by Teodoro Mayer at Credito Mobiliare [sic] also seems to me to be significant. I believe that in many cases it is not Judaism that counts but Judaism-Freemasonry, the fact that Freemasonry was certainly an institution in which there were many Jews.⁸⁴

Sraffa was not persuaded by Gramsci's "other reasons". "Surely Nino doesn't mean to say that in Poland, for example, the fact that the Jews are dealers or moneylenders or non-peasants is "some other reason" for hostility against the Jews, as though the "real reason" were to do with theological or anthropological differences".⁸⁵ Ignoring the reference to the recent appointment of Teodoro Mayer,

⁸² *ibid.*, p.42.

⁸³ By this time Gramsci was familiar with the 25-point programme of the Nazi Party which was reproduced in full in the article 'Il Nazionalsocialismo in Germania', *Civiltà Cattolica*, May 1931.

⁸⁴ To Tatiana, 8 February 1932, LCII p.531-533.

⁸⁵ Piero Sraffa to Tatiana, 1 March 1932, in *Lettere a Tania per Gramsci*, cit., p.50-54.

Sraffa suggested that the facts cited by Gramsci to support his case "belong to a past stage".⁸⁶ "Besides, it is necessary to distinguish between anti-semitism and *Two Worlds*: the granting of certain privileges to the Jewish universities (ie, as religious communities) is anything but an act of anti-semitism but it tends, as far as it can, to make the distinction clear-cut".⁸⁷ He drew attention to the dilemma faced by those Jews who are silently leaving their Judaism behind and assimilating with other Italians, who find themselves since the Concordat having to declare in many instances that they are either Jews or non-Jews. "For an infinite number of Jews or half-Jews this has been a difficult problem to resolve: what they wanted to avoid was having to 'leap', but today either you are a Jew or not a Jew - there is no middle way".⁸⁸ Sraffa could not explain these facts and asked for Gramsci's opinion. "It is probably necessary to understand the relation of the State to the Catholic Church in Italy. The attitude of the State towards the minor churches would follow 'logically' from an explanation of this; in the case of the Jews, this could be coloured by the example of foreign countries, especially by the Nazis and similar movements".⁸⁹

21 March. Gramsci was impressed by Sraffa's observations and found the new data he provided interesting "because I had no knowledge of facts such as these".⁹⁰ He refrained from commenting on Sraffa's new facts or his suggestion about the influence of the Nazi movement on Italy. He confined himself to reminding Tatiana of the starting-point of their debate - the alleged existence of popular anti-semitism in Italy: he reminded her of this "because now we are talking about something else" (meaning, presumably, Germany).

When the question is posed in these terms - that is, within its proper limits and with all germs of racist romanticism and more or less confused Zionism well and truly sterilised - the thing is worthy of attention. And the data you now provide are interesting because I had no knowledge of facts such as these. What I wanted to establish is this: that for some time now no popular anti-Semitism (which is the classical anti-Semitism, that which has provoked and still provokes tragedies and has importance in the history of civilisation) has existed in Italy, and that in no sense do the Jews represent a special culture, nor do they have any particular historical mission in the modern world, nor do they separately, by themselves, ferment the process of development of history. That was the starting-point of our debate and it is necessary to recall it because now we are talking about something else.⁹¹

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.52.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.52.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.53.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.53.

⁹⁰ To Tatiana, 21 March 1932, LCII p.550.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.550. [Translated in HH p.201].

Chapter 3

January - December 1932

From the Presidential Elections to the Chancellorship of Schleicher

The Letters

“....now there is someone who 'philosophically' accepts being manure....”

By the start of 1932 Gramsci was well on the way to becoming a “micromaniac”, his nerves being worn down by all the petty preoccupations and niggardly thoughts brought on by prison life. He invented a new metaphor to describe his condition; the quality of his irony, including his self-irony, was as intelligent as ever:

Prometheus at war with all the gods of Olympus appears to us a tragic Titan: Gulliver tied up by the Lilliputians makes us laugh. If Prometheus, instead of having his liver devoured daily by an eagle, had been nibbled away by ants, he would have made us laugh too. Jupiter wasn't very intelligent for his time: the technique of getting rid of opponents was still not very advanced.....¹

His interest in the myth of Prometheus can be followed in the notes at this time. His exercises in translation from German included a rendering of Goethe's *Ode to Prometheus* as well as an extract from Engels' piece *On Goethe* 2. In §8.214 (April 1932) he made a critical summary of an article on the subject in the latest issue of the periodical *Leonardo*. This turned upon the contrast between the image of Prometheus in Goethe's famous ode and in an unfinished play on the same theme thought to have been written at a later date. The latter expressed a more complex image of the hero which was closer than the ode to expressing Goethe's own psychology. This was the focus of Gramsci's interest.

The rebellion of Prometheus is 'constructive', he appears not just as the Titan in revolt but more especially as 'homo faber', conscious of himself and of the meaning of his work. To this Prometheus the gods are not at all infinite or omnipotent. 'Can you make me grasp in my hand the vast expanse of the sky and the earth? Can you separate me from myself? Can you expand me until I embrace the whole world?'. Mercury replies with a shrug of the shoulders: it's [your] destiny! And so even the gods are mere vassals. But doesn't Prometheus still feel happy in his workshop, surrounded by his creations? 'This is my world, this is my everything. Here I feel myself!'. He told Mercury that as a child he became conscious of his own physical existence when he noticed that his feet supported his body and his hands reached out into space to touch. Epimetheus had accused him of particularism, of not recognising the sweetness of being at one with the gods, with kindred, with the world and the sky. 'I've heard that story before', Prometheus replied, for he wasn't content any more with the unity which embraced him from outside himself, he must create a unity which springs from inside himself. Such unity can only arise from

¹ To Tatiana, 18 January 1932 in LCII p.524. [Translation in HH,p.186].

² The translation of Engels' article *On Goethe* (which Gramsci wrongly attributed to Marx) was in Notebook 7 (QCIV,p.2391) and Goethe's *Ode* was translated in Notebook C (QCIV,p.2440) reserved for translations only, together with extracts from Goethe's *Conversations with Eckermann*. Both items were probably translated in 1931.

'the circle filled with his own activity'.³

The image of Prometheus in his workshop finding within himself the strength to resist the gods, corresponded to Gramsci working on the notebooks in his prison cell, "the circle filled with his own activity", especially at a time when he was conscious of losing all his contacts with the outside world. It also answered to the conviction formed in his youth under the influence of Croce's writings that, even in his hour of greatest need, "modern man can and must live without religion, whether it is revealed or positive or mythological religion or any other expression you care to use"⁴. However, any suggestion that he simply identified with Goethe's hero was proved wrong a few months later when he again mentioned Prometheus in §9.53 (June 1932). This note was a more transparent statement of Gramsci's 'philosophical' state of mind; to express this he chose an altogether less 'heroic' metaphor.

A dialogue. Something fundamental has changed. You can see it. What is it? Before, everyone wanted to be cultivators of history, to have active parts to play, each having an active role. No one wanted to be 'manure' of history. But can the earth be ploughed without first being manured? So there must be the ploughman and 'manure'. Everyone acknowledges this in the abstract, but what about in practise? 'Manure', in order to be 'manure', means standing aside, returning to the darkness, to obscurity. Something has changed because now there is someone who 'philosophically' accepts being manure, who knows that is what he must be and adapts himself to it.

You could say it's like the question of the man on the brink of death except that there's a big difference: being at death's door means being on the brink of a decisive act which will last just a second whereas being manure lasts a long time and the question is repeated from one moment to the next. We only live once, as they say; your own personality is irreplaceable. It's not like playing a game where you are faced with a fortuitous, instantaneous choice in which, after a lightning appraisal of all the values, you make a decision which can't be deferred any longer. In this case the decision is deferred every second and repeated every second. So something has changed, as we said.....The image of Prometheus who, instead of being attacked by the eagle, is devoured by ants. The Jews had the imagination to invent Job: the Greeks could only imagine Prometheus. But the Jews are more realistic, more remorseless, and have also given their hero a higher profile 5

Yet even someone who "accepts 'philosophically' being manure" has an ultimate faith in the rationality of history and his reference to the Jews reminds us that this

³ §8.214. 'Popular Outline'. *Suggestions on aesthetics and literary criticism*, QCII, p.1075, based on Leonello Vincenti: 'Prometeo', *Leonardo*, March 1932 (See Professor Gerratana's note in QCIV p.2820-2821).

⁴ To Tatiana, 17 August 1931, in LCII,p.446, for Gramsci's reaction to the religious conversion of his former professor of letters, Umberto Cosmo. See also §10.05. *Croce and Religion*, QCII,p.1217.

⁵ §9.53 in QCII,p.1128.

faith was about to be tested to an unimaginable degree. A useful perspective on this is provided by another reference to Goethe at this time. In the first half of 1932 Gramsci was writing in Notebook 10, his brilliant critical analysis of the philosophy of Croce. He exchanged several letters with Tatiana on the subject. Gramsci suggested that Croce's intellectual influence was partly due to his literary style. This was reminiscent of Goethe's style in expressing qualities of inner strength which Gramsci undoubtedly admired:

This literary style corresponds to the moral life of the writer in expressing an attitude of serenity, composure and imperturbable assurance which one might call Goethean. While so many people are losing their heads and stumbling around with apocalyptic feelings of intellectual panic, Croce becomes a landmark for all who wish to arrive at inner strength because of his unshakeable certitude that metaphysically evil cannot prevail and that history is rationality.⁶

Tatiana suggested that Croce was "rather isolated at the present time" and no longer as influential as Gramsci thought. Although Gramsci did not agree, she was probably correct as far as Croce's current intellectual influence was concerned. Judging from the tone of §9.53 Gramsci seemed to find a kind of serenity of his own in philosophically accepting being the 'manure' of history; but the source of this serenity, the "unshakeable certitude that metaphysically evil cannot prevail and that history is rationality", appears 'anachronistic' as the Third Reich begins to cast its shadow. In the correspondence of 1931-32 Tatiana herself seemed to succumb to a certain "intellectual panic" in relation to the growth of anti-Semitism and Gramsci had sought to guide her out of it by means of a wholly rational analysis of the question of race. Nevertheless, Gramsci's rationality seems in hindsight more 'anachronistic' than Tatiana's panic, which was more in tune with the times.

Contacts with the Family

In February Gramsci kept his promise to his son Delio and wrote a delightfully evocative letter to him recounting his childhood recollection of how hedgehogs collect apples:

One autumn evening - it was already dark, but the countryside lay bathed in radiant moonlight - I went with another boy, a friend of mine, into an orchard full of fruit trees, chiefly apple trees. We hid in a bush, facing into the wind. All of a sudden the hedgehogs came out of their holes; there were five of them, two big ones and three little ones. They made their way in single file towards the apple trees, rambled about in the grass for a little and then got down to work: they looked for the windfalls and rolled them together into a clearing, pushing them along with their legs and their little snouts. In this way they built
⁶ To Tatiana, 25 April 1932, LCIIP.567. [I have taken the liberty of slightly modifying the translation in HH p. 211-212].

up a hoard, all the apples lying close together.⁷

His efforts to be a father to his sons were more rewarding than his attempts to help Julia recover from her depression. He wrote some interesting letters to Tatiana about it at this time in which he speculated about the causes and tried to advise accordingly. These should be read against the background of the gigantic social changes under way in the Soviet Union during the First Five-Year Plan and the intense ideological atmosphere created by the State to bring these changes about.⁸ Gramsci thought that Julia's illness was rooted in an inferiority complex, which was aggravated by the pressure upon the individual created by this extreme environment:

The most important point seems to be this: that a psychoanalytic cure can be helpful only to those elements in society which romantic literature used to call the 'insulted and injured'.....I would describe them as those individuals who are caught up between the iron contrasts of modern life.....and are unable on their own to stand up to the strain of these contrasts.....The situation becomes dramatic at certain definite moments in history and in certain definite environments: when the environment is super-heated to extreme tension, and gigantic collective forces are unleashed which press hard on single individuals and drive them till it hurts, in order to obtain from them the maximum return of will and determination for the purposes of creation. Such situations become disastrous for exceptionally refined and sensitive temperaments.....I believe, therefore, that a person of culture (using the word in its German sense), an active element in society (as Julia certainly is, and not merely for official reasons such as the presence in her bag of a party card which postulates social activity on her part) is and must be his or her own best psychoanalyst.⁹

This analysis probably tells us more about Gramsci's perception of the Soviet Five-Year Plan than it does about Julia's illness. Judging from the letters to Tatiana which followed, in which Gramsci was forced to clarify what he meant by the

⁷ To Delio, 22 February 1932, LCII p.539. [Translated in full in HHp.194-196].

⁸ By this time Gramsci was well-informed about this. He had read the Russian Supplement of *The Economist* for November 1930 which he reported having read very carefully in a letter to Tatiana of 29 June 1931, in LCII p.432. There were also several articles on the Soviet Union in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (for example, the article in the supplement on 'The Five-Year Plan in 1931: The Decisive Year', 23 January 1931) and a long interview on the Five-Year Plan given by Trotsky to the special correspondent of MGW published on 3 April 1931. This interview, which has passed unnoticed, is almost certainly one of the sources of his reflections in §6.138. *Past and Present. Transition from the War of Manoeuvre (and from Frontal Attack) to the War of Position in the Political Field as well*, which is often misinterpreted because it is thought to apply to the 'West' not the 'East'.

⁹ To Tatiana, 15 February 1932, LCII p.534. [Translated in HH, p.191-193]. See also the following letter to Tatiana of 7 March in which he argues that, rather than resort to psychoanalysis, "one can arrive at a certain serenity even in the clash of the most absurd contradictions, and under the pressure of the most implacable necessity. But one can reach it only if one succeeds in thinking 'historically' or dialectically and by identifying one's own task with intellectual dispassion; one's own, or at any rate some well-defined task which one can regard as one's own, and which is within the limit of one's capacity". LCII p.545.

'insulted and injured', it merely gave rise to further misunderstandings about the exact nature of Julia's depression. At the end of March he wrote to Julia confessing to "a certain inhibition when I try to make contact with you"¹⁰. After receiving further news of her in May, including a letter from his father-in-law in Moscow, Gramsci regretted that in his letters to Julia he had been "throwing stones in the dark", doing more harm than good.¹¹ Again he was forced to explain to Tatiana what he meant.

I only meant that if I had had certain information before, I would have expressed myself differently in my letters to Julia etc. Instead, for some time now it has been like playing blind man's buff.....I can't get you to understand that a prolonged lack of news inevitably gives rise to suspicions.....and ends up creating an endless chain of tragic equivocations...¹²

Increasingly, Gramsci wrote to Tatiana about Julia rather than to Julia herself. He managed to overcome his 'inhibition' at the end of June when he wrote telling her the story of 'A Man in a Ditch' who succeeds, after several appeals for help, in getting out of the ditch by himself. He concluded by looking to the future rather than the past and gave the first hint of divorce which he proposed later in the year.

We must hurl all that's past into the flames and build new lives from the ground up. Why should we let ourselves be crushed by the lives we have led up to now? There's no sense in preserving anything at all apart from what was constructive and what was beautiful. We must get out of the ditch, and throw off that toad sitting on our hearts.¹³

The State of his Health

Towards the end of May Gramsci reported that insomnia, due to the constant noise in the corridor outside his cell, had reduced him to "a state of enormous weariness and exhaustion".¹⁴ A few weeks later he developed a temperature and felt feverish; solid food caused him to vomit and so he limited himself to drinking milk. The result was that he had "become incapable of any form of intellectual concentration, not even the minimum needed to write a letter".¹⁵ By the start of August he felt a bit better although the summer heat had started to get to him: "it's started to get overpoweringly hot....every effort I make leaves me bathed in sweat,

¹⁰ To Julia, 28 March 1932, LCII p.554.

¹¹ To Tatiana, 16 May 1932, LCII p.576.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ To Julia, 27 June 1932, LCII p.593-595.

¹⁴ To Tatiana, 23 May 1932, LCII p.579.

¹⁵ To Tatiana, 18 July 1932, LCII p.597.

which is disagreeable as well as enervating".¹⁶ All this was using up his great reserves of patience and resistance. The point of crisis was reached at the end of August when he got little or no sleep for eight days in succession: "In my opinion I've reached the point where my powers of resistance are in danger of complete collapse"¹⁷.

Gramsci was already in a highly precarious state, therefore, when there occurred in September- October "a succession of events which have combined to ruin my health"¹⁸. These provoked a series of psychologically dramatic letters in which Gramsci touched the depths of his inner self.

Firstly, without having Gramsci's go-ahead, Tatiana forwarded a request to Mussolini on compassionate grounds to allow him to be visited by an outside doctor, Professor Arcangeli. Deeply frustrated at having control of his life in prison taken out of his hands in this way, Gramsci threatened to break off all contact with her, but not before his tenderness had got the better of his severity:

Dear Tania, I'm very fond of you and I realise that you've helped me more than anyone else to get through the periodic crises which I'm forced to undergo in prison and which aggravate my nervous state, which is bad enough already. Nevertheless, I have to tell you that your attitude to life these past years, which have been hard and harsh, is like the attitude which comes across in reading the romantic library of Madame de Segur: your optimism is incredible, your hypo-theses are always what you would like to happen, you have kept a naivety and freshness of feeling which are enchanting and endearing. They endeared me during the years when we spent time together talking and discussing, notwithstanding the fact that I always thought after my childhood experiences that I was immune to such 'weaknesses'. Nevertheless, in spite of all this, in spite of my tenderness for you which hasn't changed, I must ask you to approach our relations completely differently if you want them to continue under the present conditions. You must take no further interest in my prison life and consequently you must alter your correspondence about it if you don't want it to be broken off completely.¹⁹

Secondly, on 7 October his sister Grazietta, apparently without considering its likely impact on him, sent news from Sardinia that his mother was dying. Gramsci's response persuaded the family that the effect on his morale was such that it was better to reassure him on this account and conceal from him the true state of affairs:

The idea that mamma could be dying while I know nothing precise about it and have no chance of seeing her again obsesses and torments me every minute of the day and night. I remember her at those times when she showed great energy and strength, I can see quite distinctly many scenes of our family life in the past, and I cannot imagine that she could be reduced to the state you describe and that she feels herself to be near to leaving us

¹⁶ To Tatiana, 1 August 1932, LCII p.599.

¹⁷ To Tatiana, 31 August 1932, LCII p.609.

¹⁸ To Tatiana, 9 November 1932, LCII p.636.

¹⁹ To Tatiana, 3 October 1932, LCII p.621.

etc. Nor do I know whether or not you will be able to convince her how much I have always loved her and how one of the bitterest regrets of my life, which has had so much influence in shaping my character, was seeing how she has had no respite in her life, no satisfactions, no enduring peace.²⁰

Finally, at the start of November Gramsci received a telegram from his brother Carlo with news that an amnesty for political prisoners had been granted to mark the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome.²¹ For the next several weeks, much of his correspondence was taken up with calculating how the amnesty applied to him but Carlo's telegram had "really led me to think for seven or eight hours that I could be freed".

These three events - the clash with Tatiana over the petition to Mussolini, Grazietta's letter about his mother, and Carlo's telegram about the political amnesty - left his nerves in shreds. It was at this juncture that he put to Tatiana the idea of suggesting to Julia a divorce by mutual consent: the suggestion was made from strength not from weakness.

We shudder to think that in India wives have to die when their husbands die and yet, fundamentally, we don't appreciate that this also happens, in less immediately violent forms, in our civilisation. Why should a living being be tied to a dead or almost dead one? It seems to me that the older generation whose morals were formed in the pre-war years are outdated in their attitude to these matters and that the new generation, who make decisions faster and without being hidebound by outdated sentiments, are right. As I said, it's not a simple matter and it can't be done without a violent tear, leaving a painful wound; nor can we be blind to the fact that after the decision there will be a certain period of remorse, regret, and oscillation, but we can also look forward to getting through this and creating a new life.....I have thought about it one way or another for a long time, perhaps ever since the day I was arrested - not very seriously at first, then more deeply and carefully.²²

After analysing the possibility that the idea might be a "very romantic gesture" or a "kind of sentimental blackmail", Gramsci ended up thinking that the best thing would be to do it unilaterally, cutting off all relations with her without seeking her consent:

This last option has tormented me very much but I have never been and never will be able to face it. By resolving the relationship in this way, Julia would have a double burden since she would lose all esteem for me (which would not be without consequences for the esteem she must have for herself) without avoiding any of the pain. The pain can't be avoided but it can be limited, so can other consequences of a moral and intellectual nature. The initiative must come from me, that's certain, and there can be no hiding from the inevitable consequences. I must face up to it with all the strength of my being. Although Julia is no longer a young woman, she can still be free to start a new phase of

²⁰ To Grazietta, 17 October 1932, LCII p.626-627.

²¹ To Tatiana, 9 November 1932, LCII p.635.

²² To Tatiana, 14 November 1932, LCII p.637-638.

her life.....I shall go back into my 'Sardinian' shell. This doesn't mean that I won't suffer but I'll feel less with every day that passes and will adapt myself to it. I can bear it, I'll get used to it.²³

The business of the reviews:

"I've become 'anachronistic' in everything....."

As a result of the new penal regulation, Gramsci cancelled the subscriptions to the foreign-language reviews at the end of 1931, including the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*. He was allowed to read the *Corriere della Sera*. Although he complained about "the lack of continuity in the news", the *Corriere* reported political events in Germany in the first half of 1932 closely and continuously. Gramsci had no difficulty following the thread of German politics to the dismissal of Brüning and the appointment of Papen at the start of June. Then on 6 June just as he was arranging with Tatiana to renew the quarterly subscription, he abruptly cancelled his instruction: "The part about the newspaper was cancelled by me. Cancel the subscription, don't renew it whatever you do".²⁴ The prison authorities had discovered that the economic affairs section of the newspaper was being used as a means of illicit communication and suspended the privilege altogether.²⁵ The loss of the *Corriere* in June, combined with the difficulty in concentrating cause by chronic insomnia, left him feeling that he was losing contact with present-day life and living increasingly in the past. This impression is confirmed by Gramsci's letters of the second half of 1932:

To Julia, 15 August: I'm completely cut off from present-day life (*attualità*)I read a certain number of reviews.....but in Italy the reviews do not follow the intellectual currents in the country very closely and so they don't evoke any kind of picture, still less a picture of the constant motion of life. ²⁶

To Tatiana, 5 September: I read very little, my memory goes from one moment to the next. The odd thing is that while I remember past events in great detail, I can't remember what happened yesterday or even a few hours ago. ²⁷

To Tatiana, 14 November: I get more and more insensitive and malleable with every day that passes.....I have already developed to a large extent the 'prison mentality' and in the last few days I've noticed that this process has gone further than I thought. ²⁸

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ To Tatiana, 6 June 1932, LCII p.584 and note 1

²⁵ Piero Sraffa: *Lettere a Tania per Gramsci*, p.239.

²⁶ LCII p.606-607.

²⁷ LCII p.612

²⁸ LCII p.638-639.

To Julia, 19 December: I've lost much of my power of imagination and I've lost, too, most of my contacts with what is really going on in life. My memories are very lively but are, after all, six years old by now and so much must have changed in that time. Inevitably, I've become 'anachronistic' in everything....²⁹

Although Gramsci sensed that he was losing touch with "the constant motion of life", it would be a mistake to infer that he simply surrendered to this process. As far as German politics are concerned, notes on the German unemployment figures and on the Reichstag elections of 31 July indicate that he was still following the thread of events in the summer of 1932. The relative paucity of references to current affairs in the notes written in the latter part of 1932 suggests that Gramsci may have lost his grip on the thread of events for a while and was (as he says in December) becoming "anachronistic" in everything, including German affairs. However, we should expect the pessimistic analysis of his intelligence to lead to an optimistic assertion of his will. The notes on Caesarism written in December 1932-January 1933 are proof that at the turn of the year Gramsci reacted vigorously against the tendency to become "anachronistic". As the "catastrophic phase" of the German crisis approached, Gramsci turned particularly to the *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera* where he could still follow the thread of German events very closely.³⁰

²⁹ LCII p.655.

³⁰ Note Prof. Gerratana's observation that Gramsci consulted the *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera* particularly closely in the first half of 1933. See the note to §15.01, QCIV p.2941.

The Periodicals and *Corriere della Sera*

The Presidential Elections (March-April)

Since the fall of the Grand Coalition in March 1930 and the appointment of Brüning as Chancellor, parliamentary government in Germany had been superseded by rule by presidential decree under Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. The country was now governed by the high bureaucracy coordinated by a military-political clique around the eighty-four year old President Hindenburg. The clique included the 'political' generals Groener, who combined the offices of Minister of the Reichswehr and the Interior, and his protégé Schleicher. The pivotal role of this presidential clique was particularly 'visible' in early 1932 when Hindenburg's term of office as president was due to come to an end. This opened the prospect of a contested election in which a rival candidate, possibly Hitler, might stand against Hindenburg and thus threaten the monopoly of the ruling circle. Brüning hoped to avoid this by extending Hindenburg's term of office. This required a change in the constitution to enable him to be re-elected by a two-thirds majority of parliament instead of by direct popular vote. At the invitation of Groener, who acted as mediator between them, Hitler went to Berlin on 7 January to discuss with Brüning whether or not the National Socialists would support this proposal in parliament.³¹ When Hitler refused a few days later, after consulting the other leaders of the self-styled National Opposition, a contested election was unavoidable.³²

The run-up to the first round of the presidential election highlighted the 'fissures' in the right-wing bloc.³³ Unable to support the candidature of Hindenburg, neither could the 'National Opposition' agree on a compromise candidate of their own: Hitler's candidature was announced on 22 February, "creating an enormous impression" ³⁴ , whilst Dusterberg stood for the Stahlhelm and the Nationalists.³⁵

³¹ 'Brüning chiede l'appoggio di Hitler per il prolungamento dei poteri a Hindenburg', *CdS*, 8 January 1932. See also Werner von Schulenberg: 'Brüning, Hitler, Hugenburg', *GER*, January 1932.

³² 'Hitler e Hugenburg contro la proposta Brüning', *CdS*, 12 January 1932.

³³ 'Hindenburg si ripresenta contro i deliberati dei gruppi nazionali' (back page rubric *Recentissime*) *CdS*, 16 February 1932. The paper suggested that the decision of the German Nationals and Steel Helmets to contest the reelection of Hindenburg by putting up their own candidate was a deliberate tactic designed to take away from Hindenburg as many votes as possible and thus make a second ballot necessary. There is no evidence to suggest that Hitler and Hugenburg concerted their tactics to this extent even if this was the effect.

³⁴ 'Hitler candidato contro Hindenburg' (*Recentissime*), *CdS*, 23 February 1932. On the announcement of Hitler's candidature, see also the rubric *Cronaca politica* in *NA*, 1 March 1932.

³⁵ 'Dusterberg per gli 'Elmetti d'acciaio', *CdS*, 24 February 1932.

Meanwhile, the left-wing forces were also unable to reach a compromise. The Social Democrats declined to put up a candidate of their own and declared their support for Hindenburg as the "lesser evil", whilst the Communists fielded their own candidate Thalmann.

The contest was 'dramatised' in the Fascist press and the result of the first round excited a lot of interest, no doubt because of the impressive challenge mounted by Hitler which made a second ballot necessary.³⁶ The result of the first ballot on 13 March was:-

	Votes	%
Hindenburg	18,651,500	(49.6)
Hitler	11,339,400	(30.1)
Thalmann	4,983,300	(13.2)
Dusterberg	2,557,700	(6.8) ³⁷

Since Hindenburg narrowly failed to obtain an absolute majority, a second round was necessary. Dusterberg withdrew and the 'National Opposition' supported Hitler. The result of the second ballot held on 10 April, was:-

Hindenburg	19,360,000	(53.0)
Hitler	13,418,500	(36.8)
Thalmann	3,706,800	(10.2) ³⁸

The results of the presidential elections, followed in rapid succession by the results of the Prussian and state elections (April) and a further round of Reichstag elections (July), provided Gramsci with further material for analysing the structure-superstructure relation. The results overturned the conventional 'economistic'

³⁶ See for example: 'Hindenburg o Hitler?', *CdS*, 10 March 1932; 'La Giornata Storica della Germania', *CdS*, 13 March 1932.

³⁷ 'Hitler decide di continuare le lotta per la conquista del potere in Germania', *CdS*, 15 March 1932; Under the rubric *Germania*, *RSE*, 15 March 1932, p.542-548, and foreign press reaction under the same rubric, *RSE*, 22, 29 March 1932. For an analysis of the results and prospects after the first round, see Giuseppe Renzetti: 'Hindenburg e Hitler', *GER*, March 1932; Mario da Silva: 'Le elezioni presidenziali tedesche', *CF*, 1 April 1932; under the rubric *L'Italia e Il Mondo*, 'Le elezioni presidenziali in Germania', *EF*, March 1932; under the rubric *Cronaca politica*, *NA*, 1 April 1932; under the rubric *Cose Straniere*, 'Prime avvisaglie della lotta presidenziali', *CC*, 19 March 1932, and 'Esito delle elezioni presidenziali', *CC*, 2 April 1932.

³⁸ 'Viva impressione per la forte votazione ottenuta dai social-nazionali', *CdS*, 12 April 1932; under the rubric *Germania*, *RSE*, 12 April 1932, p.753; under the rubric *Cronaca politica*, *NA*, 16 April 1932; for comment on the result and prospects after the second ballot, Giuseppe Renzetti: 'Aspetti politici attuali della Germania', *GER*, April 1932. See also the comment in 'Hitler e il Nazionalsocialismo', *CF*, 15 May 1932. This was the first of a series of articles by Mario da Silva in *Critica Fascista* trying to explain Nazi doctrine to Italian fascists: see 'Basi dello Stato nazionalsocialista', 1 June; 'Nazionalsocialismo e democrazia', 15 June; 'Nazionalsocialismo e economia liberale', 1 August, 1932.

wisdom of the communists that under circumstances of deepening economic crisis the masses would turn “automatically”, and with “lightning speed”, to communism as a solution to their problems, especially in the country with the strongest communist party in Europe.

The Rising Curve of Unemployment

For the presidential elections were held against a background of deepening economic crisis which could not have been more favourable from the Communist standpoint: this was measured in the steeply rising curve of official unemployment, which passed 6 million in February 1932³⁹. On the eve of the first round the *Corriere* observed that Germany had reached a critical moment having

just come through a winter full of privations and delusions, a period of desperate struggle against the difficulties which have been piling up year by year and now threaten to turn into an avalanche. It is precisely this widespread exasperation in people's minds which is the unknown factor and threatens the ruling candidate in spite of the prestige of Field-Marshal von Hindenburg's name.⁴⁰

Under these circumstances the paper predicted a strong showing by the Communist candidate Thalmann who would pick up “around 7 million votes, perhaps more rather than less”⁴¹. When Thalmann polled less than 5 million votes the *Corriere*, with evident satisfaction, expressed its amazement that “a people which has six million unemployed could not even muster more than five million votes for that form of desperation which follows the word of Moscow and is represented by German Communism”⁴². The result of the second ballot in which Thalmann's vote fell by over a million confirmed the inability of the Communist Party to expand its mass support in conditions which were supposed to be highly favourable to its cause. The economic illusion of Communism could thus be exploited by its enemies.

³⁹ The unemployment figures were carried in the political reports of the *Corriere*. On 8 January 1932 its Berlin correspondent reported that “the unemployment index continues to rise inexorably: at the end of 1931 Germany had 5,666,000 unemployed, an increase of 316,000 in the last fortnight of December”: ‘Bruning chiede l'appoggio di Hitler’, CdS, 8 January 1932. On 23 February the paper reported that “the unemployment statistics for the first half of February show a further increase of 81,000, the total without work rising to 6,127,000: ‘Hitler candidato contro Hindenburg’, CdS, 23 February 1932.

⁴⁰ ‘Hitler o Hindenburg?’, CdS, 10 March 1932.

⁴¹ ‘La Giornata storica della Germania’, CdS, 13 March 1932.

⁴² ‘Hitler decide di continuare la lotta’, CdS, 15 March 1932.

The failure of Thalmann stood in striking contrast to that of Hitler. In polling over 13 million votes in the second round, Hitler had doubled the National Socialist vote in the nineteen months since the Reichstag election of September 1930. On the eve of the election the *Corriere* identified the main elements of the mass support for Hitler and suggested that the economic crisis had set in motion an irresistible 'movement' in his favour.

Hitler is in a good position because his is a movement and not just a party. The masses of young people, discontented and without hope for the future, move towards him when they do not turn to Communism. The German petty-bourgeoisie, which ought to be the backbone of the Nation, was defeated by inflation and remains economically helpless. They look to Hitler, however, not because they think his programme is perfect - it remains generalised - but because he remains a patriotic man who has in fact sharpened the tone of German nationalism, and because he offers a seductive formula to whoever has lost his place in society or has no place at all: 'have done with it all', ie, have done with the system and the men who have failed to restore prosperity to Germany after the war. Hitler includes in this the old ruling dynasties and so there is little likelihood of the imperial ghosts and their heirs reappearing under his leadership.⁴³

From Gramsci's 'scientific' standpoint, the expansion of support for Hitler was no more an inevitable or automatic result of the economic crisis than it was for the communist candidate Thalmann. The economic crisis was a necessary but not sufficient condition. It created the potential for political change but it was the Nazis rather than the Communists who succeeded in harnessing this potential at the different political levels - presidential, Reichstag, state etc. Relatively little attention has been paid to how this was done, in particular to the rapid expansion of the organisation and personnel of the Nazi party after September 1930 without which it could not have turned the mass movement to its political advantage. The 'speed' of this process is particularly striking since changes in the organisational structure of a political party 'normally' take longer to put in place and are slower to take effect.⁴⁴ Even at the presidential level where the minds of the electorate could focus on the person of Hitler rather than on lists of party candidates, it required the orchestrated work of thousands of party functionaries at all levels to harness the mass movement set in motion by the economic crisis. The rapid recruitment, training, and deployment of these forces in the course of the economic crisis was a spectacular feat of political organisation without which the electoral expansion of the Nazi Party could not be explained.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 15 March 1932.

⁴⁴ The most important study of the party's organisational structure in this period is Dietrich Orlow: *The History of the Nazi Party*, Vol.1, 1919-33 (David and Charles, 1971). The author observes: "As an organisational feat the Reich presidential campaign was an immense accomplishment".

Fascism, Catholicism, Nazism

The performance of Hitler in the presidential election was the occasion for a renewed effort to promote a more favourable image of him to fascist (and catholic) intellectuals in Italy. A key mediator between the two movements was Giuseppe Renzetti who contributed a significant article to *Gerarchia* at this point.⁴⁵ The first essential was to remove the impression left by the warning of the German bishops a year earlier that Hitler was "anti-Catholic".

The German clergy justified their attitude on the basis of a number of anti-Catholic declarations (which were far from prudent and far from opportune, it must be admitted) by certain zealous party members who support the idea of a national religion similar to the Gallican project which the Popes of past centuries fought against, an idea arising from the statements and tendencies contained in a book, *The Myth of the 20th Century*, written by the deputy Rosenberg, the director of the official party newspaper.

Renzetti argued that the real motive behind the attitude of the German clergy was political not religious: it was not really because the ideology of the Brown Shirts was objectionable from a religious point of view but because their irresistible advance threatened the existence of the Catholic Centre Party "which has been able until now to play the role of arbiter of the parliamentary situations and indirectly to exercise command functions". He cited a recent article in the Catholic paper *Germania* to show that the religious motive alleged by the German clergy could not be taken at face value. The paper pointed out the danger to the Catholic Church of "Jewish liberalism":

(in the article, which came to conclusions largely similar to those of the National Socialists, it was said among other things that almost all of Berlin's theatres, three-quarters of the press, 90% of the advertising agencies and 60% of the journalistic agencies are in Jewish hands; that the immigration of Galician Jews to Germany should be prohibited; that a clear distinction ought to be made on the part of the State between the treatment handed out to the baptised and the unbaptised; that Jewish emancipation ought to be prevented, etc).

Renzetti claimed that the attitude of the German clergy to National Socialism was politically motivated. It was intended to keep the Catholic masses loyal to the Centre Party. However, the Centre Party no longer represented the majority of German Catholics. Most had no desire to mix religion and politics and were alienated by the clergy's attitude. The interests of religion would be better served if

⁴⁵ Giuseppe Renzetti: 'Aspetti politici attuali della Germania', *GER*, April 1932, pp's 319-321. All quotations from this source. The importance of Renzetti's role as a 'conservative' mediator between the Italian and German movements was pointed out by Professor Wolfgang Schieder in his lecture 'The German Right and Italian Fascism before 1933' delivered at the German Historical Institute in London, 13 May 1999.

the Church were a “purely religious, absolutely apolitical” organisation. He cited Hitler’s latest campaign speeches suggesting that the Centre was actually furthering anti-Christian ends:

Hitler is not an anti-Catholic. In the past he may have flirted with what we might call ‘Nordist’ ideas; aggravated by the clergy’s fight against him, he may have made some anti-Catholic declarations, but that’s all. In reality, he is fighting the Centre, and has said so recently in his speeches during the presidential election campaign, because the Centre keeps Marxism in power and because the system it is part of favours the development of Bolshevik culture. Indeed, far from being anti-religious Hitler wants the State he supports to have a Christian basis. This is the only basis on which a national State can be built.

Renzetti’s article stressed the difference between Hitler and Rosenberg on which the Jesuits pinned their hopes in the survey of the Nazi movement in *Civiltà Cattolica* the previous year. Moreover, in citing the Catholic paper *Germania* it encouraged the tendency to see a basis for future mutuality of Catholicism and Nazism in their shared attitudes towards the Jews. Gramsci read this poisonous piece just as he brought the discussion on anti-Semitism in the prison letters to an end in March 1932. At the very least it supported Sraffa’s suggestion that anti-Semitism in Italy had grown since the Concordat, especially under the influence of the Nazi movement.

The Ban on the Storm Troops (April)

The reelection of Hindenburg was followed a few days later by a presidential decree banning the Nazi Storm Troops. By 1932 the latter numbered some 400,000, four times the size of the Reichswehr itself.⁴⁶ The timing of the decree depended on the need to ensure internal law and order during the impending elections to the Diets of Prussia and other states on 24 April. The decree emanated from Groener in consultation with the Interior Ministers of the various states and was signed, very reluctantly, by Hindenburg. The decree aroused opposition in army circles and, with the help of Schleicher’s intrigues, fatally undermined the

⁴⁶ ‘Lo scioglimento dei reparti social-nazionali ordinato con decreto di Hindenburg’, *CdS*, 14 April 1932; ‘Dignitosa e ferma protesta di Hitler’, *CdS*, 15 April 1932. The number was quoted by Hitler who, in his response to the decree, declared: “Let them dissolve my shock troops. This won’t change the heads of their members who will continue as long as they have hearts and minds to stay loyal to me. Besides, since I can no longer lead and supervise their activity I don’t feel responsible for the 400,000 members of the banned formations, for whose conduct I have answered up to now” quoted in *CdS*, 14 April 1932. Reports of the press reaction to the ban were under the rubric *Germania* in RSE, 19 April (p.815), 26 April (p.869 and p.907), 3 May 1932 (p.931).

president's confidence in his minister who within a month was forced to resign.⁴⁷ The army leadership disliked the decree which seemed to set the Reichswehr in opposition to the National Socialists. The Storm Troops were regarded as potential recruiting material and already collaborated with the Reichswehr on manoeuvres. Moreover, the fact that the ban did not apply to the para-military organisations of the left, in particular the socialist Reichsbanner, was seen by the right-wing press to have compromised the president's position 'above party'.⁴⁸ Hitler was quick to take advantage of the president's embarrassment by observing with well-aimed sarcasm that Groener's first action after the presidential election was "to ban our Storm Troops but to leave the Reichsbanner alone, as if this organisation was considered necessary to the power of the State".⁴⁹ The president was obviously sensitive to this criticism and instructed Groener to start an inquiry into the activities of the Reichsbanner, to find legal grounds for banning it.

The instinct for compromise within the right-wing bloc proved stronger than the desire for confrontation. An indication of this was that from the start Hitler and the National Socialists were kept well-informed by sources within the government, possibly Schleicher himself, of what was going on. On the day of the decree the Berlin correspondent of the *Corriere* remarked that

relations between the National Socialists and senior functionaries in the central administration are apparently intimate enough to allow them to follow very closely what is going on in the not very secret offices of the Ministry. There was great surprise in administrative circles in Berlin that the 'Brown House' was already in possession yesterday of virtually the exact text of the decree published only today.⁵⁰

The following day it reported on the "inside story" of the ban contained in Goebbels' paper *Der Angriff* in which Groener was said to have decided on the dissolution of the Storm Troops "against the objections of his military advisers in the Reichswehr Ministry".⁵¹

⁴⁷ On the decree banning the shock-troops and its role in the downfall of Groener, see F.L.Carsten: *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933* (Oxford University Press, 1966) pp's 338-350. Before Groener's resignation on 12 May, Schleicher had already met Hitler twice to try to reach a compromise which would include the lifting of the ban.

⁴⁸ See the detailed reports on the ban and its aftermath in *CdS*, 14 and 15 April 1932.

⁴⁹ Quoted in *CdS*, 15 April 1932.

⁵⁰ *CdS*, 14 April 1932, cit.

⁵¹ *CdS*, 15 April 1932, cit.

The Elections in Prussia and other states (April)

The momentum of the mass movement of voters built up by the National Socialists in the presidential elections carried over into the state elections a fortnight later, although the latter presented the party with a more complicated task because of the need to compile lists of candidates for the different states. ⁵² The campaign started before not after the second round of the presidential elections: by focussing on Prussia in the presidential campaign, Hitler avoided duplicating his efforts in the state elections.

It is precisely in Prussia, and especially in eastern part of Prussia, that Hitler has recently made the most progress. With the figures ready to hand Hitler can show that if the mass sympathetic to him stays the same today, he could win almost half the seats. By the same calculations his allies, the German Nationals, would lose a certain number of the seats they currently have. But in union with each other the national front would form the only party which in accordance with parliamentary principles ought to be entrusted with the government.....

Hitler is preparing for this struggle. His candidature in the second ballot of the presidential election obviously gives him the opportunity to keep in motion the vast masses of his supporters including not only those organised in the National Socialist movement but also the sympathisers who count a lot in an electoral regime. Always remember that women as well as men can vote in Germany and that the women outnumber the men.⁵³

Hitler concentrated especially on the eastern districts of Prussia, the heartland of the traditional German Nationalists. Hence it was not surprising when the Nationalists whose voters had supported Hitler in the second presidential ballot, suffered heavy losses to the Nazis in the state election. The gains of the Nazis appeared all the more impressive as elections to the Prussian Diet had not been held since 1928, when they were little more than a fringe party. The results, which Gramsci studied closely, were as follows (1928 results in brackets) ⁵⁴ :-

Social Democrats	93 (130)
Centre	67 (71)
State Party	2 (22)
Communists	57 (45)
German People's Party	7 (34)
German National Party	31 (81)
Hannoverian Party	1 (2)
Christian Social Party	2 (0)
National Socialists	162 (6)

⁵²See D.Orlow, Vol.1,p.253.

⁵³ 'Come Hitler si prepara alla battaglia per le elezioni della Dieta prussiana', *CdS*, 16 March 1932.

⁵⁴ The election results for Prussia, Bavaria, Wurttemberg, Anhalt, and Hamburg were reported with obvious satisfaction under the headline 'Le conseguenze della grande vittoria di Hitler', *CdS*, 26 April 1932. They were also carried under the rubric *Cose Straniere* in *CC*, 7 May 1932; under the rubric *L'Italia e Il Mondo*, *EF*, May 1932. Foreign press reaction to the results was under the rubric *Germania* in *RSE*, 26 April (p.869 and p.907), 3 May 1932 (p. 931). An important analysis of the results was Giuseppe Piazza: 'Le Elezioni in Germania', *NA*, 1 May 1932.

Across the states the National Socialists made big gains as the bourgeois parties of the middle and the right disintegrated or disappeared: in Bavaria their seats in the Diet rose from 9 to 43; in Wurttemberg from 1 to 23 seats; in Anhalt they won 15 seats compared to none in the old Diet; in Hamburg their success was less spectacular, their seats increasing from 43 to 51. The Communists also made gains although their capacity to 'expand' their popular vote and to make inroads on the mass base of the Social Democrats proved to be limited. Indeed, in 'red' Hamburg the Communists actually lost seats ⁵⁵.

The most significant feature of this series of elections in the eyes of one observer was the 'fusion' at the base of the German Nationalists and the National Socialists.⁵⁶ The author saw an analogy with what had happened in Italy where the Nationalist Party founded by Enrico Corradini had fused with the Fascist Party and was disbanded as a separate organisation after the latter had come to power. He observed the same process happening in Germany in spite of the Nationalist leader Hugenburg.

It seems to be greatly assisted by the infallible instinct of the people since the mass of their voters in all the partial and local elections held since September 1930 have continued to transfer from the old party to the new. This was most apparent in the second ballot of the presidential election when the supporters of the German Nationalists, left a free vote, cast their votes almost en masse for the National Socialists. It seems therefore that the transformation in Italian style of German Nationalism into National Socialism is likewise happening from below and despite the incomprehension of the party's general staff whose querulous resistance is no more than the surface effervescence which sometimes accompanies complete and profound chemical fusions.⁵⁷

The author made two further observations in support of the National Socialists worth noting (as far as Gramsci is concerned). Firstly, the disintegration of the social base of the German Nationalists was due to the fact that its leaders were incapable of bringing about the kind of social and political 'revolution' that the National Socialists promised.

The whole conduct of the German Nationalists.....demonstrates the fundamental, congenital incapacity of the old German nationalism to carry through a revolution. They have proved beyond doubt by now that they cannot go beyond the 'revolutionary' limits of a worthless abstentionism on the one hand or of an obsolete project to restore the monarchy on the other, not to mention being completely devoid of and indifferent to any social programme or concern. 'You are social reactionaries' the National Socialists have always called the German Nationalists, even as they joined them in the Harzburg Front. 'We are social revolutionaries'. That is the difference.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ In Hamburg the Communists won 26 seats against 35 in the old Diet.

⁵⁶ Giuseppe Piazza: 'Le Elezioni in Germania', *NA*, 1 May 1932

⁵⁷ *Ibid* p.55.

⁵⁸ *Ibid* pps 52-53.

Secondly, when challenged by other parties to define their social programme more precisely, the author acknowledged that the National Socialists had been found wanting. However, echoing the Berlin correspondent of the *Corriere*, he suggested that the reason for this was that

true parties of action which accomplish real revolutions, do not arise with ready-made programmes like Minerva springing fully armed from the head of Jove, but are born as 'movements', rather like natural phenomena, out of a feeling which leads irresistibly to action. This feeling and action conceal in embryo or in nuce the 'programme' of ideas, which are then explored and unfold only step by step.....⁵⁹

From Bruning to Papen:
the 'Cabinet of the Barons' (June)

On 30 May President Hindenburg dismissed Bruning who had governed for two years by presidential decree. It was the first time in the history of the German Republic that the Chancellor was forced to resign by the decision of the President rather than by a vote of Parliament and the first time that a government was formed without the collaboration of the parliamentary parties ⁶⁰. With the support of the Reichswehr and the landowners, the clique around Hindenburg now began their attempt to create a presidential dictatorship which, under the appearance of being "above the parties", was clearly orientated towards the Right. ⁶¹

Bruning was dismissed for a combination of reasons. The recent electoral successes of the National Socialists, who had adamantly refused to collaborate with him and had long clamoured for his head, weakened Bruning's authority and increased the pressure on the President to dismiss him. The popular vote of the National Socialists counted less with Hindenburg, however, than the opposition to Bruning within the ruling elite itself: in particular, the Reichswehr had lost confidence in Bruning's government over the ban on the Storm Troops whilst the agrarians were hostile to its policy of resettlement in the eastern provinces.

⁵⁹ Ibid p.54.

⁶⁰ 'Il Gabinetto Bruning costretto a dimettersi. Hindenburg ha un lungo colloquio con Hitler', *CdS*, 31 May 1932; 'Hindenburg incarica von Papen di formare il Governo', *CdS*, 1 June 1932; 'Il nuovo Gabinetto tedesco. Von Papen alla Cancelleria', *CdS*, 2 June 1932. Comment on the situation and prospects at the fall of Bruning was in Giuseppe Renzetti: 'Le Fasi della rivoluzione tedesca', *GER*, June 1932. Press reaction to the fall of Bruning and the new government of Papen under the rubric *Germania* in *RSE*, 31 May 1932 (p.1155), 7 June 1932 (p.1216), 14 June 1932 (p.1280).

⁶¹ The significance of this stage in the breakdown of German democracy is analysed by Karl Dietrich Bracher in *The German Dictatorship* (1973) pps 216-227.

In a matter of hours a situation has come to a head which has been in the offing for several weeks. It appeared inevitable once Schleicher had forced Groener to depart, which immediately made it clear that the government could not survive against the will of the Reichswehr. For his part Brüning was too closely involved with the policy of Groener to distance himself in time. The president's absence from Berlin was fully exploited by the circles around Schleicher who, having got rid of Groener, proceeded to dismantle the very strong position which the Chancellor until recently had enjoyed with Hindenburg for the past two years. The military have recently been joined in their attacks by the landowners of eastern Prussia who are particularly close to the President, who have strongly protested against the colonisation projects of Stegerwald which amount to an expropriation of their estates in order to promote internal resettlement.⁶²

Brüning's dismissal was not followed by the customary 'ministerial crisis'. His successor von Papen was announced the following day and the composition of the new cabinet shortly after. The new chancellor was not charged with forming a new cabinet since the distribution of offices had already been decided by Hindenburg's circle without the usual negotiations with the leaders of the parliamentary parties. The attempt to create a presidential cabinet "above the parties" was apparent in the selection of ministers who had little or no connection with the political parties in the Reichstag. In this respect Hindenburg's constitutional experiment in which the principle of ministerial accountability to parliament was effectively abandoned, was reminiscent of the state of affairs under the old imperial constitution - the consequences of which had been analysed so incisively by Max Weber. The homogeneity of the cabinet ministers derived precisely from their aloofness from the political parties, their traditional, conservative mentality, and their aristocratic social background. The democratic press christened it "the cabinet of the nobles", the left-wing press "the cabinet of the barons".⁶³

Whether Hindenburg's experiment was intended to be a permanent or a transitional arrangement was far from clear at the time. Was the aim to exclude Hitler from power or merely to prepare the way for him? ⁶⁴ The *Corriere* supported the claims of Hitler and the Nazis and regarded it as a transitional government designed to

⁶² *CdS*, 31 May 1932.

⁶³ "The *Berliner Tageblatt* defined it not as a cabinet of national concentration but a cabinet of the nobles, full of illustrious names but devoid of personalities. The *Vossische Zeitung* on the other hand defined it as an agrarian-industrial cabinet with a strong military tinge. Such a government is bound to be opposed by the left-wing parties". Quoted from *CdS*, 1 June 1932. See also Giuseppe Renzetti: 'Le Fasi della Rivoluzione tedesca': "The social democrats and the communists will fight against it as a cabinet of barons, of a reactionary and military character" *GER*, June 1932.

⁶⁴ The speculation on this question was reported in *CdS*, 31 May 1932. One commentator declared that Papen's government "had no other task but to prepare the way for Hitler", under the rubric *Note e Rassegne* in *NA*, 1 June 1932; another said that "the decision of the Head of State immediately appeared to be a temporary expedient designed to prepare public opinion for more radical changes", under the rubric *L'Italia e Il Mondo*, *EF*, July 1932.

prepare for their inevitable accession to power. Its editorial of 1 June clearly forshadowed what was to come in early 1933:

No German government today can have real authority and stability unless it is supported by the rising tide of the national forces. It is possible that the Head of State, more or less in agreement with Hitler, will succeed in putting together another cabinet of a provisional character charged with the function of liquidation....Until now Hitlerism has divided the country and, through having to struggle, could not have done otherwise; only when it comes to power will it promote political reconciliation and spiritual unity. There will be no doubt then about its first task: the repression of communism, the real enemy of Germany and, on this account, of Europe.⁶⁵

It is doubtful whether Hindenburg considered this outcome to be 'inevitable' in the summer of 1932. A presidential government which did not depend for its survival on a majority in parliament might yet be 'tolerated' if it responded to the pressures of the political parties. The latter would no longer compete for power but behave as pressure groups in much the same way as they had done under the imperial regime. Thus Hitler was not invited to join the new cabinet but his conditions for tolerating it were met in full: firstly, the president made a 'clean sweep' of Brüning's cabinet and none of its ministers were reappointed; secondly, the ban on the Storm Troops was lifted; thirdly, Papen immediately dissolved the Reichstag before it reconvened and set new elections for 31 July. Hitler's 'toleration' ended, however, as soon as the results of these elections were declared: the attempt to make presidential government permanent was therefore unlikely to succeed.

The Reichstag Election (July)

Despite Goebbels' shrewd apprehension in his diary in April that "we are winning ourselves to death in these elections" the results of the Reichstag election of July showed little sign that the expansion of popular support for the National Socialists had yet reached the point of exhaustion. The National Socialists doubled their seats from 107 to 230, polling over 13 million votes much as Hitler had done in the second presidential ballot in April but this time without the addition of the Nationalist votes.⁶⁶ The Nationalist vote itself proved surprisingly solid in view of the losses suffered in the Prussian elections: Hugenburg's party lost only 4 seats

⁶⁵ *CdS*, 1 June 1932.

⁶⁶ The results were reported under the rubric *Germania* in *RSE*, 9 August 1932 (p.1700); under the rubric *Speculum* in *GER*, August 1932; under the rubric *Cronaca politica* in *NA*, 16 August 1932; under the rubric *Cose Straniere* in *CC*, 20 August 1932; under the rubric *L'Italia e Il Mondo* in *EF*, September-October 1932. For the fascist analysis of the results, see Giuseppe Renzetti: 'Aspetti della situazione politica tedesca', *GER*, August 1932; and further comment in Mario da Silva: 'Sipario su Weimar', *CF*, 15 August 1932.

after losing 50 seats in Prussia in April.

Although the National Socialists were now the largest party in the Reichstag, the combined seats of the two right-wing parties were still not sufficient to give them a majority. This did not prevent Hitler from demanding complete power when he met the President on 13 August.⁶⁷ The violence before and after the election combined with the indecisive result gave Hindenburg the excuse to exclude Hitler from power altogether and to continue the experiment in presidential government. The official press release of the Hindenburg-Hitler meeting spoke of the President's refusal of Hitler's "demand for entire and complete control of the State" and his reluctance to hand over power to "a movement which had the intention of using it in a one-sided manner".⁶⁸ When the new Reichstag met for the first time on 12 September, Papen avoided a massive vote of no confidence by dissolving it immediately and setting new elections for the 6 November.⁶⁹

From Papen to Schleicher

The state of political deadlock in Germany after Hitler's audience with Hindenburg on 13 August now led one fascist commentator to speak of "a crisis of National Socialism".⁷⁰ What could Hitler and the Nazis do next without abandoning the official path of legality? The crisis affected public opinion which now felt that all ways out of the situation were blocked and that there was little prospect that the new elections set for 6 November would produce a Reichstag very different from its predecessor, especially as further expansion of National Socialism looked unlikely:

It was already possible to diagnose the crisis of National Socialism from the fact that it reached the peak of its electoral development in the last election, having almost completely drained the reserves of the defunct middle parties which it took advantage of in its rapid rise at parliamentary level.....The 'revolution of the ballot-box' is finished in Germany as well.⁷¹

⁶⁷ On the Hitler-Hindenburg meeting on 13 August see under the rubric *Germania*, RSE, 23 August 1932 (p.1755), and reaction to Hitler's exclusion, RSE, 30 August (p.1810), 6 September (p.1869), 13 September 1932 (p.1957). See also under rubric *L'Italia e Il Mondo*, EF, September-October 1932.

⁶⁸ RSE, 23 August, cit.

⁶⁹ On the dissolution of the new Reichstag, see under the rubric *Germania*, RSE, 20 September 1932 (p.1987); see also under the rubric *Cose Straniere*, CC, 1 October 1932.

⁷⁰ Giuseppe Piazza: 'La Germania tra una rivoluzione e una restaurazione' in NA, 16 October 1932. We cannot be sure Gramsci read this article because, unusually, he does not cite in the notes any of the issues of *Nuova Antologia* for the second half of the year, the last one being for 16 August 1932. We can presume he received it since he does not indicate in the letters any difficulties, which was his usual practise when any of his reviews was interrupted or missing.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

The writer anticipated

further successive 'legal' or constitutional steps in the crisis, although it is difficult to speak of constitutionalism at a time when the very guardians of the constitution can find no other means to defend it from general attack than to start a debate about it whilst their own observance of it is strictly minimal. Even in the case of constitutions in ruin, however, there are some points still worth clinging on to in times of crisis and general dislocation, just as someone who is shipwrecked does not disdain to hold on to a safety-plank even though it is part of the wreckage itself. These points certainly include everything which refers to the popular origin and basis of power.⁷²

For example, the victory of the National Socialists in the July elections gave Hindenburg the perfect opportunity to adopt the English practise of "winner takes all" as a constitutional expedient to justify their ascent to power. Amidst the wreckage of the Weimar system of 'coalition' government, this English expedient would have made possible the transition to "the totalitarian form of party government".⁷³

However, all this presupposed that Hindenburg wanted to prepare the way for Hitler which he clearly did not. For this writer the political deadlock consisted in the fact that Germany was caught between a 'restoration' and a 'revolution'. Far from being the precursor of National Socialism, the presidential cabinet was a return to the past and clung to the idea of a restoration of the monarchy as a solution to the crisis; the recent revival of monarchist propaganda tended to confirm this. It had no social programme to speak of even though a country like Germany with its huge proletariat could not be governed without one. It embodied the old German nationalism "which is not a movement of intellectuals but a movement connected with the landed society of eastern Prussia, which constitutes a very important part of the country".

What else are we to make of the somewhat ghostly reappearance of so many gentlemen with the high-sounding name of 'von', from the old *Klassenstadt* or Junker State, who appeared to have been variously reassembled for a film about a Wilhelmine ministry? Viewed in this light, the assembled company appeared like romantic Don Quixotes: although they swore a cavalier oath to uphold the Weimar constitution, they rode and still openly ride the old nag of the monarchy which has become a bag of bones since the war was lost.....⁷⁴

Hitler and the Nazis offered the chance for the old German nationalism embodied in the presidential cabinet to renew itself. In clinging to the past rather than looking to the future, however, Hindenburg's 'sense of history' had failed him:

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

This latest attempt by the old nationalism sprang from the constitutional 'wisdom' of President von Hindenburg. If he had wanted to show any historical sense, however, he would have done better not to derail or frustrate the revolution but to mediate it by contributing long-term political experience and by ensuring that solid and permanent national interests are represented.⁷⁵

The first concessions by Papen's government to Hitler - the dissolution of the Reichstag, the lifting of the ban on the Nazi shock troops - were steps in the right direction. If the present cabinet had followed this line, it could have accomplished the urgent task of transition from the old to the new and taken its leave in an honourable 'changing of the guard'.

The Reichstag Election and the Appointment of Schleicher
(November-December)

The results of the Reichstag elections of 6 November 1932 confirmed the belief that the Nazis had peaked in the summer: they lost 2 million votes and 34 seats.⁷⁶ A striking feature of the results was the revival of the traditional Nationalists, the party most closely identified with Papen's cabinet, who increased their seats from 37 to 52 at the expense of the Nazis. The slow erosion of the mass base of the Social Democrats continued to the advantage of the Communists, whose seats increased from 89 to 100. The result deepened the political deadlock since the possibility of forming a government with a parliamentary majority was more remote than ever. On 17 November Papen resigned as Chancellor, expecting to be recalled by the President once the constitutional forms had been observed. On 21 November Hindenburg invited Hitler as leader of the largest party to explore the possibilities of a parliamentary majority knowing full well that the election results made this virtually impossible. On 23 November Hitler rejected the President's invitation:

The leader of the National Socialists countered by pointing out the obvious impossibility of meeting this condition but, not wanting to burn his bridges, suggested an intermediate solution: it would be enough for him to govern by means of Article 48, which Hindenburg had already granted to Papen and, before him, Brüning. But on 24 November the President refused on the grounds that (in the words of the official document) "he could not take the responsibility before the German people for entrusting the powers of a presidential government to the leader of a party which has always proclaimed its totalitarian spirit and which, moreover, has always been opposed to the President personally and to the political and economic measures he considered necessary". In short, a Hitler government would mean a party dictatorship whilst Hindenburg wants a National Government: but

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ The results were reported under the rubric *Germania* in RSE, 15 November; in CC, 19 November 1932; in NA, 16 November 1932. Werner von Schulenburg's article: 'Le Elezioni in Germania' in GER, November 1932, contained few facts and did little to illuminate the background.

how the latter can be formed leaving out the National Socialists is a problem similar to squaring the circle.⁷⁷

On 2 December it was announced that General von Schleicher, Minister of the Reichswehr, was appointed Chancellor.⁷⁸ Hindenburg had wanted to reappoint Papen but could not do so against the objections of Schleicher who announced that the Reichswehr had no confidence in Papen. The French paper *Temps* came nearest to reading the situation:

There is no doubt that the Marshall's preference was for Papen, who was supported by Hugenburg's Nationalists, by the leaders of big industry and by the men of the Prussian Right. However, the ex-Chancellor declined recognising that his return to the leadership of affairs in the face of the open hostility of all the parliamentary parties would provoke the most serious internal complications.⁷⁹

In fact Papen's reappointment was vetoed by Schleicher even though he was the President's choice. Speaking for the Reichswehr, Schleicher said that the army would not countenance the risk of a civil war which the reappointment of Papen might provoke. The army's word was final.

The National Socialist press adopted a more cautious tone than usual, regretting the fact that the army had now been drawn into politics:

The manner in which the new Chancellor has been appointed is simply a desperate ploy to avoid at all costs giving power to Hitler. We have no prejudice against General von Schleicher whose merits in the field of army affairs we fully appreciate, but he has yet to prove himself to be a true man of State. We are very concerned that he is not only Chancellor but also Minister of Defence because a political struggle will immediately take on a military character. His every action will have repercussions in the army. Until now he can be proud of having kept the army out of the political struggles but now that he is an exponent of politics he will draw the armed forces into the political arena. Indeed, for reasons of internal politics the latter could now find themselves part of the front against German freedom.⁸⁰

The same position was adopted by the re-elected president of the Reichstag, Goring, in a short speech at the opening of the new Reichstag on 6 December. The Nazis were definitely supporters of authoritarian government but this could

⁷⁷ Under the rubric *Cronaca Politica*, NA, 1 December 1932: note the reference to Article 48 of the constitution. The exchange between Hitler-Hindenburg, including the text of Hindenburg's refusal, was also reported under the rubric *Germania* in RSE, 6 December 1932. See also the rubric *Cose Straniere* in CC, 17 December 1932.

⁷⁸ On the appointment of Schleicher and his programme, see Werner von Schulenberg: 'E Schleicher?', GER, December 1932; under the rubric *Germania* in RSE, 6 December (p.2590), 13 December (p.2650); 20 December (p. 2742), 27 December 1932 (p.2770).

⁷⁹ Reported under the rubric *Germania* in RSE, 13 December 1932 (p.2653). The right-wing French paper *L'Avenir* welcomed the appointment of Schleicher comparing the role he would play in Germany with the position of Mussolini on coming to power in Italy: *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Under the rubric *Germania* in RSE, 13 December 1932 (p.2652-2653).

depend on bayonettes alone:

Bayonettes are sometimes useful things but not to support oneself with. We deplore the fact that the nomination of the Minister of the Reichswehr as Chancellor will drag our small but excellent army into the struggle of sides. The Reichswehr should not be used as an instrument of politics. Now he wants to govern under Article 48, which is the purest absolutism. It should be made perfectly clear straight away that to take away from the people's representatives the right to pronounce votes of no confidence in the government clearly offends against the spirit of the constitution. The constitution establishes that power in the State derives from the people: that is why power ought to have been and must be entrusted to Hitler, who is supported by a third of the people.⁸¹

⁸¹ Ibid.

Notebooks 7-12

In the course of 1932 Gramsci wrote notes in as many as eleven notebooks. Some were added at the end of notebooks mostly written earlier, some were entered at the start of notebooks mostly compiled later. The main body of his work in 1932 was concentrated in five notebooks numbered 8-13. There was a significant shift in his pattern of work at this point: around February-March he started to reorganise and redraft many notes written so far; sometimes he expanded the earlier drafts, sometimes he simply transcribed them.¹ Although they included many entirely new notes, most of those in *Notebook 10* (The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce), *Notebook 11* (Introduction to the Study of Philosophy), *Notebook 12* (On the Intellectuals), and *Notebook 13* (Notes on the Politics of Machiavelli) were based on earlier drafts. From now onwards Gramsci divided his time and effort between writing new notes and rewriting old ones. Most of the new notes written in 1932 are found in the 'miscellaneous' sections of *Notebooks 8-9*.

§8.171, §7.95, §8.107. Questions of Language

Towards the end of 1931 Gramsci began a third series of 'Philosophical Notes'. One of the earliest of these contained an interesting 'materialist' analysis of ideology. Gramsci observed how the language of the intellectuals may remain formally the same even though a new historical situation has changed its content.

§8.171 [extract]....One of the characteristics of the intellectuals as a crystallised social group (ie, one which sees itself as continuing uninterruptedly through history and therefore as being above the struggles of groups rather than as the expression of a dialectical process through which every dominant social group elaborates its own category of intellectuals) is precisely to reconnect themselves, in the sphere of ideology, with a preceding intellectual group by using the same conceptual nomenclature. A new historical situation creates a new ideological superstructure whose representatives (the intellectuals) must themselves be conceived as 'new intellectuals' born out of the new situation and not as a continuation of the preceding intellectual milieu. If the new intellectuals put themselves forward as the direct continuation of the ideas of the preceding intellectuals, they are not 'new' at all: ie, they are not linked to the new social group which represents the new historical situation but are left-overs from the old social group and the old ideas of their intellectuals. Nevertheless the fact is that no new historical situation, however radical the change which brought it about, completely changes the language, at least not in its external, formal aspect. On the other hand the content of the language has changed even if it is difficult to be aware immediately of the precise change. Moreover, the phenomenon is historically complex and is complicated by

¹ The new phase of work was based on the plan (written at the turn of 1931-32) set out at the start of *Notebook 8* (QCII p.935-936) and was connected with his request for "special notebooks" in the letter to Tatiana on 22 February 1932 (LCII p.537-538). On the 'phases' of composition of the notebooks see Professor Gerratana's preface to the critical edition, especially QCI p.xv.

the differences of culture typical of the different strata of the new social group, many of whom in the ideological sphere are still immersed in the culture of the preceding historical situation. A class, many of whose strata still have a Ptolemaic conception of the world, can be the representative of a very progressive historical situation: these strata may be backward ideologically but are very advanced on a practical level, in terms of their economic and political function etc. If the task of the intellectuals is to determine and to organise the cultural revolution, in other words to adapt culture to practical life, then it is evident that 'crystallised' intellectuals are reactionary etc.....²

What was the "practical origin" of these philosophical reflections? In this passage Gramsci differentiates between the 'new intellectuals' of the Left (ie, the communists) representing the progressive class, and the so-called 'new intellectuals' of the Right (ie, the fascists). The date of this note suggests that his starting-point may have been the reports of the big rally of the German Right held at Harzburg in October 1931 in which Hitler and the National Socialists publicly formed a common 'front' with the traditionalists, ie, the Nationalist leader Hugenburg, the Stahlhelm leaders, and other figures from the old regime. What else were the Nazis doing at the Harzburg rally if not seeking "to reconnect themselves, in the sphere of ideology, with the preceding intellectual group"? A 'materialist' critique of this event suggested, however, that whilst Hitler and the National Socialists adopted the same "conceptual nomenclature" as the traditional nationalists, the new historical situation had changed its meaning "even if it is difficult to be aware immediately of the precise change".

§7.95, §8.107. The Term 'Reich'.

At the end of *Notebook 7* we find evidence of the sort of difficulty Gramsci meant. Here he wrote a cluster of five notes dealing with questions of 'political nomenclature'. One of these, §7.95, written at the same time as §8.171 above, touched on the term 'Reich'. Gramsci's periodicals had begun to contemplate the forthcoming presidential elections in Germany. He noted the fact that the aged Field Marshal Hindenburg, whose term of office was due to expire in early 1932, was referred to by the title 'President of the Reich' not 'President of the Republic'. The traditionalist term 'Reich' was still used even though the political context had completely changed. When instead of using the German word 'Reich' political commentators translated it into Italian, they commonly got the meaning wrong.

² §8.171. *On the 'Popular Outline'. The Question of Nomenclature and Content*, QCII p.1043-1044. The new series started at §8.166, probably written in November 1931.

§7.95. *Political Nomenclature. Reich, etc.* Find the exact historical and ideological origin of this term which is wrongly translated as 'empire'. Likewise, the 'Commonwealth' of British nations cannot be translated as 'republic' even though it also means 'republic'.³

Note Gramsci's habitual link between the two 'traditionalist' countries, Britain and Germany. In English the word 'Commonwealth' once meant 'republic' and now meant something like 'empire', whereas in German the reverse was the case: the word 'Reich' had once meant 'empire' (as in Holy Roman Empire, for example) and was now used as a substitute for 'republic'. When the presidential elections were held a few months later, in March 1932, Gramsci returned to this question in §8.107.

§8.107. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. Reich.* As for the meaning of the term Reich, which does not mean 'empire' at all (I notice sometimes in *Gerarchia* it is even translated as 'realm' (*regno*)), it is worth noting that it exists in all the Germanic languages and occurs in the Scandinavian languages in the corresponding term for Reichstag. It seems that Reich is really a Germanic term to indicate in a general way the territorial 'State'.⁴

Gramsci noted that *Gerarchia* chose to describe "the venerable Hindenburg" as 'President of the Realm', a title with positively monarchist overtones in spite of the fact that Germany was a republic. But the point he repeats is that 'Reich' does not mean 'empire': why does he insist on this? Gramsci indicates that he had seen it translated as 'empire'. This anachronistic meaning occurred especially when commentators tried to render into Italian the expression 'Third Reich'. One instance of this was in the detailed account of the ideas of National Socialism published in *Civiltà Cattolica* earlier in May in which Dr. Goebbels was quoted as calling upon the youth of Germany to rise up since "You are the nobility of the Third Empire" (ie, Third Reich).⁵

Knowing what the 'Third Reich' came to mean we might think that 'empire' was a better translation of Reich than territorial 'State' but to Gramsci it seemed a completely anachronistic usage. These notes on the term 'Reich', however, are the start of an enquiry into the meaning of a new historical myth, the 'Third Reich'. Gramsci may have perceived as early as 1931 that this concept was the prime example of the attempt by Hitler and the Nazis to claim what the "crystallised intellectuals" claimed for themselves, ie, to be the uninterrupted continuation of

³ §7.95. *Political nomenclature. Reich, etc.*, QCII p.923.

⁴ §8.107. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. Reich.* QCII p.1004. An example of the mistranslation in *Gerarchia* can be found in Werner von der Schulenberg: 'Bruning, Hitler, Hugenburg', *Gerarchia*, January 1932 (Professor Gerratana's note, QCIV p.2798).

⁵ 'Il Nazionalsocialismo in Germania', *CC*, May 1931.

German history. An essential property of this new historical myth was its 'messianic' element, but Gramsci did not seem to think that this ingredient was particularly 'new' either. In the exchange of letters with Tatiana at this time (12 October 1931) he suggested that he may have been wrong to have taken her supposed tendency to anti-Semitism so seriously and might have done better to make a joke of the whole thing by posing a series of absurd questions:

Or I could have asked you the question how can we possibly know who is the "true" Jew, or the Jew "in general", or even man "in general" - the answer to which can't, I think, be found in any anthropological or sociological museum. And what's more, what does their conception of God as "the god of armies" mean for today's Jews and all the language of the Bible about "the chosen people" and the mission of the Jewish people, which resembles the language used by Kaiser Bill (Giuglielmone) before the war.⁶

The absurdity of trying to identify the Jew "in general" appears to us, in the wisdom of hindsight, rather less ridiculous than it appeared to Gramsci's rational mind in 1931 for the imponderable element of Nazi anti-Semitism lay precisely in its abstract universality which turned the Jew "in general" into the object of hatred. But the key point for the present purpose is the link in Gramsci's mind between the 'mission' of the Jewish people and that of the German people. This may have been no more than a casual analogy on his part, of course, but the context of the exchange suggests that the link was 'dialectical' and revealed a turn of mind which tended to synthesise opposites. The Kaiser's vision of the national 'mission' of the German people would thus be the 'antithesis' of the biblical mission of the Jewish people, but Gramsci may have perceived that the racial element of this national mission - ie, anti-Semitism - had now become the key.

Past and Present

The thread of Gramsci's enquiry into the term 'Reich' followed a circuitous route to §15.48. This was written in April 1933 just as the rhetoric of the so-called 'Third Reich' became reality. On the way there Gramsci changed route, or rather countries. In notes written towards the end of 1932 he analyses myths of national 'missions' in terms of Italian not German culture, referring especially to the doctrines of Mazzini.⁷ But this Italian stage of the route left its 'trace' in §15.48, so we can be reasonably sure of having followed, all along, the same thread.

⁶ To Tatiana, 12 October 1931, LCII p.479.

⁷ See in particular §9.127. *Risorgimento*, QCII p.1190-1191.

Machiavelli (1) A study of keywords like 'Third Reich' used by movements of the German Right. Historical myths like this are essentially a concrete and effective way of presenting the myth of the 'historical mission' of a people. The point to study is precisely this: why is this form 'concrete and effective', or simply more effective than another? In Germany the uninterrupted continuity (ie, not interrupted by permanent foreign invasions) between the medieval period of the Holy Roman Empire (the first Reich) and the modern period (from Frederick the Great to 1914) makes the concept of the 'Third Reich' immediately comprehensible. In Italy the concept of the 'Third Italy' during the Risorgimento could not be easily understood by the people because of the lack of historical continuity and homogeneity between ancient Rome and papal Rome (in fact the homogeneity even between republican and imperial Rome was hardly perfect). Hence the relative success of Mazzini's watchword of 'the people's Italy' which tended to mean a complete renewal of popular initiative in a democratic sense, a new Italian history in contrast to Gioberti's 'Primato'. The latter tended to present the past in terms of its theoretically possible continuity with the future, ie, with a particular political programme in the here and now presented in a broad historical perspective. But Mazzini's myth did not take root and his successors watered it down and mixed it up with bookish rhetoric. The medieval Communes, which were an effective and radical historical renewal, might have served Mazzini as a precedent but they were exploited instead by the federalists like Cattaneo. [This theme should be related to the first notes written in the special notebook on Machiavelli].⁸

§8.210. The term 'revolutionary'

Another ambiguity in current political nomenclature concerned the term 'revolutionary'. The confusion arose because fascist intellectuals freely appropriated the term to describe their own movements. Writing in December 1931 an Italian observer of the rally of the German Right at Harzburg, for example, made no distinction between the Nazi and Communist 'revolutions'. Gramsci asked:

Do we have to accept as 'revolutionary' all those movements which try to dignify and to justify themselves by calling themselves 'revolutions'? There is an inflation of concepts and revolutionary phraseology here, as though the hat makes the head or the habit makes the monk. De Sanctis already observed and ridiculed this attitude in *The Jew of Verona*. It is also necessary to see if the phraseology of 'revolution' is purposely used to create 'the will to believe', the latter being well-supported by solid 'collateral' arguments (in the shape of tribunals, police etc). The fact that so many Nietzscheans masquerading as rebels against existing reality and social conventions etc have ended up stomaching them, and have thus emptied certain attitudes of any serious content, is perfectly true, but this is no reason to allow one's judgement to be guided by charlatans of this sort....⁹

⁸ §15.48. *Machiavelli*, QCIII p.1808-1809.

⁹ §8.210. *History and Anti-History*, QCII p.1068. De Sanctis' essay on Father Bresciani's novel *The Jew of Verona* is in *Saggi Critici* (1952 edition), a cura di Luigi Russo, Vol. I, p.44-70. The following passage from De Sanctis illustrates Gramsci's point, including the 'collateral' arguments:

"Shortly after [ie, after 1848] the reaction puts on the revolution's clothes and starts mimicking it. It simulates the public meetings, the cries, the enthusiasm; we have the demonstrations, the petitions and the rounds of applause, and you would have said it was the thing itself if, once the fear had ceased, he had not courageously added his own contribution, the gallows, the prisons, and *The Jew of Verona*. Thus, a mad emperor passes himself off as Alexander the Great, a fine figure of a man apparently restored to life, simply by dressing in the same style; but underneath the surface of the skin the wolf reveals its true nature as it bares its teeth and shows its ferocity" (p.45).

See also the editors' comments on 'Father Bresciani's Progeny' in SCW, edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, p. 298-301.

Past and Present

Gramsci's reference to the novel by the Father Bresciani, which was originally serialised in the Jesuit review *Civiltà Cattolica*, is particularly interesting in terms of his dialectic of past and present. Coming in the middle of his exchange of letters with Tatiana (September 1931-March 1932) on whether or not there was any anti-Semitism in Italy, it seems that Gramsci saw this novel as a possible way of understanding German anti-Semitism in the context and perspective of Italian culture. Was not Bresciani's 'Jesuit' vision of the 1848 Revolution in *The Jew of Verona* similar to the Nazi vision of communism or 'Bolshevism' as part of the Jewish world conspiracy? Gramsci would return to the 'spirit' of *The Jew of Verona* towards the end of the notebooks. Writing in 1934-35 in the light of the Nazi dictatorship, he describes the kind of social psychology in which a cultural product such as this thrives:

The psychology which precedes an intellectual phenomenon of this sort is created by panic, by a cosmic fear of demonic forces which are beyond understanding and so cannot be controlled except by constructing something universally repressive. The memory of this panic (of its acute phase) is long-lasting and decisively shapes the will and the feelings: creative freedom and spontaneity disappear and what remains is the rancour, the spirit of vengeance, the stupid blindness - all hidden by a mellifluous and jesuitical disguise. Everything is reduced to the practical (in the worst sense), everything is propaganda, polemic, implicit negation expressed in mean, narrow-minded, often vile and repulsive form as in *The Jew of Verona*.¹⁰

§8.195. An 'Explosive Synthesis of the Collective Will'

After the elections of 1930 it was commonplace to express surprise at the volcanic suddenness with which the mass movement of Hitlerism had erupted. The commentator on the nationalist rally at Harzburg, for example, remarked that "the refusal of the Right to participate in the State has been prolonged for so long that it has resulted all of a sudden in the unexpected upsurge of National Socialism which emerged in the elections of 14 September 1930 as already such a gigantic movement that it has taken over the leadership and almost swallowed up the old German National Right and, together with it, is pushing at the doors of the State".¹¹

In the early months of 1932 Gramsci followed the elections in Germany for the Presidency of the Republic. His primary source of news was the *Corriere della*

¹⁰ §23.36. *Methodological Criteria*, QCIII p.2232.

¹¹ Giuseppe Piazza: 'La crisi tedesca e il fronte di Bad Harzburg', *NA*, December 1931.

Sera which reported the elections very closely, although his periodicals also had much to say during and after the event. In the first ballot on 13 March Hitler polled over 11 million votes against 18 million for Hindenburg: this rose to 13 million votes in the second ballot on 10 April against 19 million for Hindenburg. In the eighteen months since the Reichstag elections of September 1930, Hitler and the National Socialists had doubled their mass vote. This was the background of §8.195 in which Gramsci discussed Marx's famous proposition from the *1859 Preface* that "society does not pose problems for itself unless the material conditions for their solution already exist".

This proposition immediately poses the problem of the formation of a collective will. To analyse critically what it means involves research into how precisely permanent collective wills are formed and how they set concrete aims for themselves in the short- and medium-term, ie, a collective course of action. It is a question of more or less long processes of development and rarely of sudden, explosive 'syntheses'. Such 'explosions' do occur but on close examination it can be seen that they are more destructive than reconstructive; they remove external and mechanical obstacles in the way of an indigenous, spontaneous development. The Sicilian Vespers could be taken as a typical example.

The formation of a collective historical movement could be concretely studied, analysing it in all its molecular phases - something which is rarely done since it would weigh down any approach: usually it is assumed that the currents of opinion have already taken shape around a group or a dominant personality. In modern conditions the problem is expressed in terms of the party or a coalition of related parties: how a party is first established, how its organisational strength develops, what social influence it has etc. The molecular process is extremely minute and must be analysed in the smallest detail. The documentation for this is made up of a vast quantity of books, pamphlets, newspaper and review articles, conversations and oral debates repeated countless times. In their gigantic aggregation these represent the laborious process which gives birth to a collective will with the degree of homogeneity necessary and sufficient to bring about an action coordinated and simultaneous in time and in the geographical space where the historical event takes place.¹²

The remote example of the Sicilian Vespers of 1282 when the population of the island rose up to expel the French occupiers reveals the breathtaking scope of Gramsci's historical imagination but it should not distract us from 'similar' explosions under modern conditions where the formation of a collective will "is expressed in terms of the party or a coalition of related parties". Indeed, by presenting itself as a national uprising against Germany's 'subjection' (or indeed occupation) by the French under the Versailles Treaty - in other words, as "a nationalist party in a regime of national subjection" - Hitler and the Nazi movement were not entirely removed from the Sicilian Vespers. Their aim was precisely to destroy the "external and mechanical obstacles" put in Germany's way by the

¹² §8.195. The proposition etc, QCII p.1057-1058.

Versailles Treaty.

But what of Marx's famous proposition? What did it have to do with the collective will now forming in Germany behind Hitler? The sudden expansion of Hitlerism under conditions of 'catastrophic' economic crisis after 1929 appeared to provide striking confirmation of 'economistic' interpretations of Marx's theory of the political superstructures. When Gramsci wrote §7.10. *Structure and superstructure* after the German elections of September 1930, he argued that the Comintern's current 'revolutionary' line of action was wrong. This depended on essentially economistic assumptions (the theory of spontaneity etc) which the election result tended to prove wrong: the relatively sluggish increase in the Communist vote was evidence for this. On the other hand, the sudden expansion of Hitlerism seemed to be striking proof that 'economistic' interpretations of political movements were valid. But how could Marx's theory of history be wrong for political movements of the Left but right for political movements of the Right? Unless it was valid for both sides, the theory could not be 'scientific'.

This brings us back to §8.195. The whole emphasis of Gramsci's application of Marx's proposition in this note is anti-economistic; that is, the expansion of Hitlerism must be analysed as a process of 'molecular' changes in consciousness which depended on a vast quantity of books, pamphlets, newspaper articles, conversations, oral debates etc, etc: these cultural facts are just as integral to Marx's "material conditions" as economic facts. Purely 'economistic' accounts were not sufficient to explain the expansion of Hitlerism either.

§8.195 [continued]: the Change of Ideological Elements

In the last part of this note Gramsci picks up one of the threads which he first elaborated in his critique of Michels' typology of political parties on the eve of the German elections of September 1930. This was his historicist explanation of the mass appeal of the charismatic leader, in which he argued that

the so-called 'charisma' of which Michels speaks always coincides with a primitive phase in the development of mass parties in which its doctrine appears as something nebulous and incoherent in the eyes of the masses and needs an infallible pope to interpret and adapt it to circumstances... These ideologies are nurtured by feelings and emotions which have still not reached the point of dissolving because the classes (or the class) which express them, having arrived historically at the point of dissolution, still have a certain basis and cling to the glories of the past in order to shield themselves from the future.¹³

¹³ §2.75, QCI p. 233.

If we now move forward in time to §8.195, written during the presidential elections of 1932, we can see the continuity and change in Gramsci's thinking about Hitlerism.

The importance of utopias and of confused and rationalistic ideologies in the initial phase of the historical processes whereby collective wills are formed. Utopias, or abstract rationalism, are no less important than the old conceptions of the world elaborated through the accumulation of successive historical experiences. What matters is the critique of this ideological complex by the first representatives of the new historical phase. The critique involves a process of differentiation and change in the relative weight which the elements of the old ideologies possessed: what was once secondary and subordinate, or even incidental, is now taken to be primary, becoming the nucleus of the new ideological and doctrinal complex. The old collective will dissolves into its contradictory elements since the subordinate elements among them are developing socially etc.

After the formation of the regime of parties - a historical phase connected with the standardisation of the great masses of the population (communications, newspapers, big cities etc) - the molecular processes occur much more rapidly than in the past etc.¹⁴

If this passage is 'reduced' from the general to the particular - that is, to its "practical origin" in the current phenomenon of Hitlerism - it poses a number of questions, although we cannot be 'certain' that they were the questions in Gramsci's mind. Could the particular utopia he was thinking of be the 'Third Reich'? If so, can this particular utopia, understood in its racial sense, be considered an expression of 'abstract rationalism' comparable in this respect, let us say, to utopian socialism? Could the secondary and subordinate, not to say incidental, element of the old ideological complex be anti-Semitism, now become "the nucleus of the new ideological and doctrinal complex"? And what of the classes (or class) for whom this nebulous utopia was so meaningful? Were they moribund classes which "had reached the point of dissolving" (§2.75) or were they subordinate classes which in this passage were still "developing socially"? Was he revising his concept of the German petty-bourgeoisie as a 'dying class'?

The hypothesis that these were the analytical questions in Gramsci's mind is supported by two contextual considerations. Firstly, from the start the constant focus of Gramsci's observation of the German crisis was the political and ideological interplay between the old and the new Right. He particularly wanted to understand the rise of Hitlerism in relation to the traditional (or 'crystallised') intellectuals and their dying ideology. The presidential contest between Hindenburg and Hitler 'dramatised' this question more than ever before. Moreover, it is worth noting that the traditionalist Hugenburg backed Hitler in preference to Hindenburg on the

¹⁴ §8.195. The proposition etc, QCII p.1058.

second ballot. This would explain Gramsci's assertion that the new 'collective will' could take the form of "a party or a *coalition of parties*". It also laid the basis for an eventual 'fusion' between the old and the new.

Secondly, the exchange of letters with Tatiana and Piero at this time on the question of anti-Semitism suggests that Gramsci saw this as the key to the change in the relative weight of the elements of German nationalism. This perception may have been strengthened by what Gramsci was reading in his reviews at this time. An article on the presidential contest in the March issue of *Gerarchia*, for example, sought to explain and, to some extent, to 'mediate' Nazi anti-Semitism for an Italian fascist readership as this was perceived to be the incomprehensible 'foreign' element in German fascism. The article concluded that once the Nazis came to power, "we can assume that common sense and reason will prevail in this question over the fanaticism of the few".¹⁵ Despite this attempt to put the element of anti-semitism 'in proportion' and to marginalise the 'fanatical few', the article provided timely evidence for Piero's suggestion that the attitude of the State towards the Jews in Italy since the Concordat may be "coloured by the example of foreign countries, especially by the Nazis and similar movements".¹⁶

A further insight into Gramsci's perception of the changing relation of elements in German nationalism is provided by §9.39. *Cultural arguments. Elements of French political life* written a few months later. This note extends his reflections on "the monarchist party in a republican regime, or the nationalist party in a regime of national subjection". In particular, Gramsci shows how the anti-republican element of monarchist ideology relates to the nationalist element. As usual he starts from the elements of French political life, but it is German political life which makes the analysis *current*.

The monarchists have constructed the historical-political doctrine (which they seek to popularise) according to which the Empire and the Republic have up to now meant invasion of French national territory. Two invasions connected with the politics of Napoleon I (in 1814 and in 1815), one with the politics of Napoleon III (1870-71) and one with the politics of the Third Republic (1914) provide the material used for agitation. The republicans make use of the same materials but their standpoint, of course, is not the same as the monarchists. The latter can even seem defeatist insofar as the causes of invasion are rooted in French institutions and not, as the republicans argue, in the hereditary enemies of France and in the first place Prussia (rather than Germany: this distinction is of some importance because it depends on the tendency of French policy to isolate Prussia and to make Bavaria and the southern Germans, including the Austrians, allies of France). This mode of presenting the question to the popular masses by all the various nationalist tendencies is far from being ineffective. But is it historically accurate? How many times

¹⁵ Giuseppe Renzetti: 'Hindenburg e Hitler', *GER*, March 1932.

¹⁶ Piero Sraffa to Tatiana, 1 March 1932, in *Lettere a Tania per Gramsci*, p. 53.

has Germany been invaded by the French? (It would be necessary to count the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 as a French invasion). And how many times has Italy been invaded by the French? And how many times has France been invaded by the English?.....But after 1870 the nationalistic myth of the Prussian danger has almost completely absorbed the attention of the propagandists of the Right and has created the climate of foreign policy which is suffocating France.¹⁷

When Gramsci asks 'How many times has Germany been invaded by the French?' and includes in this the French invasion of the Ruhr in 1923, the possibility of applying this analysis to the propaganda of the German Right becomes apparent. Was not the German Republic also associated by the Right with defeat and occupation by the French? The popular appeal of Nazi propaganda suggested that this combination of the anti-republican with the nationalist element was particularly 'effective'. Moreover, this analysis is connected with the claim of the traditional or 'crystallised' intellectuals to represent the "uninterrupted continuity" of the nation's history.

