

**GRAMSCI'S CONCEPTION OF EVERYDAY
POLITICAL PRACTICE : ¹¹
A STUDY OF HIS FACTORY COUNCIL WRITINGS**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the Dissertation entitled
GRAMSCI'S CONCEPTION OF EVERDAY POLITICAL PRACTICE:
A STUDY OF HIS FACTORY COUNCIL WRITINGS, submitted
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has not been previously submitted for any other degree
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CHAPTER - IINTRODUCTION

This is an attempt to study certain aspects of the political thought of Antonio Gramsci, one of the most prominent Marxist thinkers of this century. In the recent years there is an enormous growth of literature on Gramsci in the West. He is looked upon as an intellectual source to provide answers to the questions facing the working class movements in the West and also to understand the nature of the State and relations of domination, in the advanced capitalist societies. An interest in a thinker and his thought is largely shaped by the concerns of a particular age, to discover possible clues or answers to the problems facing it. Historically a parallel can be drawn between Gramsci's concerns and those of ours. Gramsci wrote against the backdrop of the first world war and developed his theory in opposition to the degeneration of Marxism into a positivistic variation. And our concerns are shaped, in a negative sense, by the distorted developments in the international working class movement- the bureaucratic, economic deviations.

The non-materialisation of revolution in the Western capitalist societies despite the existence of the mature material conditions calls for a theoretical explanation. Here in lies the significance of Gramsci's theory of hegemony which provides a coherent explanation of the failure of revolution in the West as a result of the process of internalisation of the bourgeois social relations in the everyday life of the masses in capitalism. Besides this, the revolutionary strategy formulated and developed by Gramsci on the basis of the analysis of the nature and development of capitalism and the bourgeois State in the imperialist phase still broadly holds true for the west. In other words, the strategic elaborations of Gramsci and the conceptual structures and analyses at the base of his theorisation provide us with penetrating insights into the nature of bourgeois domination, which are essential for formulating the revolutionary strategy and visualising concretely the nature of the mode of revolutionary articulation and transition.

Gramsci also becomes significant for the fact that he presents a comprehensive conception of revolution, basing on the analysis of bourgeois domination as an

everyday experience. Identifying the bourgeois State and domination ~~with~~ a social relation, he defines revolution as a negation of the domination in everyday life of masses in capitalism and also as the elaboration of socialist relations. The proletarian class would be able to become a historical force, according to Gramsci, by transcending the alienated activity in capitalism by organising itself into a collectivity. This presents a highly complex conceptual interrelationships. The proletarian class would become a historical force only through an organisation which represents them as a class of producers as against the bourgeois class. This contradiction between producer and oppressor is the central theme in the Gramscian conception of factory council. Factory council as an organisation unifying the entire working class living in the factory regardless of the political and religious adherence and union affiliation, facilitates the process of workers' ^{politicization} Factory council as a representative institution of the workers, facilitates their democratic participation ~~there-~~ by ensuring their mutual education. In this, Gramsci discovers the answer to the negation of the world of

bourgeois everyday life. As long as the worker leads a particularistic existence, he never realises his potentiality, but only acquires I-consciousness. Only through a collectivity, he becomes an effective force and thereby succeeds in translating his potentiality into actuality. This is essentially a political question. Because politics is a mediation which relates individual action to that of a larger collective action. This is a central question in the conception of revolution. This is to say that the conception of proletarian revolution determines the nature of political practice which in turn determines the transformation of the particular, alienated individual with 'I-consciousness' into an Individual with 'We-consciousness'*. The solidarity or unity of the workers is essential for the realisation of the proletarian revolution. This necessitates the mediation of politics only through which, it is possible to organise the workers into a historical force.

With ^{these} themes in mind, we have chosen to study Gramsci's Factory council Writings, because it is here that we find a presentation of a conception of organisation, of revolution and revolutionary political practice as dialectically interrelated themes. The examination of these

*. For a discussion of particularity and Individuality; See Agnes Heller, 'Marx's Theory of Revolution and Revolutionisation of Everyday life', The Humanisation of Socialism, London, 1976

questions to understand how the actualisation of revolutionary process take place is necessary to grasp the nature of everyday political practice. The revolutionary process for realising socialism has to be initiated within capitalism by negating the bourgeois domination in everyday life and restructuring it on entirely different principles. The factory council as a revolutionary organisation is capable of unifying the workers and counterposing them to the capitalist social order.

This is the central theme of our dissertation. In order to comprehend the significance and the nature of the elaboration of this theme- the conception of everyday political practice, we shall attempt to understand the historical conjuncture of Gramsci's writings. In the second chapter, we shall deal with Gramsci's understanding of the nature of the post-war Italy. For Gramsci, the proletarian revolution was an actuality in the post-war period. He reaches this understanding as a result of his analysis of imperialism and its structural linkages whereby he identifies crisis in the Italian State, the bourgeois class and argues that objectively, this crisis has transferred the historical initiative to the working class. But the working class in its givenness- as an economic-

corporate, class can't take over this responsibility. It has to acquire the consciousness of its own historical responsibility and prepare itself to replace the bourgeoisie. Gramsci, however, argues that the factory council movement as a spontaneous one generated by the crisis in the social order as a product of these specific social condition shows the direction of history.