§8.187, §8.55, §8.81, §9.21, §9.68:
The Ascendancy of the Bureaucratic Caste

During the transition from parliamentary to presidential rule in Germany in 1930 Gramsci described a historical tendency whereby "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".¹⁸ He was talking about Italy but referred to Weber's wartime critique of bureaucratic leadership for evidence of "a 'similar' state of affairs in the Kaiser's Germany". The continuity between *past and present* in his thinking can be traced in his observations on what had happened in the elections in Germany in 1930 and in Britain in 1931. This was when classes broke away from their traditional political parties and leaders. When a crisis of parties like this arises, "it cannot but be reflected in the State, where the power of the bureaucracy (in a broad sense, military and civil) is consequently strengthened to a formidable degree".¹⁹

¹⁷ §9.39, QCII p.1118-1119.

¹⁸ §3.119, QCI p. 388.

¹⁹ §4.69, QCI p. 513.

The theme of bureaucracy became a central thread in Gramsci's thinking in 1932 and we find many notes on the question in Notebooks 8 and 9. Gramsci brings to this question two 'organising' perspectives which we may call structural and superstructural. The structural perspective is outlined in §8.108. [*Machiavelli*] *The Bureaucracy* in which he suggests that the problem of the bureaucracy and the functionaries must be seen not just in terms of the concept of the State but "in a much wider framework, ie, the framework of social 'passivity' [or] relative passivity, and understood from the standpoint of the production of material goods". The superstructural perspective is indicated in §9.21. *Machiavelli. History of the bureaucracy* where he observes that "this problem partly coincides with the problem of the intellectuals". Thus, when he began redrafting his notes on the intellectuals at this time (ie, from February 1932) he describes them as "the functionaries of the superstructures".²⁰

What was the *practical origin* of these notes on bureaucracy? To be sure, their theoretical scope goes far beyond one country, but there is an explicit 'German' thread running through them. This was connected with the pivotal position in German politics in 1932 of President Hindenburg and the intrigues of the presidential circle. Gramsci's main source of German news in the first six months of 1932 was the *Corriere della Sera*. A notable feature of the *Corriere*'s reporting of the German crisis was the privileged access or inside information it seemed to have about the intrigues of the presidential circle. To some extent Gramsci's comments in the notes on the "caste" mentality of the bureaucracy bear the imprint of this source. But the most imaginative aspect of his perspective is the connection between *past and present*. In February 1932 Gramsci began rewriting his notes on the intellectuals in Notebook 12 in parallel with writing those on bureaucracy: the most interesting additions to these second drafts relate to this theme. In particular, the pivotal position of the Hindenburg circle in German politics in the first half of 1932 brought sharply into contemporary focus his historical perspective on Germany's "traditional intellectuals", ie, the Prussian Junkers.

²⁰ §12.01, QCIII p.1518.

§8.187, §12.01. The Spirit of Caste

The 'German' thread running through these notes on bureaucracy can be traced back via Max Weber to Germany's 'classical' philosopher, Hegel.

§8.187. *Intellectuals.* The position assigned by Hegel to the intellectuals should be accurately studied. It has had enormous importance not only in the conception of political science but in the whole conception of cultural and spiritual life. With Hegel thinking in terms of the castes or the 'estates' begins to give way to thinking in terms of the 'State', whose 'aristocracy' are precisely the intellectuals. The 'patrimonial' conception of the State (which is the mode of thinking in terms of 'castes') is the conception which Hegel immediately had to destroy (scornful and sarcastic polemics against von Haller). It is impossible to understand anything (historically) about modern Idealism and its social roots without this 'validation' of the intellectuals by Hegel.²¹

According to this interpretation of Hegel, those who claim to see in his philosophy of the State a rationale for 'Prussianism' have picked the wrong thread. They should look to von Haller's patrimonial conception based on "the mode of thinking in terms of castes", not to the theory of the modern constitutional State elaborated by Hegel in polemical contrast to von Haller. In effect Gramsci was denying that the heirs of classical German philosophy were the reactionary Right. The mentality of Germany's traditional intellectuals, the Prussian Junkers, had more in common with von Haller's conception. Gramsci reminds us of this "caste" mentality when he redrafted his notes on the intellectuals at this time. Moreover, it is worth noting that the reference to Weber's critique of the political leadership of the high bureaucracy in imperial Germany is now united with his account of the traditional intellectuals.

The Prussian Junkers resemble a priestly-military caste, with a virtual monopoly of directive-organisational functions in political society, but possessing at the same time an economic base of its own and so not exclusively dependent on the liberality of the dominant economic group. Furthermore, unlike the English landowning aristocracy, the Junkers constituted the officer class of a large standing army, which gave them solid organisational cadres favouring the preservation of an *esprit de corps* and of their political monopoly.

[In Max Weber's book *Parliament and Government in the New Order in Germany* can be found many elements showing how the political monopoly of the nobility impeded the elaboration of an extensive and experienced bourgeois political personnel and how it is at the root of the continual parliamentary crises and of the fragmentation of the liberal and democratic parties. Hence the importance of the Catholic Centre and Social Democracy which succeeded during the imperial period in building up to a considerable extent their own parliamentary and directive strata etc].²²

²¹ §8.187, QCII p.1054.

²² §12.01, QCIII p. 1526-1527.

§8.55, §8.81. The Corporate-Military Spirit

The German thread can be traced in other notes written at this time. In the first Gramsci pursued the differences of mentality of the English and Prussian aristocracy. His account is reminiscent of Max Weber's analysis of this difference which hinged on the fact that the English aristocracy was a genuine *rentier* class whereas the Prussian Junkers were not. The terminal crisis facing the estates of the Junkers after 1929, which necessitated huge subsidies known as *Osthilfe*, was a timely reminder that the Junkers were producers not rentiers. It is probable that Gramsci was mindful of this economic basis of the crisis of hegemony in Germany even though he writes regrettably little about it.

§8.55. Encyclopaedic Ideas. Self-Government and Bureaucracy. Self-government is an institution or political-administrative custom which presupposes quite specific conditions: the existence of a social stratum which lives off rent, which has long experience of public affairs, and enjoys a certain prestige among the popular masses for its rectitude and impartiality (and also for certain psychological qualities such as its ability to exercise authority with dignified firmness but without haughtiness or arrogant detachment). It is understandable therefore that self-government has only been possible in England where the class of landowners, in addition to its condition of economic independence, had never been in savage conflict with the population (as happened in France) and had not had great corporate-military traditions (as in Germany), with the separateness and authoritarian attitude which derive from them.

Change of meaning of self-government in non-Anglo-Saxon countries: struggle against the centralism of the high bureaucracy, but institutions entrusted to a bureaucracy directly controlled from below. Bureaucracy become necessity: the question must be raised of forming an honest and impartial bureaucracy which does not abuse its function to make itself independent of the control of the representative system. It can be said that every form of society has its own approach or solution to the problem of bureaucracy, and no two can be the same.²³

Written during the presidential elections in 1932, the *currency* of this analysis becomes apparent. Was not Hindenburg the very embodiment of Germany's "great corporate-military traditions with the separateness and authoritarian attitude which derived from them"? Was not the transition from parliamentary to presidential rule in Germany driven by the tendency of the high bureaucracy "to make itself independent of control of the representative system"?

The psychological and moral attitudes deriving from these corporate-military traditions were not confined to "the priestly-military caste" embodied by President Hindenburg and the political generals in his circle, but were shared by the ex-officers belonging to the para-military associations of post-war Germany. By 1932

²³ §8.55, QCII p.974. [Translated in SPN p.186 note].

the largest of these "delinquent associations", as Gramsci calls them, was Hitler's Storm Troops. Moreover, these psychological and moral attitudes were not cultural 'constants' but were subject to 'degeneration'.

This is the theme of §8.81. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. The corporate spirit [Lo spirito di corpo]*. Gramsci's reflections in this note are typically 'opaque'. This was probably because he was so close to the *particular* events which immediately suggested them that he 'overdid' the effort to *generalise* from them. As near as we can tell, this note was suggested by the events immediately after the second ballot of the presidential election, namely, the controversial ban on Hitler's Storm Troops imposed by presidential decree on 13 April. Hitler's public response to this ban as reported in the *Corriere della Sera* provided evidence of what Gramsci meant by the degenerate corporate spirit. His practise was to publicly defend members of the SA found guilty of criminal acts, including murder: now that the SA was banned, Hitler said, he could not be responsible for their conduct.

Let them dissolve my units. This will not change the minds of their members who as long as they have hearts and minds will remain faithful to me. Besides, since I can no longer lead and supervise their activity I cannot take responsibility for the 400,000 members of the banned formations and I cannot answer for their conduct.

Do not lose confidence and faith in our people and in the victory of our idea, which serves the greatness of the Nation. I will give all my strength to this struggle. Notwithstanding General Groener, as long as you live you will belong to me and I will belong to you. ²⁴

In the best sense of the term it (ie, the corporate spirit) can mean the concord of purpose and will, the solid moral unity for which the priority is to get things done in the interests of the one and only whole, whether it is done by one or other component of the whole being unimportant. However, corporate spirit usually has a negative meaning, ie, 'defence' of the whole against the punishments for wrongdoing of single individuals. It is possible to understand the origin of this degeneration: it lies in the false conception of what constitutes the 'whole'. The 'whole' is assumed to be only a fraction of it, a subordinate fraction, clearly, which tends to and tries to use the 'force' deriving from the corporate spirit to impose itself (subordinate though it is) on the whole, in order to exercise an indirect power (if direct power is not possible) and to obtain privileges. Further analysis indicates that at the root of this corporate spirit is the ambition of a person or a small group of persons (which we then call a 'faction', 'clique', 'gang', 'cabal' etc). The bureaucratic element, the civil but especially the military element, has the strongest tendencies towards the corporate spirit, which leads to the formation of 'castes'. The strongest psychological and moral element of the corporate spirit is the point of honour, that is to say corporate honour, which creates the most misguided and degenerate passions. The struggle against the degenerate corporate spirit is the struggle of the whole against the ambitions of single individuals and against privileges, of the State against the castes and the 'delinquent associations'.²⁵

²⁴ Quoted in 'Lo scioglimento dei reparti social-nazionali ordinato con decreto di Hindenburg', *CdS*, 14 April 1932.

²⁵ §8.81, QCII p.986-987.

The meaning of this opaque note becomes transparent as soon as its precise context is established. On this view the interests of the whole, the State, were threatened not only by “a clearly subordinate part” (ie, Hitler’s movement) but also by the military-bureaucratic clique in charge of the State itself (ie, Hindenburg’s circle). Hence the State (the ‘whole’) must struggle against the degenerate corporate spirit of both the delinquent associations and the castes.

§9.68. Bureaucratic Centralism

The ‘German’ thread in his ‘superstructural’ analysis of bureaucracy can be further traced in §9.68. *Machiavelli. Organic centralism and democratic centralism* in which Gramsci discusses ‘organic centralism’, a term which he then corrected to ‘bureaucratic centralism’. His purpose in writing this note was to differentiate clearly between the centralism of the nationalist and fascist Right, which in one way or another was bureaucratic, and the centralism of the communist Left, which should be democratic. But as always there is the ‘scientific’ possibility that the two sides may be reversed since the bureaucratic centralism of the Right may give the appearance of being democratic just as the democratic centralism of the Left may (as Trotsky had warned) degenerate into being bureaucratic.

In his original definition of ‘organic centralism’ Gramsci started, as always, from an element of French political experience. It referred to the doctrines of Maurras and to the mode of selecting a leading political group (ie, Action Francaise) by means of ‘coopting’ members around one who is ‘the possessor of the truth’. The reference to Maurras helps to make partial sense of Gramsci’s frankly abstruse account of the theories of organic centralism since one of these theories, which he describes as expressing a purely sectarian or fanatical position on the part of intellectuals, was surely meant to correspond to the original Maurras ‘model’.

Meanwhile, in the theories of organic centralism it is necessary to distinguish between two kinds: those which conceal a precise political programme of real predominance of one part over the whole (whether this part consists of a stratum such as the intellectuals or of a privileged territorial group) and those which amount to a purely one-sided position (also on the part of intellectuals), ie, an immediately sectarian or fanatical position, which also conceals a programme of predominance although as a conscious political aim it is less obvious.

The more exact name is bureaucratic centralism since only democratic centralism can be organic. The latter is precisely a ‘centralism in movement’ so to speak, ie, a continuous adaptation of the organisation to the real historical movement. It is organic precisely because it takes into account the movement, the organic mode in which historical reality reveals itself, and also because it takes into account something which is relatively stable

and permanent or at least which moves in an easily predictable direction. In States this element of stability is embodied in the organic development of the leading group just as in parties it is embodied in the organic development of the hegemonic social group.

In States bureaucratic centralism means that a narrowly privileged group has been formed which tends to perpetuate its privileges by controlling and even stifling the birth of oppositional forces at the base, even if the interests of these forces are homogeneous with the dominant interests (for example in the struggle of protectionism against free trade). In parties representing subaltern social groups, the element of stability consists in the organic necessity of ensuring that hegemony is not exercised by privileged groups but by progressive social forces - organically progressive in comparison with others which, although allied, are mixed forces which waver between the old and the new.²⁶

The two kinds of organic centralism theorised in this passage - in the State and in the party - bear the 'imprint' of the German situation in the summer of 1932 when the passage was written. In the Reichstag elections of 31 July, support for Hitler and the National Socialists reached a peak: with 37% of the popular vote and 230 seats they were now the largest party in the Reichstag. The President was not impressed. Hindenburg rejected Hitler's 'democratic' claim to the Chancellorship and stood by his favourite von Papen and the unelected "cabinet of the barons".

Gramsci's first 'theory' of organic centralism corresponded to Papen's "cabinet of the barons". This was the 'caste' conception of the State theorised by von Haller. The representative principle played no part whatsoever. Its members were chosen by the President from a privileged territorial group, the Junkers, their chief qualification being their aristocratic background and the fact that they had no connection with the parliamentary parties and with the democratic processes of the republic. Papen's 'presidential' cabinet was an example of bureaucratic centralism in the State where a narrowly privileged group seeks to perpetuate its privileges by denying power to new oppositional forces at the base, ie, the Hitlerites, even though these new forces had the same fundamental interests as those of the dominant group.

The second 'theory' of organic centralism describes the leading intellectuals of Hitler's party who stood for "a purely one-sided, ie, immediately sectarian or fanatical position". The principle of election played no part in forming this group either. Like the intellectual group around Maurras, they were chosen by cooption around "one who is the possessor of the truth". In this sense, the centralism of Hitler's party was no less 'bureaucratic' than the centralism of Papen's cabinet. However, the electoral victory of Hitler gave his "plan to predominate" a democratic

²⁶ §9.68, QCII p.1139.

disguise which Papen's completely lacked. Although this was Hitler's real political aim, the democratic disguise made it less 'apparent' than Papen's.

§9.61. The Law of Fixed Proportions applied to the Structure:

(I) The Coefficient 'Organic-Cyclical' Crisis

Gramsci's thinking about the German crisis in 1932 converged on two notes written in August in Notebook 9: these were §9.61. *Past and Present. England and Germany* and §9.62. *The Theorem of Fixed Proportions*. The timing of these notes depended on new data becoming available to him through the periodicals, ie, the German unemployment figures for the first half of 1932 and the results of the Reichstag elections of 31 July.²⁷ The first provided a 'snapshot' of the economic structure of Germany in 1932, the second gave a snapshot of the political superstructures. In each case the use of serial data afforded Gramsci an insight into the *movement* of the German crisis at both levels, although the relation between the two levels remained indistinct.

Past and Present

Gramsci's first attempt to analyse the crisis of 1929, ie, §6.123. *Observations on the crisis, 1929-30-?*, was written at the time of the financial crisis of 1931 when occasional or 'conjunctural' movements of the structure were very apparent. Moreover, as the question mark indicated he was careful to avoid making 'predictive' assumptions about the duration of the crisis. This was consistent with the cautionary principle put forward in §7.24. *Structure and Superstructure* :

The difficulty of identifying the structure statically (like an instantaneous photographic image) at any one time. In fact, politics is sometimes the reflection of tendencies in the development of the structure, but this does not mean that such tendencies will necessarily produce a result. A structural phase can only be studied and analysed after it has completed its entire process of development, not during the process itself: in the latter case the only method is to proceed by hypotheses and by making it perfectly clear that they are only hypotheses.²⁸

In notes written in early 1932, however, Gramsci was convinced that recovery was far from imminent and began to put more emphasis on the permanent or 'organic' features of the crisis. This was probably due to the powerful impression made on

²⁷ Bruno Biagi: 'Aspetti e problemi della disoccupazione', NA, 16 August 1932. For reports of the German election results of 31 July, see above (historical background to 1932). The main analysis was Giuseppe Renzetti: 'Aspetti della situazione politica tedesca', GER, August 1932.

²⁸ §7.24. *Structure and Superstructure*, QCII p.872.

him by the rising levels of unemployment throughout the industrialised countries. The change of emphasis can be seen in his sharp attack on Luigi Einaudi's sanguine perspective on the crisis.

Einaudi's articles on the crisis, especially those in *Riforma Sociale* of January-February 1932, are often jokes for the feeble-minded. He prints extracts from economists of a century ago without appreciating that the 'market' has changed.....International production has developed on such a scale and the market has become so complex that certain arguments appear literally infantile.....What Einaudi says to explain why past crises have been overcome is correct in general terms.....But he takes no account of the fact that economic life hinges increasingly on a series of large-scale mass productions which are now in crisis; controlling this crisis is impossible precisely because of its extent and depth which have reached such proportions that quantity becomes quality, ie, no longer conjunctural but organic crisis. Einaudi presents arguments which apply to conjunctural crises because he wants to deny that there is an organic crisis; but this is 'immediate politics' not scientific analysis, it is the 'will to believe', 'medicine for the souls' - administered, what is more, in a puerile and comical way.²⁹

Gramsci also followed the articles in *Corriere della Sera* at this time written under the pseudonym 'Metron' who offered the same reassuring perspective: where Einaudi provided "medicine for the souls", Metron offered "the opium of misery". In an article of 15 March the author reported the results of a study published during the World Energy Conference in Berlin in 1930 which calculated the total amount of mechanical energy used by humanity in a single year. From this the author reckoned that for every year of work done by "a man of flesh and bone", twelve times that amount was done by "metallic men" (ie, machines). If mechanical energy continued to be harnessed at this rate, the author looked forward to the realisation of "an ideal form of idleness which civilises rather than brutalises, when man will no longer need to work with his muscles but solely with his brain - the most most noble and desirable form of work". Gramsci was less than impressed by the rainbow at the end of Metron's projection of technological unemployment and dispelled it in a tone of acerbic realism.

This is written in 1932 when precisely in the countries where the 'metallic men' work for the other men in infinitely higher proportion than the world average, there exists the most terrible crisis of enforced idleness and degrading misery. This is the opium of misery yet again!³⁰

If the rising levels of unemployment in the industrialised countries by early 1932 convinced him that the crisis was "no longer conjunctural but organic", Gramsci was no nearer to solving the original problem of finding the dialectical relation

²⁹ §8.216. *Short Notes on Economics. Ugo Spirito and Co.*, QCII p. 1077-1078. Gramsci's italics.

³⁰ §8.90. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. The Machine*, QCII p.994-995. Gramsci refers to the article by Metron: 'La diffusione della macchina', *Corriere della Sera* 15 March 1932.

between these two kinds of structural *movement* - the relatively 'occasional' and the relatively 'permanent'. This was not purely and simply a problem of analysing the structure but of analysing the relation between structure-superstructure since structural analysis was subordinate to the primary aim of the 'philosophy of praxis' which was to make practical, ie, political judgements.

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In §9.61. *Past and Present. England and Germany*, written in the summer of 1932, Gramsci found the formula he was looking for: he called it 'the coefficient cyclical-organic crisis'. In August he read in *Nuova Antologia* a serial set of unemployment figures taken from the League of Nations *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*. In the table of sixteen countries (excluding the United States) the figures for England and Germany were as follows:

	January	February	March	April	May
Germany	6,041,910	6,128,429	6,034,100	5,739,070	5,582,620
England	2,354,044	2,317,784	2,233,425	2,204,740	2,183,683

The writer noted that the fall in unemployment (which was particularly sharp in Germany) was seasonal and that the economic situation "has worsened in these last few months".³¹ Nevertheless, the figures provided Gramsci with a 'snapshot' of the structures of Britain and Germany which enabled him to form a hypothesis about their prospects of recovery.

A comparison between the effects on the two countries of the crisis of 1929 and the following depression. This analysis should bring out the real structure of each country. Moreover, it should show the reciprocal function of each in the world economy - an aspect of the structure which is not usually observed very carefully. The starting-point of this analysis can be the phenomenon of unemployment. Do the masses of unemployed in England and Germany have the same significance? Does the theorem of 'fixed proportions' as applied in analysing the internal division of labour produce the same picture in both countries? It can be said that English unemployment, although numerically lower than German unemployment, indicates that the coefficient 'organic crisis' is higher in England than in Germany where the coefficient 'cyclical crisis' is more important. Consequently, in the event of a 'cyclical' recovery unemployment would be absorbed more easily in Germany than in England.

Which element of the structure gives rise to this difference? The answer is that commerce is more important relative to industrial production in England. There exists in England a larger mass of 'proletarians' employed in the commercial sector whereas in Germany the mass employed in industry is greater. Composition of the working population and its

³¹ Bruno Biagi: 'Aspetti e Problemi della Disoccupazione', *NA*, 16 August, p. 446.

distribution among the different sectors. The numerous commercial people (bankers, stock brokers, representatives etc) require large numbers of staff to carry out their day-to-day services: they constitute a commercial aristocracy more rich and powerful than in Germany. There is a larger number of 'ritual parasites' - people who are not employed directly in production but in distribution and the (personal) services of the propertied classes.³²

The "coefficient" cyclical-organic crisis was probably the most satisfactory formula invented by Gramsci in the notes to express the relation between relatively occasional and relatively permanent crises of the structure in each country. However, Gramsci's conception of the structure itself was changing by this time as the national economy was integrated into the international economy: this adjustment is indicated by his reference to "the reciprocal function of each country in the world economy - an aspect of the structure which is not usually observed very carefully".³³ The 'coefficient' was clearly meant to apply to the crisis of the national economy, but the change in the conception of the structure suggests that Gramsci was inclined to conceive the 'coefficient' in international terms, with 'cyclical' crisis pertaining to one national economy and 'organic' crisis to another.

Past and Present

This picture of the English economy in §9.61 confirms that the link between organic crisis, 'parasitic' classes, and consumption of 'savings' was a persistent thread in Gramsci's thinking about the European states. In his analysis of Americanism in §1.61 (1929) he first thinks of these parasitic classes - "pensioners of economic history" as he calls them - as 'old' classes left over by Europe's centuries-long 'tradition'. In his critique of Arias in §6.123 (1931), however, the 'historical' element appears to be of more recent origin and is 'quantitatively' a phenomenon of the post-war period:

Arias neglects a 'historical' element of some importance: in the distribution of national income, especially via commerce and the stock exchange, isn't it true to say that a category of 'withdrawers' has appeared in the post-war period [(or at least increased in comparison with the preceding period)] which does not have any necessary and indispensable productive function yet absorbs a considerable quota of income?.....

³² §9.61, QCII p. 1131-1132.

³³ See also §9.32. *National Economy*, QCII p.1115. "The entire economic activity of a country can only be judged in relation to the international market; it 'exists' and must be evaluated only in the context of an international unity.....A purely national 'balance' of the economy doesn't exist, either in its totality or for a particular activity" etc.

The category of unproductive parasites, in both the absolute and relative sense, has grown enormously in the post-war period and this is the category which devours savings. In European countries it is even greater than in America etc.....Society creates its own poisons by having to provide a living for masses of the population (not only unemployed wage earners) who impede savings and thus break the dynamic equilibrium.³⁴

The historical perspective presented here, where a structural tendency observable in the pre-war period is greatly intensified in the post-war period, corresponds closely to the picture of the English industrial crisis which emerges from §5.86. *England* (1930). This was based on another 'snapshot' of the English structure: the balance of payments.

For about 50 years before the war the English trade balance was already changing its internal structure. The proportion made up by the export of goods was relatively decreasing and the balance was based increasingly on the so-called invisible exports, ie, the interests on capital investments abroad, the insurances on the merchant marine, and the earnings realised by London as an international financial centre. After the war competition from other countries has increased the importance of the invisible exports still further. This explains the concern of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Bank of England to restore the pound to the gold standard and thus restore its position as an international currency. This objective was achieved but at the expense of an increase in the cost of industrial production, which has lost ground in foreign markets.

But was this the cause (or at least the most important element) of the English industrial crisis? To what extent did the government sacrifice the interests of the industrialists to those of the financiers, those who lend money abroad and organise the world financial market based on London? Alternatively, the restoration of the value of sterling could have anticipated the crisis instead of being the cause of it, since all the countries, including those which kept a fluctuating exchange rate for some time and stabilised it at a lower value than the original, have undergone and are undergoing the crisis. It could be said that by anticipating the crisis the English industrialists ought to have been the first to seek remedy and therefore to recover before other countries and to restore their world hegemony. Besides, the immediate return to the gold standard meant that the social crises caused by the transfers of property and by the lightning decline of the petty-bourgeois middle classes have been avoided in England. In a traditionalist, conservative country like England with its ossified social structure, what would have been the results of the phenomena of inflation, fluctuation, and devaluation of the currency? Much more serious than in other countries to be sure.

In any event, it would be necessary to establish precisely the relation between the exports of goods and the invisible exports, between the industrial fact and the financial fact: this would help to explain the relative lack of political importance of the workers and the ambiguous character of the Labour Party, as well as the scarcity of stimuli to its differentiation and development.

The increasing weight of invisible exports in the English trade balance and the growing political weight of the commercial-financial aristocracy centred on London would explain why Gramsci drew attention in §9.61 to the international aspect of the national structure, its function in the world economy, and why he asserted that "there is no purely 'national' balance of the economy, neither as a whole nor for a particular activity". The implications of this perspective for his concept of

³⁴ §6.123, QCII p.793.

'parasitism' in the national economy are far from clear. Can the commercial-financial aristocracy of the city of London be described as 'parasitic' in view of the 'invisible earnings' from its services? This may explain Gramsci's cautionary principle that the theorem of fixed proportions should not be applied mechanically or "sociologically" since (as the example of England's commercial-financial sector would show) "every country has its own optimum principle of fixed proportions".

What then of Gramsci's argument about the role of 'parasitic classes' in organic crisis? From the start Gramsci acknowledged that "statistics of these social elements are very difficult to work out because it is very hard to find the 'heading' which can cover them all".³⁵ The difficulty can be studied in §6.123 where he searches for a general 'heading' which would cover all these parasitic elements. For one thing, the heading would have to cover both 'old' and 'new' elements. The image of England in §5.86 as "a traditionalist, conservative country with its ossified social structure", for example, suggests that Gramsci was still thinking of these parasitic elements as 'old' classes left over by the European 'tradition'. But these 'residues' would hardly account for the enormous growth of unproductive parasites in the post-war period, unless he was thinking of the large number of "ritual parasites" (Veblen?) employed in the service of the old classes. The simplest heading, which covered both old and new parasites and yielded a single set of statistics, was adopted in §8.108. *Bureaucracy* (March 1932).

What is the distribution of the population of a given society with respect to 'goods' and to 'services' (Goods being understood in the restricted sense of material goods whose 'space and volume' can be physically consumed)? It is certain that the more extensive the 'services' sector, the worse the society is organised. One of the aims of 'rationalisation' is certainly to restrict the sphere of the services to the bare necessity. Parasitism develops especially in this sector to which commerce and distribution in general belong. 'Productive' unemployment causes 'inflation' of services (multiplication of small business).³⁶

It was this distinction between 'goods' and 'services' which led Gramsci to apply the theorem of fixed proportions in §9.61 in analysing the internal division of labour in England and Germany. The statistics he was searching for show, in fact, that he was right in thinking that the services sector had grown "enormously" in the post-war period: it was in fact the single most important 'structural' change of the post-war years.³⁷ In the United Kingdom it grew by 15% in the decade 1920-30: by the

³⁵ §1.61. *Americanism*, QCI p.70.

³⁶ §8.108, QCII p.1004.

³⁷ The figures are in Harold James: *The German Slump. Politics and Economics 1924-1936* (Oxford, 1987) Table XVIII p.208.

end of the decade 10.9 million were employed in services compared to 10 million in industry. In Germany employment in services in the same decade also grew by 15%: by the end of the decade industry remained much the bigger sector employing 13.3 million as against 9.7 million in services, but where employment in services had grown rapidly since the war employment in industry had remained stagnant. In Italy the growth of the services sector was even more phenomenal. The general heading of 'services' would thus 'cover' the huge mass of "unproductive parasites" which had come into existence everywhere since the war.

How did Gramsci see his thesis on 'parasitic classes' applying to Germany where the internal division of labour was apparently more 'rational' than in England? The notes offer very few clues to the answer. The statistics on the rapid rate of growth of the services sector in Germany show that an 'organic' problem (in Gramsci's sense) was developing but the numbers still employed in industry in 1932 tended to confirm his judgement that "the coefficient 'cyclical crisis' was more important" in Germany. Nevertheless, the formula of the 'coefficient' implied that Gramsci *must* have thought about how his thesis 'parasitic classes-organic crisis' might apply to Germany.

One clue to the German 'translation' of this thesis lies in the rather odd title he chose for §8.108, ie, *Bureaucracy*, where a term usually associated with the 'superstructure' is examined from the standpoint of the 'structure', ie, in terms of the distribution of employment between goods and services. Gramsci's dialectical usage serves to remind us of the two-dimensional way in which the relation 'structure-superstructure' is usually conceived by Marxists, not to mention their critics. Moreover, in the absence of statistics Gramsci used the evidence presented by the real world. He was writing in August 1932, the year of virtually continuous elections in Germany, when the inflation of the 'services sector' was only too apparent in Germany at the level of the 'superstructures', ie, of the parties and the State.

A further clue to the direction of Gramsci's thinking in 1932 is his assertion in §9.21 that the problem of the bureaucracy partly coincides with the problem of the intellectuals. This new connection is explained further in his notes on the intellectuals. As Gramsci redrafted these notes from February 1932 onwards, he inserted an entirely new passage on "the democratic-bureaucratic social system". The spectacle presented by Germany at the time closely corresponded to the

'hybrid' system which Gramsci describes. But the purpose of describing the social system in these terms was to convey the 'parasitic' weight of the political 'superstructures'.

In the modern world the category of intellectuals, understood in this sense, has undergone an unprecedented expansion. The democratic-bureaucratic social system has spawned huge masses of them, some justifying their existence more by the political necessities of the dominant fundamental group than by the social necessities of production. Hence Loria's conception of the unproductive 'worker' (but unproductive in relation to whom and to what mode of production?), which could be justified to an extent if one takes account of the fact that these masses exploit their position to take for themselves huge cuts of the national income.....³⁸

In Germany the organic growth of 'parasitism' was most apparent to Gramsci in the political superstructures, in the growing mass of "unproductive workers" employed by State and party administrations. Moreover, statistics confirm Gramsci's insistence on the huge proportion of national income devoured by these new parasites both before and after the Nazis came to power. As Harold James notes:

The really startling increases in investment in National Socialist Germany were classed as investments in public administration: in 1928 this accounted for 19.3 per cent of German investment; in 1932, 25.9 per cent, and in 1934, 35.7 per cent. These figures reflected the number of jobs in state and party bureaucracy created as part of 'Hitler's social revolution'. ³⁹

§9.62. The Law of Fixed Proportions applied to the Superstructures:

(II) how a movement becomes a party

This reading of Gramsci's 'thread' is confirmed by the following note. Having applied the theorem of fixed proportions to the English structure, in the next note he applies it to the German superstructures. In §9.62 he asks how many of these 'unproductive workers' (ie, intellectuals) do political parties need (and therefore how many are surplus to need)? This could be calculated by studying the sequence of German election results in the first half 1932 - the presidential (March-April), state (April), and Reichstag (July) elections. By retracing Gramsci's reading we can see how he arrived at this kind of analysis.

Sometime in April or May 1932 Gramsci reread Matteo Pantaleoni's *Principles of Pure Economics*. ⁴⁰ This gave him "the law of fixed proportions" which was defined in §9.62 as follows:

³⁸ §12.01, QCIII p.1520 (Translated in SPN p. 13].

³⁹ Harold James cit., p.414.

⁴⁰ See the reference to the new edition of 1931 of Pantaleoni's *Principles of Pure Economics* in §10.30, QCII p.1268. "On re-reading Pantaleoni's book...." etc.

The law of fixed proportions is stated by Pantaleoni in his *Principles of Pure Economics* as follows: 'Bodies combine chemically only in fixed proportions, and any quantity of an element in excess of the quantity needed for a combination with other elements, remains free ; if the quantity of one element is insufficient in proportion to the quantities of the other elements present, the combination only occurs to the extent to which the quantity of that element, *present in smaller quantity than the others, suffices*'.⁴¹

Gramsci says that this principle could be used in the study of politics and indicates a series of problems to which it could be applied - "to the analysis of situations, of the relations of force etc, to the problem of the intellectuals". He is careful to stress that in politics its explanatory value was 'metaphorical'; it cannot be applied mechanically as if it were a universal ('sociological') law, since every organisation has its own 'optimum' principle of fixed proportions. "Nevertheless, the science of organisation especially should refer to this principle".

How did he think of applying this principle to politics and what particular problem did he have in mind? A clue to the answer can be found in some rough calculations he did in the same notebook on the results of the elections in Prussia in April 1932.⁴² Gramsci recorded the number of seats won by each party and, in brackets, the number won in the previous election in 1928. The Prussian figures were particularly useful in testing empirically one of the first principles in studying the structure-superstructure relation, ie, that "politics is sometimes in fact the reflection of tendencies in the development of the structure, but this does not mean that such tendencies will necessarily produce a result".⁴³ Since the previous elections in Prussia were held in 1928, ie, *before* the onset of the 1929 crisis, the election would clearly show what political 'result' the structural crisis was having. Gramsci had this principle in mind in §9.62 where he restated it as follows: "Given a certain premiss an *automatic* historical movement will follow; but its potential has to be harnessed politically by parties and by men with the necessary 'capacity': if these are absent or deficient (in quantity and quality) the automatic process will prove 'sterile'; the premiss exists but its potential consequences are not realised".⁴⁴

Below the list of gains and losses made by each party in Prussia, Gramsci made some hasty calculations for the main parties of the Left and the Right, taking into account the recent reform of the Prussian electoral law which increased the quota of votes needed to elect one deputy from 40,000 to 50,000.

⁴¹ §9.62. *Machiavelli*, QCII p.1133.

⁴² See the summary description of the figures in QCIV p.2401. I am grateful to Professor Gerratana for providing me with a copy of Gramsci's original.

⁴³ §7.24. *Structure and Superstructure*, QCII p.872.

⁴⁴ §9.62, QCII p. 1133.

Social Democrats	130 x 40,000 = 5,200,000 Now 93 x 50,000 = 4,650,000	Loss of votes 1,450,000 [sic]
Communists	45 x 40,000 = 1,800,000 Now 57 x 50,000 = 2,850,000	Increase 1,050,000
German Nationals	81 x 40,000 = 3,240,000 Now 31 x 50,000 = 1,550,000	Loss 1,685,000 [sic]
National Socialists	6 x 40,000 = 240,000 Now 162 x 50,000 = 7,860,000	Increase 7,860,000?

On the face of it these rough calculations were simply intended by Gramsci to measure the latest change in the *relations of force* between Left and Right in Germany but they also raised *the problem of the intellectuals* in a particular way where 'intellectuals' meant functionaries of the parties in "the democratic-bureaucratic social system". How many functionaries did a political party need at a given level? An answer to this question was suggested by the law of proportionality used in the Prussian elections. The fixed quota of 50,000 votes to elect one deputy gave Gramsci the idea of leaders being a 'function' of a given mass. The number of leaders or 'functionaries' needed would therefore be related the size of the social mass the party sought to organise and lead.

The democratic principle of proportionality led Gramsci to the scientific principle of fixed proportions as a metaphor for studying party organisation. It was no accident that Gramsci recurred at this point to one of the fundamental laws of *chemistry* in view of his interest in the democratic ideology of Antoine Lavoisier, the founder of modern chemistry, who was guillotined during the Terror.⁴⁵ The law of chemical combination could thus be seen as a further example of French history providing Gramsci with an 'element of politics' for which he then found a corresponding element in German experience. The law offered above all a metaphor for the *process* by which the masses moved from one party to another. The primary purpose of his arithmetic on the Prussian elections, in fact, was to calculate the movement from one party to the other on the Right and the Left. This process was the theme of an article commenting on the German elections in the May issue of *Nuova Antologia*. The fascist standpoint of its author did not prevent Gramsci from extracting the point of 'scientific' substance from the familiar

⁴⁵ See Gramsci's observations on Lavoisier in §4.45. *Structure and Superstructure*, QCI p.472. [Translated in SPN p.406].

fascist rhetoric. This point concerned the process of "chemical fusion" going on between the parties of the German Right. The author suggested that the elections showed that the Nationalists and National Socialists were in the process of 'fusing'. This was similar to what had happened in Italy where the Nationalists had merged with the Fascists after 1922 and had disbanded as separate party, except that in Germany the fusion was happening "from below", in spite of the Nationalist leaders, whereas in Italy it happened "from above".

It [the process of fusion] seems to be greatly assisted by the infallible instinct of the people since the mass of their voters in all the partial and local elections held since September 1930 have continued to transfer from the old party to the new. This was most apparent in the second ballot of the presidential election when the supporters of the German Nationalists, left a free vote, cast their votes almost en masse for the National Socialists. It seems therefore that the Italian-style transformation of German Nationalism into National Socialism is likewise happening from below and despite the incomprehension of the party's general staff whose querulous resistance is no more than the superficial effervescence which sometimes accompanies complete and profound chemical fusions.⁴⁶

The mass movement from Nationalist to National Socialist leadership in successive elections was evidence of the failure of the Nationalists to offer effective leadership at the corresponding levels. In §9.62 Gramsci suggests that this failure can be expressed in organisational terms, ie, as reflecting a deficiency in the quantity and quality of a party's 'cadres' at different levels.

This law [of fixed proportions] may serve as a metaphor to explain how a 'movement' becomes a party, ie, a political force which is more or less effective depending on the 'leaders' it has at the various levels and on the 'capacity' of these leaders. Given certain conditions an *automatic* historical movement will follow; but its potential has to be harnessed politically by parties and by men with the necessary 'capacity': if these are absent or insufficient (in quantity and in quality), the automatic process produces no result. The premiss exists but its potential consequences are not realised. Hence it can be said that it is the task of parties to produce leaders. They are functions of the masses, serving to select, train, and multiply the leaders necessary to transform a particular mass (which is a 'fixed' quantity insofar as the numbers in a given social group can be established beforehand) from a condition of turbulence and chaos into an articulate political army prepared for the historical moment.

When the total vote for a particular party wavers between seemingly arbitrary maximum and minimum limits in successive elections, whether at the same level or at different levels (in Germany, for example: elections for the President of the Republic, for the state Landtags, for the Reichstag, for the communal councils, and so on right down to factory committees), it can be deduced that the party's cadres are insufficient in quantity and in quality, or in quantity and not in quality (relatively), or in quality and not in quantity. A party which wins a lot of votes at trade union level and fewer at political level lacks leaders of sufficient quality: it has numerous or at least sufficient junior cadres, but it lacks the proportionate numbers of cadres at higher levels. This type of analysis, which has already been mentioned in other notes, is possible.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Giuseppe Piazza: 'Le Elezioni in Germania', NA, 1 May 1932, p.55.

⁴⁷ §9.62, QCII p.1133.

This way of analysing party organisation was 'scientific' because it could apply to the parties of both sides. In his rough calculations on the Prussian elections Gramsci selected and paired the main parties of the Left and Right precisely to see how the same principle applied to both sides. The fluctuations in the mass vote of the two competing parties of the Left and Right are seen as a function of the relative strength and weakness of their 'cadres', ie, of the quantity and quality of their 'leaders' at different levels of the party hierarchy. By this test the capacity of the Nazis to produce 'leaders', and therefore to harness the political potential of the 'automatic' movement which began in 1929, proved much greater than that of the Communists. Indeed, Gramsci may have been struck by the fact that the theory of the 'united front from below' invented by the Communists proved singularly effective as practiced by the Nazis, for the Nazis were much more successful in wresting leadership of their particular 'mass' from the Nationalists than the Communists were from their rivals the Social Democrats. It is true that Nazi initiatives at factory council and trade union level failed to make much headway. The article in *Nuova Antologia* included some rare data on factory council elections in Germany which Gramsci must have taken into account in writing §9.62 where all levels are mentioned, "right down to factory committees"

It is difficult if not impossible to be clear how far the National Socialists have got in conquering strategic positions in this field. According to the statistics of the free Trade Unions (Social Democratic) it emerges that 83.6 % of the Factory Councils elected during 1931 are theirs (and the figure goes up to 91.5 % together with the Christian unions) as against only 0.5 % which are National Socialist, rising by a further 4 % together with the German Nationals and others. 3.4% are Communist. According to other statistics, however, the figures stand at: 85% belonging to the Socialist and Christian unions combined, 5.2% to the National Socialists combined with other right-wing groups, and 9.4% to the Communists. Whatever the case, it would appear from these figures that at union level the National Socialist conquest of the Factory Councils has scarcely begun.⁴⁸

The failure of the Nazis to take over leadership in the factories, however, must be set against their success in penetrating the branches of the Farmers Association (Landbund) where the left-wing parties never set foot. Rather than attempting to build a new rival organisation of their own, the Nazis typically concentrated on infiltration (*Gleichschaltung*) of the existing organisation and taking it over in tact. This involved agitating to detach their members from the traditional Junker leadership of the Landbund and their party, the Nationalists. In this case the Communist tactic of the 'united front from below' worked with complete success for

⁴⁸ Giuseppe Piazza cit., p. 61.

Nazi control of the Farmers Association was virtually complete by 1932. This aspect of the Nazis' 'leadership capacity' seemed to escape the kind of analysis developed in this note, however, where Gramsci seems more interested in developing new structures rather than in infiltrating old ones.

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When Gramsci set out in §9.62 to explain "how a movement becomes a party" the context suggests that he was thinking in the first place of the expansion of the Nazi Party rather than the Communist Party after 1929. This was by far the most significant political result of the 'automatic' movement started by the economic crisis. The type of analysis developed in §9.62 focusses attention on the 'organisational' response of the party to the crisis. To see how the type of analysis suggested by Gramsci could be elaborated or 'corrected', it is useful to compare it briefly with the findings of modern historians on this aspect.

The crisis of 1929 saw the start of a massive growth in the number of full-time, salaried functionaries employed by the party.⁴⁹ The opening in the summer of 1930 of the new national headquarters in Munich, the Brown House, symbolised the expansion of the party's corps of professional functionaries. After the election of September that year there was an influx of technocrats, the so-called 'New Functionaries', most of them university-educated and from upper middle-class and aristocratic backgrounds.⁵⁰ The rapid growth of staff of the Reich Leadership (Reichsleitung) was paralleled by a similar expansion of staff of the thirty-seven Gaus. As far as *quantity* is concerned, the number of full-time staff employed by each Gau rose to over a thousand by the start of 1932.

In 1931 the Reich Leadership took steps to integrate and rationalise the local party organisations whose development had "lagged far behind" the expansion of staff at Gau and district levels. At the same time efforts to improve the *quality* of the lower party cadres were stepped up, if by quality is meant their effectiveness as 'persuaders'. The party provided a series of two-week intensive training courses in public speaking for local militants. The massive vote for Hitler in the second round of the presidential election in 1932 owed much to "the incredible feats of political

⁴⁹ The following is based on Dietrich Orlow: *The History of the Nazi Party*, Vol.1, 1919-1933 (David and Charles, 1971), especially chapters six and seven, p.185-298.

⁵⁰ On the so-called 'New Functionaries' see Michael H. Kater: *The Nazi Party. A Social Profile of Members and Leaders, 1919-1945* (Basil Blackwell, 1983) p. 176-189.

mobilisation" performed by the local organisations. ⁵¹

After the elections of early 1932 a complete rationalisation of the party's administrative structure began in order to rescue it from "the amoeba-like aimlessness of its organisational development". ⁵² This was the so-called Strasser Plan which was implemented with Hitler's support at two meetings of the leadership in June that year. The plan divided the vertical organisation of the Gau into a series of levels each headed by a 'leader', from the Gau leader (Gauleiter) downwards. The Gau and district leaders were full-time professionals and their offices had a fully-developed staff structure by 1932. Together with senior officers of the SA they headed the lists of party candidates at elections and many sat as members of the Reichstag and state Landtags. Below these levels were the local, section, cell, and block leaders - the political equivalent of NCOs "whose importance is greater than is generally recognised" (Gramsci). Their main task was to recruit, 'encadre', and mobilise the mass of new members who joined the party during the crisis, so that "there exists no party member who does not in some way work for the party".⁵³

However, the Strasser Plan did not stop sharp fluctuations in the party's mass vote. When Gramsci wrote §9.62, after the Reichstag elections of July 1932, the Nazi vote reached a peak of 37%. The possibility that this rapid expansion was a 'cyclical' phenomenon, a short-term superstructural 'boom', probably did not escape him. The Reichstag elections in November 1932, when the Nazi vote fell to 33%, a loss of almost 2 million votes in three months, tended to confirm this. According to Gramsci's law of fixed proportions, "if the total vote for a party wavers between apparently arbitrary maximum and minimum limits in successive elections.....it can be deduced that the party's cadres are insufficient in quantity and quality" etc. If the Nazi party's expansion was a 'cyclical' phenomenon, we might also infer that the deficiency was more likely to be one of quality than of quantity.

⁵¹ Dietrich Orlow cit., p.252.

⁵² *ibid.* p. 255. On the organisational reforms of Gregor Strasser, see Orlow cit., p.256 *passim*.

⁵³ *ibid.* p. 221.

§9.69. Number and Quality in Representative Regimes

The image of the political party presented in §9.62 is that of a political elite. The imprint of the communist concept of the party as the vanguard of the masses is visible, especially in the attention given to the party's 'cadres', only Gramsci meant to describe political parties generally. To the extent that these "are functions of the masses, serving to select, train, and multiply the necessary leaders", Gramsci's communist party did not differ essentially from other parties. The elitist angle came with the special emphasis on developing the 'capacity' of the leaders, but this meant their capacity to win the support of the masses in the context of a democratic, pluralist political system. The question of whether these leaders were *representative* of the masses was not addressed. Did they represent all of the masses, a majority of the masses, a minority of the masses, or none at all? This depended on "the elective principle".

A typical comment in *Critica Fascista* on the result of the Reichstag election on 31 July led Gramsci to examine this principle in §9.69. The interest of this note lies in his passing comment that the fascist criticism of parliamentary democracy was "oligarchic in origin". What did he mean? The clue lies in the passage from democracy to dictatorship in Italy in 1922-25 when the Fascists found their path to power blocked by the system of proportional representation in much the same way that the Nazis, despite winning 37% of the vote, were now frustrated by a similar system in Germany. The commentator of *Critica Fascista*, alluding to the way the Fascists had got over this obstacle, shared the obvious sense of frustration at the failure

on the part of Hitler's movement or the bloc of nationalist parties to achieve the absolute majority of votes, the 51% of parliamentary seats, which in accordance with parliamentary etiquette gives a political party the right to take over power undisturbed for at least the entire term of a parliament - assuming that the party in question is not shrewd enough, by making timely adjustments to the bureaucratic and the electoral machines, to secure for itself all those interests and all those legal procedures necessary to obtain another solid and, in theory, possibly perpetual parliamentary majority.....

Naturally I am using strictly democratic jargon which is the most appropriate in commenting on an election held in accordance with the rules of the most complicated, systematic, and therefore the most democratic law, that of proportional representation. For anyone who is free from doctrinal prejudices can see that the law of number is supreme and that the opinion of any idiot who can read and write carries exactly the same weight in determining the political future of the State as that of someone who dedicates his best energies to the State and the Nation. Anyone can see that the premiss for a change of direction in Germany exists and has done for some time. If you want to find its official date of birth.....you need go no further back than the month of September 1930 when Hitler's movement, which up till then had been considered a collection of malcontent, ambitious or unstable demagogues, gathered in the ballot boxes democratically distributed in every electoral district of the

Reich for the purpose of electing a new Reichstag something like six and a half million votes and thus became numerically the second biggest party in Germany.....

The votes for the National Socialists indicated that an idea, which had been maturing in the German spirit and which Hitler was the first to express in an explicit form and to put into the programme of his movement, had started to spread among the masses and transform their spirit. And God knows how contagious ideas are, especially new ideas which answer to needs felt in a dim and confused way. This is why regardless of numerical considerations it was already possible to declare, as Italian journalists immediately did: *hic incipit vita nuova*.⁵⁴

Gramsci responded to this criticism of abstract democracy using the weapons of Fascist ideology itself which claimed that the life of the State was decisively shaped by "the active minorities, the elites, the avant-gardes etc etc". The opinions of these would-be elites did effectively 'count' for more, especially if they were backed by unlimited material resources.

One of the most banal commonplaces which gets repeated against the elective system of forming the organs of State is that 'number is the supreme law' and that 'the opinion of any idiot who can write (and even of an illiterate, in certain countries) has exactly the same weight in determining the political future of the State as the opinion of one who dedicates his best energies to the State and the Nation' etc. (There are many forms of this, some even more felicitous than this one by Mario da Silva in *Critica Fascista* of 15 August 1932, but the content is always the same). It is certainly not true that number is the supreme law nor that the opinions of all voters have 'exactly' the same weight. In this case too, numbers are nothing more than simply an instrumental value which give a measure and relation. So what, then, is being measured? What is measured is precisely the effectiveness, the expansive and persuasive capacity, of the opinions of the few, the active minorities, the elites, the avant-gardes etc etc: that is, their rationality or historicity or concrete functionality. In other words, it is untrue that the opinions of every individual have exactly the same weight. Ideas and opinions are not 'born' spontaneously in each individual brain: they have had a centre of irradiation and diffusion, a group of men and even a single individual who has elaborated and presented them in the political form of current reality. The counting of 'votes' is merely the final act of a long process in which it is precisely those who 'dedicate their best energies (when such they are) to the State and the Nation' who have the most influence. If those who are supposedly the best, notwithstanding the unlimited material resources at their disposal, fail to get the consent of the majority, they must be judged as incompetent or as unrepresentative of the 'national' interest which cannot help being the decisive influence in directing wills in one way or another. 'Regrettably' everyone tends to confuse his own particular interest with the national interest and therefore to find it dreadful etc that the 'law of numbers' decides the outcome. Thus it is not a question of he who 'has much' feeling reduced to the level of just anybody, but precisely of he who 'has much' wanting to deprive this anybody of the tiniest fraction of power he has to decide the future life of the State.

These banal assertions have been extended from a critique (of oligarchic origin) of the parliamentary regime (which really ought to be criticised, instead, because the 'historical rationality' of numerical consent is systematically falsified) to a critique of all representative systems, including those which are not parliamentary and not fashioned according to the canons of abstract democracy. They are even less accurate when applied to these.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Mario da Silva: 'Sipario su Weimar', *CF*, 15 August 1932, p.303.

⁵⁵ §9.69. *Machiavelli*, QCII p.1140-1141.

If we return these observations to their German origin, ie, the result of the Reichstag election of 31 July, the nature of Gramsci's argument can be established concretely. The expansion of Nazi ideas had nothing to do with the mysterious workings of the German spirit but is explained in a 'realistic' way, in terms of the capacity of the would-be 'elite' constituted by Hitler and the Nazi Party, which is the 'centre of irradiation and diffusion' of their ideas. But didn't their popular appeal at the polls prove the "rationality" of these ideas? Gramsci's answer would be that the abstract rationality of numerical consent was "systematically falsified" by the unlimited material resources at the disposal of the parties of the German Right. If they still failed to obtain the consent of the majority with all these resources, it can only be concluded that these parties did not represent the 'national' interest.

Did this mean that Gramsci 'objectively' agreed with Fascism's claim to be a 'revolution' in which a new 'elite' took over the State? Gramsci must have been aware that this claim was common to 'both sides'? Didn't the Communists with their 'vanguard' theory of the revolutionary party make a 'similar' claim? The clue to Gramsci's distinction between the elitist claims of Fascism and Communism lies in his comment in parenthesis that the fascist critique of the parliamentary system was "oligarchic in origin" . This implied a certain perspective on Fascism in the context of Italian history and politics which emphasised its fundamentally conservative, traditionalist character. Gramsci was inclined to see Nazism in a similar light.

**Past and Present:
the Conservative Roots of Fascism**

Since the 'science' of elites originated in Italy with Mosca and Pareto, a cultural language already existed into which Gramsci's communist 'elite' could be translated. Gramsci had familiarised himself with this scientific language by rereading the key works of Mosca in 1932. However, since this native science of elites was claimed by the Fascists, especially the explicitly anti-democratic version of Pareto, any attempt to translate the communist elite into the scientific language used in Italy had to be highly discriminating. Gramsci seems to have taken the view that the Fascists' claim to be a new ruling elite had no 'scientific' basis and was merely rhetorical. This was because they openly repudiated "the elective principle" as a method of constituting either the party or the State.

Gramsci's 'translation' started from the critique of Mosca's "political class", although he did not exclude the possibility of assimilating Pareto's "elite". By recasting these concepts in terms of the 'superstructural' concept of the intellectuals, - ie, as "the intellectual category of the dominant social group" - Gramsci left no doubt that the Marxist translation would be on his terms.

§8.24. *History of the intellectuals*. Mosca's *Elementi di scienza politica* (new enlarged edition of 1923) is to be examined under this heading. Mosca's so-called 'political class' is nothing other than the intellectual category of the dominant social group: Mosca's concept of the 'political class' should be linked to Pareto's concept of the *elite* which is another attempt to interpret the historical phenomenon of the intellectuals and their function in the life of the State and society. Mosca's book is an enormous hotch-potch of a sociological and positivist character, plus the tendentiousness of immediate politics which makes it more digestible and gives it a livelier literary style.⁵⁶

The main deficiency of Mosca's *Elementi* was that it did not deal with "the whole question of the political party". The indeterminate character of his concept of the "political class" reflected the fact that this class lacked a solid organisational base in the political parties. Indeed, going by Gramsci's explanation of the historic weakness of the political parties in Italy in an earlier note, §3.119, this political class deliberately governed in such a way as to weaken the parliamentary parties and cause their disintegration. The discourse of Gramsci's *Modern Prince* started, therefore, from the deficiency of Mosca's *Elementi* : the modern political party.

§8.52. *Machiavelli. The Modern Prince*. The question of the political class (see the books of Gaetano Mosca). But Mosca formulates the question in an unsatisfactory way: his notion of the political class is so wavering and elastic that one cannot even understand precisely what he means by it. It seems to embrace all of the propertied classes, the entire middle class; but what then is the function of the upper class? At other times it seems to refer only to the political aristocracy, the 'political personnel' of a State, and furthermore to that part of it which operates 'freely' within the representative system; that is, to the exclusion of the bureaucracy, including also its upper stratum, which Mosca thinks should be controlled and directed by the political class. Mosca's deficiency is apparent in the fact that he does not deal with the whole question of the 'political party' and given the character of his books, especially the *Elementi di scienza politica*, one can understand why. Mosca's interest wavers between the 'objective' and disinterested position of the scientist and an impassioned, immediately partisan position of someone who sees events developing which distress him and which he wants to react to. The two parts of the book were written at two typical moments in the political-social history of Italy, in 1895 and 1923, when the political class is disintegrating and cannot find any solid organisational ground.⁵⁷

The publication dates of Mosca's books were important in locating Fascism's relationship to this strand of the Italian 'elitist' tradition. According to Gramsci's notes on the Risorgimento, Mosca's books were typical of the conservative

⁵⁶ §8.24, QCII p.956.

⁵⁷ §8.52, QCII p.972.

literature which resulted from the fall of the Right in 1876, the coming to power of the Left, and the reform of the parliamentary regime (in 1882 the suffrage was significantly extended). "For the most part they are lamentations, recriminations, pessimistic and catastrophic judgements on the Italian situation".⁵⁸ This conservative literature written in the spirit of an 'aristocratic' contempt and fear of parliamentary democracy came back into vogue in the years before 1914 when the suffrage was made universal. In the postwar period Mosca's books contributed to the intellectual climate in which parliamentary government in Italy disintegrated completely.

In 1919 Mosca was elevated to the Senate and in 1922, on the eve of the March on Rome, appointed Professor of Public Law at the University of Rome. The reissuing of his books could not have come at more critical moments. The second edition of the *Elementi di scienza politica* was published in 1923, the same year in which the Acerbo Law was passed reforming the system of proportional representation in order to give Mussolini's government a permanent majority and to render it effectively irremovable by parliamentary vote. The *Elementi* was perfectly attuned to a regressive electoral reform which tended to restore government by a self-perpetuating oligarchy 'similar' to the political class described by its author. For it was in the definition of parliamentary oligarchies that he excelled. His *Teorica* and his *Elementi* presented in persuasive form a view of the political process as managed by narrow and self-perpetuating cliques - a situation in which the presumed representative of the 'the people' was not in fact elected by his constituents but "had himself elected" by imposing his own candidacy".⁵⁹

The publication of a new edition of Mosca's *Teorica dei governi e governo parlamentare* in 1925, the year in which Mussolini announced the introduction of the dictatorship, was even more irresponsible. Whether or not senator Mosca consciously intended it, the reissuing of this book at such a moment tended to lend support to Mussolini's project of liquidating the parliamentary regime completely and forever freeing the "oligarchy" from dependence on the elective principle.

The books of the Mosca-Turiello group started to come back into vogue in the years before the war.....Mosca's book was reprinted in 1925 with a few notes by the author recalling that the book is about his ideas in 1883 and that the author no longer agrees in 1925 with the twenty-four year old writer of 1883. The reprinting of Mosca's book is one of the numerous episodes of the Liberals' political obtuseness and dilettantism in the first and second postwar years.....In 1925 Mosca had

⁵⁸ §9.89, QCII p.1154.

⁵⁹ H. Stuart-Hughes: *Consciousness and Society. The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930* (London, 1967) p. 255.

changed his standpoints and perspectives, nevertheless he reprints his book out of literary vanity, thinking to immunise it with a few brief notes of retraction.....⁶⁰

The Fascist criticism of the parliamentary regime was "oligarchic in origin" because the tendency of the Fascists to dispense with parliamentary democracy and to restore oligarchical rule in Italy was strengthened at a critical juncture by Mosca's works. While Senator Mosca later regretted the disappearance of the representative regime in Italy, his books contained little justification for retaining it, least of all in its democratic form. The abolition of the elective principle in forming the organs of the State was extended to the Fascist Party itself in 1926 when election to offices within the party was abolished.

§9.133, §9.136. Caesarism

In the Reichstag election of November 1932 the National Socialists lost votes to the Nationalists and the Communists won votes from the Social Democrats. The overall relation of forces between the parties of the Right and the Left remained unchanged, although the further advance of the Communists could be exploited by the Right "psychologically" by seeming to bring the "catastrophe" a step nearer. The result of the election confirmed the deepening state of deadlock or "static equilibrium" between the forces in conflict - a state of affairs in which, according to earlier notes, the 'charismatic' man emerges. In these notes we see the metamorphosis of the charismatic man of earlier notes into the "heroic personality" or Caesar, except that Gramsci's main concern is to analyse the situation which produces a Caesar rather than the qualities of the 'hero' himself, god-given or otherwise.

It was against this background that the Reichswehr minister, General von Schleicher, was appointed Chancellor on 2 December. One observer noticed that this was the same date as the coup d'état of Louis Bonaparte in France on 2 December 1851 and posed the question whether Schleicher's appointment marked the advent of a 'Bonapartist' regime in Germany.⁶¹ The appointment of Schleicher gave Gramsci the 'occasion' to write two long notes on Caesarism near the end of Notebook 9. These must have been written sometime during Schleicher's short term of office from the start of December 1932 to the end of January 1933, ie, *before* Hitler came to power. A further note on Caesarism written

⁶⁰ §9.89, cit., p.1155-1156.

⁶¹ Werner von Schulenberg: 'E Schleicher?', *GER*, December 1932.

after Hitler succeeded Schleicher on 30 January 1933, helps to 'situate' these earlier notes quite precisely. In §14.23 he added a third variety of Caesarism to the two examined in the earlier notes - ie, "whether progressive, reactionary, *or of an intermediate and episodic character*"⁶² : this third variety plausibly describes the short period of Schleicher's chancellorship which in Gramsci's terms of analysis would have marked an intermediate "degree" of Caesarism. In fact, Gramsci gives no hint in these notes of their immediate 'German' significance and restricts himself to analysing forms of Caesarism in the remote or recent past, but this is in order to better define the nature of contemporary Caesarism (Caesarism "in the modern world") and to better understand what was happening and likely to happen *here and now* in Germany.

The terms of Gramsci's analysis as set out in these notes are fourfold: (a) the concept of "Caesarism without a Caesar" (b) the non-military character of contemporary Caesarism (c) the possibility of intervention from outside, by a foreign Caesar (d) the problem of historical significance, ie, of progressive and reactionary forms of Caesarism, and the concept of the two combined, ie, "the dialectic of revolution-restoration". This first analysis was meant to be provisional and further analysis of the problem, as one might expect, led Gramsci to make some corrections to this first schematic 'approximation'.

(a) Caesarism without a Caesar

The emergence out of the shadows of the presidential circle of the relatively unknown and less than charismatic figure of General von Schleicher as a possible candidate for the role of a German Caesar probably gave Gramsci the idea of Caesarism without a Caesar, ie, "without a great 'heroic' and representative personality". Gramsci observes that the phenomenon of Caesarism is "more a polemical-ideological formula than a historical-political one": to change the one formula into the other it was necessary to 'depersonalise' the phenomenon, to focus not on the personality of the hero but on the nature of the political process. This in turn led to the notion of 'degrees' of Caesarism where what is measured is not the personal stature of the leader but the degree of his executive power. The advent of Caesarism can therefore happen by degrees, which make up what he calls "the Caesarist phase". Gramsci gives two examples to illustrate how the

⁶² §14.23. *Machiavelli. Caesarism and 'Catastrophic' Equilibrium of the Political-Social Forces*, QCIIIp. 1680.

successive degrees of Caesarism can be plotted.

There can be a 'Caesarist solution' without a Caesar, ie, without a great 'heroic' and representative personality. The parliamentary system has provided the mechanism for such compromise solutions. The 'Labour' governments of MacDonald were, to a certain degree, solutions of this kind: the degree of Caesarism increased when the government was formed headed by MacDonald as prime minister with a Conservative majority. Similarly in Italy from October 1922 until the defection of the Popolari, then by stages until 3 January 1925, and then until November 1926, there was a political-historical movement in which various degrees of Caesarism succeeded one another until a purer, more permanent form was reached - although even this was not static or immobile. Every coalition government is a first stage of Caesarism, which may or may not advance to more significant stages.⁶³

Apart from anything else, this can be read as an intelligent piece of guesswork on Gramsci's part. He seems to have chosen examples from other countries which illustrated the different possibilities of how the Caesarist phase might develop in Germany *after Schleicher*. The English example culminated in a coalition, the National Government, the Italian example progressed from coalition to a purer form of Caesarism, the Fascist dictatorship. This is how the Caesarist phase in Germany developed, in fact, from the nationalist coalition with Hitler as Chancellor formed in January 1933 to the 'pure' dictatorship six months later.

This aspect of Gramsci's analysis of Caesarism is to be related to something he says about the question of constitutional legality in one of the early notes in Notebook 14, which was started around this time (ie, the turn of 1932-33). In §14.11 Gramsci recommends an analysis of constitutions based on the model of Marx's account of the Spanish constitution of 1812. This should bring out, among other things, those points which 'legalise' the transition from democracy to dictatorship. This important aspect of modern Caesarism is usually neglected.

A historical and critical reconstruction of the political regimes of States which have a decisive function in world affairs. The most interesting point appears to be this: how the written constitution is adapted (has been adapted) to changing political conjunctures, especially those unfavourable to the dominant classes. An objective, analytical exposition of the constitution and of all the organic laws is therefore necessary, but this description must be based on the model of the analysis we have of the Spanish constitution of 1812.....In every constitution attention should be paid to the points which permit the legal passage from the constitutional-parliamentary regime to a dictatorship: for example, Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution which has been so important in recent German history.⁶⁴

The reference to "recent German history" can be taken to mean the whole phase of government by presidential decree under Article 48 of the constitution, ie, from the

⁶³ §9.133. *Machiavelli. Caesarism*, QCII p.1195.

⁶⁴ §14.11. *Arguments about Culture. The Great World Powers*, QCIII p.1665.

appointment of Brüning in March 1930 onwards, which would therefore mark the start of the 'Caesarist phase'. But Gramsci was probably thinking back to more recent events. From the reports of Hitler's meeting with Hindenburg in August 1932 following the Reichstag election, Gramsci knew of Hitler's demand to be given, as Chancellor, the same power to rule by decree under Article 48 as his predecessors Brüning and Papen. This demand was refused on the ground that Hitler could not be trusted not to use these powers to create a dictatorship. It was in view of this possibility that one perceptive fascist commentator anticipated "further successive 'legal' or constitutional steps in the crisis". He thought that the best way to resolve the political deadlock was to utilise the "wreckage" of the defunct Weimar constitution in order to bring Hitler to power, "since even in the case of constitutions in ruin there are some points worth clinging on to in times of crisis and general disorientation".⁶⁵

These observations on the 'constitutional' passage from democracy to dictatorship shed further light on the phenomenon of Caesarism. In modern Caesarism the *legality* of the Caesarist regime is much more important than it was at the time of Louis Bonaparte's illegal military coup d'état, especially if it was to forestall a groundswell of public opposition. The public revulsion following the murder of Matteotti in 1924, for example, showed how a careless disregard for legality could endanger the progress of the whole Caesarist project. The tactic of the German Communist party in 1933 was based, in fact, on the expectation of a widespread and rapid popular reaction against the Nazis once they came to power: reading between the lines Gramsci did not think much of this fatalistic tactic, which was a case of the politics of "so much the worse, so much the better" (*la politica del peggio*).⁶⁶ But this upsurge of oppositional forces during the "catastrophic phase" never materialised. The potential opposition to Hitler's government remained passive partly because it exercised power legally.

(b) Modern Caesarism as a Police not a Military System

The appointment of a general as Chancellor raised the theoretical possibility that the state of deadlock in Germany might be resolved by a military coup d'état in the 'classic' style of Louis Bonaparte. According to Gramsci this 'technique' was now

⁶⁵ Giuseppe Piazza: 'La Germania tra una Rivoluzione e una Restaurazione', NA, 16 October 1932.

⁶⁶ See the reference to "certi casi della politica del peggio" in §15.06, QCIII p.1760.

out of date.

In the modern world with its big economic-trade union and party-political coalitions, the mechanism of the Caesarist phenomenon is 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 which came about through quite meticulous coups d'etat, through military actions etc. In the modern world trade union and political forces, and small groups of citizens with unlimited financial resources at their disposal, complicate the phenomenon: the functionaries of the parties and the 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 arises in this field as was studied in connection with the Jacobin-1848st formula of the so-called 'permanent revolution'. Modern political 'technique' completely changed after 1848 - after the expansion of parliamentarism, of the regime of union and party associations, of the formation of vast State and 'private' bureaucracies (ie, those of parties and trade unions, hence private-political); and after the transformations in the organisation of the police in the broad sense, ie, not only of the public service dedicated to the repression of crime but of the totality of forces organised by the State and by private individuals to safeguard the [political and economic] domination of the ruling class. In this sense, entire so-called 'political' parties and other organisations of an economic or some other type must be regarded as organs of political police, of a 'repressive' and 'investigative' character.⁶⁷

Placed in its historical-political context, this passage can be read as an analysis of the advent of Caesarism in Germany written on the eve of Hitler coming to power on 30 January 1933. Of the two alternative techniques to military action, the Nazis chose to terrorise rather than corrupt their opponents on the Left. The terror was aimed particularly at the functionaries of the Communist and Social Democratic organisations. The instrument of this terror was the police forces, including the 'private' police organisation of the Nazi Party - the Storm Troops. The fact that the Storm Troops were enrolled as special police during the 'emergency' following the Reichstag Fire and given official police powers of search and arrest confirmed Gramsci's analysis of the 'technique' of Caesarism more precisely than he could have foreseen at the time of writing this note. However, the extension of 'official' police powers to the Storm Troops was consistent with his analysis in §14.11 of the importance of maintaining the formal semblance of 'legality' during the transition to the dictatorship.

One reason why repression rather than corruption is the preferred technique of modern Caesarism is because in the modern world, Gramsci maintains, the opposition between the rival forces is "historically incurable" and ultimately leaves no room for compromise.

In the modern world Caesarist phenomena are quite different from those of the progressive Caesar/Napoleon I type and from those of the Napoleon III type, although they tend to resemble the latter. In the modern world, the equilibrium with catastrophic prospects occurs not between opposing forces which could in the last analysis fuse and unite, albeit

⁶⁷ §9.133 cit., QCII p.1195.

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. Nevertheless, Caesarism still has some margin - greater or smaller depending on the particular country and its importance in the global context - because a social form 'always' has marginal possibilities for further development and organisational improvement. In particular, it can count on the relative weakness of the rival progressive force arising from its character and way of life. Modern Caesarism is more a police than a military system.⁶⁸

In stating that the fundamental conflict in modern Caesarism is "historically incurable" Gramsci was probably generalising from observation rather than from dogma. The impossibility of some kind of "fusion" between the conflicting forces was supported by his observation of Schleicher's failure to resolve the political deadlock in Germany in the winter of 1932-33. Gramsci was probably thinking of the failure of Schleicher's attempted "opening to the Left" which sought to enlist the cooperation in the government's programme of elements from both the Left and the Right. In particular, Schleicher's proposal for agrarian reform mobilised the opposition of the big landowners whose hysterical cry of "agrarian Bolshevism" sufficiently impressed Hindenburg to persuade him to dismiss the Chancellor forthwith. The opposition to Scheicher's programme within the dominant bloc demonstrated the intransigence of the 'reactionary' forces and confirmed that the opposition of the rival forces was indeed "incurable". However, by using the police to repress the progressive force, whose relative weakness was due to the fact that they could not afford private police organs of their own, the Caesarist regime, once in power, could still create "marginal possibilities" for further development of the existing social form.

In spite of the material resources needed to maintain these private organs of police, it was still cheaper for the Caesarist regime to use terror rather than corruption against its opponents. In §15.07. *Machiavelli. Elections*, Gramsci puts the whole question of 'technique' into perspective. Written during the reign of terror which accompanied the election campaign of February-March 1933, he laconically observed that "often these big shots are recruited for a few lire a day, in other words, often 'shooting' is more economical than 'voting' - that's the nub of it. After the introduction of universal suffrage, corrupting the voter has become too dear: twenty lire and a rifle is enough to get rid of twenty voters".⁶⁹

⁶⁸ §9.136. *Machiavelli. Caesarism*, QCII p.1198.

⁶⁹ §15.07. *Machiavelli. Elections*, QCIII p. 1761.

(c) Caesarism as Foreign Intervention

In Gramsci's first 'scheme' of Caesarism or Bonapartism, the catastrophic equilibrium was resolved by intervention from outside. The connection between the internal-external aspects of the Caesarist situation is a rather indistinct aspect of his analysis, but it is worth eliciting since the external relations of Caesarism are seldom discussed. Gramsci refers to cases of outside intervention in the remote *Italian past*, such as the French invasion of 1494 shortly after the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, but these should not divert our attention from the immediate *German present* which suggested this relation to him in the first place.

Caesarism or Bonapartism 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 mutual 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 and subjugates what is left of A and B. In Italy this is precisely what happened after the death of Lorenzo the Magnifico and in the ancient world with the barbarian invasions.⁷⁰

The possibility of outside intervention threads its way through Gramsci's notes on the German crisis from the start. This is because the focus of his observation was the politics of the German Right, although it was also a possibility in the politics of the German Left. In fact, the 'internal-external' relation as Gramsci saw it presented two possibilities: there was the real possibility of French intervention as a factor in the politics of the Nationalist Right and the theoretical possibility of Soviet intervention as a factor in the politics of the Communist Left.

Given the regime imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles and the necessity to ensure her compliance, the possibility of French intervention was a permanent feature of the German 'situation'. It was also the fundamental determinant of nationalist politics in Germany, whether they were the politics of legal compliance with the Treaty ('Fulfilment') or illegal defiance in one form or another. In the notes Gramsci comments on this 'internal-external' relation in different ways at different times. For example, in the discussion of 'underground warfare' in §1.134 he speculated on the possibility that an attempted coup d'état by the German Nationalist Right, by exposing their illegal military preparations, would give the French a timely excuse to invade.⁷¹ In §8.37 he discusses a situation in which the immediate economic life of a nation is subordinated to international

⁷⁰ §9.133 cit., p.1194.

⁷¹ §1.134 (1929-30), QCI p.123.

relations and how this subordination is exploited by the most nationalistic party to gain advantage over its rivals.⁷² The example of Germany comes immediately to mind for the Nazis' exploitation of the issue of reparations payments or "debt slavery" answered precisely to the state of economic subordination he describes. Gramsci therefore suggests, paradoxically, that the so-called "party of the foreigner" is the most nationalistic party itself, not the party which it usually accuses of this (ie, the communist party). In §9.39 the 'internal-external' relation is seen from the French angle. To contradict the propaganda of the French monarchists, who associated the republic with German invasions of French territory, Gramsci asked how many times has German territory been invaded by the French - "(the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 should be counted among the French invasions)".⁷³ The point was that there was a similar link in the propaganda of the German monarchists between its 'internal' and 'external' elements, the anti-republican element being closely connected with the nationalistic element.

There is no hint of this Franco-German relation in the notes on Caesarism, but we know that Gramsci was studying it closely at the time they were written. The evidence for this is §14.03 in which he recommends "the study of German and French politics *in the winter of 1932-33*".⁷⁴ This would provide "a mass of material for the purposes of research", particularly research into "*the interrelation between foreign and internal policy* (where the assumption is that it is always the internal policy of a particular country which decides things: it is clear in fact that the initiative of a country due to internal reasons, will become "foreign" for the country which undergoes this initiative)".⁷⁵ The possibility that the advent of a nationalist government led by Hitler openly defying the Versailles Treaty might provoke France into intervening was discussed in Gramsci's press reports of the time, but the analysis of Caesarism suggests that this would only become a serious possibility in the event of a bloody civil war in Germany which left both force A and force B mutually exhausted.

The other possibility of outside intervention in the German "catastrophe" was theoretical, or rather was a theoretical mistake: this was the unrealistic hope of intervention by the Soviet Union. Gramsci alludes to this in §14.68, the only note in

⁷² §8.37 (1932), QCII p.964-965.

⁷³ §9.39 (1932), QCII p.1118-1119.

⁷⁴ §14.03 (1933), QCIII p.1657.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

the notebooks to refer to Stalin (ie, Giuseppe Bessarione). This note was written shortly *after* the catastrophe had happened - namely, the destruction of the German Left in the Nazi reign of terror in February-March 1933. Gramsci describes two historical-political phases which ended in "a state of passivity and inertia".⁷⁶ In the second and worst of these, the passivity and inertia of the movement was explained by the fact that everyone "is waiting for a form of 'Napoleonism', which is anachronistic and mechanical (since historical phases seldom repeat themselves in the same form)".⁷⁷ The context suggests that Gramsci was referring to the false expectation by the German Communists ("the party of the foreigner") that the Red Army would come to their aid at the crucial moment and thus impose a 'Napoleonist' or Caesarist solution from outside. The necessity of intervention by the Red Army was in fact urged by Trotsky in his articles on Germany in 1933 in which he reminded everyone of the advice he gave eighteen months earlier, namely, that "it should be axiomatic for every revolutionary worker that the attempt of the fascists to seize power in Germany must lead to the mobilisation of the Red Army".⁷⁸ Gramsci may have known of Trotsky's 'axiomatic' advice to the revolutionary workers of Germany which, judging by their passivity and inertia in 1933, was more successful than even he could have imagined. For the false expectation of a 'Napoleonic' intervention by the Red Army was attributed by Gramsci to "the general theory of permanent revolution, which is nothing more than a general forecast presented as a dogma and which collapses by itself because it doesn't in fact come true".⁷⁹ The question remained (which cannot be analysed at this point): how did the false assumptions of the dogma of permanent revolution come to be accepted by the orthodox leaders of the German Communist party?

⁷⁶ §14.68 (1933), QCIII p. 1730.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ This advice was first given in 'Germany, the Key to the International Situation' (26 November 1931) and Trotsky's reminder of it was in 'Hitler and the Red Army' (21 March 1933): see Leon Trotsky: *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (1971) p. 95 and p. 395.

⁷⁹ §14.68 *cit.*, p.1730.

(d) The Historical Significance of Caesarist Regimes

The historical significance of Caesarist (or Bonapartist) regimes is the most difficult question raised by Gramsci's analysis. The difficulty partly arises from the fact that he deliberately starts from a schematic formula - "progressive force A v. reactionary force B" - even though the whole tendency of his thinking was anti-schematic: "there can be progressive and reactionary forms of Caesarism: the exact historical significance of each form can only be reconstructed in the last analysis from concrete history, not from any sociological schema". His main concern in these notes was to define the *rules* of the Caesarist phenomenon but the rules were to be applied in the flexible and 'comprehensive' spirit of the historian rather than the sociologist.

Although Caesarism always expresses the solution in which a great personality is made the 'arbiter' of a historical-political situation characterised by an equilibrium of forces heading for catastrophe, it does not have the same historical significance in all cases. There can be progressive and reactionary forms of Caesarism: the exact historical significance of each form can only be reconstructed, in the final analysis, from concrete history and not from any sociological schema. Caesarism is progressive when its intervention helps the progressive force to triumph even though its victory is limited by certain compromises. It is reactionary when its intervention helps the reactionary force to win; this case also involves certain compromises and limitations although these have a different value, extent, and significance from the former. Caesar and Napoleon I are examples of progressive Caesarism, Napoleon III (and also Bismarck) of reactionary Caesarism. The problem is to see whether in the dialectic 'revolution-restoration' it is the element of revolution or restoration which predominates, for it is certain that in the movement of history there is no turning back and there are no such things as restorations *in toto*.⁸⁰

Gramsci's concern for the rules of Caesarism partly stemmed from the implications of Croce's revision of historical materialism. In the second draft of this note he denies that the formula of Caesarism is merely "a canon of historical interpretation"⁸¹ even though his recommendation for the study of concrete cases seems to imply precisely this. The implication of Croce's revision was to dissolve the *a priori* concepts of historical materialism whilst acknowledging its value in "drawing attention" of historians to the facts economic and social history. Gramsci agreed with the anti-positivist side of Croce's interpretation: historical materialism

⁸⁰ §9.133, QCII p.1194.

⁸¹ The second draft is §13.27, QCIII p.1619-1622. For the interpretation of historical materialism as "a canon of historical interpretation", see Benedetto Croce: *Materialismo storico ed economica marxista* (1961), p. 80-81: "This canon advises us to turn our attention to the so-called economic substratum of societies in order to understand better their configurations and episodes. The concept of 'canon' should not encounter any difficulties especially if it is remembered that it implies no anticipation of results but is only an aid in seeking them and is entirely for empirical use".

was not to be regarded as a universal 'sociological' schema which is then applied mechanically to the study of history. But it was possible to heed Croce's anti-positivist warning without surrendering the concept of dynamic class struggle on which the materialist conception of history was based, especially if this concept was properly understood in the dialectical sense of the founder. Such was the difference between Caesarism as *concept* and as *canon*.

Gramsci's approach to Caesarism pivots on this tension between concept and canon. If anything, the difficulty of his analysis is not due to 'schematism' but to the absence of it since when it comes to concrete history Gramsci changes and even breaks the rules if necessary. The possibility of 'Caesarism without Caesar', for example, seems to bend the rules to breaking point but such flexibility is imposed by the concrete facts he is thinking of: few would disagree with his view of Ramsey MacDonald as a less than heroic personality, but this goes to show how the method of 'approximating' ever more closely to concrete facts can result in illuminating corrections to the rules of the original schema which, it can be argued, stop short of reducing it to a mere 'canon'.

In assessing the historical significance of Caesarist regimes, the flexibility of the rules is evident in two main ways. His use of deliberately generic terms to describe the forces in conflict - 'progressive' and 'reactionary' - is because he knows full well that the static equilibrium which gives rise to Caesarism may not correspond straightforwardly to the fundamental class divisions, but this was no reason to abandon the rules of class struggle altogether. The most original of Gramsci's innovations to the rules, however, is "the dialectic of revolution-restoration". As a criterion of historical comprehension and judgement, this allowed him to see Caesarist regimes as progressive *and* reactionary at the same time. This dialectic and one of its variants, the concept of "passive revolution", occupied his thinking a good deal in the notes of 1933 as the nature of the new Caesarist regime in Germany began to reveal itself.

Meanwhile, between the first and second of these notes Gramsci hastened to modify the 'sociological' schema so that it 'approximated' more closely to the facts. By differentiating between the fractions of the dominant bloc, he starts to break down the mechanical division between the progressive force A and the reactionary force B. The starting-point, as always, is French history, but we should not lose sight of the shadowy forms of German politics lurking in the immediate background.

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 organic deficiency which is necessarily insuperable. This is precisely what happened in the case of Napoleon III. The dominant force in France from 1815 to 1848 was split politically into four fractions: legitimists, Orleanists, Bonapartists, and Jacobin republicans. Such was the internal factional struggle that it was possible for the rival (progressive) force B to advance in a 'precocious' form. However, the existing social form had not yet exhausted its possibilities of development, as subsequent history proved abundantly in fact. Napoleon III represented (in his own way, i.e., as fitted the stature of the man, which was not great) these latent or immanent possibilities. His Caesarism is therefore, once again, of a particular type. It is objectively progressive, though not like that of Caesar or Napoleon I. The Caesarism of the latter was, so to speak, of a qualitative-quantitative character, i.e., it represented the historical phase during which the passage from one type of State to another occurred - 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 to a limited extent, quantitative: there was no passage from one type of State to another but only 'evolution' of the same type along an unbroken line.²

Thus, after describing the Caesarism of Napoleon III as a "reactionary" form, he now says it was "objectively progressive" (although this amendment is dropped in the second draft). In spite of repressing the progressive force A, which had advanced "precociously" in the 1848 revolution, the Caesarism of Napoleon III was "objectively progressive" because it enabled the still latent potential of the existing social form to develop. Thus, the traditional dominant force B, or rather a particular *fraction* of it, by demonstrating that its deficiency was momentary rather than organic, subsequently turned out to be a progressive force. This in turn leads Gramsci to differentiate between forms of Caesarism which represent 'revolutionary' and 'evolutionary' progress.

Does this analysis of the facts of French history break the rules of Caesarism? By interpreting the rules dialectically not mechanically, that is to say, by understanding Caesarism as Caesarism in movement, as a *historical* phenomenon, Gramsci is able to judge its significance as far as "the dominant force" is concerned in a more differentiated way. The so-called dialectic of revolution-restoration was designed mainly to capture Caesarism as movement; the terms of the movement remain deliberately categorical - "revolution-restoration" - and seem to leave no room for compromise, although the observation that in history "there are no such things as restorations *in toto*" comes into play here. The notion of "objectively progressive" was not simply a momentary equivocation on Gramsci's part, however: it implied a significant change in the rules, in which "progress" now pertained more to the social than to the political form. The change of emphasis corresponded to the new "phase" of Caesarism, the post-catastrophic phase, after the advent of the

Caesarist regime has saved the dominant force (B) from catastrophe. Accordingly, in the course of 1933 the thread of Gramsci's thinking moves on since, strictly speaking, once the Caesarist regime is safely installed the "Caesarist phase" comes to an end. From the analysis of Caesarism during the phase of impending catastrophe Gramsci begins to elaborate the formula of "passive revolution" in which there is "objective progress" without the active participation of the progressive force (A) itself - indeed, in which the progressive force is actively suppressed by its rival. This movement of Gramsci's mind was dictated by the movement of real events. From the reflections on Caesarism at the turn of 1932-33 to those on passive revolution in the first half of 1933, Gramsci's notes are like a mirror in which we see reflected the shadowy forms of German politics. In his analysis of the fractions of the dominant bloc in France on the eve of 1848, for example, we can see reflected the "momentary deficiency" caused by 'similar' splits within the dominant bloc in Germany on the eve of 1933. However, the demands of thinking *creatively* were related to the process of reality itself. This process developed so rapidly in 1933 that Gramsci did not have time to dwell on whether or not his thinking was obeying the rules.

Postscript: Was Bismarck's Caesarism 'Reactionary'?

The question of historical significance is posed particularly sharply by Gramsci's description of Bismarck's regime in these notes as a "reactionary" form of Caesarism. Although it is no more than a passing reference, Gramsci retained it in the second draft. It is worth trying to clarify what he meant by this for two reasons: firstly, because his description of Bismarck's regime has been specifically rejected by *historical materialists* otherwise sympathetic to his political theory; secondly, because the timing of this reference coincided with the reappearance of Caesarist forms in Germany - specifically with the "intermediate" form represented by Schleicher - and therefore implied a particular continuity between *past and present* in Gramsci's thinking about German politics.

The concept of Caesarism or Bonapartism has been applied by German historians to Bismarck's regime quite independently of Gramsci's notes on the subject, most notably by Hans-Ulrich Wehler whose work on *The German Empire 1871-1918* (1973) defined for a certain time the main historiographical paradigm of imperial

Germany.⁸³ The similarity between Wehler's concept of Bonapartism and Gramsci's was noted by David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley in their paradigm-smashing book *The Peculiarities of German History* (1984).⁸⁴ However, in challenging the dominant paradigm the latter found themselves having to reject Gramsci's description of Bismarck's regime as a reactionary form of Caesarism in spite of their attempt to use other elements of his political theory such as the concept of civil society to support their reinterpretation. Gramsci's concept of Caesarism was "very schematic" and, as far as Bismarck's regime was concerned, "certainly does not correspond to the analysis of *revolution from above* advanced in this essay".

As we saw, Gramsci's sociological 'schema' was meant to be a first 'approximation' to concrete history. Further analysis of Caesarist forms was expected to result in a more differentiated judgement of their historical significance which "the dialectic of revolution-restoration" was meant to accommodate. In many ways, Wehler's analysis of the combination of old and new elements in Bismarck's Bonapartism is consistent with this dialectic, but in the final analysis the element of 'restoration' still predominates:

In Wehler's case the main effect of this 'Bonapartist' definition of the state is certainly to acknowledge the new importance of industrial capital within the German social formation in the period after unification. But this is expressed in such a way as to leave the 'aristocratic' or 'Junkerist' definition intact. Industrial capital has arrived, but its interests are accommodated within a 'traditional' power structure of a basically unreformed kind.⁸⁵

Whereas in Wehler's interpretation of Bismarck's regime the element of 'restoration' predominates (always remembering Gramsci's rule that "in the movement of history there is no turning back and no such things as restorations *in toto*"), in Blackbourn and Eley's the predominant element is 'revolution'. But for the latter defining the State in imperial Germany was not simply a matter of *emphasis*. In fact, the two authors gave a detailed description of the institutional forms of the aristocratic State in imperial Germany which would fully justify defining it as backward, not to say "reactionary".

⁸³ For his account of Bismarck's Bonapartism, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler: *The German Empire 1871-1918* (Berg, 1985) p. 55-62, especially p.57-58.

⁸⁴ David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley: *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford, 1991) p. 129-130 and note5.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

This is the definition that should be most familiar to us after the preceding discussions in this essay. The twin characteristics of backwardness and aristocratic dominance are thought to have been expressed in a number of institutional ways: the executive power of the King-Kaiser, the autonomy of the military, the preferential recruitment of the officer corps and the bureaucracy from the aristocracy, the limited powers of the Reichstag, the transmuted seigneurial character of local government east of the River Elbe, the effective immunities of the landowners from certain kinds of taxation in the same region, and of course the special qualities of the Prussian as opposed to the Reich Constitution. Now, at one level these factors amply justify an 'aristocratic' description of the state. But for that description to acquire theoretical status the State-society relation must be addressed, and in existing discussions the relationship of the Junkers (as a social class) to the State (as an ensemble of political institutions) is left regrettably unclear.⁸⁶

Do Gramsci's notes throw any light of this society-State relation? The passing reference to Bismarck's reactionary Caesarism in §9.133 was organically connected in fact to other notes, especially those on the traditional intellectuals in Germany. When these are taken into account, we see that his judgement of Bismarck's regime formed part of a wider conception of German history which was anything but schematic. Indeed, his comparative analysis of the function of the English and German aristocracy brought out a number of German 'peculiarities'.

It [the English landowning class] loses its economic supremacy but for a long time maintains its political-intellectual supremacy and is assimilated by the new power group as its 'traditional intellectuals' and its ruling stratum. The old landed aristocracy is joined to the industrialists by a kind of suture which is precisely how the traditional intellectuals join up with the new dominant classes in other countries.

The English phenomenon also appears in Germany but is complicated by other historical and traditional elements.....The development of industry took place within a semi-feudal framework which lasted up until November 1918 and the Junkers preserved a political-intellectual supremacy to a much greater extent than the corresponding English group. They have been the traditional intellectuals of the German industrialists, but with special privileges and a strong consciousness of being an independent social group based on the fact that they retained considerable economic power over the land, which was more 'productive' than in England. The Prussian Junkers resemble a priestly-military caste, with a virtual monopoly of directive-organisational functions in political society but possessing at the same time an economic base of its own and so not exclusively dependent on the liberality of the dominant economic group. Furthermore, unlike the English landowning aristocracy the Junkers constituted the officer class of a large standing army which gave them solid organisational cadres favouring the preservation of an esprit de corps and their political monopoly.

(In Max Weber's book *Parliament and Government in the New Order in Germany* many elements can be found showing how the political monopoly of the nobles impeded the elaboration of an extensive and experienced bourgeois political personnel and is at the root of the continual parliamentary crises and of the fragmentation of the liberal and democratic parties. Hence the importance of the Catholic Centre and of Social Democracy which during the imperial period managed to build up quite considerable parliamentary and directive strata of their own).⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *ibid.* p.128.

⁸⁷ §12.01, QCIII p. 1526-1527.

This brilliant synopsis of German history, written *before* 1933, poses a number of questions for empirical research which cannot be pursued here. Its main features are now familiar to German historians seeking explanations of 1933 in terms of the 'deep' continuities of German history. Arguably, it offers a closer 'approximation' by a Marxist thinker to the concrete relation between State and society in imperial Germany than any number of circular abstractions about the relative autonomy of the State, the State as instrument, the State as arbiter etc. The 'dominance' of industry in the German social formation is clearly acknowledged but so is the virtual 'monopoly' of higher political leadership by the aristocracy. However, Gramsci's analysis of the function of these traditional intellectuals is not purely 'superstructural': if it were so, its theoretical status as far as historical materialism is concerned would remain in doubt. In fact, the relation between structure-superstructure is conceptualised in very deliberate terms. As we see, Gramsci is quite clear that the *independent* social consciousness of the Prussian Junkers "ultimately" depends on preserving an economic base of their own. The preservation of this economic base, however, appears in his analysis to be a matter of *military* as well as economic necessity, the aristocratic character of the officer corps being closely related to the *territorial* basis of the standing army. To convey the aristocracy's sense of its own exclusiveness, Gramsci speaks of the *suture* between the dominant group and their ruling stratum, preferring this to the term *fusion* in which the specifically 'aristocratic' character of the dominant or ruling ideas might disappear altogether. Moreover, the *suture* suggests that the joining together of the industrialists and the aristocracy was a deliberate act of intervention rather than a slow organic process. What particular 'surgery' did Gramsci have in mind?

This brings us to Bismarck. Gramsci acknowledges the influence on his thinking of Weber's powerful critique of the legacy of Bismarck's 'Caesarist' regime in *Parliament and Government in the New Order in Germany*. His description of Bismarck's regime as a "reactionary Caesarism", in fact, owed as much to Weber as to Marx. Weber illustrated its reactionary character by analysing Bismarck's deliberate act of dividing the National Liberals by introducing protective tariffs in 1879. This divided the German bourgeoisie and brought about a realignment of social forces by forging an alliance between heavy industry and the agrarians ('iron and rye') on the basis of protectionism and the anti-socialist law. This was

Gramsci's "suture". Bismarck deliberately divided the main political party of the bourgeoisie in order to make his own political monopoly complete, but the legacy to his successors was to give a permanent monopoly of the function of higher political leadership to a social group completely lacking in the specifically 'political' (as distinct from bureaucratic) capacity needed for this role. To this extent, the historical significance of Bismarck's Caesarism could be said to be more like a 'restoration' than a 'revolution' from above.

This analysis of Bismarck's Caesarism clarifies the relation between *past and present* in Gramsci's thinking. The continuities are both explicit and implicit. We have seen that he first referred to Weber's critique of the imperial system during the early months of Brüning's chancellorship in 1930 when the transition from parliamentary to presidential government took place. Gramsci appears to have seen this as a regression to the post-Bismarckian system of 'Caesarism without Caesar' in which the function of political leadership is carried out not by party leaders responsible to parliament but by "a force of non-party men linked to the government by paternalistic ties of a Bonapartist-Cesarist type" (§3.119). This description approximated quite closely, in fact, to the relation between the new chancellor and his President, who is the power behind this "State-Bonapartist party" as Gramsci calls it.

The second element of continuity was linked in Gramsci's mind to the first, although whether he saw this as a relation of 'cause and effect' is not clear. When he again referred to Weber's critique in 1932, it was in the light of the Reichstag and other elections since 1930. The results were seen by Gramsci as confirming the *historical* weakness of the liberal and democratic parties which virtually disintegrated in these elections. They also confirmed the historical strengths of the Catholic Centre and Social Democracy whose popular vote remained remarkably solid. The disintegration of the bourgeois parties of the 'middle' thus coincided in Gramsci's mind with the regression to traditional Caesarist forms of rule in Germany although, as we said, the relation of cause and effect is far from clear.

The third element of continuity is implicit. In his account of Germany's traditional intellectuals, Gramsci said that the Junkers' consciousness of being an independent social group ultimately depended on preserving an economic base of their own. The most 'reactionary' aspect of Bismarck's Caesarism as Gramsci saw it may have been his determination to preserve this economic base by a host of

“anti-historical” measures of which protective tariffs were the most obvious but not necessarily the most important.⁸⁸ Whatever the case, the main ‘structural’ question raised by Gramsci’s version of imperial Germany is the *dynamic relation* between the rapid progress of big industry and the gradual decline of big agriculture. He was enough of a historical materialist to know that this relation was crucial to any analysis of the superstructures, which remained his primary interest. The question is: what point did he think the decline of big agriculture had reached by 1929, or rather, what prospect did he think the Prussian aristocracy had of preserving their economic base in the crisis of 1929? In the first draft of 1930 he says that “it is not difficult to imagine that the difference in the situation of the English and the Prussian nobility will even out with the passing of time”⁸⁹ - which presumably meant that the ‘productive’ function of the Prussian nobility would, in the course of time, decline in importance to the English level. But in the second draft of 1932 he drops this rather sanguine perspective altogether. Did this mean that he thought that the eastern estates were now facing ‘terminal’ decline? After all, this possibility was precisely what the Junkers themselves complained of so vociferously, their outcry against Schleicher’s “agrarian Bolshevism” being a case in point. This ‘terminal’ hypothesis fits neatly into Gramsci’s initial conception of the German crisis put forward in 1929 as a “crisis of authority”, in which the breakdown in all its forms of the ideology of the traditional intellectuals would coincide with their economic bankruptcy. However, the course of events by 1933 seemed to have strengthened rather than weakened his respect for “the force of tradition”. A number of notes written in 1933 referring to “the strength of agrarian parties” suggest that if he ever asked himself the question - have the Prussian Junkers now come to the end of the road? - his answer was no. The threat to the very survival of their economic base seemed only to increase their determination to preserve it by any political means possible, even if it meant bringing Hitler to power. By saving the traditional order in the East, the new Caesarist regime could thus be seen as a kind of ‘restoration’.

⁸⁸ An important element of *continuity* before and after 1918 neglected by historians appears to be the mortgage-credit operations of the Prussian *Landschaften* which accounted for the massive accumulated debt-structure of the Junker estates. Gramsci’s thesis on the relative and absolute *parasitism* of the old classes left over by the European ‘tradition’ can be related to this.

⁸⁹ §4.49, QCI p. 480-481.

Chapter 4

The Catastrophic Phase: 30 January-14 July 1933 From the Appointment of Hitler to the Suppression of Parties

The Letters

"I sometimes think my whole life has been a big mistake....."

The "catastrophic phase" in the breakdown of Gramsci's health came to a climax in the early months of 1933.¹ On the morning of 7 March he collapsed getting out of bed and was left temporarily paralysed. Two weeks later on 20 March Professor Arcangeli, the doctor chosen by Tatiana, examined him in prison. Arcangeli's medical certificate stated: "Gramsci cannot survive for long under the present conditions. I consider his transference to a hospital or clinic absolutely necessary, unless he can be granted conditional freedom".² Arcangeli wanted the certificate to include a request for a pardon but Gramsci opposed this. It took another eight agonising months before he was transferred from Turi to Civitavecchia, and thence to the 'secure' clinic at Formia near Rome, but by this time his physical breakdown had passed the point of no return.

The climax in the breakdown of Gramsci's health came at exactly the same moment in the political crisis in Germany when the equilibrium "with catastrophic prospects" was resolved by the new 'Caesar', Hitler. Between the Reichstag Fire on 27 February and the Reichstag election on 5 March, the Nazis launched a wave of terror which completely destroyed the organisations and cadres of the German Left, starting with the Communist Party.³ Gramsci followed this climactic phase of the German crisis as closely as he could through his periodicals, particularly the *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera*.⁴ The "practical origin" of many notes in *Notebooks 14* and *15* can be traced to the German situation in the early months of 1933. In retrospect, it can be argued that the whole project of international revolution born in Russia in October 1917 definitively ended in Germany in March 1933. Although Gramsci understood the significance of the

¹ "The truth is that some time ago, about a year and a half, I entered a phase of my life which without exaggeration I can only define as catastrophic. I cannot react against my physical illness any more and I feel my strength ebbing away all the time". To Tatiana, 13 February 1933, LC II p. 683. His letter to Teresina the following week, 20 February, makes it clear that this catastrophic phase began with his haemorrhage of 3 August 1931. LC II p.687.

² Quoted in G.Fiori: *Antonio Gramsci. Life of a Revolutionary* (1970) p. 278.

³ The whole momentous atmosphere of the time, including the terror, is dramatically evoked in Philip Metcalfe's riveting *1933* (Black Swan, 1990).

⁴ Professor Gerratana notes that Gramsci relied on this periodical particularly in the early months of 1933: see QCIV p.2941.

German defeat, he never regarded it as final or 'epochal': but this was more an act of *faith* than of intellect on his part. The German defeat confirmed what he wrote soon after the German elections of 1930, ie, that after 1917 a new 'period' had begun in which the war of movement in politics was superseded by the war of position. The only glimmer of light in the descending darkness in 1933 lay in "passive revolution", a concept which Gramsci now linked with the war of position and which occupied many of the notes written in 1933. It was a Marxist variant of Vico's "cunning of providence" - an expression of faith in the ultimately rational workings of history at a moment which the forces of reason appear to have been completely vanquished. In the meantime, the only consolation for communists of Gramsci's generation was to accept philosophically, as he did, that they were the "manure of history".⁵

1933: the Year of *Candide*

Gramsci was fond of quoting Romain Rolland's motto - "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will" - as the guiding principle of his existence. It is worth recalling what it means since we are presented on the face it with a contradiction in terms: "I am a pessimist of the intellect and an optimist of the will. In every circumstance I think of the worst possible scenario and then mobilise all my reserves of willpower to defeat the obstacle ahead of me. I never entertain illusions or suffer from delusions. Above all, my strength has always been an infinite patience, a patience which is neither passive nor inert but animated by a spirit of perseverance".⁶ It would never be more difficult to live by this motto than in 1933. Gramsci greeted the new year with the pessimism which it deserved, but this merely served to strengthen his will to resist:

If the year 1932 was tough, 1933 looks to me to be even worse. I am completely exhausted and at the same time things are getting harder to bear. The relation between my disposable strength and the effort demanded has worsened. Still, I am far from being demoralised. In fact, my willpower is strengthened precisely by the realism with which I analyse the elements of my existence and my resistance. I embrace you affectionately.⁷

The first test of his willpower related to a very immediate matter. His struggle to cut down on his smoking was partially successful. He reported that he was consuming only a fraction of the tobacco he was smoking when he was free: "It's still too much,

⁵ The expression is used in the "dialogue" in §9.53 (summer 1932), QCII p.1128.

⁶ To Carlo, 19 December 1929, in LC I p. 298.

⁷ To Tatiana, 2 January 1933, in LC II p. 662.

in my view, but believe me it's very difficult to completely extirpate such an inveterate and deeply-rooted habit".⁸

On 30 January 1933 (the same day coincidentally that Hitler was made German Chancellor) Gramsci took up Tatiana's well-intentioned advice "to be of good humour". For this he turned to Voltaire's *Candide*, which covered all the worst possibilities of life.

Your recommendation is very useful, I think, but difficult to apply, at least as a predetermined programme. It might be necessary to compile a complete treatise on good humour, possibly extracted from Voltaire's *Candide* and suitably arranged to cover all the disagreeable possibilities in life. It is a real pity that Voltaire's works (as far as I know) are forbidden in prison and it is particularly unpleasant to have to spend one's whole life narrowly confined inside four walls without any of the diversions which stimulate good humour. In any case, you're right. It all depends on comparing one's own life with something even worse and consoling oneself with the relativity of human fortunes *

Writing as someone who "had known only the ugliest side of life", Gramsci then tested Tatiana's advice by recollecting a concrete episode from his Sardinian boyhood but this was so horrifying that it was impossible to extract from it any feeling of "good humour". Nevertheless, Voltaire's hero is mentioned in the notebooks on several occasions in 1933. *Candide's* naive and fatuous optimism which always concluded from the most terrible experiences that "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds" must have seemed to Gramsci a humorous parody of his own brand of pessimism of the intellect.

In February his insomnia got much worse and he began to fear that his physical suffering could overcome his remaining powers of resistance. The 'contradiction' at the heart of his existential motto now grew sharper. For once his stoical composure cracked and he confessed that physical suffering reduced him to crying like a child.

It's true, for some time now, roughly a year and a half ago, I started a phase of my life which without exaggeration I can only call catastrophic. I can no longer react against my physical illness and feel my strength ebbing away all the time. Besides, I don't want to give in to the process, I don't want to neglect anything which even theoretically might contain the possibility of ending this suffering. I think to neglect anything would, in a certain sense, be tantamount to suicide. Admittedly I may have become full of contradictions but not to the extent of not understanding elementary things like these....

Dear Tania, there are times when I'm just like a child: I feel so tired out that I start crying and fear that I am falling into a delirium. I never realised that one's physical condition could dominate one's moral strength to such an extent, but then I must have overestimated my own reserves. What's more, you must not be too surprised by this: I cannot hide this state of affairs any longer. I assure you that I still draw a little strength from the thought that I have responsibilities towards Julca and the boys; otherwise, I

⁸ To Tatiana, 9 January 1933, in LC II p. 665.

⁹ To Tatiana, 30 January 1933, in LC II p.673.

would give up the struggle since living has become so burdensome and odious for me. I embrace you tenderly... ¹⁰

It was against this increasingly desperate background that Gramsci made the "decision" reported in the letter to Tatiana of 27 February.¹¹ This is one of the most important letters as far as revealing the 'political' motives of his resistance are concerned, although these cannot be disentangled from the 'personal' motives alluded to above. No attempt has been made to decode this "decision", which he needed to disguise from the prison censor. This decision was not what one might expect from the growing desperation apparent in his preceding letters to Tatiana: rather, Gramsci remained true to his existential motto - "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will" - and decided to continue his resistance even though he was assailed by intense doubts about whether it served any further political purpose. In the first place, Gramsci was convinced - rightly or wrongly - that for reasons of political expediency he had been abandoned by *his own side*. He told Tatiana that he had not simply been condemned by the Special Tribunal but by "a much wider organism". This wider organism or "invisible tribunal" as he once called it, included his wife Julia who had "unconsciously" condemned him, and "a series of other people" who had condemned him "*less unconsciously*". Who were these "other people"? The only answer is the Communist leadership in Moscow which, he believed, had reasons of its own to 'condemn' him. In his thinking, these reasons probably had to do with what were perceived to be his "oscillations" in the letter to the Russian Central Committee of 1926 on the internal party struggle. They may also have been connected with his disagreement with the current international tactic revealed in the 'political conversations' of 1930, news of which had circulated through the prison system and beyond. Whatever the case, Gramsci could see why the leadership in Moscow might find it politically expedient to leave such an independent-minded communist leader to languish in a fascist prison.

Gramsci's doubts about the tactic of the so-called 'third period' were now fully justified by the development of the political situation in Germany which he had followed closely through his periodicals since the start of the year. It must have been about this time (the letter of 27 February 1933 was written, coincidentally, on the day of the Reichstag Fire) that Gramsci wrote §15.07 in connection with the German elections appointed for 5 March. This was based on a comment in the

¹⁰ To Tatiana, 13 February 1933, LC II p.683-684.

¹¹ See LC II p.690.

Gazeta Polska reported in the *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera* "for the end of January or the start of February", and clearly anticipated the Nazi reign of terror against German Communism launched after the Reichstag Fire.¹² The point is that the victory of fascism in Germany must have contributed to the "doubts" which assailed Gramsci at this point about the whole purpose and direction of Russian leadership of the Communist International. The doubts in Gramsci's mind can be formulated as follows: what was the point of continuing his resistance to the fascist regime if it was true that the communist leadership in Moscow had abandoned him to his fate? What was the point of continuing the international struggle after the German defeat, which demonstrated (according to Gramsci's notes of early 1933) a "criminal" neglect or ignorance on the part of Moscow of the European situation? Finally, what was the point of continuing to struggle for the sake of Julia and the boys in Moscow if it was true that she also had 'condemned' him, albeit "unconsciously". Such were the elements of 'pessimism of the intellect' which led up to the "decision" announced by Gramsci on 27 February.

I thought I ought to write to you because I think I have arrived at a decisive turning-point in my life when it is necessary without further delays to make a decision. This decision is taken. The line of conduct which I indicated to you in the last conversations and in the recent letters is only a conditional part of these decisions. Sometimes I think my whole life has been a big mistake (big for me at least) or misadventure. The only thing that still persuades me that this is not entirely true is your attitude and especially that of the lawyer. (Don't be offended if I put the lawyer before you: there are plausible reasons for this which should not offend you and which you yourself can understand). But this is not sufficient. 13

What, then, was this "decision" or "decisions"? To judge from his subsequent line of conduct in which he refused to ask for clemency in spite of his doctor's wishes but would continue to press for conditional liberty on legal grounds, the first decision was to continue his resistance to the Fascist regime. The second decision, which was connected with the first, was to maintain "communist discipline" in spite of his doubts about the intentions towards him of the leadership in Moscow.¹⁴ This renewed spirit of communist discipline is apparent in the notes written in March-April 1933, particularly in the 'apologetic' §14.68 in which Gramsci appears to

¹² The context of §15.07 is discussed below. The comment in *Gazeta Polska* was in fact reported in the issue of RSE for 14 February 1933. See QCIV p.2942.

¹³ LC II p. 690.

¹⁴ The decision to maintain "communist discipline" might also be related in some way to the release on medical grounds of Athos Lisa, whose famous report to the party centre in exile on Gramsci's attitude to the international tactic was dated 22 March 1933. See A. Lisa: *Memorie* p.95.

defend Stalin's leadership at the very moment of its greatest disaster.¹⁵ However, no amount of communist self-discipline could stop him from having doubts on this score, doubts which break through in the notes at several points. Finally, the third decision, which was intimately connected with the second, was to maintain contact with Julia and the boys even though the whole relationship had become fraught with misunderstanding. In short, having stared the worst possible scenario in the face, Gramsci now mobilised his final reserves of willpower.

For the time being Gramsci's decision remained "conditional" on the outcome of his lawyer's application for conditional liberty on legal grounds. He makes this clear in his letter to Tatiana of 6 March written the day before he collapsed in his cell. In this letter the 'contradiction' on which his moral resistance was based found its most extreme expression. Gramsci uses the metaphor of one who is shipwrecked and is driven by hunger to contemplate what was normally unthinkable: cannibalism. Are we dealing with the same personality or have the material circumstances and the "molecular changes" they had wrought in him given birth to a different personality who no longer contemplates cannibalism with the same abhorrence?

Well, as I said to you, a similar change is happening in me (cannibalism apart). The most serious thing in cases like this is that the personality divides in two: one part observes the process, the other undergoes it. But the observing part (as long as this exists it means there is self-control and the chance of recovery) feels all the precariousness of its own position, ie, it foresees a point at which its function will disappear, when self-control will vanish, and the whole personality be swallowed up by a new 'individual' with impulses, actions, modes of thought different from the ones before. Well, this is the situation I am in.¹⁶

This letter is related to the 'Autobiographical Notes' in §15.09 which must have been written at virtually the same time.¹⁷ Here Gramsci records how he "had begun to judge catastrophes of character with greater indulgence, by experiencing the process through which such catastrophes happen". Towards the end of his analysis, Gramsci suggests that such catastrophes can be viewed from a collective as well as an individual point of view. Everyone trusts that he will have the strength to react against the 'invisible' process which leads to disaster, but the majority find themselves in the situation where the process has already gone beyond the point at which they are capable of reacting to it. He then concludes his analysis with the following cryptic paragraph:

¹⁵ §14.68 is discussed below.

¹⁶ LC II p.693.

¹⁷ §15.09. *Autobiographical notes*, QCIII p. 1762-1764.

Today's manifestations of this fact should be studied. This is not to say that this fact did not happen in the past, but it is certain that in the present it has assumed a special and.....voluntary form: that is, today it is calculated that the event will happen and it is systematically prepared, which did not happen in the past (systematically means 'en masse' therefore, without excluding naturally the particular 'attentions' paid to individuals). It is certain that today a 'terroristic' element has crept in, an element of material and also moral terrorism, which is far from negligible. This aggravates the responsibility of those who, whether through inexperience, negligence, or even perverse will, did not try to prevent certain ordeals from having to happen even though they were able to. [Against this anti-moralistic way of seeing things there is the falsely heroic, rhetorical, phrase-making conception, the struggle against which is virtually pointless] ¹⁸

The timing and content of this cryptic paragraph, especially the reference to the "terroristic element", strongly suggest that Gramsci is referring to the collective disaster suffered by the German Communist Party at that very moment - 6 March 1933 - and to the responsibility of the leaders who had failed to prevent it. For was it not the case that the tactic of the German Communist Party - what Gramsci elsewhere called "the politics of so much the worse, so much the better" (*la politica del peggio*) ¹⁹ - had led the German proletariat, or at least a substantial section of it, precisely to the point when it was too late to react against the collective disaster which Hitler had systematically prepared from the moment he came to power?

In another note written about this time also inspired by the German disaster, Gramsci applied the logic of Voltaire's *Candide* - that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds - and asked what lessons could be learned by those who "had stared hell in the face":

Those who dominate cannot resolve the crisis but they have the power (to prevent) others from resolving it - that is to say, they have the power merely to prolong the crisis itself. *Candide* perhaps might say that this is precisely what is needed for the elements of the real solution to prepare and develop themselves, given that the crisis is so serious and demands such exceptional means that only he who has stared hell in the face can decide to use them without trepidation or hesitation ²⁰

The Physical Collapse of 7 March 1933

By an extraordinary coincidence it was at this moment that disaster struck Gramsci himself but his physical collapse on 7 March 1933 did not lead to the 'moral' disaster he most feared. Gramsci reported the bare facts of what had happened to Tatiana a week later, but it was not until he was examined by an outside doctor on

¹⁸ Ibid p.1764.

¹⁹ See §15.06, QCIII p.1760.

²⁰ QCIII, p.1718.

20 March that the poor state of Gramsci's health was officially attested. Professor Arcangeli reported:

Antonlo Gramsci, prisoner at Turi, is suffering from Pott's Disease; he has tubercular lesions in the upper lobe of the right lung which have caused two discharges of blood; one of these discharges was copious, and accompanied by fever lasting several days. He is also suffering from arterio-sclerosis, with hypertension of the arteries. He has suffered collapses, with loss of consciousness and partial aphasia lasting several days. Since October 1932 he has lost 7 kilos (over a stone) in weight; he suffers from insomnia and is unable to write as he used to. Gramsci cannot survive long under present conditions. I consider his transfer to a hospital or clinic to be necessary: that is, if it is not considered possible to grant him conditional liberty ²¹

The collapse of 7 March must have interrupted his work on the notebooks although it is hard to establish for how long. The fact that he was able to write letters to Tatiana on 14 and 21 March indicates that he did not lose the use of his hands completely, although as Arcangeli indicated "he was unable to write as he used to". The variation in handwriting towards the end of *Notebook 14* (which also affected the three notes inserted at the start of this notebook) suggests that these notes were written after 7 March, although it is difficult to tell how long after.²² Moreover, it is probable that Gramsci had started *Notebook 15* before 7 March and that it was then interrupted for a while, although again it is hard to say for how long. ²³ An interesting indication of the possible length of the interruption is the Zulu saying recorded early on in the notebook in §15.12:

The wisdom of the Zulus produced this maxim reported by an English review: 'It is better to advance and die than to stop and die' ²⁴

The quotation was taken from the issue of *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera* for 25 April 1933 - more than seven weeks after Gramsci's collapse.²⁵ It was Gramsci's 'epitaph' on the fate of the German Communist Party which no longer existed.

A month after the crisis, on 10 April, Gramsci reported that he still found it very difficult to write: "My hands are still invariably painful and have no strength to hold even small weights. If I try to make a small effort as a test, I lose control of

²¹ LC II p.696-697. [Translated in HH p.255].

²² For the variation in handwriting see the description of *Notebook 14* in QCIV p.2412. The three notes inserted at the start of the notebook included §14.03. *Machiavelli. Centre* which gives the most direct indication of his thinking about the German crisis at this time.

²³ The first notes in *Notebook 15* use sources dated January-February 1933. See QCIV p.2413.

²⁴ §15.12, QCIII p.1769.

²⁵ See QCIV p.2944.

the movement again” 26. Nevertheless, he was still able to write letters, including a short one to his boys full of interesting suggestions:

Dearest Dello, I've received your letter of 28 March with news of the goldfish, the rose and primrose, the beans and the lions. What sort of lions were the ones you saw? Were they African lions or lions from Turkestan? Did they have manes, or was the hair round their necks short and smooth? And were the bears like the ones you saw in Rome? z

Judging from his letters it is probable that by the second half of April - about five or six weeks after the crisis - Gramsci had recovered sufficiently to be able to write notes again. His recovery continued into the first half of May. On 8 May he reported:

I received Ludwig's *Colloqui* in due course and have read them already. I can't study as I did in the past (although even then the studying was very relative), but still I can't manage to do completely nothing z

However, Gramsci then found out something which completely upset his precarious recovery. We cannot be sure what this was but in the letter to Tatiana of 16 May, where his change of mood is first registered, he clearly states that his exasperation was due to the fact that his instructions to Tatiana concerning “the management of affairs regarding my physiological existence itself” had been ignored. 29 This indication tends to support the hypothesis that what Gramsci now learned was that the text of the medical certificate written by Arcangeli after examining him on 20 March had been published by the organ of the French Communist Party, *L'Humanite*, on 8 May as part of a campaign organised by the Italian Communist Party in exile to secure conditional liberty for Gramsci.30 The medical certificate touched precisely on what Gramsci, with deliberate emphasis, called “my physiological existence itself”. He must have realised that this act would make his legal application for conditional liberty much *less* likely to succeed. Togliatti disclaimed any responsibility for the act and recognised that it was a “big mistake”.31

If this was indeed the reason for Gramsci's sudden change of mood, as seems most likely, his harsh words to Tatiana were perfectly understandable. What exasperated him most was to see his life being treated as “the toy of impulsive and

26 To Tatiana, 10 April 1933, LC II p.702.

27 To Dello, 10 April 1933, LC II p.703. [Translated in HH p.259].

28 To Tatiana, 8 May 1933, LC II p.710.

29 To Tatiana, 16 May 1933, LC II p.712.

30 See Aldo Natoli: *Antigone e il prigioniero*, p.157.

31 *Ibid.*, p.157.

unreasoned decisions” and to see his carefully thought-out instructions being “simply overridden by hair-brained initiatives, which take no account even of the repercussions they will have on me”.³² Moreover, Gramsci was far from sharing the “absurdly optimistic” state of mind which he detected in the letters of both Tatiana and Julia, who may have been buoyed up by news of the international campaign on his behalf which had now started. It seems that the humour which Gramsci hoped in January to find in the absurd optimism of Voltaire’s *Candide* now evaporated as he suffered the consequences at first-hand of the “absurd optimism” of his nearest and dearest. To have collaborated in maintaining their optimism now seemed to him “criminal”. Given the complex political and legal nature of Gramsci’s situation, the good intentions of his relatives and friends were not enough. “Goodwill which is disarmed, incautious, inexpert, and obtuse is not goodwill at all: it is stupid naivety and merely causes disasters”.³³ Moreover, Gramsci could no longer live by his existential motto now that his final reserves of willpower were nearly exhausted.

Until some time ago I was, so to speak, a pessimist by intelligence and an optimist by will. That is, although I could see perfectly clearly all the conditions which were unfavourable and extremely unfavourable to any improvement in my situation (whether in general terms as far as my legal position is concerned, or in particular terms, to do with my immediate physical health), I nevertheless thought that by making a rationally calculated effort it was possible to get a result of some kind. If the effort was conducted with patience and acumen, without neglecting to organise the few favourable elements and trying to neutralise the numerous unfavourable ones, it was possible to get a result of some value, if only to be able to live physically, to halt the terrifying waste of vital energies which is progressively wearing me down. Today, I don’t think this any more. This does not mean that I have decided to surrender, so to speak: it means that I no longer see a concrete way out and I no longer have any reserves of strength to rely on.³⁴

The months of June-July 1933 were the hardest of Gramsci’s imprisonment. Already reduced to a physical wreck by this time, he was now tormented again by constant insomnia and migraine. The letters of these months testify to his desperate struggle to survive without “surrendering” (ie, without asking for clemency). His reserves of willpower were not completely exhausted. He was angered by the criminal neglect of his health by the administration, particularly the Ministry of Justice and the General Directorate of Prisons, who continued to delay transferring him to a hospital in spite of Arcangeli’s medical report that “Gramsci cannot survive

³² To Tatiana, 16 May 1933, LC II p.712-713.

³³ To Tatiana, 29 May 1933, LC II p.717.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.717.

long under present conditions". This gave him the willpower to make a last "rationally calculated effort". On 6 July he wrote an "extraordinary" letter to Tatiana instructing her to press the authorities to transfer him as a matter of urgency.³⁵ He was convinced that the obstruction could only be removed by Mussolini himself (who was probably the reason for it). It was necessary to petition him directly and even to seek a personal interview with him.

...I remain convinced that anything of any importance to do with me will never be resolved without a decision by the Head of Government. So the petition, I think, is indispensable. I think it would be very useful if, as you said to me, you could possibly have an audience (*udienza*) accompanied by a female friend of some standing. In any case, you should try to ensure that your written statement precedes the audience. If you were to give in writing an exposition of the facts as you know them in a lucid and persuasive way, it is not impossible that the Head of Government will decide to take the measures required, and you could say that I would be able to make a detailed statement (*che io potrei fare una memoria circostanziata*). The truth is that I am exasperated by the thought that I have been permanently disabled by arterio-sclerosis at my age and that this should have gone unpunished. Since it is possible to demonstrate that the conditions in which this has happened are covered and sanctioned by the general prison regulation and since on innumerable occasions the Governors of the Prison at Turi have made arrangements to remedy these conditions, it is not difficult to identify those who are administratively responsible.³⁶

The content of this letter, proposing a petition and interview with Mussolini, was carefully calculated to ensure that the prison governor of Turi would bring it to the attention of the General Directorate of Prisons. The latter might then have to answer to the Head of Government for neglecting its statutory duty towards Gramsci who was entitled under the prison regulation to medical treatment. It is probable that "the facts" which Tatiana was to bring to Mussolini's attention backed up by Gramsci's "detailed statement", would bear directly on this point and amount to an indictment of the General Directorate for neglect of duty. This rationally calculated effort produced a result of some value: an inspector of prisons visited Turi almost immediately and arranged for Gramsci to be transferred to a new cell on the ground floor "away from the infernal noises", where he could at least get some sleep. As a result he reported that he was feeling "a bit better" on 24 July.³⁷

³⁵ To Tatiana, 6 July 1933, LCII p.725-728.

³⁶ To Tatiana, 10 July 1933, LC II p.729.

³⁷ To Tatiana, 24 July 1933, LC II p.734. After asking Sraffa's advice, Tatiana dropped the proposal to seek a personal interview with Mussolini. See the exchange of letters between them on 14 and 18 July 1933 in Piero Sraffa: *Lettere a Tania per Gramsci*, p.131-132

The Business of the Reviews

With the exception of a series of notes at the end of *Notebook 15*, Gramsci did very little new work on the notebooks during the summer of 1933.³⁸ "The summer has always laid me low, even in the absence of other unfavourable conditions..... (Besides, I still haven't regained easy use of my hands)".³⁹ Throughout July he still found it difficult to use his hands and "if I want to write I have to use printed handwriting".⁴⁰ His normal pattern of reading reviews and writing notes was further interrupted by the fact that he received no periodicals in the month of August at all.⁴¹ The August issues, which carried the news of the Reich Concordat signed on 20 July, arrived late together with those for September. Although he tried to get back to routine work in the autumn and wrote a series of new notes in *Notebook 17*⁴², the issues for October did not arrive either⁴³ and he received no further reviews before his transfer out of Turi on 19 November 1933. It is possible that this combination of circumstances caused Gramsci temporarily to lose the thread of current events in Germany in the summer of 1933 and that he did not pick it up again until he reestablished himself and resumed work at Formia in the early months of 1934.

³⁸ The last notes in *Notebook 15*, from §15.54 to §15.75, appear to be the only new notes (B texts) written in these months. Gramsci used sources dated June and July 1933. QCIV p. 2953-2957. He may have done some work on *Notebook 13* during these months but this consisted almost entirely of second drafts (C texts) of earlier notes.

³⁹ To Tatiana, 29 May 1933, LC II p.718.

⁴⁰ To Tatiana, 17 July 1933, LC II p.731-732.

⁴¹ To Tatiana, 3 September 1933, LC II p.743.

⁴² The first notes in *Notebook 17*, from §17.01 to §17.33, were new notes (B texts) using sources dated August and September 1933. QCIV p.2966-2974. All the notes in *Notebook 16* with one exception were second drafts of earlier notes (C texts).

⁴³ To Tatiana, 12 November 1933, LC II p.754-755.

The Periodicals

Hitler's new year message

In his new year message to the Brown Shirts for 1933, Hitler used the rhetoric of the providential man or *superman*.¹ The protagonist of "the German catastrophe" presented himself in 1933 as the only man who could *prevent* it. The rhetoric evoked an apocalyptic vision of Germany's fate and the providential appearance of a superman who alone could save her from it. "Passing on to his predictions for 1933, Hitler affirmed that the decadence of Germany's political and cultural values was simultaneously leading to economic ruin. It is only a question of time, but collapse is inevitable". Only the intervention of a providential man could prevent this. He cited the example of Italy to prove that the miraculous appearance of such a man was not impossible:

'The terrible consequences for European civilisation of the chaos and regression which will follow were foreseen and confronted by only one people in Europe. Thanks to one of those exceptional men in the history of the world, to whom whole generations are linked by a duty of gratitude, the Italian people found in Fascism the ideal which dominates it and reshapes its whole life'.

The new year was a time for predictions and since he was the instrument of destiny Hitler's 'predictions' always proved infallibly correct. His prediction that Papen's attempts to save the German people from misery by means of government decrees would fail had come true: he now predicted that Schleicher's attempts would fail even more completely. The point was that providence would not be satisfied by such "*intermediate solutions*", nor would it be tricked by manoeuvres or diverted by compromises. The failure of Schleicher's government will prove this.

'It will then be proved that the manoeuvres to prevent the victory of National Socialism by means of intermediate solutions, which are national only in appearance, shatter against this ineluctable, fateful development'. Hitler concluded by reaffirming that 'as long as he has strength he will oppose all compromises, in the certainty that forgiveness does not make a friend out of an irreconcilable enemy, who invites the National Socialists to participate in government not in order to bring them to power but in order to suffocate them'.

The Hitler-Papen Talks

Under cover of this uncompromising rhetoric, Hitler was now eager to reach a compromise. His movement was in the throes of a crisis which momentarily

¹ Hitler's new year message was reported in RSE, 17 January 1933, p.121-122. All the following quotations are from this source.

threatened his own leadership. By sticking to his demand for nothing less than the Chancellorship backed by the presidential powers, his strategy to win power now appeared to threaten the unity of the National Socialist Party itself. If Hindenburg had refused to give in to this demand after the party's spectacular success in the July elections, he was even less likely to after its heavy losses in the November elections. Doubts within the party about Hitler's strategy came to a head in December with the resignation of Gregor Strasser as head of the party apparatus.² These doubts then turned into an incipient threat to Hitler's very position as leader when Schleicher invited the disaffected Strasser to secret talks. By offering Strasser a post in the cabinet and a programme attractive to the 'socialist' tendency within the party he represented, Schleicher apparently hoped to win the backing of the whole party and thus to outmanoeuvre and isolate Hitler.³ We can judge how seriously Hitler took this threat to his leadership by the fact that both Schleicher and Strasser were to be murdered in the 'Night of the Long Knives' in June 1934.⁴

Schleicher's enemies now united against him and began plotting his downfall. On 5 January the Berlin paper *Tagliche Rundschau* leaked the news of secret talks in Cologne between Hitler and Papen, who still remained close to Hindenburg.⁵ Papen's intrigues also attracted the interest of Hugenburg's party which had its own reasons for dissatisfaction with Schleicher.

It seems that these intrigues of von Papen at this moment have coincided and tallied with the prejudices and preoccupations of the German Nationalist Right at the so-called 'social' policy of Chancellor von Schleicher and in the final analysis opposition to Schleicher has provided the bridge which has led to Hitler. 'It would appear highly unlikely that Hitler could come to terms with Papen whom he has fought for months on end in a form which should have ruled out personal contacts of this kind. However, it seems that the hostility of the National Socialist leader against Schleicher proved decisive. Above all, Hitler was increasingly convinced of the urgency of achieving power in order to get full command of the internal difficulties of his party.⁶

² The 'Strasser case' was reported in RSE, 3-10 January 1933, p.30-31.

³ Schleicher's programme was reported in RSE, 3-10 January and 17 January 1933. See also the rubric *Cose Straniere* in CC, 7 January 1933, and the issue of EF for February 1933.

⁴ Hitler apparently panicked and threatened to commit suicide unless the party supported him although, of course, this was not reported at the time. See Henry Ashby Turner: *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power: January 1933* (1996), p.24-29.

⁵ The Hitler-Papen talks in Cologne talks were reported in RSE, 17 January, p.122, and 24 January, p. 180. They are analysed by Turner, *ibid.*, p.42-52.

⁶ RSE, 17 January 1933, p.122.

By the middle of January the German press was speculating on the kind of government which might succeed Schleicher. The forecast of the *Hamburger Nachrichten* turned out to be more or less right:

There is always the possibility of entrusting power to the National Socialists and to the representatives of the national movement in general on an openly authoritarian basis. The Head of State ideally wants a national government summoned and backed by him. An openly authoritarian government of this type, with almost half the votes in Parliament, would guarantee national reconstruction and would at the same time be sufficiently strong to deter the trade unions from calling general strikes, which have become customary since Papen's resignation. Any further attempt to reshuffle the government would be nothing more than a waste of time, making political differences deeper and economic distress harsher. This is the Gordian Knot which must now be cut. If the differences in the nationalist camp can be overcome, the attempt will be successful.⁷

The Splits in the Dominant Bloc:
the agitation of the Agrarian League

It was the agitation of the Agrarian League, however, which destroyed the President's confidence in Schleicher and sealed the fate of his government. The leaders of the League used their privileged access to Hindenburg, who was particularly sympathetic to the interests of agriculture, to complain that Schleicher was not doing enough to protect German farmers from foreign imports or from foreclosures. On 11 January Schleicher was summoned by the President to listen to the complaints of the Agrarian leaders in his presence. However, the tactics of the League on this occasion prevented Schleicher from accommodating their demands:

In addition to everything else, a conflict broke out between the Reichslandbund (the National Association of Farmers in Germany) on one side and the government and industry on the other..... The leaders of the Reichslandbund were received by Hindenburg to whom they intended to present their demands. At the same time as this visit was happening, however, they published a document which was considered unprecedented in government political circles in which the government on one side and industry on the other were vilified on account of their resistance to the schemes to protect agriculture. Schleicher declared that he wanted no further dealings with the leaders of the Reichslandbund and the directorate of the national association of industry headed by Bohle Krupp responded proudly to these insults saying that German industry would have been prepared to make sacrifices to relieve the plight of agriculture but this unexpected act of hostility by the Reichslandbund had changed all this.

Meanwhile the government was preparing its own programme for the reconstruction of agriculture which included protective measures such as an increase in tariffs and quotas on foreign agricultural products. These measures would be put into effect as soon as the commercial agreements with some of the countries which exported agricultural products like Yugoslavia and Sweden expired, although the commercial agreements with the latter had already been broken.

The conflict between the government and the Agrarian League was aggravated, however, by the fact

⁷ RSE, 24 January 1933, p.179.

that it was becoming increasingly political in character insofar as the actions of the agrarians were openly supported by the National Socialists who were now strongly represented in the presidency of the League. This is hardly surprising since Hitler had already - on 3 January to be precise - put forward his own view to the fifth agrarian conference held at the Brown House.⁸

The demagogic tactics of the Agrarian League at this critical moment reflected the extent to which the National Socialists had penetrated its leadership and branch organisations.⁹ As well as making the usual private representations to the President on behalf of agriculture, the League took the unusual step - under National Socialist influence - of attacking Schleicher's cabinet publicly. This brought the conflict of interest between agriculture and industry into the open where the National Socialists could exploit it more effectively and thus open the door to Hitler who promised to eliminate such 'class' conflicts. The explanation of the conflict in the *Volkischer Beobachter* condemned this "class struggle carried on from above by the old bourgeoisie" and claimed that the National Socialists were the only party which understood the solidarity of interest between German workers and peasants.

The conflict between the Agrarian League and the Schleicher cabinet has many causes. Up to now this struggle has been seen as a conflict of interests; the gigantic economic organisations of the various federations consider themselves to be in competition with each other and in their short-sighted way are convinced that the interests of some of them can only be safeguarded by destroying the welfare of the others. This way of seeing things is downright marxist in conception according to which class struggle, and in turn class dictatorship, is the premiss of political and economic activity. These conflicts between big industry and the representatives of agriculture originate from the class struggle carried on from above by the old bourgeoisie, so it is important to bear in mind the general political situation.....

We support the peasant not in order to gain advantages for the nationalist movement but because we recognise perfectly clearly that the prosperity of all the classes depends upon him. If the peasant ends up producing too little, hunger in the real sense of the word will be the result for everyone. At the present time the big anti-German capitalists are seeking to achieve their plans by gradually expropriating for ridiculous sums, accepted under pressure, the whole territory of Germany for the purposes of stock-market speculation. In this event big Jewish finance would have in its control the entire food-supply of the nation. The 'meaning of world history' marked out in November 1918 would thus be realised.

It is not easy to assume the leadership of the rural population in face of the millions of impoverished individuals in the big cities who, under the influence of liberal-marxist propaganda, must regard the peasant as their natural enemy. Hitler therefore has the historic credit of having boldly declared himself a National Socialist among the peasants and then of having revived the honour of the German

⁸ RSE, 24 January 1933, p.182.

⁹ National Socialist penetration of the Agrarian League is discussed in Horst Gies: 'The NSDAP and Agrarian Organisations in the Final Phase of the Weimar Republic' in *Nazism and the Third Reich* (1972) edited by Henry A. Turner, and in J.E. Farquharson: *The Plough and the Swastika. The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany 1928-45* (1976) p.33-35.

peasants in the capital after being ignored for a decade. Today the National Socialist peasants know that the poor German workers have also struggled for their farms, have shed their blood and in many cases have even been murdered for their sake. The peasant must not and never will forget this struggle of the big cities on their behalf. Our intervention in support of the current action of the Agrarian League therefore has nothing to do with any interest or speculation but represents a struggle for blood and for soil, to secure the supply of bread to the big cities. If we are all to live, the peasant must not die. 10

The Fall of Schleicher

The first news of Schleicher's resignation and the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor was carried in the *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera* of 31 January. The same issue also gave details of the composition of Hitler's cabinet: apart from two National Socialists - Frick and Goring - the cabinet was dominated by members of the traditional ruling elite obviously in deference to Hindenburg's wishes.¹¹ There was more extensive press comment on the downfall of Schleicher in the following issue of 7 February. The editorial considered that the opposition of Papen and Hugenburg had been decisive:

The cabinet's difficulties, already aggravated by the hostility between the agrarians and industrialists, were multiplied by the growing lack of confidence of the right-wing parties in both the political and the social/economic policies of Schleicher which aroused the suspicion that he was intent on abandoning the principle of authority revived by Hindenburg when he summoned von Papen to power and on adopting syndical concepts which were in essence international in character. The party of Hugenburg was sufficiently convinced of this that it adopted a resolution decisively opposed to Schleicher which stated: 'The economic policy of the government is once again sliding towards socialist and international ideas. Meanwhile there is a serious danger in the splits which exist in the agrarian field and which create the threat of rural Bolshevism'.¹²

The review went on to report foreign reactions to the fall of Schleicher, especially that of the French press. The *Journal des Debats*, for instance, drew attention to the hostility of heavy industry to Schleicher's social programme:

Although Schleicher is a general, he has broader ideas than the men of the extreme Right. In fact, his aim was to win over the popular elements and he even thought of coming to terms with the trade unions. The old Prussians and the magnates of the iron industry wanted to bring about his downfall at any price. On the other hand Hitler, who had recently contributed to the fall of von Papen, was the

¹⁰ RSE, 24 January 1933, pp's 182-183.

¹¹ See RSE, 31 January 1933, p.233. Further reports on the nomination of Hitler as German Chancellor and on the new 'national coalition' were in RSE, 7, 14 February 1933; in *Cronaca politica*, NA, 16 February; in *Cose straniere*, CC, 18 February. See also *Rassegna politica*, POL, February-April, although this issue did not appear until August of that year.

¹² RSE, 7 February 1933, p.281-282.

mortal enemy of General von Schleicher because he had attempted to weaken his party.¹³

It was far from clear at the time that Hindenburg would appoint Hitler in succession to Schleicher. The democratic *Berliner Tageblatt*, for instance, said that the dismissal of Schleicher would not be a national misfortune "if it were not for the danger that his place will be taken by a *purely reactionary regime* of a kind that Germany had not seen until now". The linchpin of this purely reactionary regime, however, was not Hitler but the combination of Papen-Hugenburg:

'Hindenburg has charged Papen with negotiating to find a solution to the crisis and has therefore designated him as the future Chancellor. This indicates how the President wants the solution to unfold'. The paper observed how 'Papen's mandate is accompanied by the limitation of seeking a solution within the framework of the constitution and with the agreement of the Reichstag' but was doubtful 'whether Papen will be able to interpret this mandate in the same sense in which the majority of the people understands constitutionality or whether he will seek to enlarge it in line with the prescriptions of Hugenburg'. It then added that 'there can be no talk of stable leadership or economic security at the moment when the champions of constitutional experiments are preparing to come to power'.¹⁴

Similarly, the *Vossische Zeitung* observed that "the President has decided, as we thought, against Schleicher's cabinet and received Papen immediately after the Chancellor departed". However, it doubted whether "the negotiations conducted until now between the National Socialists and the German Nationalists correspond to the lines indicated by the presidential mandate". The paper was sceptical whether Hitler would be included in or be prepared to support the next government, the inference being that this made an 'authoritarian' solution of the crisis which Hindenburg was thought to favour *more not less* likely. The impression that a "purely reactionary regime", *not including Hitler*, was in preparation was strengthened by the report in the *Borsen Courier* :

As regards the projects for a dictatorship, which Schleicher had advised against, the paper added that the ex-Chancellor had informed Hindenburg that such a dictatorship would provoke a presidential crisis. He added that other prominent political personalities were of the same view and urged Hindenburg to listen to them, but the President had refused to do so.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid. p.286. The fall of Schleicher is analysed in depth by Henry Ashby Turner in *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power: January 1933* (1996)

¹⁴ RSE, 7 February 1933, p.282.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.282.

Hitler and the 'National Coalition'

One of the premisses of the appointment of Hitler's cabinet was to put an end to the open conflict between agrarians and industrialists. It was with this end in view that the Nationalist leader Hugenburg combined the posts of Minister of Economics and Agriculture in the new cabinet. The 'vestiges' of the imperial past were unmistakable. In particular, the cabinet appeared to be an attempt to restore the old imperial 'solidarity bloc' of iron and rye on the basis of general protective tariffs. The traditionalist elements - the symbols of national 'continuity' - dominated the new 'national coalition' to such an extent that it was widely characterised in the press not as the government of Hitler but of Hitler-Papen-Hugenburg.¹⁶ There was much speculation about who were the 'masters' in the new coalition and it was easy to mistake appearance for reality, especially if reality was perceived through Marxist lenses. Did Hitler serve the interests of the dominant classes in an 'instrumental' sense or was he their 'master' in the Bonapartist sense? The consensus of the press reports carried in the *Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera* was that Hitler would be a 'prisoner' of his cabinet in both an ideological and practical sense. It was obvious to the *Bayerische Kurier*, for example, "that from the day the new cabinet was formed, Hitler set himself to follow the ideas of Hugenburg". The *Munchner Zeitung* did not doubt that Hitler's cabinet would tackle the great problems of the day but observed:

It remains to be seen, however, what will be done and with what speed. If the cabinet had consisted solely of National Socialists, it would be hard to avoid the suspicion of dramatic coups in Germany's internal life. But examining the list of Hitler's colleagues we find, apart from Frick and Goring, other people like Hugenburg and Papen who are certainly not disposed to support experiments against the so-called 'Princes of the Banks'.....Indeed, it is obvious from this, and from the fact that in any case the Minister of War is not a National Socialist, that Hitler does not have a free hand.¹⁷

The *Regensburger Anzeiger* had to admit that Hitler was not at ease in the company of Hugenburg. Indeed,

Hitler may realise that he is perceived to be the slave of Hugenburg-Seldte who, with all their sociological, economic, and financial forces and connections, are not only the co-proprietors of Hitler's powers but also like wedges of respectability put there to prevent the reforming thoughts of the National Socialists from taking flight, particularly in the field of economic and social policy.¹⁸

¹⁶ Particularly in RSE, 7 and 14 February 1933.

¹⁷ RSE, 14 February p.339

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.339-340

The *Schlesische Volkszeitung* considered the new cabinet to be “a German-National government” in which “the personality who will set the tone is Hugenburg”. Not only in Prussia but also in the Reich

the National Socialists have surrendered themselves too quickly to the guidance of Hugenburg-Papen. They have thus linked their destiny to a party which no longer has any roots in the people and will not have in future as long as a Hugenburg remains its leader.¹⁹

The last word goes to the authoritative *Frankfurter Zeitung*. The paper welcomed the intention of the new cabinet “to promote the middle stratum (*ceto medio*) of the rural and urban population in order to preserve the forces of individualism lying dormant there”, but feared that the interests of big capital would for the time being prevail. While stressing the likely influence of Hugenburg and Papen on the policies of the new government, however, it could foresee a time when the National Socialists would emancipate themselves from their ideas:

A decisive factor in shaping the economic policy of the cabinet is the fact that far too much power is concentrated in the hands of privy councillor Hugenburg, with the result that all urgent matters of economic and social policy will fall within his competence. The further elaboration of social policy will be based on the ideas set out by Papen. The possibility that commercial policy will be a further development of the idea of autarky cannot, at the very least, be ruled out.

To sum up: the Hugenburg tendency in economic policy will prevail. The National Socialists have not won any strategic gains in this field. However, if they want to spend their time in forming a programme, and to put the necessary thought into it, this programme will soon emancipate itself from the influence of Hugenburg. Whenever it comes to implementing such a programme, which will certainly pay more attention to the middle class than to big capitalism, differences over economic policy are bound to arise at the very heart of the new ministry.²⁰

Hugenburg's Economic Measures

One of the priorities of Hitler's government was to satisfy the demands of the agrarians whose agitation had played a key role in bringing down Schleicher. Another was to cover up the split in the dominant agrarian-industrial bloc which had ‘scandalously’ become public under Schleicher. The open split testified to the “political deficiency” of the traditional ruling caste, although Gramsci was wrong in supposing that this deficiency was “momentary”²¹. It was to deal with these priorities that the Nationalist leader Hugenburg was appointed Minister of Economics in the new cabinet responsible for both agriculture and industry. In

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.340.

²⁰ RSE, 14 February 1933, p.341. (I have consolidated five short paragraphs into two here.)

²¹ §9.136, QCII p. 1198.

February Hugenburg announced a series of measures to support agriculture which included a general increase in tariffs on imported foodstuffs, further subsidies to maintain grain prices, and a moratorium on foreclosures of bankrupt farms and estates²². The increase in protective tariffs on food was officially justified on the grounds that "internal production is more than sufficient to meet national requirements and so there is no need for imports"²³. At the same time Hugenburg announced the repeal of the commercial agreement with France concluded by Schleicher's government. According to the press reports Gramsci read:

The government's decision "to repeal with effect from 1 March next a number of the tariff arrangements with France covering a series of agricultural and industrial products" was noted not only for its commercial but also its political significance. The rider to the convention of 28 December last gave the contracting parties the right "to repeal at 14 days notice single provisions of the commercial treaties". The announcement added that "the government's intention was to avoid as far as possible any disturbance to Franco-German trade and therefore limited the repeal to cases in which it was indispensable in view of the particular situation of certain branches of the German economy"²⁴

The unilateral repeal of the French commercial agreement was the prime example of what Gramsci called "the aggravation of the nationalistic (State-nationalistic) element of the economy"²⁵.

Meanwhile, Hugenburg's measures to protect agriculture did nothing to reassure industry. The press, still to be "coordinated" by the new regime, was free to speak its mind. The organ of heavy industry, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, blamed the record fall in exports in January on Schleicher's policy of import quotas. It now appeared from the commitment to autarky that Hitler's government was even more indifferent to foreign trade than his predecessor. The paper warned against a doctrinaire approach in economic policy, citing the example of flexibility set by Mussolini in Italy.

"The figures are the lowest ever recorded; they show that at last Germany must adopt a commercial policy which enables it to maintain its place in world markets and to gain new ones. This is only possible if it offers something to its most important customers instead of adopting narrow and often inappropriate measures which make it impossible for them to do business in German markets. This does not mean flooding Germany with foreign goods: the aim must be to intensify trade with all those countries which are prepared to accept German products on good terms. Hence the principle of only allowing into the country what it does not produce itself is absolutely wrong and must disappear. Such

²² RSE, 7 March 1933, p.513.

²³ *ibid.*, p.512.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.512-513.

²⁵ §15.05, QCIII p. 1756.

a policy of isolation is not national, and Mussolini would never dream of saying that protectionism and free trade, most favoured nation and preferential systems are anything more than economic instruments which must be considered case by case in order to increase foreign trade, certainly not to reduce it".

The article went on to say that "it is incomprehensible how an increase in agricultural production at the expense of industrial production can serve the interests of agriculture. Already in January we have paid for the mistakes made by the policy of quotas. In the summer we will have to suffer the consequences of this contempt for exports, whereas we ought to be following a policy for the good of the whole economy"²⁶.

The policy of autarky announced by the new German government also caught the attention of the foreign press. A Polish paper, the *Kurjer Warszawski*, pointed out the dangers of this 'experiment', notably the pressures it created to remove the barriers to German rearmament.

"Germany is embarking on an experiment in economic self-sufficiency which will result in a sudden increase in the prices of agricultural products and livestock. To appreciate the danger of this experiment we have only to examine the German trade balance for the month of January which dropped from 391,000,000 to 23,000,000 marks. Even more noteworthy is the fact that exports have fallen particularly to those countries whose imports into the Reich are limited by tariff barriers. Besides, there is no doubt that economic autarky is not in the interests of industry which means that we must expect further experiments to satisfy the industrialists. These must consist above all in a greater exploitation of the internal market, only the situation is complicated because the purchasing power of the German citizen, who is burdened by taxes, is constantly in decline. The threat of a storm could be postponed indefinitely either by the return of a favourable conjuncture or by an immediate solution to the disarmament problem without having to wait for four years as planned."²⁷

Hitler's Anti-Communist Crusade

Whilst the German press was inclined to think that Hitler would be the prisoner of the 'traditionalists' in the new cabinet, the French press anticipated the coming dictatorship of Hitler. This prospect was not entirely unwelcome from the French standpoint. Although it disclaimed any support for *la politica del peggio* - the politics of 'so much the worse, so much the better' - the *Journal des Debats* thought that a Hitler dictatorship would at least serve to clarify to the world "the real situation in Germany"²⁸. The *Temps* was more specific and foresaw the possibility of civil war:

It would be no less disconcerting if, under the pretext of gathering together a right-wing parliamentary majority, it came to establishing a genuine Hitler dictatorship, which could not fail to provoke the liveliest reactions in Germany on the part of the christian, socialist, and communist workers organisations. A Hitler cabinet would risk adding the threat of civil war to all the other difficulties which

²⁶ RSE, 7 March 1933, p.513.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.513-514.

²⁸ RSE, 7 February, p.285.

beset Germany, and it is far from certain that such a government would have the unreserved support of the Reichswehr, which was the principal guarantee of the stability of Schleicher's cabinet.²⁹

In fact the danger of civil war was deliberately *played up* by the new regime and exploited to its advantage. Hitler immediately set about creating the necessary climate in which the 'preventive' use of force against the Communist Party would appear to be backed by popular consent. The keynote was struck by the 'manifesto' which Hitler read at the first meeting of the cabinet on 31 January and then broadcast by radio to the nation in which he conjured up the spectre of an imminent communist revolution in Germany: "Fourteen years of Marxism have ruined Germany: one year of Bolshevism will destroy her. In this hour of anxiety for the existence and future of the nation, the commander-in-chief during the World War [Hindenburg] has summoned us to fight under him to save the Reich".³⁰ The deliberate fanning of the fear of communism was combined with assurances from the new Minister of the Interior Frick that "if the Communists continued to agitate for a general strike.....the government would take the most energetic measures".³¹ The Nazi paper *Der Angriff* reported that such measures had in fact already been discussed at the first cabinet meeting on 31 January and would be implemented immediately. In fully supporting such measures, the paper stretched the credibility of its rhetoric to breaking-point: "Germany must be cleansed once and for all of the bloody beast of Moscow's foreign legion".

Meanwhile the French left-wing paper *Populaire*, in an article of 1 February, doubted whether Hitler's movement would be satisfied with half-measures against the German Left. With a clear-sighted view of the danger the German Left now faced, the paper appealed to the Communists to abandon the tactic imposed by Stalin and to join forces with the Socialists:

The question now is whether the army of Brown Shirts and the crowds which follow Hitler will stay within the limits marked out by Hugenburg and Papen with Hitler's agreement. The question is whether Hitler as Chancellor can get his troops to obey him as he did as leader of the national opposition. This is doubtful. The mass of elements demoralised by the crisis who are waiting for the creation of Hitler's 'Third Reich' to put an end to their misery will hardly be satisfied by a laudably conservative action on the part of their leader. It is probable that sooner or later Hitler will either come into conflict with his troops or be forced to follow the movement and give his government the character of a real fascist revolution.

²⁹ RSE, 7 February, p.286.

³⁰ RSE, 7 February, p. 291.

³¹ Ibid, p.290.

Right from the start his situation was full of contradictions. Will he not be driven into seeking a restoration of the Hohenzollerns in order to consolidate his government, especially as his partners are all monarchists? Meanwhile, the German proletariat is in a terrible situation. The only means left to it to resist the capitalist and fascist reaction is to bring about the unity of the workers. But for this the support of the communists is necessary. Is there any hope of a change of attitude on their part? Will they understand the necessity of abandoning the method of divisive and fratricidal struggle? To achieve this it would be necessary to shake off the tutelage of Stalin.³²

On 10 February Hitler opened the election campaign with a speech at the Berlin Sportpalast declaring war on 'Marxism' in Germany, by which he meant both the Socialists and the Communists.³³ At the same time he summoned the editors of the German press and told them that "within ten years Marxism will not exist in the Reich".³⁴ As Minister of the Interior for Prussia, Goring was making full use of his new police powers to deal preventively with the alleged threat from the Left. The police were instructed by circular not to hesitate to use their firearms against "subversive elements". On 24 February he issued a decree creating an auxiliary police force recruited from the para-military Storm Troops and Steel Helmets, "to assist the regular forces which have long been considered insufficient for the task"³⁵. Hitler's government was therefore well positioned by the actions of Goring and Frick to take full advantage of the Reichstag Fire on the 27-28 February to strike against the German Left. The 'war' against Marxism in Germany would take nearer to ten days than ten years.

The Reichstag Fire and the Nazi Terror

The first news of the burning of the Reichstag was carried in the issue of the *Rassegna settimanale* of 7 March:

On the evening of the 27 February, apparently with the complicity of some Communist deputies, subversive elements succeeded in setting fire at a various points to the Reichstag palace. Despite the prompt intervention of the fire services, the flames destroyed the inside of the building almost completely.

In official circles the fire was described as the most frightful act of terrorism ever committed in Germany by the bolsheviks. Thanks to the prompt and efficient work of the police in searching the predominantly communist quarter known as 'Liebknecht House', convincing proof was found of a far-reaching attempt at insurrection against the legal authorities, the start of which would be signalled by the destruction of the Reichstag and other public buildings.

On 28 February the President, Marshall Hindenburg, signed a decree intended to deal with the communist danger which temporarily abrogated certain articles of the Constitution. The mass arrests in

³² RSE, 14 February, p.344-345.

³³ RSE, 14 February 1933 p.410.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 409.

³⁵ RSE, 7 March p.508.

Berlin, Prussia, and the rest of Germany bear witness to the Government's resolve to enforce the law and to confront every eventuality.

The event itself, and even more the projected red revolution, made a big impression not only in the press but also on public opinion which unanimously supported and universally approved the energetic measures of repression taken by the government. ³⁶

Goring's ruthless police action (which aimed in the first instance to destroy the left-wing press) was 'counter-balanced' by Goebbels' intimidation of the press whose editors were warned that they were no longer free to criticise the government. They therefore had little choice but to report the official line that the Reichstag Fire was an act of "communist terror". However, the foreign press was largely beyond the reach of such intimidation and free to analyse the event more objectively. The reaction of the French press, which immediately speculated that the Fire may have been the work of *agents provocateurs* working for the government, proved particularly irksome. The right-wing *Action Francaise* wasted no time in speculating about the likely perpetrators:

It is not important to know whether the Reichstag was set on fire by the terrorists of the Third International or by all too efficient agents provocateurs of the Hitler government. If this fire had fallen from heaven, the effect would have been the same. It has given Hitler the opportunity to place Marxism beyond the law. The struggle against Marxism is his *raison d'etre*: without Communism and Social Democracy there would be no National Socialist movement.

The burning of the Reichstag has provided Hitler with the classic pretext for repression. The Constitution is suspended prior to being abrogated. The guarantees of individual liberty have been abolished, so the bad tremble and the good rest assured. It is the familiar prelude to the creation of all authoritarian regimes. This was Hitler's sole aim: he had no other significance nor could he do anything else. And Germany has made no mistake ³⁷

The *Temps* invited its readers to regard the claims to have discovered documentary proof of preparation for a revolutionary coup d'etat with "great reserve", especially as these claims were obviously designed to produce a reaction on the part of the masses in favour of the governing right-wing parties on the eve of the election. It also observed that actions taken in the name of suppressing the Communists were, in fact, directed equally against the Social Democrats and all the opposition parties. Hitler was obviously intent on creating a dictatorship by copying - though not very subtly - the example of Mussolini.

Hitler's racist movement proceeds from the same principles and by the same methods as Italian Fascism. The fuhrer has invented nothing. He is content to copy Mussolini, taking the model of Fascism and adapting it to the German temperament. Whereas the Duce after the March on Rome

³⁶ RSE, 7 March p.511.

³⁷ RSE, 14 March p.564.

combined subtlety with boldness, the fuhrer believes that all he needs is Prussian brutality. The National Socialists aim to reduce their enemies to silence, to crush them with violence, to impose themselves as absolute masters of the State, to govern by and for their party. ³⁸

Not surprisingly for a fascist publication, the reports in the *Rassegna settimanale* contained no details of the sordid and frightful brutalities perpetrated by the Storm Troops at this moment, although the imaginative reference in the *Echo de Paris* to Germany's "permanent night of St.Bartholomew" was sufficiently close to reality to provoke an official denial by the Wolff Bureau, the German press agency, on 2 March: "The foreign press has published news claiming that a night of St. Bartholomew has been organised for the end of this week . It also claims that members of the National Socialist assault sections and other extremist elements intend to massacre the communist, marxist, and Israelite leaders. The news has already been described by various correspondents of foreign newspapers as absurd".³⁹ In fact, the violence of the Storm Troops was so indiscriminate (as *Temps* had alleged) that on 10 March Hitler issued a manifesto which called upon them to exercise 'discipline' by concentrating on the main task - "the annihilation of Marxism".⁴⁰ In a radio broadcast two days later Hitler called off the bloodhounds altogether.

As your leader, and in the name of the government of the national revolution, I exhort you to uphold the honour as well as the dignity of the new regime to ensure that these go down in history. From today, when all the executive power passes finally into the hands of the new national Germany both in fact and symbolically, the second phase of our struggle begins. From today onwards, the task of purifying and reordering the Reich will be conducted from above, according to a definite plan: from today onwards I order you to observe the strictest discipline. All isolated action must stop absolutely immediately. ⁴¹

The Reichstag Election, 5 March

The Nazis continued to mix terror with propaganda right up to the eve of the election. Their campaign came to a climax on 2 March when Hitler gave another speech at the Berlin Sportpalast on "the world danger of Bolshevism" which was greeted with hysterical applause. He concluded by reminding his audience of his 'prediction' fourteen years before that the Marxist programme would fail: "by

³⁸ Ibid., p.564

³⁹ RSE, 14 March 1933, p.566.

⁴⁰ The manifesto was reported in RSE, 28 March p.699. The same issue carried a report of Frick's speech to a rally of Brown Shirts at Frankfurt on 15 March that the Communists would be put to work in "concentration camps".

⁴¹ RSE, 28 March 1933, p.700.

starting from the class struggle as its chosen method of political action, this programme served only to weaken the nation, to the detriment of all its members whether workers or not".⁴²

The first news of the election results - the percentages of the popular vote gained by the major parties - were reported in the *Rassegna settimanale* of the 7 March followed by further details of the distribution of seats in the next issue.

In the new Reichstag the National Socialists will have 288 seats compared to 196 in the previous Reichstag, the 'red-white-black fighting front' [ie, the Nationalists and Steel Helmets] will have 52 seats against the previous 51, the Centre 71 against 70, the Bavarian Populists 20 against 20, the Social Democrats 120 against the previous 120, the Communists 79 against the previous 100.⁴³

The extensive reports in the *Rassegna settimanale* of the foreign press reaction to the German election results included on this occasion a brief resume of Moscow's initial response as set out in *Pravda* and *Isvestiya*. Not surprisingly these were presented in a tone which questioned their credibility, but on this occasion the scepticism was justified. For whilst the relatively modest losses of the German Communists hardly added up to the 'annihilation' promised by Hitler, neither did they amount to a 'victory' as the Soviet press claimed.

The Soviet press in its usual preconceived way tried to minimise and even deny the Hitlerite victory. In fact, *Pravda* considered the results of the elections in Germany as a great political victory for the German Communist Party. After speaking of 'provocations, repressions, arrests etc' the paper came to the conclusion that 'German fascism has mobilised all its forces for a frontal attack on the German proletariat. But this attack has been repulsed. The results of the electoral struggle, in which all the advantages were on the side of the class enemies of the proletariat and on the side of reaction, prove that the German Communist Party has held all the positions conquered in recent years (?). The greater number of votes obtained by the National Socialists can be partly explained by the increase in the number of voters going to the polls.

In an article published in *Isvestia* Radek even thought that the election results were like 'the German fascists' defeat of the Marne. Just as in 1914 when the imperialist German army decided that in order to achieve the lightning destruction of France it would go through Belgium, which therefore worsened Germany's international situation, today Fascism has decided to take measures to destroy the German working class whose only effect has been to worsen its international situation. ⁴⁴

Although the popular vote of the German Communists held up remarkably well under conditions of terror, the fact remained that the party's cadres had been

⁴² RSE, 14 March 1933, p.566-567.

⁴³ RSE 7 March p.512, 14 March 1933, p.567. The results were also reported under the rubric *Cronaca Politica* in NA, 16 March 1933; under the rubric *Cose Straniere* in CC, 18 March 1933; and in the otherwise worthless article by Werner von Schulenberg: 'Socialismo e Comunismo in Germania', GER, March 1933.

⁴⁴ RSE, 14 March 1933, p.573.

effectively destroyed. Who was responsible for this disaster? As long as Moscow talked of 'victory' there could be no question of examining its responsibility for the defeat. The most immediate question, however, arose from Moscow's suggestion that the Nazi repression of the German Communist Party would worsen the "international situation". It was far from clear what this meant, but Hitler was keen to emphasise to Stalin that there was no reason why the destruction of the German Communist Party should have any effect on either German or Soviet *raisons d'état*. On the contrary, now that there was no Communist Party in Germany "to play the foreigner's game", whether the foreigner be Paris or Moscow, relations between Germany and Soviet Russia could only improve. This point was already circulating in the German press: "Still with regard to the repercussions of the elections abroad, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote that 'the distancing between Berlin and Moscow which counts for so much in Paris will not happen because as long as the eastern questions have not been regulated no German government can abandon collaboration with Moscow. The struggle of annihilation against Communism can only be to the advantage of these relations'.⁴⁵ The same point was emphasised by Hitler in his speech at the ceremonial opening of the new Reichstag on 23 March, when the newly reelected Communist deputies were conspicuous by their absence. There was no reason why the destruction of German Communism should lead to a worsening of relations with Moscow, still less to Soviet intervention in some form or another:

As regards Soviet Russia he [Hitler] predicted that 'friendly mutual relations should be of benefit to them both'. As far as the anti-communist struggle is concerned, he said that 'this is an absolutely internal question in which Germany will not accept any interference on the part of anyone'.⁴⁶

Potsdam Day, 21 March

On 21 March the opening of the new Reichstag was staged with solemn ritual at the Garrison Church in Potsdam, the burial place of Frederick the Great. The site was specially chosen by Hitler and bore testimony to his instinct for historical myth-making and for the emotional impact of such myths on the public mind. A full report of the event was carried in the *Rassegna settimanale* including the texts of President Hindenburg's message to the German people and of Hitler's speech:

⁴⁵ RSE, 14 March p.570.

⁴⁶ RSE, 11 April p.808.

'Fortunately, as the country moved towards the precipice, a group of men decided to oppose this ruinous drift; out of this group arose the movement whose task it was to promote the rebirth of the new Germany and on the 30 January 1933 you, Herr Marshal, generously saw fit to entrust the country's destinies to this new Germany. Fully convinced that the German people must also express its support for the new order, we, as representatives of the national government, addressed the final appeal to the Nation. The people replied on 5 March, the great majority giving us their support. In an awakening unique of its kind, the people have rejuvenated the national honour in a matter of weeks and thanks to its profound intuition, Herr President, has brought about the marriage between the symbol of the old greatness and of the new energies'.....

In conclusion Hitler stated that 'through the will of divine Providence, the national awakening has happened under the auspices of Hindenburg, the national hero, whose life is the symbol of the indestructible energy of the German nation'.

After Hitler's speech was finished, the Marshall President descended into the crypt below to place a crown in the Prussian colours on the tomb of Frederick the Great. Outside once more, Hindenburg reviewed the march-past of the troops and the national storm troopers ⁴⁷

The context and significance of this event is perceptively analysed by Ian Kershaw who notes particularly the symbolic interplay between Hitler and Hindenburg:

The stage-management of the 'Day of Potsdam' succeeded brilliantly in exploiting the authority and charisma of the revered Reich President in the interests of the new Nazi rulers. Especially during the first months of the regime, the mutual respect and admiration of Chancellor and Reich President were constantly emphasised. Already during the election campaign the NSDAP had produced posters showing the venerable Reich President and the 'youthful', dynamic Chancellor standing together beneath the slogan: 'The Marshal and the Corporal: Fight with Us for Peace and Equal Rights'.

The intended association of old and new, of the traditional authority of Hindenburg with the plebiscitary mandate of Hitler, was obvious. Such propaganda doubtless helped in transposing to Hitler some of the trust in Hindenburg as the embodiment of German national values. Hitler's exaggeratedly humble obeisance before the aged Field Marshal and his 'blessing' of the 'new Germany' embodied by the Chancellor in the Potsdam Garrison Church above the tomb of Frederick the Great, given massive coverage in press and newsreel, was in this respect a masterpiece of suggestive propaganda. But although Hindenburg continued to be incorporated into Nazi imagery until his death in 1934, there could be no doubt that the intended hero of the image-builders was not the old Reich President, who for more than seven years had represented the hated Republic, but the 'People's Chancellor', Hitler, whose star was clearly in the ascendant. And following the promulgation of the Enabling Act on 24 March 1933, his dominance as Chancellor, now no longer reliant on the President's 'emergency decree' powers, was also institutionally secured. ⁴⁸

Revolution or Restoration?

As Gramsci was recovering from the paralysis which struck him on 7 March, the reviews for April 1933 arrived. They were dominated by articles on the so-called "national revolution" in Germany now being speedily carried through by Hitler and the Nazis. But what kind of 'revolution' was it which freely appropriated the

⁴⁷ RSE, 11 April p.806-808. See also the report in CC, 1 April 1933, and the article by Giuseppe Piazza: 'Primo Tempo Nazionalsocialista in Germania' in NA, 1 April 1933. [The Potsdam ceremony was also reported in POL, February-April, not published until August].

⁴⁸ Ian Kershaw: *The Hitler 'Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1989) p.55-56.

'revolutionary' rhetoric of Marxism whilst ruthlessly destroying the Marxist parties? The fascist reviews passed over the Nazi terror let loose on the night of the Reichstag Fire without reporting the brutal details, but the chilling finality of the commentaries left no doubt about the fate of the German Left.

The effective disappearance of the forces of the Marxist Left is not contradicted or attenuated by the fact that the elections of 5 March were still very far from giving anything like total power to the forces of the national Right, which achieved little more than the bare majority strictly needed to govern. Even if the election results of 5 March still show that seven million votes were cast for the Social Democrats and over four million for the Communists, it remains no less true that the bare majority achieved by the nationalists is effectively and irresistibly a totalitarian majority which puts a definitive end to a period of history. It is neither possible nor imaginable to turn back. We can be calm and confident in the knowledge that both Communism and Social Democracy, even if they have still not materially died out or disappeared, have no further possibility of life in Germany; they have been cut out of the life of the country and are destined to perish or quickly wither away in the new national climate where they cannot possibly draw breath. 49

Again, what kind of 'revolution' was it which associated itself so closely with the past and claimed to be restoring the spirit enshrined at Potsdam? The chief intermediary between the Italian and German movements, Giuseppe Renzetti, passed the night of 30 January 1933 in the circle of the new chancellor. His commentary faithfully projected the 'historic' image of Hitler which Nazi propaganda promoted with particular intensity at this moment:

During the night a flood of people made up of militants of the Brown Shirts and of the Steel Helmets in grey filed for six hours without interruption below the windows of the two adjacent palaces on the Wilhelmstrasse where the old Field Marshall, head of the royal and imperial armed forces, the victor of Tannenberg, and the young Chancellor of the people, the wounded and decorated corporal, the leader of the revolution, stood. They were saluting in both men not only the interpreters and actors of an inevitable and inexorable German historical necessity, but also the new Germany which wants to renew itself by means of a new idea linked to the noble traditions of Germany. Hindenburg and Hitler - two sides (as we have written in past) of a single face, finally reconciled on that memorable night - renewed the promise to their people to guide and lead it towards the high destinies to which it rightly aspires.⁵⁰

The political interest of fascist commentators centred on the question of how relations between the coalition partners, the Nazis and the Nationalists, would develop. *Gerarchia* kept its options open by voicing the positions of both the radicals and conservatives: while Renzetti observed that Hitler's partners would "retard the forward march of the revolution", Schulenburg wanted to strengthen the relations between the 'left-wing' and the 'right-wing' tendencies by "reinforcing the

49 Giuseppe Piazza: 'Primo Tempo Nazionalsocialista in Germania', NA, 1 April 1933, p. 375.

50 Giuseppe Renzetti: 'La Rivoluzione Nazionale in Germania', GER, April 1933, p.281.

right".⁵¹ Schulenberg associated the 'revolutionary' tendency of the Nazis with their fanaticism in the Jewish question, but he thought he detected the first signs of restraint: they had begun to distinguish between Jewish immigrants from the East, the "wandering Jews" who were linked with the Communists, and German Jews who were "bourgeois and conservative". There was no truth in the stories of atrocities against the Jews. Like the atrocity propaganda of the First World War, they were pure inventions designed to blacken Germany's reputation abroad.

In *Nuova Antologia* Giuseppe Piazza saw the national coalition in terms of the dialectic 'revolution-restoration'. For Piazza the 'revolutionary' character of the Nazis was bound up with the "socialist" side of their programme. This contained "the specifically fascist concept" of overcoming the Marxist class struggle, but this could not be achieved until the Nazis had absorbed the Nationalists who clung to the class consciousness of the past.

Now this populism of the National Socialists, which is rooted in the social or "socialist" programme which is alluded to in the second part of their name, ie, the specifically fascist conception of overcoming the class struggle, is what divides them from their partners in government, the German Nationals, who have no social conception except the negative one, which still belongs to Manchester economics; that is, they refuse purely and simply to recognise the class struggle and thus assume that they have overcome it, but this very negation puts them right back into the historical climate of class in exactly the same way as their marxist opponents, although from the other side. In this respect, the whole dialectical interest of the work of reconstruction which is under way today is rooted in the political composition of the government in this first phase of the new regime, ie, in the fortunes of the present coalition or union of the two national parties in government, the National Socialists and the German Nationals. There is no doubt that the union is very solid and based on serious, well-founded reasons, but it cannot and must not be confused with fusion; we are not only authorised but also obliged to affirm the clear distinction between the two partners and the separate character which they inevitably presented to the voter in the recent struggle for electoral legitimacy even though they were already partners in government. For those like us who have never doubted for a moment the certainty that National Socialism would come to power in Germany, as part of the unstoppable drive to renew the civilisation of the European state which was started by Fascism in Italy, even when others thought it was irredeemably lost in the byways of legality or in the bog of parliamentarism: we affirm this without fear of raising doubts about the advent to power of the coalition or about the goodwill and legitimacy on which the union between the two is based. On the contrary, we argue, as we have always argued, that the necessary condition for the work of renewal of National Socialism is the complete fusion, in Italian style, with the old Nationalism of the German Nationals, a fusion which we believe is in progress and virtually a fact in the present governing alliance which, it should be noted, far from being an old-style coalition based on compromises over programmes, is based in the 'first hour' on establishing the priorities of the whole programme. ⁵²

⁵¹ Werner von der Schulenburg: 'La Rivoluzione Tedesca', GER, April 1933, p. 287-288.

⁵² Giuseppe Piazza, cit., p. 378.

The advent to power of the Nazis meant the admission of a "new political class into the structures of the State" but whether this was the start of a revolution (ie, the creation of a really new State) or a restoration remained to be seen.

Meanwhile, the union has served above all to introduce the new political class into the structures of the State, to strengthening the basis of an administration which has been purified and corrected in certain institutions, which is necessary for the long-term work to be completed in the future; and lastly, in contact with the agrarianism of the German-Nationals, to the ruralisation of National Socialism which is essential to the equilibrium of the programme of economic and social reconstruction. This last point is extremely important and fundamental since it is perhaps the principal justification for the presence in government of the German Nationals (not to speak of the legitimate presence of the fighting-front of the Steel Helmets which speaks for itself) or of their influence which is so disproportionate to their modest numerical strength.

National Socialism's work of reconstruction of the State in Germany is enormously helped by the fact that there already exists an ancient tradition of the State consolidated over the centuries which is part of the political and moral consciousness of the Nation. If the republican scenario of Weimar, which was in truth quite artificial, has suddenly crumbled and collapsed, the scenario of Potsdam now comes to the fore resonating at every step with the echoes of former greatness and glory, from those of Frederick to those of Bismarck.....This is the recurring value of the symbol of Potsdam for the first majority assembly of the national renewal and this, in the last analysis, is the profound inspiration behind the presence and influence in the government, out of all proportion to its number, of the German-National phalanx, which represents still intact and unchanged the old 'class State' which sustained the Empire until the last moment. Italian Fascism did not have the inestimable advantage of having an ancient, tried-and-tested State tradition at its disposal; in overthrowing the liberal State it overthrew whatever State tradition existed in Italy and had to create the State *ex-novo*, relying solely on the inventive genius of the race. Having overthrown the liberal-social democratic State, the National Socialist Revolution had instead the benefit of the old State tradition in Germany which it came face to face with and could embrace. But just as the maximum advantage is always paid for in life by the greatest of risks, the revolutionary will risks competing with the ambition to restoration and remaining in certain points, perhaps in many points, impaired and reduced in strength and eventually diverted or falsified. For this reason we said at the start that the whole interest of the present situation rests on the internal dialectical fortunes of the two partners in the governing coalition; and we believe that the degree of success of the German revolution will depend on the extent to which it can create, still on the basis of the native tradition, a really new State, ie, on the point on the scale at which it fixes the correlation between Revolution and Restoration. ⁵³

In *Gerarchia* Vittorio Profuni, referring to the mood of "messianic expectation" prevailing in Germany, sought to explain the meaning of the 'Third Reich' according to its several theorists.

The doctrine is formulated quite simply. Returning to the glories of the Germanic past, to its virtuous traditions, the theorists justify the name 'Third Reich' from a historical point of view. The first Reich was in fact the most glorious Holy Roman Empire, a manifestly feudal institution which dominated the world in its time; the second was the Prussian empire of Frederick the Great, the founder of modern German power, which was the archetypal or model empire whose last representatives were the Hohenzollerns. And the Third Reich? This is to be inaugurated very shortly.⁵⁴

⁵³ *ibid.*, p.378, 382

⁵⁴ Vittorio Profuni: 'Il Terzo Regno', GER, April 1933, p. 290.

Profumi could make little sense of the 'Third Reich' as a political, social or economic 'system': on this level it did not stand up to critical analysis. It was essentially a mystical aspiration, a utopia founded on the myth of Nordic blood - the myth of the twentieth century according to Rosenberg. The utopia was more reactionary than revolutionary in character - a violent reaction against everything foreign and everything modern in the world of politics, "a totalitarian return to tradition" as he called it. As for its alleged affinity to Fascism, "nothing could be more wrong. The fascist revolution was different....".⁵⁵ Fascism was not based on rigid doctrinal schemes and precise theoretical formulae; it was more pragmatic and born out of everyday experience. The Fascist regime respected tradition, especially that of imperial Rome, but abounded in the newest inventions and had never lost itself in nostalgic longing for the past. Profumi warned that the super-nationalism behind the idea of the Third Reich could lead to great harm, including for Italy. "A supernationalism supported by the myth of Nordic blood ought to lead logically, and as an inevitable consequence, in an anti-Roman direction. With their Third Reich the Teutons have to dominate the world".⁵⁶

It was left to Sergio Panunzio to voice the predominantly triumphalist view of the German events which showed the primacy and universality of Italy's own fascist revolution.

When one then reflects on what is happening at this moment in Germany, for which the political experience of the fascist regime serves as a model and a firm point of reference, the picture is complete. Every Italian can feel proud of our country, the 'morning' nation of Europe as Bertrand Spaventa elegantly called it, which has been the precursor of all ideas and all institutions ever since the Renaissance. Until October 1922 it was a slave to foreign imitation, the unsuccessful imitator of the political institutions of England, France, and Belgium: today it provides anxious and confused peoples with the fully-fledged example and the paradigm of the new institutions and the new political regime.⁵⁷

For Panunzio the German revolution provided further proof that the "end of parliamentarism" was a universal phenomenon. The first signs of constitutional transformation could be detected even in republican France where the supporters of parliamentary government were thoroughly demoralised. Judging from "the

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p.294.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.297.

⁵⁷ Sergio Panunzio: 'La Fine del Parlamentarismo e l'Accentramento delle Responsabilita', GER, April 1933, p.300.

melancholic, desperate, and tearful devotees and believers in parliamentary institutions, France can hardly be said to represent the exception to the rule: the conclusion must be that the rule is truly universal and without exceptions of any sort". 58

From the Enabling Act to the Suppression of Parties
(March-July 1933)

The *Rassegna settimanale* and other periodicals continued to carry reports and articles on political developments in Germany in the first half of 1933, including the passing of the Enabling Act in March 59, the boycott of the Jews in April 60, the suppression of trade unions in May 61, the public burning of books in Berlin 62, the resignation of Hugenburg 63, the decree suppressing political parties in July 64, including the Nationalist and Centre parties, and the Concordat with the Vatican the same month. 65 A discursive article on "the new revolutionary generation in Germany" in the issue of *Critica Fascista* for 1 July 1933 66, which was probably the source of §15.66, indicates that Gramsci did not lose interest in German affairs, but the movement of events was so fast that it was difficult to follow the thread. The interruption to his reviews did not help: Gramsci received no reviews for August 1933 and the missing issues did not arrive until September. 67 There was a further interruption in October pending his transfer from Turi in November. 68 Consequently after the passing of the Enabling Act in March there is little trace of German events in Gramsci's notes of 1933. In §13.37 (written in the autumn or winter of 1933) he refers to "the defeat of Hugenburg in Germany" as though it was a *forecast* when it

58 *ibid.*, p.305.

59 RSE, 11 April 1933; under the rubric *Cose Straniere* in CC, 1 April 1933

60 RSE, 11 April 1933.

61 RSE, 23 May 1933

62 Mario da Silva: 'Lettera della Germania: Il Rogo di Piazza dell'Opera', CF, 1 July 1933.

63 RSE, 18 July 1933; the rubric *Cose Straniere* in CC, 15 July 1933

64 RSE, 18 July 1933.

65 Raffaele Iacuzio: 'Il Concordato fra la Santa Sede ed il Reich Germanico', GER, August 1933. See also RSE, 24 August 1933; the rubric *Politica Estera*: 'Il Concordato fra il Reich e la Santa Sede', EF, August-September 1933; the rubric *Cose Straniere* in CC, 5 August 1933.

66 Gustav Glaesser: 'La nuova generazione rivoluzionaria tedesca', CF, 1 July 1933.

67 Letter to Tatiana, 3 September 1933, LCII p.743.

68 Letter to Tatiana, 12 November 1933, LCII p. 754-755.

was already an accomplished fact. This important development was reported in the reviews, but Gramsci may have missed it. This supposition is supported by his silence in the notes of 1933 about another important development: the Reich Concordat signed in July. The first reference to it is in §16.11 which was written in 1934. It seems that it was not until Gramsci resumed his studies at Formia in the early months of 1934 that he caught up with the thread of German events which he had temporarily lost track of in the summer of 1933.

§14.04, §14.27, §14.30. The Racist Origins of the 'Superman'

In the early months of 1932 (at the time of the presidential elections in Germany) Gramsci asked: "Do we have to accept as 'revolutionary' all those movements which try to dignify and to justify themselves by calling themselves 'revolutions'?", and went on to observe: "The fact that so many Nietzscheans masquerading as rebels against existing reality and social conventions etc have ended up stomaching them, and have thus emptied certain attitudes of any serious content, is perfectly true, but this is no reason to allow one's judgement to be guided by charlatans of this sort".¹ The year 1932 was the tenth anniversary of the Fascist "revolution". Gramsci suggests that in spite of the Nietzschean postures struck by Mussolini, which were more theatrical than anything else, the past ten years had proved that the Fascists were far from being rebels against existing social conventions. The Concordat with the Catholic Church in 1929, for example, revealed how conventional these would-be Nietzscheans really were. It was a timely observation in view of the rise of a new Nietzschean 'superman' in Germany and a concrete way of putting the similar 'revolutionary' claims of the Nazis into some kind of perspective.