In the third chapter, we shall deal with^{the} question of strategy and tactics and its significance for the revolutionary political preparation to prepare the masses to seize historical initiative and dictate the course of social development. Here we shall show the significance of the proposition of 'concrete analysis of concrete situation' for the formulation of the proletarian revolutionary strategy and tactics. Gramsci differentiates 'organic' from 'conjunctural' aspects of class struggle. The nature of the organic aspect is determined on the basis of the position of the social classes in the world of production whereas 'conjunctural' is related to the nature of political forces of 'day-to-day' character. This distinction closely parallels with the distinction between 'war of position' and 'war of movement'. The former is the basis of the revolutionary strategy whereas

the later is important to frame tactical line for day-to-day political initiative. We shall attempt to show how this is important to direct the day-to-day political activity for revolutionisation.

In this chapter, in a later section, we shall attempt to elucidate Gramsci's critique of the dominant social democratic practices and trade unionism. Gramsci draws a detailed critique of the traditional working class organisations and practices contrasting them with the factory councils and shows how the former had become redundant in the post-war period. The central argument of Gramsci's critique is that the traditional working class organisations, having originating in the period of capitalist initiative have inherited the principles central to the bourgeois society. Operating on the bourgeois legality these organisations treat the worker as a commodity in the labour market. Gramsci argues that the trade union functioning as an integrative institution to the bourgeois society, never transcends economism as its practice and thereby fails to politicize the everyday struggles of the working class. The result of this is the integration of the working class into the world of bourgeois everyday life. In other words it merely reinforces

the bourgeois hegemony on the working class and maintains the fragmentation of class struggle as a concomitant to the division of labour in capitalism, organising the workers on the craft lines. Nevertheless, Gramsci maintains that trade union having originated on the bourgeois legality serves a tactical purpose of ameliorating the conditions of working in capitalism. But it can never be used as strategic means for ^{the} proletarian revolution.

In the fourth ^achapter we shall deal with the question of the proletarian revolutionary organisation, i.e, factory council; Gramsci's conception of the proletarian revolution; and the centrality of the conception of 'worker as a producer' as opposed to 'worker as a wage-earner', and the relationships between the common sense world view and the revolutionary consciousness.

CHAPTER II

THE ACTUALITY OF REVOLUTION

The 'actuality of revolution' is the liet motif of Gramsci's Ordine Nuovo writings. How does Gramsci reach this understanding ? What is its basis ? What are the different instances or levels of this exposition ? The examination of these questions is important for understanding the Political Writings (PWs) of Gramsci because it forms the basis of his Factory Council Strategy. This being the underlying current of the various conceptions and problematics elaborated in the PWs, it is important to examine it in order to appreciate the post-war revolutionary strategy articulated by Gramsci along with his critique of the theory and practice of the Second International, which has at its core an entirely different conception of class struggle, proletarian revolution and institutional structures for the proletarian State. Gramsci's understanding of the post-war situation as revolutionary shapes his reflections on these interrelated themes, thereby differentiating his approach from that of the reformist leadership of the PSI (Italian Socialist Party) and CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour) led trade unions.

Gramsci, PSI and the War

We shall begin our discussion by examining the early articles of Gramsci on the war of 1914-18 and the Russian Revolution. This is attempted not out of a mere curiosity in the chronological order but to view the thematic development of Gramsci's concerns and to see the continuity in the development and extension of the elements in this specific argument that the post-war Italy was mature for the proletarian revolution and to know how his critique of the positivist Marxism and reformist social democratic practice provided a starting point for an unhindered development of the theoretical perspective which not only succeeded in overcoming the limitations of the objectivistic and evolutionist versions of Marxism but also provided a critical explanation of this development in the history of Marxism. These early writings, when seen in relation to the Prison Writings provide us with a coherent, internally consistent body of ideas, in the sense that they not only reflect upon the questions of immediate importance but also have a bearing on the development of Marxist theory. In other words, the significance of these articles lies in the fact that they pronounce a break

with reformism and positivist Marxism and become a point of departure for the reconstruction of the dialectical materialist theory from the crisis of the Second International Marxism.