At the turn of 1932-33 Gramsci began a series of notes on the popular origins of the 'superman'² which questioned the fascist claims to Nietzsche. His argument was that admirers of the 'superman' were influenced more by the heroes of French serial novels than by the study of *Zarathustra*.

Every time we come upon some admirer of Nietzsche, it is worth trying to find out if his 'superman' ideas, against conventional morality etc etc, are of genuine Nietzschean origin. In other words, are they the result of a process of thought located in the sphere of 'high culture' or do they have much more modest origins? Are they connected, for example, to serial literature? (But was Nietzsche himself entirely uninfluenced by French serial novels? It should be remembered that this literature, now relegated to the caretakers and the servants' quarters, was once very popular among the intellectuals, at least until 1870, just as the 'thriller' is today). In any case, it seems possible to say that much of the would-be Nietzschean 'supermanism' has its source and 'doctrinal' model only in.....*The Count of MonteCristo* by A.Dumas. In Dumas, as far as I can see, the Montecristo type was represented in more ways than one: it can be seen in Athos in *The Three Musketeers*, for example, and in *Joseph Balsamo*, although it could possibly be

¹ §8.210. *History and Anti-History*, QCII p.1068.

² §14.04. *Popular Literature*, QCIII p.1657-1659; §14.27. *Popular Literature. Popular (popolaresche) Origins of the 'Superman'*, QCIII p.1685; §14.30. *Popular Literature. Popular Origins of the Superman*, QCIII p.1688.

found in other novels as well.³

Apart from their immediate polemical intent, the 'superman' notes were an exploration of the cultural matrix of petty-bourgeois psychology, particularly that of the 'petty intellectuals' attracted to fascism.⁴ Gramsci makes this clear in the second draft written a year later in early 1934:

(The petty bourgeoisie and the petty intellectuals are particularly influenced by such novelistic images, which are their 'opium', their 'artificial paradise', in contrast to the narrowness and pinched circumstances of their immediate life). From this comes the popularity of certain sayings like 'It is better to live one day as a lion than a hundred years as a sheep', particularly successful among those who are really and irremediably sheep. How many of these 'sheep' say: Oh! If only I had power even just for one day, etc; the desire to be an implacable 'executioner' is the aspiration of someone who feels the influence of Monte-Cristo.⁵

One of Gramsci's sources for these notes was an article by the French journalist Louis Gillet⁶ recounting in 'romantic' language worthy of *The Count of Monte Cristo* his first meeting with the 'superman' Mussolini: Gramsci recommended it for studying "the relation between late romanticism and some aspects of modern life".⁷ However, by "some aspects of modern life" he did not simply mean the personality cult of Mussolini for another 'superman' had now come to power who cast the same kind of 'romantic' spell. In his new year message to the Brown Shirts for 1933 Hitler evoked what had been done to save 'European civilisation' by one providential man, Mussolini.

Passing to the predictions for 1933, Hitler affirmed that the decadence of Germany's political and cultural values runs parallel to its economic ruin. The collapse will come; it is only a question of time. 'The terrible consequences for European civilisation of the chaos and regression which will follow were foreseen and confronted by only one people in Europe. Thanks to one of those exceptional men in the history of the world, to whom whole generations are linked by a duty of gratitude, the Italian

³ §14.04, cit., p.1657.

⁴ Gramsci had explored this theme before, notably in an article of 1924 on the influence of the French novel in shaping "the romantic side of the fascist movement, of fascists like Mario Gioda, Massimo Rocca, Curzio Suckert [Malaparte], Roberto Farinacci etc, etc: an unbalanced imagination, a quivering of heroic fury, a psychological restlessness which have no intellectual content other than the sentiments found in the serial novel of French romanticism around 1848.....The historical conjuncture has allowed these romantics to become a 'ruling class' and has turned the whole of Italy into a serial novel (CPC, p.369 and SCW p.346 note). The new element in the prison notes was the 'German' Nietzsche. With the expansion of German fascism, Italian fascists increasingly claimed Nietzsche as a source of 'revolutionary' inspiration.

⁵ §16.13. *Popular Origin of the 'Superman'*, QCIII p.1880. A translation of the second draft can be found in SCW p.355-359.

⁶ Reported in RSE, 15 December 1932. See Professor Gerratana's note to §14.30 in QCIV p.2928-2929.

⁷ §14.30, QCIII p.1688.

people found in Fascism the ideal which dominates it and reshapes its whole life'.⁸

Hitler cast himself in the role of the German 'superman' in the mirror image of Mussolini, and in the image of the 'superman' the Brown Shirts saw dimly reflected the image of themselves. Gramsci perceived that the Brown Shirts saw themselves as an "an association of supermen" (§14.18). For 'scientific' purposes he compared them to the "active minority" of Italy's Risorgimento, Garibaldi's Red Shirts, only to conclude that the popular-national 'spirit' of the Red Shirts was qualitatively different from the 'spirit' of the brown-shirted superman.⁹ The day of the German 'supermen' was now at hand. The Brown Shirts' fantasy of 'having power for just one day', their longing to be 'implacable executioners', was about to become a reality.

The German origin of these 'superman' notes is confirmed by a further line of inquiry suggested in §14.27, but the cultural matrix to be investigated in this case had an entirely different 'romantic' flavour.

For the Nietzschean 'superman', apart from the romantic influence of Stendhal (and of the cult of Napoleon I generally), it is necessary to examine the racist tendencies which culminated in Gobineau and thence in Chamberlain and in Pan-Germanism (Treitschke and the theories of power).¹⁰

Gramsci was surprisingly accurate in suggesting that the French novel, especially Stendhal, was a significant influence on Nietzsche. However, Nietzsche's 'superman' was not a racist concept in spite of his friendship with Wagner. If the concept had any *political* significance at all, which is questionable, it might be more accurate to describe it as 'Bonapartist' (or 'Caesarist') rather than racist and to relate it to Nietzsche's worship of heroes (including Caesar) which he shared with Wagner. In this sense, Gramsci's 'superman' notes were linked with the notes

⁸ Reported under the rubric *Germania* in RSE, 17 January 1933, p.121.

⁹ However Gramsci distinguished two forms of 'Garibaldism' at this point depending on the relation between the active minority and the masses. Thus in §14.18. *Machiavelli. Volunteerism and Garibaldism*, he writes: "A distinction must be made: on the one hand there is volunteerism or Garibaldism which theorises itself as an organic form of historical-political activity and *exalts itself by phrases which are nothing more than a transposition of the language of the individual superman to an association of 'supermen' (exaltation of the active minorities as such etc)*: on the other hand there is the volunteerism or Garibaldism conceived as the initial moment of an organic period to be prepared and developed in which the organic whole, as a historical bloc, fully participates. The 'vanguards' without supporting army, the 'shock troops' without infantry and artillery, are themselves transpositions of the language of rhetorical heroism: this is not true of the vanguards and shock troops as specialised functions of complex and regular organisms. The same applies to the elites of intellectuals without masses but not of the intellectuals who feel organically linked with the national-popular masses". QCIII p.1675-1676. My italics.

¹⁰ §14.27 cit., p.1685.

on Caesarism which he was writing at the same time (see §14.23 below). However, it is likely that the inquiry into the relation between the Nietzschean 'superman' and the racist tendencies was immediately suggested to Gramsci by the coming to power of Hitler and the Nazis in January 1933. Although neither Hitler nor Rosenberg made much of Nietzsche's ideas, the fact remains that "the will to power", the "superman", "masters and slaves" etc were readily vulgarised by the petty intellectuals of the Nazi movement who thus spared themselves the need to read Nietzsche himself.¹¹ The key 'moment' in the Nazi vulgarisation of the 'superman' was precisely its assimilation to the "racist tendencies" (Gobineau, Chamberlain, etc) from which the Nazi movement more recognisably drew inspiration. This was a relatively simple task since the 'aristocratic' Nietzsche's aversion to Wagner's anti-semitism seemed to be based on little more than its 'vulgarity'.

Whilst the racist tendencies mentioned by Gramsci could properly be described as a current of late romanticism, the interesting point is that they did not find expression in popular novels. Gramsci recognised this in the later draft of this note in which he suggested that racist thought was "feudal in origin", whereas the French serial novel was essentially a "democratic" cultural form: "But perhaps the popular 'superman' of Dumas should really be considered as a 'democratic' reaction to the concept of racism which is feudal in origin, and should be put alongside the glorification of 'Gallicism' in the novels of Eugene Sue".¹² Gramsci's suggestion invites inquiry into the dissemination of these racist (ie, superman-'Aryan') tendencies among the petty intellectuals attracted to Nazism. How did they come to captivate and shape the Nazi "imagination"? As we will see, in later notes on 'Lorianism' Gramsci recognises the role of racial 'science' in preparing the cultural climate for Nazism (see §28.01 below), but the question posed by these 'superman' notes has more to do with the racial "imagination". In this connection, it is interesting to note that in Gramsci's conception the predominant 'language' of a

¹¹ Elizabeth Nietzsche had the *Nietzsche-Archiv* sent to Mussolini on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday in 1933 with the telegram: "To the noblest disciple of Zarathustra, whom Nietzsche had dreamed of, the inspired reawakener of aristocratic values in Nietzsche's sense, the *Nietzsche-Archiv* sends in deepest respect and admiration the warmest good wishes". The Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche is analysed in Steven E. Aschheim: *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990* (Berkeley, 1992)

¹² §16.13. *Popular Origin of the 'Superman'*, QCIII p.1881-1882 [Translated in SCW p. 358].

national culture may be musical rather than literary and that the dissemination of 'romantic' conceptions of life may owe more to the opera than to the novel. This conception of cultural language could apply to Italy and Germany in contradistinction to France (and England), although the imprint left by Verdi, of course, was entirely different from that left by Wagner. It is fair to say that the Nazis demonstrated that the impact made by Wagner on German (or 'Germanic') culture was 'incalculable'. The inquiry begun by Gramsci in 1933 relates generally to the influence of romantic *fiction* in politics, but this includes the possibility that music may be a more influential source than literature in awakening a nation's "imagination". In the *fictional* struggle between Aryans and Jews which now began in Germany, Wagner was a vital source of the central *fiction* on which the Nazi State was founded.

**Further Thoughts on Caesarism:
§14.23. Splits in the Dominant Bloc**

The movement of the Brown Shirts led Gramsci to explore the function in national politics of the "active minority", the "men of action". As we said, to analyse this element of politics *scientifically*, he boldly compared Hitler's Brown Shirts with a movement which could not have been more different, Garibaldi Red Shirts, and called the general phenomenon 'Garibaldism' (or 'volunteerism'). The same dialectical turn of mind can be found in §14.23 (January 1933) where it resulted in an even more improbable synthesis of opposites, between the Nazi movement in Germany and its ideological antithesis, the Dreyfus movement in France. Gramsci says that "there are other modern historical-political movements of the Dreyfus type": the context and timing of this note strongly suggests that he meant the Nazis even though he does not say so explicitly. The reference back to the Dreyfus movement is further evidence that French experience was the primary source of 'political elements' in the conceptual laboratory of the notebooks. But what did he mean by movements of the Dreyfus-type? What was the 'objective' content of this concept?

Starting from the original 'sociological' schema of Caesarism (§9.133/136) Gramsci proceeded to make an 'elliptical comparison', that is, to see how far it 'approximated' to reality. The procedure was indicated in §9.136 where he analysed the splits in the dominant bloc in France leading to the Caesarist regime

of Napoleon III.

This is one element of closer approximation. Another such element is this: the catastrophic phase may be brought about by a [momentary] political deficiency of the traditional dominant force and not by any organic deficiency which is necessarily insuperable. This is precisely what happened in the case of Napoleon III.

The same procedure of 'approximating' ever more closely to reality was at work in §14.23. Here Gramsci analyses the splits in the traditional dominant bloc on the eve of Hitler coming to power in Germany. These splits were particularly apparent in the last days of Schleicher's chancellorship in January 1933 when the government and its supporters in industry were openly attacked by the Agrarian League on account of the its 'Bolshevist' plans for eastern agriculture. The agitation was fermented by the Nazis who had penetrated the eastern branches of the Agrarian League (one of the 'technical-economic' organisations referred to in §14.23) and now claimed to speak for the rural as well as urban masses. Its intervention was decisive in bringing about the fall of Schleicher and in reconciling the 'Junker' Hindenburg to the urban demagogue, Hitler.

This was the immediate political background to Gramsci's further reflections on Caesarism in §14.23. He probably wrote this note on learning of the fall of Schleicher, who thus represented an "intermediate and episodic" form of Caesarism. Hitler came to power against the background of splits in the dominant bloc in Germany 'similar' to the political circumstances which had brought Louis Bonaparte to power in France. The chancellorship of Schleicher had revealed "the political deficiency of the traditional dominant bloc", but the succession of Hitler proved that this deficiency was only "momentary".

§14.23. Machiavelli. Caesarism and 'catastrophic' equilibrium of the political-social forces. It would be a methodological error (an aspect of mechanical sociology) to think that in Caesarism - whether progressive, reactionary, or of an intermediate and episodic character - the new historical phenomenon is entirely 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 without studying the function of the military groups and the French peasantry.

A very important historical episode from this point of view is the so-called Dreyfus movement in France. This too belongs to the present series of observations, not because it led to 'Caesarism' but 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 thwarted the Caesarism of the most reactionary part of that same bloc. And they did this by relying for support not on the peasantry and the countryside but on the

subordinate strata of 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).

We can find other modern historical-political movements of the Dreyfus type, which are certainly not revolutions but which are not entirely reactionary either - at least in the sense that they also shatter stifling and ossified State structures in the dominant camp and introduce into State life and social activity a different and more numerous personnel. These movements too can have a relatively 'progressive' content to the extent that they indicate that there were effective forces - albeit 'marginal' forces - still latent in the old society which the old leaders did not know how to exploit, but such forces cannot be absolutely progressive in the sense that they are not 'epoch-making'. They are rendered historically effective by their adversary's inability to construct, not by an inherent force of their own. Hence they are connected with a particular situation of equilibrium between the conflicting forces - both of which are incapable in their respective camps of summoning up an autonomous will to bring about reconstruction.¹³

If by "other modern historical-political movements of the Dreyfus type" Gramsci meant the Nazi movement, as the context suggests, then his analysis makes us think about the coming to power of Hitler in an unfamiliar way. The simple solution would be to dismiss Gramsci's improbable synthesis of opposites - Dreyfus movement-Nazi movement - as evidence that he was losing his grip on reality by the start of 1933, but the comparison is more interesting than that. The most obvious mistake from a conventional marxist perspective was to think of Hitler's movement as being 'counter-Caesarist' in tendency, but this was only insofar as it thwarted the ambitions of Schleicher who, it seemed to Gramsci, represented "a Caesarism in gestation, of a clearly reactionary nature". It is the impression he gives of Hitler, not of Schleicher, which appears mistaken. The 'reactionary' Schleicher was seen by Gramsci as a 'traditional intellectual' in the German tradition: by comparison Hitler appeared 'if not a revolutionary, not entirely reactionary either'. His advent to power was seen as 'shattering the stifling and ossified State structures in the dominant camp and introducing into State life a different, more numerous personnel'. As a description of the so-called 'national revolution' of 1933, this was objectively true: if anything, in trying to judge the advent of Hitler 'objectively' Gramsci overstated the extent to which the influx of the new intellectuals into the existing State structures displaced the traditional intellectuals.¹⁴ Arguably his mistake was to think of this as an 'objectively progressive' phenomenon which is hard to justify in view of the bureaucratic jungle of the Nazi State. For all its rational niceties, Gramsci's subtle historicist dialectic -

¹³ §14.23. *Machiavelli. Caesarism and 'catastrophic' equilibrium of the political-social forces*, QCIII p.1680-1681. [Translated in SPN p. 222-223, starting from "It would be an error of method....."].

¹⁴ See David Schoenbaum's *Hitler's Social Revolution* (Norton, New York-London, second edition 1980), especially the percentage change in State personnel after 1933, p.195-196.

'reactionary-progressive', 'restoration-revolution' etc - ultimately failed to capture the dynamics of Hitlerism. The element of intellectual and moral 'shock' we find in his last notes on Hitlerism in 1935 suggested that the new phenomenon overwhelmed this kind of rational analysis. Strictly speaking, the relatively short-lived duration of the new regime proved Gramsci correct, but is this sufficient to say that it was not "epoch-making"?

Further Thoughts on Caesarism:

§14.34. Political Parties as Police Agencies

The composition of Hitler's cabinet announced on 31 January 1933 included only two Nazi ministers apart from Hitler: Frick the Minister of the Interior and Goring the Minister for Prussia. It may not have escaped Gramsci's attention that these two appointments gave the Nazis complete control of all the police forces and a monopoly of police powers throughout the Reich. Judging from its timing as well as its content, this circumstance was reflected in another note written at this point, §14.34. *Machiavelli. Political Parties and Police Functions*. Here Gramsci continues the observation made at the end of §9.136 that "modern Caesarism is more a police than a military system". The first function of Caesarism is to maintain the rival progressive force in a permanent state of weakness, which under modern conditions is done by police rather than by military methods. But just as there are reactionary and progressive forms of Caesarism, so the police function of political parties can be exercised "in a repressive or expansive sense".

It is hard to rule out the possibility that any political party (not only of the dominant but also of the subordinate groups) may carry out a police function, ie, as guardians of a particular political and legal order. If this were to be proved unconditionally, the question might be put in different terms and should be about the methods and purposes with which such a function is exercised. Is it exercised in a repressive or expansive (*diffusivo*) sense, is it reactionary or progressive in character? Does the particular party exercise its policing function in order to preserve a purely extrinsic, outward order which shackles the living forces of history, or does it exercise it in such a way as to raise the people to a new level of civilisation whose political and legal order is expressed in its programme? In fact, a law is broken by someone belonging to one of the following: (1) the reactionary social elements whom the law has deprived of power; (2) the progressive elements who are constrained by the law; (3) the elements which have not attained the level of civilisation which the law can represent. A party's policing function can therefore be progressive and reactionary: it is progressive when it tends to keep within the orbit of legality the reactionary, dispossessed forces and when it raises up the backward masses to the level of a new legality. It is reactionary when it tends to constrain the living forces of history and to preserve an anti-historical legality which has been superseded and become extrinsic. Moreover, the way the particular party functions provides criteria with which to discriminate: when the party is progressive it functions 'democratically' (in the sense of a democratic centralism), when the party is reactionary it functions 'bureaucratically' (in

the sense of a bureaucratic centralism). In the latter case the party is not deliberative but purely executive: in this case it is technically a police agency and to call itself a political party is purely metaphorical and fictitious.¹⁵

As we suggested, the 'practical origin' of this note was probably the role given to the Nazi ministers in Hitler's cabinet as guardians of the legal order in Germany. This is probably what Gramsci meant by saying that political parties of "subordinate groups" may also exercise a police function. The 'objective' element of the analysis consisted in comparing the ways in which fascist and communist parties exercise this function, the presumption being that the former was 'repressive' and the latter 'expansive'. Interestingly enough, the dialectic leaves open the reverse possibility that communist parties may also become 'bureaucratic' not 'democratic' centralisms and thus function more as police agencies than political parties. After all, the very terms 'democratic v. bureaucratic centralism' originated from communist debates. They were connected with Trotsky's early criticisms of the growth of bureaucratic centralism which had become the defining feature of 'Stalinism' by the early 1930s. To assume that Gramsci would never entertain the idea that communist parties might function as police agencies applying the same kind of bureaucratic repression as fascist parties fails to appreciate his dialectical capacity for 'objectivity'. Meanwhile, Gramsci had no illusions that the Nazis would exercise their police function 'repressively': the role assigned to them in the new cabinet strengthened the impression that the Nazi party was more than anything else a police agency.

§14.53, §15.02. Agrarian and Industrial Parties

Gramsci's perspective on the coming to power of Hitler on 30 January 1933 was both historical and comparative. His historicism made him more disposed to emphasise the elements of historical *continuity* than change. The link between past and present was defined by his earlier account (restated in §15.18¹⁶) of the function of the "traditional intellectuals" in the bourgeois revolutions in England and Germany. This described the union ('suture') between the landowners and the industrialists which enabled the former to maintain their function of political-intellectual leadership long after losing their dominant economic role. Given this perspective, Gramsci saw the Nationalists (the 'historical' party of §14.03: see

¹⁵ §14.34. *Machiavelli. Political Parties and Police Functions*, QCIII p.1691-1692.

¹⁶ §15.18. *Past and Present*, QCIII p.1775-1776.

below), not the Nazis, as the big players in the new 'national' coalition. The split between agrarians and industrialists which had openly appeared under Schleicher and which "was considered unprecedented in German political circles"¹⁷ meant that it was imperative for the new chancellor to strengthen the traditional solidarity bloc of the two groups. This was the political significance of making the Nationalist leader Hugenburg responsible for both industry and agriculture in the new cabinet. To reconcile the 'Junker' Hindenburg the traditional intellectuals were over-represented in the cabinet which was widely characterised in the press not as the government of Hitler but of Hitler-Hugenburg or Hitler-Papen. There was much speculation about who were the 'masters' in the coalition and appearances were deceptive, especially if perceived through marxist lenses. Was Hitler the instrument of the dominant classes or their Caesarist master? It was difficult to have it both ways, although Gramsci was a dialectical master of such difficulties. At first sight Hitler appeared more the servant than the master, especially in view of his dependency on the presidential powers. Gramsci's *historicism* led him at first to overestimate the political weight of the German *tradition*. In reality the coming of Hitler proved that the leadership function of Germany's traditional intellectuals was about as extinct as Hindenburg himself, but it also proved that *tradition* (as the Nazis 'reinvented' it) was a more potent political myth than ever.

For a comparative perspective on the new German government, Gramsci turned not to Italy (as one might expect) but to England, the other "preeminently industrial country" (§14.53) where the political influence of the agrarians persisted beyond their natural life. The turning-point of the German crisis in 1933 brought to mind the decisive moment of the British crisis in 1931 (§15.02) when the Conservatives, standing as 'national' candidates, won a landslide victory in the general election. On 31 January Hitler immediately called for further Reichstag elections to obtain popular endorsement of his government and Gramsci probably anticipated that the new 'national' government would win a sweeping victory at the polls as it had done in Britain. Of course, the comparison with Britain only 'approximated' to the German situation (which is probably why Gramsci did not make it explicit) but the experience of the two countries suggested to him that at the decisive moment agrarians and industrialists fused into a 'national' bloc under the political leadership of the agrarians. The process was marked by the disappearance of the

¹⁷ According to the report in RSE, 24 January 1933, p.179, quoted above.

“intermediate parties” (§14.53) including what Gramsci calls “ ‘industrial’ parties” (§15.02). These were useful to the industrialists in ‘normal’ times but in extreme situations they turned to the agrarian party for political leadership. Meanwhile the “manoeuvrable” rank-and-file of these intermediate parties passed over to what he calls the “demagogic” parties (§15.02). A further feature was the introduction of general protectionism to consolidate the dominant power bloc. This had happened in Britain where the Conservatives, in spite of the protests of their partners the free-trade Liberals, had introduced general protection in the course of 1932. Industrial and agricultural tariffs (the ‘anti-historical policies’ of §14.53) were, so to speak, the stitches of the ‘suture’.

This line of argument is elaborated in two complementary notes written in different notebooks sometime in February 1933. The first discusses agrarian parties, the second industrial parties. As we see, Gramsci chose to illustrate his argument by referring to the recent history of Britain, but the date of these notes points to the ghostly presence of Germany behind his generalisations.

§14.53. Machiavelli. The Strength of Agrarian Parties. A typical phenomenon of the modern epoch is this: that the agrarian parties are (relatively) stronger in the parliaments, or at least in a series of them, than their historical, social and economic functions warrant. This is due to the fact that in rural areas all the elements involved in agricultural production continue to form a bloc which is often under the leadership of the most reactionary of these elements. On the other hand, there is no such bloc in the cities and in urban-type populations: it dissolved generations ago if in fact it ever existed (since it could not exist as long as the franchise was not enlarged). It therefore happens that in preeminently industrial countries the agrarians, now that the intermediate parties have broken up, have the ‘parliamentary’ upper hand and impose ‘anti-historical’ policies. It is necessary to establish why this happens and to determine whether or not the urban parties, due to their corporatism or narrow-minded economism, are to blame.¹⁸

§15.02. Machiavelli. Do the big industrialists, it can be asked, have a permanent political party of their own? The answer, it seems to me, must be ‘no’. The big industrialists make use of all the existing parties at one time or another but they do not have their own party. This does not mean that they are in any way ‘agnostic’ or ‘apolitical’: their interest lies in keeping a given equilibrium and they ensure this precisely by using the means at their disposal to strengthen, at one time or another, this or that party on the ever-changing political chessboard. (The only exception, of course, is the party in opposition to them which must not be strengthened in any way, not even as a tactical ploy). But if this is what happens in ‘normal’ circumstances, there is no doubt that in extreme situations, which are the ones that count (when national life is engulfed in war, for example), the big industrialists turn to the party of the agrarians who, in contrast, do have their own permanent party.

This argument is illustrated by England where the Conservative Party has devoured the Liberals who traditionally claimed to be the party of the industrialists. This is due to the English situation which is characterised by its big trade unions. In England it is true to say there is no formal opposition party in the grand style to the industrialists, but there are nevertheless organisations of the working masses which (as experience shows) at

¹⁸ §14.53. *The Strength of Agrarian Parties*, QCIII p. 1712.

certain moments, precisely when it counts, turn themselves constitutionally upside down and burst open the bureaucratic envelope (in 1919 and 1926 for example). Moreover there are permanent interests binding agrarians and industrialists together (especially now that there is general protectionism, both agrarian and industrial) and there is no denying that the agrarians are much better organisers 'politically' than the industrialists. They exert more attraction on the intellectuals and are more 'long-term' in their aims.

The fate of the traditional 'Industrial' parties like the English 'Liberal-Radical' Party and the French Radical party (the latter, though, always very different from the former) is interesting (so is that of the Italian Radical Party of not so long ago). What exactly do they represent? They represent a nexus of big classes and small classes, not a single big class: this explains why they appear and disappear at various times. The 'manoeuvrable' rank-and-file was supplied by the small class whose situation in the coalition was forever changing until the point when it was completely transformed. Today it supplies the rank-and-file of the 'demagogic' parties and one can see why.

In general, it can be stated that in a history of parties such as this, the key to understanding most about the original causes of the transformation of parties lies in comparing the various countries. The polemics between parties in the 'traditionalist' countries where 'vestiges' of the whole historical 'catalogue' are represented, are equally illuminating.¹⁹

We said that the agenda of these notes was suggested by the political conjuncture in Germany after Hitler's call for a new round of Reichstag elections on 5 March. The disappearance of the "intermediate parties" (including an 'industrial' party like the German People's Party), and the passage of their rank-and-file to the "demagogic parties", was one of the most striking aspects of the elections in Germany between 1929-33. In the forthcoming election Gramsci expected these parties to be swept away as the Liberal party in Britain had been in the 'national' landslide in 1931. Moreover, notwithstanding Snowden's radio broadcast describing Labour's manifesto in 1931 as 'Bolshevism run mad', the communist threat in Britain was merely a 'spectre'. In Germany where a "formal opposition party in the grand style to the industrialists" (the German Communist Party) did exist, it was a tangible presence. The opportunity for "demagogic parties" to manipulate the fears of the "small classes" was much greater. Indeed, Hitler's radio broadcast on 31 January presented the whole election campaign as a national crusade to save Germany from 'Russian' Bolshevism.²⁰

§14.03, §15.06. The 'Symbiosis' of Parties and Ideologies

This brings us to §14.03, one of the most puzzling of all the prison notes. Although it refers directly to Hitler and German politics in early 1933 and is therefore of obvious interest, it has been left untranslated. This is probably because it seems to

¹⁹ §15.02. Do the big industrialists have a permanent political party of their own?, QCIII p.1750-1751.

²⁰ See the report of the broadcast in RSE, 7 February 1933, p.291, quoted above.

contain an unaccountable misjudgement of Hitler on Gramsci's part which his translators have discreetly passed over in silence. But are we dealing with a mistaken conception or, more likely, one which we have failed to grasp? The "intermediate" parties (§14.53), including the "industrial" parties (§15.02), reappear in §14.03 as "centre" parties. Gramsci's "centre" covers the widest possible spectrum but when he describes the Nazis as a party of the "centre" (as he unmistakably does) and their partners the Nationalists as the "extremists", he seems to empty the term "centre" of any meaning. When he further refers to Hugenburg's (not Hitler's) party as the "demagogic" party, we are inclined to think that Gramsci has completely lost the plot of German politics at this point.

§14.03. Machiavelli. Centre. An accurate study of parties of the centre, understood in the broad sense, would be exceptionally instructive. The exact meaning of the term, extensions of its meaning, historical changes in its meaning and in its accepted sense. For example, the Jacobins were an extreme party: today they are a typical party of the centre. So are the Catholics (in their mass); so are the Socialists, and so on. An analysis of centre parties, I believe, is an important aspect of contemporary history.

And don't be misled by the words or by the past: for example, the Russian 'nihilists' are certainly to be regarded as a party of the centre, and the same applies even to the modern-day 'anarchists'. The question is whether, by symbiosis, a party of the centre may serve the interests of a 'historical' party: for example, Hitler's party (of the centre) serving the interests of Hugenburg and Papen (extremists: i.e. extremists in a certain sense, agrarians and partly industrialists, given the particular German historical background). Centre parties and 'demagogic' or bourgeois-demagogic parties.

The study of German and French politics in the winter of 1932-33 provides a mass of material for this line of research. So does the contrast between foreign and domestic policy (where it is understood that the domestic policy of a particular country invariably decides matters: it is clear in fact that one country's action, inspired by domestic reasons, becomes 'foreign' for the country which undergoes its effects). (QCIII p.1656-1657).

How are we to explain this puzzle? Gramsci's health was certainly *in extremis* when he wrote this note. On 27 February he told Tatiana that in addition to his chronic physical condition, "I also feel that my *intellectual powers* themselves are breaking up and you must have got this impression yourself from some of my letters". The breakdown of 7 March 1933 left him partially paralysed for about two weeks. According to the doctor who visited him on 20 March, his condition included arterio-sclerosis with hypertension of the arteries, so that "he is unable to write as he used to". This would explain the variation in the *handwriting* of this note which was squeezed into the front page of Notebook 14 after he had filled the rest of the notebook, and would suggest that it was written shortly *after* the crisis of 7 March.

Should we therefore consider this note as evidence of his failing intellectual powers and charitably disregard it, or is there more to Gramsci's conception of Hitler than we have recognised?

In fact, Gramsci's description of the Nazis as a party of the "centre" is the least puzzling aspect of §14.03. It will come as no surprise to political scientists familiar with the influential interpretation of Hitler as an "extremist of the centre".²¹ Not to be misled by all the extremist rhetoric of the "national revolution", Gramsci applied the axiom that political parties are the 'nomenclature' of social classes. To determine the real nature of Hitler's party, Gramsci asked himself who supported it. The most striking feature of the German election figures available to him was precisely the disappearance of the "intermediate parties", notably the German People's Party (DVP), the German Democratic Party (DDP), and the *Wirtschaftspartei*. The passage of the rank-and-file of these parties to Hitler's party in the elections of 1930-33 led Gramsci to characterise it as a party of the centre. But Gramsci's "centre" was not simply political nomenclature for the "middle class" (or *Mittelstand*). If the socialists were a party of the centre, the concept embraced both left-of-centre and right-of-centre parties and was meant to describe a nexus between classes rather than a single class. In fact, Gramsci's "centre" meant something similar to the relation described in §15.02 where the intermediate (ie, centre) parties are said to represent "a nexus between small classes and big classes". This nexus breaks up in times of grave national crisis, the intermediate parties disappear, and their "manoeuvrable rank-and-file" passes over to the "demagogic" parties.

The real puzzle is why Gramsci characterises Hugenburg's party as the "demagogic party" when the obvious candidate for this description was Hitler's. However, §14.03 is only one piece of the puzzle. Other pieces can be found in §15.06, where Gramsci again mentions the "symbiosis" of parties, and §15.07 where he refers to "the law of the turncoat". These pieces help to 'integrate' the conception contained in §14.03.

²¹ See in particular the analysis of Hitler as an 'extremist of the centre' (p.137) in the chapter 'Fascism - Left, Right, and Centre' in Seymour Martin Lipset: *Political Man. The Social Bases of Politics* (Heinemann, second edition, 1983) and the critique of Lipset's interpretation as reviewed by Ian Kershaw in *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (second edition, 1989) p.29-30 where, interestingly enough, Lipset's interpretation is classified as "non-marxist".

Like his opposite Maurras in France, Hugenburg was a "demagogue who does not know how to be one".²² In the autumn of 1929 he joined forces with Hitler who supplied the talents of the demagogue which he himself lacked. Hugenburg needed Hitler as much as Hitler needed Hugenburg: the instrumentality was mutual, or "symbiotic". The collaboration of the Nationalists and the Nazis in the anti-Young Plan campaign in 1929-30, the plebiscitary campaign in Prussia in 1931, the Harzburg Front, the second ballot of the presidential election in 1932, the national coalition of January 1933 - all this bore witness to the "symbiotic" relation of the two parties throughout the crisis. As usual, the historicist Gramsci employs an organic metaphor - "symbiosis" - to convey the idea of "process", ie, the continuity between history and politics, past and present. We learn more about this concept in §15.06 where the specific example of Hitler's party (§14.03), which is the "practical origin" of Gramsci's theorising, disappears behind generalisations which purport to be valid for parties of both the Left and the Right.

§15.06. Machiavelli. Conceptions of the world and practical intentions, of a comprehensive (totalitari) and partial character. A basic criterion in judging both conceptions of the world and, especially, practical intentions is this: can the conception of the world or the practical intention be thought of as 'standing by itself', as 'independent', as shouldering on its own the whole responsibility for collective life? Or is this impossible? Can it only be conceived of as something which 'integrates', or perfects, or counter-balances another conception of the world or practical intention? It is clear on reflection that this is a key criterion in the theoretical assessment of ideological and practical initiatives (*moti*), and its practical implication is obviously of some importance.

One of the commonest superstitions is the belief that everything that exists is 'natural' and that things cannot be otherwise; that all one's attempts to reform things, no matter how badly they go, will not alter the way things are because the traditional forces are still at work precisely to make sure things do not change. There is certainly some truth in this way of seeing things and it would be disastrous if there wasn't. But if it goes too far, this way of thinking can become dangerous (certain cases of the politics of 'so much the worse, so much the better'). In any case, the above-mentioned criterion in making philosophical, political and historical judgements remains valid.

There is no doubt that some movements, if examined closely, think of themselves as marginal in character; that is, they presuppose a main movement and graft themselves onto it in order to reform certain of its presumed or actual imperfections. Certain movements, in a word, are purely reformist. This principle is important politically because the theoretical truth that every class has only one party is demonstrated at crucial turning-points by the fact that various factions, who until then had presented themselves as 'independent' parties, come together to form a single bloc. The multiplicity which existed beforehand was only reformist, to do with partial issues, and constituted in a sense a division of political labour (quite useful in its way). But each part presupposed the other, so much so that at the crucial moments, precisely when the main issues come into play, they joined forces to form a bloc.

²² Gramsci describes Maurras in these terms in §1.48, written in late 1929, but it is an even better description of Hugenburg at that moment. The comparison Maurras-Hugenburg, however, is not made *explicit* by Gramsci until much later in §13.37 (QCIII p.1646), probably written in the second half of 1933.

The conclusion is that in building a party, it must be given a 'monolithic' foundation and should not be built on the basis of secondary questions. Careful scrutiny is therefore needed to ensure homogeneity between the leadership and the rank-and-file, between the leaders and their mass following. If the leaders at the crucial moments cross over to their 'true party', the masses are beheaded and left paralysed and ineffectual.

It can be stated that no real movement becomes conscious of its global importance (*la sua totalitarista*) all at once but step by step through experience. It learns from the facts that nothing that exists is natural (in the irrational sense of the word) but exists because certain conditions exist and that, if these disappear, it must have consequences. In this way the movement perfects itself, shedding its arbitrary, 'symbiotic' features; it becomes genuinely independent in the sense that if it wants certain results, it creates the necessary preconditions - indeed, it commits all its forces to the job of creating them.²³

Given that the immediate "practical origin" of these generalisations was the formation of the national government in Germany on 30 January 1933, it should be possible to make sense of them in concrete terms. One reading of them would be this. By symbiosis Gramsci meant that the Nazis had "grafted themselves onto" the historical stem, the Nationalists, who represented the German "tradition". As the "historical" party (§14.03) Gramsci considered the Nationalists to be the "main movement". A further feature of their "symbiosis" was ideological. The differences in ideology between the two parties were partial not total in character: in particular, the "socialist" element in the Nazi programme made up for a glaring deficiency of the traditional nationalists who had no social programme to deal with the crisis. Applying to the Right a set of terms borrowed from the Left, Gramsci thus saw the Nazis as a "reformist" not a "revolutionary" party. The coalescence of the two nationalist parties was based on a world-view which was essentially the same, especially in its anti-French (and anti-Russian) orientation. Gramsci reminds us of this by recommending "the study of German and French politics in the winter of 1932-33" (§14.03), which referred to reactions in France to the new nationalist government in Germany. The anti-French orientation of Nazi ideology stemmed, of course, from the regime imposed on a defeated Germany by the Versailles Treaty, just as the anti-Russian accent stemmed from the Bolshevik Revolution. The fact remains that both were perfectly attuned to the older, pre-war "tradition" of an encircled Germany.

Gramsci regarded the Nazis and Nationalists, in fact, not as two "independent" parties but as "fractions" of a single bloc. Their coming together at the decisive moment of the German crisis - 30 January 1933 - demonstrated the axiom that

²³ §15.06, QCIII, p. 1759-1761. See also SPN p.157-158. I have changed the paragraphing, using five instead of Gramsci's two, to make this more readable.

“every class has only one party”. Furthermore, Gramsci took the view that on achieving power the demagogue Hitler would desert the “small classes” (§15.02) from which he came and “cross over to his ‘true’ party”, the “demagogic” party representing the interests of the “big classes”. He thus obeyed the basic law of the demagogue, “the law of the turncoat” (§15.07). However, Gramsci envisages a time when Hitler’s movement will free itself from dependency on the ‘historical’ party of Hugenburg-Papen, shed its “arbitrary, symbiotic features”, and become fully independent and self-determining.

§15.07 (I) The ‘Law of the Turncoat’

The ‘law of the turncoat’ (§15.07) was connected with Gramsci’s earlier observations on demogogy in §6.97. These were written in August 1931 in the context of the Nazis’ plebiscitary campaign in Prussia at the time. Gramsci distinguished between inferior and superior types of demogogy. The inferior type “regarded the masses as a servile instrument, useful in achieving one’s own ends and then to be discarded”. This type corresponded to Michels’ “charismatic leader”. The superior type aims to achieve “organic political ends”. His ambition was to raise the political capacity of the masses themselves by selecting and educating, through the mechanism of the party, leaders who will be his potential ‘competitors’ - the reverse of the personal ambition of the charismatic leader. This higher type of leadership must preserve the political party itself at all costs, ensuring that it does “not disintegrate as a result of the death or disappearance of the individual leader, leaving the mass to sink back into chaos and primitive powerlessness”. Gramsci concluded §6.97 by stating the same axiom which he invoked in §15.06:

If it is true that every party is the party of one class only, the leader must base himself on this class and develop from it a general staff and an entire hierarchy. If the leader is ‘charismatic’ in origin, he must repudiate his origin and work to make the task of leadership organic, with the characteristics of permanency and continuity.²⁴

Gramsci anticipated in 1931 that the ‘charismatic’ Hitler would “repudiate his origin” if he ever came to power. He would discard the “small classes”, the servile instrument of his petty ambition, and consolidate his leadership by pursuing policies “organically” in the interests of the “big classes”. But what did he mean by saying that the movement would, in time, shed its “arbitrary, ‘symbiotic’ features”

²⁴ §6.97. *Past and Present. Great Ambition and Petty Ambitions*, QCU p.772.

(§15.06)?

A possible 'dialectical' reading would be this. In time the Nazis would learn to do without their partners the Nationalists because the existence of this "historical party" - the party of the agrarians - depended on conditions (§14.53) which were disappearing. The Nazis would then shed the arbitrary, symbiotic features of their ideology. Gramsci was probably thinking of the "socialist" elements of National Socialism which appealed especially to the "small classes". Their function was to "integrate", or "counter-balance", the ideology of the traditional nationalists: this is what he means by the "division of political labour (quite useful in its way)" between the two parties. These elements served the 'demogogic' purpose of Hitler during the social crisis of 1929-33 but once he had freed himself from dependency on the historical party and had consolidated his leadership, these elements were no longer needed. This putative reading of §15.06 is consistent with the several elements of Gramsci's conception found in other notes, including the "law of the turncoat" mentioned in §15.07.

§15.07 (II) The Day of the 'Big Men'

In §15.07 Gramsci made a sardonic comment on a Polish press report (which he read in the issue of *Rassegna settimanale* of 14 February) about the new round of Reichstag elections due on 5 March. The blend of stoical realism and mature sarcasm suggested that in spite of the appalling state of his health his marxist political intelligence was as sharp as ever. Unravelling the Polish statement, Gramsci came up with a fresh analysis of the combination of 'force and consent' which characterises the transition from a parliamentary to a fascist regime.

§15.07. Machiavelli. Elections. A Polish paper (the *Gazeta Polska* at the end of January or the start of February) carried the following statement: 'Power is always conquered by means of a great plebiscite. The method of voting is either by ballot or by shooting. The first is quantitative, the second qualitative. In the first you have to rely on the majority of small people, in the second you rely on the minority of 'big shots' (*grandi caratteri*)'. There's a grain of truth in all this muddle. Why should the 'shooting' always coincide with the big men? Why should the one who pulls the trigger always be a big man? These big men are often hired for a few lire a day - the point being, in other words, that 'shooting' is often more economical than an election. Now that one man one vote has been introduced, the cost of corrupting the voter is prohibitive: twenty lire and a rifle is enough to get rid of twenty voters. The 'big shots' of which the *Gazeta Polska* speaks are also subject to the law of the turncoat.²⁵

²⁵ §15.07. *Machiavelli. Elections*, QCIII p.1761. The quotation from the *Gazeta Polska* was reported in RSE, 14 February 1933, p.346: see Professor Gerratana's note in QCIV p.2942.

As we saw from §14.03, Gramsci was also studying French as well as Polish press reactions to the new regime in Germany. In the same issue of *Rassegna settimanale* which reported the *Gazeta Polska*, he read an appeal to the German Communists by the French left-wing paper *Populaire*. It was full of foreboding at the "terrible situation" facing the German proletariat as Hitler's Storm Troops strained at the leash. It blamed Stalin for putting the German workers in this position.

The question is whether Hitler as Chancellor can get his troops to obey him as he did as leader of the national opposition. This is doubtful. The mass of elements demoralised by the crisis are waiting for the creation of Hitler's 'Third Reich' to put an end to their misery and will hardly be impressed if their leader acts conservatively. It is probable that sooner or later Hitler will either come into conflict with his troops or be forced to follow the movement and give his government the character of a real fascist revolution.

.....Meanwhile, the German proletariat is in a terrible situation. The only means left to it to resist the capitalist and fascist reaction is to bring about the unity of the workers. But for this the support of the communists is necessary. Is there any hope of a change of attitude on their part? Will they understand the necessity of abandoning the method of divisive and fratricidal struggle? To achieve this it would be necessary to shake off the tutelage of Stalin.²⁶

The Nazi reign of terror was let loose on the night of the Reichstag Fire, 27-28 February, a week before election day. Its first target was the cadres of the German Communist party, which were destroyed with lightning speed. In view of the pivotal role of the German party in the whole revolutionary project in the 'West', the implications of the event were not lost on Gramsci. Even though the defeat was foreseeable, it must have come as a hard blow to his morale. Far from losing his head, he set about rationally analysing the lessons of the defeat. His preferred image of Prometheus not as the tragic hero at war with the gods but as *homo faber* in his workshop comes to mind at this point. Nevertheless, it was not entirely coincidental that Gramsci questioned the point of his own resistance at this moment. On 27 February, the same day as the Reichstag Fire, he wrote to Tatiana: "Sometimes I think my whole life has been a big mistake (big for me anyway)"? In fact, Gramsci did not surrender to this thought but for once in his moral life he

²⁶ RSE, 14 February 1933, p.344-345.

needed other people to convince him that he was wrong.²⁷

Gramsci must have written §15.07 in the second half of February or the first half of March 1933. Whether he wrote it before the Reichstag Fire on 27-28 February, in anticipation of the Nazi terror, or after the election on 5 March when the results of the terror had become apparent, is hard to say. Certainly, the combination of 'voting' and 'shooting' closely approximated to the brutal reality of the election. Moreover, the analysis of "collective (political) disasters" in the preceding §15.04 probably refers to the destruction of the German Communist party and suggests that this was an accomplished fact by the time he wrote §15.07. In §15.04 Gramsci already asks who was responsible for the disaster. The reference to the German disaster is disguised for prudential reasons behind the familiar mask of generalisation, but he does not hide his indignation at "the criminal habit of allowing useless sacrifices through negligence".

§15.04. Machiavelli. Elements of Politics [extract].....

Since the division between rulers and ruled also exists within the same group, certain principles have to be fixed upon and strictly observed. For this is the area where the most serious 'errors' occur, where the most criminal weaknesses and the hardest to correct are revealed. For when it is a question of the same group, the belief is common that obedience must be automatic; not only must it come about without any need to demonstrate its 'necessity' and rationality, it must be unquestioning. (Some believe and, what is worse, act in the belief that obedience 'will come' without being solicited, without the path which has to be followed being pointed out). Thus it is difficult to cure leaders completely of 'Cadornism' or the conviction that a thing will be done because the leader thinks it is right and rational to do it: if it is not done, the 'blame' is put on those who 'ought to have' etc. Thus it is hard too to root out the criminal habit of allowing useless sacrifices through negligence. Yet common sense shows that the majority of collective (political) disasters occur because no attempt has been made to avoid useless sacrifice, or because manifestly no account has been taken of the sacrifices of others whose lives have been gambled with.....This principle extends to all actions demanding sacrifices. Hence after every disaster it is first necessary to find out the responsibility of the leaders and to be precise about it (for example: a front is made up of various sectors and each sector has its leaders; it is possible that the leaders of one sector are more responsible for a particular defeat than those of another, but it is a question of degree - never of anybody being exempt from responsibility.²⁸

²⁷ Gramsci's several *Autobiographical Notes* written at this time should also be studied to understand his 'moral' state of mind at this point, notably his reflections on "catastrophes of character" in §15.09 in which he says: "It is certain that a 'terroristic' element has crept in which was not there in the past, an element of material as well as moral terrorism, which is not to be disdained". QCIII p.1762-1764. Professor Gerratana notes the close correlation between these *Autobiographical Notes* and Gramsci's letter to Tatiana of 6 March 1933 (QCIVp.2942-2943): to further 'integrate' this crucial moment in Gramsci's life, however, it is also important to note the wider historical moment which was defined by the catastrophe of the German Communist Party in March 1933.

²⁸ §15.04. *Machiavelli. Elements of Politics*, QCIII p.1752-1753. The whole note is translated in SPN p.144-146.

No doubt the German disaster confirmed the pessimistic view Gramsci had always taken of the political ability of the leaders of German Communism, but the blame was not entirely theirs. For the division between rulers and ruled "within the same group" ran along national lines, so that the question was this: how far were the leaders of the German 'sector' responsible, how far the leaders of the Russian 'sector'? The responsibility was shared, perhaps not to the same degree, but there was no question of anybody being exempt - including Cadorna himself, the commander-in-chief. For according to this analysis, was not the disaster caused by Cadorna's belief that "obedience must be automatic", "without being solicited"? When things were not done, were not others blamed for not doing what they "ought to have" done, leaving Cadorna himself "exempt from responsibility"? The passage can be read as an analysis of Stalin's relation to German Communism. Like Cadorna, Stalin believed that "obedience must be automatic" and, like Cadorna, he passed the blame off onto others when things went badly. Of course, we can never "prove" the veracity of this reading of §15.04 because of the mask of generalisation which Gramsci wore to protect himself from the 'inquisition' not only in Rome but also in Moscow.

Meanwhile Gramsci prefigured future political developments in Germany when he suggested in §15.07 that the "big shots" of the *Gazeta Polska* were subject to the law of the turncoat. The "law" began to operate soon after the election as Hitler tried to regain control of the "national revolution" let loose on the night of the Reichstag Fire. In his radio broadcast of 12 March Hitler, with barely concealed anxiety, called off his bloodhounds, the Storm Troops, and ordered them to observe the "strictest discipline". The "second phase" of the struggle had now begun, but this would be "conducted from above, according to a definite plan".²⁹ The leader's call to order did nothing to quench the thirst of the Storm Troops for a "second revolution". The nature of this "second revolution" was never clearly defined: for some it meant the takeover of the State by the party, purging it of conservative, upper-class elements; for others it meant nothing less than the expropriation of "big capital". It was a parody of a 'socialist' revolution fuelled by all the rage of the small classes against the big classes. The spectre of this "second revolution" was excoriated on the Night of the Long Knives on 30 June 1934 when the turncoat Hitler "beheaded" his own Storm Troops. It could be argued that this was also the moment when the movement shed "its arbitrary, symbiotic features" if these are understood to be the

²⁹ Hitler's broadcast of 12 March was reported in RSE, 28 March 1933, p.700 (see above).

'socialistic' elements of its ideology. However, Gramsci may not have grasped in 1933 that the 'socialism' in National Socialism was the same thing as its anti-Semitism (the 'socialism of fools') and that anti-Semitism not socialism was in fact the permanent source of the movement's "revolutionary" dynamic.

§14.68. Stalin and the German Disaster

In a thought-provoking postscript introducing Gramsci to English readers for the first time, Professor Stuart-Hughes argued that the crucial difficulty in assessing his career lay in "his position of party leadership at Russian direction".³⁰ This difficulty does not appear so "crucial" to us as it did to Stuart-Hughes writing at the height of the Cold War in the 1950s, but as a historical (as distinct from political) judgement, he was correct: Russian leadership of the Communist International after Lenin's death presented Gramsci with real difficulties. This was most apparent in his suppressed letter to the Russian leaders in 1926 and, again, in his 'tacit' disagreement with the political line of the 'third period' in 1930. Gramsci recalled Lenin's self-criticism at the Fourth Congress in 1922 to the effect that international policy could not be translated into European languages because it was "too Russian" (§7.02). The tension reached breaking-point in 1933 when the Third International suffered its worst and, in some ways, its final disaster in Germany. But having reached breaking-point, Gramsci did not 'break'. Why was this?

On 27 February 1933 Gramsci told Tatiana that he had arrived at a turning-point in his life and had taken a "decision", or a series of decisions.³¹ This decision coincided with a decisive turning-point in the international situation, ie, the advent to power of Hitler in Germany followed, within weeks, by the destruction of German Communism. The German disaster would plausibly explain his dramatic statement in this letter that "sometimes I think my whole life has been a big mistake (big for me at least), a miscalculation". As suggested earlier, there were three closely related elements in Gramsci's decision. The first was to continue his resistance to the Fascist regime in Italy whilst pursuing his legal right to conditional liberty. The second followed from the first: this was to maintain "communist discipline" in spite of being haunted by doubts about the leadership in Moscow, especially about its

³⁰ H. Stuart-Hughes: *Consciousness and Society. The reorientation of European social thought 1890-1930*. (1958) p.100.

³¹ To Tatiana. 27 February 1933, LCII p.690.

intentions towards him. The third element was intimately bound up with the second: this was the decision to stay in touch with his Russian wife Julia and his two sons in Moscow. Gramsci was in an impossible situation, caught between the visible tribunal of Fascism and the invisible tribunal of Stalinism. He had only to contemplate the possibility of open apostasy to realise that it was completely out of the question. Not only would he give himself up as a hostage to Mussolini's propaganda machine, his apostasy could have incalculable consequences for his wife and family living in Stalin's Moscow.

Gramsci 'testified' to the spirit of communist discipline in §14.68. It is the only one of his notes to refer to Stalin, albeit in a thinly disguised way. Gramsci must have written it at the time of the destruction of German Communism in the Nazi terror of February-March 1933.³² The extraordinary thing is that at the moment of the Comintern's greatest disaster Gramsci writes what appears to be a defence of the international leader, Stalin. In particular, he now defends Stalin from the accusation of "nationalism" - the very criticism which he himself had levelled against him in private conversation with Riboldi in 1931.³³ To rekindle the spirit of communist discipline, it was necessary to return to orthodox positions through "self-criticism", free from any trace of "hypocrisy".³⁴ It was a difficult exercise in which pessimism of the intelligence and optimism of the will struggled with each other for mastery.

§14.68. Machiavelli. Joseph Bessarione's piece of September 1927 (In question-and-answer form) raises some key points of the science and art of politics. The point to develop in my opinion is this: how should the national aspect of the international situation be understood by the philosophy of praxis (when expressed in political form)? What answer does its founder [ie, Marx] and, in particular, its greatest recent theorist [ie, Lenin] give to this question?

Really the 'national' aspect is the result (in a certain sense) of a singular, 'original' combination of circumstances and it is only by understanding and perceiving its original and singular nature that the national situation can be dominated and directed.

Undoubtedly the line of development will be towards internationalism: the perspective is international and must be so. But the starting-point is 'national' and one must begin from this point. Hence it is necessary to study accurately the combination of national forces which it is the task of the international class to lead and develop along international lines in accordance with the international perspective and directives. The leading class only leads if it interprets this combination exactly: this class itself is part of the combination

³² Note the theme of the following §14.70. *Machiavelli. When it can be said that a party is formed and cannot be destroyed by normal means*, QCIII p.1732-1735, which was suggested by the destruction of the German Communist party by *abnormal* means, ie, by terroristic rather than electoral methods.

³³ See the Gramsci-Riboldi conversation of 1931 discussed above.

³⁴ The reference is to the problem formulated in the following §14.74. *Past and Present. Self-criticism and the Hypocrisy of Self-criticism*, QCIII p.1742-1743. The whole note is translated in SPN p.254-257.

and this is precisely why it can lead the movement in a certain direction and with certain perspectives. In my opinion this is the fundamental point of disagreement between Leon Davidovitch and Bessarione as interpreter of the majority [i.e., Bolshevik] movement. The accusations of nationalism are invalid since they do not get to the heart of the question. Study of the majority [i.e., Bolshevik] struggle from 1902 to 1917 shows that its originality consists in purging internationalism of any vague, purely ideological element ('ideological' in the perjorative sense) and in giving it a politically realistic content.

The whole complex of national needs can be understood in terms of the concept of hegemony and one can see why certain tendencies never mention this concept or only touch on it. A class which is international in character must, in a certain sense, 'nationalise' itself if it is to guide social strata whose outlook is narrowly national (intellectuals) and often not even national but particularistic and localistic (peasants). Moreover, the sense in which it nationalises itself cannot be too definitive because the conditions needed for an economy based on a world plan can only arise after first passing through multiple phases in which the regional combinations (consisting of groups of nations) may be variable. Besides, it must never be forgotten that historical development is driven by the laws of necessity until such times as those forces which are aiming to construct a planned economy based on a peaceful and cooperative division of labour have decisively gained the initiative.

Concepts which are not national (i.e., which cannot be applied to each individual country) are obviously mistaken and meaningless. They have resulted in a state of passivity and inertia in two quite distinct phases: 1) in the first phase no one accepted the responsibility of making a start believing that, once having started, they would find themselves isolated. Everyone waited for everyone to start together and the result in the meantime was that no one got started and set about organising the movement. 2) the second phase is possibly worse because everyone is waiting for a form of 'Napoleonism', which is anachronistic and quite unnatural (since not all historical phases are repeated in the same form).

The theoretical flaws in this modern version of the old mechanistic mode of thinking are masked by the general theory of permanent revolution: this is nothing more than a forecast of a general type presented as a dogma and which collapses automatically by virtue of the fact that it is not coming true.³⁵

There is no reason to doubt Gramsci's sincerity in revising the accusations of nationalism against Stalin which "do not get to the heart of the question", but the view he expressed to Riboldi in 1931 that "even in the International Stalin is first a Russian, then a Communist" remained unchanged. This is the key to understanding Gramsci's position in this note. It was based on Lenin's self-criticism at the Fourth Congress in 1922 (§7.10) when he warned that international policy could not be applied in other countries because it was "too Russian".

What is the relation between past and present in this note? Its immediate "practical origin" was the German disaster of 1933, but it brings to mind the debate which arose in the Russian Communist party a decade earlier following the defeat in Germany in 1923 when Stalin's doctrine of 'socialism in one country' was evolved in opposition to Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution'. Gramsci appears to take sides. Starting from the premiss that "the starting-point must be national", he justifies Stalin's doctrine on the grounds that the international class had to

³⁵ §14.68. *Machiavelli*, QCIII p.1728-1730. Translated in SPN p.240-241.

"nationalise" itself in order to lead other classes in Russia which do not have an international character and outlook. At the same time Gramsci resumes his critical attack on the theory of permanent revolution which (as the latest German disaster showed) "collapses automatically by virtue of the fact that it is not coming true". The destruction of German Communism in 1933 made 'socialism in one country' (ie, the construction of a 'planned economy' currently in progress in Russia) a reality. This note was a sort of 'act of faith' by Gramsci in the whole project of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. It was an act of faith in the future of his own children as much as anything else, but as a statement of communist orthodoxy and a demonstration of communist discipline he could not have made himself clearer. Indeed, Gramsci was so successful in this that some writers have gone so far as to accuse him of "paying homage" to Stalin. The invisible tribunal in Moscow, therefore, would have no grounds for complaint!

But is it the case that Gramsci simply 'takes sides' in this note? By placing it under the rubric 'Machiavelli' his intentions were 'scientific', where the essence of Machiavellism was its 'objective' validity for both sides. But how could he be 'objective' whilst appearing to take sides? The fact was that 1933 was not simply a return by Gramsci to post-1923 positions as though nothing had changed, since Stalin had in the meantime 'exchanged' positions with Trotsky in the field of international policy. Gramsci thought that the offensive tactic adopted in 1929 was a variety of permanent revolution. This tactic was imposed indiscriminately on all countries but it could not be applied in Germany (let alone Italy) where it proved to be "obviously mistaken and meaningless". The imposition of this tactic by Moscow changes the significance of Gramsci's premiss, for in Germany (and Italy) the "starting-point" was not national but Russian. The international tactic reflected the needs of the Russian situation at the start of the Five-Year Plan in 1929. Gramsci's criticisms of permanent revolution testified to his orthodoxy, to be sure, but they were meant to apply to the policy of the current international leader, Stalin. This dialectical ('Machiavellian') interpretation of §14.68 is supported by study of the collateral notes written at this time which testify to Gramsci's view that as leader of the International Stalin was "first a Russian, then a communist". A comment on contemporary Russia in §14.63, for example, provides a revealing insight into Gramsci's view of the 'national' interests behind Stalin's international policy. In this note he examines the question of how we study history. He starts from

an observation by the English historian Seeley to the effect that the 'national' standpoint of the historian leads him to select and emphasise certain facts in preference to others which are 'objectively' more important as far as their consequences are concerned. He goes on to refer to H.G.Wells' *A Short History of the World* as a useful corrective to the predominantly 'Eurocentric' perspective on world history: "reading Wells' books on world history reminds us of this neglect and indifference. The reality is that up to now we have been interested in European history and what we have called 'world history' is the history of Europe and its non-European dependencies". This is because history interests us for national (ie, political) reasons. It is possible that the cultural influence of Marxism will encourage greater objectivity in the study of history, but Gramsci could honestly see no sign of this happening in the first 'Marxist' State.

§14.63 (extract).....

Maybe these interests are becoming broader under the influence of the philosophy of praxis [ie, Marxism] which tends to persuade us that only knowledge of an entire historical process can provide us with an explanation of the present time and confirm that our political forecasts are reasonably plausible and concrete. But we should have no illusions even on this score. Although there is a lot of interest in Russia in oriental questions, this interest arises from the geopolitical position of Russia and not from more universal and scientific cultural influences. I must tell the truth (*Devo dire la verita*): a lot of people don't even know the history of Italy to the extent that it explains the present time, even though it is necessary, it seems to me, to be familiar with this history before any other. A think-tank on foreign policy which studied in depth even the questions of Cochin-China and Annam would not displease me intellectually, therefore: but how many would be interested in its work?³⁶

Russia's interest in oriental questions was inspired by national interests not scientific ones. This would hardly be surprising but for the fact that Moscow was not only the capital of a nation-state but the headquarters of the Communist International whose mission was to promote world revolution. It was only by studying the history of other countries 'objectively' that the Comintern could be sure that its political forecasts were reasonably plausible and concrete. The political forecast for the 'third period' turned out to be completely mistaken as far as the countries of Europe were concerned. Nor could it be said that the interest in oriental questions was a sign that Russia had broken with the Eurocentric view of world history "since a lot of people do not even know the history of Italy" let alone that of Cochin-China.

Gramsci continues this 'oriental' theme later in §15.21. The hero of this note is Tizio, the Italian equivalent of Tom in 'Tom, Dick, and Harry'. The real identity of

³⁶ §14.63. *Arguments about Culture. How to Study History?*, QCIII, p.1722-1723.

Tizio is (and always will be!) unknown, of course: all we know about him is that he was completely ignorant of foreign languages and spoke only the local dialect. This presented certain difficulties, especially when it came to studying oriental questions.

§15.21. *Past and Present.* If we asked Tizio, who has never studied Chinese and only knows the dialect of his own province, to translate a passage of Chinese, he would quite reasonably be surprised and take the matter as a joke; if we then insisted, he would think he was being taken for a ride, get offended and start a fight. Well, even without being asked, this same Tizio thinks he is authorised to speak about a whole series of questions requiring a knowledge of Chinese even though he is ignorant of the technical language, the historical position, the connection with other questions, and sometimes even the fundamental and distinctive elements. All he knows about Chinese is that it is a language of a given people which inhabits a given point on the earth: he is ignorant of the intellectual topography of these questions and of the frontiers which mark their limits.³⁷

Let us suppose that the real identity of Tizio is Stalin. Although this supposition can never be 'proved', it must be said that Tizio bears a striking resemblance to him. For in spite of his complete ignorance of foreign languages, did not Stalin as leader of the Communist International also think he was authorised to speak about a whole series of questions requiring a knowledge of foreign languages, not excluding Chinese? Stalin's disastrous policy in the Chinese Revolution in 1927, for example, was proof that not even Chinese questions were excluded from his range of international 'expertise'. Of course, those who think that Gramsci 'paid homage' to Stalin in the notebooks will find it hard to credit him with such a sarcastically damning critique of Stalin's international leadership. Apart from telling us about Russia's interest in oriental questions, including presumably Chinese questions, Gramsci gives no clues to Tizio's identity. Perhaps the most significant clue lies in the metaphor of "translation" itself. The same metaphor was used by Lenin in his last speech to the Fourth Congress in 1922 (which Gramsci attended in person) when he said that we Russians have not been able to "translate" our language into European languages. As a linguist by training, Gramsci was much impressed by Lenin's metaphor and the difficulty he alluded to of translating theory into practice. This difficulty was never overcome because Stalin (like Tizio) had no capacity for self-criticism and no idea of his cultural limitations.

Although Gramsci decided for compelling reasons to maintain communist discipline in 1933, there was a significant element of machiavellian 'duplicité' in his attitude. However we judge his decision, it would be wrong to characterise his

³⁷ §15.21. *Past and Present*, QCIII, p.1779.

duplicity as 'hypocrisy'. Gramsci used duplicity to tell the truth under impossible circumstances. Under historical conditions in which the lie reigned supreme on both sides, to find a way of telling the truth was an achievement in itself.

§14.70. The Problem of 'Playing the Foreigner's Game'

The difficulty raised by Stuart-Hughes of "party leadership at Russian direction" was analysed objectively by Gramsci himself in §14.70. *Machiavelli. When it can be said that a party is established and cannot be destroyed by normal methods.* If the German Communist party had been destroyed as Gramsci suspected, it was not by normal means: as the election results of 5 March confirmed, the party was destroyed by 'shooting' not by 'voting' (§15.07). Nevertheless, the event raised the general question of what parties must do to prepare for the possibility of their own destruction. "Since defeat in the struggle must always be envisaged, the preparation of one's own successors is just as important as what is done to achieve victory" (§14.70). Gramsci now returned to the study of party cadres started in §9.62. *Machiavelli. The theorem of fixed proportions* where he analysed the strengths and weaknesses, both quantitative and qualitative, of a party's "leaders" at different levels. In Gramsci's "morphology" the existence of a party depends on three fundamental elements which he loosely defines as the mass element, the cohesive element, and the intermediate element. Between these elements there exists "fixed proportions" and the party achieves maximum efficiency when these proportions are achieved. The cohesive element is the most fundamental: without it the party does not exist.

§14.70 [excerpt].....

2) The main cohesive element which centralises nationally and makes effective and powerful a complex of forces which left to themselves would count for little or nothing. This element is endowed with great cohesive, centralising and disciplinary power; perhaps for this reason it also has the power of innovation (innovation, that is, in a certain direction, according to certain lines of force, certain perspectives, even certain premisses). It is also true that this element alone would not form the party although it counts for more in this respect than the first element considered. We speak of generals (capitani) without an army but in reality it is easier to form an army than to form generals: indeed, an (already existing) army is destroyed if it loses its generals whereas the existence of a united group of generals who agree among themselves and have common aims will soon form an army even where none exists.³⁸

³⁸ §14.70. *Machiavelli. When it can be said that a party is formed and cannot be destroyed by normal means*, QCIII p.1733. The whole note is translated in SPN p.151-155, starting from: "The problem of knowing when a party.....", and ending: "But nobody can prevent speculation from being made".

Since a party cannot exist without a general staff, they have a responsibility to anticipate the possibility of their own disappearance. The long-term 'educative' function of political leadership always present in Gramsci's thinking is the key to this:

This second element can be destroyed all the more easily because it is small in number, but in case it is destroyed it is necessary that it leaves behind as its heritage a ferment from which it may be recreated. And where could this ferment better be formed and subsist than in the first and third elements, which are obviously the nearest in character to the second? The activity of the second element towards creating this ferment is therefore fundamental and so the criteria by which it should be judged are to be sought in (1) what it actually does, (2) what provision it makes for the possibility of its own destruction. Since defeat in the struggle must always be envisaged, the preparation of one's own successors is just as important as what one does to achieve victory.³⁹

But what if the leaders are "conceited" enough to think that the party is indestructible and make no such preparations? The "conceit" of the German leaders consisted in thinking that the party was strong because it could count on the backing of a foreign State, the Soviet Union, which would not stand by and allow it to be destroyed. This was a source of weakness not strength. It was not simply that the propaganda of the German nationalists took advantage of the party's links with Moscow to accuse it of "playing the foreigner's game": there was also the danger that in their subservience to Moscow, the leaders did nothing on their own initiative to prepare for the party's destruction.

With regard to the party's 'conceit', this may be said to be worse than the national conceit of which Vico speaks. Why? Because a nation cannot help existing and given the fact that it exists it is always possible, albeit with goodwill and by soliciting the texts, to discover that its existence is full of destiny and meaning. On the other hand a party may not exist by virtue of its own strength. It should *never* be forgotten that in the struggle between nations, it is in the interest of each one of them that the other should be weakened by internal struggles and that the parties are precisely the elements of internal struggles. Hence it is always possible to raise the question whether the parties exist by virtue of their own strength, by their own necessity, or exist instead only to serve the interest of others (in fact, this point is never overlooked in the polemics; indeed, it is even a recurring theme, especially when the answer is not in doubt - which means, in other words, that it has taken hold and sows doubts). Naturally, anybody who allowed himself to be torn apart by such doubts would be a fool. Politically the question is of purely momentary relevance. In the history of the so-called principle of nationality, foreign interventions in favour of national parties which trouble the internal order of enemy States are innumerable..... As we see, the list of examples is a long one and so it is necessary to have clear ideas on the subject. Given that whatever one does, one is always playing somebody's game, the important thing is to try in every way to play one's own game successfully - in other words, to win outright. In any event, party conceit is to be scorned and replaced by concrete deeds. Anyone who substitutes conceit for concrete deeds, or indulges in the politics of conceit, is not to be taken seriously at all. It is needless to add that parties must avoid giving even the 'justified' appearance of playing somebody else's game, especially if the somebody is a foreign State. If there is

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.1734.

speculation, nobody can prevent it.⁴⁰

The 'objective' implications of this passage are very interesting. A recurring theme in the polemics of the German nationalists was that the communists were playing Moscow's game: this was the main theme of the "national revolution" launched by Hitler on 31 January 1933 and Gramsci acknowledges that the accusation "has taken hold and sows doubts". But aside from the "momentary" propaganda of the German nationalists, Gramsci is objective enough to realise that "it should *never* be forgotten [least of all by communist leaders] that in the struggle between nations, it is in the interests of each one that the other should be weakened by internal struggles and that the parties are precisely the elements of internal struggles". If Gramsci applied this principle to the relation between the Soviet Union and the German Communist party as the context suggests, the question arose of whether the party existed by its own necessity or to serve Russian interests. Certainly, the Soviet Union had every interest in weakening its capitalist enemies by promoting internal struggles when its own energies were fully absorbed in the terrible struggles of collectivisation and industrialisation. Indeed, seldom was the Soviet interest in weakening its external enemies more compelling than in the winter of 1932-33 when the Ukraine was gripped by a terrible famine directly induced by the policy of collectivisation. Gramsci's perception of the Soviet Union's 'instrumental' use of communist parties in other countries had grown since the start of the 'third period' in 1929 when the change to 'offensive' tactics by the Communist International coincided with the launch of the Soviet Five-Year Plan. These tactics were "obviously mistaken and meaningless" as far as Italy was concerned and (after the Nazi breakthrough in 1930) the same applied to Germany. The tactics reflected the Russian situation and served Russian needs. To use Lenin's phrase, they were "too Russian".

This passage also clarifies what Gramsci meant in §14.68 by saying that international concepts which could not be applied in practise had resulted "in a state of passivity and inertia in two distinct phases". What were these phases? The first phase culminated in the outbreak of war in 1914 which marked, as Gramsci saw it, the demise of the Second International. The second phase culminated in the advent of Hitler and the passive destruction of German communism in 1933.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.1735.

For were not the leaders of German Communism (with Trotsky's encouragement)⁴¹ "waiting for a form of Napoleonism" in 1933? Was not the false expectation of intervention by the Red Army part of their fatal "conceit"? The logic of Gramsci's thinking appears to be that 1933 effectively marked the demise of the Third International. Needless to say, this did not imply that marxist internationalism was dead: the Spanish Civil War shortly after provided abundant 'practical' proof that it was not. Gramsci merely implied that the Russian or Stalinist concepts which now reigned supreme in the Third International had nothing to do with internationalism.

A further implication of Gramsci's objectivity, however, relates to the question of "communist discipline". For the principle that "in the struggle between nations, it is in the interest of each one that the other should be weakened by internal struggles" applied to the Soviet Union in the reverse sense. This would explain Gramsci's reflections on the phenomenon of "black parliamentarism" in §14.74 and §14.76, which he explicitly extended to the Soviet Union.

It appears that 'black' parliamentarism is a theme to develop more fully if only because it affords the opportunity to define precisely the political concepts which make up the 'parliamentary' conception. The comparisons with other countries are interesting in this regard: was not the liquidation of Leon Davidovitch, for example, 'also' an episode in the liquidation of the 'black' parliament which continued to exist after the abolition of the 'legal' parliament?⁴²

The precise context of these last notes in Notebook 14 must be established more positively before we jump to conclusions about Gramsci's 'position' between Trotsky and Stalin. His 'position' is usually more 'objective' than the surface of the notes would lead us to believe and tended to be located at a critical distance from both sides. Nevertheless, if Gramsci was suggesting that the liquidation of the Trotskyist Opposition was necessary, this was consistent with his warning that internal struggles were dangerous because they "played the foreigner's game". It was also consistent with his decision in 1933 to maintain "communist discipline" and with his act of faith in the project of "socialist construction" in the Soviet Union.

⁴¹ Leon Trotsky: *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (Penguin, 1975). At the end of 'Germany, the Key to the International Situation' (26 November 1931) Trotsky stated: "It should be axiomatic for every revolutionary worker that the attempt of the fascists to seize power in Germany must lead to the mobilisation of the Red Army" (p.95). In 'Hitler and the Red Army' (21 March 1933) Trotsky stated: "A year and a half ago, we wrote that the Red Army, in its principal mass, ought to turn its face to the West to acquire the possibility of smashing fascism before it destroys the German proletariat...." (p.395).

⁴² §14.74. *Past and Present. Self-Criticism and the Hypocrisy of Self-Criticism*, QCIII p.1742-1743 and its continuation in §14.76. *Past and Present*, QCIII p.1744.

In spite of Trotsky's vision of the international preconditions of socialism and his reservations about the tempo of Stalin's 'super-industrialisation', not even he abandoned hope in this.

§14.57, §15.05, §15.16. The Economic Conjunction, 1933

In early 1933 Gramsci attempted a new analysis of the capitalist crisis (§14.57 and §15.05). The last time he addressed this question was during the financial panic in Germany in the summer of 1931 (§6.123), although his comparative analysis of the unemployment figures in England and Germany at their peak in the summer of 1932 (§9.61) showed that he continued to keep a sharp eye on *movement* of the structure.⁴³ The new analysis was probably based on the supposition that the crisis was entering a new 'conjunction' at the start of 1933. If so, this had as much to do with political as economic developments. The "practical origin" of these notes, written in February-March, was very probably the coming to power of Hitler and the nationalist government in Germany. This is consistent with Gramsci's conception that the economic 'conjunction' was "closely linked to immediate politics" (§6.130) and with the argument presented in these notes that "one of the most visible features of the 'current crisis' is the aggravation of the nationalistic (State-nationalistic) element in the economy" (§15.05). Gramsci was thinking of the first measures of Hitler's government in economic policy - increased protection for agriculture, commitment to autarky in foodstuffs, and unilateral repeal of the commercial quotas recently agreed with France⁴⁴ - although he obviously meant to describe a *general trend* rather than a particular case.

Gramsci's starts from the liberal analysis of the 'elements' of the economic crisis as listed by Einaudi's *La Riforma Sociale* at the start of 1933.⁴⁵ He suggests a different starting-point more in tune with current political trends than 'classical' economic theory. "It seems to me that in doing an analysis it is necessary to start by listing the impediments which national (or nationalistic) policies have put in the way of the circulation of 1) goods 2) capital 3) men". He argues that since the crisis is

⁴³ See above: §6.123. *Past and Present*. Observations on the crisis of 1929-30-?, QCII p.792-793, and §9.61. *Past and Present*. *England and Germany*, QCII p1131-1132.

⁴⁴ See the report on 'The Economic Situation' under the rubric *Germania* in RSE, 7 March 1933, p.512-514.

⁴⁵ See Professor Gerratana's note to §14.57. *Past and Present*, in QCIV p. 2934.

not 'conjunctural' (as Einaudi assumed)⁴⁶ but 'organic', it can only be overcome by creating a new structure "which will take account of the tendencies built into the old structure and dominate these through the new premisses on which it is based". By the 'old structure' Gramsci means the liberal regime with its tendency towards free (ie, international) circulation, but the many barriers now being erected to free circulation were creating a 'new structure'. The new premiss was nationalist rather than internationalist.

§14.57. Past and Present.....

In this case the major premiss is nationalism, which does not simply consist in the attempt to produce in one's own territory everything consumed there (which means that all forces are directed towards anticipating the state of war) since this finds expression in traditional-style protectionism. It also consists in the attempt to fix the main channels of trade with particular countries either because they are allies (and therefore to support or to shape them in a way more suited to the state of war) or with the aim of cutting them off even before military hostilities begin (and this new type of economic policy is the policy of 'quotas' which is based on the absurd premiss that between two countries there must be an 'equal balance' in the exchange of goods, not that every country can only balance at par by trading with all the other countries without distinction).⁴⁷

The thread of economic nationalism was then woven by Gramsci into his main analysis in §15.05 except that he now thinks of it as a tendency inherent from the start in the 'old structure' rather than the premiss of a new one. Further threads from his earlier notes on the economic crisis are now woven into the larger picture, notably the conception of the national economy as a *dynamic equilibrium* between competing tendencies (§6.123) and the *reciprocal function* of different countries in the international economy (§9.61). Moreover, the "catastrophic phase" starting in 1929 is part of an "organic" crisis which must be seen in historical perspective.

§15.05. Past and Present. The Crisis. The study of the events which are subsumed under the term 'crisis' and which have assumed a protracted, catastrophic form from 1929 to the present time merits special attention.

1) Anyone who tries to argue that there is a single interpretation of these events, or (and this amounts to the same thing) to find a single cause or origin, will have to be rebutted. We are dealing with a process with many manifestations, in which causes and effects are intertwined and overlap with each other. To simplify means to distort and to misrepresent. It is a complex process, therefore, like many other phenomena, not a single 'event' which is repeated in various forms all originating from a single cause.

2) When did the crisis begin? This question is bound up with the first one. Since we are dealing with a development not with an event, this is an important question. We could say that there is no such thing as a starting date of the crisis but only of some of the noisier 'manifestations' which are erroneously and tendentially taken to be the crisis itself. For some the start of the crisis is the crash of the New York stock exchange in the autumn of 1929, which for those who want to find the origin and cause of the crisis in 'Americanism'

⁴⁶ Gramsci's analysis in §14.57 recalls his criticism of this assumption in §8.216. *Short Notes on Economics. Ugo Spirito and Co.*, QCII p.1076-1078.

⁴⁷ §14.57. *Past and Present*, QCIII p.1716.

is understandable. But the events of the autumn of 1929 in America are only one of the noisy manifestations of the developing crisis, nothing more. The whole postwar period is one of crisis, with attempts to obviate it which have been successful now and again in this or that country, nothing more. For others (and perhaps they are not far wrong) the war itself is a manifestation of the crisis, not to say the first manifestation: the political and organisational response of those responsible for the crisis was precisely the war. (This shows that it is difficult in analysing the facts to separate the economic from the political, ideological crises etc even if this is possible scientifically, i.e. by a process of abstraction).

3) Does the the crisis have its origin in the technical relations, i.e. in the positions of the respective classes, or in other facts? Legislation, disorders etc? It certainly appears demonstrable that the crisis has 'technical' origins, i.e. in the respective class relations, but that at the beginning its first manifestations or signs gave rise to conflicts of various kinds and to legislative interventions which showed up the 'crisis' itself or which increased some of the component factors but did not determine it.

These three points: 1) the crisis is a complex process; 2) the crisis began at least with the war, if this was not its first manifestation; 3) the crisis has internal origins, in the modes of production and thus of exchange, and not in political or juridical facts. These seem to be the first three points to establish clearly and accurately.

A further point is not to overlook the simple facts, i.e. the basic contradictions of contemporary society, in favour of apparently complex (but it would be better to say 'far-fetched') facts. One of the fundamental contradictions is this: that whereas internationalism, or rather 'cosmopolitanism', is the necessary premiss of economic life, State life has developed increasingly in the direction of 'nationalism', 'self-sufficiency' etc. One of the most visible features of the 'current crisis' is the aggravation of the nationalistic (State-nationalistic) element of the economy: quota systems, clearing, restrictions on foreign exchange dealings, balanced trading between only two states etc. We could therefore say - and this would be more exact - that the 'crisis' is really the quantitative intensification of certain elements which are neither new nor original, but the intensification of certain phenomena in particular whereas other elements which were present from the start and acted simultaneously with the first, with the effect of neutralising them, have become inoperative or have disappeared entirely. In brief, the development of capitalism has been a 'continuous crisis', so to speak: that is, an extremely rapid movement of elements which balanced and neutralised one another. At a certain point in this movement, some elements have become predominant whilst others have disappeared or become irrelevant in the general framework. This is when events suddenly occur which are given the specific name 'crisis' and which are more or less serious depending precisely on whether major or minor elements of equilibrium come into play. Given this general framework, the various levels and aspects of the phenomenon can be studied: monetary, financial, productive, internal commerce, international commerce etc, although this does not exclude the possibility - given the international division of labour and of functions - that any one of these aspects may appear to be the prevalent or most obvious one in this country or that. But the fundamental problem is that of production and the disequilibrium in production between progressive industries (in which constant capital has been increasing) and stagnant industries (where the immediate labour force counts a lot). Since a stratification between progressive and stagnant industries also occurs in the international field, it is understandable that the countries in which the progressive industries are superabundant have felt the crisis more etc. Hence the various illusions arising from the failure to understand the fact that the world is a unity whether one likes it or not, and that as long as certain structural conditions exist all countries will pass through certain 'crises'. (For all these arguments it will be necessary to consult the literature produced by the League of Nations, its experts and its financial commission which will at least be useful in assembling all the material on the question; the same applies to the publications of the most important international journals and the Houses of Parliament).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ §15.05. *Past and Present. The Crisis*, QCIII p.1755-1759. A translation of the whole note is in FSPN p.219-221.

The idea of 'a stratification between progressive and stagnant (*stazionarie*) industries in the international field' appears to be a generalisation from his earlier analysis of the economic structure of England and Germany in §9.61 (August 1932) which, he believed, would show "the reciprocal function of each in the world economy - an aspect of the structure which is not usually observed very carefully". By comparing the unemployment figures in the two countries, Gramsci had formed the hypothesis in the summer of 1932 that "English unemployment, although numerically lower than German unemployment, indicates that the coefficient 'organic crisis' is higher in England than in Germany where the coefficient 'cyclical crisis' is more important. Consequently, in the event of a 'cyclical' recovery unemployment would be absorbed more easily in Germany than in England".⁴⁹

Reading his periodicals in the spring of 1933 Gramsci may have detected the signs of a cyclical recovery which would put this hypothesis to the test. This would explain why sometime in April-May 1933 - perhaps in connection with the preparations for the World Economic Conference at the end of May⁵⁰ - Gramsci produced a second definition of the term 'conjuncture'. The first one written in 1931 asked what was the difference between the 'conjuncture' and the economic 'situation' (§6.130): the new one defined the relation of the 'conjuncture' to the economic 'cycle'.

§15.16. *Encyclopaedic Ideas...*

Conjuncture. The conjuncture can be defined as the totality of circumstances which determine the market in a given phase, as long as these circumstances are conceived as being in movement, i.e. are conceived as a totality which leads to a process of continually new combinations, a process which is the economic cycle. The conjuncture is studied in order to predict and hence also, within certain limits, to direct the economic cycle in a way favourable to business. Hence the conjuncture has also been defined as the oscillation of the economic situation, or the totality of such oscillations.⁵¹

For Gramsci the diagnosis of economic *movement* was not an end in itself, of course, but an indispensable tool in the science and art of politics. The study of the 'conjuncture' was important because "it is more closely linked to immediate politics" (1931), just as the 'coefficient organic-cyclical' crisis' (1932) was invented by

⁴⁹ §9.61. *Past and Present. England and Germany*, QCII p.1132.

⁵⁰ Gramsci was reading the April issues of RSE at the time of writing this brief note (see Professor Gerratana's note to the preceding §15.12 in QCIV p.2944: the quotation Gramsci cites was taken from the *Economist* as reported in RSE, 25 April 1933, p.932). See 'Studi e commenti sulla crisi economica mondiale' under the rubric *Problemi Politici Generali* in RSE, 18 April 1933, and under the same rubric 'La Conferenza economica mondiale e il problema dei debiti di guerra' in RSE, 25 April 1933, p.931-932 - i.e. the same pages from which the quotation in §15.12 was taken.

⁵¹ §15.16. *Encyclopaedic Ideas. Congiuntura.*, QCIII p.1774.

Gramsci as a tool of *political* forecasting. If we contextualise the new definition, we may say that Gramsci is trying to relate the change of government in Germany in 1933 - the new 'conjuncture' - to the economic cycle, not forgetting that political change itself was a significant element in "the totality of circumstances which determine the market in a given phase". If the new definition was an implicit recognition on his part that an upturn in the economic cycle was under way, the important question was whether or not the new German government had the ability, "within certain limits", to direct it in a way favourable to business. The rapid absorption of unemployment in Germany after 1933 may have proved Gramsci's hypothesis correct, but this is beside the point. The hypothesis was not an economic prediction but an element of political judgement. In the perspective of 1933, the future stability of the new regime depended on its ability to direct the "automatic" economic cycle to its own advantage. Whether it would be able to do this with the Economics Minister Hugenburg at the helm remained to be seen.

After the Terror.

§15.11, §15.15 etc: Nazism as Passive Revolution, or 'Transformism'

In discussing 'progressive' and 'reactionary' forms of Caesarism at the turn of 1932-33 Gramsci stated that "the problem is to see whether in the dialectic 'revolution-restoration' it is the element of revolution or restoration which predominates, for it is certain that in the movement of history there is no turning back and there are no such things as restorations *in toto*" (§9.133). As we saw, after the fall of Schleicher and the appointment of Hitler, Gramsci deliberately compared Nazism with a movement of the "other side", ie, the Dreyfusard movement in France: the common factor was that such movements "are certainly not revolutions but are not entirely reactionary either, at least in the sense that they also shatter stifling and ossified State structures in the dominant camp and introduce into State life and social activity a different and more numerous personnel" (§14.23). By comparison with Hindenburg's reactionary chancellors Papen and Schleicher, Gramsci considered the advent of Hitler a relatively 'progressive' development although the semantic problems of this term obviously did not escape him. The dialectic 'revolution-restoration' was a useful way of interpreting the historical significance of the new Caesarist coalition. Although the element of 'restoration' in Hitler's cabinet seemed to predominate, the presence of the Nazis signified that it was not a restoration *in toto*. But how could the historical

significance of the new element be explained? To call it a 'revolution' would be taking the Nazis at their word: "it was certainly not a revolution", therefore. But if it was "not entirely reactionary either", Gramsci was obviously not comfortable describing it as "relatively 'progressive'".⁵²

After the Nazi terror had done its work, he began a new series of notes on the concept of 'passive revolution'.⁵³ The practical origin of these notes was the new situation created by the destruction of the German Communist party, which placed the concept of passive revolution (and its relation to war of position) on Gramsci's agenda. The notes continued the analysis of 'revolution-restoration' only the problem is stated slightly differently: " 'Restorations' need to be judged 'dynamically', as a 'cunning of providence' in Vico's sense" (§15.11).

Past and Present

To understand the whole configuration of Gramsci's thinking about the German situation in March 1933, we must refer back to a series of notes he wrote a year earlier in which, so to speak, he prepared 'theoretically' for this moment. It was the start of 1932, the tenth anniversary of the Fascist "revolution" : Gramsci used the occasion to elaborate a cluster of concepts which would then shape his thinking about the Nazi "revolution" of 1933.

The close affinity between 'revolution-restoration' and 'passive revolution' was first suggested in §8.25.

§8.25. *Risorgimento*. Find out what Quinet means, and how he justifies, the formula of equivalence of revolution-restoration in Italian history.....Can Quinet's concept be considered close to Cuoco's concept of 'passive revolution'? Both Quinet's 'revolution-restoration' and Cuoco's 'passive revolution' intend to express the historical fact of the absence of popular initiative in the development of Italian history, and the fact that 'progress' happens as a reaction on the part of the dominant classes to the sporadic and disorganic rebelliousness of the popular masses with 'restorations' which include some recognition of popular needs - hence 'progressive restorations' or 'revolutions-restorations' or even 'passive revolutions' etc ⁵⁴

⁵² Jeremy Noakes has observed in this context that "to use the term 'revolution' is to enter a semantic minefield": see his analysis of the relation between the Nazis and the German elites after 1933 in 'Nazism and Revolution', in Noel O'Sullivan, ed., *Revolutionary Theory and Political Reality* (London, 1983) p.73-100.

⁵³ The series included §15.11, §15.15, §15.17, §15.25, §15.56, §15.59, §15.62.

⁵⁴ §825, QCII p.957.

The concept was that progress happens as part of the *reaction* of the dominant classes who in order to *suppress* any further intervention of the popular masses in politics give some satisfaction to their needs (hence the *equivalence* of restoration-revolution). In the following §8.36, Gramsci equates this dialectical process with the phenomenon known in Italian history as 'transformism'.

§8.36. *Risorgimento. Transformism.* Transformism as one of the historical forms of what has already been noted about 'revolution-restoration' or 'passive revolution', with respect to the process of formation of a modern State in Italy. Transformism as a "real historical document" of the real nature of the parties which appeared as extremist in the period of militant activity (Party of Action). Two periods of transformism: 1. from 1860 to 1900 'molecular' transformism, ie, individual political figures formed by the democratic opposition parties are incorporated individually into the conservative-moderate 'political class' (characterised by its aversion to any intervention of the popular masses into State life, to any organic reform which would substitute a 'hegemony' for the crude, dictatorial 'dominance'); 2. from 1900 onwards transformism of entire groups who pass over from the extreme to the moderate camp (the first event is the formation of the nationalist party, with ex-syndicalist and anarchist groups, which culminates in the Libyan war in the first instance and subsequently in interventionism).⁵⁵

Thus, leaders of the democratic opposition who appeared extreme in the period of militant activity were subsequently absorbed by the conservative 'political class' (in Mosca's sense). The passage of time, however, does not alter their *lack of principle*. For the the one-time democrats have now joined a 'political class' opposed to any participation of the popular masses in State life. The would-be "extremists" were therefore not what they appeared to be. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the political class is "transformed" by absorbing the democratic leaders since Gramsci seems to suggest that this is how it becomes conscious of popular needs. Without this, there would be no "passive revolution".

This analysis formed the background to Gramsci's question in §8.210: "Do we have to accept as "revolutionary" all those movements which try to dignify and justify themselves by calling themselves "revolutions"?⁵⁶ In the tenth anniversary of its "revolution", Gramsci was thinking primarily of Fascism, although he was aware that Nazism (currently in its period of militant activity) also used 'revolutionary' nomenclature. In fact, this whole cluster of concepts - 'revolution-restoration', 'passive revolution', 'transformism' - was an attempt to analyse critically fascism's claim to be a revolution.

It is important to note that Gramsci saw the origin of Fascism itself as the start of a process of transformism. Although the interventionist movement of 1915 claimed to

⁵⁵ §8.36, QCII p.962-963.

⁵⁶ §8.210. *History and Anti-History*, QCII p.1068.

be 'revolutionary', it really consisted in the wholesale 'passing over' of the revolutionary personnel (including ex-syndicalists and anarchists) from the extreme to the conservative-moderate camp. In view of these beginnings, it was logical that Gramsci then described fascism as a form of "passive revolution". Commenting in §8.236 on Croce's *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, which he describes as an entire treatise on passive revolution, he asks: "Could this treatise have a current significance? Would not a new 'liberalism' under modern conditions be precisely 'fascism'? Would not fascism be precisely the form of 'passive revolution' proper to the twentieth century just as liberalism was in the nineteenth century? I have mentioned this thesis in another note and the whole thesis should be examined in depth".⁵⁷

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In the notes of 1933 Gramsci "documented" the concept of passive revolution from the history of the Italian Risorgimento but, significantly, he placed the notes under the rubric 'Machiavelli' not 'Risorgimento'. The aim was to derive from historical analysis "some general principle of political science" which could be applied in analysing contemporary politics. The whole cycle of passive revolution in nineteenth-century Italy was reviewed in order to take a long view of a 'similar' process which (in Gramsci's hypothesis) may be starting in Germany now that the Nazis had come to power. The curious feature of these notes when studied in context is the way in which analysis of the Risorgimento bears the 'imprint' of contemporary forms redolent of Germany's "national revolution". Behind the "visionary apostle" Mazzini, the prophet of Italy's national "mission", or the "charismatic" Garibaldi, the ghostly presence of Hitler in various guises is almost tangible; again, behind Garibaldi's Red Shirts, the "revolutionary levy", lies the shadow of Hitler's men of action, the Storm Troops. Furthermore, Gramsci compared the 'Thousand' to the levy of reserve officers during the First World War knowing that this category supplied the leaders of the para-military formations of post-war politics, including the Nazi S.A. The use of shock troops, it will be recalled, was regarded by Gramsci as characteristic of the war of position, not the war of movement: "the use of shock should not be considered a sign of the general

⁵⁷ §8.236. *Points towards an essay on Croce*, QCII p.1088-1089.

combativity of the mass of troops but, on the contrary, as a sign of their passivity and relative demoralisation" (§1.133).

These 'similarities' are intuitive, experimental suggestions which seem extremely far-fetched at first sight and it would certainly be mistaken to try to pursue them 'systematically'. Nevertheless, they fall into Gramsci's fundamental pattern of theorising which attempted to synthesise the experience of contrasting political movements in terms of a common principle of political science. At this point the hypothesis - "Would not fascism be precisely the form of 'passive revolution' proper to the twentieth century just as liberalism was in the nineteenth century?" - came into play. Gramsci analyses the role of the revolutionary forces in the national movement in Italy in order to assess the contribution of the 'revolutionary' (ie, Nazi) forces in the national movement in Germany. The 'scientific' principle (in italics) was embedded in the historical analysis

§15.11. Machiavelli. Can the concept of 'passive revolution' in the sense attributed by Vincenzo Cuoco to the first period of the Italian Risorgimento, be related to the concept of 'war of position' in contrast to war of manoeuvre? In other words, did these concepts have a meaning after the French Revolution and can the twin figures of Proudhon and Gioberti be explained in terms of the panic created by the Terror of 1793, as Sorel's ideas can be in terms of the panic following the Paris massacres of 1871? In other words, 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 once again becomes a war of manoeuvre?

'Restorations' need to be judged 'dynamically', as a 'cunning of providence' in Vico's sense. One problem is the following: in the struggle Cavour-Mazzini, in which Cavour is the exponent of the passive revolution/war of position and Mazzini of popular initiative/war of manoeuvre, are not both of them indispensable to precisely the same extent? Yet it has to be taken into account that whereas Cavour was aware of his role (at least up to a certain point) inasmuch as he understood the role of Mazzini, the latter does not seem to have been aware of his own or of Cavour's. If, on the contrary, Mazzini had possessed such awareness - in other words, if he had been a realistic politician and not a visionary apostle (ie, if he had not been Mazzini) - then the equilibrium which resulted from the convergence of the two men's activities would have been different, would have been more favourable to Mazzinianism. In other words, the Italian State would have been constituted on a less retrograde and more modern basis. *And since similar situations almost always arise in every historical development, one should see if it is not possible to draw from this some general principle of political science and art. One may apply to the concept of passive revolution (documenting it from the Italian Risorgimento) the interpretative criterion of molecular changes which in fact progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes.* Thus, in the Italian Risorgimento it has been seen how the composition of the moderate forces was progressively modified by the passing over to Cavourism (after 1848) of ever new elements of the Action Party, so that on the one hand neo-Guelphism was liquidated and on the other the Mazzinian movement was impoverished (Garibaldi's oscillations etc also belong to this process). *This element is therefore the initial phase of the phenomenon which is later called 'transformism' and whose importance as a form of historical*

development has not as yet, it seems, been adequately emphasised. ⁵⁸

In the second of the notes Gramsci's thinking moves on from Mazzini's moment in 1848-49 to Garibaldi's in 1859-60. The movement of thought corresponded to the transition in the Risorgimento from the 'short' war of movement to the 'long' war of position. Now that the mass 'tidal wave' of 1848-49 had subsided, the initiative of the popular-democratic forces passed to the revolutionary 'levy', Garibaldi's Red Shirts. The 'process' of transition was represented in terms of the organic metaphor of "molecular changes" which Gramsci regarded as the first stage of "transformism". After 1848 the passing over of Mazzini's followers to the leadership of Cavour 'transformed' the liberal-conservative party and thus prepared it for the new changes which came in 1859-60. The focus of Gramsci's analysis now switches from Cavour-Mazzini to Cavour-Garibaldi.

§15.15. Machiavelli. Other aspects of the relation 'passive revolution/war of position' in the Italian Risorgimento can be studied too. An extremely important one is what may be called the 'personnel' aspect, another is that of the 'revolutionary levy'. The 'personnel' aspect can be compared precisely with what happened in the First World War in the relationship between the career officers and reserve officers on the one hand, and between the conscripts and the volunteers/commandos on the other. The career officers corresponded in the Risorgimento to the regular, organic, traditional etc political parties, which at the moment for action (1848) proved to be virtually useless and in 1848-49 were overwhelmed by the popular-democratic Mazzinian tidal wave. This tidal wave was chaotic, formless, 'extempore' so to speak; nevertheless, under improvised leaders (or at least not belonging to groups formed beforehand such as the moderate party), obtained successes which were undoubtedly greater than those achieved by the moderates: the Roman Republic and Venice showed a very notable strength of resistance. In the period after 1848 the relation between the two forces - the regular and 'charismatic' - was organised around Cavour and Garibaldi and produced the greatest result, although this result was later taken over (*Incamerato*) by Cavour.

This personnel aspect is related to the other aspect, the 'levy'. It should be observed that the technical difficulty on which Mazzinian initiatives always came to grief was precisely that of the 'revolutionary levy'.....In the second period (1859-60) the 'revolutionary levy', which is what Garibaldi's Thousand was, was made possible firstly by the fact that Garibaldi grafted himself on to the Piedmontese national forces and secondly by the fact that the English fleet effectively protected the landing at Marsala and the capture of Palermo, neutralising the Bourbon fleet. In Milan after the Five Days and in republican Rome, Mazzini had opportunities to set up recruitment centres for an organic levy but had no intention of doing so. This explains his conflict with Garibaldi in Rome and his ineffectiveness in Milan compared with Cattaneo and the Milanese democratic group. *In any case, although the course of events in the Risorgimento revealed the enormous importance of the 'demogogic' mass movement with its leaders thrown up by chance,*

⁵⁸ §15.11, QCIII p.1766-1767 and SPN p.108-109. My italics. Gramsci's emphasis on the value of 'transformism' as a historical-political concept was endorsed by the historian Paul Ginsborg: "Passive revolution would also seem an accurate description of certain dynamics of change within the bourgeoisie itself. Gramsci's subtle analysis of the way in which the Italian liberal Moderates absorbed the major elements of the radical Action Party (and were themselves changed in the process) is probably his greatest contribution to the history of the Risorgimento": in John A.Davis,ed., *Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution* (London, 1979), p. 47.

improvised etc, it was absorbed (riassunto) by the traditional organic forces - in other words, by the parties of long-standing with rationally-formed leaders etc. The same result occurs in all political events of this type.....Similarly, in the First World War the old career officers got the upper hand over the reservists etc (cf. notes in other notebooks on this question). In any case, the absence among the radical-popular forces of any awareness of the role of the other side prevented them from being fully aware of their own role either. Hence their weight in the final balance of forces was not proportional to their effective power of intervention, so that they failed to achieve a more advanced result along more progressive and modern lines.⁵⁹

The general principle remains the same from one note to the other except that whereas in the first the revolutionary personnel “transform” the pre-existing forces, in the second they are “absorbed” by them. Translated into the terms of German politics, we may say that Gramsci’s historical analysis is an attempt to explore two questions posed by the German situation in March 1933: the “personnel” question and the “revolutionary levy” question. How far would the introduction of Hitler and other leading personnel of the Nazi movement into State life transform (ie, ‘revolutionise’) the pre-existing forces? In effect, Gramsci had already raised this question when he suggested that movements of the Dreyfus-type were not entirely reactionary because “they shatter stifling and ossified State structures in the dominant camp and introduce into State life and social activity *a different and more numerous personnel* ” (§14.23). Conversely, how far would Hitler and the other Nazi leaders, in passing over to the dominant camp, simply be “absorbed”? Did not the “law of the turncoat” (§15.07) imply that as soon as they achieved power Hitler and the Nazi “big shots” would betray the ‘revolutionary’ hopes of their followers.

The second question concerned the revolutionary levy. Would the “reservists” (ie, the Storm Troops) or the “career officers” gain the upper-hand? In many ways this was the crucial question facing Hitler after March 1933. It was decided by the “new changes” of 1934, ie, the elimination of Rohm on the ‘Night of Long Knives’. But this was a moment of restoration not revolution. The leaders of the Storm Troops were stopped from “passing over” into the officer corps so that its “molecular transformation” through a wholesale change of personnel could not take place.

Another question, which may appear naive in retrospect, was this: how far was Hitler conscious of his role? The guiding-thread in the analysis is that neither Mazzini nor Garibaldi were fully aware of the role of the ‘realist’ Cavour, and therefore of their own role, with the result that “their weight in the final balance of

⁵⁹ §15.15, QCIII p.1772-1774 and SPN p.111-113. My italics.

forces is not proportional to their effective power of intervention". Gramsci's explanation lies in the role of 'permanent' political parties. Mazzini and Garibaldi were "improvised" leaders thrown up "by chance" by the "demagogic" mass movement, whereas Cavour was the product of "a party of long-standing with rationally formed leaders". Could something 'similar' be said of Hitler in 1933? Was he not an improvised leader thrown up by the demagogic mass movement rather than the product of a permanent party (like the conservatives) with rationally-formed leaders? Was Hitler aware of the role of his conservative partners, and therefore of his own role, or was he playing the 'long-term' game of the conservatives without being fully aware of it? The historical notes on passive revolution were also an attempt to answer this *contemporary* political question. Of course, the question 'how far was Hitler conscious of his role?' appears naive in view of the speed with which he outmanoeuvred his conservative partners in government, but Gramsci's analysis raises a deeper question about the political processes by which the ultimately unrealistic, irrational aims of the charismatic leader may come to dominate the political (and military) agenda.

As a guide to interpreting the prospects of the German situation in 1933, Gramsci's analysis of the Risorgimento is misleading in a number of ways. The analysis of Cavour's role, for example, may have led him to overestimate the political capacity of the conservatives (the 'traditional intellectuals') in Hitler's coalition. In fact, the advent of Hitler in 1933 signified that the deficiency of Germany's 'natural' leaders was not simply "momentary" but permanent (ie, "organic"), unless Hitler himself is seen as representing a hitherto untapped source of leadership potential in the dominant camp. But if Gramsci was deceived in this respect, the error was soon corrected. The value of his analysis lies in the concept of passive revolution in the established elites - "transformism" - which remains a potentially useful way of interpreting the "revolutionary" significance of National Socialism.

Another criterion, which relates to the question of how far 'demagogic' leaders are conscious of their role compared to 'rationally-formed' leaders, was formulated in §15.06:

It can be stated that no real movement becomes conscious of its global significance (*la sua totalitaria*) all at once but step by step, through experience. It learns from the facts that nothing that exists is natural (in the irrational sense of the word) but exists because certain conditions exist and that if these disappear it must have consequences. In this way the movement perfects itself, shedding its arbitrary,

'symbiotic' features; it becomes genuinely independent in the sense that if it wants certain results, it creates the necessary preconditions - indeed, it commits all its forces to the task of creating them.⁶⁰

By this criterion the Nazi movement would develop a 'revolutionary' ideology pragmatically and would learn through the experience of power to free itself from its 'superstitious' respect for the country's 'natural' leaders. This 'pragmatic' explanation of the Nazis' ideological aims coincides to some extent with the way in which 'functionalist' historians have explained the growing radicalism of Nazi policy, especially towards the Jews. But this suggestion brings into focus the underlying paradox of applying to National Socialism the concept of passive revolution. For Gramsci understood the concept in Vico's sense as a "cunning of providence", as if the Nazis were the unwitting instrument of 'Reason' in the enlightenment sense of the word. His conception that Nazism was 'rational' (and thus 'revolutionary') to the extent that it freed itself from a superstitious or 'irrational' respect for tradition showed Gramsci to be a true heir of the Enlightenment. His metaphysical faith in the rational working of history was heroic under the circumstances, but it must be said that if the 'cunning of providence' was at work in Germany after 1933 there was nothing rational about it.

Gramsci concluded the notes on passive revolution in §15.62. This was written some months later in June-July 1933, by when all political parties in Germany except the Nazi Party had been suppressed. Significantly Gramsci called it the "first epilogue" as if to indicate that it was his last word on the theoretical lessons of the German defeat. Although he still thought that passive revolution was a useful concept, he now began to have doubts about it "since the whole way of posing the question may induce some kind of fatalism". For Vico's "cunning of providence" could easily be invoked to support the same kind of "fatalism of the divine-right type" which underpinned the "conceit" of the German Communist party and caused it to go down passively to defeat.

§15.62. *Past and Present. First Epilogue.* The thesis of the 'passive revolution' as an interpretation of the Risorgimento period and of every epoch characterised by complex historical upheavals. Utility and dangers of this thesis. Danger of historical defeatism, i.e. of indifferentism, since the whole way of posing the question may induce a belief in some kind of fatalism etc. Yet the conception remains a dialectical one - in other words, it presupposes, indeed it postulates as necessary, a vigorous antithesis which presents intransigently all its potentialities for development. Hence the theory of 'passive revolution' understood not as a programme, as it was for the Italian liberals in the Risorgimento, but as a criterion of interpretation in the absence of other elements which

⁶⁰ §15.06. *Machiavelli. Totalitarian and partial conceptions of the world and practical dispositions*, QCIII p.1760-1761.

are active in a dominant way. (Hence the struggle against the political morphinism which emanates from Croce and his historicism).....

A revision of certain sectarian ideas on the theory of the party which represent precisely a form of fatalism of the 'divine right' type. Development of the concepts of the mass party and the small elite party and the mediation between the two. (Theoretical and practical mediation: theoretically, is it possible for a relatively small but still significant group to exist, let us say several thousand strong, which is socially and ideologically homogeneous, without its very existence being proof of a widespread state of affairs and corresponding state of mind which cannot be expressed on account of purely mechanical, external, and hence transitory causes?).⁶¹

In the absence of a "vigorous antithesis" in Germany, Gramsci seems to return to Lenin's theory of the party in *What is to be Done?* in order to regenerate the antithesis at a seemingly hopeless juncture.

§15.27, §15.48 (I). The 'Third Reich' as a Sorellian Myth

Hitler's 'national revolution' was welcomed for the most part with uncritical enthusiasm by fascist intellectuals in Italy, but the occasional echo of discordant, critical voices could still be heard in Gramsci's periodicals. In a review by the historian Delio Cantimori in the March issue of *Leonardo*, Gramsci heard the voice of Conrad Heiden, the first historian of National Socialism.

§15.27. Since the history of German National Socialism will tend to be written these days for the purpose of paying court (*a scopi aulici*), it will be necessary to remember the volume by Conrad Heiden, *Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus, die Karriere einer Idee* (Berlin, Rowohlt, 1932, pp's 305 (see the review by Dello Cantimori in *Leonardo*, March 1933)).⁶²

Gramsci's note is all too brief but if we turn to Cantimori's review we gain some idea of why he recommended it.

The publishers Rowohlt have added to their political collection an informative history of National Socialism, a good book which deserves to be mentioned notwithstanding its one-sided approach and, occasionally, its excessively corrosive criticism of the personality of Hitler. Heiden combines a lively realism and a well developed critical sense with an abstract conception of the parties and of the political forces. This causes him to neglect a number of essential elements and forces in the Hitlerite movement, although the author probably does not think of them as essential to the movement but rather as aspects of the general history of Germany in recent years. Heiden's criticism that Hitlerism has no programme could have been transformed into a fruitful principle of interpretation but his polemical position, which sees no intellectual value in any of the writers of National Socialism (whereas at least the work of the Strassers is worth evaluating in doctrinal terms), prevents him from developing this principle in a useful way.

Heiden is quite clear about the origin of National Socialism: he argues that 'as a spiritual force it is the work of a few intellectuals, mostly from northern Germany, during the years 1926-28. As a living political cell it originated from the gigantic Patriotic Party and from the Pan-German League

⁶¹ §15.62, QCIII p.1827 and SPN p.114.

⁶² §15.27, QCIII p.1783.

(Fatherland Party, All-German Association) - in short, from the wartime annexationist movement of 1917. Its independent existence begins in 1919. As a political instrument it was prepared by the Reichswehr in Munich with whose help the figure of Adolf Hitler, a very intelligent man but of unreliable character, emerged along with captain Ernst Rohm. This was in 1921'.

The political maxim that it is necessary to avoid having too fixed a programme but to follow the course of events is derived by Heiden from Marxism and, in general terms, is basically correct. With these elements and along these lines Heiden develops his interpretation. His pragmatic realism is often most impressive but it is, perhaps, too sceptical and polemical. He reconstructs the history of the National Socialist Party internally, as the history of 'this state within the state', and it is therefore divorced from the history of Germany in the last ten years. The states of mind which have led so many young people to join the party are not examined, nor are the ideals of the many men who have inspired it. The two Strasser brothers are considered in terms of their political action and their drive for power inside the party not for their ideas (which are simply treated as instruments of struggle) or their efficacy. Indeed, the ideas of these men are not even examined as doctrinal instruments but solely for their immediate propaganda effect.

Within these limits, the work is written with magisterial command of the first-hand sources, with a sense of human understanding, and without polemical or apologetic petty-mindedness. Neither an exercise in apologetics nor in propaganda, it remains for the time being the best historical and critical work which we have on the subject.⁶³

Gramsci probably had some sympathy with Heiden's 'Marxist' view that Hitler had no fixed programme and therefore it was not worth taking National Socialist ideas seriously except as practical "instruments of struggle". This approach coincided to a large extent with his own analysis of the ideologies characteristic of 'charismatic' parties, although Gramsci was evidently more interested in explaining why such ideologies proved so effective.

Moreover, in the modern world the so-called 'charisma' of which Michels speaks always coincides with a primitive phase in the development of mass parties in which its doctrine appears as something nebulous and incoherent in the eyes of the masses and needs an infallible pope to interpret and adapt it to circumstances. The more this happens, the more the party originates and takes shape on the basis of incoherent and muddled ideologies.....These ideologies are nurtured by feelings and emotions which have still not come to the point of dissolving because the classes (or the class) which express them, having arrived historically at the point of dissolution, still have a certain basis and cling to the glories of the past in order to shield themselves from the future. ⁶⁴

One element of Nazi ideology which Gramsci considered worth studying was the idea of the 'Third Reich'. In the April issue of *Gerarchia* he read a critique of "the new myth, the latest dazzling utopia to be spread and exalted in Germany". The myth was attributed mainly to Rosenberg, "one of its most accomplished theorists and advocates", who gave it a racial twist by relating it to "the myth of blood". The article was a critical exposition of the idea, an exercise which Heiden had studiously avoided.

⁶³ *Leonardo*, March 1933, p.125.

⁶⁴ §2.75 (i) (1930). R.Michels etc, QCI p.233.

It is obvious from all aspects of daily life in Germany that everybody is in a state of messianic expectation..... Nor has the fact that Hitler has become Chancellor diminished the idealistic status and concrete value of an idea which first appeared a few years ago and has now achieved theoretical status: the Third Reich (terzo regno).

There is a great deal of discussion and writing about this new political system in Germany and in Europe, including for some time now in Italy . For the sake of greater clarity it is first necessary to point out that in the minds of its various theorists the word 'Reich' stands for an epoch or, better still, an era. The theory is not identified with one party but has penetrated many parties although for obvious reasons it has had most impact and success among the right-wing parties and the Hitlerites. From the circles of high culture and from scientific treatises, the theorists have carried the idea into the more emotive and passionate arenas of politics and journalism.....

The doctrine is formulated quite simply. Its theorists justify the name of the 'Third Reich' by harking back to Germany's glorious past, to its virtuous traditions. The first Reich in fact is the most glorious Holy Roman Empire, plainly feudal in character, which dominated the world of its time. The second is the Prussian empire of Frederick the Great, the founder of modern German power. This was the archetypal, model empire of which the Hohenzollerns were the last representatives. And the Third Reich? This is the one which is about to be inaugurated.⁶⁵

Although Profumi's article was surprisingly critical of the Nazi myth which he regarded as reactionary and dangerous, it would not have detained Gramsci for long. Apart from one or two phrases trying to capture the unique character of the Nazi 'restoration' ("a totalitarian return to tradition"), it mostly added to the "asphyxiating" gases (§28.01) given off by fascist intellectuals when discussing ideology. Nevertheless, Gramsci was obviously impressed by the effectiveness of this myth in focussing the messianic expectations of the German people.

§15.48. Machiavelli. (1) A study of keywords like 'Third Reich' used by movements of the German Right. Historical myths like these are essentially a concrete and effective way of presenting the myth of the 'historical mission' of a people. The point to study is precisely this: why is this form 'concrete and effective', or just more effective than another? In Germany the uninterrupted continuity (ie, not interrupted by permanent foreign invasions) between the medieval period of the Holy Roman Empire (the first Reich) and the modern period (from Frederick the Great to 1914) makes the concept of the 'Third Reich' immediately comprehensible. In Italy the concept of the 'Third Italy' during the Risorgimento could not be readily understood by the people because of the lack of historical continuity and homogeneity between ancient Rome and papal Rome (in fact, even the continuity between republican and imperial Rome was far from perfect). Hence the relative success of Mazzini's watchword of 'the people's Italy' which tended to mean a complete renewal of popular initiative in a democratic sense, a new Italian history in contrast to Gioberti's 'primato'. The latter tended to present the past in terms of its theoretically possible continuity with the future, ie, with a particular political programme in the here and now presented in a broad historical perspective. But Mazzini's myth did not take root and his successors watered it down and mixed it up with bookish rhetoric. The medieval Communes, which were an effective and radical historical renewal, might have served Mazzini as a precedent but they were exploited instead by the federalists like Cattaneo. [This theme should be related to the first notes written in the special notebook on Machiavelli].⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Vittorio Profumi: 'Il Terzo Regno', GER, April 1933, p.290. Note also the article, published six months earlier, by J.Evola: 'Il nuovo mito germanico del 'Terzo Regno'', POL, June-August 1932 (published November 1932) in which the 'Third Reich' is seen as an example of a Sorellian 'myth'.

⁶⁶ §15.48, QCIII, p.1808-1809.

The ideas of National Socialism, however muddled, should be taken seriously to the extent that they were "concrete and effective". His reference to the first notes in the special notebook on Machiavelli suggests that he considered the 'Third Reich' to be an example of a Sorelian myth, ie, "of a political ideology expressed neither in the form of a cold utopia nor as learned theorising, but rather as a creation of concrete fantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organise its collective will" (§13.01). The myth dramatised the coming of Hitler in 1933 as the dawn of a new 'epoch' which would restore Germany to its 'historic' power and glory. It was made concrete and effective by rituals like Potsdam Day on 21 March in which Hitler paid homage to the Prussian tradition at the tomb of Frederick the Great. However, in charismatic leadership the myth is embodied not by a permanent collective organism, a political party, but by a single individual. The myth of the 'Third Reich' served to magnify Hitler's image as the 'providential' man of German history. In spite of its long-term 'epoch-making' claims, however, the character of the myth was essentially short-term. In charismatic leadership the element of short-term 'restoration' rather than 'long-term' revolution predominated.

In the modern world, only those historical-political actions which are immediate and imminent, characterised by the necessity for lightning speed, can be incarnated mythically by a concrete individual. Such speed can only be made necessary by a great and imminent danger, a great danger which precisely fans passion and fanaticism suddenly to white heat, and annihilates the critical sense and the corrosive irony which are able to destroy the 'charismatic' character of the condottiere (as happened in the Boulanger adventure). But an improvised action of such a kind, by its very nature, cannot have a long-term and organic character. It will in almost all cases be appropriate to restoration and reorganisation, but not to the founding of new States or new national and social structures....It will be defensive rather than capable of original creation. Its underlying assumption will be that a collective will is already in existence but has become nerveless and dispersed, has suffered a collapse which is dangerous and threatening but not definitive and catastrophic, and that it is necessary to reconcentrate and reinforce it.....⁶⁷

§14.58, §15.66. The Generation Question

We saw from the notes on "the crisis of authority" in 1930 (§1.127,§3.34) that Gramsci regarded the youth question as a significant aspect of the German crisis. He showed particular interest in the literary expression of the crisis - the "rebellion of the sons against the fathers" (§3.03) - , but it also had a political dimension. Both the communists and the fascists claimed to represent the rebellion of the younger generation against the old. These claims were not without substance when the

⁶⁷ §13.01. The fundamental character of *The Prince*...., QCIII p.1558 and SPN p.129-130. This first note in Notebook 13, the special notebook on Machiavelli, was written in early 1932.

age-composition of their membership is compared to that of the 'historic' parties of the Left and the Right, the Socialists and the Nationalists.

Gramsci's position was that the communists as the leaders of the 'progressive class' could solve the youth question because only a marxist analysis addressed the root causes of their rebellion. A typical symptom of the structural crisis was the permanent unemployment of the intellectuals which was particularly harsh on the youngest of these, the students, who can see "no future" for themselves (§1.127). However, a class-based, revolutionary solution was blocked by a number of factors. One was "political-military pressure" (§1.127), which appears to mean the action of the para-military forces of the Right against the Communists. Another factor was ideological, ie, when the rebellion of the young "takes on a national character".

When the phenomenon takes on a so-called 'national' character, ie, when the class difference does not come openly into play, then the question becomes complicated and confused. The 'young' find themselves in a permanent state of rebellion because the profound causes of their rebellion persist without the possibility of being analysed, criticised, and resolved.....The 'old' are dominant in fact but 'apres moi le deluge': they fail to educate the young and to prepare them to take over.⁶⁸

The youth turned to fascism in the mistaken belief that the causes of their rebellion were rooted in the 'national question', whilst the communists are prevented by extrinsic factors from educating them in the class question. The rebellion of the youth persists as long as they continue to believe in the "fictitious" solution offered by fascism. For one reason or another, the old of 'both sides' fail in their duty to educate the young.

In February-March 1933 at the time of the Nazi terror, Gramsci returned to the youth question. A comment in *Critica Fascista* led him to ask the question: "why are men restless?".⁶⁹ He observes that restlessness may lead men either to " 'blind' action" or to its opposite, "immobility". If we ask what the "practical origin" of these thought was, the context would suggest that Gramsci is synthesising Nazi restlessness, resulting in blind action, and Communist restlessness, producing immobility.

§14.58 *Past and Present*. Why are men restless? What is the source of this restlessness? Because their action is 'blind', because they act for the sake of acting. Meanwhile, it is not true that restlessness is confined to the blindly 'active': it can lead to immobility instead. When there are many, conflicting impulses to action, restlessness becomes precisely 'immobility'. It can be said that restlessness is due to the fact that

⁶⁸ §1.127. *The Youth Question*, QCI p.116.

⁶⁹ See Professor Gerratana's note to §14.58 which gives the issue of *Critica Fascista*, 15 February 1933, as a possible source of this note: QCIV p. 2934-2935.

there is no identity between theory and practice, which further implies that there is a double hypocrisy: that is, when they get down to work they have a theory or implicit justification for their work which they do not want to admit, and they 'admit' or affirm a theory which does not correspond to practice. This contrast between what is done and what is said produces restlessness - that is, discontent, dissatisfaction. But there is a third hypocrisy: restlessness is attributed to a fictitious cause which, by failing to justify and explain it, does not allow them to see when their restlessness will come to an end. But this oversimplifies the question: in reality things are more complex.

The common feature of Nazi action and Communist inaction is that theory and practice do not correspond. There is hypocrisy on both sides, although its nature differs in each case. The Communists talk of action but in practice are inactive. They have a theory to justify their inaction, but are embarrassed to admit it. What they say is in contrast to what they do. The Nazis have no theory to justify their action, or rather a fictitious theory: either way, their action is blind. This is as far as Gramsci got in dissecting the moral restlessness of each side before seeming to lose patience with his own analysis. The argument then takes a new turn.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to take account of the fact that the men of action do not coincide with the intellectuals and, furthermore, of the relations which exist between the older and younger generations. The intellectuals, particularly the intellectuals of the older generation, bear the greatest responsibilities in this situation. The greatest hypocrisy is that of the intellectuals, especially of the older intellectuals. In the struggle of the young against the old - whatever chaotic forms it happens to take - we find the reflection of this moral indictment, which is only unjust as far as its form is concerned. In reality, it is the old who 'lead' life but they pretend not to, they pretend to leave the leadership to the young, but the 'fiction' itself is not without importance in these matters. The young can see that the results of their actions are contrary to what they expected, they believe (or pretend to believe) they are 'leading' and become all the more restless and discontented. What makes the situation worse is that although there is a crisis, the elements which can resolve it are prevented from developing with the necessary speed. Those who dominate cannot resolve the crisis but have the power (to prevent) others from resolving it - that is to say, they have the power merely to prolong the crisis itself. Perhaps *Candide* might say that this is precisely what is needed for the elements of the real solution to prepare and develop themselves, given that the crisis is so serious and demands such exceptional means that only he who has stared hell in the face can decide to use them without trepidation or hesitation.⁷⁰

The continuity of thought between this analysis of the youth question and the notes of 1930 is striking. Here the 'intellectuals' tend to coincide with the old, the 'men of action' with the young - which was another way of describing their action as 'blind'. The older generation are the biggest hypocrites since they allow the young to believe that they are leading, especially when the time comes for 'action' - as it did in March 1933 when Hitler let loose his army of Storm Troops. Hitler's claim to lead the younger generation was 'fiction', but it had its uses at moments like this. Meanwhile, the progressive elements 'theoretically' led by the communists hold

⁷⁰ §14.58. *Past and Present*, QCIII, p.1717-1718.

the real solution in their hands, but are prevented from developing with the necessary speed. Will the communist theory of “so much the worse, so much the better” speed things up? It was the logic of Voltaire's *Candide*. Perhaps the Nazi terror will bring about a ‘lightning’ concentration of the progressive forces? Perhaps now that the Communists “stared hell in the face”, they will be stirred into action and will not hesitate to use exceptional means.

Gramsci returned to the youth question a few months later in §15.66 after reading another article in *Critica Fascista* on the ideas of “the new revolutionary generation in Germany”.⁷¹ This claimed that the changes now going on in Germany were driven by “the revolt of the young against the ‘gerontocracy’ which has dominated things up to now”. “Holding in its hands all the positions of command and controlling every mechanism, the gerontocracy has been able to lead Germany until this providential year of 1933 in which the colossus, with its feet of clay, has noisily collapsed”. The article quoted approvingly a German publicist who claimed that in National Socialism the younger generation had discovered a new sense of ‘socialist’ mission:

“We are the most radical, the most pure, the most genuine socialists that a nation has ever produced. Our socialism, however, is entirely new. It is born from *the nation* and is as far removed from any class-based socialism of the Marxist type as the heavens are from the earth. We have now learned that Marxist socialism is not genuine at all but is the worst betrayal of the true sentiment of sociality. Today, the elements of socialism and nationalism have joined together in a new socialism, the first German socialism, which is destined to dethrone not only caste and class but also the power of money in order to remake ourselves as a nation”.⁷²

According to *Critica Fascista*, these prophecies were coming true. The ‘German’ revolution was now under way. In dismantling the Republic the Nazis were ridding Germany of the rule of the ‘gerontocracy’.

The article left Gramsci more worried than ever about the political education of the younger generation. If these were the ideas of Germany’s youth, they proved that “infantile disorders” in politics could arise on the Right as well as the Left. Now that the older generation or ‘intellectuals’ of the German Left had been arrested or scattered, like those of the Italian Left, they were unable to carry out their duty of educating the young. Curing them of this latest disorder was a more difficult task than ever.

⁷¹ Gustav Glaesser: ‘La nuova generazione rivoluzionaria tedesca’, CF, 1 July 1933, p.256-259.

⁷² *ibid.*, p.259.

§15.66. *Past and Present*. In the succession of generations (and insofar as every generation expresses the mentality of a historical epoch) it can happen that there is an older generation with antiquated ideas and a younger generation with infantile ideas. What is missing, that is, is the intermediate historical link, the generation which could have educated the young.

All this is relative, of course. This intermediate link is never missing entirely, but it can be 'quantitatively' very weak and therefore materially quite unable to carry out its task.

Again: this can happen for one social group and not for another. The phenomenon occurs [most] frequently and in its most serious form among the subordinate groups. This is due to the difficulty - inherent in being 'subordinate' - of maintaining an organic continuity of the leading intellectual strata, and to the fact that for the few elements whose intellectual capacity is equal to the highest expressions of the historical epoch it is difficult to organise what the Americans call 'brains trusts'.⁷³

Gramsci's idea of the missing link contained more than a hint of the "lost generation" of 1914. If the missing link was not entirely missing, it was quantitatively very weak since most of the 'educators' had been lost in the First World War. But the lost generation was also a metaphor for the war of position in politics, ie, for the grievous defeats of the communists by the fascists. In this sense, Gramsci himself was one of the lost generation.

§15.47, §15.48 (II). The 'End of Parliamentarism'

After the Reichstag passed the Enabling Act on 23 March, the fascist Sergio Panunzio triumphantly announced "the end of parliamentarism".⁷⁴ Panunzio was one of the cohort of syndicalist intellectuals who had followed Mussolini into the interventionist camp in 1915, taking with them Sorel's critique of parliamentary politics but without its proletarian fervour. He argued that parliamentary government was in terminal decline and was being succeeded everywhere (not just in Italy) by authoritarian or dictatorial regimes. The latest 'constitutional' changes in Germany now provided timely support: "what can we say about the state of public law in Germany, from the presidential dictatorship of Hindenburg (1930-32) to the current period of dictatorship by the head of the Brown Shirts?" The Nazi 'revolution' in Germany encouraged fascist intellectuals in Italy to inflate the significance of their own 'epoch-making' revolution. Panunzio now proposed to revise 'old-fashioned' constitutional theory in the light of the spread of authoritarian regimes. To the three traditional functions of the State - the administrative, legislative, and judicial - should be added a fourth, which he called "the 'function of

⁷³ §15.66. *Past and Present*, QCIII, p.1829-1830.

⁷⁴ Sergio Panunzio: 'La fine del parlamentarismo e l'accentramento delle responsabilita', GER, April 1933, p. 298-305.

governing', or determining the political direction". The parliamentary system of government had failed to address this primary function either in theory or (as post-war experience showed) in practice.

Gramsci was not impressed. Firstly, Panunzio did not address the question of the *causes* of the crisis of the parliamentary system. Secondly, and more importantly, Panunzio's *alternative* was far less rational or efficient than the parliamentary system which he so eagerly consigned to the dustbin of history.

§15.47. Machiavelli..... In reality, Panunzio thinks in patterns, i.e., in a formalistic manner, which is actually worse than the old constitutionalists. What he ought to explain, as his starting-point, is why the split and the conflict between parliament and government has happened, so that these two institutions working together can no longer manage to give a permanent direction to government. This cannot be explained by logical schemes, however, but only by reference to the changes which have taken place in the political structure of the country, i.e., realistically, by means of historical-political analysis. It is not a matter purely and simply of difficulty, in fact, but of the difficulty of shaping a permanent, long-term sense of political direction.

The analysis cannot avoid examining : (1) why the political parties have multiplied; (2) why it has become difficult to form a permanent majority from these parliamentary parties; (3) why, therefore, the great traditional parties have lost the power to lead, have lost prestige etc. Is this a purely parliamentary fact or is it the parliamentary reflection of radical changes which have taken place in society itself, in the function which social groups have in productive life etc? It seems that the only way of finding out the origin of the decline of parliamentary regimes is this: the reason is to be sought in civil society, and there is no question that in this field of research it is essential to study the union phenomenon; furthermore, not the union phenomenon understood in the elementary sense of associations of all the social groups for whatever purpose, but in the typical or classical sense - i.e., the newly-formed union of social elements which were previously without a 'voice in the capital' and which, through the very fact of becoming unionised, modify the political structure of society.⁷⁵

This analysis recalls Gramsci's first account in 1929 (§1.48) of the disintegration of the 'apparatus of hegemony' in the post-war period, except that he now looks more to the causes than the symptoms of the phenomenon. These must be sought in the changes in contemporary 'civil society'. The organisation of social elements previously without a 'voice in the capital' seems to refer to the experience of post-war Italy, specifically to the inability of the Liberal regime to cope with the impact made by the entry of the rural masses into civil and political life. The practical origin of Gramsci's second criticism, however, was the experience of Germany.

§15.48. Machiavelli.....

II. It seems that the question posed by Panunzio about the existence of a 'fourth' state power, that of 'determining the political direction', should be connected with the problems raised by the disappearance of political parties and hence by the emptying of

⁷⁵ §15.47. *Machiavelli*, QCIII p.1807-1808.

Parliament. This is a 'bureaucratic' way of posing a problem which previously was resolved by the normal functioning of national political life, but it is hard to see how a 'bureaucratic' solution of the problem is possible. The parties were precisely the organisms in civil society which not only worked out the various political directions, but educated and presented the men supposedly qualified to apply them. At the parliamentary level the various 'directions' worked out - whether total or partial, long-term or immediate in character - were challenged, stripped of their particularistic features etc, and one of them became the 'state' direction insofar as the parliamentary group of the strongest party formed the 'government' and guided the government. The fact that as a result of parliamentary disintegration, the parties have become incapable of carrying out this task, has not done away with the task itself and has not indicated a new way of solving the problem; the same applies to educating and testing out the various personalities. The 'bureaucratic' solution, in fact, merely masks a regime of parties of the worst kind insofar as they operate hidden from view and without accountability; the parties are replaced by cliques and by confidential personal influences, to say nothing of the restricted possibilities of choice and the deadening of political sensitivity and tactical elasticity. It was Max Weber's opinion, for example, that the difficulties experienced by the German State in the post-war years were due in large part to the absence of a political-parliamentary tradition and of the life of parties before 1914.⁷⁶

This criticism of the 'bureaucratic' solution was probably based on the presidential dictatorship in Germany (to which Panunzio referred) rather than the 'charismatic' dictatorship which was now replacing it. Its most complete expression was Papen's non-party cabinet of 1932 which answered closely to his description of a regime in which "the parties are replaced by cliques and by confidential personal influences". When parliamentary government was superseded by presidential government in 1930, Gramsci had recalled Max Weber's critique of the political system of imperial Germany (§3.119). The presidential dictatorship seemed to be a regression to the kind of regime which Weber had criticised in which unelected bureaucrats (both civil and military) usurped the role of professional politicians in "determining the political direction". After the "emptying of parliament" in March 1933, the Nazis adopted a different kind of 'bureaucratic solution' in which a host of State and party agencies competed (in vulgar 'Darwinist' terms) to "determine the political direction". Whilst Gramsci was invoking the rationality of Weber, Hitler was introducing the law of the jungle. Functionalist historians of Nazi Germany have explained just how 'irrational' the consequences of this 'bureaucratic solution' proved to be.

⁷⁶ §15.48(II). *Machiavelli*, QCIII, p.1809.

Amendments to Notebook 13: *Notes on Machiavelli*

(I) §13.21. Hitler and Hindenburg

During this period Gramsci was filling *Notebook 13* (1932-34) with the second drafts of the notes on Machiavelli. His observation of German politics in 1933 led him to make one or two significant additions to these second drafts.

One of the threads of the 'German' notes was the importance of studying the 'constitutional' passage from the parliamentary regime to the fascist dictatorship. In §9.133 he described the successive 'degrees' of Caesarism which led up to the permanent dictatorship in Italy in 1926; in §14.11 he noted the importance of article 48 of the Weimar constitution which had formed the basis since 1930 of Germany's 'presidential' dictatorship. The same thread can be traced in §13.21. In the first draft of this note Gramsci suggested that the traditional function of the monarchy as the symbol of the unity of the State was taken over by 'totalitarian' parties when they came to power. Indeed, it was by appropriating the function of the Head of State that such parties became 'totalitarian'. The thesis was originally an attempt to synthesise the coming to power of 'totalitarian' parties in Bolshevik Russia and Fascist Italy. The advent of the Nazis now led Gramsci to add the *president of the republic* to his thesis.

§13.21. Continuing the 'New Prince'. It has already been said that the protagonist of the New Prince in the modern epoch could not be a personal hero but only the political party; that is to say, the particular party which at one time or another, and depending on the various internal relations of the different nations, has the aim of establishing a new type of State (and which is rationally and historically founded for this purpose). It should be noted that in those regimes which claim to be totalitarian, the traditional function of the institution of the Crown is really taken over by the particular party in question, which is totalitarian in fact precisely because it fulfils this function. Although every party is the expression of a social group, and of one social group only, the fact remains that under given conditions of a certain type particular parties only represent a single social group insofar as they exercise a balancing and arbitrating function between the interests of their own group and those of other groups; and thus succeed in ensuring that the development of the group they represent happens with the consent and with the help of the allied groups, if not also with that of definitely hostile groups. The constitutional formula of the king or the *president of the republic* who 'reigns but does not rule' is the juridical expression of this function of arbitration. The preoccupation of the constitutional parties not to 'expose' the Crown or the *President*, the formulae stating that responsibility for the actions of the government lies not with the head of State but with his ministers, are the casuistry behind which lies the general principle of safeguarding the conception of the unity of the State, and the consent of the governed to the action of the State, whatever personnel are immediately in government and whatever party they belong to.

With the totalitarian party these formulae lose their meaning and consequently the institutions which functioned on the basis of such formulae become less important. But the function itself is incorporated by the party, which will exalt the abstract concept of the 'State' and seek by various means to give the impression that it is working actively

and effectively as an 'impartial force'.⁷⁷

Gramsci was probably persuaded to include the president of the republic by observing the way in which the Nazis exploited the authority and prestige of President Hindenburg in the first months of the new regime. The close association between Hitler and Hindenburg was a constant theme of Nazi propaganda and was particularly visible in the brilliant stage-management of Potsdam Day on 21 March which was fully reported in Gramsci's reviews.⁷⁸ The political significance of the ceremony consisted in transposing from Hindenburg to Hitler the symbolic function of the Head of State. In the context of the Nazi terror at that time, it was crucially important for Hitler to appear to be "working actively and effectively as an 'impartial force'". The Potsdam ceremony was a key moment in the 'subjective' transition to a 'totalitarian' regime in Germany even though the process was objectively far from complete at this stage. The curious thing is that the German events obviously contradicted his prescription that the protagonist of the 'New Prince' cannot be a personal hero but only a political party", for it was the charismatic Hitler not the Nazi Party which embodied the 'totalitarian' function he describes. However, the point is that Gramsci did not regard Hitler as a new or "modern" Prince. The imagery of Potsdam Day was more about 'restoration' than 'revolution'.

(II) §13.37. Hitler and Hugenburg

When Gramsci reworked his earlier notes on French national life, he included them in the notebook on Machiavelli (§13.37). His model was Marx's classic analysis of French history in the years 1848-51 which were a source of key concepts in political theory notably, of course, 'Bonapartism'. France was the laboratory in which Gramsci first invented and tested his political concepts, for French history was considered to be "the richest in political elements" (§1.44). However, the elaboration of *general* principles of political science was by nature *comparative* and proceeded by analysing the similarities and differences between various countries and movements. The *theoretical* value of Gramsci's French notes lies in his account, based on the French 'model', of the construction of bourgeois

⁷⁷ §13.21. Continuing the 'New Prince', QCIII p.1601-1602. My italics.

⁷⁸ For example in RSE, 11 April 1933, p.806-808. The event is perceptively analysed by Ian Kershaw in *The 'Hitler Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1989) p.55-56.

hegemony in Europe after the 1848 revolutions and its tendency to disintegrate in the post-war years. The account included a detailed analysis of the main enemy of the parliamentary system in France, the royalist group *Action Francaise* led by Charles Maurras. From a *theoretical* point of view, however, this was the least developed part of the account. Perhaps realising this, Gramsci began to develop the theoretical side more explicitly in the second draft by introducing elements from the recent political experience of Germany.

Maurras' group was a prime example of an element of politics, ie, "the monarchist party in a republican regime". As such Gramsci compared it to a similar element in German politics, the main right-wing party led by the newspaper magnate Alfred Hugenburg. When Hugenburg took over the party leadership in 1928, he led it into "opposition in principle" to the German republic, a position similar to that of Maurras' group in republican France. The failure of the politics of *a priori abstentionism* as practiced by these parties of the extreme Right contained a useful lesson for parties of the extreme Left who had contemplated a similar course of action (or, as Gramsci saw it, 'inaction') in the past.

The defeat of Maurras is certain (so is Hugenburg's in Germany). It is Maurras' conception which is false because it is too polished logically. Besides, Maurras himself knew he had suffered defeat precisely at the beginning of the polemic with the Vatican, which coincided (certainly not by accident) with the parliamentary crisis in France in 1925. Whilst the ministries followed one another in rotation, *Action Francaise* declared that it was ready to assume power and an article appeared which went as far as inviting Caillaux to collaborate despite the fact that it had continually demanded the firing-squad for Caillaux. The episode is classic. The rigid, rationalistic politics of Maurras, of *a priori abstentionism*, of the natural 'iron' laws ruling French society, was doomed to atrophy, to collapse, to abdication at the decisive moment. *When the decisive moment comes, we can see that the great mass of energies set in motion by the crisis, far from flowing into the reservoirs artificially created for them, follow the channels traced out in the real world by real politics up to that point and are diverted towards the parties which have always remained active, or even those which have sprouted like mushrooms out of the ground of the crisis itself.* Apart from the feeble-mindedness of believing in 1925 that the republican regime was about to collapse as a result of a parliamentary crisis (such are the monomaniacal hallucinations which anti-parliamentary intellectualism leads to), if anything collapsed it was the character of Maurras who perhaps will never be shaken out of his state of apocalyptic illumination, not to mention the collapse of his group which felt isolated enough to have to appeal to Caillaux and company.⁷⁹

These additions to §13.37 reflect recent German experience, particularly the mass expansion of the Nazi Party between 1929-33: this is what he means by the mass

⁷⁹ §13.37. *Notes on French National Life*, QCIII p.1646-1647. My italics. In the preceding §13.25. 'Duplicity' and 'Naivety' of Machiavelli, Gramsci cites the issue of the review *La Cultura* for October-December 1933. It must be presumed therefore that Gramsci wrote §13.37 after this date.

of energies flowing towards parties “which had sprouted like mushrooms out of the ground of the crisis itself”. A significant proportion of these energies had been diverted from the Nationalists to the Nazis. Whereas Hugenburg rigidly abstained from republican politics in the belief that the course of German history would inevitably restore the country’s ‘natural’ rulers, Hitler adapted his party’s ideology to the rapidly changing circumstances of the world crisis and the masses followed him not Hugenburg. Furthermore, Gramsci’s comparison ‘Maurras-Hugenburg’ illustrated the ‘scientific’ principle that there is no such thing in politics as an integral restoration, a restoration *in toto*, in spite of the ‘natural laws’ of history invoked by purely reactionary ideologies of this type.

Postscript: A ‘Dialectical Break’ In 1933?

The first principle of Gramsci’s historicism was that reality in movement and the concept of that reality must be conceived as an inseparable unity.⁸⁰ By this principle it is possible to speak of a ‘dialectical break’ in Gramsci’s theorisation of the German crisis in 1933 when the movement of his thinking temporarily lost touch with the movement of reality. The curious aspect of §13.37 is that Gramsci writes about “the defeat of Hugenburg” as though it was a *forecast* when it was already an accomplished fact. He did not appear to realise at the time of writing this note (in the autumn or winter of 1933) that Hugenburg’s defeat *had already happened*. In June 1933 Hitler ditched his partners in the national coalition: Hugenburg resigned from the cabinet and the Nationalist party was dissolved shortly afterwards. Although this development was reported in his periodicals⁸¹, he may have lost the thread of German events sometime in the summer of 1933. It seems that after his transfer from Turi to Formia at the end of 1933, Gramsci caught up with the German events he had lost track of in mid-1933. The ‘break’ was partly due to interruptions to his periodicals in the summer of 1933⁸², although we must not forget also that his physical condition by this time was becoming unendurable.

⁸⁰ §10 (Part II).01, QCII p.1241.

⁸¹ For example under the rubric *Germania*, ‘L’inquadramento del fronte tedesco-nazionale nel socialnazionalismo e le dimissioni di Hugenberg’, in RSE, 18 July 1933, p.1576.

⁸² On 3 September 1933 he reported to Tatiana that he had received no reviews at all for the month of August. The August issues were sent with those for September. LCII p.743.

Chapter 5

The Formia Period, December 1933-August 1935 The Struggle for the *Weltanschauung*

Tatiana's Letters

"I must admit Nino's appearance really frightened me....." ¹

Gramsci left Turi prison on 19 November 1933. The 21 prison notebooks started there went with him. Gramsci was worried that they would be sequestered by order of the Ministry of Justice and be impossible to recover, but in the event they were removed from the prison by a simple ruse. Gramsci went to collect his belongings from the prison storeroom and engaged the prison officer in conversation while, as arranged, his cell-mate Gustavo Trombetti simply slipped them into his trunk.² The ease with which the notebooks were removed suggests that they were of no importance to the prison or higher authorities.

There was a last-minute hitch in the transfer to the clinic at Formia. His brother Carlo had contracted with the clinic's director, Dr. Cusumano, to pay his expenses (120 lire a day). When Gramsci realised the "huge cost" to his family, he told the Ministry to cancel the arrangement and he was sent instead to the prison at Civitavecchia. Sraffa called it a "real disaster". Somehow Gramsci was prevailed upon to accept the transfer to Formia: Sraffa told Tatiana not to mince her words and to tell him that "he does not show much respect for you if he thinks you would prefer to put 120 lire a day in a savings bank at the cost of letting him die".³ When Tatiana visited him at Civitavecchia on 3 December, she found him in a bad way:

I must confess that Nino's appearance really frightened me. Maybe you can get some idea of his physical condition if I tell you that his body seems to have shrunk to minimum proportions. Not only that, his movements are those of someone who will break to pieces if he makes any sudden movement. It is alarming to see him using so much caution to sit down or stand up. His face has a very anxious expression. He has a burning pain in his hands and he has lost a lot more weight. I asked him about his health. 'What do you want me to tell you?' he replied. I couldn't hide my shock or alarm: 'But you don't look at all well'. 'I know' he said.⁴

At Formia Tatiana visited him every Sunday. The correspondence between them ends at this point but her letters to Sraffa, to her sister Julia, and to Gramsci's family

¹ Tatiana to Sraffa, 7 December 1933, LCII p.154.

² Trombetti's testimony in *Gramsci vivo nelle testimonianze dei suoi contemporanei*, a cura di Mimma Paulesu Quercioli (Feltrinelli, 1977) p.233.

³ Sraffa to Tatiana, 17 November 1933, in *Lettere a Tania per Gramsci* a cura di Valentino Gerratana (Editori riuniti, 1991) p.150.

⁴ Tatiana to Sraffa, 7 December 1933, *ibid.*, p.154.

in Sardinia give a good picture of his personal circumstances and state of mind. Although he was more comfortably accommodated there, he was mainly concerned that the clinic took no steps to treat his multiple physical ailments. Mortified at the cost to his family, he was dissatisfied that the clinic was not providing the medical treatment it was being paid for. In April he asked to be transferred to a clinic for nervous disorders at Fiesole. Acute insomnia, headache, and under-eating sapped his morale and made him extremely irritable: "he says he is tired, extremely tired and as for his health, 'things will end badly'".⁵ We know from Arcangeli's diagnosis after the crisis in March 1933 that he was suffering from Potts disease. He now revealed that since then he had been urinating blood.⁶ He knew full well that his condition was worsening even though medical tests at the clinic on his chest and kidneys apparently did not confirm this. In early September he discussed with Tatiana a further petition to Mussolini pressing for his right to conditional liberty under article 176 of the penal code. Unless he was transferred out of Formia immediately, "he was frightened of soon becoming a complete invalid".⁷ Just before the petition was sent on 24 September, the tension with the Cusumano reached breaking-point and the angry director revealed what he really felt about Gramsci. At the end of her visit Tatiana overheard him shouting that Gramsci "was even being treated too well, *rather better than he ought to be*".⁸ His suspicion that the clinic had no real interest in treating him was obviously not far wrong.

Gramsci did not write to Julia in this period. Tatiana explained that he wanted to write to her without having to worry about surveillance of his letters by the local police "who pry into the soul of every political prisoner with particular gusto and with the definite aim of getting at him psychologically".⁹ Julia's letters arrived sporadically and made a tremendous impact: after receiving one in May, he walked around in a fog, couldn't sleep on account of his thoughts, and next day didn't feel himself.¹⁰ In July Julia sent a new set of photographs of the children including a

⁵ Tatiana to Sraffa, 17 May 1934, *ibid.*, p.160.

⁶ The same letter quoted in Aldo Natoli: *Antigone e il prigioniero* (Editori riuniti, 1991) p.173.

⁷ Tatiana to Sraffa, 12 September 1934, *ibid.*, p.165. See also the draft of Gramsci's petition to Mussolini in September 1934 in QCIV p.2415-2416.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.166. My italics.

⁹ Tatiana Schucht, letter to Moscow 15 August 1934, *Lettere ai familiari*, a cura di Mimma Paulesu Quercioli (Editori Riuniti, 1991) p.185.

¹⁰ Tatiana to Julia, 25 May 1934, *ibid.*, p.171.

particularly striking one of their younger son Giuliano:

Giuliano is so beautiful because he looks so much like you (ie, Julia): he has your mouth and forehead and you know how beautiful you are. Such a great blessing. This will bring joy next Sunday - joy, naturally, mixed with sorrow. Antonio suffers a lot on your account and the children's, he is wounded in spirit because of his family.¹¹

Gramsci's petition for condition liberty was granted in October. The chief inspector of police for political affairs arrived from Rome and required him to sign an undertaking not to exploit the concession of conditional liberty for propaganda purposes, as a communist victory over the fascist regime. Surveillance of his conversations with Tatiana now ended, his sleep was no longer interrupted by night-time patrols, and he was free to leave the clinic and walk into town. However, he had to remain at Formia and report to the police until his transfer to another clinic was approved. It was not until August 1935 that he left Formia for the Quisisana clinic in Rome. We have very few details about his life at Formia from October 1934 to August 1935 but he went on writing notes until the transfer to Rome.¹² He also wrote short letters to his boys in Moscow, the thought of whom kept him in touch with the life of the affections: "How sorry I am not to be close to my dear boys, and not to be able to help them with their school work and help them forward on their journey in life".¹³ Nor had he lost his sense of the magic of childhood. At Formia he wrote his first letter to his youngest Giuliano:

Dear Julik,

You've seen the sea for the first time. Write and tell me what you thought about it. Did you get a good mouthful of salt water when you went in for a bathe? Have you learnt to swim? Did you catch any little fish or any live crabs? I've seen little boys catching small fish in the sea using a hollow brick to scoop them up. They caught enough to fill a bucket!
Your Papa [in Russian], Antonio.¹⁴

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¹¹ Tatiana to Julia, 5 July 1934, *ibid.*, p.178.

¹² The latest periodical source traced by Professor Gerratana is the issue of *La Cultura*, April 1935, used in writing §29.08 (QCIV p.3034), although the draft of the petition to the General Inspector of Public Security in *Notebook 17* is dated 19 June 1935 (QCIV p.2416). Gramsci was transferred on 24 August 1935.

¹³ To Delio, 8 April 1935, LCII p.763 (Translated in HH p.264)

¹⁴ To Julik, undated but presumed to be from Formia, LCII p.766 (Translated in HH p. 279).

In the first months of 1934 at Formia Gramsci continued to read but not to write. The subscriptions to the reviews were renewed, he could now read a newspaper again - the *Corriere della Sera*, his principal source of political news in this period - and he started to ask for books. In February Tatiana told Sraffa that he "hasn't written a line since coming to Formia".¹⁵ It is hard to be sure when exactly he resumed writing - probably in March 1934¹⁶ - but there was a further stoppage in September when Tatiana reported that "at the moment he can't work any more".¹⁷

It is clear that the demanding regime of *simultaneous* reading and writing followed at Turi could not be sustained with the same intensity any longer. The emphasis now shifted decisively from writing new notes to redrafting earlier ones. Most of the notes written at Formia were redrafts (C texts)¹⁸ of notes written at an earlier stage. These were regrouped according to theme and redrafted in separate notebooks with headings more or less corresponding to Gramsci's last plan of study. This explains why he started so many new notebooks at Formia. Of the 298 notes contained in Notebooks 16-29, only 70 were entirely new (A or B texts) - most of them in the 'miscellaneous' Notebook 17. To this extent we may say that Gramsci did not do very much *new thinking* at Formia. However, redrafting earlier notes was far from being an entirely mechanical exercise. Gramsci sometimes updated them by introducing new insights and examples suggested by later reading in 1933-35. There was obviously a kind of 'tension' between the new political facts he was reading about in 1933-35 and the structures of thought already elaborated in earlier notes. The question is how far and in what ways did Gramsci incorporate new facts in the Formia notes, especially the most recent German developments. A series of 'German' notes - two B texts and six C texts - scattered through five of the Formia notebooks can be identified.

¹⁵ Tatiana to Sraffa, 16 February 1934: "The first thing to tell you is that Nino has not written a line since coming to Formia.....He gets the reviews on subscription and has asked for some books. He gets the *Corriere della Sera* and will be getting *Il Sole* as well. The books from Turi have arrived", Piero Sraffa: *Lettere a Tania per Gramsci*, cit., p.159-160.

¹⁶ Note that §17.38 to §17.44 were based on sources for January-March 1934.

¹⁷ Tatiana to Sraffa, 12 September 1934, *ibid.*, p.165.

¹⁸ Professor Gerratana designates the notes as follows: first drafts = A texts; single drafts = B texts; second drafts = C texts. See QCI p.xxxvi.

The Periodicals and *Corriere della Sera*

The Reich Concordat, July 1933

In 1931 the German bishops had warned Catholics that the ideology of National Socialism, notably its "religion of race", was irreconcilable with Catholic doctrine. Its errors were similar to those of another movement of integral nationalism, *Action Francaise*, which Pope Pius XI had condemned in 1926. Although the German bishops banned Catholic membership of the Nazi Party, the possibility that the Pope might solemnly condemn National Socialism was illusory. *Action Francaise* claimed that the Church's motives in condemning it were political not religious: otherwise the anathema would be universal and apply to groups in other countries (notably Fascist Italy) which professed a similar ideology. As Gramsci observed: "The Pope, and likewise *Civiltà Cattolica*, have in fact steered well clear of identifying and 'punishing' with these same sanctions those individual persons or groups in other countries which have the same tendencies as Maurras and make no secret of them".¹ In the event, the Church opted for an 'Italian' not a 'French' solution to the Nazi problem by signing a Concordat with Nazi Germany in 1933. As *Gerarchia* duly noted at the time, "on behalf of all the bishops and archbishops of Germany, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Breslau marked the occasion by publicly thanking the Chancellor Hitler".²

The Fascist view of the Reich Concordat was given by Raffaele Iacuzio, the Director-General of Cults. Although there was no mention of it in the text itself, he noted that negotiations for the Concordat were closely intertwined with the dissolution of the Centre party in Germany. The relatively solid base of the Centre throughout the crisis of 1929-33, including the election of March 1933, testified to the difficulty the Nazis had in winning over the mass of Catholic voters, especially in face of the warnings of the bishops. Hitler understood that Catholic 'consent' to the new regime depended primarily on the direction given by the Vatican to German Catholicism.³

¹ §20.04. *Integral Catholics, Jesuits, Modernists*, QCIII p.2101 (Translated in FSPN p.89). See also the first draft of this note, with the same title: §5.141, QCI p.671-673.

² Raffaele Iacuzio: 'Il Concordato fra La Sante Sede ed Il Reich Germanico', GER, August 1933.

³ At the cabinet meeting on 7 March, two days after the Reichstag elections, Hitler expressed the view that the supporters of the Centre and the Bavarian People's Party could only be won over "if the Curia dropped both parties". Guenther Lewy: *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964) p.30.

The special importance assumed (as everyone knows) by the Catholic party in Germany, the Centre, due to its compact character, must also be considered. The party has been dissolved in agreement with the ecclesiastical authorities: and 'in view of the legal guarantees contained in the terms of the Concordat safeguarding the rights and liberties of the Catholic church in the Reich and its states, the Holy See, in accordance with its traditional teaching, promises to issue instructions excluding the clergy and the religious from membership of political parties and from activity in support of political parties.....

In addition, the Concordat states that the obligation imposed on the clergy not to undertake any activity in support of political parties does not imply ' limitation of any sort in teaching and expounding publicly, as their duty requires, the doctrines and maxims of the Church, not only dogmatic but also moral'; and that religious education will seek in particular to educate the conscience in patriotic, civil, and social duties, according to the tenets of the faith and of Christian moral law.

In this way the new regime in Germany, which is founded on the unitary conception of the State, expects from the Church a cordial collaboration in bringing about the victory of the supreme ideals which it proposes to realise in the life of the State and the people.....⁴

The "agreement" of the Catholic hierarchy to the dissolution of the Centre Party was not entirely a matter of bowing to the inevitable in view of its willing collaboration in the outcome, although the two things were far from incompatible. The Church's retreat from political activity, which in the fascist view was "in accord with its traditional teaching", was obtained relatively easily. However, the negotiations met with greater difficulty in the field of civil society where the Church defended its "trenches" with greater tenacity.

In the field of Catholic action, the protection of the State is recognised and guaranteed not only for those organisations with exclusively religious, cultural, and charitable aims, but also for those serving other purposes, including social and professional ones, which are not directly under the control of the ecclesiastical authorities, although the latter must guarantee to undertake their activity outside any political party. ⁵

However, Iacuzio acknowledged that "it is not always easy to determine where social and economic activity ends and political activity begins". The conflict in Italy in 1931 over Catholic Action, which was accused of forming an embryonic political party, warned of the difficulties ahead for Catholic Action in Germany.

The question of Catholic Action was examined by Padre Rosa in his official commentary on the Concordat which appeared in *Civiltà Cattolica* after its ratification in September 1933.⁶ Rosa addressed the Catholic critics of the Concordat, notably in France, with all the intellectual and moral ingenuity for which

⁴ Raffaele Iacuzio, cit., p.649.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.647.

⁶ E. Rosa, SJ: 'Il Concordato della Santa Sede con la Germania', CC, 18 November 1933. Although Gramsci's subscriptions were cancelled prior to his transfer out of Turi on 19 November 1933, his reference to this issue of *Civiltà Cattolica* in §17.18 confirms that he eventually received it at Formia. See Professor Gerratana's note to §17.18, QCIV p.2970.

the Jesuits were legendary. He blithely denied, for example, that the requirement on Catholic schools in Hitler's Germany to educate the conscience of pupils in their civic and patriotic duties presented any difficulty: "Nor can it be said that Hitlerism intrudes with unjust pretensions (as others have written) in the care which it recommends "to educate the conscience of pupils in patriotic, civic, and religious duties", for this is indeed well understood by Catholic pedagogy and the Church is well pleased on every occasion to give support to the civil powers. Likewise, the latter should always reciprocate with equal good faith!".⁷ Nor did the liturgical prayer for the prosperity of the Reich and the German people at the end of religious services present any difficulty, even though Rosa betrayed his disbelief in Hitler's claim that the Third Reich rested on Christian foundations: "Did not the principles of the Apostles also prescribe prayer for pagan states and their rulers, and precisely during the first century of persecutions? Nor did this in any way signify approval of their policies!".⁸ On the question of Catholic Action, which was dealt with in Article 31 of the Concordat, Rosa was concerned that its future was neither settled nor guaranteed.

However, certain difficulties arise in the mind, at least as regards the practical arrangements, over the two following articles which deal with the provisions of the concordat or the statutory position regarding Catholic Action. To be sure, the protection of the Catholic organisations and associations which are devoted exclusively to religious, cultural and charitable ends or to Christian benevolence, and as such are directly controlled by the ecclesiastical authority, is promised and assured: the same applies to the others, or to those which serve other purposes including social and professional ones, only as long as they ensure that they undertake their work outside any political party; the Reich government and the German episcopate have undertaken to draw up an agreed list of these other organisations, which could later be incorporated into the State associations serving similar social or professional purposes.⁹

As Rosa clearly suggests, the difficulty over Catholic Action was partly rooted in the fact that not all the Catholic organisations were under direct control of the hierarchy who alone could 'guarantee' abstention from politics. The Concordat thus afforded the Vatican the opportunity to centralise control of the lay organisations in Germany where (as Gramsci observed) the structure of Catholic Action was unusual in being neither unified nor centralised. As for the promise by the Holy See to order the exclusion of the German clergy from politics, Rosa's attitude was both more modernist and more 'flexible' than that of the Fascist Director-General of Cults who

⁷ *ibid.*, p.340.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.342.

⁹ *ibid.*, p.342-343.

considered political abstention to be “in accord with its traditional teaching”. By contrast Rosa invoked the “civil rights” of the clergy and the “particular circumstances” of Germany.

This last disposition which seems to restrict the range of civil rights which the clergy and the religious, as citizens, are equally entitled to under the law, is certainly a serious matter; but it is manifestly legitimised by the reasons and considerations mentioned above, both by the particular circumstances of the German Reich and by the timely protection for the rights and liberties of the Catholic Church which is assured by the present legislation introduced by the Concordat; in all their work and in their civil and religious conduct, the clergy and the religious must place this protection above anything else. But the last clause of the ‘final protocol’ makes clear that abstention from political struggle is not restricted only to the Catholic clergy but will be imposed on all the ministers of the other non-Catholic religious confessions who are subject to the same provisions concerning political activity in the parties.

And lastly it is explicitly stated that abstention from militant or party political activity itself does not in any way imply restricting the priests and the religious from publicly teaching and expounding, as their duty requires, the doctrines and maxims of the Church, not only dogmatic but also moral. It is therefore a perfectly reasonable and holy abstention, especially under the present conditions. Moreover, it is abstention from party politics, or so-called political struggle, not abstention from the politics enshrined in legal justice, ie, the duty to cooperate in the common good by observing and promoting genuine Christian morality in social and public life itself; because this kind of politics is the essential duty of the citizen according to the same precepts of rational and Catholic ethics, and it is a duty which cannot be renounced.¹⁰

Rosa concluded by answering the French critics of the Concordat. He was less bothered by the old French monarchists for whom the Concordat amounted to “the canonisation of Hitlerism”, than by the “modern critics” who warned of the dangers of failure and the probability of violation, “to the detriment of Catholics and of religion in Hitlerite Germany”. Rosa returned to the ‘Jesuitical’ position with which he started. The objections to the Concordat were without substance.

We say this even granted the hypothesis, which is not implausible, that the fears about the future observance of these conventions which are currently a matter of speculation and are nurtured and expressed in many quarters, turn out in practice to be true. For, in the same way that rights are not suppressed by being abused, still more the violation of a law does not render null and void the law itself, or juridical and moral norms in the social life of peoples.¹¹

We cannot deny, nevertheless, least of all at the present time, that their fears are founded, but we deny the validity of the arguments which are illogically deduced from these fears to the effect that the Concordat is useless or, worst still, harmful. Moreover, ever since the first echo of these arguments reached us we have insisted on this very point, without harbouring ‘optimistic’ illusions, and our answer, which is historically and juridically undeniable, can have no reply. In any case, without further ado let us conclude in the words of our confrere in France that, after taking note of the objections, “the Holy See has considered them more and better than anyone else, but equally has well-

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.343-344.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.332.

grounded, wise, and well-considered reasons for passing over them with a view to the greater good".¹²

The Sterilisation Law, January 1934

Hitlerism has shown that in Germany, under the rule of an apparently serious intellectual group, a monstrous Lorianism was hatching out which has broken the official mould and has been propagated as a new 'official' conception and scientific method.¹³

This was how Gramsci viewed Hitlerism in the last of the 'German' notes written in 1935. How did his reading in 1933-35 lead him to describe Hitlerism as a "monstrous Lorianism" and what did he mean by this? The 'time-frame' of this final comment can be defined by two expressions of the "new 'official' conception and scientific method" of the Nazi State: the sterilisation law which came into effect in January 1934 (when Gramsci moved to Formia) and the Nuremberg Laws promulgated in September 1935 (shortly *after* Gramsci stopped writing the notebooks).

Before 1933 the racial core of Hitlerism tended to puzzle Italian fascists. Nazi anti-semitism was not taken very seriously and was regarded at best as an instrument, at worst as an aberration of Nazi propaganda. However, the actual *practice* of the Nazi regime in the course of 1933-34 clarified and 'authenticated' its ideological aims. In particular, the practical measures immediately taken to begin isolating and excluding the Jews and the handicapped from the racial community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) demonstrated the basic importance of racial theory in Hitlerism. Sympathetic or interested fascist observers in Italy were therefore forced to come to terms with Nazi racial theory even though there was little or nothing in their own national culture to help them do this. The intellectual reaction to Nazi racism was reflected in Gramsci's reviews in 1933-34 which contained numerous articles on this subject. When Gramsci described Hitlerism as a "monstrous Lorianism", there is no doubt that he was thinking of the racial theory and practice of the Nazi regime and the 'scientific' basis it laid claim to.

The racial ideology of the Nazis proved at first to be the main stumbling-block to Italian fascists looking for affinities between the two movements. While fascist and/or Catholic intellectuals could explain and even justify the anti-Jewish measures of 1933 in "common sense" terms - the supposed need to reduce the

¹² *ibid.*, p.346.

¹³ §28.01 [Lorianism], QCIII p.2325. See the analysis of 'Lorianism' below.

'excessive' Jewish influence in German public life - the possibility that anti-semitism was the core of a comprehensive racial *Weltanschauung* was hard to imagine. Taking their cue from Mussolini himself who in his well-publicised conversations with the German-Jewish writer Emil Ludwig¹⁴ and in other public pronouncements at the time rejected the Nazi 'obsession' with race, fascist intellectuals who followed German developments had an uneasy sense of the potential dangers of this obsession now that it had become the 'official' conception. The Nuremberg party congress in September 1933, for example, evoked the following comment from Giuseppe Piazza who wrote

the crude identification of Race with Nation and of Racism with National Socialism which was clearly expressed at the Nuremberg Congress, can lead to excesses and thus prove to be a hindrance to the regime rather than, as it would wish, a mobilising and inspirational myth.....This brutal and archaic identification - the worst, the crassest legacy of the Wilhelmine period - has surprisingly been borrowed by National Socialism.....It will be the source of fatal contradictions for National Socialism because it contains the seeds of the most dangerous and unrestrained degenerations, of a materialistic and deterministic kind.....and runs the risk of leading directly to a kind of superstitious and anti-religious paganism. The concept of Nation cannot be identified with that of Race for the simple fact that it already contains and supersedes this, transforming it into something new and higher which is entirely a spiritual reality with nothing of the latter's materialism. ¹⁵

Warnings about the potential 'excesses' of Nazi racial theory were confirmed by the law for the compulsory sterilisation of those suffering from hereditary illnesses which was approved in July 1933 and came into effect on 1 January 1934.¹⁶ In addition to legal acts excluding the Jews from the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Nazi regime now called upon medical science to serve the goal of racial purification. If National Socialism as one Nazi official called it in 1934 was nothing but "applied biology"¹⁷, then medical science had a key role to play in engineering the new

¹⁴ Emil Ludwig: *Colloqui con Mussolini* (Mondadori, Milan 1932). In a letter to Tatiana on 8 May 1933 Gramsci reported: "I have received Ludwig's *Colloqui* and have read them already" (LCII p.710), but he does not refer to the *Colloqui* in the prison notes.

¹⁵ G.Piazza: 'Nazionalsocialismo - Razzismo', *NA*, 16 September 1933, p.182-183.

¹⁶ The 'Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring' was approved at the same cabinet meeting on 14 July which approved the Concordat but publication was delayed until 26 July, six days after the Vatican signed Concordat. See Lewy, cit., p.258-259. The basic provisions of the sterilisation law were reported under the rubric *Cose straniere* in CC, 1 January 1934, p.111. The usual editorial practice in this rubric was to report the bare facts, but on this occasion the following comment was added: "There is no need to emphasise that this ordinance is opposed to the teachings of the encyclical *Casti connubi* and therefore to the conscience of Catholics; we will only say that such an anti-Christian, uncivilised, and inhuman measure is more worthy of the breeders of beasts than the pastors of peoples". The secondary literature starts from the seminal article by Jeremy Noakes: 'Nazism and Eugenics: The Background to the Nazi Sterilisation Law of 14 July 1933', in R.J.Bullen, H.Pogge von Strandmann, and A.B.Polonsky (eds): *Ideas into Politics* (London/Sydney 1984).

¹⁷ Quoted in Robert Proctor: *Racial Hygiene. Medicine under the Nazis* (1988) p.64.

racial utopia. The advent of the new regime thus opened up exciting opportunities for a whole group of German intellectuals to advance their careers by their contribution to the 'science' of racial hygiene.

The law listed a series of physical and mental illnesses - including schizophrenia, alcoholism, and manic depression - deemed to be hereditary. Doctors with patients suffering from any of the scheduled illnesses were legally required to inform the health authorities and 'hereditary health tribunals' would then decide on the compulsory sterilisation of the patient. Quite apart from objections from the standpoint of individual rights and Christian ethics, which were fully articulated by the Jesuits in *Civiltà Cattolica*, the law rested on highly dubious scientific foundations. The scientific doubts voiced in Italy bring to mind some of the key features of 'Lorianism' as Gramsci defined it - "the lack of a systematic critical spirit", "a negligent approach to scientific activity" etc - and remind us that Lorianism was far from being merely an Italian phenomenon.

But the supporters of sterilisation appeal to science. A truly heavy responsibility rests upon those men who in the name of science call loudly for the application to practical life of their theories of heredity, affirming in their writings and repeating at congresses that the current state of scientific research on hereditary transmission justified the intervention of the State to prevent the procreation of 'undesirables'. This was the theme most often repeated at the international congresses of the eugenic societies in order to create among the jurists and still more among the economists a favourable climate for the law. 18

The writer specifically mentioned Rudin's work on the hereditary transmission of mental illnesses and questioned the empirical evidence on which it was based. He quoted from the proceedings of a recent conference on mental health held in Rome in September 1933 at which one expert, Prof. Sante de Sanctis, stated: "The empirical basis of Rudin's hereditary prognosis rests upon statistics which are far too limited to constitute a method and a proof.....A cloud of prejudices is necessary before we can be convinced". He continued:

To see how much truth there is in this decisive statement we have only to look at the list of illnesses supposedly governed by the law of heredity. Challenging the statistics with other statistics gathered with scientific rigour and accuracy, Dr. Vallejo Najera stated: "whoever wishes to take into account the latest researches and experiments must conclude from the facts that the present state of our knowledge of heredity, allowing for all the difficulties of hereditary prognosis and of clinical diagnosis, provides absolutely no scientific justification for the sterilisation of persons suffering from mental

18 U.Lopez, SJ: 'Difesa della Razza ed Etica Cristiana' (1), CC, 17 March 1934, p.579. The second instalment of this article is in CC, 7 April 1934. A third article by Lopez: 'Razzismo e Cristianesimo di fronte ai Malati Ereditari' appeared in CC, 5 May 1934.

illnesses, disorders or deficiencies. 19

Outside the Catholic context, the *scientific* case against eugenic sterilisation was the subject of two articles by Alfredo Bertagnoni in *Corriere della Sera*. The writer suggested that understanding of the laws of heredity had not advanced beyond the pre-scientific stage since the “fundamental principle of life” had not yet been discovered and possibly never would be.

However, for all that has been said and is being said about heredity, and no less about evolution, it must be said that it remains a very mysterious phenomenon. The transmission of physical and mental characteristics is evidently an undeniable fact but it is equally undeniable that the transmission of these characteristics is neither universal nor inevitable. We do not know very much about the laws of heredity despite the very rich literature on the subject. Heredity is part of the great mystery of life and perhaps we will never know its fundamental principle. Hence to enact laws, to decide on surgery (*mutilazioni*) on the basis of uncertain data, on the ground of scientific probabilities or medical hypotheses: isn't this the height of irresponsibility on the part of organs set up by the State?²⁰

Just as Piazza had warned of “the most dangerous and unrestrained degenerations” to which Nazi racism could lead, so Bertagnoni warned of the possible excesses of eugenics. After describing an earlier law passed by the American state of Indiana which authorised prison doctors to sterilise incorrigible criminals and the incurably insane, he observed:

This idea leads step by step to the idea of including among those deemed to be unfit for social life all sorts of undesirables, not only people with moral defects but also those suffering from alcoholism, tuberculosis or syphilis, the blind, the deaf, the deformed and, in a general way, all those potential parents of unfit offspring. What is more, it also includes all those who by the fact of belonging to an inferior race constitute a danger to the superior race. In particular, this is the conception behind the recent German law for the prevention of defective offspring. Even though this law specifies the individual defects liable to medical examination, it is no less true that the greatest defects are considered *a priori* to be certain psychological attributes of races which are not completely Aryan²¹.

In fact the Nazis never applied compulsory sterilisation to the Jews. Although the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 regarded the Jews as a problem of racial hygiene, they dealt with the ‘problem’ by sexual segregation of Aryans and Jews not by sterilisation. Nevertheless, it is interesting that Bertagnoni could contemplate such a monstrous possibility in 1934. In fact, the guesswork of Padre Lopez writing in *Civiltà Cattolica* proved closer to the mark. Lopez contrasted the Catholic conception of the rights of man and of the family as defined by papal encyclicals,

¹⁹ Ibid p.580.

²⁰ Alfredo Bertagnoni: ‘Eugenica e sterilizzazione’ in *Corriere della Sera*, 18 May 1934 and the same writer’s article ‘Le due sterilita’ in *Corriere della Sera*, 6 June 1934.

²¹ Ibid.

notably Pius XI's *Casti Connubi*, with the conception of Alfred Rosenberg for whom the State was above all the custodian of the race:

These opposite principles logically have opposite consequences. It is clear that in an absolutely totalitarian conception of the State in which it is the judge of all rights, the State - once having established the good of the race as the highest norm - assumes by force of this principle the power not only to impose the sterilisation but even the elimination of those individuals suffering from organic or mental disorders.²²

Prescient though this analysis was, those who expressed forebodings in 1934 about "a catastrophic eugenics"²³ could not have visualised how catastrophic the drive for racial 'purification' would prove to be.

The Rosenberg Question, February 1934

Sometime after February 1934²⁴ Gramsci collated a set of earlier notes called *Integral Catholics, Jesuits, Modernists* in which he added some new remarks about the development of relations between the Vatican and the Hitler State since the signing of the Concordat in July 1933. Gramsci found the Vatican's attitude towards Hitlerism surprising. The anti-Catholic, anti-Christian nature of Hitler's movement was apparent from Rosenberg's book *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* which was published well before the Nazis came to power. Indeed, as early as 1931 the German bishops had issued "the most solemn warning" to Catholics that the ideology of National Socialism, particularly its "religion of race", was irreconcilable with Catholic and Christian doctrine.²⁵ A tenuous distinction was made between Hitler who avoided attacking the Church in *Mein Kampf*, and Rosenberg's "furious hostility against the Church and against any Christian sentiment". Nevertheless, the bishops observed that the "errors of the National Socialist leaders" were obviously similar to those of the French *Action Francaise* which Pius XI had condemned in 1926. To this extent Gramsci thought that the difficulties the Church in Germany now (in 1934) found itself in were "predictable".

²² U.Lopez op. cit, CC, 7 April 1934. The sterilisation law prepared the ground for more radical 'wartime' measures, ie, the euthanasia programme carried out in 1939-41. See in particular Henry Friedlander's *The Origins of Nazi Genocide. From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (1995). Friedlander's description of the academic scientists who took part in the euthanasia programme provides a detailed case study of Gramsci's "monstrous Lorianism".

²³ The phrase is quoted by Lopez in the third of the articles cited above, in CC, 5 May 1934.

²⁴ The notes were redrafted as §20.04. Gramsci refers directly to Monsignor Umberto Benigni "who died in 1934": Professor Gerratana notes that Benigni died on 26 February 1934 (QCIV p.2994).

²⁵ See the 'historical background' for 1931 above.

On 24 January 1934 Hitler made Alfred Rosenberg officially responsible for the ideological indoctrination and training of the Nazi Party. Shortly afterwards Rosenberg addressed a specially invited audience on "the struggle for the *Weltanschauung*". "If today we were content with only the power of the state, the National Socialist movement would not have fulfilled its mission.....The political revolution in the state has indeed been completed, but the intellectual and spiritual recasting of men's minds is only just beginning".²⁶ On 9 February the Vatican placed Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* on the Index of Forbidden Books.²⁷ Although the book had first appeared in 1930, the Vatican waited until now to officially condemn it. The ban appeared to be a response to Rosenberg's promotion by Hitler to an 'official' role in the Nazi Party, but the Church was still far from contemplating a ban on Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

The reasons for the Vatican's condemnation of Rosenberg's *Myth* were set out in the issue of *Civiltà Cattolica* on 3 February:

The book drags through the mire not only the Catholic Church and Catholics who number a good third of the population of the Reich, but all those who believe in the Christian religion as God revealed it - that is to say, the great majority of the Reich - who are treated with suspicion, contempt, and anti-Christian hatred. And all this in the name of the fatherland and the German nation, in the name of a new religion promulgated by Rosenberg which is destined to replace Christianity: the religion of race. It is a fanatical and extremely violent book which sows the seeds of racial and religious hatreds, discord and rivalry among the sons of this same nation. It is therefore completely opposed to the general aim of National Socialism itself, which is to unite the German people in order to bring about its national rebirth. It is completely opposed to the declarations of Hitler that he wishes to establish the 'Third Reich' on 'Christian foundations'. Moreover, it is extremely antipathetic to other nations who can hardly be expected to welcome Rosenberg's exaltation throughout the book of Germanism as the source and beginning of every civilisation. ²⁸

The Vatican's forthright condemnation of Rosenberg, coming soon after the sterilisation law came into effect, placed the Concordat under considerable strain. The Church continued to clutch at the straws offered by Hitler who privately assured the German hierarchy that he did not like Rosenberg's book and did not identify with its views. However, it now pressed him to make a public declaration.

²⁶ Quoted in Robert Cecil: *The Myth of the Master Race. Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology* (Batsford, London 1972) p.113. Rosenberg took his cue from Hitler who had spoken some months earlier of the need "to stamp the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* on the German people".

²⁷ The historical background to the Rosenberg question is discussed in Guenther Lewy: *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1964) p.151-160.

²⁸ M. Barbara SJ: 'Mito Razzista Anticristiano', CC, 3 February 1934. As Gramsci pointed out, Pius XI was "the Jesuits' Pope" and so the views expressed in *Civiltà Cattolica* were particularly 'authoritative'.

Now, fidelity and objectivity towards National Socialism oblige us to make known Rosenberg's declaration in his preface of February 1930: 'The ideas and the conclusions set out in this book are my *personal* opinions, not programmatic points of the movement to which I belong.....which cannot therefore be held responsible for the content of this book'.

Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, Chancellor Hitler himself has solemnly declared since the start of his coming to power that he wishes to establish the Third Reich on 'Christian foundations'. Well then, Catholics and indeed all Christian believers in the Gospel have the right to expect that the government of the Reich, which has done so much to sweep away the atheistic and subversive press of the communists, will prove beyond doubt that it denies all responsibility for this book and will take the necessary measures against a book which undermines the very foundations of Religion and of the Christian State, offends the majority of the nation, and is an extremely pernicious influence on youth.²⁹

Hitler never publicly repudiated Rosenberg's views, of course, and was never likely to. The Jesuits' attempt to draw a dividing line between them, or between the ideology of the party and the official conception of the State, was manifestly untenable now that Hitler had publicly demonstrated his confidence in Rosenberg. In any case, the sterilisation law should have destroyed any remaining shred of credibility in Hitler's claim that the Third Reich was based on 'Christian foundations'. Indeed, the connection between eugenic sterilisation and the "religion of race" as preached by its new high priest, Rosenberg, was understood early and with particular clarity by the Jesuits. When Hitler would not disown Rosenberg's anti-Christian ideas, the Jesuits turned a more critical eye on Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in order to show without further dubiety just how far the basis of the Third Reich was from being Christian.

The Struggle for the *Weltanschauung*

Meanwhile, actions spoke louder than words. During the spring and summer of 1934 the Nazi Party stepped up the pressure to dissolve the Catholic organisations protected under article 31 of the Reich Concordat and to incorporate them into the parallel party organisations. In March, for example, the leader of the Hitler Youth, Baldur von Schirach, who was ideologically close to Rosenberg, contributed to "the struggle for the *Weltanschauung*" by launching a membership drive aimed particularly at members of the Catholic youth organisations.³⁰ The latter were encouraged to desert their Catholic leaders and to join the rival Nazi organisation. By imposing a ban on double membership, von Schirach effectively announced

²⁹ Ibid p. 248-249.

³⁰ Guenther Lewy, *op. cit.*, p.121.

that it was impossible to be both Catholic and Nazi.

The defence of separate, independent Catholic organisations now became synonymous with the defence of Christian beliefs and values as such. At Easter the Pope addressed a special message of encouragement to the Catholic youth associations in Germany for the 'sacrifices' they were making to uphold religious values, "by resisting the pressure of an alluring propaganda which seeks to draw you towards a conception of life which is not Christian but pagan".³¹ "In our capacity as your pastor we are anxiously aware of the situation in which Catholic youth in Germany finds itself and we know that your bishops are also preoccupied by it. Equally, your associations should know that their cause is our cause". Rosenberg suggested in the *Volkischer Beobachter* that the resistance of the Catholic organisations was being orchestrated by the ex-leaders of the dissolved Centre Party and that it amounted to a revival of 'political' Catholicism. This implied that the Catholic organisations had forfeited their legal right to existence which under the terms of the Concordat was strictly conditional upon their refraining from political activity of any kind.

The Centre passed unharmed through the Hitlerite revolution. Its leaders are living in Germany undisturbed. This is the first thing to stress in order to appreciate the impudence of some of the high ecclesiastical dignitaries who, feeling themselves secure, take the liberty of preventing National Socialism from preaching its ethic and its political creed. We maintain that with all their protests the Centre and the Catholic clergy especially are trying to create an atmosphere of martyrdom and persecution. National Socialism has always recognised and will continue to recognise the right of religions to exist. However, it will decisively oppose any attempt to substitute the pulpit for the parliamentary tribune now suppressed.³²

The hint of brutality in Rosenberg's observation that the Catholic leaders should count themselves fortunate in having survived the revolution "unharmed" and that they were wrong to feel quite so "secure" is significant when we recall that the massacre of 30 June 1934 claimed two prominent leaders of the Catholic organisations: Dr. Erich Klausener, the head of Catholic Action, and Adalbert Probst, the head of the Catholic sports organisation.³³

³¹ Reported in *Corriere della Sera*, 4 April 1934, under the byline 'Il Papa contro il neo-paganismo. Una lettera ai goivani cattolici tedeschi'. The Pope's message was also reported under the rubric *Germania* in RSE, 17 April 1934. The text was published in Germany in the *Kolnische Volkzeitung*: a ban on publication was imposed on the other German papers. See the further article in *Corriere della Sera*, 7 April 1934: 'Il Vaticano e il neo-paganismo nazista. Rielievi della stampa inglese'.

³² 'Tensione di rapporti nel Reich tra camicie brune e cattolici', *Corriere della Sera*, 8 April 1934. Rosenberg's article was also reported under the rubric 'Germania' in RSE, 24 April 1934

³³ Guenther Lewy op cit., p.124.

The Massacre of 30 June 1934

In §17.51 Gramsci wrote a critical gloss on a quotation from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. It must have been written around September 1934, although the date cannot be pinned down with complete certainty. Gramsci observed that when a party becomes a State, it must be reorganised and adapted to the new situation. The party's 'religion' (ie, ideology) will also have to change: sectarianism, or "the blind, one-sided fanaticism of 'party' (in this case the fanaticism of a sect, a fraction of a larger party in which an internal struggle is going on)" must give way to a more "State-minded" conception. At the end of the note Gramsci refers opaquely to today's political situation where sectarian fanaticism was much in evidence: "Political life today provides ample evidence of this narrow- and closed-minded mentality which, by the way, provokes dramatic struggles because they are themselves the means by which historical development takes place in practice". What "dramatic struggles" was Gramsci thinking of? From the reference to *Mein Kampf*, it may be supposed that he was thinking of recent German politics, in particular the 'sectarian' struggle which developed inside the Nazi Party in 1934 which was settled so 'dramatically' by the massacre of the leader of the Storm Troops, Ernst Rohm, and more than a hundred others on 30 June - the 'Night of Long Knives'. The event was front-page news for several days in the *Corriere della Sera* and was extensively reported in Gramsci's reviews.

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In *Corriere della Sera* Gramsci could read the signs of growing tension between 'revolutionary' and 'reactionary' tendencies in the Third Reich. On 18 April Ernst Rohm, Minister of State and Chief of Staff of the SA, gave an 'unauthorised' speech to foreign diplomats and journalists in Berlin in which he announced that the National Socialist 'revolution' was far from over. "We are convinced that the reaction still lives" he said. It took various forms but included "all those who refuse to recognise that the Hitler movement is not only nationalist but also socialist". The audience listened in embarrassed silence as Rohm told them in brutal street language what he proposed to do with these 'reactionaries':

'There are still people today holding official posts who have not breathed so much as a whiff of our revolution' Rohm declared. 'We don't care about their outdated mentality but we will smash their heads in if they try to make this counter-revolutionary mentality predominate'. This passage of the speech was particularly violent. The minister stated at the end that the order and discipline of his units express the new style of German life and concluded that 'the units themselves are the National Socialist revolution'.³⁴

Rohm's speech gave rise to the myth that he was actively plotting a "second revolution", a myth which Hitler then used to legitimise the mass murder of 30 June. Meanwhile, Hitler used the anniversary of May Day to enter "the struggle for the Weltanschauung" himself. In a speech to a gathering of Brown Shirts in Berlin he explained the purpose of universal labour service. According to the *Corriere*: "Virtually the whole of Hitler's speech was devoted to outlining the concept of the *Deutsche Volksgemeinschaft* which must strengthen the duty to show popular solidarity".³⁵ The *volkisch* conception of National 'Socialism' differed from the *classist* conception of Rohm although, of course, Hitler's idea of winning the 'battle of ideas' did not depend on such niceties.

Further evidence of the tensions in the German ruling group surfaced in the *Corriere* some weeks later in von Papen's speech at Marburg University on 17 May. Papen complained that the conservatives were being dubbed 'reactionaries' by the young revolutionaries whose leaders in the Hitler Youth were crying 'the enemy is on the right'. He observed that there existed a "a dualism between the party and the State which must be resolved", that "an abyss has opened up between the intellectual tendency and the practical side of the German revolution". Instead of attacking the people dubbed reactionaries by Hitler, the new regime should concentrate on fighting the marxist tendency". Papen now argued that the question of the Christian foundations of the State was at stake in this struggle. Referring to the efforts of the new regime to create a single evangelical church, he observed:

Referring to the religious dissent which the press had hushed up but which was nevertheless still continuing, Papen exclaimed: 'German citizens who demand that Germanic faith be given a unitary basis would do well not to forget that the Christian doctrine has been the source of the religious strength of the whole of Western thought.....The struggle being fought out will decide whether the new regime will be Christian or lose itself in a pseudo-religious idealism. The Germans have no right to withdraw from the ranks of Christian peoples because, if they do, they will not be able to act in the European context and will cause harm to the idea of the Reich'.³⁶

³⁴ 'Vivace discorso di Roehm contro le mene antirivoluzionarie' under the rubric 'Recentissime', *Corriere della Sera*, 19 April 1934. Rohm's speech was also reported in RSE, 8 May 1934.

³⁵ *Corriere della Sera*, 2 May 1934.

³⁶ 'Dissidio ideologico tra von Papen e gli altri membri del Governo' under the rubric 'Recentissime', *Corriere della Sera*, 21 June 1934. Papen's speech was also reported in RSE, 26 June 1934.

Rosenberg's reply to Papen in the *Volkischer Beobachter* on 20 June further escalated the tension. He observed that National Socialism was against the ideas of both the left and the right because it aspired to be 'totalitarian'. "It is therefore a big mistake to believe, for example, that the so-called right-wing circles had the same aim as the National Socialists, albeit using a different tactic. It is necessary to use the word 'reaction' for these circles, which they did not like precisely because it is true". The Christian tradition invoked by Papen confirmed that the right-wing wanted a restoration not a revolution.

The revolution of the twentieth century is not only directed against the ideas of 1789 but also seeks to prevent the forms which were defeated then from returning and informing life here and now. We have not made a revolution in order that a superannuated epoch, under the guise of a 'conservative revolution', can proclaim the restoration of a situation as it existed five hundred years ago.

The French revolution broke out because the old world was broken down and decayed. But it had no great leaders and no great ideas. The subsequent democratic epoch was therefore a confused transitional form between two representative forces, ie, between medieval universalism and the rebirth of 'popular' thought in the twentieth century.

Thus the National Socialist movement is not the construction of a system, albeit that of a single party, but is the sense of totality in all fields of existence; it is the unshakable foundation of the State; it is the first National German State. Every citizen must either be a valid and useful member of it or must be set apart.³⁷

A few days later on 24 June Rosenberg presided at a ceremony which demonstrated the absurd lengths to which Nazi 'intellectuals' went in their effort to reinvent the German tradition. Rosenberg placed a wreath on the tomb of the medieval Saxon king Widukind and gave a speech on the nearby site of a battle in which the Christian emperor Charlemagne had killed 4500 of his followers:

In the speech delivered by Rosenberg he said that 'the war of Charlemagne against Widukind was the first thirty years war and Germany is still feeling its effects. Today, all Germans have an intimate feeling no longer for Charlemagne's side but for that of his defeated adversary.....Today, after a thousand-year dominance by the principate which the emperor Charlemagne personified, the idea of the Saxon leader is once again dominant in Germany.....we see rising up the three figures which have been decisive for the past and the present of Germany: Arminius, the victor over the Roman legions; Widukind who tragically succumbed 800 years later in the struggle for the blood and the soil; Adolf Hitler who a thousand years later is the present-day protagonist of the work of these two.³⁸

As 30 June approached the *Corriere* reported a series of articles by the British journalist Vernon Bartlett who had just been granted an interview with Hitler. He argued that Papen's Marburg speech marked the start of a crisis of the Nazi regime: "Hitler's party, by pushing too far to the left, risks provoking an attempt by

³⁷ See the rubric *Germania* in the issues of RSE for 26 June and 10 July 1934, the latter carrying the first reports of the ruthless suppression of the alleged Rohm plot. For the above quotations, see RSE 10 July 1934, p. 1069.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.1070.

the right to overthrow him. He must waste no time in energetically purging his party, much as the Duce did in Italy".³⁹

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On 30 June 1934 Chief of Staff Rohm together with numerous senior and junior officers of the SA were murdered by units of Himmler and Heydrich's SS. The official murder toll given by Hitler in a speech to the Reichstag two weeks later was 77 but the real number probably exceeded 100 including General Schleicher and many others with no connection with the SA. Rohm was immediately replaced as Chief of Staff by Lutze with instructions from Hitler to transform the SA into "the instrument which the government needs and which I want". The change was warmly welcomed by the Reichswehr Minister von Blomberg who "on behalf of the German cabinet and the army" thanked the Chancellor for saving the German people from civil war and affirmed that Hitler had now proved himself to be a great "statesman and soldier". The cabinet promptly legalised the murders by declaring them to "legitimate defence of the State". It also amended the law "guaranteeing the unity of the party and the State" promulgated at the end of 1933 at Rohm's insistence whereby the SA Chief of Staff was *ipso facto* a member of the Reich government.

An official version of these events, full of dramatic detail worthy of a popular crime thriller and calculated to capture the public imagination, was fed to the German and foreign press in a series of carefully prepared press releases.⁴⁰ It centred on a alleged plot by the SA's homosexual leadership to overthrow Hitler and start a 'second revolution' with the aim of purging the State of 'reactionary' elements. Goring's press conference, for example, went as follows:

".....Rohm, a courageous ex-combatant, allowed himself to be drawn by his abnormal tendencies into company which would prove fatal to him, surrounding himself with men who, although tied to him, would end up compromising him irreparably. Thus, the SA command began to hatch plans for a revolt aiming to supplant the present regime with a State which would be headed by these sick elements. Hitler recognised the danger in time. In fact, he delayed acting in order to follow the development of the situation until it was beyond doubt, but the moment it was clear that the SA command intended to proceed from plans to the grand action, to the so-called 'second revolution', he acted like lightning. A few days ago he gave me the orders which I executed today and which he himself implemented in Bavaria. The poor foot-soldiers were deceived by their leaders; they were alerted and armed without

³⁹ Under the rubric 'Recentissime', *Corriere della Sera*, 29 June 1934.

⁴⁰ The main sources available to Gramsci were *Corriere della Sera*, 1,3,4,5 July 1934 and RSE, 10 and 17 July 1934. Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on 13 July describing the plot and explaining his action in suppressing it was carried in *Corriere della Sera*, 14 July 1934.

knowing why or against who. They were told: 'March against the reaction!' The SA command, whilst assembling its forces for a second revolution against the reaction, was itself closely connected to reactionary elements".⁴¹

The regime's control of the press made it virtually impossible to sort out fact from fiction. However, in addition to the official press releases the *Corriere* reported comments of the foreign papers which, even if they could not contest the 'facts' of the affair, were free to speculate about their political meaning. Several papers observed that Hitler had been forced to choose between the SA and the Reichswehr. The French paper *Temps* "recognised that Hitler is still master of the situation but has sacrificed his troops to ensure the support of the right-wing and the Reichswehr.....The reality now is that the Chancellor is only master of the situation to the extent that the Reichwehr wants him to be. Who can fail to see in this situation a new fact in the German situation?".⁴² For the Austrian *Wiener Zeitung* "the plot by the storm troops is an invention. Rohm's only plan was to use tactics of passive resistance to prevent the dissolution of the storm troops and to save his position as one of the top leaders. Failing this the Reichswehr had asked Hitler in the form of an ultimatum to eliminate Rohm and the shock troops. Hitler had to take account of this".⁴³

Meanwhile the decapitation of the SA on 30 June was not the only blow struck by Hitler in the 'battle of ideas' in 1934. A few days later the news that Dr. Klausener, secretary of state and head of Catholic Action, and other influential Catholics had been among the victims of the massacre was announced from the pulpit of some churches in Berlin.⁴⁴ The fact that the news did not come from official sources might suggest that these victims could not very credibly be implicated in the alleged plot. Again, the comments of the Austrian press were particularly pointed in their understanding of Nazi political technique. The Vienna *Reichspost* observed that after this Hitler would have a hard job salvaging his moral authority among German Catholics:

In fact death has not only struck the unworthy leaders of National Socialism, but also men whose reputation was immaculate and whose memory cannot be denigrated by unproven accusations. We are speaking of ministerial counsellor Klausener and two assistants of Vice-Chancellor von Papen. It will be very difficult for the Catholics of Germany and with them all the friends of order to forget these sad facts. Hitler must now reconquer Germany all over again and must do it without storm troops, for it is now a question of winning the confidence, the ethical convictions, of the population. ⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Corriere della Sera*, 1 July 1934

⁴² *Corriere della Sera*, 3 July 1934.

⁴³ *Corriere della Sera*, 4 July 1934.

⁴⁴ *Corriere della Sera*, 4 July 1934.

⁴⁵ *Corriere della Sera*, 5 July 1934

In fact Hitler had already started on the task. As the news of Dr. Klausener's murder leaked out the official news agency announced that "the negotiations which have begun between the government of the Reich and the representatives of the German episcopate regarding the interpretation to be given to article 31 of the Concordat affecting the rights of the Catholic associations have had favourable results. The representatives of the episcopate were granted an audience by Hitler and it is announced that measures will be taken which allow one to hope for a pacification in this field".⁴⁶

The Jesuits' Critique of Nazi Racism

In §20.04. *Integral Catholics, Jesuits, Modernists*, Gramsci said that it was difficult to assess the merits of Pius XI's policy because it followed an "uncertain, timid, and faltering course due to the immense difficulties which it continually comes up against". The Church was renowned for its infinite power to adapt and develop but this was not entirely true.

The eruption of new forms of nationalism.....has not only made it impossible to adapt but has made it difficult to exist, as one sees in Hitlerite Germany. Moreover, the Pope cannot 'excommunicate' Hitlerite Germany, at times he must even be supported by it, and this makes it impossible to pursue with any degree of vigour an upright, positive religious policy. In face of phenomena like Hitlerism, even broad concessions to modernism would be meaningless by now, but would merely add to the confusion and imbroglio.

The difficulty of pursuing "an upright, positive religious policy" in Nazi Germany was reflected in the efforts of the Jesuits of *Civiltà Cattolica* to resist the Nazi 'struggle for the Weltanschauung' in 1934. The immense difficulty of the Church's position, however, was brought home by the murder of Catholic leaders, including the head of Catholic Action in Germany, on 30 June (not to mention the assassination by the Nazis of the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss on 25 July). To be sure, there was nothing "timid" about the Jesuits' condemnation of the murders, which was quite unequivocal, but this was accompanied by certain 'intellectual' concessions to anti-semitism which were anything but upright.

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⁴⁶ *Corriere della Sera*, 4 July 1934.

Hitler's claim that the Third Reich was founded on Christian foundations was given the lie in a series of lucid articles in *Civiltà Cattolica* dealing with the Nazi conception of the State and the new 'religion of race'.⁴⁷ These were conducted largely on the basis of Hitler's writings and speeches to remove any equivocation as to the 'official' conception. The image of Hitler as the friend of Christianity in the fight against atheistic communism gave way, for the moment, to that of the theorist of a singularly 'brutal' conception of the State and the infallible pope of a 'monstrous' religion of race.

The first article observed that the doctrine of the State in the various publications of National Socialism was hard to pin down and was obscured by the nebulous myth of the Third Reich. Hitler's conception conformed to the model of "the so-called modern State" which had emerged out of the ruins of the liberal State. This 'revolutionary' conception overthrew the old equilibrium between the needs of the State and the rights of the individual. The individual is "pushed increasingly into darkness and nothingness with the result that the State takes on gigantic proportions, becoming the absolute master and grandiose myth of the new age". This deification of the State is justified by the principle of the nation. "In fact, most of today's revolutionary movements call themselves nationalist and claim to be the sole defenders of the nation which they project into the sphere of the absolute and transcendent, turning it into a higher reality standing above and absorbing into itself the individual".⁴⁸

But the Nazi theory of the State turned the nation in upon itself. This involution was "hard to understand after so many centuries of civilisation, which has taught men to look beyond the national horizon and to embrace all peoples, who all bear the stamp of nobility". The nation is understood as the "nation-race". This is not a cultural entity, "the repository of the traditions, the glories, the spirit, the character and the language of the people, a sacred heritage which the present generation must defend and enrich and hand on to future generations". Such a conception was too rationalistic, too spiritual for the mind of National Socialism. The nation is a "racial community, a gathering of individuals held together.....by the naked bond of blood". According to Hitler, the forces which shape civilisation are racial and so "the

⁴⁷ In addition to the articles by U.Lopez and M.Barbara mentioned earlier, see A.Messineo, SJ: 'La Concezione dello Stato nel Terzo Reich', CC, 19 May 1934, and 'La Nuova Religione della Razza', CC, 4 August 1934. (Not to be confused with F. Messineo, the Italian translator of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* published in 1913).

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.347-348.

State must regard the preservation and elevation of the race as its highest mission, the precondition for any development of human civilisation".⁴⁹ Its primary task was to preserve and strengthen not the cultural patrimony of the people but the biological fitness of the race. It must therefore take upon itself the task of supervising family relations "for the purpose of imposing eugenic conditions of reproduction". Referring closely to *Mein Kampf*, the author continues:

As to the choice of means to achieve this end, the racist conception of the nation leads to the most monstrous consequences. The State must resolutely and ruthlessly influence the lives of individuals so that infections and contaminations of the blood do not spread. In face of the duty of maintaining the race the right of personal liberty is of secondary importance; the only human right which exists, which is at the same time a sacrosanct duty, is to ensure that the blood is kept pure. There must be no stopping at half-measures such as letting people with incurable illnesses have the freedom to infect the healthy. The necessity of preventing defective people from reproducing equally defective elements is accepted by the most clear-minded intelligence and represents the most humane action of which humanity is capable (Hitler).⁵⁰

Referring to Hitler's speech opening the Reichstag on 30 January 1934, the author observes: "Proof that all this is not merely declaiming from the rostrum is the law for the sterilisation of the handicapped which has now come into force and which is defended with such tenacity that it has become the criterion for judging the friends and enemies of the State". The same brutal conception of the State can be traced in Hitler's other speeches, which must now be taken more seriously.

Like the legislator of Sparta Hitler, for his part, does not recoil from the thought of suppressing defective children *en masse*. At the congress of his party held at Nuremberg on 7 August 1929, he spoke in these terms: 'If a million children were born annually in Germany and the 700,000 or 800,000 weakest were made to disappear [facesse scomparire], the effect would be an increase in strength' (*Volkischer Beobachter*, n.181, 7 August 1929).⁵¹

The article concluded by remarking on the perversion of ethical values by the German press. "By a supreme irony these propositions are represented in the press as the most sacred work on behalf of humanity when, in fact, humanity is negated and bestiality is deified; as the outcome of the purest reason when, in fact, reason is stifled by instinct; as the moral renewal of the German people when, in fact, every affirmation is fundamentally immoral".⁵²

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.349-350.

⁵⁰ *ibid* p.355-356

⁵¹ *ibid* p.357

⁵² *ibid.*, p.357.

Hitler had stated in *Mein Kampf* that "the political leader must regard the religious doctrines and institutions of his people as untouchable, otherwise he should not be a politician but should become a religious reformer if he has the makings of one". However, the role now assigned to Rosenberg and the pressure on the Catholic organisations persuaded the Church to see Hitler as not just a political leader but a religious reformer.

This principle seems, nevertheless, to have been forgotten in the new totalitarian State in Germany and the harsh experience of the evangelical churches, forced to accept the famous Aryan paragraph which is contrary to the universalistic content of their faith, bears witness to this. Moreover, the Fuhrer himself at the congress of his party held at Godesberg on 27 August 1933 announced that it was necessary to create a new unitary conception for the whole of Germany, which cannot be Christianity in its present form, and revealed his intentions by promoting the fanatical anti-Christian Alfred Rosenberg to the rank of director-general for the education of youth. These words and deeds demonstrate that Hitler wants to become a religious reformer and that together with his party he aims to give Germany a whole new conception of life which will satisfy the absolute postulate of race and blood. ⁵³

The author went on to describe the main features of this new conception of life from the works of Rosenberg and others, but pride of place was given to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, now considered the 'bible' of the German people. If Hitler had expressed admiration for the Catholic Church - for its monolithic unity, its dogma, its dedicated priesthood etc - this was merely because it provided an instructive *model* for the new religion which would now replace it.

Nor does it lack the supreme pontiff endowed with the gift of infallibility! While Rosenberg abuses the Roman Pontiff....., General Goring promotes the Fuhrer in his place: 'To be quite honest', he says, 'we are fanatics, because without fanaticism nothing really great can be accomplished. What would have become of Christianity without its fanatics? Yes, we burn with fanaticism for our people. In the same manner in which Catholics consider the Pope infallible in all questions of religion and morality, so we believe with the same deep conviction that the Fuhrer is infallible in all matters affecting the moral and social interests of the people. Hitler himself calls the motivating ideas of the party and the racist conception of the world a dogma and gives them the same qualities: "a particular conception of the world must be organised on the basis of a precise formula; for a political party in formation, the fundamental principles of the party are the equivalent of dogmas for the faith"'. ⁵⁴

Hitler's disclaimer before coming to power that he had no intention of starting a religious struggle was thus exposed as a lie. This assumed fresh political significance since the Nazi leaders in Catholic Austria in 1934 at that very moment

⁵³ A.Messineo: 'La Nuova Religione della Razza', CC, 4 August 1934, p.228

⁵⁴ Ibid p. 236

telling the Austrian people the same lie.⁵⁵ Quoting the regional inspector of the Nazi Party in Austria who disclaimed any idea that Nazism was a new religion, the writer commented:

The political aim of such a declaration, aimed at the Catholics of Austria, cannot be in doubt.....If National Socialism proposes in accordance with Hitler's directives to his party to create a conception of the world which can reunite the whole of Germany, 'coordinating' the existing confessions; and if this conception cannot be Christianity in its present form, the necessary consequence is that racism must try to transform Christianity or to suppress it in the event of insurmountable resistance. ⁵⁶

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The clarity and rectitude of Messineo's critique of Nazi racism contrasted with the analysis of Nazi anti-semitism by Padre Rosa in a two-part article which appeared under his name later in the year.⁵⁷ The article was a detailed critique of Theodor Fritsch's notorious *Handbuch der Judenfrage* (35th edition, Leipzig 1933) which was reissued by the Nazis and "distributed throughout Germany in hundreds of thousands of copies". Rosa spoke out against the attempts by the Nazi anti-semities to spread "the most odious calumnies and defamations against the Church itself and against the Catholics". Their hostility had passed from words to deeds, to the most unjust and violent vexations against the Catholic people and their hierarchy, including "the bloody deeds of the 30 June last, which the history of modern civilisation will record with horror".

But what exactly were these 'calumnies and defamations'? Referring to the several contributors to Fritsch's *Handbook*, Rosa noted that

they all seek to confuse and condemn in the same terms the Jews and the Catholics or (as they say) 'Juda and Rome'. In fact, with the advent of the Nazis this motto has been adopted by a league of Protestant fanatics, or rather unbelievers, who call themselves explicitly 'The League against Juda and Rome' and have their own militant periodical which boasts of being an organ of the National Socialist party.

The worst and most inexcusable mistake of the anti-semitic writers of the *Handbuch*....is their constant, persistent attempt to involve in the same accusations made against Judaism those who least deserve them, ie, the Popes and the Catholics, indeed Catholicism as such.

⁵⁵ On 25 July 1934 the Nazis assassinated the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss and attempted unsuccessfully to seize power in Austria. The reaction in Italy was reported in *Corriere della Sera*, 26,27,28, 29 July, 1 August 1934.

⁵⁶ Ibid p.237

⁵⁷ E. Rosa, SJ: 'La Questione Giudaica' e l'Antisemitismo Nazionalsocialista' (I), CC, 20 October 1934, and (II), 3 November 1934. Padre Rosa, the editor of *Civiltà Cattolica*, was the authoritative voice of the Jesuits and close to Pius XI - "the Pope of the Jesuits" (Gramsci).

Defending the Church from these 'calumnies and defamations', Rosa invoked the worst tradition of Catholic anti-semitism as 'voiced' by the Jesuits of *Civilta Cattolica*, which the contributors to Fritsch's *Handbuch* had cited more than once with approval.

The references given so far reveal the fanaticism, the hatred, and the confusion of ideas by which the Nazi fantasist equates Juda and Rome, Catholics and Jews, the Catholic Church and Jewish society. Such excessive fanaticism lessens, without doubt, the practical efficacy of the anti-Jewish movement; indeed, it stirs up the suspicion of the anti-semitic Nazis against the Catholics rather than against the Jews and the Masons.

Moreover, the Catholics were the first to warn against and denounce the Jewish danger as far as its sad reality is concerned. And these same Nazis, in their epilogue, again cite the testimony of *Civilta Cattolica*.....which for the past eighty years has been repeating, in an altogether different style and with greater moderation and precision, the truth contained in the modern-day exaggerations of anti-semitism.

What did Rosa mean by "the Jewish danger"? He certainly didn't mean this in the racial-biological sense which defined the Nazi view of the role of the Jews in history. His perspective on "the Jewish danger" was religious not biological but, in its own obscure terms, the interpretation of history was just as negative. Rosa devoted particular attention to "the history of Judaism" as presented by one contributor to the *Handbuch*, from the Middle Ages ("or *Ghettozeit*, as he calls it") to modern times. The negative influence of the Jews in modern times was not limited to the German countries.

And here we can honestly agree with the author in acknowledging and deploring the progress of 'Judaisation' (as he calls it) not only in Berlin but in many other cities and countries outside Germany itself, such as in France and in Poland, in fact throughout Europe. But the Protestant non-believer fails to see, or does not want to see, that this 'Judaisation' was one of the victories of the Protestant revolution and the general spread of unbelief in Europe, with the coming together at first and later the almost total predominance of the Masonry which, as we know, found such favour among Protestants.

Rosa feared that the Nazi attack on the Catholic Church might develop into another *Kulturkampf*. The editors of the *Handbuch* summoned the regime to a struggle on two fronts - against both Catholics and Jews. Rather than follow the example of Bismarck, however, Rosa implied that the Nazis ought to see the Catholics as potential allies not enemies in their struggle against "the Jewish danger". Moreover, Rosa left no room for misinterpretation in his conclusion.

No one can interpret our words openly condemning this *Handbuch* of the German anti-semites as a sort of apology or, worst still, an exaltation of Judaism and the Jews who have always been and, as they themselves profess, still are the most relentless and irreconcilable enemies (*nemici accaniti e irreconciliabili di Cristo e del cristianesimo*) of Christ and Christianity, especially of the integral and sincere Christianity enshrined in the Catholicism of the Roman Church. But this very hostility, which is

the essence of Judaism, causes us to rise up against the calumnies which are repeated throughout the book and reiterated in the epilogue: that Catholicism or, as it is called here at the end, 'ultramontanism' is close to and in league with Judaism, indeed with rabbinical and Talmudic Judaism no less!

The forthright criticism of the Nazi policy of eugenic sterilisation in the first half of 1934 revealed the 'modernist' face of the Jesuits, insofar this criticism proceeded from a 'liberal' defence of the rights of the individual and the family against Hitler's racial State. However, by the end of the year the Jesuits of *Civiltà Cattolica*, or at least their authoritative spokesman, seemed to take the view that the Church's best way out of its predicament under the Nazis was to make concessions not to modernism but to *anti-modernism*, ie, anti-semitism.

Notebooks 16-29

The incidence of German politics on the notes written in 1934-35 can be traced in a few new notes in *Notebook 17* and in significant additions to a number of old notes which Gramsci reworked at this time, notably those in *Notebooks 16, 20, and 28*. They deal with various questions. If any guiding-thread can be found in them it lies in Gramsci's interest in following the practical development of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* in the new situation after January 1933. The importance of racism in German culture "which has had new *and unanticipated* developments" (§17.43), is central in these notes, as is Gramsci's difficulty in explaining the success of this "monstrous" phenomenon (§28.01) which he obviously regarded with repugnance and shock. The German events seemed to force themselves on Gramsci's attention. As Italian Fascists prepared to embrace their kindred spirits in Nazi Germany, Gramsci seemed instinctively to turn away from it as a term of comparison in elaborating a political theory for his native Italy.

§16.11. The Reich Concordat: Capitulation of the State or the Church?

When Gramsci resumed work at Formia in early 1934, one of the first things he turned to were his earlier notes on concordats. He inserted a new reference to the German or 'Reich' Concordat of 1933, but this was to make an abstract juridical point which made no difference to his general thesis that concordats represented "the capitulation of the modern State". Gramsci's thesis was largely based on the Italian Concordat of 1929, but how far did it apply to the German Concordat of 1933?

The capitulation of the modern State which happens in concordats is masked by verbally identifying concordats with international treaties. But a concordat is not just another international treaty: in fact a concordat results in interference in sovereignty in *only one* state's territory, since all the articles of a concordat refer to the *citizens of only one* of the contracting states over which the sovereign power of a foreign state justifies and claims rights and powers of jurisdiction (albeit a special, definite kind of jurisdiction). What powers has the Reich acquired over the Vatican City by virtue of the recent concordat?.....

The concordats undermine the autonomy which is the essential characteristic of the sovereignty of the modern State. Does the State get anything in return? Certainly, but it obtains it within its own territory in respect of its own citizens. The State (and in this case it would be better to say the government) makes sure that the Church does not hinder the exercise of power but, rather, favours and supports it just like a crutch supports an invalid. In other words, the Church undertakes in relation to a determinate form of government (determinate from an external standpoint, as the concordat itself documents) to promote the consent of one part of the ruled which the State by its own explicit recognition cannot obtain by its own means. Herein lies the capitulation of the State

since, in fact, it accepts the tutelage of an external sovereignty and in practice recognises its superiority.¹

The argument was ethical rather than juridical. By the *modern* state Gramsci meant the *secular* state. No state was truly modern which depended on religion in any form for the consent of its citizens. By this criterion the Fascist regime was not a modern state. The Concordat of 1929 effectively restored Catholicism as the *established* religion of Italy. The State hugely subsidized the Church and accepted its far-reaching jurisdiction over education, matrimony, and cultural life. In return the Church instructed Catholics in their duty of civil obedience and patriotic loyalty to the (Fascist) State. Mussolini's atheism did not prevent him from using religion as an "instrument of rule". Fascism and Catholicism entered into a new 'combination' which was reflected in the regime's policies in the fields of eugenics, corporativism, and imperialism.² By the standard of the 'ethical' State as proclaimed by Gentile and the neo-idealist supporters of Fascism, the Concordat was a "capitulation". But referring to this group Gramsci observed: "The ethical nature of a concrete state, of a particular state, is defined by its effective legislation not by the polemics of the irregular forces of the world of culture".³ While Hitler was undoubtedly influenced by the Italian precedent, the German Concordat can hardly be considered a "capitulation" on the part of his regime. For Hitler it was little more than a short-term expedient to obtain the cooperation of the Vatican in dissolving the Catholic Centre Party without resistance and in guaranteeing the complete withdrawal of the clergy from politics. Nor did it imply any ideological concessions to Catholicism. The 'ethical' nature of the Nazi State was anti-Christian as well as anti-Jewish. The compulsory sterilisation law (July 1933), for example, was based on the consciously anti-Christian 'ethics' of social Darwinism and racial hygiene and it was precisely in anticipation of Catholic objections that publication of the law was delayed until a week after the Concordat was signed. Moreover, no sooner was the Concordat ratified in September than Hitler began "the struggle for the *Weltanschauung*" which was directed mainly against the Catholic lay organisations. If there was any "capitulation", it was on the part of the Catholic hierarchy. Nor was this entirely a matter of terror, 'persuasive' though this was. The

¹ QCIII, p.1866-1867. First draft QCI, p.493-494. Translated in FSPN p.61-62.

² Adrian Lyttelton calls it "a hybrid clerico-fascist ideology" in *The Seizure of Power. Fascism in Italy 1919-1929* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, second edition 1987) p. 421.

³ §16.11, QCIII p.1868. Translated in FSPN p.63.

Pope promoted Catholic consent for the Nazi regime by his warm approval of Hitler's stand against atheistic Bolshevism. Moreover, the struggle for the *Weltanschauung* in 1934, which included the murder of prominent Catholic laymen on 30 June, was not without its effect on the official mind of the Church. The extent to which the Catholic hierarchy was prepared to go beyond its 'silence' about the Jews and to rekindle traditional, religious anti-Semitism is not clear, but Padre Rosa's long article on 'The Jewish Question' in late 1934 is evidence that the Church's "capitulation" at the highest level went as far as this.

§17.43. Marxism v. Racism

We saw that with the rise to power of Hitler at the start of 1933 Gramsci began a series of notes on the popular myth of the 'superman' in which he mentioned the need to examine "the racist tendencies that culminated in Gobineau and then in Chamberlain and Pan-Germanism".⁴ Prompted by reviews of a new biography of Gobineau, Gramsci now followed this up. In §17.43 he poses the problem of "accurately reconstructing the history of racist ideas and in establishing their place in the historical framework of modern culture". Gramsci's focus alters from the 'superman' to the 'master race' - the alleged superiority of the Germanic race - although the underlying question to which he wants to find an answer remains the same: why had racism become "a militant and effectual political ideology" in Germany?

Since Gramsci believed that the historical framework of modern culture was defined by the Marxist 'synthesis' of German philosophy, French politics, and English classical economy, the problem was to define the relation of racist ideas to this synthesis. One might have expected him to start from the young Marx's critique of Bruno Bauer's conception of the Jewish Question with which he was familiar, but Gramsci approached the problem from the French not the German side of the synthesis. The point of contact with racism was found in the great French historians of the Restoration, notably in the famous 'controversy of the two races'.⁵

§17.43. Problems of culture. Racism, Gobineau, and the historical origins of the philosophy of praxis. The *Life of Gobineau* written by Lorenzo Gigli should be read to see if Gigli has succeeded in accurately reconstructing the history of racist ideas and in establishing their place in the historical framework of modern culture. For this it is

⁴ §14.27, QCIII p.1685.

⁵ For an account of this controversy, see Leon Poliakov: *The Aryan Myth. A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (1974), p.17-36.

necessary to go back to the historiographical tendencies in France during the Restoration and under Louis Philippe (Thierry, Mignet, Guizot) and to the conception of French history as a secular struggle between the Germanic (Frankish) aristocracy and the people of Gallic or Gallo-Roman origin. The polemic on this question, as has been noted, was not restricted to the scientific field but overflowed into the field of immediate, militant politics: some aristocrats vindicated the domination of the nobles on the basis of a 'right of conquest' and some democratic writers argued that the French Revolution and the execution of Louis XVI were nothing but an insurrection by the original Gallic element against the Germanic element which had superimposed itself on their ancient nationality. It is well-known that many of the most popular of Eugene Sue's novels (*The Mysteries of the People*, *The Wandering Jew*, etc) dramatised this struggle and that between instalments of *The Mysteries of the People* Sue addressed letters to his readers explaining this struggle in a historical-political form as only he could. Newspapers and reviews joined in the polemic (for example, the early issues of the *Revue des deux Mondes* presented the question in moderate terms, against the fanaticism of some nobles who overstepped the mark). The same question was raised in French historiography in connection with the relations between Gauls and Romans and Jullian's voluminous works on the history of Gaul are well known.

It is worth noting that this discussion gave rise (at least partially) to two tendencies: 1) that of the philosophy of praxis which began to study the two strata of the French population not from the standpoint of their different national origins but for their economic and social functions; 2) that of racism and the superiority of the Germanic race which, from being a polemical element used by the French aristocracy to justify a more radical Restoration, an integral return to the conditions of the pre-revolutionary regime, became through Gobineau and Chamberlain an element of German culture (imported from France) which has had new and unanticipated developments. The question could not take hold in Italy because feudalism of Germanic origin was destroyed by the communal revolutions (except for the Mezzogiorno and Sicily) which gave rise to an entirely new type of aristocracy of mercantile origin. Proof that this question is not merely abstract and bookish but can become a militant and effectual political ideology is demonstrated by the German events.

The works of the French historians Thierry, Mignet, Guizot and others would thus have given rise to two divergent conceptions of history: Marx's conception based on the struggle of classes and Gobineau's on the struggle of races, although it is important to note that Gobineau's was *also* a struggle of classes. Gramsci's reconstruction of this neglected moment in the history of ideas was perfectly accurate. The influence of the French historians on Marx's theory of class struggle is well documented although it has been investigated in much detail.⁷ Moreover, the controversy about the two races in French historiography was certainly one of the antecedents of Gobineau's *Essai sur l'Inegalite des Races* (1853-55) and Gramsci was obviously interested to note the French origins of German racism. However, the controversy made no impression on Marx and formed no part of

⁶ §17.43, QCIII p.1943-1944. For the reviews of Gigli's *Vita di Gobineau* (1933), see Professor Gerratana's note in QCIV p.2976-2977.

⁷ "No credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them. Long before, the bourgeois historians had described the development of the class struggle" Marx's letter to Weydemeyer 1852, quoted in David Maclellan: *Marx before Marxism* (Macmillan, 1970), p.154.

Marx's 'Franco-German' synthesis. He had certainly read Eugene Sue's novels in the 1840s: Sue's description of the Paris 'underclass' was taken up by the circle of Young Hegelians in Germany and their attempt to extract high philosophical meaning from it was satirised in *The Holy Family*. But the controversy of the two races and Sue's fictional account of it left no trace in Marx's theory.

The guiding-thread of this note lies in what it tells us about Gramsci's dialectic of 'revolution-restoration' in relation to Hitlerism. For while Hitler stole marxist thunder by claiming that his racism was *revolutionary*, Gramsci's analysis of its historical origins firmly associates it with tendencies to *restoration* in contrast to Marxism, the genuinely revolutionary current. However, he was still no nearer to answering the underlying question of how had these ideas now become "a militant and effectual political ideology" in Germany? He is fishing for answers in the remote polemic about the Franks and Gauls which had "overflowed into the field of immediate, militant politics" via the newspapers of the day which had serialised Sue's novels. However, in reworking the notes on the 'superman' at this time he added that the glorification of 'Gallicism' in Sue's novels could be seen as a 'democratic' reaction *against* the 'feudal' conception of racism. If this was how the 'Gallic' myth entered popular-national feeling in France, how had the 'Aryan' myth - the myth of Germanic superiority - 'taken hold' in Germany? In view of its 'aristocratic' provenance and character, it was hard to see how such a myth could become a 'popular' ideology?⁸

This was not just "a bookish and abstract question, as the German events demonstrated". But how does his historical analysis help in understanding these events? Gramsci's reconstruction provides one or two clues to the possible relation between past and present which is always at play in his historical thinking. The first lies in his presentation of marxism and racism as opposite tendencies. Hitler won popular support by stressing the danger of communism and vowing to eradicate 'Marxism' from Germany forever. The anti-Marxist crusade created conditions favourable to the expansion of racism. The *volkisch* ideas of the Nazis became 'meaningful' precisely in the context of the battle against a doctrine which

⁸ Referring to the late 1890s when the German translation of Gobineau (1898) and Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899) appeared, Peter Pulzer writes: "Increasingly the argument of race was invoked to defend a class. Gobineau had already shown how to do this, but for him it was aristocracy and Aryanism which went together. The popular appeal of such an argument was clearly limited and the new racialists harnessed Aryanism to the defense of the third estate, the *Mittelstand*". *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, revised edition, 1988, p. 231).

emphasised the nation's class divisions. A further clue may lie in the 'right of conquest' invoked by the 'aristocratic' race to justify its domination. In their struggle against the injustice of the Versailles Treaty and against French hegemony, the Nazis won popular support by claiming something like a Germanic 'right of conquest' vis-a-vis the French. Most Germans supported this 'right' when it came to undoing the Versailles settlement and restoring the lost territories (the Rhineland etc); but the right of conquest might have unanticipated consequences when invoked by 'fanatics' who 'overstepped the mark'.

§20.04. Pope Pius XI's German Policy.

In 1934 Gramsci collated and redrafted in *Notebook 20*, under the double heading *Catholic Action* and *Integral Catholics, Modernists, Jesuits*, a collection of earlier notes on the politics of the Catholic Church. He now introduced a new question: "On the question of 'the merits' of Pius XI's policy, it is not easy to draw conclusions, as is shown by the very course of this policy, an uncertain, timid, and irresolute policy by reason of the immense difficulties it continually has to run up against".⁹ This new question was suggested by the difficulties of the Church's position in Nazi Germany after the signing of the Reich Concordat in 1933. The Vatican had cooperated with Hitler's government in dissolving the Centre Party and withdrawing from political society in the expectation that the existence of Catholic Action, the network of Catholic organisations in civil society, would be guaranteed. This bargain contained the essence of Pius XI's 'policy'. However, in order to bring the negotiations to a speedy conclusion, the legal position of these organisations as had been left undefined. Instead, it was agreed that the Reich government and the German bishops would draw up a list of recognised organisations. This task had not been completed when, at the start of 1934, Hitler made Rosenberg responsible for the ideological indoctrination of German youth. The Church signalled its disapproval by placing Rosenberg's *Myth* on the Index of Forbidden Books, but this did not deter him from launching the so-called struggle for the *Weltanschauung* - an all-out assault on the Catholic youth organisations. What perspective did Gramsci bring to bear on the Vatican's German policy?

⁹ §20.04, QCIII p.2093. Translated in FSPN p.82

Past and Present

We saw that Gramsci's notes on German newspapers (§2.26) led him to formulate the concept of the "ideological front" of the dominant class (§3.49). This was later reconceived in terms of the famous metaphor of the superstructures or "trench systems" of civil society (§7.10). The press was "the most conspicuous and dynamic" part of this front, but it extended far beyond this. "The position which the Church has kept in modern society cannot be explained without knowing the persistent and patient effort it makes to keep developing its own section of this material structure of ideology" (§3.49). What efforts did the Church make to defend and develop its position in civil society?

After the Reichstag election of September 1930, Gramsci tended to concentrate on developments in *political society* in Germany, but there was one element of *civil society* which continued to interest him: this was the network of lay organisations collectively known as Catholic Action. Gramsci's notes on this provide an interesting insight into the Vatican's policy towards Germany before and after the Reich Concordat of 1933, particularly as Catholic Action was the most vexed question in the negotiations. The first notes can be found in *Notebook 5* (1930-31).

§5.22. *Catholic Action in Germany. Die Katholische Aktion. Materialien und Akten* by Dr. Erhard Schlund, OPM, Josef Kosel & Friedrich Pustet Verlag, Munich, 1928.

This is a review of Catholic Action in the principal countries and an exposition of papal doctrines on the subject. Catholic Action of the usual type does not exist in Germany but is considered to be the totality of Catholic organisation. (This means that in Germany Catholicism is dominated by Protestantism and does not dare to attack it by means of intense propaganda). This should be the basis for studying how the political base of the 'Centre' is deployed. (Cf. also Monsignor Kaller's book *Unser Laiepostulat*, Leusterdorf am Rhein, Verlag der Johannesbund, Vol. 1; 2nd edition, 1927, p.320). Schlund's book tends to introduce and popularise in Germany a Catholic Action of the Italian type, and certainly Pius XI must push in that direction (perhaps cautiously, though, since pressing this activity too far might reawaken old resentments and struggles) [c. October 1930].¹⁰

§5.59. *Catholic Action in Germany. On the initiative of the episcopate, German Catholics founded a 'German Catholic Peace League' in 1919. On this League and its programme and on subsequent efforts to develop it, see *Civiltà Cattolica* of 19 January 1929.*

In the same issue see Pius XI's letter to Cardinal Bertram, Archbishop of Breslau, on the subject of Catholic Action in Germany, which must be considered a personal intervention by the Pope to give greater impetus to the Catholic Action movement which, it seems, does not have very enthusiastic organisers in Germany. The Pope's letter is a real theoretical-practical programme and is interesting in general not just for Germany. *Civiltà Cattolica* includes a lengthy commentary on the letter and it is understood that the commentary is also meant to apply to other countries [c. October 1930-March 1931].¹¹

¹⁰ QCI p. 556-557. Translated in FSPN p.109.

¹¹ QCI p.592. Translated in FSPN p.109-110

Why was Catholic Action not very popular in Germany where the Catholic presence in civil and political society before 1933 was otherwise so impressive? A key difference between 'Catholic' Italy and 'Protestant' Germany consisted in the fact that the German laity had their own political party, the Centre, and were more independent of the episcopal and papal hierarchy. In terms of the 'ethical' State, this was a sensitive matter. Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* had pitted the "religion of the fatherland" against the religion of Rome. It made independence of 'ultramontane' influence a litmus test of Catholic 'patriotism' and fostered the laity's spirit of national autonomy. Pius XI's policy of promoting a Catholic Action in Germany on the Italian model, ie "under the strict control of the episcopate", implied a centralising tendency which was not welcome to the political leaders of German Catholicism, not least because it ran the risk of "reawakening old resentments and struggles".

Gramsci returned to the subject in *Notebook 8* (1932) where the tension between the Centre Party and the papal 'party', Catholic Action, was brought into sharper focus:

§8.129. *Catholic Action*. The weakness of each national organisation of Catholic Action consists in the fact that its action is limited in scope and continually upset by the necessities of the Holy See's international and internal policy in each State. To the extent that every national Catholic Action grows and becomes a mass organisation, it tends to become a genuine and proper party which follows directions dictated by the internal necessities of the organisation; but this process can never become organic precisely because of the intervention of the Holy See. This would explain perhaps why Catholic Action has never been particularly welcome in Germany. The Centre was already so well developed as a political-parliamentary force involved in all the internal struggles going on in Germany that any extensive formation of Catholic Action under the strict control of the episcopate would have compromised its actual power and possibilities of development. One should recall the conflict between the Centre and the Vatican when the Vatican wanted the Centre to approve Bismarck's military laws, to which the Centre was strenuously opposed.

There was a similar development in Austria where clericalism has always been politically strong as a party and had no need of a vast permanent organisation like that of Catholic Action but only of disorganic electoral flocks under the traditional control of the parish priests [c.March-April 1932].¹²

How did the Holy See's policy impede the organic development of the lay organisations in Germany? Gramsci obviously saw the Vatican's intervention in the matter of Bismarck's military laws as a significant precedent. He had already made a note of this episode earlier in the notebooks:

§2.20. *For the Relations between the German Centre and the Vatican*, and therefore for studying concretely the traditional policy of the Vatican in the various countries and the forms it takes, there is an extremely interesting article by Andre Lavedan in the *Revue Hebdomadaire* summarised in the *Rivista d'Italia* for 15 March 1927. Leo XIII asked the Centre to vote for Bismarck's seven-year law 12 QCII p.1019. Translated in FSPN p.107-108

having had assurances that a satisfactory modification of the political-ecclesiastical laws would follow. Frankenstein and Windthorst did not want to go along with the Vatican's invitation. Only seven members of the Centre voted for the law: 83 abstained [before 16 June 1930].¹³

Of course, Bismarck never allowed the "religion of the fatherland" to interfere with *reasons of state* (particularly when it came to the military budget) and did not hesitate to invite Vatican interference in German affairs if it was politically expedient. Conversely, the leaders of the Centre apparently did not need either Bismarck or the Pope to tell them where their duty lay: they refused to do the will of either by voting for the military budget even at the expense of a relaxation of the anti-Catholic laws. Nevertheless, the episode showed the possibility of the Vatican reaching an accommodation with the Reich government over the heads of the Centre Party and the Catholic laity.

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Gramsci's comments on the German policy of Pope Pius XI (1922-39) are set in the context of an interesting analysis of the internal politics of the Church. He identifies three tendencies in Catholicism fighting each other for hegemony: the Integralists, the Jesuits, and the Modernists. The politics of Pius XI consisted in weakening the influence of the extreme right, the Integralists, and moving the Church to the 'centrist' position represented by the Jesuits. Until 1933 this policy seemed to be quite resolute, especially as the Pope excommunicated Maurras and the extreme right-wing *Action Francaise* in order to isolate the Integralists.

This is an important question and can, I think, be resolved in these terms: the papal action against *Action Francaise* is the most visible and resolute aspect of a wider action aimed at eliminating a series of consequences of the policy followed by Pius X (in France, but indirectly in other countries, too). In other words, without mounting a frontal attack on them, Pius XI wants to curb the importance of the Integralist Catholics who are openly reactionary and are making it nearly impossible to create a strong Catholic Action and democratic-popular party in France able to compete with the radicals. The struggle against modernism had unbalanced Catholicism, driving it too far to the right; hence the necessity to 'centre' it afresh on the Jesuits, to endow it with a flexible political form, not constrained by doctrinally rigid positions but allowing a wide-ranging freedom of manoeuvre etc: Pius XI, without a shadow of a doubt, is the Jesuits' Pope. But the battle against the Catholic Integralists on an organic front is much more difficult than the one against the modernists. A more advantageous terrain is offered by the struggle against *Action Francaise*: here the Integralists are fought not so much as Integralists but insofar as they are supporters of Maurras. In other words, an 'extended formation' type of battle is being waged, individuals being picked out as not obeying the Pope and as hindering the defence of the faith and morals against a confessed pagan and atheist, while the tendency in its entirety is officially ignored.¹⁴

¹³ QCI p.175. Translated in FSPN p.108-109.

¹⁴ §20.04, QCIII p.2092-2093. Translated in FSPN p. 81.

The condemnation of Maurras and *Action Francaise* in 1926 was a 'democratic' moment of a papal policy which was not fundamentally committed to democracy as a particular political form. The policy was to give Catholicism "a flexible political form, not constrained by doctrinally rigid positions but allowing a wide-ranging freedom of manoeuvre". In fact, the greatest success of this policy was the Concordat with Fascist Italy in 1929. The papal action against *Action Francaise* may even have concentrated Mussolini's mind on the need for Italian Fascism to come to terms with the Papacy. The fact that he was a confessed atheist himself and that the 'pagan' ideas of Maurras were admired by the conservatives in the Fascist ruling elite was testimony to the religious as well as the political flexibility of papal policy. The surprising point is that Gramsci thought that Pius XI's policy of promoting Catholic Action aimed to create a popular-democratic Catholic party in France as an alternative to *Action Francaise*, since the same Pope did nothing to save a similar party in Italy, the Popolari. But the Pope supported Catholic Action because it was a flexible form which gave the Church greater freedom of manoeuvre in the changing political circumstances of each country. As an element of civil society, it served as a potential 'base' from which Catholicism could advance into political society since (as Gramsci observes) the organic tendency of every national Catholic Action was to grow into a mass organisation and become a fully-fledged political party. But it was also a base to which Catholicism could retreat whenever it was expedient to withdraw from political society, as in Fascist Italy. Catholic political parties were therefore expendable but Catholic Action was not.

The Concordat with Hitler's Germany was the most disquieting testimony of the Vatican's 'Jesuit' policy of avoiding doctrinally rigid positions. The ban on Catholic membership of the Nazi Party imposed by the German bishops on clear-sighted doctrinal grounds was now removed. However, the freedom of manoeuvre which the Church hoped to gain from a policy of doctrinal flexibility proved entirely illusory. The difficulty of the Church's situation in Hitler's Germany was such that Gramsci thought its very existence was at stake. This led him to question the conventional wisdom about the Church's legendary capacity to survive by adapting to historical circumstances. The history of the Church was placed in a sweeping historical perspective in which shrinking territorial margins and growing doctrinal rigidity made 'adaptation' increasingly difficult. This evolutionary process

culminated in the crisis of adaptation presented by "the irruption of new forms of nationalism" in the twentieth century.

On the question of the 'merits' of Pius XI's policy, it is not easy to come to any conclusions as the very course of this policy shows: it proceeds in an uncertain, timid, and irresolute manner due to the immense difficulties which it must continually run up against. It has been said time and time again that the Church's capacity to adapt and develop is inexhaustible. This is not altogether accurate. A number of decisive points in the life of the Church can be fixed:

- the first can be identified as the schism between East and West. The schism was territorial in character and was between two historical civilisations with few ideological and cultural elements dividing them. It began with the advent of Charlemagne's Empire, i.e., with a renewed attempt at establishing a political and cultural hegemony of the West over the East. It came at a time when the ecclesiastical forces were poorly organised and got wider and wider automatically, by the force of events that were impossible to control, as happens when two people who have had no contact for decades draw further and further away from each other and end up speaking two different languages.
- the second is the Reformation, which came about in quite different conditions. Although it resulted in a territorial separation, it was markedly cultural in character and led to the Counter-Reformation and the decisions of the Council of Trent, which put a very strong curb on the Catholic Church's possibility of adapting.
- the third was the French Revolution (a liberal-democratic Reform) which forced the Church to assume an even more rigid and mummified form, becoming an absolutist and formalistic organism nominally headed by the Pope. He is invested with theoretically 'autocratic' powers which, in reality, are very few because the whole system is held together by the rigidity of the paralytic.

The whole society in which the Church moves and can evolve has this tendency to become rigid and leaves it with few possibilities to adapt, which are scarce enough already because of the present nature of the Church itself. The irruption of new forms of nationalism which are, after all, the culmination of the historical process that began with Charlemagne, i.e., with the first renaissance, not only makes adaptation impossible but also makes the Church's very existence difficult, as we see in Hitlerite Germany. Moreover, the Pope cannot 'excommunicate' Hitlerite Germany, he even has to rely on it at times, which makes it impossible to pursue a positive and upright religious policy with any degree of vigour. Faced with phenomena like Hitlerism concessions to modernism, however extensive, would have no meaning by now but would only add to the confused and tangled state of affairs. Nor can it be said that things are much brighter in France because the theory of contraposing the 'religion of the fatherland' to the 'Roman' one was invented precisely in France and the most likely possibility is an increase in patriotic nationalism not Roman cosmopolitanism.¹⁵

What did he mean by saying that the irruption of new forms of nationalism in the twentieth century was the culmination of a historical process that started with Charlemagne? The process consisted not only in the separation of the *secular* from the ecclesiastical power but also in the tendency to invest the secular power with *religious attributes*. Did not the myth of the 'Third Reich' claim a direct line of descent from the Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne? Gramsci now offers a 'rational' interpretation of this myth (which he discussed in §15.48). As the first Holy Roman emperor, Charlemagne had reinvented the cult of the emperor first adopted

¹⁵ QCIII, p.2093-2094. Translated in FSPN p. 82-83.

in imperial Rome - a cult which invested 'Caesar' with the attributes of divinity. The rebirth of this classical cult in Christian form was an element of the "first renaissance". The suggestion seemed to be that *the Fuhrer cult*, which was strongly promoted at the time of Hindenburg's death in August 1934, descended from the cult of the emperor started in Germany by Charlemagne. This interpretation is consistent with what Gramsci saw as the religious character of the new forms of nationalism - the "religion of the fatherland". This was invented by the French during the revolutionary wars and was now preached in entirely different circumstances in Hitler's Germany. Moreover, the religious cult of the leader was connected in Gramsci's mind with his concept of 'Restorations'. In an earlier note he observed, in relation to the similar cult of the Pope's infallibility, that one of the features of restorations was the acceptance of principles which had once been opposed. Thus, the fact that the new religion of nationalism in Germany was anti-Catholic and abused the Pope, as Rosenberg did in the struggle for the *Weltanschauung*; did not prevent it from adopting the principle of the *infallibility* of its own leader.¹⁶

What of the 'merits' of Pius XI's German policy? As we said, the Concordat with Hitler's Germany testified to Pius XI's policy of giving Catholicism "a flexible political form, not constrained by doctrinally rigid positions". Unable to 'excommunicate' Hitler's Germany, the Pope aimed to establish a *modus vivendi* with it. The Vatican readily sacrificed the Centre Party and retreated from political society but stubbornly defended the Catholic 'trenches' in civil society in the hope of retaining some margin for manoeuvre. Although the Vatican showed flexibility in trying to adapt to the new environment of the Third Reich, its policy was far from flexible in terms of the internal politics of the Church. For the Concordat afforded the ecclesiastical no less than the secular 'absolutists' the opportunity to centralise control of their subjects. The Vatican could now realise its ambition of bringing the Catholic laity in Germany under the leadership of the clerical hierarchy, for they alone could deliver the promise given in the Concordat to refrain from all activity of political parties except the Nazi Party.

¹⁶ For Gramsci's interesting comments on the cult of the emperor, based on articles by the Jesuit father G. Messina 'L'apotesosi dell'uomo vivente e il Cristianesimo' in *Civiltà Cattolica* for 17 August and 21 September 1929, see §5.138. *Il culto degli Imperatori*, QCI p.668-669. The note was interspersed with the first drafts of his notes on *Integral Catholics, Jesuits, Modernists*.

Although Gramsci understood the Pope's "immense difficulties" in Germany, his judgement of papal policy was severe. If the policy of adaptation was not working out in practice as the events of 1934 confirmed, the Vatican had only itself to blame since the difficulties were entirely foreseeable. It would have done better to follow the lead of the German bishops in 1931 in suggesting that the papal condemnation of *Action Francaise* could be extended to the whole Nazi movement whose "errors" were much the same. This verdict is contained in a further addition to §20.04. Gramsci had earlier summarised the results of a study of *Action Francaise* by a French bishop which contained a psychologically penetrating analysis of the categories of people who supported Maurras' movement. He now redrafted this earlier summary, inserting a new link with Hitler's followers.

Amongst the followers of Maurras and Co., in addition to the conservatives and the monarchists, *Civiltà Cattolica* follows the footsteps of the Bishop of Agen who detects four other groups: (1) the snobs (attracted especially by Maurras' literary gifts); (2) the admirers of violence and the strong arm, "with exaggerations of authority pushed to the point of despotism, *disguised as* resistance to the spirit of insubordination or social subversion of the contemporary era"; (3) the 'false mystics', the 'naive believers in prophecies of extraordinary restorations, wonderful conversions or providential missions' ascribed precisely to Maurras and Co; this group, which has remained 'undaunted' since the time of Pius X, excuses Maurras' unbelief which it attributes to 'the deficiency of grace', 'almost as if sufficient grace for conversion was not given to everyone; nor can those who resist be blamed for falling into or persisting in sin'; (this group is semi-heretical therefore, since it justifies Maurras by trotting out Jansenist or Calvinist positions. On this subject, an explanation of Maurras' obstinacy in not wishing to be 'converted' is necessary since this cannot be due only to 'ethical and intellectual integrity and loyalty', which is precisely what causes the Jesuits trepidation. The Jesuits understand that if Maurras' group captured state power, the actual situation of French Catholicism would be more difficult than it is at the moment. *Hence the Vatican's attitude towards Hitlerism, notwithstanding the fact that Rosenberg wrote his Myth before the seizure of power, is surprising. True, Rosenberg is not of the same intellectual stature as Maurras, but the whole Hitlerite movement is intellectually base and vulgar and what has happened to Catholicism and Christianity was predictable.*¹⁷

Gramsci inserts the parallel with Hitler's movement in the category of "the false mystics, the naive believers in prophecies of extraordinary restorations, wonderful conversions or providential missions", as though these were the "errors" of Hitler's followers which bore the most striking similarity to Maurras'. The German bishops had pointed to the similarity long before they came to power and had unequivocally condemned Rosenberg's *Myth*, yet it was not until 1934 - when it was too late - that the Vatican placed it on the Index of Forbidden Books. Instead of condemning the whole of Hitler's movement before it came to power and lending its weight to

¹⁷ QCIII p.2102-2103. My italics. Translated in FSPN p.91.

the defence of the democratic regime, the Vatican clutched at the straw of supposing that Hitler was a Christian even if Rosenberg was not. The struggle for the *Weltanschauung* in 1934 proved this distinction was illusory.

Moreover, the struggle brought out the weakness of the Jesuit policy of not being constrained by “doctrinally rigid positions”, especially with regard to the ‘Jewish Question’. In his commentary on the Concordat (October 1933) Padre Rosa observed that whilst the Catholic clergy promised to renounce political activity, they did not and could not renounce their duty to promote Christian morality in public life. This duty proved more difficult to do than he realised. When the law on eugenic sterilisation came into effect (January 1934) the Jesuits mounted a vigorous attack on the anti-Christian, racial conception of the Nazi State. The persecution of the Jews, however, was passed over in silence until the appearance of Rosa’s two-part article on the Jewish Question (October-November 1934). The article was written under the impression of shock made by the murders of the leaders of Catholic Action on 30 June. Rosa blamed the murders on the tendency of Nazi propagandists to treat Jews and Catholics alike (“Juda and Rome”) as enemies of the State. Although he condemned the murders in forthright terms, he was at pains to deny the Nazi equation between Catholics and Jews - even to the extent of invoking the long tradition of *Civiltà Cattolica* “which for the past eighty years has been repeating, in an altogether different style and with greater moderation and precision, the truth contained in the modern-day exaggerations of anti-semitism”. The grave ‘concessions’ to anti-semitism in this article may have been brought about by the murders of 30 June, but they confirmed Gramsci’s observation that it was impossible for the Catholic Church in Nazi Germany “to pursue a positive and upright religious policy with any degree of vigour”.

§17.51. The Transition In Nazi ‘Mentality’

At the end of *Notebook 17* Gramsci wrote a critical gloss on a quotation from *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler stated that “the founding or destruction of a religion is an action of immeasurably greater importance than the founding or destruction of a State, not to mention a party.....”. The quotation was particularly apposite to the situation in 1934 when the so-called struggle for the *Weltanschauung* seemed

intent on destroying Christianity and replacing it by a new "religion of the fatherland". The "dramatic struggles" mentioned by Gramsci do not refer to the anti-Catholic campaign, however, but to another moment in the development of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* : this was the liquidation of Rohm and the "socialist" tendency in National Socialism.

§17.51. *Machiavelli*. Hitler writes in *Mein Kampf* : '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 uncritical: the three elements - religion (or 'active' conception of the world), State, party - are indissolubly linked, and the real process of historical development necessarily passes from one to the other.

It is evident that Machiavelli, using the forms and language of the time, understood that the three elements were necessarily homogeneous and interrelated. To lose one's soul in order to save one's country or State is an element of absolute laicism, of a conception of the world which is both positive and negative (contrary to religion or the dominant conception).

In the modern world a party is integrally a party and not, as happens, just a fraction of a bigger party, when it is conceived, organised, and led in such modes and such forms that it develops integrally into a State (an integral State, and not a government in the technical sense) and into a conception of the world. The development of the party into a State reacts upon the party, which has to be continually reorganised and developed. Similarly, the development of the party and the State into a conception of the world, ie, into a total as well as molecular (individual) transformation of the modes of thinking and acting, reacts upon the State and the party, forcing them to continually reorganise and raising new and original problems to solve. It is evident that such a conception is hindered as far as its practical development is concerned by the blind, one-sided fanaticism of 'party' (in this case the fanaticism of a sect, a fraction of a larger party where internal struggle is going on), ie, by the lack of either a State-minded conception or a conception of the world which has the potential to develop further because it is historically necessary. The political life of today furnishes plenty of evidence of these narrow-minded and closed-minded mentalities which, by the way, provoke dramatic struggles because they are themselves the means by which historical development happens in practice. But the past - including the Italian past since Machiavelli's time, which is what we are most interested in - is just as rich in experiences; for all of history bears witness to the present.*

Gramsci goes back to "first principles" to judge Hitler's statement. The element of "absolute laicism" in Machiavelli's conception of the world consisted in sacrificing religious to political ends. The prince broke the norms of Christian morality and therefore risked losing his immortal soul for the sake of his State. The example of Cesare Borgia who murdered his own captains after conquering the Romagna in order to ensure unrivalled leadership of the new principality comes to mind.

Whether or not Gramsci was thinking of this 'classic' episode, it is probable that the "dramatic struggles" mentioned in this opaque passage refer to the 'similar' murder of Rohm and the SA leaders on 30 June 1934.

*18 QCIII p.1947-1948. Translated in SPN 266-267.

The internal contradictions of the Nazi party and its ideology had sharpened since the capture of State power in 1933. By now Hitler found it necessary to curb the party radicals, particularly in the SA, who called for a second revolution against all the "reactionaries" who "refused to recognise that Hitler's movement was not only nationalist but also socialist" (Rohm). Rohm and the leftist tendency of the SA exhibited what Gramsci calls "the blind, one-sided fanaticism of 'party'". This had served a useful purpose in its time but had now become an obstacle to the 'State-minded' mentality which the ruling party must now develop. Insofar as Hitler's action was a choice between the SA and the army, the murder of Rohm and the SA leaders was a practical demonstration of this 'State-minded' mentality. Moreover, Gramsci was right in thinking that the dramatic events of 30 June marked the start of a reorganisation of the Nazi Party, although the full extent of the purge of leftist elements was concealed by the massive display of party unity at the Nuremberg rally in September.¹⁹ In many ways, however, Hitler's choice was not between the SA and the army, but the SA and the SS. The claims of Rohm and the "old fighters" to be the standard-bearers of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* were now taken over by Himmler and the new elite, the SS, who proved their 'State-minded' credentials by carrying out mass murder.

The events of 30 June 1934 were a turning-point in the process of "transformism" in both the State and the party. The elimination of the SA leaders placated the officer corps whose exclusive character and status were preserved from the threat of plebeian transformation through merger with Rohm's SA. However, the officers' traditional, 'priestly' conception of themselves as the institutional embodiment of the State remained a potential danger to Hitler's position and could not be left untouched. Hitler took the opportunity provided by the death of Field Marshall Hindenburg shortly afterwards to stamp the new conception of the 'State' on the army by requiring it to swear an oath of personal loyalty to the Fuhrer.

Meanwhile, the real victor of 30 June 1934 was the SS. Although there is no reference to it in the prison notes, the SS illustrates how Gramsci's concept of "transformism" might be applied to German fascism. The traditional elites would not be 'transformed' by the absorption of new personnel from the plebeian ranks of the fascists: rather, the personnel of the traditional ruling class, especially the sons of

¹⁹ The extent of the purge is described by Dietrich Orlow in *The History of the Nazi Party, 1933-1945* (David and Charles, 1973) Vol.2, chapter 3 'Purges, Struggles, Crises:1934-36', especially p.120-121. Hitler opened the Nuremberg rally of 1934 by announcing that "the National Socialist revolution as a revolutionary, power-oriented development had reached its conclusion".

the fathers, would be absorbed by a new parallel elite, the SS. Gramsci says that the potential of the new conception of the world depends on the extent to which it is "historically necessary". This can be judged from David Schoenbaum's description of the career possibilities which underpinned the ideological potential of the SS:

With the possible exception of the Labour Front, it [the SS] was the Third Reich's outstanding example of a successful institutional innovation. Confining itself initially to infiltration rather than direct challenge, and to quasi-conservative elite ideology in sharp and conscious distinction to the populist egalitarianism of SA and party, the SS succeeded where its competitors failed. By 1939, when the SA had long ceased to have any meaning at all and the functions of the Party, despite its huge numbers and vast administrative machine, stagnated in a kind of querulous moral rearmament combined with patronage, the SS had become a real organ of State, ultimately responsible only to Hitler. If Himmler's status as Chief of German Police according to a statute of 1937 ambiguously subordinated him to the Ministry of the Interior - he was called "autonomous deputy" - the extension of his police prerogatives in the form of the Waffen-SS gave him, in effect, parity with the Wehrmacht.....

If it was the war itself which brought the potentialities of the SS to their full realisation, the structural and, above all, the sociological nucleus of its growth was organised at the very beginning. From 1933 on, the SS exploited its status as *the* Nazi elite to attract members of the old social elites into an institutional identification with the new regime incomparably more attractive than the unwashed *Volksgemeinschaft* of Party or SA. With its ideological predilections and expansive capacities, the SS also offered new careers and promotion possibilities for university graduates - particularly in law and medicine - that could scarcely be matched by any other institution. Its attraction for the young could be seen in the average age - 29.2 in 1938; for the sons of aristocratic families, in the relatively high concentration of aristocrats in its leadership - 9 per cent, or 58 of 648 with the rank of colonel or higher in 1938; and for those in liberal professions, in its absolute membership figures. At the end of 1938, nearly 12,000 of these were SS members, including roughly 3000 lawyers and 3000 doctors.²⁰

The process by which the SS recruited the sons of aristocratic and bourgeois families illustrates Gramsci's principle that "restorations must be judged 'dynamically', in terms of the dialectic of "revolution-restoration". The SS may have been the outstanding example of institutional innovation by the Nazis, but its success owed much to its espousal of a "quasi-conservative elite ideology" in which the principle of birth and ancestry, understood in racial rather than aristocratic (ie, class) terms, was 'restored' as the governing criterion of selection.

§23.36 and §28.01: Bescianism and Lorlanism In German Culture

Although Gramsci drew political lessons from this bloody episode in "the political life of today", we can sense his aversion to German developments as he turns away from Germany to Italy, "which is what interests us most". A similar spirit of

²⁰ David Schoenbaum: *Hitler's Social Revolution. Class and Status in Nazi Germany 1933-1939* (Norton, 1980) p.227-228.

aversion, indeed of repugnance, can be detected in the additions to §23.36 in which he argues that “restorations” are universally repressive in the field of cultural life, “especially the restorations which take place in the present epoch”. He cites as an example the literature produced in Italy after the defeat of the 1848 revolution, particularly the novels of the Jesuit father Bresciani. In periods of restoration cultural life is permeated by the spirit of Bresciani.

The psychology which precedes an intellectual phenomenon of this sort is created by panic, by a cosmic fear of demonic forces which are beyond understanding and so cannot be controlled except by constructing something universally repressive. The memory of this panic (of its acute phase) is long-lasting and decisively shapes the will and the feelings: creative freedom and spontaneity disappear and what remains is the rancour, the spirit of vengeance, the stupid blindness - all hidden by a mellifluous and jesuitical disguise. Everything is reduced to the practical (in the worst sense), everything is propaganda, polemic, implicit negation expressed in a mean, narrow, *often vile and repulsive form as in The Jew of Verona*.²¹

Unfortunately, Gramsci does not indicate how he would ‘translate’ this element of Italian literary culture - Bresciani’s *The Jew of Verona* - into equivalent German terms, but the culture of Nazi Germany provided plenty of evidence of this spirit of ‘restoration’ and was permeated by similarly “vile and repulsive” forms. We have only to think of the grotesque stereotypes of the Jew in Nazi propaganda to appreciate what he means by “a cosmic fear of demonic forces which are beyond understanding”.

A more complete cultural ‘translation’ can be found in *Notebook 28* where Gramsci turns his attention from the literature of Padre Bresciani to the social science of Achille Loria. It was his final word about the German events.

Gramsci once compared himself in self-mocking vein to the Chinese sage Lao-Tse who was reputed to have been born with the wisdom of an eighty-year-old. The strong language of §28.01 [Lorianism] suggests, however, that he was not yet beyond being shocked by the latest “unanticipated” developments of German culture.

Loria is not an isolated, freakish case: on the contrary, he is the most rounded and complete example of a series of representatives of a particular intellectual stratum in a definite historical period. I refer generally to that stratum of positivist intellectuals who took an interest in the workers question and were more or less convinced that they were fundamentally examining, revising, and going beyond the philosophy of praxis [i.e. Marxism]. But it should be noted that every period has its Lorianism in a more or less rounded and perfected state, just as every country has: Hitlerism has shown that in Germany, under the rule of an apparently serious intellectual group, a monstrous Lorianism was hatching out which has broken the official mould and has been propagated

²¹ §23.36, QCIII p.2232. The italics, which indicate an addition not in the first draft, have been added.

as a new 'official' conception and scientific method. The fact that Loria could exist, write, speculate, publish books, and what passed for books, is not at all strange: there will always be discoverers of perpetual motion and parish priests publishing further instalments of *Jerusalem Liberated*. Rather, the fact that he became a pillar of culture, a 'master', and that he 'spontaneously' found an enormous public, makes us reflect on the weakness of the critical barriers - such as they were - even in normal times; but in abnormal times, when passions are unleashed, just imagine how easy it is for the Lorias, with the support of interested forces, to break through all the dams and to turn an environment of intellectual culture, still weak and delicate, into a swamp which lasts for decades.

Only now (1935), after the brutality and unprecedented ignominy manifested by German 'culture' dominated by Hitlerism, have a few intellectuals begun to notice just how fragile modern civilisation in all its contradictory - but necessarily contradictory - expressions, was: the civilisation, that is, which had its beginnings in the first renaissance (after the Millennium) and became dominant through the French Revolution and the movement of ideas known as 'classical German philosophy' and as 'English classical economy'. Hence the impassioned criticism of intellectuals like Georges Sorel, like Spengler etc, who fill the cultural atmosphere with asphyxiating and sterilising gases.²²

Buried in *Notebook 28*, this passage displays some of Gramsci's finest qualities of mind - the blithely ironic intelligence ("what passed for books"), the vitality of the metaphors ("asphyxiating and sterilising gases"), the critical bite, the confident sweep of the historical imagination, the intellectual and moral high-mindedness: all this bore witness to the renaissance of intellectual culture in Italy at the turn of the century in which he had participated, but which was now swamped by the rising tide of 'Lorianism'.

Gramsci's notion of 'Lorianism' had its origin in Croce's essay 'The Historical Theories of Professor Loria' (1896).²³ Croce observed that Loria enjoyed "a universal reputation as an original talent and discoverer of 'new horizons'" by virtue of plagiarising and vulgarising Marx's theory of history. How was this possible? On the one hand, Loria's emphasis on 'objective' economic conditions, on the force of 'external' necessity, had 'quietistic' implications which were attractive to 'conservatives of all kinds'. The latter, seeing that his interpretation of Marxism presented no danger politically, were eager to celebrate Loria and to shower him with rewards and honours. On the other hand, Loria's simplistic reduction of Marxism to a form of iron economic determinism was in tune with the reigning positivist spirit of the 1890s with its mania for 'scientific' laws. "He [Loria] wanted to discover the law of laws, as he called it, the law of economic evolution. This discovery is his glory as a scientist". This simplification of Marxism was attractive to the socialists of the time who, still largely ignorant of the original texts, were

²² QCIII p.2325-2326

²³ In Benedetto Croce: *Materialismo storico ed Economia Marxista* (Laterza, Bari, 1961).

persuaded that Loria had 'perfected' and developed his theory. The whole edifice of Loria's brilliant reputation, however, had little to do with the intellectual merits of his writings. Indeed, Croce traced in detail Loria's 'reworkings' of Marx's theory which often resulted in "burlesque, not to say downright ridiculous (*maccheronici*)" parodies of the original.

This comic element was Gramsci's intuitive criterion in selecting examples of Lorianism in the thinking of Italian intellectuals. However, Gramsci took such examples of "bizarre and eccentric" thinking very seriously. They arose from a whole series of bad habits which, together, resulted in the "degradation" of the national culture. He defined them as follows:

The comprehensive title 'Lorianism' can be used to describe certain harmful and bizarre aspects of the mentality of a group of Italian intellectuals which are, therefore, characteristic of the national culture: (Incoherence, lack of a systematic critical spirit, a negligent approach in developing scientific activity, the absence of a centralised culture, slackness and ethical indulgence in the field of scientific-cultural activity etc which are not adequately challenged and firmly nailed: they therefore amount to an irresponsible attitude towards the development of the national culture).²⁴

These bad habits were not just confined to Italian intellectuals, of course. In Germany they had given rise to a 'monstrous' form of Lorianism which had become the 'official' conception of the Nazi State. There is little doubt that Gramsci was referring to the racial 'science' which underpinned the legislation of the Nazi regime as he read about it in the course of 1933-35, from the anti-Jewish measures of 1933 to the compulsory sterilisation law of 1934 (and later the Nuremberg Laws of 1935) although he invites us to see the official conception of the Nazi State as the culmination of a process of intellectual 'degradation' which began well before 1933.

How did the degradation of German intellectual culture come about? Gramsci gives no concrete indications but it is worth putting forward some suggestions. For example, although its 'incubation' period can be traced back to the social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century, it was not until the war and post-war years that the tide of 'German' Lorianism began its irresistible rise. A representative intellectual of this rising swamp and a worthy candidate as the German 'Loria', was the racial anthropologist F.K.Gunther who in his *Racial Science of the German People* (1922) and a host of other works did more to

²⁴ QCIII p.2321.

popularise the ideas of racial science in Germany than any other single figure.²⁵ A 'Gramscian' perspective on Gunther's work might attach particular importance to the backing he received from Germany's leading medical publisher, Julius Lehmann, and the favourable reviews of his books by 'respectable' figures in the academic establishment like Eugen Fischer and Alfred Ploetz. Their political connections to Hitler's movement helped to secure Gunther's appointment to the new chair of anthropology at Jena in 1932 although the majority of the university senate were opposed. Hitler signified his approval by personally attending Gunther's inaugural lecture.²⁶ Thus with the support of interested forces the German 'Loria' was able to break through all the 'critical barriers'.

²⁵ On the origins and development of 'racial science' in Germany, see above all Paul Weindling: *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge, 1993)

²⁶ Robert N. Proctor: *Racial Hygiene. Medicine under the Nazis* (Harvard, 1988) p.27.

Conclusion:
Gramsci's Interpretation of the German Crisis, 1929-35

The *Storicita* of the Prison Notes

The task of reconstructing the historical context of the *Prison Notebooks* (1929-35) presents many technical difficulties, but what emerges after all that has been written about his theory is a largely unknown Gramsci. His original intention was to write something *for eternity* in the spirit of his former master the philosopher Croce, but even in prison Gramsci remained very much as he described Machiavelli - "a man of his time". The quality of *eternita* was the hallmark of Croce's idealist cast of mind whereas the essential property of Gramsci's was its *storicita*. To be sure, if writing *for eternity* meant formulating political theory in a 'disinterested' scientific spirit, Gramsci did this by thinking dialectically about politics and writing in 'machiavellian' terms intended to be valid for "both sides" (§4.04), the Left and the Right. This explains the constant sensation of ambiguity which the most perceptive readers of the prison notes have noticed. But if writing for eternity meant placing himself above or outside the immediate political struggles of the day (which was not an impossible project inside the walls of a remote prison in Bari), this could not have been more alien to Gramsci's spirit. What strikes us from his letters is his unbreakable resolve even in the dark days at the turn of 1932-33 not to give up on life, to resist the inexorable tendency of the prisoner to become "anachronistic" and to stay in touch with the current of affairs via the periodicals at his disposal. The new problems posed by the current political struggles were the substance of his theorising: they provided the "practical origins" of his theory (the "philosophy of praxis") and were ultimately the source of its freshness and originality. The prison notebooks testify to the creativity (in contrast to the poverty) of theory because Gramsci addressed the novel and urgent problems presented by the real world. For Gramsci theory was "non-definitive". By writing in the form of occasional notes, he deliberately resisted the closed spirit of 'system' characteristic of idealist thought and made sure that his thinking 'adhered' as closely as possible to the actual course of historical events. For all their merits, the many attempts to present the theory of the prison notebooks in 'systematic' form ignore the fact that it did not proceed from concept to concept, but *from reality to concept*: its connecting threads are located *outside* the notes themselves, in the process of reality itself between 1929-35.

Can we speak of a 'Gramscian' interpretation of the German crisis and, if so, what are its key features? How does it differ from interpretations of the rise of fascism in Germany by other contemporary marxists? What relation does it have to the later historiography on the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich?¹

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The Marxist Theory of Fascism

In the last analysis of fascism before his arrest in 1926, Gramsci argued that the *peripheral states* of Europe (he mentions Italy, Spain, Portugal, Poland) were particularly vulnerable to fascism.² This perspective was developed after the turning-point in Germany in 1923 when "a catastrophic eruption of the economic element" - the hyperinflation - led not only the communists but also the fascists to attempt a 'revolution'. The abject failure of Hitler's attempt to imitate the successful example of a 'fascist revolution' carried out by Mussolini a year earlier seemed to highlight the differences between the German and Italian 'terrains', and this difference was a significant influence on Gramsci's *theory of the periphery*. In prison Gramsci did not simply abandon his earlier analyses, but the rise of fascism as a mass movement in Germany, an advanced capitalist state at the heart of Europe, posed new theoretical challenges demanding the elaboration of new concepts. Moreover, by the time Gramsci began writing in 1929 the so-called 'fascist revolution' in Italy itself had entered a conservative or 'restorationist' phase marked by the subjugation of the Fascist party itself, the ascendancy of the conservative bureaucracy, strict financial orthodoxy, the combination with Catholicism, and the propagandist cult of the leader. These were new characteristics which the ongoing analysis of fascism must take account of.

Gramsci's perception of the German crisis after 1929 was organised quite differently from that of other contemporary marxist interpretations, whether it was the official prognosis of the Comintern for the 'third period' after 1929 (an 'economistic' prognosis which Gramsci thought was a mistake) or the interpretations developed by marxists in opposition, notably Thalheimer and

¹ I have tried to answer this third question by indicating in the footnotes some of the historical works listed in the bibliography which relate to the themes of Gramsci's various inquiries.

² 'Un Esame della Situazione Italiana' (August 1926), in *La Costruzione del Partito comunista 1923-1926* (Einaudi, 1971) p. 113-124 (translated in SPW p. 400-411).

Trotsky. The latter tended to interpret fascism rather narrowly in terms of the concept of 'Bonapartism', an authentically marxist concept derived from the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, although they disagreed on whether Hitlerism corresponded to this form.³ Gramsci deployed the same concept under its Italian name 'Caesarism' but he introduced it at a late stage in the notes - at the turn of 1932-33 - where it is first used in relation to Schleicher not Hitler. The notes on Caesarism were a continuation of earlier observations (§2.75i, 1930; §2.75ii, §4.69, 1931) on the charismatic leader insofar as the essence of the phenomenon was not 'Caesar' himself (hence the formula of "Caesarism without Caesar, ie, without a 'heroic' personality") but a specific conjuncture in the class struggle marked by a "static equilibrium of the conflicting forces tending towards catastrophe". In this sense, the timing of Gramsci's notes on Caesarism had less to do with the appointment of Schleicher as Chancellor than with the result of the November elections when the state of "static equilibrium" was confirmed precisely by *the decline* in the Nazi vote. Gramsci's attempt to graft Weber's concept of charismatic leadership onto the Bonapartist or Caesarist argument is interesting, but these observations were part a more comprehensive historical conception of the German crisis which did not start (in late 1929) with the rise of Hitlerism at all.

The distinctive features of Gramsci's interpretation are due to the fact that it was accompanied by a rethinking of Marxism itself. The clue to this lies in a remark made by Togliatti in 1925 on the eve of the Lyons congress. Togliatti defended the leading nucleus of the party from Bordiga's charge that they were "not Marxists at all but neo-Hegelians, disciples of Benedetto Croce":

We arrived at Marxism by the route followed by Marx" he replied, "that is, by starting from German idealist philosophy, from Hegel..... Compared to other possible paths to Marxism, ours is the *via maestra* and has all the consequent advantages.⁴

In the prison notes Gramsci retraced the *via maestra* through "the study of Marx's Hegelianism" (§1.152). The route led to the conception of Marxism encapsuled in the *Theses on Feuerbach* and found throughout the prison notes as "the philosophy of praxis", a conception well attuned to the age of Lenin - "the greatest modern exponent of the philosophy of praxis". Meanwhile, Gramsci's progress along the *via maestra* led him to elaborate a number of concepts which could be applied to the German 'terrain'.

³ David Beetham: *Marxists in Face of Fascism* (Manchester University Press, 1983), p.26.

⁴ Paolo Spriano: *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*. 1. *Da Bordiga a Gramsci* (Einaudi, 1967) p.482.

The Main Features of Gramsci's Interpretation

The "practical origins" of Gramsci's theory meant that he addressed whatever questions were randomly posed by the developing crisis in Germany between 1929-34: he never got to the stage of synthesising his ideas and producing an integrated interpretation of the crisis. Nevertheless, there are a number of continuous guiding threads or lines of inquiry in his 'German' notes. Initially, we can single out *three* main ones which we will call the 'Hegelian' threads.

(i) The Traditional Intellectuals

The crisis of authority. The first thread is historicist. It starts with his account of the ruling function of the *traditional intellectuals* in the bourgeois revolution in Germany from 1848 to 1918 (§1.44, §4.49, §12.01, §15.18). Gramsci's synopsis of the function and mentality of the Prussian Junkers was set in a comparative perspective and synthesised the essential elements of structure-superstructure: the "suture" whereby the aristocracy assumed the function of the bourgeoisie's ruling stratum or "intellectuals" was similar to the English experience, but the German case differed in two respects: firstly, the Prussian aristocracy, unlike the English, was a producer not a rentier class; secondly, they were more solidly organised and possessed greater *esprit de corps* by virtue of constituting the officer corps of the army.⁵

The historicist relation between past and present, history and politics, lies in Gramsci's perception of the crisis of 1929-34 as a global *crisis of hegemony*, or "crisis of authority" (§1.48, §3.03, §1.127, §3.34, §4.22). Under the republic the residual power of the traditional ruling class in both State and civil society (east of the Elbe, but not only there) was considerable, but its capacity for leadership in the political and cultural fields was historically exhausted. When the 'catastrophic' crisis came in 1929, it offered no credible alternative to the parliamentary regime which it so detested. The *cultural* symptoms of this crisis of authority were captured in Gramsci's notes on the dominant "fathers-and-sons" motif in contemporary German writing⁶ where he found evidence (in the moral defence of parricide, for

⁵ A concise history of the Prussian Junkers is F.L.Carsten (1989). Gramsci's perspective is quite similar to that of his contemporary Eckart Kehr (1977).

⁶ Peter Gay (1974), chapter 5 'The Revolt of the Son'; Walter Laqueur (1974); Detlev Peukert (1991), chapter III.4.

example) of “a new kind of intellectual and moral disorder” (§3.03).

Not for the first time personal analysis sets itself against the principle of authority, which is attacked in all its forms: religious dogma, monarchical power, official teaching, the military State, the marriage bond, paternal prestige, and above all the system of justice which protects these transitory institutions and which merely coerces, constrains, and arbitrarily deforms public life and human nature. Man is unhappy and bad as long as he is shackled by the law, by custom, and by traditional ideas. He must be freed from all this in order to be saved. The creative virtue of destruction has become an article of faith (§3.03/1930).

His notes on the state of permanent rebellion of the young and the cultural despair of the old who abdicated their responsibility as educators and took the attitude of “apres moi le deluge” (§1.127), are related to this theme.

The tradition of bureaucratic rule. His recommendation of Weber's critique of the tradition of bureaucratic (as distinct from party) rule in imperial Germany is part of this historicist thread (§3.119, §12.01, §15.48).⁷ The *currency* of Weber's critique stemmed from the fact that the presidential ‘dictatorships’ starting in 1930 appeared to Gramsci to be a reversion to the post-Bismarckian tradition of rule by bureaucrats devoid of any capacity for political leadership which Weber had castigated so effectively in his articles of 1917-18. Germany was not peculiar in this respect. A similar custom whereby the high bureaucracy usurped the function of the parliamentary leaders and formed itself into an independent ‘party’ (“the State-Bonapartist party”) could be traced in post-Risorgimento Italy. The theme is continued in the notes written in 1932 when the reelection of Hindenburg temporarily strengthened the ascendancy of the traditional bureaucratic caste headed by the political-military clique (§8.81) around the president.⁸ Gramsci redrafted his synopsis on the traditional intellectuals at this time (§12.01). The difference in ‘mentalities’ of the Prussian and English aristocracy is further explored in terms of the contrasting administrative customs of English self-government and Prussian bureaucratic centralism (§8.55), a difference partly due to ‘structural’ determinants - again, the English aristocrats were rentiers, the Prussians were not. Meanwhile, the tradition of bureaucratic rule without political capacity found its perfected expression in Papen's ‘cabinet of the barons’ appointed in June 1932.⁹ The members of Papen's government were not drawn from the political parties but personally selected by Hindenburg from the remnants of yesterday's men, the

⁷ Max Weber (1994), Wolfgang Mommsen (1984), chapter 6.2.

⁸ K.D.Bracher (1970), chapter 4: ‘Democracy in Crisis’; F.L.Carsten (1966).

⁹ Martin Broszat (1993), chapter 3.2.

Prussian nobles. It was the nearest attempt to solve the crisis by an integral restoration of the old regime. When Hindenburg refused to dismiss Papen and appoint Hitler in his place after the Nazi victory in the elections in July, Gramsci raised the question of "bureaucratic centralism" (§9.68). The suggestion that Papen's government was a form of this is an interesting example of Gramsci's 'machievellian' use of a concept originating on the Left (from Trotsky) to analyse the politics of the Right, although the concept also accorded well with Weber's critique. Gramsci went back to Weber after the Enabling Act ended the parliamentary regime in March 1933 (§15.47). The function of political parties in the parliamentary regime was to train and select the leaders - "educating and testing out the various personalities" - who would determine the political direction of the State. The Nazi regime now reverted to a "bureaucratic solution" to the problem of selecting leaders, but this was far less efficient since "the parties are replaced by cliques and by confidential personal influences, to say nothing of the restricted possibilities of choice and the deadening of political sensitivity.....".

The concept of restoration. The final twist in the historicist thread is Gramsci's dialectic of 'revolution-restoration'. As early as 1930 he speculated in terms derived from English history on whether the present "interregnum" could be followed by a "restoration" (§3.34). The bankruptcy of the traditional ideologies tended to rule out this possibility but "not completely". Meanwhile, the appearance of new ideological "combinations" was anticipated, although he gave no indication of what this might be in the case of Germany. The new combination was between the old and the new, the Nationalists and the National Socialists. From the start of the crisis the two parties entered into a "symbiotic" union to campaign against the republic - against the Young Plan in 1929-30, for the Prussian plebiscite in 1931, in the Harzburg Front, in the second ballot of the presidential elections in 1932, and finally in Hitler's national coalition of 1933. The "molecular" process by which old and new ideologies combine is studied in notes written at the time of the presidential elections in early 1932: in the elements of continuity and change in the "language" used by the old and the new intellectuals (§8.171; his semantic enquiries into the term 'Reich' in §7.95 and §8.107 are connected with this) and in the "change in the relative weight of the elements" which occurs when new "utopias" are born out of the old ideological complex (§8.195). The particular element he had in mind may well have been the element of race, since anti-

semitism was the subject of Gramsci's fraught correspondence with Tatiana and Piero at this time on the question of the "two worlds". The element of anti-semitism was certainly present in traditional nationalism¹⁰, but "what was once secondary and subordinate, even incidental, is now taken to be primary, becoming the nucleus of the new ideological and doctrinal complex"

The interregnum ended when the Nationalists and Nazis formed the coalition government headed by Hitler in January 1933. Gramsci now thought of applying Edgar Quinet's formula of "the equivalence of revolution-restoration" in Italian history (§8.25). He introduces it in the notes on Caesarism written in the short period from Schleicher to Hitler, to break down his first schematic distinction between 'progressive' and 'reactionary' forms of Caesarism. "The problem is to see whether in the dialectic 'revolution-restoration' it is the element of revolution or restoration which predominates, for it is certain that in the movement of history there is no turning back and no such things as restorations *in toto*" (§9.133). The 'machievellian' method of synthesising opposites now led Gramsci to compare the *anti-Jewish* Hitlerites who had thwarted the ambitions of Schleicher, who represented the reactionary military caste, with the *pro-Jewish* Dreyfusards before 1914 who had defeated the reactionary 'caste' element in the French military establishment: both were examples of historical-political movements "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 and introduce into State life and social activity a different and more numerous personnel" (§14.23). Gramsci continued to explore the problem of "judging restorations 'dynamically'" in the series of notes on "transformism" in the Risorgimento (§15.11, §15.15 etc) written immediately after the destruction of the Left in the Nazi reign of terror in early 1933. The molecular process by which the 'revolutionary' personnel passed over to the dominant camp in the Risorgimento offered the mirror image of a 'similar' process now *starting* in Germany with the introduction of Nazi personnel into State life¹¹, especially as transformism was governed by the same law as that followed by all demagogues on achieving power - "the law of the turncoat" (§15.07). How far would the new personnel be "absorbed" by the traditional intellectuals, how far would they "transform" their traditional consciousness?

¹⁰ Peter Pulzer (1988).

¹¹ David Shoenbaum (1980); Ian Kershaw (1991), chapter 7.

Gramsci speculates on whether, “by symbiosis”, the Nazis were serving the interests of their partners the Nationalists, “the historical party” (§14.03). He predicts that in time the movement would “shed its arbitrary, symbiotic features” and thus become conscious of its global (‘totalitarian’) significance (§15.06). The thread of Gramsci’s thinking at this stage (the first quarter of 1933) is hard to follow but in suggesting that the Nazi Party in power would “shed its arbitrary, symbiotic features” he did not simply mean ditching the Nationalists (which, of course, Hitler soon did) but also shedding the ‘socialist’ element of the new ideological ‘combination’.

There is no doubt that some movements, if examined closely, think of themselves as marginal in character: ie, they presuppose a main movement and graft themselves on to it in order to reform certain of its presumed or actual imperfections. In a word, certain movements are purely reformist” (§15.06/1933).

Here the dialectic of ‘*revolution* -restoration’ is modified to ‘*reform* -restoration’: the constant element is ‘restoration’, but it is still not a ‘restoration *in toto*’. The Nazis ‘reformed’ the ideology of traditional nationalism by introducing a ‘socialist’ element necessary to win power under the post-war conditions of social and economic crisis, but this element was unnecessary (‘arbitrary’) now that they had won power and “the law of the turncoat” applied. Thus Gramsci looked forward not only to the shedding of the Nationalists but of the National ‘Socialists’. The “dramatic struggles” of 1934 (§17.51) when those who called for a “second revolution” were ruthlessly liquidated was a significant episode in the dialectic of ‘revolution-restoration’ which governed the real process of events. The “blind, one-sided fanaticism of ‘party’” of the Storm Troops impeded the development of the “State-minded conception of the world” (§17.51) necessary for the ruling function.

(II) Civil Society

The second thread consists of the *dialectic of civil society-State* (starting in §1.47) which places particular emphasis on the *private initiatives* of the dominant class in organising or reorganising the State. At an early stage in the notes, Gramsci singled out two forms of private initiative by the dominant bloc which played a key role in changing the equilibrium of force and consent on which the ‘normal’ parliamentary state depended: these were private armies and private newspapers.

The storm troops and 'underground warfare.' The activities of private armies in the Weimar republic, especially the political warfare conducted by the paramilitary associations of the Right (§1.48, §1.133,134) were seen in this context.¹² Gramsci interpreted the use of shock troops by the Right as a sign of the relatively passive and demoralised state of their army, ie, of the deficiency in mass support for their cause. The crisis of hegemony - a 'slackening of discipline and fighting spirit on the part of the army as a whole' - demanded a new tactical deployment. "A weakened State structure is like a flagging army; the shock troops - ie, *private* armed organisations - enter the field and have two tasks: to use *illegal* methods, whilst the State appears to remain within the framework of legality, to reorganise the State itself". The distinction between civil society-State was useful, therefore, in shining a light on the *illegal* activities of the dominant class which must remain in the private sphere in order to maintain the appearance of the *Rechtsstaat*. From his Italian experience (notably the Matteotti murder) Gramsci appreciated that the 'appearance' of legality was highly sensitive politically. A note written in 1932 at the time of Bruning's ban on Hitler's Storm Troops (the "delinquent association" of §8.81) touches on this question. Since the ban was arguably the main reason for Bruning's dismissal and since Papen's first act was to lift it, the *hypocrisy* of the State in this matter was transparent. Gramsci's notes of 1932-33 on contemporary Caesarism as more "a police than a military system" (§9. 136) and on political parties as "police agencies" (§9.133, §14.34), which anticipated the Nazi seizure of Germany's entire police apparatus, were related to this question. So was his recommendation to marxists to study the constitutions of the major states along the lines of Marx's analysis of the Spanish constitution of 1812, especially those which (like the Weimar constitution) provided for a "legal passage" from democracy to dictatorship.

The concentration of newspapers and the 'ideological front'. In addition to the private armies, Gramsci took a close interest in the big press groups.¹³ His note on the German newspapers (§2.26), which covers the spectrum from the extreme nationalist to the liberal-democratic dailies, constitutes a detailed description of the "material structures" which made up the "ideological front" of the dominant class. The press was "the most dynamic" section of this front which included publishing

¹² R. Bessel (1985)

¹³ M. Eksteins (1975).

houses¹⁴, reviews and periodicals of all kinds, and much else - "everything which directly or indirectly influences public opinion belongs to it". This is what Gramsci later had in mind by "the superstructures of civil society" (§7.10) which are particularly dense in advanced capitalist states like Germany. The note on newspapers may well have been 'occasioned' by the violent campaign of the right-wing 'Hugenbergpress' against ratification of the Young Plan in 1929-30 which led the Socialist Interior Minister, Severing, to contemplate tighter legal controls on the press. The Hugenberg press projected Hitler nationally for months on end and was a crucial aspect of his "symbiotic" dependence on his partner Hugenburg.

It was Hugenberg's strategy since the war years to build up a 'public opinion machine' in anticipation of the democratic political order likely to follow the war.¹⁵ The alarming extent of his media power by the time of the 1929 crisis was already described by Ludwig Bernhard in his classic *Der 'Hugenberg-Konzern'* (Berlin, 1928: untranslated). Its growing hold over the struggling provincial press in the hard times after 1929 was particularly significant, especially in the light of Gramsci's observation that "in Germany the number of newspapers published throughout the country is impressive and the concentration [of papers] in Berlin is matched by an ample stratification nationwide" (§3.83; the expression *un ampia stratificazione di provincia* is substituted in second draft). The spectacular choreography of the Nazis' "propaganda concentrations" may have obscured the "everyday" influence of the local papers in winning over the hearts and minds of small town Germany to Hitler's cause.

Stragglers along the *Sonderweg* may well be interested in this 'transitional' phase of the route between 1914-18 in which the dominant bloc planned to use the power of the press to permeate post-war civil society with traditional national values. However, Gramsci did not think Germany was entirely peculiar in this respect. His notes on the concept of public opinion - "the point of contact between civil and political society" - and on the role of the yellow press and the radio in manufacturing public opinion 'booms' on the eve of elections (§7.83, §7.103) were obviously pertinent to Germany, but he wrote them in response to the landslide victory of the National Government in Britain in November 1931 in which the Rothermere and Beaverbrook press, not to mention the supposedly independent BBC, had much to say.

¹⁴ Gary D. Stark (1981).

¹⁵ John A. Leopold (1977)

The position of the Catholic Church. The third element of civil society studied by Gramsci was the network of lay organisations collectively known as Catholic Action (§5.22, §5.59, §8.129). The depth of the “ideological front” of the dominant class extended to the Catholic Church: “The position which the Church has kept in modern society cannot be explained without knowing the persistent and patient effort it makes to keep developing its own section of this material structure of ideology” (§3.49). This vision was comprehensible in the Catholic states of the *periphery*, especially in view of the ‘restoration’ of an established Church in Italy in the Concordat of 1929, but what of the Church’s position in protestant Germany? Was not the position entirely different there where, for example, one element of the national terrain was a popular-democratic Catholic party, the Centre, which the Fascists in Italy had stifled in its infancy? Was it not a crude simplification to align the networks of the Catholic Church in Germany along the same “ideological front” as the organisations of the extreme Right, albeit far to the rear of these? The several warnings of the German bishops in 1931 against the Nazis would support this criticism, but at the decisive moment in 1933 the Nazis exploited the fact that the anti-communism of the Catholic hierarchy was far stronger than its anti-fascism. The intervention of the Vatican in overruling the German bishops was crucial. The Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pius XII) was ready to collaborate in the passive dissolution of the Centre Party in order to win the coveted prize of the Reich Concordat.¹⁶ Gramsci’s lively interest in the historical *precedent* of Vatican intervention in the vote on Bismarck’s seven-year law (§2.20) seemed to anticipate this possibility; so did his comment on the Concordat with Prussia in 1929 (§1.03/05) which indicated that “the juridical thought of the Vatican has evidently changed and it could change again depending on political expediences” (§16.11).

The Church undertook in the Concordat to withdraw from political society in the hope of preserving its position in civil society without realising that the very reality of “civil society” was an affront to the Nazi State. In Hitler’s Germany “the whole society in which the Church moves and can evolve tends to become rigid and leaves it with few possibilities to adapt.....” (§20.04). Moreover, the Concordat was the means by which the Nazis “coordinated” the Catholic Church from the

¹⁶ Guenter Lewy (1964), John Cornwall (1999)

beginning and the Church's subsequent attempts to separate itself from the Nazis' ideological front - like Vatican's formal condemnation of Rosenberg's book in 1934 (§20.04) - could not change its basic position.

(iii) The Political Parties

The third thread consists of Gramsci's inquiry into the political parties. Not without 'soliciting the texts', he derives the concept of the party from Hegel's doctrine of the private associations (§1.47) and so treats it as an element of civil society, but his later distinction between civil society and *political society* differentiated the parties from other forms of voluntary association.

The historical party. Synthesising elements of German philosophy and French politics in imitation of the young Marx (§1.47 & §1.48), Gramsci started by selecting a *concrete element* of French political experience - "the richest in political elements" (§1.44). The right-wing *Action Francaise* led by Charles Maurras offered the model of a certain type of political party - "the monarchist party in a republican regime, like the republican party in a monarchist regime, or the nationalist party in a regime of national subjection" (§1.18).¹⁷ The parties of the Right, whether monarchist or nationalist or both, could therefore be seen in a certain sense as 'revolutionary' parties since their ideological aims could only be achieved by overthrowing the political systems in which they were forced operate. Thus, analysis of parties of the 'revolutionary' Right could potentially offer useful political lessons for the revolutionary Left, who must must learn from the weaknesses and strengths of their enemy. Gramsci compared Maurras' *Action Francaise* to Hugenberg's party in Germany (§13.37) which answered to the description both of a monarchist party in a republican regime and (given the Versailles Treaty arrangements) a nationalist party in a regime of national subjection. Elsewhere he calls it "the 'historical' party" (§14.03). Its leader Hugenberg was, like Maurras, "a demagogue who does not know how to be one" (§1.48). His tactic of absolute opposition to the republican system was applied in the violent agitation against the Young Plan in the autumn of 1929, but this resulted in splitting the parliamentary party in November 1929 as the first of several fractions of the conservative-agrarian wing (contemptuously referred to by the reactionary rump as English "Tory

¹⁷ Walter Kaufmann (1954)

democrats") broke away. The splitting of parties was one of the main symptoms of the crisis of hegemony or "crisis of authority" in the parliamentary arena (§1.48) although, as we said, Gramsci discovered symptoms of the same crisis in the field of culture, as his note on German writers indicates (§3.03).

Gramsci started at the end of 1929, therefore, not with the rise of the Nazis but with the disintegration of the Nationalists.¹⁸ As the "historical party" (§14.03) the Nationalists were the focus of his historicism and the key to understanding the historical-political dimension of the crisis of authority. It was the party of the dominant 'agrarian-industrial' bloc but under Hugenberg's leadership the historical 'suture' at the level of the parties was in danger of coming apart. The party leadership passed from the agrarians, the "traditional intellectuals" whose historical function was to lead, to an industrialist who demonstrably lacked this capacity.

The charismatic party. Gramsci returned to this thread in the summer of 1930 during the election campaign in Germany. He began a two-part critical summary of Robert Michels' typology of political parties (§2.75.i & ii). In an article of 1928 Michels added a new party to the typology contained in his pre-war work *Political Parties* : this was the charismatic party 'discovered' (so Gramsci correctly thought) not by Michels but by Weber. The process of his theorising followed the real course of events in Germany where (according to his periodicals) Hitler's party was rapidly gaining ground in the election campaign. He now turned his attention from the historical party to the charismatic party, but Gramsci saw Hitler's movement as part of *the same historicist thread* . In Weber's terms, we could say that Gramsci saw the possible solution to the crisis of authority in Germany as the *transformation* of traditional into charismatic authority expressed in the historical myth of a national "man of destiny".¹⁹ The *invention of tradition* played a key role in this myth-making since a version of the nation's history had to be created which culminated 'providentially' in Hitler. However, Gramsci did not think this type of solution was peculiar to the Germans. It was Mussolini who exemplified for Michels the modern charismatic leader, but it was the rise of Hitler in 1929-30 which gave Gramsci's commentary on Michels its currency.

The theoretical question was this: can one speak of charismatic *parties* based on the personality of the leader as a new type of party? Gramsci took note of Michels' observation that charismatic leaders can be found in parties of the Left as well as

¹⁸ Attila Chanady (1967)

¹⁹ Ian Kershaw (1989).

the Right. In the case of Germany, for example, the leadership style of Ferdinand Lassalle (a proto-'national socialist'?), who seemed to evoke similar popular hero-worship as Hitler was now doing, supported this. Nevertheless, Gramsci was not persuaded to accept that a party could be constituted on the basis of personality instead of the 'permanent' bases of class and ideology which were grounded in the mode of production. He offered an alternative explanation of the charismatic phenomenon which harked back to the first phase of the development of Fascism as a mass movement in Italy:

In the modern world the so-called charisma of which Michels speaks always coincides with a primitive phase in the development of mass parties in which its doctrine appears nebulous and incoherent in the eyes of the masses and needs an infallible pope to interpret and adapt it to the circumstances. The more this happens the more the party originates and takes shape on the basis of incoherent and muddled ideologies..... These ideologies are nurtured by feelings and emotions which have still not reached the point of dissolving because the classes (or the class) which express them, having reached historically the point of dissolution, still have a certain basis and cling to the glories of the past in order to shield themselves from the future (§2.75.i /1930).

This conception approximated closely to the reality of German politics in the summer of 1930 as Hitler's party began the phase of mass expansion. Gramsci was aware of the fact, for example, that Otto Strasser had recently been expelled for daring to open a debate about the party's 'socialism' which questioned de facto Hitler's position as the infallible pope of its ideology. His suggestion that the party's nebulous ideology actually enhanced Hitler's charisma ('infallibility') in the eyes of the masses was an important insight confirmed by later research into this "deceptively simple" question.²⁰ At this stage he sees Hitlerism as the ideology of 'dying classes' - the shopkeepers and petty-bourgeois of Berlin, the small farmers and farm managers of the countryside mentioned in another 'German' note (§2.26) - who are emotionally drawn to Hitler by a mixture of nostalgia and fear. The breakthrough of Hitler's party in the September elections led Gramsci to pose the theoretical question of "the value of the ideologies" which, he suggested, could be studied concretely by analysing "the current phenomenon of the decomposition of parliamentarism" (ie, in Germany) (§4.22). But if 'Hitlerism' exemplified the efficacy of the ideologies, Gramsci was no more certain than later historians what in the eyes of the masses the ideology of Hitlerism actually meant.²¹ A brief annotation written shortly after, however, referred significantly to "the change in the

²⁰ Ian Kershaw (1983)

²¹ *ibid.*

psychology of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists" since Stresemann's death in 1929 (§5.118). Meanwhile, the financial panic in Germany in the summer of 1931 (§6.90) coinciding with Hitler's new plebiscitary campaign in Prussia (§6.97) led Gramsci to pick up the thread of the charismatic party. The study of Marx's "concrete historical and political works", especially the *Eighteenth Brumaire* but other texts besides (§7.24), now led to a new twist in the thread as the charismatic leader was seen to be the product of the same situation that produced a 'Bonaparte'. There were no such things as charismatic parties, only charismatic leaders. The latter was essentially a "demagogue" whose mass appeal owed much to modern techniques of political choreography (§6.97), but he emerged out a similar state of deadlock in the class struggle described by Marx in his accounts of the class struggles in France 1848-51.

There's no evidence of any parties of this type. At particular moments certain more or less exceptional personalities represent and express certain interests. At certain moments of 'permanent anarchy' caused by the static equilibrium of the conflicting forces, one man personifies 'order', ie, the breaking of the deadlock by exceptional methods, and all the 'frightened ones', all the 'rabid sheep' of the petty-bourgeoisie flock to his side. Nevertheless, he does have a programme, however vague: indeed, it is vague precisely because it merely aims to restore the external political casing of a society in crisis (§2.75.ii/1931).

The expression "rabid sheep" adhered closely to the moment of financial panic in Germany in the summer of 1931 when a run on the banks was only narrowly averted, but the possibility presented by the plebiscitary campaign in Prussia that the charismatic Hitler might choose this moment to restore "order" proved unfounded. For the time being the state of "static equilibrium" in Germany persisted, but events in Britain now presented Gramsci with the chance to put the class struggles in Germany into comparative perspective.

The crisis of parties: the normal and exceptional solutions. The fall of the Labour Government, the abandonment of the gold standard, and the British general election now dominated the international news agenda. The spectacle of Ramsey Macdonald asking the country for a "doctor's mandate" while brandishing a handful of worthless German banknotes from the 1923 inflation kept the British 'flock' together at this critical moment. The massive victory of the National Government in the election of 27 October 1931 demonstrated that the parliamentary equilibrium of force and consent on which the hegemony of the dominant bloc normally depended could be extremely "dynamic" in time of acute crisis.

At a certain point in the historical process classes break away from their traditional parties; in other words, the traditional parties, given their particular organisational form and the particular men who personify and lead them, cease to represent their class or fraction of their class. This is the most delicate and dangerous kind of crisis because it opens the door to providential or charismatic men. A situation arises in which the representatives and the represented are at odds with each other, and when something like this occurs in the province of private organisations (parties and trade unions) it cannot but be reflected in the State where, in consequence, the power of the bureaucracy (in a broad sense, military and civil) is strengthened to a formidable degree. How then does such a situation arise?

The process differs from one country to another although its content is the same. The crisis is dangerous when it spreads to all the parties and all the classes, when, in other words, the rank-and-file of one or more parties does not pass over very speedily to a party which better expresses their general interests. The latter is an organic (normal) phenomenon even if the speed with which it happens is extremely rapid in comparison with normal periods. It signifies the fusion of a class under a single leadership in order to solve a dominant life-or-death problem. If the crisis is not solved in an organic way like this but by means of the providential man, it means that a static equilibrium exists. This is when no class, neither the conservative nor the progressive, is strong enough to win and even the conservative class needs a master (§4.69/1931).

This note synthesised the key features of Gramsci's crisis of hegemony (§1.48) and set the agenda for the next phase of the crisis: the disintegration of the traditional parties and ideologies, the dialectic of civil society and State, and the static equilibrium which produces the charismatic man. It is interesting to note that the catalyst which produced this synthesis was the British general election of 1931 as reported by the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (§7.94). When the 'national government' came to power in Germany in 1933 Gramsci referred back to the British election in 1931 (§15.02). He was particularly impressed by the disappearance of the traditional "intermediate" party, the free trade Liberals, whose rank-and-file passed over in the 1931 election to the protectionist party, the Conservatives. According to Gramsci's analysis, the class content of this - which was "essentially the same from one country to another" - was this: these intermediate or (as he calls them) "industrial" parties represented a nexus of small classes and big classes which broke up during the crisis when the big class, the industrialists (supported by the conservative press) switched support to the agrarian party, the Conservatives, who stood for general protectionism for industry and agriculture. To this extent the disintegration of the middle parties was not a peculiarity of the German crisis, but whereas the main beneficiary in Britain was the Conservatives (disguised as the 'National' party), in Germany it was the Nazis. According to this perspective, the peculiarity of the Germans would have more to do with the historic problems of German conservatism not German liberalism.²² The fact remains that the coming to power of the 'National' coalition in Germany in

²² David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley (1984)

January 1933 was seen as a 'similar' class phenomenon as that of the National Government in Britain in October 1931: the essence of both 'turning-points' was the fusion of the dominant bloc under a single political leadership.

The bureaucracy of parties. The dialectic civil society-State in Germany at the end of 1931 now led Gramsci to direct his attention to the State (ie, the civil and military bureaucracy) whose power was greatly strengthened by the crisis of the "private" organisms, the political parties and trade unions. This explains the many notes on the question of bureaucracy (§9.21 etc) in the first half of 1932 when in fact the ascendancy of the political-military clique around President Hindenburg was most marked. At the same time, Gramsci attributed the crisis of the German parties during the new historical phase after 1929 to their tendency to become "bureaucratised". He applied to the parties of the "other side" a concept which was first invented by his "own side": this was the concept of "tempismo" invented by Trotsky in the articles on *The New Course* in 1923-24 in which he attacked the bureaucratic tendency of communist parties which caused them to miss revolutionary opportunities like the German 'October' of 1923.

One of the most important questions about political parties is their 'ability to ride the storm' (*tempestivita*) or 'aptitude to change with the times' (*tempismo*) or how they react to the spirit of 'habit' and the tendencies to become anachronistic and mummified. In practice parties arise (as organisations) after historical events of importance for the social groups they represent. But they are not always capable of adapting to new epochs or historical phases, they are not always capable of developing in step with the development of the global relations of force (and hence the relative relations) in the particular country or in the international field. This line of research must distinguish between: the social group; the party's mass membership; the party's bureaucracy or general staff. Force of habit is most dangerous in the last of these: if the party is organised as an autonomous, self-sufficient establishment, it will end up becoming anachronistic. This is when crises of parties occur, when all of a sudden they lose their historical social base and end up 'suspended in mid-air': this is what has happened in Germany as a result of the expansion of Hitlerism (§7.77/1931).

The failure of the traditional party of the German Right, the Nationalists, to adapt to the new historical phase starting in 1929 (or even 1918) was particularly evident. The earlier thread of "the monarchist party in a republican regime" (Maurras-Hugenburg) had emphasised the failure of its *ideology*. Gramsci's historicist analysis of the bureaucratic spirit of 'habit' and the tendency to become 'anachronistic' continues the same thread by analysing the weakness of the party's *organisation*. The same bureaucratic spirit of habit was apparent in the State which, after all, was personified by an "anachronism", Field Marshall Hindenburg, who symbolised the fact that the ruling function of the traditional intellectuals was

nearly 'extinct'. Moreover, the bureaucratic centralism of Papen's 'cabinet of the nobles' which had no support in parliament, was a mark of its "anachronistic" character.

Gramsci's 'scientific' use of Trotsky's concept, however, could not hide the fact that the science of revolution had as much, if not more, to learn from the "other side" (in the first place, Weber) about the functional role of bureaucracy in the modern State, especially in view of what Gramsci now called "the whole democratic-bureaucratic system" (§12.01) of advanced capitalist states like Germany. This system was never more in evidence than in Germany in the first half of 1932 when the party 'machines' mobilised to fight a continuous series of elections at the presidential, state, and parliamentary levels. Gramsci seemed to think that these elections marked the transformation of Hitler's 'movement' into a 'party' insofar as the mass expansion of a party was considered to be a function of the quantity and quality of its cadres at different levels (§9.62, §9.69).²³ No doubt he implicitly compared the relative mass expansiveness of the Communists and the Nazis in these elections, which were taken to reveal the quantity and quality of their cadres at respective levels. His rough calculations from the voting figures in the Prussian state elections in April (§9.62 note) of the relative strengths of the parties of the Left and the Right were connected with this.

The endurance of agrarian parties. The mass expansion of Hitler's party reached its peak in the July elections, but the deadlock could not be broken by electoral means and the loss of some 2 million votes the following November cast doubt not only on the permanence of the mass base of Hitler's party but also the capacity of its cadres. The "static equilibrium" revealed by the election result of November now led Gramsci to formulate his theory of Caesarism "with catastrophic prospects" (§9.133/136, §14.23), with its attendant reflections on parties as purely police agencies (§9.133, §14.34), but the result may also have affected his judgement in other ways. Firstly, the relative recovery of the Nationalists and decline of the Nazis in November and their preponderance in the 'National' cabinet formed in January 1933 explains Gramsci's reflections on "the strength of agrarian parties" (§14.53, §15.02), although the comparison with the National (ie, Conservative) victory in Britain in 1931 was certainly a factor in these reflections. Secondly, the recovery of the Nationalists raised the question how much the mass expansion of Hitler's party

²³ Dietrich Orlow, 1 (1971)

owed to the disintegration of the “intermediate parties” in Germany. This would explain Gramsci’s subsequent conception of Hitler’s party as a form of “extremism of the centre” (§14.03) which anticipated an important thesis on Nazism proposed later.²⁴ Thirdly, the election result in November, and the national cabinet formed in January, pointed to the fact that the relation between the parties of the German Right was more accurately described as one of “symbiosis” between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ than a straightforward process of transformation of one into the other. Gramsci predicted that now that it had come to power Hitler’s movement would in time “shed its arbitrary, symbiotic features” (§15.06), but judging from the whole cluster of German notes written in early 1933 he understood this to mean the development of an ideology in which the element of ‘restoration’ would increasingly predominate over that of ‘revolution’. Judging by the “dramatic struggles” inside the Nazi party in 1934 (§17.51), this forecast was not far wrong.

(iv) Structure-Superstructure and the ‘Historical Bloc’

The three guiding threads so far identified were explicitly traced back to Hegel (§1.47, §6.24, §8.187), confirming the fact that Gramsci’s rethinking of Marxism started with an attempt to read Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* as Marx must have done [The text of Marx’s *Critique* of 1843-44 was not extant at the time]. Gramsci interweaves these three Hegelian threads with a fourth authentically Marxist thread - the concept of *structure-superstructure*, the cornerstone of the materialist conception of history. The Hegelian threads of the theory - intellectuals, civil society-State, political parties - all pertain to the superstructures, but Gramsci was not *simply* the theorist of the superstructures. This view does not do justice either to his notes on the structure-superstructure question or, still less, to the application of his theory to the German crisis after 1929. It should not be forgotten that Gramsci elaborated his theory in the context of the world capitalist crisis after 1929 - “a catastrophic eruption of the immediate economic element” - which provided immediate and concrete *evidence* with which to ‘test’ the theory of the structure-superstructure. Gramsci’s notes are particularly interesting, therefore, since discussions of this question seldom descend (or ascend!) to empirical analysis.

²⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset (1983), Ian Kershaw (1991), chapter 2.

The critique of economism. Gramsci began theorising on this question shortly after the Reichstag elections of September (the source cited in §4.38 is dated 21 October 1930). The dramatic 'superstructural' result marked by the breakthrough of Hitler's party were seen by Gramsci in the perspective of the 'catastrophic eruption' of the Wall Street Crash a year before (letter to Tatiana, 4 November 1930) but, paradoxically, the results confirmed his vigorously *anti-economistic* theory of revolution. In his most sophisticated statement of this theory (§7.10, §7.16) he argued that the *superstructures of civil society* in the advanced capitalist states, like the trench systems of modern warfare, were more resistant to catastrophic structural crises than economistic theories of revolution assumed. This did not mean, of course, that the victory of the Hitlerites had *nothing* to do with the catastrophic impact on Germany of the 1929 crisis. In the war of position in politics, attack and defence, or rather attack and counter-attack, pertain to *both sides* - Gramsci's text is deliberately ambiguous or "objective" on this point - but there is no doubt that he interpreted the German election results as a successful *counter-attack*. The economistic assumptions on which the policy of the Comintern in the 'third period' rested were demonstrably falsified by the German results. Nor could the successful counter-attack of the Hitlerites simply be explained in economistic terms. This took no account of the depth of the ideological front of the dominant class (§3.49) with its all too 'material' superstructures of para-military associations, newspaper concentrations, and much else.

The famous passage comparing the superstructures of civil society to the trench systems of modern warfare (§7.10) was, in fact, a critique of the Comintern's revolutionary thinking. For prudential reasons Gramsci gave it an impeccably orthodox disguise by composing it in the form of a critique of the revolutionary theory of Rosa Luxemburg (*Germany's* theorist) whose 'errors' had been formally denounced by the Fifth Plenum in 1925 which Gramsci had attended in person. The "invisible tribunal" in Moscow could not therefore accuse him of heresy. However, accurate contextual analysis of this celebrated note which he wrote immediately after the acrimonious disagreement with his comrades in November-December 1930 over the 'third period' line, reveals the living relation between *past and present* he had in mind. The majority of comrades supported the Comintern's policy and felt that Gramsci had underestimated the likely effects of the world capitalist crisis in destabilising the Fascist regime. The few who were still on

speaking terms with him, notably Athos Lisa, invited him to prepare an analysis of the Italian situation in the context of the world economic crisis. This was impossible without access to the necessary economic data but Gramsci's project for a study of the Italian economic structure (§6.96) indicates that he was not insensitive to the economistic prejudice of his comrades. Whatever the case, Gramsci began in 1931 to study closely the causes and dynamics of the world capitalist crisis both before and after the new phase starting in 1929. This was obviously a deliberate project since Tatiana began sending him (which she would not have otherwise done) special material for the task such as the issue of the review *Economia* for March 1931 entirely devoted to the causes of the world economic depression.

Gramsci's study of the economic crisis can be followed in notes written at three different moments: the financial crisis in Europe in the summer of 1931 (§6.90, §6.123, §6.130); the unemployment peak in the summer of 1932 (§9.61); and the new conjuncture at the start of 1933 marked by the coming to power of Hitler in Germany, although the creation of the IRI in Italy in January 1933 should also be included in the conjuncture (§15.01, §15.05, §15.16). His judgement of the crisis shifted during this time. At the end of 1930, at the time of writing about the 'resistance' of civil society in the advanced states (§7.10, §7.16), Gramsci was inclined to think that the 1929 Crash was "a catastrophic eruption of the immediate economic element" similar in its intensity and duration to the German inflation in 1923. By the start of 1932 he was persuaded by the general scope, depth, and duration of the new crisis that it was not "conjunctural" like 1923 but "organic" (§8.216: criticism of Einaudi). His theoretical effort was directed at defining the difference between these terms - organic and conjunctural - and at understanding the correlation between short-term and long-term *structural movements* which they were meant to describe.

Conjunctural and organic crisis. The relation of structure-superstructure depended from the start on the accurate definition of structural *movement*. There were two kinds to take into account in assessing superstructural phenomena - 'occasional' and 'permanent' (the terms 'conjunctural' and 'organic' were substituted in 1931) movement: "The occasional leads to political analysis and is useful in judging political groups and personalities; the permanent leads to social-historical analysis and is useful for judging the big social groups" (§4.38). Economics did not 'determine' politics but the movement of the economy must be studied for the

purposes of political forecasting. From the study of Marx's "concrete historical and political works" Gramsci extracted a series of principles warning against simplistic economic determinism. The most important of these was

the difficulty of identifying at any given time, statically (like an instantaneous photographic image), the structure. In fact, politics at any given time is a reflection of the tendencies of development of the structure, but this does not necessarily mean that such tendencies will be realised. A structural phase can only be concretely studied and analysed after the whole process of its development has been completed, not during the process itself, unless by means of hypotheses and by declaring explicitly that hypotheses is what they are (§7.24/1931).

The 'parasitic' thesis. Gramsci applied this principle in studying the new structural phase starting in 1929. In the notes we find a number of "snapshots" of the structure (for example, §5.68 on the British trade balance; §9.61 on English and German unemployment) depending on the fortuitous availability of economic data in the periodicals. Sometimes he described the kind of "image" he wanted without having the necessary data at his disposal. For example, during the financial panic in Europe in the summer of 1931 Gramsci argued (against Gino Arias) that the underlying "crisis of saving" was not due to the Fordist policy of paying the workers high wages but to the quota of national income consumed by absolutely unproductive or 'parasitic' social categories. In an earlier note on Americanism he acknowledged the difficulty of measuring this quota:

The European 'tradition' is characterised precisely by the existence of such classes made up of social elements like the civil service, the clergy and intellectuals, landed property, commerce. The older a country's history the more these elements have left behind over the centuries residues of idle people who live off the 'pension' left by their ancestors. Statistics of these social elements are very difficult to work out because it is very hard to find the 'heading' which can cover them all (§1.61/1929-30).

His difficulties in working out the appropriate 'heading' can be followed in the polemic against Arias where he suggests that what is needed is a statistical 'snapshot' of the economically active population: "A relation between 'employed' workers and the rest of the population would provide the image of the 'parasitic' weight which rests on the population" (§6.123). Without having the appropriate statistic to clinch his argument, Gramsci nevertheless concluded:

The category of unproductive parasites, in both the absolute and relative sense, has grown enormously in the post-war period and this is the category which devours savings. In European countries it is even greater than in America etc. The causes of the crisis therefore are not moral (enjoyments etc) or political in nature but socio-economic, ie, of the same character as the crisis itself:

society creates its own poisons by having to provide a living for masses of the population (not just unemployed wage-earners) who impede savings and thus break the dynamic equilibrium (§6.123/1931).

Gramsci's 'parasitic' explanation of the causes of the crisis of saving in Europe seems more persuasive in relation to the social structure of Italy than of Germany where by his criteria the proportions of the population were more economically 'rational'. The parasitic social categories he describes certainly existed in Germany (given their huge mortgage debts and the huge subsidies paid in 'Eastern Aid', the Junkers themselves were the main "pensioners" of German economic history)²⁵ but a statistic showing the relation of 'employed' workers to the rest of the population would probably show that the 'parasitic weight' was greater in Italy than in Germany. When he returned to this question in early 1932, he thought of using a different statistic ("snapshot") to measure parasitism.

What is the distribution of the population of a given society with respect to 'goods' and 'services'?.....It is certain that the more extensive the 'services' sector, the worse the society is organised..... Parasitism develops especially in this sector to which commerce and distribution in general belong. 'Productive' unemployment causes 'inflation' of services (multiplication of small business) (§8.108/1932).

The phenomenal growth of the services sector, in fact, was the single most important structural change of the post-war economy: in Germany employment in services grew by 15% compared to 1% in industry in the decade 1920-30, by a further 21% compared to 13% in industry in the decade 1930-1940.²⁶ But if these figures tend to substantiate Gramsci's thesis on the growth of relative parasitism, they also suggest that fascism was not simply the ideology of "dying classes".

The notes on Arias illustrate his attempt to define the relation between the two kinds of structural movement: the financial panic of 1931 was a conjunctural crisis - the conjuncture being "the whole complex of immediate and transitory features of the economic situation" (§6.130). However, the crisis of saving also had a historical or organic element, ie, the increasing quota of the national income consumed by the category of unproductive 'parasites' which had "grown enormously in the post-war period" (§6.123). The study of the conjuncture was useful in judging political groups and personalities, but it was not possible to

²⁵ See the study by M.Tcherkinsky (1922) ie, before the inflation of 1923.

²⁶ Harold James (1987)

predict its political outcome (if any). What would be the political result of the financial crisis of 1931? Gramsci may have reckoned that the financial panic in mid-July was a vote of no confidence in the policies of Brüning and could result in his fall (§6.90). He may also have reckoned that it would serve the ambition of the charismatic Hitler (§6.97) whose plebiscitary campaign in Prussia was due to reach a climax in early August. Would the “rabid sheep” set in motion by the financial panic flock to his side? Would the charismatic Hitler choose this moment to restore “order”? (§2.75.ii) In fact, the financial crisis had neither of these political outcomes.

The ‘snapshot’ of 1932. The most successful of Gramsci’s snapshots was his comparison of the English and German unemployment figures in the first half of 1932 (§9.61) which led him to invent the formula of “the coefficient ‘organic-cyclical’ crisis” and to form the hypothesis that in the event of a cyclical recovery unemployment in Germany, although numerically much higher, would be absorbed more rapidly than in Britain.

The starting point of this analysis can be the phenomenon of unemployment. Do the masses of unemployed in England and Germany have the same significance? Does the theorem of ‘fixed proportions’ as applied in analysing the internal division of labour produce the same picture in both countries? It can be said that English unemployment, although numerically lower than German unemployment, indicates that the coefficient ‘organic crisis’ is higher in England than in Germany where the coefficient ‘cyclical crisis’ is more important. Consequently, in the event of a ‘cyclical’ recovery unemployment would be absorbed more easily in Germany than in England. Which element of the structure gives rise to this difference? The answer is that commerce is more important relative to industrial production in England. In England there exists a larger mass of ‘proletarians’ employed in the commercial sector whereas in Germany the mass employed in industry is greater (§9.61/1932).

Gramsci appeared to relate the cyclical movement of German unemployment to the mass movement towards Hitler in the several elections of the first half of 1932 (§9.61 & §9.62). This is consistent with his later reference to the sudden “mushrooming” pattern of growth of Hitler’s movement. In contrast to the historical party led by Hugenburg which waited for the masses to ‘come back’ to it, Hitler’s party actively campaigned during the crisis to win them over.

When the decisive moment comes, we can see that the great mass of energies set in motion by the crisis, far from flowing into the reservoirs artificially created for them, follow the channels traced out in the real world by real politics up to that point and are diverted towards the parties which have always remained active, *or even those which have sprouted like mushrooms out of the ground of the crisis itself* (§13.37/1933. My italics).

The element of political judgement was to see the mass expansion of Hitlerism as a “cyclical” phenomenon, but it was impossible to “predict” in the summer of 1932 what would happen in politics when the economic cycle came to an end or entered a new phase.

Gramsci’s study of the cyclical movement of the crisis was reflected in the new definition of ‘conjuncture’ in 1933 (§15.16). The change of government (and hence of economic policy) marked a change in the *economic* as well as the political situation in Germany - in other words, a new conjuncture (this being “more closely linked to immediate politics”). “The conjuncture is studied in order to predict and, within certain limits, to direct the economic cycle in a way favourable to business”. Whether or not Gramsci appreciated that Hitler had fortuitously come to power at a favourable point in the ‘automatic’ economic cycle is hard to say, but this new definition anticipated that his government would actively direct the cyclical economic recovery to its own advantage and that of big business (whose interests were represented by Hugenburg, the new Minister of Economics).

The historical bloc. The national government formed on 30 January 1933 was the moment of fusion of the “historical bloc” in Germany. Gramsci used Sorel’s notion to convey the force of ideology in binding structure-superstructure together in a permanent bloc (hence the term has been equated with “ideological bloc”), although it also had the advantage of suggesting that for all its permanence the bloc was continually *in movement*.²⁷ A concrete reference to the role of ideology in maintaining the solidity of the historical bloc can be traced in Gramsci’s summary of the German newspapers (based on pre-1929 data):

The *Neue Prussische Zeitung* , still called the *Kreuzzeitung* , also with a small circulation (10,000): it is the classic organ of the Junkers (Prussian latifundists), aristocratic ex-officers, monarchists and absolutists who have kept their wealth and solidarity based on landed property. On the other hand, the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* , organ of the *Bund der Landwirte* (Farmers Association), has a circulation of 100,000 copies: it is read by the small farmers and farm managers and helps to keep public opinion in the countryside loyal to the old regime (§2.26/1930).

The permanence of this bloc depended in the last analysis on preserving the Junker estates by a variety of “anti-historical policies” protecting them in times of agricultural depression from the deadly solvent of market forces.²⁸ However, their

²⁷ On the long-term structural decline of the East, Frank Tipton (1976); for a structural explanation of the breakdown of the political hegemony of the big landowners, Richard Bessel (1978)

²⁸ A.Gerschenkron (1943); S.R.Tirrell (1951)

preservation also depended on the residual force of the ruling ideas which made even raising the question of agrarian reform of the East an affront to sacred national values. Hindenburg saw the defence of the social order in the East as his solemn national duty: it was the equivalent in class struggle of a second 'Tannenberg'. Hence the agitation of the Farmers Association in 1933 against Schleicher's proposals for reforming eastern agriculture ("agrarian Bolshevism") was decisive in persuading him to dismiss Schleicher and bring in Hitler.²⁹

Gramsci saw the 'national government' formed in 1933 (like the National Government in Britain in 1931) as a measure of "the strength of agrarian parties" (§14.53). He observed that at the decisive moment of the crisis the big industrialists abandoned the "intermediate" parties and turned to the agrarians for political leadership (§15.02). The new regime was the political expression of the protectionist bloc of steel and rye on which the historical continuity of the 'Reich' was founded.³⁰ But the fusion was an affair of small classes as well as big classes. The agrarian parties owed their strength to

the fact that in rural areas all the elements involved in agricultural production continue to form a bloc which is often under the leadership of the most reactionary of these elements. On the other hand there is no such bloc in the cities and in urban-type populations: it dissolved generations ago if in fact it ever existed (since it could not exist as long as the franchise was not enlarged). It therefore happens that in preeminently industrial countries the agrarians, now that the intermediate parties have broken up, have the 'parliamentary' upper hand and impose anti-historical policies. It is necessary to establish why this happens and to determine whether or not the urban parties, due to their corporatism and narrow-minded economism, are to blame (§14.53/1933).

In fact, during the crisis the Nazis were the only urban party to capture a large part of the rural constituency, penetrating the Farmers League (especially its eastern branches) which was virtually under Nazi leadership by 1933.³¹ Indeed, the demagogic slogan of "agrarian Bolshevism" reflected the new tone of Nazi leadership of the League. Nazi infiltration of the Farmers League was a crucial "molecular change" in the historical bloc but their aim was to preserve not to destroy it. In Gramsci's dialectic it was an element of 'restoration' rather than 'revolution', always remembering that restorations must be understood and judged 'dynamically' (§15.11).

²⁹ M.Broszat (1993), chapter 4.2; Henry A. Turner (1996)

³⁰ Fritz Fischer (1986)

³¹ Horst Gies (1972); J.E.Farquharson (1976).

(v) The Force of the Ideologies

The last guiding-thread in Gramsci's analysis of the German crisis and the most difficult to retrace accurately and continuously relates to the marxist concept of ideology. This concept accompanied the birth of his political vocation when he left Turin university in 1915 for a career in revolutionary politics, and was of special importance to him in understanding the intellectual function he had now chosen for himself. Just before leaving (- the interventionist crisis in the summer of 1915 was decisive -) his linguistics tutor Matteo Bartoli introduced him to Annibale Pastore who was giving a series of lectures on marxist theory.³² Gramsci wanted to understand more about Marxism and in particular how ideas can become forces or "idea-forces". He would discover the answer to this problem not in the lecture halls of Turin but in the practical example provided by Lenin in Petrograd in 1917 ("The Revolution against 'Capital'"). Meanwhile, even though his commitment to revolutionary politics meant he had broken with Croce *in practice*, his thinking still remained "rather Crocean".³³ The task of "settling accounts" with Croce's philosophy would have to wait until the prison notebooks, but it is interesting to note that he started precisely from Croce's revision of the concept of ideology.

In his pre-1917 writings Croce accepted Marx's doctrine that the ideologies were practical constructs, instruments of political rule. In the preface to the 1917 edition of his writings on marxism he thanked Marx for having rendered him insensible to the seductions of the dominant ideologies. Marx's 'atheism' was a sane antidote to the passions unleashed on both sides during the war of 1914-18 which was a war of "religions" (ie, nationalist ideologies) as well as a war of "interests". However, Croce later revised his interpretation. Gramsci observed that in his post-1917 writings he repeatedly misrepresented Marx's concept by suggesting that as a materialist he denied the reality of the ideologies, reducing them to "appearances" and "illusions" concealing the dominant economic interests. Croce should have known better. His post-1917 interpretation turned a polemical

³² Domenico Zucaro: 'Antonio Gramsci all'Universita di Torino 1911-15', *Societa*, December 1957.

³³ "In February 1917.....I wrote that just as Hegelianism had been the premiss of the philosophy of praxis in the nineteenth century, at the origins of modern-day civilisation, so Croce's philosophy could be the premiss for the renewal of the philosophy of praxis in our times and for our generations. The question was barely touched upon and was dealt with certainly in a primitive and most certainly an inadequate way since the concept of the unity of theory and practice, philosophy and politics, was far from clear to me at the time and I tended to be rather Crocean. But now it seems to me that, even though the maturity and capacity needed for such a task may be lacking, it is worth reexamining this thesis and elaborating it critically in more developed terms" (§10.I.11, QCII p.1233).

language (“appearance” and “illusion”) used by marxist critics to unmask the dominant ideologies and to destroy their hold on the masses, into a gnosiological principle which denied the objective reality of the ideologies altogether - which denied, in other words, their efficacy as instruments of political rule. As Gramsci put it: “Marx explicitly affirms that men become conscious of their tasks on the terrain of ideology, of the superstructures, which is no small affirmation of ‘reality’” (§4.15).

Gramsci first formulated his argument in a series of notes headed *Croce and Marx* (§4.15, §4.20, §4.22) written at the time of the election campaign in Germany in the summer of 1930. He suggested that the question should be studied *empirically* with particular reference to the current phenomenon of the decomposition of parliamentarism (§4.22). The context indicates that he meant the current “crisis of authority” in Germany where the breakdown of the parliamentary regime had now led to the sudden explosion of a new ‘ruling idea’ - ‘Hitlerism’. There was a lot to be said for the marxist criticism that Hitlerism was an “illusion” but it was plainly wrong to infer from this that it was not an “objective and effectual reality”. Its success in the German elections of September 1930 was “no small affirmation of reality”

Again, Gramsci’s rethinking of marxism from its Hegelian origins was deployed in support of his argument for “the validity of the ideologies”. From memory he recalled the affirmation in the *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (1844) that “theory also becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses” (§7.21). This affirmation was potentially valid for “both sides”, the Left and the Right. In the latest German elections the theory that had gripped the masses with seemingly lightning speed and with the energy of a material force, was not communism but Hitlerism. It was the beginning of what he would later call “an explosive synthesis of the collective will” (§8.195) although Gramsci doubted the “solidity” of the popular belief in Hitler in view of the inherently instable nature of “charismatic” leadership.

*

There are four strands in Gramsci’s notes on the ‘German ideology’. Firstly, in using the term ‘Hitlerism’ in the notes (rather than ‘fascism’ or ‘national socialism’), Gramsci was conscious of its charismatic origin. The charismatic leader himself

was a form of ideology³⁴ which marxist theory had not come to terms with before Gramsci. Secondly, the success of the charismatic or providential man partly depended on what marxist historians have called “the invention of tradition”. Gramsci’s observations on the way in which the new intellectual group around Hitler sought to connect itself in the sphere of ideology with the traditional intellectuals are relevant here. The historical myth of the ‘Third Reich’ was a clear example of this. Thirdly, Gramsci regarded Hitlerism as a movement of ‘restoration’ disguised by the language of ‘revolution’.³⁵ Its language was more redolent of Nietzsche than of Marx but, either way, it was still a matter of “appearances”. Whilst unmasking its revolutionary pretensions, Gramsci recognised that “appearances” were important in view of the fact that the ruling ideology in its traditional form had lost its hold, especially on the younger generation. Before 1933 the revolutionary language of Hitlerism not only expressed the “will to power” but also fostered the “will to believe”, which was vitally important in the context of the despair and fear engendered by the 1929 crisis. After 1933 Gramsci developed a “functionalist” analysis of Hitlerism according to which the practice of governing the State would step by step clarify the nature of the movement’s ideology. His forecast that the movement would shed its “arbitrary, symbiotic features” was verified by the massacre of 30 June 1934 when its inchoate ‘revolutionary’ element was ruthlessly liquidated. In the dialectic ‘revolution-restoration’, the element of restoration now predominated.

Lastly, the mass expansion of Hitlerism in the election of September 1930 raised the question of the ‘racial’ consciousness of the Germans.³⁶ Gramsci recognised the element of race as the nucleus of the new ideological and doctrinal complex - Hitler’s utopia - and the first laws of the ‘racial’ State in 1933-34 confirmed this.³⁷ However, he found it hard to explain what seemed to be the mass appeal of this element. The problem was partly that the question of race did not interest him unless “the germ of racist romanticism....was well and truly sterilised” (letter to Tatiana, 21 March 1932), but this was arguably the secret of its appeal. Meanwhile, he observed that the intermixing of the elements of racial struggle and class

³⁴ Ian Kershaw (1983)

³⁵ Jeremy Noakes (1983)

³⁶ The best empirical research on the electoral appeal of Nazi anti-semitism *before* 1933 is Sarah Gordon (1984), chapter 2.

³⁷ Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ipperman (1991)

struggle could sometimes play a significant part in setting “the nationalistic tone of movements of the subaltern classes” (§7.51). The economic crisis of 1929 created the conditions in which the ideology of racial struggle could find a ‘meaningful’ response, although Gramsci also took into account external conditions: the struggle of national ‘liberation’ from the regime of subjection imposed by the French at Versailles was interwoven with the intensification of the class struggle following the catastrophe of 1929.

Gramsci’s observations on German ideology start from the “crisis of authority” (§1.48, §3.03, §1.127, §3.34, §4.22). In the post-war period the traditional ideologies or ruling ideas had largely lost their hold on the masses, especially on the younger generation (§3.03, §1.127). How would this crisis of authority be resolved? The breakdown of the ruling ideas potentially created the conditions for an unprecedented expansion of marxism (§3.34), but in the meantime (the “interregnum”) a new “combination” appeared - national socialism or ‘Hitlerism’. The “catastrophic irruption of the immediate economic element” in 1929 (§7.10) was followed in September 1930 by a catastrophic irruption of the *ideological* element.

The charismatic leader as an ideological form. The “nebulous” character of Hitlerism was intimately connected with its charismatic origins. These included the suppression of all collective debate about the movement’s ideology³⁸ as demonstrated by the instant expulsion of Otto Strasser for daring the debate the question of the movement’s ‘socialism’ in 1930. For

in the modern world the so-called charisma of which Michels speaks always coincides with a primitive phase in the development of mass parties in which its doctrine appears nebulous and incoherent in the eyes of the masses and needs an infallible pope to interpret and adapt it to the circumstances These ideologies are nurtured by feelings and emotions which have still not reached the point of dissolving because the classes (or the class) which express them, having arrived historically at the point of dissolving, still have a certain basis and cling to the glories of the past in order to shield themselves from the future (§2.75i/1930).

This interpretation of Hitler as the saviour of “dying classes” who cling to the glories of the past was consistent with his conception of it as a movement of restoration, especially as these dying classes included a “big class” (the landowning nobility) as well as “small classes”. The theme of restoration underpinned by fear of the future was more pronounced when Gramsci returned to the question of charisma at

³⁸ J.Nyomarkay (1967)

the time of the financial panic in 1931.

At certain moments of 'permanent anarchy' caused by the static equilibrium of the conflicting forces, one man personifies 'order', ie, the breaking of the deadlock by exceptional methods, and all the frightened ones, all the 'rabid sheep' of the petty bourgeoisie flock to his side. Nevertheless, he does have a programme, however vague: indeed, it is vague precisely because it aims merely to restore the external political casing of a society in crisis (§2.75ii/1931).

Gramsci maintained that in the modern world the collective will was formed on the permanent basis of the mode of production which standardised the modes of thinking and acting of the masses. By contrast, the collective will formed "through the impulse and immediate suggestion of a 'hero'", was inherently unstable and was "continually forming and disintegrating" (§7.12/1930). It was largely a thing of the past. In modern times it was the form of leadership characteristic of conditions of exceptional crisis³⁹ but it could not have a permanent, long-term character.

In the modern world, only those historical-political actions which are immediate and imminent, characterised by the necessity for lightning speed, can be incarnated mythically by a concrete individual. Such speed can only be made necessary by a great and imminent danger, a great danger which precisely fans passions and fanaticism suddenly to white heat, and annihilates the critical sense and corrosive irony which are able to destroy the 'charismatic' character of the condottiere (as happened in the Boulanger adventure). But an improvised action of such a kind cannot, by its very nature, have a long-term and organic character. It will in almost all cases be appropriate to restoration and reorganisation, but not to the founding of new States or new national and social structures..... (§13.01/1932).

The invention of tradition. The power of mass suggestion exercised by the providential man (§4.69) or mythical hero (§13.01), crucially depended on how the masses perceived his relation to the nation's "tradition". The failure of the traditional ideologies made it necessary to reinvent them. The ideology of Hitlerism was (as historians have often observed)⁴⁰ more a case of reinventing the old than of creating anything new. This aspect was brought sharply into focus in the presidential contest between Hindenburg and Hitler in early 1932. At the time Gramsci made inquiries into the meaning of the term 'Reich' (§7.95, §8.107) as in the contradictory title 'President of the Reich' (ie, not 'President of the Republic') which expressed the idea of continuity with the 'Second' Reich as though the defeat and revolution of 1918 and, more importantly, the territorial reorganisation of 1919, had not happened. Just as Hindenburg was the last representative of the

³⁹ Jeremy Noakes (1983)

⁴⁰ Ian Kershaw (1983)

Second Reich, Hitler presented himself as the first representative of the 'Third Reich', thus perpetuating the myth of the historical continuity of the 'Reich'. Gramsci thought that Hitler's use of the traditional "conceptual nomenclature" was significant, observing that "if the new intellectuals put themselves forward as the direct continuation of the ideas of the preceding intellectuals, they are not 'new' at all: ie, they are not linked to the new social group which represents the new historical situation but are left-overs from the old social group and the old ideas of their intellectuals" (§8.171). Again this analysis was consistent with the concept of Hitlerism as restoration but his concept was not unqualified. He acknowledged that although the nomenclature formally remained the same, "the content of the language has changed even if it is difficult to be aware immediately of the precise change" (§8.171). The precise meaning of the 'Third Reich' was clearer after it was established in 1933:

A study of keywords like 'Third Reich' used by movements of the German Right. Historical myths like these are essentially a concrete and effective way of presenting the 'historical mission' of a people. The point to study is precisely this: why is this form 'concrete and effective', or just more effective than another? In Germany the uninterrupted continuity (ie, not interrupted by permanent foreign invasions) between the medieval period of the Holy Roman Empire (the first Reich) and the modern period (from Frederick the Great to 1914) makes the concept of the 'Third Reich' immediately comprehensible (§15.48/1933).

Gramsci traced the 'messianic' element in German nationalism back to the Wilhelmine period but it did not become "concrete and effective" in the eyes of the masses until after 1919. For the historical continuity of the Reich had, of course, been interrupted by the Versailles Treaty which not only redrew the territorial frontiers of the Reich but also imposed an element of foreign invasion and occupation. This was a potent weapon in the hands of the German monarchists. After 1919 they invented a similar doctrine to that of the French monarchists who, as ever, served as Gramsci's 'model'.

The monarchists have constructed the historical-political doctrine (which they seek to popularise) according to which the Empire and the Republic have up to now meant invasion of French national territory. Two invasions connected with the policies of Napoleon I (in 1814 and in 1815), one with the politics of Napoleon III (1870-71) and one with the politics of the Third Republic (1914) provide the material for agitation.....This way of presenting the question to the popular masses by all the various nationalist tendencies is far from being ineffective. But is it historically accurate? How many times has Germany been invaded by the French? (It would be necessary to count the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 as a French invasion)... (§9.39/1932).

The tendency to synthesise French and German experience in terms of a common element of politics - the anti-republican doctrine of the monarchists - was typical of Gramsci's dialectical turn of mind. The mission of "all the various nationalist tendencies" in Germany was to free the Reich from "the regime of national subjection" (§1.18) imposed by the French at Versailles. Before 1929 not all nationalists agreed with the right-wing monarchists that this mission could only be achieved by getting rid of the republic. But after the death of Stresemann in 1929 the various nationalist tendencies fused together in the mission of the providential man, Hitler. In a brief note on Stresemann in early 1931 Gramsci noted "the change in psychology of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalists" in Germany since his death (§5.118) - a change which was registered by the unexpected success of Hitlerism in the election of the previous September. The formation of a collective will, Gramsci observed, was usually a long process of development and rarely a matter of "sudden, explosive syntheses" (§8.195). "Such 'explosions' do occur but on close examination it can be seen that they are more destructive than reconstructive; they remove external and mechanical obstacles in the way of an indigenous, spontaneous development". The collective meaning of Hitler's "mission" was to rid Germany of "the external and mechanical obstacles" of Versailles.

The ideology of restorations. In early 1932 Gramsci began thinking about "the formula of the *equivalence* of revolution-restoration" as a way of interpreting national history from the Risorgimento to Fascism (§8.25). With the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome in 1932 Fascism celebrated its claim to be a 'revolution' even though it had since revealed itself, especially in the Concordat of 1929, to be a 'restoration'. The *currency* of the formula, the putative link between history and politics, included a *comparative* element. For this perspective on the nature of Fascism could be applied to Germany at this time where the presidential contest between Hitler-Hindenburg appeared to present the voters with a choice between revolution and restoration. Gramsci's point was that the choice was more "apparent" than real since the two terms were not opposites but *equivalents*. Was not Hitlerism another movement of restoration disguised in the language of revolution? Thus we find him 'unmasking' the general pretensions of fascist movements to be 'revolutions'.

Do we have to accept as 'revolutionary' all those movements which try to dignify and justify themselves by calling themselves 'revolutions'? There is an inflation of concepts and revolutionary phraseology here, as though the hat makes the head or the habit makes the monk. De Sanctis already observed and ridiculed this attitude in *The Jew of Verona*. It is also necessary to see whether the phraseology of 'revolution' is purposely used to create 'the will to believe', this being well-supported by solid 'collateral' arguments (in the shape of tribunals, police etc). The fact that so many Nietzscheans masquerading as rebels against existing reality and social conventions, etc, have ended up stomaching them and have thus emptied certain attitudes of any serious content, is perfectly true, but this is no reason to let one's judgement be guided by charlatans of this sort (§8.210/1932).

Gramsci returned to the formula 'revolution-restoration' in the notes on Caesarism at the turn of 1932-33 as the "catastrophic" phase of the German crisis approached (§9.133/136, §14.23). These were interwoven with another series on "the popular (*popolaresche*) origins of the 'superman' (§4.04, §4.27, §4.30) in which he resumed the critical task of deflating the pretensions of these would-be Nietzscheans. The Caesarist and the superman notes were putatively linked. Their *currency* was provided by Hitler's new year message to the Brown Shirts comparing himself to Mussolini. Hitler evoked the imminent catastrophe facing Germany in order to emphasise that only a 'superman' could prevent it. Just as Italy had been saved by Mussolini, "one of those exceptional men in the history of the world", so providence had now given Germany its own world-historical hero. Gramsci suggested that the romantic hero-worship on which the credibility of this vision of history depended was not grounded (at least in the case of Italy's Black Shirts) in high culture at all, in spite of Nietzsche's predilection for heroes.

Every time we come upon some admirer of Nietzsche, it is worth trying to find out if his 'superman' ideas, against conventional morality, etc, etc, are of genuine Nietzschean origin. In other words, are they the result of a process of thought located in the sphere of 'high culture' or do they have much more modest origins? Are they connected, for example, to serial literature? (But was Nietzsche himself entirely uninfluenced by French serial novels? It should be remembered that this literature, now relegated to the caretakers and servants quarters, was very popular among the intellectuals at one time, at least until 1870, just as the 'thriller' is today) (§14.04/1933).

The romanticism of Germany's Brown Shirts had different roots, though. These spoke not of individual supermen (Caesar, Napoleon, etc) but of a *race of supermen*: Hence:

For the Nietzschean 'superman', apart from the romantic influence of Stendhal (and the cult of Napoleon I generally), it is necessary to examine the racist tendencies which culminated in Gobineau and thence in Chamberlain and in Pan-Germanism (Treitschke and the theories of power) (§14.27/1933).⁴¹

⁴¹ Steven E. Ascheim (1994)

The putative link between racism and 'restoration' was established in 1934 when a new biography of Gobineau provided Gramsci with the occasion to trace the roots of racism back via Gobineau to the great French historians of the Restoration before 1848 (see below). The link is interesting in view of attempts by later historians to trace the origins of a so-called "revolutionary" racism from this period which is supposed to be a peculiarity of the Germans. At the very least Gramsci's analysis points to the semantic problem of calling this tendency as "revolutionary".

Meanwhile, the "static equilibrium with catastrophic prospects" (on which the *Caesarist* thesis depended) was broken by exceptional methods when Hitler let loose the Brown Shirts on the parties of the German Left. The 'morality' of the would-be 'Nietzscheans' was amply demonstrated in the cellars of Berlin's Brown Houses. The sudden and complete liquidation of 'Marxism' was not the 'revolution' it claimed to be, however, but the start of a modern 'restoration' characterised by a regime of universal repression. The charismatic man, it will be recalled, appeared at moments of great and imminent danger, "a great danger which fans passions and fanaticism suddenly to white heat and annihilates the critical sense and corrosive irony which are able to destroy the 'charismatic' character of the condottiere" (§13.01). The imminent danger of a communist revolution was now past but the 'restoration' depended on keeping the memory of it alive. Gramsci makes this point in a penetrating comment on the cultural spirit of restorations in §23.36. This was written in the summer of 1934 at the time of the 'Night of the Long Knives', the murderous suppression of the alleged "plot" by Rohm and the Storm Troops. It was a redraft of a note written earlier but Gramsci made a few later additions which bore the imprint of recent German events.

Whatever they choose to call themselves, restorations, *especially the restorations which take place in the present epoch*, are universally repressive: 'Father Bresciani', or Bresciani-type literature, predominates. The psychology which precedes an intellectual phenomenon of this sort is created by panic, by a cosmic fear of demonic forces which are beyond understanding and so cannot be controlled except by constructing something universally repressive. The memory of this panic (of its acute phase) is long-lasting and decisively shapes the will and the feelings: creative freedom and spontaneity disappear and what remains is the rancour, the spirit of vengeance, the stupid blindness - all hidden by a mellifluous and jesuitical disguise. Everything is reduced to the practical (in the worst sense), everything is propaganda, polemic, implicit negation, expressed in a mean, narrow, *often vile and repulsive form as in The Jew of Verona*. (§23.36/1934: italics indicate additions to the second draft).

The main clue to these “demonic forces” lies in Gramsci’s reference to the *The Jew of Verona*, the anti-semitic novel about the 1848 revolution in Italy by Father Bresciani which had originally appeared in serial form in the Jesuit review *Civiltà Cattolica*. Gramsci had mentioned De Sanctis’ critical essay on this novel in early 1932 (§8.210) at the time of his exchange of letters with Tatiana and Piero on the question of whether there was any anti-semitism in Italy. In the letters Gramsci was far from convinced of this, but his reference in the notes to *The Jew of Verona* indicates that he was more open-minded than the letters would suggest. Bresciani’s characterisation of the 1848 revolution in Italy as a conspiracy of secret societies under the influence of the ‘Jew of Verona’ had a striking contemporary resonance. Gramsci’s insight lay in his attempt to “translate” the anti-semitism of the Nazi movement into Italian cultural terms. The system of universal repression which he held to be characteristic of modern restorations was now exemplified by the Nazi repression of Jews and Marxists, who were both regarded as part of the same “world conspiracy”. The bloody repression of the Rohm “plot” added a further element to the “demonic forces” allegedly at work in Germany. In the official account of the plot given by Goring and reported in *Corriere della Sera*, Rohm was described as “a courageous ex-combatant who had allowed himself to be drawn by *his abnormal tendencies* into company which would prove fatal to him”. Again, Hitler’s intervention had averted a great and imminent danger since “the SA command began to hatch plans for a revolt aimed at supplanting the present regime with a State which would be headed by *these sick elements*”. Thus, the system of repression became ever more universal as homosexuals were added to marxists and Jews among the myriad “demonic forces” plotting against the State. “Dynamic” though Hitler’s murderous intervention was, it was perfectly attuned to the spirit of restoration. His action in murdering his captains was worthy of Cesare Borgia but the attempt to legitimise it relied entirely on “conventional morality”.

The German consciousness of race. The crucial change of meaning between the second and the third ‘Reich’ (although “it is difficult to be aware immediately of the precise change” (1932)) was the element of race. This was the real inspiration behind Hitler’s “mission” which aimed, albeit “vaguely”, to create a Reich far beyond anything imagined by Gramsci or anyone else in 1933.⁴² Gramsci first enquired into this element after the electoral breakthrough of Hitlerism

⁴² Ebehard Jackel (1981).

in September 1930 which he took - probably wrongly⁴³ - to be a demonstration of the German consciousness of race. The question was framed in comparative terms and his answer said more about Italy than Germany.

Does any sort of 'racism' exist in Italy? There have been many attempts but they are all purely literary and abstract in character. Italy differs from Germany in this respect although there are some interesting, if extrinsic, similarities between the two countries: 1) the tradition of localism and consequently the belated achievement of national and state unity. (An extrinsic similarity since the origins of Italy's regionalism differ from Germany's. Two main elements contributed to it in Italy: (a) the reemergence of local races after the fall of the Roman Empire (b) the barbarian invasions first, the foreign conquerors later. International relations had an influence in Germany but not in the form of direct occupation by foreigners). 2) Medieval universalism was more influential in Italy than in Germany where, during the Reformation, the Empire and the lay outlook triumphed much earlier than in Italy. 3) The domination into modern times of the propertied classes of the countryside, but the [social] relations are very different. The German is more conscious of race than the Italian.. (§6.35/1930-31).

In fact, this last affirmation begged a question which historians have since found hard to answer.⁴⁴ The suggestion that the German consciousness of race could be explained in historicist terms, ie, in terms of the relative continuity of German history uninterrupted by foreign conquest and occupation, was not followed up, unless it was in Gramsci's observation on the success of the myth of the 'Third Reich' as an expression of the "historical mission" of the German people. Nor was the promising idea that the alleged racial consciousness of the Germans could be explained by the domination of the aristocracy into modern times, even though this idea converged with the first notes on the 'traditional intellectuals' written at this time (§4.49). The 'missing link' in his chain of thought can perhaps be found in his observations on utopias written at the time of the Hitler-Hindenburg contest in early 1932. Gramsci had previously discussed the continuity and change in the language used by the 'old' and the 'new' intellectuals (§8.171), with reference to the term 'Reich'.

The importance of utopias and of confused and rationalistic ideologies in the initial phase of the historical processes whereby collective wills are formed. Utopias, or abstract rationalism, are no less important than the old conceptions of the world elaborated through the accumulation of successive historical experiences. What matters is the critique of this ideological complex by the first representatives of the new historical phase. This critique involves a process of differentiation and change in the relative weight which the elements of the old ideologies possessed: what was once secondary and subordinate, or even incidental, is now taken to be primary, becoming the nucleus of the new ideological and doctrinal complex. The old collective will dissolves into its contradictory elements since the subordinate elements among them are developing socially etc (§8.171/1932)

⁴³ Sarah Gordon (1984)

⁴⁴ Ian Kershaw (1983)

Was the 'utopia' Gramsci had in mind in this note Hitler's 'Third Reich'? Was the secondary element of the old ideology, which had now become "the nucleus of the new ideological and doctrinal complex", the element of race and, more particularly, of anti-semitism? Was it due to the subordinate elements of the old collective will "who are developing socially", that anti-semitism had now become the nucleus of the new ideology? These general observations on utopias 'adhere' closely to German reality in 1932 dominated increasingly by the ascent of Hitlerism. Moreover, this interpretation is corroborated 'externally' by the fact that Gramsci had only just concluded (March-April 1932) the long correspondence with Tatiana and Piero precisely on the Jewish question. Between the notes and the letters, however, there is an interesting discrepancy. The utopia of the notes is an abstract, 'rationalistic' construct whereas the 'Third Reich' was an essentially 'romantic' myth. In the letters, however, Gramsci dialectically compared the biblical language about the 'chosen people' and the 'mission' of the Jews to the sort of language used by the Kaiser before the war. This 'messianic' element in German nationalism was what Gramsci meant in the letters by "the germ of racist romanticism". This element must be well and truly sterilised, he said, before the question of race could be discussed rationally. Gramsci was in two minds about this element, not knowing whether to regard as absurd or abhorrent. However, "the germ of racist romanticism" was the nearest glimpse he had of the potential of Hitler's utopia.

A further strand in Gramsci's thinking linked racism to 'restoration'. For the origins of racist ideas Gramsci went back to "the controversy of the two races" among the great French historians of the Restoration (Mignet, Thierry, Guizot). This seems an obscure place to find the origin of modern racism⁴⁵ but Gramsci was approaching the question from a particular *contemporary* angle, ie, the interference between class struggle and racial struggle. In a brief note on "the history of the subaltern classes" written at the time of the Prussian plebiscite in 1931, Gramsci noted that "the element of racial struggle grafted on to the class struggle in France by Thierry has had some importance. How important was it in France in setting the nationalist tone of the movements of the subaltern classes?" (§7.51). As always Gramsci started from an element of French politics but the link between past and present was provided by the current political experience of Germany. In fact "the element of racial struggle grafted on to the class struggle"

⁴⁵ See, however, Poliakov (1974), chapter 2.

was a timely one to investigate at a time when the communists had joined forces with the nationalists in Germany in the campaign for the Prussian plebiscite (the "red referendum"). Gramsci did not pursue this question further until 1934 when the development of the German situation itself had removed any confusion between the two ideologies of 'struggle'.

It is worth noting that this discussion (ie, the "two races") gave rise (at least partially) to two tendencies: 1) that of the philosophy of praxis which began to study the two strata of the French population not from the standpoint of their different national origins but for their economic and social functions: 2) that of racism and the superiority of the Germanic race which, from being a polemical element used by the French aristocracy to justify a more radical Restoration, an integral return to the conditions of the pre-revolutionary regime, became through Gobineau and Chamberlain an element of German culture (imported from France) which has had new and unanticipated developments..... Proof that this question is not merely abstract and bookish but can become a militant and effectual political ideology is demonstrated by the German events" (§17.43/1934).

Thus, Gramsci clearly associated racism with the tendency to restoration not revolution, although he admitted that in Germany it "has had new and unanticipated developments".

The early legislation of the racial State, notably the compulsory sterilisation law⁴⁶ which provoked fierce criticism in Italy when it came into force at the start of 1934, persuaded Gramsci to look elsewhere for "origins". He now associated racism with the rise of scientific positivism at the end of the nineteenth century. The revolt against positivism led by Croce⁴⁷ had failed to stop the irresistible rise of 'Lorianism' in Italy, the term used by Gramsci to describe a contagion of pseudo-scientific habits of thought whose cumulative effect is the degradation of a country's intellectual culture. At the same time, the positivist revision of marxism played a key role in the glittering academic prizes awarded to the Lorias of this world "with the support of interested forces", but the national culture paid a heavy price for this blunting of the marxist 'critique'. This was a general phenomenon, not confined to Italy for

it should be noted that every period has its Lorianism in a more or less rounded and perfected state, just as every country has: Hitlerism has shown that in Germany under the rule of an apparently serious intellectual group, a monstrous Lorianism was hatching out which has broken the official mould and has been propagated as a new 'official' conception and scientific method.....

Only now (1935), after the brutality and unprecedented ignominy manifested by German 'culture' dominated by Hitlerism, have a few intellectuals begun to notice just how fragile modern civilisation was in all its contradictory, but necessarily contradictory, expressions (§28.01/1935).

⁴⁶ Jeremy Noakes (1984), Robert N. Proctor (1988).

⁴⁷ H. Stuart Hughes (1967)

Gramsci's admission that the success of racism in Germany was an "unanticipated development" is confirmed by the obvious sense of shock in this note at the "monstrous" character of Hitlerism as it implemented policies of eugenic sterilisation of the disabled and racial exclusion of the Jews. This was his last word on Hitlerism. It is uncharacteristically apocalyptic in vision and tone as he looks back on the history of civilisation since the first millennium which, as he saw it, had culminated in Marx's great synthesis. Gramsci suggests that the policies of Hitlerism were prepared intellectually by the revision of Marxism at the end of the nineteenth century which had removed the 'critical barriers' to the rise of scientific positivism. The complete repression of marxism by Hitler had eradicated from German culture the dialectical spirit of 'contradiction', but for Gramsci this was the spirit of 'civilisation' itself.

Appendix 1
The Dates of Particular Notes

Chapter 1. 1929-30

§2.75(i) and (ii). *R. Michels etc*
[Critique of Michels' concept of 'charismatic parties']

This long note was written in two instalments at different times. (i) The first part was written according to Professor Gerratana's parameters, in the second half of 1930. The following §2.76 cites the issue of *Critica Fascista* for 1 August. This indicates that §2.75 was more likely to have been written in August than in September 1930, ie, *before* rather than after the breakthrough of the 'charismatic party' in the German elections on 14 September, the results of which were not known to Gramsci before he received the issue of the *Rassegna settimanale* of 23 September.

(ii). The second part, written in different ink and handwriting, starts from the paragraph: "The charismatic leader could belong to any kind of party, whether authoritarian or anti-authoritarian" etc. This was written a year later in the second half of 1931, ie, after the Prussian plebiscitary campaign ending on 9 August. Proof of the date is as follows: in the last paragraph Gramsci refers in parenthesis to a note that he had *previously* written: "This very equivocal motive in Michels recurs (I think I have made a note elsewhere of his position at the outbreak of the war)". This must be a reference to §7.64 which discusses the Italian translation of Michels' book published in 1914, *L'imperialismo italiano*. This is one of a block of notes, §7.49-§7.108, which according to the sources used was started in August and finished in December 1931.

Chapter 2. 1930-31 (Past and Present)

§3.33. *Some Causes of Error*

My contention is that this note was written shortly after the visit of Gramsci's brother Gennaro on 16 June 1930 to inform him of the change in the tactical policy of the Comintern and the PCI. According to Gennaro's testimony, Gramsci told him that the change of policy was a mistake. His general reflections on this mistake are set out in §3.33. Moreover, Gramsci's disagreement with the Comintern's new line put him in an impossible position vis-a-vis the "invisible tribunal" in Moscow: this

explains the significance of the preceding §3.32 in which Gramsci reflects on different modes of assassination, including the method of “making life impossible”. This tends to confirm Gennaro’s testimony that he covered up for his brother and concealed his disagreement from the party leadership which might otherwise have been *forced* to expel him.

External proof of the date is that the preceding notes §3.21-§3.27 cite issues of *Nuova Antologia* for 1927 which were included in the list of material sent to Tatiana on 15 June 1930, *the day before Gennaro’s visit*. Eugenio D’Ors’ book on Goya cited in the preceding §3.32 was included in the list of material sent to Carlo on 2 October 1930. This indicates that §3.33 was written after 15 June but not later than 2 October 1930.

§7.10. *Structure and Superstructure* [Critique of Luxemburg]

My interpretation of the “double meaning” of this note depends on its temporal and contextual connection with the “political conversations” held in November 1930 when Gramsci’s disagreement with the new party line became obvious to his comrades in prison. Gramsci had just broken off the conversations when Bruno Tosin arrived at Turi “at the start of December”. This must have been when Gramsci wrote §7.10. Proof of the date is as follows. At the start of December Gramsci heard that his petition to Mussolini sent in October to be allowed to read a list of books withheld by the prison censorship had been successful and the forbidden books were immediately handed over. The list included the novel by the cossack general Krasnov, *From the Imperial Eagle to the Red Flag*, cited by Gramsci in §7.10. Assuming that Gramsci read the novel straight away, which is quite likely, this places §7.10 in December 1930.

§7.16. *War of Position and War of Manoeuvre or Frontal Attack* [Critique of Trotsky]

Gramsci also asked permission in the petition to read Trotsky’s *Autobiography* recently published in Italian by Mondadori, but Tatiana had to *order* this from the bookshop and Gramsci did not receive it until 29 December. Gramsci cites Trotsky’s book in §7.16 which, assuming he read it straight away, was probably written sometime in January 1931. It is *possible* that he wrote this note a little later,

after reading Stalin's latest speech published in the issue of *Labour Monthly* for February 1931. However, this conjecture depends on internal inference and assumes that the issue of *Labour Monthly* containing Stalin's speech (a work of "political agitation") was not intercepted by the prison censor.

§2.75ii. See above.

§4.69. *On the Parties*

This important note is extremely difficult to pin down. Professor Gerratana's parameters are very broad. It is one of a block of notes, §4.49-§4.77, started in November 1930 and completed sometime in the second half of 1931. To add to the difficulty, the preceding §4.68 cites E. Scarfoglio's book *Il libro di don Chisciotte* which was included in the list of material sent to Tatiana on 15 June 1930 - a date completely outside these parameters! This suggests that the notes in this block were not written in sequence but were entered randomly, at different times.

In the second draft, it is integrated with another note, §7.77, written in December 1931. My conjecture is that the two notes are "twins" *written at the same time* in different notebooks and later brought together and redrafted as §13.23.

Observations on the Structure of Political Parties in periods of Organic Crisis. This is supported by the internal evidence of §4.69 which closely "approximates" to what happened to the parties in the British general election on 27 October 1931.

Chapter 4. 1933

§14.03. *Machiavelli. Centre*

[Hitler and the symbiosis of the right-wing parties]

The date of this note is problematical. Professor Gerratana establishes that it was one of three notes, §14.01-03, squeezed into the front of the notebook when most of it had been filled. The handwriting differs markedly from that of the succeeding notes but is very similar to that of the notes written towards the end of the notebook. The thematic continuity between §14.02 and §14.65 on 'rationalism' in architecture compared to the other arts tends to support this.

However, the notes at the end of the notebook were not written sequentially and some of them may have been written at a much later date. According to Professor Gerratana's *conjecture*, §14.74 may have been based on a source as late as

March 1935! Whatever the date of §14.74, however, it is unlikely that §14.03 was written as late as this: the 'symbiotic' relation between the parties of Hitler and Hugenburg-Papen ended when Hugenburg was dismissed and his party was dissolved in June 1933. My conjecture is that §14.03 was written in the spring (March-May) of 1933. The difference in handwriting could have been due to the crisis of Gramsci's health on 7 March which affected his hands and (according to the doctor who visited him on 21 March) meant that "he was unable to write as he used to". A comparison of the handwriting of §14.03 and the *letters* he wrote in April and May 1933 (for which we have precise dates) might be helpful in establishing this.

§14.68. *Machiavelli*

[The question of Stalin's 'nationalism']

My interpretation of this note depends on its temporal and contextual connection with the destruction of the German Communist Party in the Nazi reign of terror in late February-early March 1933 (to which Gramsci refers in §15.07. *Machiavelli. Elections*, where he compares the relative advantages of 'voting' and 'shooting'). This is why Gramsci chose this moment to analyse the question of Stalin's internationalism. In the following §14.70. *Machiavelli. When it can be said that a party is established and cannot be destroyed by normal means*, he examines what a party must do to prepare for defeat rather than victory. Again, it was the defeat of the German Communist party which put this question on Gramsci's agenda. It is therefore probable that §14.68 was written sometime between March-May 1933.

§13.37. *Notes on French National Life*

[The defeat of Hugenburg]

The notes in *Notebook 13* were written in sequence. Since in the preceding §13.25 Gramsci cites the issue of the quarterly *La Cultura* for October-December 1933, §13.37 could not have been written before October. This is interesting because Gramsci writes: "The defeat of Maurras (like that of Hugenburg in Germany) is certain". If Gramsci meant by this that Hugenburg's defeat was a *forecast* rather than an *accomplished fact*, it would suggest that he temporarily lost the plot of German politics in the second half of 1933 since Hugenburg's defeat was in June when he left the coalition and the Nationalists were forcibly dissolved.

Appendix 2

Description of the Periodicals

**Articles and reports on the German crisis in periodicals and newspapers
received by Gramsci on subscription, 1929-34**

Of the 20-25 periodicals to which Gramsci subscribed, the following (together with *Corriere della Sera*) were the most important as far as *political news and analysis* were concerned. Abbreviations used are indicated.

Gerarchia (GER)
Critica Fascista (CF)
Educazione Fascista (EF)
Politica (POL)
Nuova Antologia (NA)
Civiltà Cattolica (CC)
Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera (RSE)
Manchester Guardian Weekly (MGW)
Labour Monthly (LM)
Corriere della Sera (CdS)

Gerarchia
A Political Review. Director Benito Mussolini

The monthly *Gerarchia* was the leading political review of Fascism. Although it appeared under Mussolini's name it was edited by his Jewish mistress, Margherita Sarfatti, who later fell foul of the racial laws in 1938. It reflected the standpoint of the State rather than the party and its editorial views could be taken as official. Its general orientation was anti-parliamentary and anti-French. It played a significant part in the increasingly pro-German orientation of Fascist Italy, especially once German 'fascism' developed into a mass movement after 1929. Until then it regarded the Nationalists not the Nazis as the German 'fascists' (compare the articles by Spaini and von Schwochau in the August and December issues of 1929). It was not blessed with capable writers on German affairs. Werner von Schulenberg was a conservative nationalist who, judging by his famous Junker name, was well connected to the old ruling class of which he claimed special knowledge in his very superficial articles. Giuseppe Renzetti was closer to Nazi circles and was a key intermediary in promoting closer relations with the Nazis: except on the issue of race, his critical distance from them was virtually nil.

1929	August	Alberto Spaini: Il labirinto tedesco
	November	[Speculum. Cronache del Mese. Virginio Gayda: Variazioni su una tema francese. Il Parlamento contro lo Stato]
	December	Geert von Schwochau: La Germania e Hitler
1930	May	Werner von der Schulenberg: Un notevole libro tedesco
	June	Ernst Buhla: Il Cancelliere Bruning
	July	Alessandro Lessona: I nuovi interrogativi della politica tedesca
	September	Giuseppe Bevione: Il trionfo di Hitler
	November	Werner von der Schulenberg: Esiste un'influenza dell'idea fascista sul risultato delle ultime elezioni politiche tedesche?
1931	April	Giuseppe Bevione: Il Progetto di Unione Doganale fra Germania e Austria
	June	Giuseppe Renzetti: Hitleriani Dissidenti
	June	Gino Arias: Il significato storico della crisi economica
	June	Minimus: La Germania a Ginevra e a Chequers. L'accordo Austro-Germanico
	June	Virginio Gayda: L'Unione Austro-Germanico a Ginevra
	August	Il Cancelliere della ricostruzione tedesca
	August	Gino Arias: Problemi economici mondiali
	September	[Giacomo Redentini: La Crisi inglese]
	October	[Camillo Pellizzi: Considerazioni sulla Crisi Britannica]
	December	Paolo Thaon di Revel: La crisi economica presente
1932	January	Werner von der Schulenberg: Bruning, Hitler, Hugenberg
	March	Giuseppe Renzetti: Hindenberg e Hitler

April	Giuseppe Renzetti: Aspetti Politici Attuali della Germania
June	Giuseppe Renzetti: Le Fasi della rivoluzione tedesca
August	Giuseppe Renzetti: Aspetti della situazione politica tedesca
August	A.G: Le Associazioni giovanili germaniche
August	Speculum.Cronache del Mese [German election results of 31 July]
November	Werner von der Schulenberg: Le Elezioni in Germania
December	Werner von der Schulenberg: E Schleicher?
1933 March	Werner von der Schulenberg: Socialismo e Comunismo in Germania
April	Vittorio Profumi: Il Terzo Regno
April	Giuseppe Renzetti: La rivoluzione nazionale in Germania
April	Werner von der Schulenberg: La rivoluzione tedesca
April	[Sergio Panunzio: La Fine del Parlamentarismo e l'Accentramento delle Responsabilita]
May	Giuseppe Renzetti: Problemi germanici
August	Raffaele Iacuzio: Il Concordato fra la Santa Sede ed il Reich Germani

Critica Fascista A Fortnighly Review of Fascism.

The fortnightly *Critica Fascista* was directed by Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of Corporations and chief ideologist of corporativism. It was an organ of 'militant' Fascism reflecting the standpoint of the party rather than the State and projecting Fascism's image as a 'youthful' movement. It was keen to promote the 'battle of ideas' even though all its serious opponents had been silenced by other means. It seldom reported political facts, preferring to be an organ of discussion of ideas and opinions. It took the ideology of National Socialism completely seriously. A series of articles in 1932 by its main commentator on German affairs, Mario da Silva, sought to explain the elements of National Socialist 'doctrine' to Italian fascists. The articles were typical of *Critica Fascista* in filling the intellectual atmosphere with what Gramsci called "asphyxiating gases".

1930	1 October	Umberto Nani: La Germania ad una svolta?
1931	1 February	Mario da Silva: Amarezze della economia tedesca
	15 February	Giovanni D'Alo: La Costituzione di Weimar e l'unita della stato germanico
	1 March	Mario da Silva: Nomenclatura e realta nella Germania attuale
	1 April	Mario da Silva: La Germania e le riparazioni
	1 May	Mario da Silva: L'unione doganale austro-tedesca
	15 May	Umberto Nani: La Piccola Intesa e l'accordo doganale austro-tedesco
	15 July	Luciano Inganni: La vacanza nei pagamenti e il maturare di una situazione
	15 September	Rodolfo Foa: L'origine della crisi britannica
	15 November	Rodolfo Foa: Dopo le elezioni generali inglesi

1932	1 April	Mario da Silva: Le elezioni presidenziali tedesche
	15 May	Mario da Silva: Hitler e il Nazionalsocialismo
	1 June	Mario da Silva: Basi dello Stato nazional-socialista
	15 June	Mario da Silva: Nazional-socialismo e democrazia
	1 August	Mario da Silva: Nazionalsocialismo e economia liberale
	15 August	Mario da Silva: Sipario su Weimar Valentino Piccoli: Problemi della nuova Germania
	15 September	Alberto Luchini: Posizioni e interpretazioni dell'intelligenza nazionalsocialista
1933	1 May	Mario da Silva: Lettera dalla Germania. Lunghezza d'onda: Roma
	1 July	Mario da Silva: Lettera dalla Germania: Il Rogo di Piazza dell'Opera
	1 July	Gustav Glaesser: La nuova generazione rivoluzionaria tedesca
	1 September	Francesco Monotti: Goebbels o della Hingabe
	15 September	Gustav Glaesser: Attualita di Sorel [review of Michael Freund: 'Georges Sorel. Der revolutionare Konservativismus', Frankfurt am Main, 1932]
	1 October	Lettera della Germania. Dopo Norimberga
	1 December	Novus: Il Cristianesimo nella rivoluzione tedesca

Educazione Fascista

The monthly, later bimonthly *Educazione Fascista* was the organ of the philosopher Giovanni Gentile, the first Fascist Minister of Education (1922-24) and President of the Institute of Fascist Culture. The review promoted his idea of Fascism as an 'integral' culture which would supersede the influence of Catholicism in the civil and moral life of Italians. Gentile was marginalised after the Concordat of 1929 but he continued to pursue his idea through the Institute of Fascist Culture. Gramsci began subscribing to the review at the start of 1932 to keep track of the currents of ideas among the different groups of fascist intellectuals. It included a regular rubric [L'Italia e Il Mondo, later *Politica Estera*] on foreign affairs carefully written by Umberto Nani which reported the main developments belatedly but accurately and dispassionately.

Rubrics: IM = L'Italia e Il Mondo. PE = Political Estera

1932	January-February	IM. Hitler contro Bruning
	March	IM. Le elezioni presidenziali in Germania
	May	IM. Le elezioni Germaniche [Results of the presidential ballots of 13 March and 10 April and Prussian and state elections of 24 April]
	July	IM. Crisi tedesca [Von Papen's nomination and programme]
	September-October	IM. La vittoria di Hitler [Results of Reichstag elections of 31 July. Hindenburg-Hitler meeting (13 Aug). Hitler rejects offer of vice-chancellorship]
	December	IM. La crisi tedesca [Dissolution of Reichstag, 12 Sept]

1933	February	PE. La crisi tedesca [Schleicher's nomination (3 Dec) and programme]
	March	Umberto Nani: Hitler e La Cattiva Coscienza della Francia
	June	PE. Il discorso Hitler [Hitler's speech on disarmament]
	July	PE. La siglatura del Patto a Quattro
	August-Sept	PE. La firma del Patto a Quattro. Il Concordato fra il Reich e la Santa Sede

Politica

Quarterly Review founded by F.Coppola and A.Rocco
 Edited by F.Coppola

The quarterly *Politica* was started in 1919 by two Southern intellectuals Francesco Coppola and Alfredo Rocco who were among the founders of the Italian Nationalist Association before the war. The merger of the Nationalists with the Fascists in 1923 was crucial in 'delivering' the conservative elites in the bureaucracy, the army, and the academic world to whom *Politica* was mainly addressed. The launch of the review coincided (as Croce noted) with the Italian translation of Treitschke's *Politics* by Laterza in 1919. This signalled the general orientation of its nationalism, which asserted the 'German' principle of authority and hierarchy in the State and the reality of power politics in international relations. The review specialised in foreign affairs, including events in the Soviet Union after 1929 in which it took a close interest. It was a leading mouthpiece of post-war Italian 'revisionism', its cause being boosted by the rise of a militant German revisionism after 1929. Its main contributor on German affairs Giuseppe Piazza (who also wrote for *Nuova Antologia*) favoured Nazi leadership of the national "revolution" in Germany but the editor Coppola was more cautious and felt that a national "restoration" (as he preferred to call it) led by the traditional elite around Hindenburg would be in safer hands (see Coppola's postscript to Piazza's article in the issue of June-August 1932, published the following November - ie, just *before* the downfall of Hindenburg's chancellor Papen!).

Gramsci's relation to *Politica* is something of a mystery. Although he listed it among the reviews he was receiving in the petition to Mussolini in October 1931, Professor Gerratana could find only one reference in the prison notes to issues of *Politica* after 1929 (in §6.85 where he refers to an article by Coppola in the issue for February-April 1929: QCIV p.2720). A peculiar feature of the review was that every issue was published several months in arrears of its appointed date: whether this was deliberate policy or editorial indiscipline is hard to say, but the timing

meant that its articles on German politics had been overtaken by events by the time they appeared. Its detailed narrative of German politics (carefully compiled by Grilli under the rubric 'Rassegna Politica') was many months behind the events it described. It did not adhere very closely to the movement of political events, therefore, but provided Gramsci with 'background' information and a 'retrospective' view.

RP = Rassegna Politica, written by Giocondo Grilli

1930 October-December [published March 1931]

RP. La Grave Crisi Germanica, le Leggi Finanziarie, e Le Elezioni Generali
La Renania dopo lo Sgombero Militare

1931 February-April [published June 1931]

RP. Polemiche Revisioniste, Secessione Parlamentare di Destra, Intransigenze Cattoliche e Sospensione delle Liberta Costituzionali in Germania

June-August [published September 1931]

RP. Protocollo austro-tedesco del 19 marza 1931 (Zollunion)

October-December [no publication date given]

Giuseppe Piazza: La crisi tedesca ad il fronte di Weimar

RP. I Vasti Sviluppi della Crisi Mondiali. Including the following headings:

Il convegno anglo-tedesco ai Chequers (5-7 June 1931)

La profonda crisi del Reich

La sopraggiunta nuova crisi finanziaria della Germania

La 'Emergency Conference' di Londra (20-23 July 1931)

I Ministri inglesi a Berlino

I Ministri tedeschi a Roma

1932 February-April [published June 1932]

Giuseppe Piazza: La lotta politica in Germania .Le elezioni presidenziali.

RP. Il parere consultativo della Corte Permanente di Giustizia Internazionale sul Progetto di Unione doganale austro-germanico.

La Crisi Economica e le Vaste Ripercussioni Politiche Mondiali. Including the following:

Referendum ed unitarismi prussiani

Ministri francesi a Berlino (27-28 September 1931)

Il Secondo Ministero Bruning (9 October 1931)

Il 'fronte unico delle opposizioni nazionali' costituito a Bad Harzburg (11 October 1931)

L'insolvenza della Germania

L'accordo sui crediti tedeschi per il 1932

June-August [published November 1932]

J.Evola: Il nuovo mito germanico del 'Terzo Reich'

Giuseppe Piazza and Francesco Coppola: La lotta politica in Germania. Hindenburg, von Papen e Hitler

RP. Le grandi consultazioni elettorali Europee della primavera 1932. Includes the following:

Le elezioni presidenziali tedesche (13 March-10 April 1932), il rinnovo della Dieta Prussiana (24 April 1932), e il duello fra nazionalsocialisti e socialdemocrazia in Prussia

Il dissidio Hindenburg-von Groner: la caduta del Ministero Bruning

Il conflitto fra il Reich e gli Stati confederati meridionali

Le elezioni generali politiche tedesche (31 July 1932)

October-December [Published February 1933]

No Articles on Germany

No Rassegna Politica

1933 February-April [Published August 1933]

Giuseppe Piazza: Elementi del nuovo ordine tedesco

RP. La Rivoluzione Nazionale Tedesca: la lotta politica dalla liquidazione della 'Coalizione di Weimar' all' avvento delle Destre Nazionali. Includes the following:

La lotta di Hitler contro l'Herrenklub'

L'entrata dello 'Stahlhelm' nella lotta politica

I progetti di von Papen per una riforma costituzionale del Reich

La fase acuta del duello Hitler-von Papen: le dimissioni del Gabinetto von Papen (17 Nov '32)

La crisi insolubile. Il Gabinetto von Schleicher (3 December 1932)

L'episodio Strasser: le dimissioni del Gabinetto von Schleicher (28 January 1933)

La ricostituzione del 'fronte di Bad Harzburg'. L'avvento delle Destre al potere: il Gabinetto Hitler di concentrazione nazionale (30 January 1933)

Il dualismo tra la Prussia ed il Reich: il Governo commissariale in Prussia dal luglio 1932 al 5 marzo 1933

La politica federale dei Governi dei Landers meridionali (April 1932- 4 March 1933)

Le elezioni del 5 marzo 1933 per l'ottavo Reichstag

La nuova Germania

La 'Magna Charta' della Rivoluzione nazionale (23 March 1933)

Le decisioni della Conferenza episcopale di Fulda (28 March 1933)

Nuova Antologia

A Review of Literature, Science and Art

The fortnightly *Nuova Antologia* is the review most frequently cited in Gramsci's notes. It was directed by Tommaso Tittoni, President of the Senate (1921-29) and then President of the newly created Academy of Italy. Tittoni was a career politician of conservative-clerical persuasion. His special interest was in foreign affairs having served as foreign minister under Giolitti and latterly influencing the early stages of Mussolini's foreign policy. The review regularly featured researched

articles on the history, politics, and culture of other countries especially Britain and Germany, like Tommasini's article on Stresemann which Gramsci commended. It featured a regular 'Political Review' (later 'Political Chronicle') which was a useful source of political facts: for example, the results of the German elections of September 1930 were reported under this rubric. Its leading analyst on German affairs was Giuseppe Piazza, who also contributed to the review *Politica*: his periodic articles on the German crisis were probably the most interesting by a fascist commentator.

Rubrics: RP = Rassegna Politica ; CP = Cronaca Politica

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------|---|
| 1929 | 16 July | [Augur: La politica della Gran Bretagna] |
| | 16 October | [Luigi Villari: il governo laburista britannico] |
| | 16 November | Francesco Tommasini: Il pensiero e l'opera di Gustavo Stresemann |
| | | |
| 1930 | 1 January | J.Evola: Aspetti del movimento culturale della Germania contemporanea |
| | 16 January | [Augur: Britannia, quo vadis?] |
| | 16 May | Alberto Giacardi: Il pangermanesimo coloniale fra le cause del conflitto mondiale |
| | 1 June | [Lorenzo Gigli: Gli amici italiani di Gobineau] |
| | 1 September | [Luigi Villari: L'agricoltura in Inghilterra] |
| | 1 October | Augur: L'anima della Germania
RP .Results of German elections, 14 September. |
| | 16 October | Manfredi Gravina: Le memorie del Principe di Bulow |
| | 16 October | Saverio Nasalli Rocca: La politica tedesca dell'impotenza nella guerra mondiale (I) |
| | 1 November | Saverio Nasalli Rocca: La politica tedesca dell'impotenza nella guerra mondiale (II) |
| | 16 November | [Luigi Villari: La posizione della monarchia nella Gran Betagna] |
| | | |
| 1931 | 1 March | Manfredi Gravina: Il terzo volume delle Memorie di Bulow |
| | 1 April | L.Chiovenda: Vita studentesca in Germania |
| | 1 May | [Luigi Villari: Giornalismo britannico di ieri e di oggi] |
| | 1 June | CP. After Stresemann. Austro-German Customs Union |
| | 16 June | CP. Talks at Chequers on Austro-German Customs Union |
| | 16 August | CP. Bruning's visit to Rome.[The English financial situation] |
| | 1 September | Principessa Maria Radziwill: Guglielmo II e Il Principe di Bulow (da un carteggio inedito) |
| | 1 September | CP .After Bruning's visit to Rome. Result of Prussian plebiscite, 9 August |
| | 16 September | [CP .The English crisis] |
| | 16 October | CP . The German crisis and the English elections |
| | 1 November | [Giuseppe Bevione: La dramma di sterlina] |
| | 16 November | [Luigi Villari: La crisi politica inglese (Result of British general election, 27 October)] |
| | 16 November | CP: German debts |

- 1 December Giuseppe Piazza: La crisi tedesca e il fronte di Bad Harzburg
 1 December CP. The fortunes of the Young Plan
- 1932**
- 1 January Note economiche. German reparations
 16 January CP. The Geneva conference on reparations
 1 February Note economiche. Reparation payments. Bruning's speech
 16 February CP. The reparations question
 1 March CP. Hitler's candidature in the presidential elections
 1 April CP. Hitler and Hindenburg: results of the first round, 13 March
 16 April CP. Re-election of Hindenburg, 10 April
 1 May Giuseppe Piazza: Le elezioni in Germania
 1 May CP. The Diet elections in Germany
 1 June CP. The German [financial] crisis
 16 June CP. New governments in France and Germany
 1 July CP. Lausanne conference on disarmament, reparations etc
 16 July [Pietro Chimienti: La Camera dei 'Lords' e il 'Parliament Act']
 16 July CP. Lausanne conference on reparations
 16 August Bruno Biagi: Aspetti e Problemi della Disoccupazione (British and German unemployment figures)
 CP. Results of German elections, 31 July
 1 September CP. The German situation after the latest elections
 16 September CP. Germany and armaments
 1 October CP. The struggle for the government in Germany
 16 October Giuseppe Piazza: La Germania tra una rivoluzione e una restaurazione
 1 November CP. German parity and disarmament
 16 November CP. The elections in Germany, 6 November
 1 December CP. The crisis of government in Germany (the problem of Article 48 of the constitution)
- 1 December [Giuseppe Bevione: La prova di Inghilterra]
 16 December CP. Schleicher nominated Chancellor
- 1933**
- 1 January CP. The question German parity
 16 January CP. German parity and security
 16 February CP. Hitler in power
 16 March CP. The New Germany (The German elections, 5 March)
 1 April Giuseppe Piazza : Primo tempo nazionalsocialista in Germania
 1 May CP. Visit of German and Austrian ministers to Rome
 16 May CP. The Mussolini Pact with Britain, France, Germany
 1 June CP. Hitler's speech, 17 May. The Mussolini Pact
 16 June CP. The Mussolini Pact
 1 July CP. The Mussolini Pact
 1 August CP. The Mussolini Pact
 1 September CP. The Austro-German question. Mussolini's intervention
 16 September Giuseppe Piazza: Nazionalsocialismo - Razzismo

Civilta cattolica
Review of the Jesuits directed by Padre Enrico Rosa

The fortnightly *Civilta Cattolica* was the intellectual review of the Jesuits. Its views on religious, political, and social questions were close to those of Pius XI, the 'Pope of the Jesuits', and Padre Rosa's reputation as a great intellectual authority probably owed as much to this than anything else. Its independence of the Fascist regime was guaranteed by the Concordat but it was only asserted when absolutely necessary: during the controversy over Catholic Action in 1931, for example, it carried the text of Pius XI's encyclical condemning the Fascist attacks on Catholic Action. Ordinarily, the review played a key role in signalling the various adjustments of position which the Church found it necessary to make in its relations with the State in this or that country, depending on the particular national circumstances and terrain. For example, the increasingly tense position of the Catholic Church in Nazi Germany after the Reich Concordat of 1933 was well documented, including a number of interesting articles responding to the early racial legislation of the Nazi regime. Every issue featured a rubric 'Cose Straniere' ('Foreign Affairs') which was a reliable and accurate source of international political news, the bare facts of which were chronicled with a studied, enervating neutrality.

Rubric: CS = Cose Straniere

1929	6 July	CS.[Inghilterra.Ministero laburista]
	20 July	CS. Germania. Il Piano Young
	5 October	CS. Germania. Concordato della Prussia con la Santa Sede
	19 October	CS. Germania. Morte del ministero Stresemann
	2 November	CS. Germania. Lotta fra Governo e tedesco-nazionali (campaign for the anti-Young Plan plebiscite)
	16 November	CS. Germania. Morte del Principe di Bulow
	7 December	CS. Germania. Esito del referendum per il plebiscito. Il nuovo Ministero degli esteri
	21 December	CS. Germania. Le peripezie del Piano Young. Giubilo per lo sgombero della seconda zona renana
1930	4 January	CS. Germania. Omaggi dell' Azione Cattolica di Berlino al Nunzio Pacelli
	1 February	CS. Germania. Disoccupazione e conflitti sanguinosi
	5 April	CS. Germania. Dimissioni del Presidente della Reichsbank. Morte di von Tirpitz
	19 April	CS. Germania.Caduta del Muller e Ministero Bruning
	3 May	CS. Germania.Approvazione dei provvedimenti fiscali e agrari
	17 May	CS. Germania. Il Nuovo Nunzio Apostolico. Esposizione finanziaria al Reichstag
	5 July	CS. Germania. Morte di Adolfo von Harnack

- 19 July CS. Germania. Lo sgombero della Renania
 2 August CS. Germania. Scioglimento del Reichstag
 16 August CS. Germania. Feste renane per la liberazione. Leggi finanziarie
 6 September CS. Germania. Discorso di Ministero Treviranus
 4 October CS. Germania. Esito delle elezioni per il Reichstag
 1 November CS. Germania. Opening of the new Reichstag (13 Oct). Brüning announces his programme (16 Oct)
 20 December CS. Germania. Brüning's financial measures approved by Hindenburg (1 Dec)
- 1931** 3 January CS. Germania. Brüning's financial measures approved by the Reichstag (6 Dec) despite opposition of the extreme parties
 7 March CS. Germania. Resumption of the Reichstag (3 Feb). Brüning survives vote of no confidence with Communists and Nazis jointly attacking the government. Nazi Party walks out of the Reichstag (10 Feb)
 18 April CS. Germania. Reichstag recesses (26 March) until October. Decree announces new restrictions on political meetings
 2 May CS. Germania. Stennes revolt against Hitler and 'legality'
 16 May [unsigned article]: Il Nazionalsocialismo in Germany
 4 July CS. The Chequers meeting: economic crisis in Germany and suspension of reparations
 18 July Il Comunismo sovietico e la Rivoluzione spagnuola [review of the German edition of Trotsky's book 'The Spanish Revolution']
- 1932** 1 January CS. Germania. Economic and financial measures (8 Dec)
 19 March CS. Germania. Prime avvisaglie della lotta presidenziale
 2 April CS. Germania. Esito delle elezioni presidenziali (results)
 16 April CS. Germania. Lotta per le elezioni della dieta prussiana. I candidati alla presidenza del Reich
 7 May CS. Germania. Esito delle elezioni presidenziali e della dieta prussiana
 4 June CS. Germania. Caduta di Brüning. Von Papen nuovo Cancelliere
 2 July CS. Germania. Le 'Truppe d'Assalto' nuovamente permesse
 6 August CS. Germania. Torbida vigilia elettorale
 20 August CS. Germania. Esito delle elezioni per il Reichstag (results)
 3 September CS. Germania. Provvedimenti di rigore. Hitler alla conquista del potere
 1 October CS. Germania. La radunata degli 'Elmi d'Acciaio' a Berlino. Lo scioglimento del parlamento tedesco. Il ritiro della Germania dalla Conferenza del Disarmo
 19 November CS. Germania. Conflitto costituzionale fra il Reich e la Prussia. Esito delle elezioni politiche
 17 December CS. Germania. Vicende e soluzioni della crisi
- 1933** 7 January CS. Germania. Programma del Cancelliere Schleicher. Concordato del Baden con la Santa Sede
 18 February CS. Germania. Caduta del ministero Schleicher. Hitler nominato Cancelliere: formazione del ministero.; primi atti del governo
 18 March CS. Germania. Incendio nel palazzo del Reichstag. Elezioni politiche (results)
 1 April CS. Germania. Tutto il potere ai nazionalisti. Inaugurazione del Reichstag
 6 May CS. Germania. 'Unitary' Law of 7 April abolishing federal structure of the State
 3 June CS. Germania. Hitler's speech of 17 May
 15 July CS. Germania. Totalitarismo in atto
 5 August CS. Germania. Concordato con la Germania (8 July)
 19 August CS. Germania. Dalla 'rivoluzione' alla 'evoluzione'. Contro i nemici della Stato
 16 September CS. Germania. Congress of National Socialists at Nuremberg

	18 November	E.Rosa, SJ: Il Concordato della Santa Sede con la Germania
	2 December	CS. Germania. Votazione plebiscitaria
1934	1 January	CS. Germania. Ordinanza sulla 'sterilizzazione' (9 Dec)
	3 February	M. Barbera, SJ: Mito Razzista Anticristiano (Rosenberg's book)
	7 April	CS. Germania. Episodi ostili ai cattolici
	19 May	A.Messineo, SJ: La Concezione dello Stato nel Terzo Reich
	20 October	E.Rosa,SJ: 'La Questione Giudaica' e l'Antisemitismo Nazionalsocialista

Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera
(Weekly Review of the Foreign Press)

The *Weekly Review of the Foreign Press* was produced by the press office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was an impressive publication consisting of excerpts in translation from foreign, mostly European, newspapers and reviews on weekly political events country by country. Under the rubric 'Germany' for example, it reported the reactions of the German and foreign press to the main developments in German politics each week. These excerpts were pieced together by editorial additions putting the events and issues in context. These often included useful summaries bringing the reader up to date with the latest political facts.

It was not primarily an organ of "ideological struggle". The fascism in its editorial approach appeared particularly in its presentation of excerpts from socialist and communist newspapers, including the Soviet press, and in its perspective on 'General Political Problems' like "the decadence of democracy as a system of government" (20 May 1930). As with all the fascist publications he received, Gramsci applied his formidable skills in 'philological criticism' in order to ascertain the facts and to get an objective view. For example, the *Weekly Review* followed the expansion of the Nazi movement with close interest and gave regular coverage to the Nazi and nationalist press, but it also reported the reactions of the French and Polish press where the progress of the Nazi movement was followed with growing concern and was greeted with sceptical or hostile comment. Gramsci could therefore get a rounded view of events.

It was Gramsci's most important source of *continuous* news about national and international politics between 1929-33, including of course German politics. When other sources gave an incomplete picture or were withdrawn altogether, he could continue to follow the thread of events in the *Weekly Review*. He does not cite it very often in the notes, but he seems to have followed it closely during two critical

phases of the German crisis: around the time of the elections in September 1930 and at the time of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933. A complete list of the contents of the rubric 'Germania' would be too detailed to give here, but the following samples are representative of the continuity and extent of its coverage.

Rubrics: G = Giornali; R = Riviste

Sample: October 1929-December 1930

(from the death of Stresemann to the Nazi electoral 'breakthrough' and reactions to it)

1929

October

- 1 G. Relazioni con la Francia - Rivelazioni su approcci per un'alleanza franco-tedesca - Una lettera di Poincare e la risposta di Reichberg
- 8 G. La situazione interna - Vivace lotta di partiti sui risultati dell'Aja - La preparazione d'un 'referendum' contro il Piano Young - Gli attentati dinamitardi - Aspri dissidi per la riforma della legge sul sussidio al disoccupati - Il compleanno del Presidente Hindenburg
La morte di Stresemann e la politica estera tedesca da Locarno all'Aja
- 15 G. Ancora commenti sulla morte del dottor Stresemann e sulla politica estera del Reich - L'assunzione da parte del dottor Curtius dell'interim del Ministero degli affari esteri - Lo scioglimento delle organizzazioni degli Elmetti d'acciaio e della commissione nazionale per il referendum contro il piano Young
Relazioni con la Grecia
Le aspirazioni coloniali tedesche e una proposta di Lord Rothermere
R. La morte di Gustavo Stresemann - La sua opera di uomo di Stato
- 22 [No report on Germany]
- 29 G. Ancora sulla lotta tra nazionalisti e Governo circa il 'referendum' contro il piano Young - Una lettera ed un giudizio del Presidente Hindenburg - L'inizio delle sottoscrizioni per la validita del plebiscito - Nuovi commenti sullo scioglimento degli 'Elmi d'acciaio' - Le elezioni amministrative a Berlino e lo scandalo Sklarek nell'amministrazione comunale - Il problema del regresso demografico tedesco
Relazioni con la Francia: la proroga delle trattative per la soluzione anticipata della questione della Sarre
Relazioni con l'URRS: Il quarto anniversario del Trattato di Rapallo
R. Ancora commenti sulla morte di Gustavo Stresemann e sulla politica estera del Reich - L'interim degli affari esteri al sig. Curtius

November

- 5 G. Ancora sul referendum per il plebiscito contro il piano Young - La lotta fra i partiti ed un nuovo intervento del Presidente Hindenburg
La morte del Principe B. von Bulow - La sua opera politica
R. Ancora commenti sulla morte di Gustavo Stresemann e sulla sua politica
- 12 G. L'esito del referendum per il plebiscito contro il piano Young - La politica estera: Relazioni con l'Italia e con la Francia
R. La morte del Principe di Bulow - La sua opera politica
Relazioni con la Francia - Il problema della Sarre e le trattative per la sua anticipata soluzione
[R. Stati Uniti. La crisi borsistica - Le ripercussioni in Europa]

- 19 G. La nomina del sig. Curtius a Ministero degli esteri e del sig. Moldenhauer a Ministero dell'economia
Relazioni con la Francia: un passo dell'Ambasciatore von Hoesch circa la data dello sgombero della Renania
- 26 G. L'esito delle elezioni municipali a Berlino - L'assemblea generale dei tedesco-nazionali e le dichiarazioni di Hugenburg
Relazioni con la Francia e l'Inghilterra - Un discorso di Mons. Kaas sui rapporti con la Francia - Un nuovo dell'Ambasciatore germanico circa la convocazione della seconda Conferenza dell'Aja - Una lettera del Ministero Snowden a proposito della restituzione delle eccedenze sulle liquidazioni delle proprietà tedesche - L'inizio delle trattative franco-tedesche per la soluzione anticipata della questione della Sarre

December

- 3 G. Ancora sul Congresso dei tedesco-nazionali - Dichiarazioni di Hugenburg e le tre mozioni votate - L'esito ufficiale del referendum per chiedere il plebiscito contro il piano Young ed il progetto di legge relativo - Il governo del Reich contrario al plebiscito
Relazioni con la Francia - Le trattative per la soluzione anticipata del problema della Sarre
- 10 G. Relazioni con la Francia - Ancora sulle trattative per la Sarre - Lo sgombero della seconda zona renana - Relazioni con il Belgio: La campagna di alcuni giornali tedeschi per il territorio Eupen-Malmedy
- 17 G. La legge per la difesa della Repubblica e per la pacificazione della vita politica - Un discorso del Ministero degli esteri Curtius contro il progetto di legge nazionalista per il referendum sul piano Young - Il progetto respinto dal Reichstag - La scissione nel partito tedesco-nazionale - Il memoriale del presidente del Reichsbank sul piano Young e la risposta del Governo - Dichiarazioni del Cancelliere sulla riforma finanziaria - La riunione della Confederazione dell'industria
L'80th anniversario del generale Mackensen
- 24-31 G. La situazione del bilancio - la ripresa delle discussioni sulla riforma finanziaria - Il voto di fiducia - L'atteggiamento del dottor Schacht e i prestiti esteri - Il rifiuto dei banchieri americani - Il prestito interno - Disordini dei disoccupati - Il progetto di 'allargamento' della riforma finanziaria - Le dimissioni del Ministero e del Sottosegretario alle Finanze
Relazioni con la Francia: Ancora sulla futura Conferenza dell'Aja e sul problema della Sarre - Il piano Young e il diritto di rioccupazione francese della zona evacuate - La Conferenza degli ambasciatori e le ferrovie della provincia renana - Un'intervista del Generale Groener sugli armamenti tedeschi in risposta alle asserzioni fatte alla Camera francese
Relazioni con la Città del Vaticano - La partenza di S.E. il Nunzio Pacelli
L'espansione economica della Germania in Turchia e in Persia
[R. Stati Uniti. Ancora sulla crisi borsistica di New York - L'atteggiamento del Governo federale]

1930

January

- 7 [No report on Germany]
- 14 G. Ancora sulla situazione del bilancio e sulle dimissioni di Hilferding - Il passaggio del Ministero dell'Economia Moldenhauer alle Finanze e la nuova nomina a Ministro dell'Economia del dott. Roberto Schmidt - L'esito del referendum contro il Piano Young - La tesi del Governo e quella dei nazionalisti
Relazioni con la Francia: piano Young, Conferenza dell'Aja e gli impegni tedeschi - Lo sgombero anticipato della Renania ed un memoriale del Maresciallo Foch - Il dott. Schacht e la delegazione tedesca all'Aja
[Problemi Politici Generali. La seconda Conferenza dell'Aja]

- 21 [No report on Germany]
[G.Problemi Politici Generali. La Conferenza dell'Aja - Per l'applicazione del piano Young etc]
[R. Problemi Politici Generali. Il problema delle riparazioni all'Aja etc]
- 28 [No report on Germany]
[G.Problemi Politici Generali. La fine della seconda Conferenza dell'Aja - La soluzione del problema delle sanzioni nei riguardi della Germania - L'accordo su tutte le clausole del piano Young per le riparazioni tedesche etc]

February

- 4 [No report on Germany]
[G.Problemi Politici Generali. Dop la seconda Conferenza dell'Aja - Commenti ai risultati ottenuti dalla Germania etc]
- 11 [No report on Germany]
- 18 [No report on Germany]
[G. Problemi Politici Generali. Dop la seconda Conferenza dell'Aja - I risultati ottenuti dalla Francia e dalla Germania etc]
- 25 G. Problemi politici all'interno e all'estero - La situazione dei partiti - Relazioni con la Francia - Problemi economici: la situazione delle industrie - Problemi sociali: i moti comunisti

March

- 4 [No report on Germany]
[R.Problemi Politici Generali. La crisi dello Stato moderno]
- 11 G. Le agitazioni comuniste - La disoccupazione - Le discussioni sul piano Young e la riforma finanziaria - Il deficit - Le richieste dei popolari - Le dimissioni del dottor Schacht da presidente della Reichsbank - Il mutamento del Ministero dell'interno in Prussia
- 18 G. Ancora sul problema finanziario e sull'approvazione del piano Young - L'atteggiamento dei partiti ed un intervento del Presidente Hindenburg - La definitiva approvazione del piano Young - La nomina di Luther a successore di Schacht nella presidenza della Reichsbank
La morte dell'ammiraglio von Tirpitz
Le aspirazioni coloniali tedesche - Un voto della Camera olandese e un reclamo degli abitanti di Samoa - Discussioni sul sistema dei mandati - Il problema della nazionalità dei tedeschi residenti nelle ex-colonie germaniche - La contrarietà per i progetti inglesi riguardanti l'unione doganale fra Kenia, Uganda e Tanganika
- 25 G. Dopo l'approvazione del piano Young e la firma apposta del Capo dello Stato - Un manifesto del presidente Hindenburg al popolo tedesco e l'atteggiamento dei partiti di destra - Propaganda nazional-socialista in seno alla Reichswehr e attentati terroristici - L'approvazione della legge sulla protezione della Repubblica - Il Capo dello Stato firma anche il trattato di liquidazione con la Polonia
R. Dopo la ratifica del piano Young - I partiti politici al Reichstag - La situazione finanziaria - Le dimissioni di Schacht e la nomina di Luther alla Presidenza della Reichsbank

April

- 1 G. Dissidio fra il Governo del Reich e quello di Thuringia - La situazione economica - La crisi ministeriale - Le dimissioni del Gabinetto Muller e il nuovo Governo
Sulla politica estera in generale - Relazioni con l'URSS - Polemiche sul trattato di Rapallo
R. La ratifica degli accordi per le riparazioni e lo sgombero della Renania
- 8 G. Ancora sulla crisi economica e sulla crisi ministeriale - Il nuovo Gabinetto Bruning - Le dichiarazioni ministeriali
- 15 G. Ancora sul nuovo Ministero Bruning - Un questionario dei tedesco-nazionali - La discussione sulle dichiarazioni governative e il voto di fiducia - Il distacco dei social-nazionalisti dai tedesco-nazionali - I compiti finanziari del nuovo Governo
Relazioni con la Francia e con l'Italia
R. Dopo la ratifica del piano Young - Il nuovo Ministero - Le prospettive economico-industriali

- 22 [No report on Germany]
 29 G. Ancora sulla situazione del partito tedesco-nazionale e sui suoi rapporti con quello social-nazionale - I lavori parlamentari e il voto di fiducia - L'approvazione dei provvedimenti agrari e dei provvedimenti fiscali per la copertura del bilancio - La situazione economica - La questione dell'incrociatore B
 Relazioni con la Francia - Il problema dello sgombero della Renania - Le nuove prospettive per la politica estera tedesca

May

- 6 G. L'assemblea del partito tedesco nazionale: la scissione evitata - I principali problemi di politica interna: bilancio, agricoltura, partiti - In occasione del quinquennio della presidenza di Hindenburg - Commenti al volo dello 'Zeppelin' su Londra e Parigi e relazioni con l'Inghilterra e la Francia
 R. Dopo la ratifica del piano Young - Il Gabinetto Bruning - La situazione parlamentare e il movimento dei partiti - L'atteggiamento dei tedesco-nazionali - I provvedimenti agrari e fiscali - Il Governo del Reich e quello della Prussia - La penetrazione straniera nelle industrie
 13 G. La situazione dei tedesco-nazionali e l'atteggiamento degli altri partiti verso il Gabinetto Bruning - Il bilancio finanziario al Reichstag - Dichiarazioni del Ministero Moldenhauer
 20 [No report on Germany]
 [Problemi Politici Generali. La decadenza della democrazia come sistema di governo]
 27 R. Aspetti della democrazia e del parlamentarismo - Misure a favore dell'agricoltura - Rinascita economica e previsioni per l'avvenire dell'industria e del commercio

June

- 3 G. La situazione dei partiti - Il problema agrario - Il bilancio della Reichswehr - Dichiarazioni del Ministero Groener
 Relazioni con la Francia - L'ordine di sgombero della terza zona renana - Dopo i colloqui di Ginevra Briand-Curtius: Il problema della Sarre
 10 G. La situazione economica e il disavanzo del bilancio - Disoccupazione, sussidi e inasprimenti fiscali
 Relazioni con la Francia: Ancora sullo sgombero della Renania - La visita a Parigi e le dichiarazioni del capo dell'Associazione giovanile tedesca 'Jungvolk' - Relazioni con l'URSS
 R. La tendenza anti-demografica e la preponderanza prussiana
 Relazioni con la Francia - L'evacuazione della Renania - La situazione nella Sarre
 17 [No report on Germany]
 24 G. Le lotte dei partiti in Bavaria - La situazione interna del partito social-nazionalista - Un decreto del Governo bavarese contro l'uso delle uniformi dei partiti - Un altro del Governo di Prussia - L'industria e la stampa tedesca - Congresso della stampa tedesca a Monaco - L'economia rurale discussa alla Dieta bavarese - La 'comunanza del lavoro' - I provvedimenti progettati dal Reich per far fronte al deficit finanziario - Dichiarazioni del Ministero del Lavoro - Relazioni con la Francia: ancora sullo sgombero della Renania

July

- 1 G. La proibizione d'un comizio e d'una adunanza dei social-nazionalisti - Ancora sul divieto delle uniformi di partito - I successi elettorali degli hitleriani in Sassonia - Il programma del Ministero Moldenhauer per far fronte al disavanzo - Il rapporto dell'agente generale delle riparazioni - Le dimissioni di Moldenhauer
 Relazioni con l'URSS - La creazione d'un comitato tedesco-sovietico per comporre le divergenze tra i due Paesi
 R. La situazione economica dopo la ratifica del piano Young
 8 G. Ancora sulla vittoria elettorale degli hitleriani in Sassonia - Le organizzazioni operaie cattoliche - Il 4th anniversario della 'Confessio Augustana' e il concordato - La concentrazione

industriale - Dopo le dimissioni del Ministero delle finanze Moldenhauer - Il bilancio degli Esteri e undiscorso del Ministero Curtius: Renania, Sarre, relazioni con l'Italia, con l'URSS e con la Polonia - La nomina di Dietrich a nuovo Ministero delle finanze - Dichiarazioni di Curtius sulle aspirazioni coloniali - Dichiarazioni del Ministero di lavoro - Le proposte del Governo per la coperturadel bilancio

La cessazione del regime d'occupazione in Renania - Festeggiamenti e manifesti - Incidenti contro i separatisti -La questione della Sarre

Relazioni con l'URSS - Ancora sulla Commissione germano-sovietica

- 15 G. Ancora sulla cessazione del regime d'occupazione in Renania - Relazioni con la Francia - Colloquio del sig. Briand con l'Ambasciatore germanico sugli incidenti contro i separatisti - Un passo francese a Berlino

R. Lo sgombrò della Renania - Il problema della Sarre - Relazioni con la Francia - L'opera del Gabinetto Bruning e la recente vittoria nazional-socialista

- 22 G. La scissione del partito social-nazionalista - Un discorso di Adolfo Hitler sugli scopi del partito - Nuove proibizioni di uniformi di partito - Ancora sui progetti finanziari per coprire il deficit del bilancio - Lo scioglimento del Reichstag - Una lettera del Presidente Hindenburg per la revoca dello scioglimento degli 'Elmetti d'acciaio' - La composizione della vertenza e la partenza del Presidente per la Renania

R. Relazioni con la Francia - L'evacuazione della Renania e il problema della Sarre

- 29 G. Ancora sullo scioglimento del Reichstag e sull'intervento del Presidente Hindenburg nella politica interna

Relazioni con la Francia - Dopo la sospensione dei negoziati per la Sarre

R. Relazioni con la Francia - La sospensione dei negoziati per la Sarre

[La crisi economica mondiale]

August

- 5 G. L'inizio della lotta elettorale - La formazione di nuovi partiti: dei contadini, del popolare conservatore, del partito di Stato - Un decreto-legge in applicazione dell'art.48 che sanziona la tassa di sacrificio

Relazioni con la Francia - I festeggiamenti in Renania: il trionfale viaggio del Presidente Hindenburg - Il lutto a Coblenza per la caduta di un ponte

R. La dissoluzione del Reichstag - Previsioni sull'esito delle future elezioni politiche

- 12 R. La lotta elettorale e la situazione politica - Il nuovo partito di Stato

[La crisi economica mondiale]

19

- 26 G. Ancora sul discorso del Ministro Treviranus - Commenti e polemiche

Relazioni con la Francia - Ancora sui festeggiamenti in Renania - I negoziati per la Sarre - Dichiarazioni del Capo della delegazione tedesca

R. Il movimento nazional-socialista - Il generale von Seeckt entra nella politica attiva - Il discorso del Ministro Treviranus - Provvedimenti economici del Governo

September

- 2 G. Ancora sul discorso Treviranus: il problema delle revisioni dei trattati - La situazione elettorale - Conflitti e manifesti - La crisi bavarese

[R. Depressione economica e disoccupazione]

- 9 G. Dopo il discorso di Treviranus: relazioni con la Francia e la Polonia - Il revisionismo - La campagna elettorale - Un discorso del dott. Held - Un discorso del Cancelliere Bruning sulla politica estera e interna della Germania - Il generale von Seeckt e le forze armate tedesche

Relazioni con l'URSS - La morte dell'ex-tenente Amlinger - Un comunicato della Reichswehr

R. Dopo il discorso del Ministro Treviranus - Il revisionismo - Relazioni con la Francia, il Belgio e la Polonia - La campagna elettorale

- 16 R. La situazione economica e la disoccupazione - Il revisionismo - Ancora sul discorso di Treviranus - I rapporti franco-tedeschi, la politica di Locarno e le elezioni
- 23 G. I risultati delle elezioni generali politiche - La posizione del gabinetto Brüning - L'impressione in Francia e in Inghilterra
- 30 R. Le elezioni tedesche - Le posizioni reciproche dei partiti al Reichstag - La ripercussione delle elezioni in Austria

October

- 7 G. Ancora sui risultati delle elezioni generali politiche - Ripercussioni sulla politica interna e sulla politica estera - Dichiarazioni di Wirth, di Hitler e del Cancelliere Brüning - Il nuovo programma del Gabinetto Brüning
R. Ancora commenti ai risultati delle elezioni tedesche - Le cause della vittoria nazional-socialista - L'atteggiamento dei partiti al Reichstag - La politica dei nazional-socialisti nei riguardi della Francia
- 14 R. Ancora sul risultato delle elezioni - Le cause economiche e sociali della vittoria degli hitleriani - I commenti francesi prospettano la necessita di un aumento di forze militari in Francia
- 21 G. Ancora commenti al risultato delle elezioni - Un articolo di Lord Rothermere e la polemica suscitata nella stampa tedesca - Le intenzioni dei social-nazionalisti - La campagna contro il Piano Young - Il raduno degli 'Elmi d'acciaio' a Coblenza - Il programma finanziario del Governo - La inaugurazione del nuovo Reichstag e l'atteggiamento dei partiti
R. Dopo le elezioni - La situazione politica e finanziaria - La situazione estera e le relazioni con aFrancia
- 28 G. L'elezione del sig. Loebe a Presidente del Reichstag - Le dichiarazioni ministeriali - Il voto di fiducia - Un discorso di Braun alla Dieta prussiana - Lo sciopero dei metallurgici - La campagna per la revisione dei trattati e i commenti alle proposte di Herve - Relazioni con la Francia
R. Le relazioni con la Francia e la possibilita d'un accordo dopo i risultati delle elezioni

November

- 4 G. Commenti al voto di fiducia per il Ministero Brüning e alla elezione di Loebe a Presidente del Reichstag - La nomina di Severing a Ministro dell' interno di Prussia - Nuovi commenti alle proposte di Herve per un'intesa franco-tedesca - La risposta di Hitler
R. Il partito di Stato - La situazione economica - Lo sciopero dei matalurgici
- 11 G. Dopo la riapertura del Reichstag e il voto di fiducia al Governo Brüning - Il programma finanziario - Ancora sulla campagna revisionista e sulle proposte di Herve - Dichiarazioni del Cancelliere Brüning sui rapporti fra la Germania e la Francia
R. Il movimento hitleriano e i suoi scopi - L'attuale situazione al nuovo Reichstag e le difficolta politiche ed economiche del Gabinetto Brüning - La campagna revisionista
- 18 R. La situazione del Gabinetto Brüning - L'azione odierna e futura dei nazional-socialisti - La campagna contro il piano Young
- 25 G. Conseguenze della crisi economica - Il lodo della vertenza metallurgica - L'azione per il ribasso delle mercedi e del costo della vita - Le richieste della Lega agraria - Le discussioni sulle riparazioni
Il revisionismo - Seguito della polemica tra Herve e Hitler - Relazioni con la Francia
R. La crisi economica e le sue ripercussioni politiche - Relazioni con la Francia - Possibilita di una revisione dei trattati - Conseguenze eventuali della revisione

December

- 2 G. Il discorso del Ministro Curtius sulla politica estera - Relazioni con la Francia - Il problema del disarmo - Il revisionismo

- 9 G. La politica finanziaria ed economica del Governo - Le dimissioni del Ministro delle finanze - I progetti finanziari discussi al Reichstag - Dichiarazioni del Ministro delle finanze
Il Congresso del partito popolare bavarese
R. Le riforme finanziarie e la situazione psicologica del popolo tedesco
[R. Inghilterra. Il sistema del governo e quello elettorale (Ramsey Muir's critique)]
[R. Problemi Politici Generali. Democrazia, monarchia, e dittatura in Europa]
- 16 G. L'approvazione al Reichstag delle leggi emanate con decreti Ministeriali in materia finanziaria
Relazioni con la Polonia - Una nota del Governo di Berlino alla Società delle Nazioni
- 23 R. L'azione per il ribasso dei prezzi - Gli atteggiamenti dei gruppi politici e la crisi della democrazia
- 30 R. La crisi economica - Propaganda bolscevica e le relazioni con l'URSS - l'aspirazione a riavere il 'corridoio' polacco - La necessità di crediti - Relazioni con la Francia

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Sample: January-August 1933

(from the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor to the abolition of other political parties and the announcement of the Reich Concordat)

January

- 3-10 G. Ancora sul programme del Cancelliere - Nuovi commenti sulla situazione interna del socialnazionalismo - L'ordinanza presidenziale per la pace nel Paese - L'assistenza ai disoccupati
- 17 G. Ancora sull'amnistia e sulle altre misure del Governo - Messaggi e dichiarazioni di capodanno del Presidente, del Cancelliere e di Hitler - Il colloquio Hitler-von Papen - Politica nazional-socialista - il movimento revisionista
Accordi commerciali con la Francia
- 24 G. La situazione generale politica e i nazional-socialisti - Le elezioni a Lippe - Il conflitto fra la Lega agraria e il Governo - Indici di miglioramento nella situazione economica - Il bilancio - Sul Governo della Bavaria - Il 62nd anniversario dell'Impero germanico
- 31 G. Conflitti fra i partiti - Ancora sulla riforma della Costituzione bavarese - Un discorso del Presidente della Reichsbank - Le dimissioni del Gabinetto von Schleicher e la formazione del nuovo Governo: Adolfo Hitler Cancelliere del Reich
Il revisionismo e la politica estera - Relazioni con la Francia e con la Polonia - L'atteggiamento della Germania nel problema del disarmo

February

- 7 G. Ancora sull'ascesa di Adolfo Hitler al Cancellierato e sulle fasi che l'hanno preceduta - I manifesti del Cancelliere al partito socialnazionalista e al popolo germanico - L'atteggiamento del Centro - Lo scioglimento del Reichstag - Dichiarazioni di Hitler sulle relazioni italo-germanico - Ancora sul Governo della Bavaria - Relazioni con l'Austria
La politica del Ministero degli Esteri - L'atteggiamento della Germania nel problema del disarmo
- 14 G. L'inizio della campagna elettorale per le elezioni al Reichstag - Lo scioglimento della Dieta prussiana - Ancora commenti sul Nuovo Governo e sulla mutata situazione politica
R. Dop la nomina di Hitler a Cancelliere - Il programma del nuovo Governo - L'inizio della campagna elettorale

- 21 G. L'ordinanza presidenziale sul diritto di riunione e di stampa - Dichiarazioni del Cancelliere sulla missione del giornalismo - Inizio della campagna elettorale: discorsi di Hitler, Hugenburg, Von Papen
 28 [No report on Germany]

March

- 7 G. La travolgente vittoria dei social-nazionalisti nelle elezioni e le fasi che l'hanno preceduta - La campagna elettorale; l'atteggiamento del centro e della social-democrazia - I problemi federali e la nuova situazione in Prussia; rapporti tra Reich e Lander - Incendio del Palazzo del Reichstag; provvedimenti contro il comunismo - I risultati elettorali
 La situazione economica - Provvedimenti per le aziende agrarie dissestate - La politica doganale e le esportazioni
 14 G. Ancora sul successo elettorale dei socialnazionalisti e del Governo - Le misure contro i comunisti dopo l'incendio del Reichstag - A proposito del movimento monarchico in Bavaria
 21 G. Ripercussioni all'interno e all'estero dei risultati elettorali
 28 G. La nomina del generale von Epp a commissario della Bavaria - Le elezioni amministrative in Prussia; nuovo successo dei partiti di Governo - Il mutamento della bandiera del Reich - Il nuovo Ministero della propaganda nazionale - La protesta francese per l'impiego della polizia ausiliaria in Renania
 R. Le elezioni politiche - Il trionfo del partito hitleriano

April

- 4 G. Italia. L'atteggiamento della Germania verso il Piano Mussolini e le dichiarazioni del Cancelliere al Reichstag
 R. Problemi Politici Generali. La decadenza dello Stato democratico e l'avvento di nuove dottrine politiche - sviluppi internazionali della dottrina fascista
 11 G. Italia. L'atteggiamento della Germania [towards Mussolini's 'Four Power' Plan]
 G. Germania. L'inaugurazione del Reichstag e della Dieta Prussiana - Il discorso programmatico del Cancelliere e la votazione dei pieni poteri
 R. Italia. Consensi stranieri alle dottrine fasciste e critiche ai governi parlamentari
 R. Germania. L'opera riformatrice del Governo hitleriano nel campo costituzionale e in quello sindacale
 18 G. Italia. L'atteggiamento della Germania - Commenti alle dichiarazioni del Gran Consiglio Fascista sul Piano Mussolini
 G. Italia. Il Duce a l'opera del Regime - La forma di Governo destinata a succedere alla democrazia - L'universalità dell'idea fascista
 R. Italia. La decadenza della democrazia
 25 G. Il consolidamento del Governo - Ancora sulla legge dei pieni poteri; l'atteggiamento del Centro - Polemiche sulla politica estera socialnazionalista - Contro le campagne caluniose di stampa - La questione dell'antisemitismo - L'abolizione delle pregiudiziali cattoliche contro il nazionalsocialismo
 Le misure contro le infiltrazioni di oppositori tra gli Elmetti d'acciaio, e la progressiva dissoluzione dei partiti d'opposizione - La nomina dei Luogotenenti per i Lander - Il riassetto economico - La missione della stampa - Caratteristiche della nuova Germania
 Relazioni con l'Italia, la Francia e l'Inghilterra
 R. L'opera del Cancelliere Hitler per la rinascita della Germania

May

- 2 [No report on Germany]
 9 G. L'opera di Hitler per l'unità del Reich - La situazione in Bavaria dopo la riforma: il nuovo Gabinetto; la collaborazione dei 'popolari bavaresi'; l'inaugurazione della Dieta - Un discorso del Cancelliere a Monaco

- R. L'opera del Governo nazionalsocialista per il rinnovamento della Germania
- 16 G. Politica estera - Relazioni con Inghilterra - Un'intervista del vice Cancelliere - Relazioni con la Francia - Relazioni con la Polonia: un colloquio del Cancelliere con il Ministero polacco a Berlino - La proroga del Trattato di amicizia con l'URSS
- 23 G. Le riforme sociali del Governo - La politica interna e la nuova struttura corporativa dello Stato in due discorsi di Hitler - L'azione contro i sindacati liberi
Le dichiarazioni del Cancelliere sulla politica estera: revisione in base ai trattati; disarmo; parità di diritti e pace - Accenni al Piano Mussolini e al messaggio Roosevelt
- 30 G. Dopo il discorso del Cancelliere
Risposte di von Papen ad accuse contro la Germania - La politica socialnazionalista
R. Le dichiarazioni del Cancelliere sulla politica estera

June

- 6 [No report on Germany]
G. Italia. Opinioni tedesche (on Mussolini's 'Four-Power Pact')
- 13 G. L'atteggiamento del Governo del Reich di fronte al problema del disarmo e agli altri problemi internazionali
La concentrazione delle forze nazionali - Dichiarazioni di Goring alla Dieta prussiana - Una riforma nella legislazione agraria - La legge per combattere la disoccupazione
- 20 [No report on Germany]
- 27 G. La moratoria dei trasferimenti - Discorsi di Hitler e Goebbels sui compiti del socialnazionalismo - Il servizio obbligatorio del lavoro - Il 'Fronte tedesco del lavoro' - Lo scioglimento dei reparti di combattimento tedesco-nazionali - L'inquadramento degli 'Elmi d'acciaio' nel nazionalsocialismo

July

- 4 [No report on Germany]
- 11 [No report on Germany]
- 18 G. La formazione dello Stato totalitario - Lo scioglimento del Partito socialdemocratico e di quello del Centro - L'inquadramento del fronte tedesco-nazionali nel socialnazionalismo e le dimissioni di Hugenburg
- 25 [No report on Germany]

August

- 1 G. Campagna per la parità aerea a proposito di una incursione su Berlino - L'anniversario di Versailles - La Vertenza della Chiesa evangeliche - Elezioni comunali nella Sarre
- 8 [No report on Germany]
- 24 G. L'organizzazione unitaria delle Chiese protestante - La firma del Concordato con la Città del Vaticano - Il nuovo Consiglio di Stato - Lo Stato totalitario: dalla rivoluzione all'evoluzione
Relazioni con l'Italia, la Francia e l'Inghilterra: un passo francese e inglese a Berlino - L'azione moderatrice del Governo italiano
R. Gli obiettivi del nazionalsocialismo
- 29 G. Relazioni con l'Austria: Ancora sull'opera di mediazione svolta dal Governo d'Italia - Polemiche e nuovi incidenti

Manchester Guardian Weekly

The subscription to the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* was taken out at the start of 1931. At first Gramsci did not think his command of English was up to it but by the summer he reported that he found English easier to read than German and that he was reading it without difficulty. The subscription had to be cancelled at the end of the year due to the fact that under the new penal code introduced that year by Alfredo Rocco, the Minister of Justice, Gramsci was no longer allowed to receive foreign-language publications. Given that most of his sources of political news were fascist or 'fascistised', it was the best anti-fascist source of political facts and analysis Gramsci had at any time during his imprisonment.

The paper was edited by Edward Taylor Scott, son of the proprietor C.P. Scott, and spoke for the tradition of British Radicalism. Politically it was aligned with the Radical or 'left' wing of the Liberal Party still led by Lloyd George until he resigned in 1931. It was a bad year for Liberals everywhere but the objective quality of the paper's reports was probably all the better for having to report so much bad news. Of the major events of 1931, there were detailed reports of the financial crisis in Germany in July and the general election in Britain in October, when the Liberal Party disappeared from British politics.

January

- 2 Germany's Coal Dispute
- 9 The Ruhr Coal Strike
Supplement. The Berlin Year [review of Berlin's cultural life in 1930]
German Foreign Policy
- 16 Six Per Cent Wage Cut in the Ruhr
Supplement. Minorities in Poland [on alleged ill-treatment of the German minority in Poland]
- 23 Minorities in Poland: German statement to League Council
- 30 Minorities Treaties Violated: Decision against Poland
Germany's 'Forced' Exports: Goods sold at less than Cost

February

- 6 Editorial. Germany's Western Frontier
The Nazis in Despair: Germany's New Hope in the League [on political violence in Germany]
- 13 'German Fascists Retreat'. Nazis retire from Parliament
Stahlhelm plans a Referendum. Attempt to dissolve Prussian Diet
Editorial. Germany's Uphill Fight
- 20 Supplement. Anti-Fascists in Germany: Ranks Closing [on the anti-Fascist movement in Bremen and Hamburg]
- 27 Communists shot by Police: Unemployment Protest

March

- 6 Supplement. Socialist Losses in Brunswick. Communist Victory
 13 Supplement. Germany, France, and Russia. Berlin Reflections on the Moscow Trial
 French Arm's Increased Power: German demand
 20 Violence in Germany. A Nazi Murder
 Fighting in Hamburg Parliament
 Editorial. The Hamburg Murder
 27 Austro-German Customs Union. A Political Storm in Europe
 Editorial. Austria and Germany
 Supplement. Germany's Pocket Battleships. Estimates allowed to pass
 A Nazi Conversion [the Scheringer case]

April

- 3 The Austro-German Customs Plan. Open to Discussion by the League
 [An interview with Trotsky on the Five Year Plan]
 10 German ministers invited to London
 Editorial. The German Visit
 Heavy Nazi Defeat. Domination Ended in Thuringia [collapse of Nazi-Nationalist coalition in
 Thuringia]
 Against Hitler. Berlin Revolt Suppressed [the revolt of Stennes and the Berlin Storm
 Troops]
 17 The German visit to England. Vain Fantasies in the French press
 Editorial. Conditions in Germany
 The Weimar Experiment. A Rather Inglorious Failure [an analysis of the experiment in Nazi
 government in Thuringia and of the methods of Frick, Nazi Minister of Interior]
 Cartoon from the Munich 'Jugend' showing "King Adolf I" and the proclamation of the "Third
 Empire" at Weimar
 24 Germany's status at Geneva.
 Dyeworks Espionage. German Communist Statement
 Referendum in Prussia. Response to Petition

May

- 1 Crisis in German Fascism. Cartoons from the Moscow 'Isvestia' and the Amsterdam
 'Notenkraker' on the recent split in Nazi ranks
 Austro-German Customs Plan
 8 Labour Day Abroad [reports from Berlin, Madrid, Paris, Moscow on Labour Day celebrations]
 Letters. Two letters supporting the report on 'German Political Brutality'
 15 German Relations with France. Austro-German Plan the Supreme Test
 The Austrian Credit Bank [collapse of the Kreditanstalt]
 22 Austro-German Union. Reference to International Court
 Fascist Gains in Germany [election results in the state of Oldenburg]
 The Pocket Battleship
 29 The German Visit to England. Frank Exchange of Views
 Patriotism in Germany. New Note of Mockery [memorial for those who died in occupation of
 the Ruhr 1923]
 German Attacks on Dr. Curtius. The Austro-German Union Plan

June

- 5 German Minister's Visit. Discussions at Chequers
 The Stahlhelm Parade. 150,000 march past the ex-Crown Prince
 Financial Experts in Vienna. Stable Currency Guaranteed [remedial measures following the
 collapse of the Kreditanstalt]

- Supplement. Poverty and Luxury in Berlin. A Menacing Outlook
 12 The Anglo-German Conversations at Chequers. Interpretations of a vague communique
 Return to Berlin. The Chancellor's hostile reception
 Emergency Tax in Germany. Salaries and Incomes Cut
 19 German Cabinet's Escape. Emergency Decree to be modified
 German Reparation Policy. Revision within Young Plan
 26 Germany Saved. American Offer a Sudden Relief [the Hoover moratorium and the financial
 crisis in Germany]

July

- 3 Uproar at Berlin University. Attack by Nazi Students
 Communists Active in Berlin. A Victory in Brunswick
 10 German Views. Saving the Five-Year Plan [German reactions to Stalin's latest speech]
 17 Grave Financial Crisis in Germany. Emergency Measures in Force
 An Eventful Week in Germany. The Situation Day by Day
 [Recommendations of Macmillan Report on Finance and Industry]
 Comment and Criticism. Editorial comment on the economic crisis in Germany
 Photograph showing the 'Danat' bank guarded by mounted police after it had closed down
 24 Little Relief for Germany. Decision of the London Conference
 Dangers in Germany. Political passions rising to fever heat [on the Communist threat to vote
 with the National Opposition in the Prussian Referendum]
 Comment and Criticism. A Temporary Solution. Editorial on how to restore confidence in
 Germany
 31 British Ministers in Berlin
 Renewed Crisis in Germany [German fears of inflation and the run on the savings banks]

August

- 7 Confidence Returning in Germany. The Referendum in Prussia
 The Prussian Referendum. Aims of the National Opposition
 Democracy in Europe. Mr. Gooch and the Outlook in Germany
 14 The Referendum in Prussia. Failure of the Dissolution Campaign
 France and Germany. Effect of the Prussian Referendum
 21 World Bankers and Germany
 France and Germany. A Change of Tone in the Paris Press
 Bankers Report on Germany
 28 [A National Government in Office in Britain]

September

- 4 Disarming Berlin
 11 Decision of the Hague Court against the Austro-German Customs Union
 Land settlement scheme for the unemployed in Germany
 Hamburg and the Elbe
 German Youth Hostels
 18 Dr. Curtius speaks out at Geneva
 Anti-Semitic Riot in Berlin
 25 [Britain suspends Gold Standard]
 The Pound in Berlin and Paris. German Fears of Inflation

October

- 2 Editorial. A Warning from Germany [Nazi and Communist gains in the Hamburg elections]
French Minister's Visit to Berlin. Goodwill but Meagre Results
Germany's Political Crisis. Nazi Victory in Hamburg
- 9 Rule by Decree in Germany. Tighter censorship and income limits [Bruning's new cabinet]
Editorial. Whither Germany?
Socialist Split in Germany [creation of German Socialist Labour Party]
- 16 German Chancellor hits out. Socialist support for Cabinet assured
Report of the Harzburg Front rally
- 23 The Position in Germany. Bruning Cabinet's Majority
- 30 [Results of British General Election]
Foreign Views on the Election [German reaction to British election result]

November

- 6 [The New Parliament Assembles in Britain]
Political Extremism in Germany [Nazi gains in the Mecklenburg elections]
- 13 Propaganda in the German Army. Ministry's statement
Nazi Leaders sent to Gaol [Storm Troops leader gaoled for organising the anti-Semitic riot of 12 September]
Increases in Germany: Devalued Pound's Effect [German unemployment reaches 4,622,000]
- 20 Germany and Young Plan: Paris negotiations
Political Murder In Germany. Frequency Alarming General Public
More gains for Hitler [Nazi and Communist gains in the Hesse elections]
- 27 Germany and the Young Plan. Agreement with France. 'Cuts' All Round
Germany's Debts to Bankers
Political Crime in Germany
Germany's Financial Plight: Action under Young Plan
Germany's Appeal [German government announces it cannot pay reparations]

December

- 4 The Nazi Plot in Hesse: Inquiry Ordered
Editorial. The Condition of the German People
Letters. Wage Reductions in Germany
Germany's Private Debts: Chances of Long-Term Credit
Two More German Banks Close
- 11 A Challenge to Hitler [Bruning's radio broadcast explaining the latest economies and threatening martial law if Hitler's party continued to incite civil war]
More German Unemployed [German unemployment reaches 5,057,000]
Herr Hitler's Announcement [Hitler promises to repudiate reparations]
- 18 Germany reaches the limit: No further economies possible
Nazi Reply to Dr. Bruning: To Share Power or Risk Defeat
German Socialists to fight Hitlerism
- 25 Germany's Ability to Pay: Conference in January at Lausanne?
A German Realist [Review of Alfred Doblin's novel *Alexanderplatz*]

Labour Monthly
A Magazine of International Labour

Edited by R. Palme Dutt, *Labour Monthly* was an organ of the British Communist Party. By calling itself 'A Magazine of International Labour', it tried to avoid the impression of being a party organ and to reach a wider audience than the party faithful. Nevertheless, its contributors included the familiar names of British communism in the 1930s - Harry Pollitt, Allen Hutt, Maurice Dobb, R. Page Arnot etc - and many issues carried Stalin's writings and speeches. Its political-ideological line was never less than completely orthodox. It was critical of the trade union leadership and the Labour Government of 1929-31 which it began to characterise as 'social-facist'. Nevertheless, it stood up for the class interests of labour during the economic crisis as the MacDonald-Snowden partnership prepared cuts in unemployment benefit.

It was on Sraffa's advice that Gramsci agreed to subscribe to it at the start of 1931. In July he wrote to Tatiana: "I hope Nino is getting *Labour Monthly* regularly: the articles are very uneven in quality but the editor's Notes of the Month are always excellent. In the July issue there is an article on historical materialism by Prince Mirsky which has a certain curiosity value since the author who lives as an emigre in London and was once an officer in Wrangel's army, has only begun to take an interest in these problems in the last couple of years". Sraffa's high opinion of Palme Dutt's notes now seems surprising since the editor's undoubted literary flair no longer disguises as it once did the rigidly orthodox standpoint which underpinned his monthly analyses of the national and international situation in 1931. Whether or not Sraffa agreed with Palme Dutt's position, however, the attempt to provide a consistent analysis of the current situation and to place it in a broad international perspective was intellectually worthwhile and respectable.

We do not know if Gramsci received *Labour Monthly* regularly. Since it was a magazine of communist "political agitation" (although in a foreign language), it is very surprising that he received it at all. However, the success of Gramsci's recent petition to Mussolini, whose decision effectively overrode Rocco's Ministry of Justice and the prison governor, may have opened a loophole in the prison censorship by creating uncertainty or confusion. It was no coincidence that the loophole was soon closed by Rocco's new penal code published on 27 June 1931 which introduced an official list of permissible reviews *excluding foreign-language*

publications. (see the letters of Sraffa to Tatiana, 11 July 1931, and Gramsci to Tatiana, 27 July 1931, seeking the text of the new regulation). The question is important not because of the few articles on Germany in the magazine (on the financial crisis), but because of the serialisation of Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question*.

We know for certain that Gramsci received the issues for July and October containing D.S. Mirsky's two articles (however, see Valentino Gerratana's discussion of these articles in *Gramsci. Problemi di metodo* p.147-153), but we can see that these were the only two issues for the second half of 1931 *which did not include instalments of Stalin's work* and it can plausibly be inferred from this that the issues containing these were intercepted by the prison censor. However, there is more doubt about the issue for March 1931 containing the text of Stalin's famous speech in February in which he articulated his vision of Russian history. This may have got through the loophole before it was closed in June. Gramsci's critical judgement of Stalin in private conversation with Riboldi at that time, ie, that he had "the nationalist mentality which is expressed in the cult of the 'Great Russians' ", may have been formed on the basis of having read this latest speech. This remains a *possibility* rather than a probability, but the dates coincide quite closely (see thesis pp's143-144)

NM = Notes of the Month, by the editor.

1931

January

NM. 1931 and War
 Garfield Williams: South Wales and the Miners' Strike
 Harry Pollitt: The Communist Party and the Whitechapel By-Election
 William Rust: The Mosley Manifesto
 Hugo Rathbone: Parasitic Decay of British Imperialism
 N.Lenin: The Meaning of Militant Materialism
 The World of Labour. Spain

February

NM. Either - Or
 Shapurji Saklatvala: The Indian Round Table Conference
 Tom Mann: Impressions of South Wales
 R.Bridgeman: The Fight against Imperialism
 William Joss: Crisis - Conflict - Counter-Offensive
 George Padmore: British Finance-Capital in West Africa
 L.Sharkey: Strike Struggles in Australia
 The World of Labour. International Miners. Germany
 Book Review [of G.T.Grinko: *The Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Union*]

- March** NM. The International Situation
J.Stalin: We must become Masters of Technique
 William Rust: The Workers' Counter Offensive
 H.Lee: The Cotton Weavers' Struggle and Victory
 J.Tanner: Engineering Workers, Be Prepared!
 Ben Francis: Lessons of the Strike in South Wales
 V.I.Lenin. In Memory of the Paris Commune
 Book Reviews.
- April** NM. Left Socialism and Communism
 Harry Pollitt: On the Eve of the Charter Convention
 Fred Douglas: Organising 'Slave Labour' in Britain
 Allen Hutt: Social Democracy and War on the Soviet Union
 G.Padmore: Forced Labour in Africa
 Vic Farrant: British Workers and the World 'Spartakiade'
 Book Reviews.
- May** NM. India
 Hugo Rathbone. The ILP and 'Moscow' Methods
 John A. Mahon: The Workers' Charter Convention
 'Railworker': Revolt on the Railways
 Allen Hutt: 'Disarmament' and the Coming War
 Lieutenant D.Scheringer: From Fascism to Communism
 V.Chattopadhyaya: The Indian National Congress
 G.Padmore: Labour Imperialism and East Africa
 Book Reviews.
- June** NM. War Manoeuvres
 William Rust: Which Way out of the Crisis?
 Bernard Houghton: Indian Mill-Owners Cry Halt!
 Dan Richards: Recent Events in Australia
 Edmund Frow: The Attack on the Engineers
 G.Padmore: Labour Imperialism and East Africa
J.Stalin: Marxism and the National Problem
 World of Labour. Burma
 Book Review.
- July** Frontispiece. The *Labour Monthly* in the May Day Demonstration, 1931
 An Appeal
 NM. 1921 - 1931
 Messages of Greeting
 A.Loovsky: The Struggle for the Masses in Britain
 E.Varga: British Economy and the Task of the *Labour Monthly*
 R.Page Arnot: Ten Years
 W.Rust: A Decade of British Workers' Struggle
 Hugo Rathbone: Ten Years of Economic Crisis
 W.Gallagher: The Royal Commission on Unemployment
 Joseph Southall: Socialism versus the Labour Government
 Marx on Kautsky (with facsimile of Marx's letter)
D.S.Mirsky: Bourgeois History and Historical Materialism
 Book Reviews.
 Cartoons

- August** NM. World Crisis and War
 Harry Pollitt: August 1st, 1931
 Maurice Dobb: The Crisis in Germany
 Friedrich Engels: World War and Proletarian Revolution
 Ben Francis: The Mining Situation Today
 George Pennington: British Railways and Workers Struggle
J.Stalin. Marxism and the National Problem
 Books Reviews
- September** NM. Towards National Coalition
 JL: The Bankruptcy of German Capitalism
 P.Glading: The Metal Workers Face Fresh Struggles
 Left Wing Socialism and Communism
 - Thomas Murray: The ILP and the Labour Party
 - 'S': Where does the ILP stand?
 Allen Hutt: The Congress of Vienna
 A.Lunacharsky: Bernard Shaw
J.Stalin: Marxism and the National Problem
 Book Reviews
- October** NM. The Great Turning-Point
 Harry Pollitt: The Charter Fight against all Cuts
 Karl Radek: British and American Finance Capital
 H.Rathbone: British Imperialism at Bay
 Shapurji Saklatvala: The Second Round-Table Conference
 Tom Lincoln: Aerial Supremacy
D.S.Mirsky: The Philosophical Discussion in the CPSU In 1930-31
- November** NM. The Mass Struggle after the Election
 J.Shields: The Struggle and the Factories
 H.Rathbone: Left Wing Socialism and Communism
 - Money and the ILP
 E.Kolman: Marx and Darwin
J.Stalin: Marxism and the National Problem
 The World of Labour. Britain - Germany - France - Italy
- December** Our Conference
 NM. New Problems
 George Hardy: British Workers and the War in Manchuria
 Left Wing Socialism and Communism
 - William Rust: The Opposition in the ILP
 - B.J.Boothroyd: The ILP Waits to See
 E.Woolley: Organising the Fight against the Means Test
 A.Macgregor: Tariffs and the Working Class
 K.S.Bhat: The Workers' Welfare League of India
J.Stalin: Marxism and the National Problem

Corriere della Sera

Under the new penal code of 1931, prisoners were allowed to read a daily newspaper which had been denied Gramsci since starting his sentence at Turi. He took out a subscription to *Corriere della Sera* for the last quarter of 1931, which was then renewed until June 1932 when he abruptly and unaccountably cancelled it, probably at the order of the prison governor. It was not restored until Gramsci was transferred from Turi to Formia in 1934.

The *Corriere* was edited by Ugo Ojetti who was appointed after Luigi Albertini was removed in 1925 for his handling of the revelations implicating Mussolini in the murder of Matteotti. Gramsci often mentions Ojetti in the notes where he is included satirically in the pantheon of third-rate writers known as "the grandchildren of Father Bresciani". His dim view of the technical standards of the *Corriere* under Ojetti's editorship is recorded in the letters where he complains about the lack of continuity in its reporting of the creation of the Istituto Mobiliare Italiano in November 1931.

The continuity of its news reports from Germany in the first half of 1932 could not be faulted, however. There was seldom a day when it did not carry news of the latest developments either on the front page or the back page under the rubric 'Recentissime'. This phase of the German crisis was densely packed with events, including the two rounds of presidential elections (March-April), the ban on the Storm Troops (April), the elections in Prussia and other states (April), the dismissal of Brüning (May) and the appointment of Papen (June). During the presidential elections the *Corriere* collaborated in reshaping Hitler's image from the party agitator to the national statesman. The reports from its Berlin correspondents were flavoured with empathy for their fellow German fascists. The stories carried details of the intense 'behind the scenes' machinations of the leading actors, giving the impression that the reporters had privileged access to the ruling circle. Gramsci frequently cites the *feature articles* in notes written in 1932 but completely avoids the political reports preferring, for example, to use factual data on the German elections taken from the periodicals.

At Formia, Gramsci was reading the *Corriere* at the time of the dramatic events of the summer of 1934 - the murderous suppression of the so-called Rohm plot on 30 June, the death of Hindenburg on 2 August and Hitler's assumption of the presidential power.

Rubric: R = Recentissime [back page]

1931

October

- 2 Scioperi di minatori in Germania
- 3 Gli 84 anni di Maresciallo Hindenburg
- 4 Battaglia contro Curtius
- 7 Oggi il Governo tedesco si dimettera
- 8 Un Regime d'eccezione instaurato in Germania
- 9 Difficile soluzione della crisi tedesca. Bruning avrebbe perduto il favore di Hindenburg
- 10 La formazione del nuovo Gabinetto tedesco
- 11 I capi socialnazionali ricevuti da Hindenburg [comments of Berliner Tageblatt on Hindenburg's "serious error" in receiving Hitler on the same day as the Harzburg rally of the Right Opposition]
- 13 Bruning si presenta oggi al Reichstag. Vivace polemiche intorno al discorso di Schacht
- 14 Il discorso-programma di Bruning al Reichstag
- 15 Le Destre contro il Gabinetto Bruning
- 16 La sorte del Governo Bruning sara decisa oggi. Hitler replica al discorso del Cancelliere
- 17 Il Gabinetto Bruning salvo per 25 voti. La mozione di sfiducia respinta. Il Reichstag aggiornata
- 20 Grandi si reca a Berlino. L'attesa in Berlino
[Further reports on Grandi's visit to Berlin 21,22,24,27,28]
- 28 [First results in British general election, 27 Oct]
- 29 Hitler e i giovani [reports parade of Hitler Youth at Brunswick and reflects on Hitler's appeal to youth]

November

- 3 Un Piano tedesco per la sistemazione dei debiti
- 4 Primo contatto franco-tedesco per la revisione del Piano Young
- 5 R. I 'punti fermi' francesi per discutere la revisione del Piano Young con la Germania. Bruning tratta a Berlino con l'ambasciatore di Francia
- 6 Dichiarazioni di Bruning al centro cattolico
- 7 Difficolta di un accordo
- 8 R. Studenti social-nazionali contro insegnanti ebrei
- 11 R. L'inchiesta finanziaria in Germania. Le divergenze sui lavori della Commissione, non ancora risolte fra Briand e von Hoesch
- 13 R. La politica economica del Duce desta unanimi consensi in Germania
- 14 Un discorso di Bruning: 'La Germania a una svolta decisiva'
- 17 R. I risultati delle elezioni in Assia [results of election in Hesse]
- 18 Le trattative franco-tedesche concluse. Draconiane misure in Germania contro la 'fuga' delle divise estere
- 19 R. La Solvibilita del Reich. Von Hoesch sottopone a Laval la formula tedesca per l'inchiesta
- 20 Corriere berlinese
R. La Germania chiede la nuova inchiesta sulla capacita finanziaria del Reich
- 21 R. Gli scandali finanziari in Germania
- 24 Modesto bilancio dell'attivit  del Comitato economico tedesco
- 26 Dope le parole, l'azione
R. La lotta dei partiti in Germania. Severing contro gli hitleriani
- 27 R. Un comunicato dei social-nazionali sul piano degli hitleriani d'Assia
- 28 Coro internazionale di proteste per il pugno sul tavolo di Laval
R. Gli hitleriani di Assia, difficilmente saranno perseguibile

December

- 1 Corriere berlinese
R. I comunisti offrono un'alleanza ai socialisti e ai Reichsbanner [success of Nazis in election at Birkenfeld. Communist appeal to Socialists for a bloc against the Right]
- 2 La Germania e il protezionismo inglese. Dichiarazioni di Luther
- 4 R. La crisi economica e finanziaria internazionale
- 5 R. Una 'pace natalizia' in Germania. Brüning e la social-democrazia
[reports of Rosenberg's visit to London and Hitler's press conference to British and American press giving his views on German relations with France]
- 6 R. Rosenberg . Brüning replichera a Hitler [Brüning's radio broadcast in reply to Hitler's recent press conference]. Due deputati hitleriani in Italia
- 8 La situazione finanziaria della Germania
R. I fermenti dei socialisti tedeschi per i provvedimenti di Brüning [results of communal elections in Wurtemberg. Brüning announces cut in salaries of all public employees]
- 9 Nuove misure tedesche contro la crisi [Brüning's radio broadcast explaining the latest economies. Threatens to declare a 'state of seige' against whoever attacks the State. German unemployment reaches 5,057,000 in November]
- 10 Corriere berlinese
R. Le ordinanze tedesche osteggiate dai gruppi radicali
- 11 R. Dichiarazioni di Dietrich alla Commissione parlamentare
- 12 La crisi economica e le ripercussioni politiche. Il dissidio Brüning-Hitler
- 13 R. Un messaggio di Hitler al popolo americano
- 15 Tre interviste in Germania.
Il Fermento nel Reich. Cruenti conflitti in parecchi centri
- 16 Il Comitato economico franco-tedesco inizia i lavori a Berlino
R. La tesi tedesca riaffermata dal Ministero della Reichswehr
- 17 Hitler replica a Brüning, dichiarandosi pronto ad assumere il Governo [text of Hitler's reply to Brüning's radio broadcast of 8 December]
- Corriere berlinese
- 24 Natale in Germania
R. Le conclusioni del Comitato consultivo del Piano Young. L'accordo tra delegati nel giudicare la situazione tedesca.
- 29 La Destra tedesca ha fretta

1932

January

- 1 L'appello del vecchio Presidente
- 2 La solidarietà fra gli Stati auspicata dal Maresciallo Hindenburg [Hindenburg's new year speech]
- 3 La condizionata adesione della Francia alla Conferenza di Losanna. Critiche varie della stampa parigiana al discorso di Hindenburg
Momento di attesa in Germania
- 5 Gli aiuti alla Germania. Polemiche intorno alla proroga della moratoria Hoover. Speranze in Germania
- 6 Le trattative finanziarie di Berlino. Il 'congelamento' dei crediti privati tedeschi prolungato di un anno - I banchieri inglesi per una soluzione provvisoria
Intensa attività in Germania
R. A Berlino si discute nuovamente un'intesa Brüning-Hitler
- 7 Probabilità di un accordo per i debiti privati tedeschi. Fervore di discussioni sulla necessità di risolvere definitivamente il problema riparazioni
La grave crisi della marina tedesca. Le triste condizioni del porto di Amburgo
- 8 Brüning chiede l'appoggio di Hitler per il prolungamento dei poteri di Hindenburg

- 9 L'attesa risposta di Hitler
- 10 Brüning dichiara che la Germania non pagherà le riparazioni. Viva impressione a Londra e a Parigi. Pronta replica di Flandin
- 12 Hitler e Hugenburg contro la proposta Brüning. La rielezione di Hindenburg
- 13 Preoccupazioni a Berlino per il mancato rinnovo dei crediti
- 14 Il dilemma degli hitleriani. Hindenburg sì, ma Brüning no
- 15 Senso di sollievo in Germania
R. Inquietudini tedesche
- 17 Attesa in Germania [hopes for Lausanne Conference]
- 19 I cavilli della Francia. Quanto ha pagato la Germania
- 20 L'intransigenza della Francia riaffermata da Laval. Penosa impressione a Berlino
- 21 La Germania rifiuta una semplice proroga della moratoria
- 22 Vive deplorazioni per il rinvio della Conferenza di Losanna. La Germania ribadisce che non pagherà
- 23 Tentativi per una soluzione provvisoria delle Riparazioni. Attività diplomatica in Germania
- 24 Vana e travagliata ricerca di un compromesso per le Riparazioni
- 26 Una moratoria totale di un anno sarebbe proposta dalla Francia
- 27 Persiste il disaccordo anglo-francese. 'Da Versailles alla crisi di '21' [start of series of articles on the history of German reparations in immediate post-war period]
- 28 La difficoltà di un accordo tra Parigi e Londra. 'L'occupazione della Ruhr'
- 29 Il lavoro in Germania per la rielezione di Hindenburg
- 30 La Francia e i pagamenti tedeschi. Nuove manifestazioni d'intransigenza ufficiale. 'Il Piano Dawes'
- 31 Una candidatura Hitler alla presidenza del Reich?

February

- 1 [Opening of Disarmament Conference in Geneva. Further reports on 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12]
- 3 Storia delle Riparazioni: 'Il Piano Young'
- 4 Scetticismo a Berlino [towards the Disarmament Conference]
- 6 Fra elezioni e riparazioni: Una catalisi a rovescio
La candidatura di Hindenburg verrebbe appoggiata anche dalle Destre
- 10 La Germania chiede che tutti si mettano al suo livello. Le destre tedesche insoddisfatte
- 11 [Italian proposal of renunciation of all 'aggressive' weapons of war welcomed in Berlin]
R. Gli Elementi d'acciaio ricevuti da Hindenburg
- 13 Il gioco delle Destre tedesche per tentare di rovesciare Brüning [the Right Opposition offers to support Hindenburg on condition that he drops Brüning]
- 14 [Reparations conference fixed for June]
R. Critiche della stampa pangermanista alla decisione per le riparazioni
- 16 Hindenburg si ripresenta contro i deliberati dei gruppi nazionali
- 19 Un Principe Hohenzollern contro Hindenburg?
- 23 Hitler candidato contro Hindenburg
- 24 Dusterberg per gli 'Elementi d'acciaio'
- 26 Brüning difende al Reichstag
- 27 Una maggioranza di 25 voti per Brüning

March

- 3 I 5 Candidati alla presidenza del Reich
- 10 Hindenburg o Hitler?
- 11 Il discorso di Hindenburg ai Tedeschi
- 12 L'appello di Brüning per Hindenburg
- 13 La giornata storica della Germania
- 15 Hitler decide a continuare la lotta
- 16 Come Hitler si prepara alla battaglia per le elezioni della Dieta prussiana

- 17 Il lavoro dei Partiti tedeschi in vista delle prossime battaglie
- 18 Le sedi dei nazional-socialisti perquisite dalla polizia in Prussia
- 19 Le perquisizioni alle sedi dei social-nazionali
- 22 I socialisti contro Groener. Nessun fronte delle destre per la Dieta
- 27 Un accordo Severing-Hitler per i documenti sequestrati
- 30 Hitler si prepara ai nuovi cimenti. Un appello di Hugenburg ai partiti borghesi

April

- 1 Hindenburg, Hitler e Thalmann si contenderanno la Presidenza del Reich
- 3 L'ex-Kronprinz interviene in favore di Hitler
- 5 La polizia contro i social-nazionali. La instancabile attività di Hitler
- 6 La persecuzione di Severing contro gli hitleriani
- 8 Uno dei figli dell'ex-Kaiser candidato hitleriano alla Dieta prussiana
- 9 L'accanita lotta elettorale tedesca
- 12 I manifesti di Hindenburg e di Hitler al popolo tedesco. Viva impressione per la forte votazione ottenuta dai social-nazionali [result of second round of presidential election]
- 13 Un colpo di forza di Braun all'agonizzante Dieta di Prussia
- 14 Lo scioglimento dei reparti social-nazionali ordinato con decreto di Hindenburg
- 15 Dignitosa e ferma protesta di Hitler
- 16 Lo scioglimento dei Reichsbanner chiesto dai social-nazionali
- 17 Hindenburg invita Groener a proporgli misure contro le formazioni militari di tutti i partiti
- 19 Gli attacchi delle destre a Groener. Nessuna decisione per i Reichsbanner
- 21 Il prossimo voto per le Diete tedesche. Le indagini sul "fronte rosso"
- 23 Le elezioni alle Diete tedesche. L'importanza del voto in Prussia
- 24 La Prussia elegge oggi la nuova Dieta. Gli hitleriani alla conquista della maggioranza
- 26 Le conseguenze della grande vittoria di Hitler. La gravità della disfatta socialdemocratica e il disordine dei partiti di maggioranza. Gli estremi tentativi per ritardare l'arrivo degli hitleriani al potere [results of Prussian and state elections]
- 27 Dopo la vittoria di Hitler. I social-nazionali chiedono a Hindenburg lo scioglimento anticipato del Reichstag
- 28 Collaborazione Brüning-Hitler?
- 29 Imminente inizio a Berlino delle trattative fra Centro e hitleriani
- 30 Difficile situazione del Gabinetto Brüning

May

- 1 R. La situazione in Germania. Brüning da Hindenburg un prestito interno per lavori pubblici?
- 3 R. In Germania. Nervosismo dei circoli militari per le tergiversazioni del Centro
R. L'ex Kaiser si dinteressa degli avvenimenti politici tedeschi
- 4 Bismarck e Mussolini. Due epoche, due condottieri di popoli
R. Il Gabinetto Brüning in crisi. Le dimissioni del Ministro dell'Economia Warmbold.
I generali della Reichswehr contro Groener? Imminente scioglimento di tutte le organizzazioni a carattere militare
- 5 R. Misure di rigore in Germania contro le organizzazioni paramilitari
- 6 R. Una querela di Hitler contro il ministro Treviranus
- 7 R. Il Ministro tedesco dell'Economia sostituito col segretario Trendelenberg
- 8 R. Il Reichstag si riapre domani. Nessun approccio tra Hitler e Centro
- 10 R. Berlino non crede a mutamenti della politica francese
- 11 R. Movimentata seduta al Reichstag. Il programma hitleriano di ricostruzione esposta da Strasser. Accuse a Groener per lo scioglimento dei "reparti d'attacco"
- 13 Una giornata di drammatici eventi a Berlino. La sessione rinviata "sine die", in seguito ad una clamorosa incidente fra hitleriani e socialisti. Hindenburg congeda Groener. I generali della Reichswehr per gli hitleriani. Difficilissima situazione di Brüning
- 14 La crescente pressione degli hitleriani porterà a una prossimo scioglimento del Reichstag

- 15 Estremi tentativi di Brüning per rinviare la crisi. Vivi allarmi in Francia per la caduta di Brüning
 17 Ammirazione in Germania per la sagace politica finanziaria italiana
 18 L'attesa per le decisioni di Hindenburg. Varii sforzi di Brüning per salvare il Gabinetto
 19 Brüning rinuncia al tentativo di risolvere parzialmente la crisi
 20 R. Dichiarazione di battaglia di Hitler al Centro.
 "I social-nazionali non vincoleranno la politica della nuova Germania ad un qualsiasi coalizione"
 [reports of stories in the Nazi Der Angriff and the nationalist Borsen Zeitung]
 [Hitler's speech to the Prussian deputies on the eve of the reconvening of the Prussian Diet]
 21 R. La lotta fra hitleriani e Centro si delinea lunga e aspra.
 22 R. Nuovo monito degli hitleriani perché Brüning lasci il Governo [reports story in Der Angriff]
 25 Le complicazioni della crisi politica tedesca. Il ricorso alle decisioni di Hindenburg
 26 R. [Opening of Prussian Diet]. Un hitleriano Presidente della Dieta prussiana.
 Mischia furibonda nell'aula tra comunisti e social-nazionali. Numerosi feriti e contusi. La seduta
 sospesa
 27 La situazione tedesca. Il dilemma di Hindenburg
 Ammirazione in Germania per il genio politico di Mussolini
 28 R. Hindenburg sosterrrebbe Brüning fin dopo la Conferenza di Losanna
 R. Una proroga della moratoria Hoover considerata impossibile in Germania
 29 R. I disordini comunisti in Germania. Vittime in Renania e ad Amburgo.
 31 Under the heading 'L'ondata social-nazionalista in Germania': Il Gabinetto Brüning costretto a
 dimettersi. Hindenburg ha un lungo colloquio con Hitler

June

- 1 Nuova Germania [editorial]
 Hindenburg incarica von Papen di formare il Governo. Espediente provvisorio. L'atteggiamento
 di attesa di Hitler
 2 Il nuovo Gabinetto tedesco. Von Papen alla Cancelleria. L'opposizione dei cattolici e il veto
 dei tedesco-nazionali. Probabile scioglimento del Reichstag
 3 Il Gabinetto von Papen completato
 4 R. Il Reichstag viene sciolto oggi. Le elezioni a luglio. I punti fermi di Hitler
 5 Hindenburg ha sciolto ieri il Reichstag. La dichiarazione ministeriale di von Papen

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Pre-Prison Writings
Periodicals and Newspapers
Selected Works of Croce
Selected Historical and Critical Works
Selected Works on German History

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Quaderno 19. Risorgimento Italiano, introduzione e note di Corrado Vivanti (Giulio Einaudi, 1977).

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(with abbreviations used)

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Socialismo e Fascismo. L'Ordine Nuovo, 1921-1922 (Giulio Einaudi, 1970)

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The numbered list of 26 periodicals was compiled and forwarded by Gramsci in his second petition to Mussolini in October 1931 (QCIV p. 2376 and p. 2391). For a profile of the 'political' periodicals with details of their 'German' contents , see Appendix II.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Periodicals | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>La Nuova Italia</i> 2. <i>L'Italia che scrive</i> 3. <i>Rassegna settimanale della stampa estera</i> 4. <i>Nuova Antologia</i> 5. <i>Gerarchia</i> 6. <i>Critica Fascista</i> 7. <i>Riforma sociale</i> 8. <i>La Critica</i> 9. <i>Civiltà Cattolica</i> 10. <i>Pegaso</i> 11. <i>La Cultura</i> 12. <i>Educazione Fascista</i> 13. <i>Nuova Rivista Storica</i> 14. <i>Marzocco</i> 15. <i>Italia Letteraria</i> 16. <i>Das deutsche Buch</i> 17. <i>Nimm und Lies!</i> 18. <i>Labour Monthly</i> 19. <i>Manchester Guardian Weekly</i> 20. <i>Politica</i> 21. <i>Les Nouvelles Littéraires</i> 22. <i>Nouvelle Revue Française</i> 23. <i>Nuovi Studi di Economia, Diritto, Politica</i> 24. <i>La Critique Sociale</i> 25. <i>Leonardo</i> 26. <i>Problemi del Lavoro</i> |
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Newspapers	<i>Corriere della Sera</i>
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Selected Works of Benedetto Croce

Gramsci "settles accounts" with Croce in *Notebook 10* (now translated by David Boothman in FSPN pp's 326-475). Croce's philosophical idealism is fundamental to understanding Gramsci's epistemology. The following works are particularly important, although his critique is more comprehensive in scope. All are published by Laterza, Bari. The dates of the first editions are followed by the dates of the editions used here.

Materialismo Storico ed Economia Marxista (1900, 10th ed., 1961)

Saggio sullo Hegel (1906, 5th ed., 1967)

Filosofia dell Spirito III. Filosofia della Pratica. Economia ed Etica (1908, 9th ed., 1973)

Cultura e Vita Morale (1913, 3rd ed., 1955)

Conversazione Critiche. Prima serie (1915, 4th ed., 1950)

Filosofia dello Spirito IV. Teoria e Storia della Storiografia (1917, 9th ed., 1966)

Conversazioni Critiche. Seconda serie (1918, 1950)

L'Italia dal 1914 al 1918. Pagine sulla Guerra (1919, 4th ed., 1965)

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Elementi di Politica (1924)

Etica e Politica (1931), combining *Frammenti di Etica* and *Elementi di Politica*, (4th ed., 1956)

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Selected Works on German History

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