In his article entitled 'Active and Operative Neutrality' (SPW pp.6-9) Gramsci taking a position on the imperialist war, that was diametrically opposed to the PSI's attitude of absolute neutrality of neither sabotaging nor supporting the entry of Italy into the war, argued that in the beginning of the war when the situation was still hazy the PSI's 'neutrality' position was tactically justified and necessary. But at the time of the controversy on the question of Italy's entry in the war, intervening in the debate, he argued that the situation was no longer so. Instead one could clearly see the nature of the war and where it was leading to and gauge the position of different social classes and their parties at that conjuncture. The need of the hour for the PSI was (Gramsci says "Mark it well, not the proletariat or socialism in general") to take a concrete position by shedding its passive attitude as an "impartial observer". Gramsci argued for the necessity of the revolutionary leadership of the PSI to play the historical role of ~~rn~~ furthering the uninterrupted and continuous development

of class struggle. Emphasizing the significance of class struggle in the revolutionary process, which is the central theme of Marxist theory of history, Gramsci argued that the proletariat had to seize the historical initiative from the bourgeoisie, which was dominating the field of class struggle by subordinating the proletariat in order to maintain its own hegemonic supremacy.

" They (the bourgeoisie) would like to see the proletariat playing the role of impartial observer in these events and leaving them to create its hour for it; but all the while the proletariat's opponents are themselves creating their own hour and busily preparing their platform for the class struggle " (SPW, p.7).

The war, according to Gramsci, had provided the PSI and proletariat with a concrete possibility for demonstrating the historical inability of the bourgeois class to lead the masses and represent the interests of the Italian nation as a whole and also for demonstrating the crisis in the capitalist civilization. Hence the necessity of the PSI to assume the historical responsibility of replacing the bourgeoisie in the Italian national life.

" This its immediate, its present task, gives it peculiar, national characteristics, compelling it to assume a specific function and responsibility of its own within Italian life. It is a potential state in the process of formation, one that is in opposition to the bourgeois state and that has sought, in the course of its long struggle with the latter and through the development of its own internal dialectic, to build up the organs it needs to overcome the bourgeois state and absorb it" (SPW, p.6).

The significance of this article lies in the fact that here Gramsci identified the ^S Socialist Party, as the only force " able to prepare the proletariat to replace them(the bourgeoisie): prepare it for that last supreme ^W wrench(the revolution)which will signal the transition of civilization from an imperfect to an alternative, more perfect form ". (SPWI, p 8).

Active Intervention to Mould the Course of Class Struggle

Criticizing the abstract, doctrinaire and formalistic opposition of the PSI to the war, Gramsci calls for a concrete course of action but without himself suggesting one. If it fails to direct the movement or development of class struggle in its favour by actively and effectively intervening into the process of class struggle through "realistic concretism", then it would have to be prepared to share the responsibility of having let capitalism recuperate from its crisis, because,

"What comes to pass, either the evil that afflicts everyone, or the possible good brought about by an act of general valour, is due not so much to the initiative of the active few, as to the indifference, the absenteeism of the many. What comes to pass does so not so much because of a few people want it to happen, as because the mass of citizens abdicate their responsibility and let things be(as they are)"(SPWI,p.17).

What we have in these essays is not merely a criticism of the reformist leadership of the PSI but also a critique of the reformist ideology of Social Democracy. Here Gramsci lays emphasis on the active and conscious intervention into the process of history as a response to the political passivity of social democracy in Italy. As against the dominant practice of social democracy of awaiting the breakdown of capitalism eventually leading to the socialist revolution, sprouting from its deterministic and objectivistic view of Marxism which (a) explained the development of a society as a process of the auto-development of a single contradiction between capital and labour, internal to the mode of production and (b) viewed the domain of politics being an instance of the superstructure understood as a mere reflection of the economy, Gramsci attempts to restore the role of human subjectivity in the realisation of the proletarian revolution and in the historical transformation. But Gramsci identifies the unfolding of the revolutionary process with the activity of the revolutionaries- revolution as a creation.

" Revolutionaries who see history as the product of their own action, made up of an uninterrupted series of wrenches executed upon the other active and passive forces in society, and prepare the most favourable conditions for the final wrench (the revolution)..." (SPW, p.7)

Absence of Theory-Praxis Dialectic in Pre-Ordine Nuovo Writings

At this stage in the intellectual development of Gramsci there is an absence of the theory-praxis and subject-object dialectic, due to which the attempt to transcend the mechanistic, objectivistic problematic of the II International Marxism takes him to the other extreme of laying unilateral emphasis on human subjectivity in historical development whereby Gramsci views revolution as a creation. This absence of appreciation of the role of objective forces in historical development is understandable given the strong influence of Croce in Gramsci's intellectual development, as Gramsci himself affirmed in a letter from prison.¹

What is necessary to observe here is that the theoretical spring board provided by Crocean idealism² serving as a starting point for the development of Gramsci's thought is extremely significant because it provided Gramsci with the fundamental and essential

1. See Davidson: Gramsci- Towards an intellectual Biography, Ch. 3.

2. Gramsci Writes: "..... just as Hegelianism had been the premise of Marxism in the 19th century, and one of the origins of modern civilization, so the philosophy of Croce might be the premise of renewed contemporary Marxism of our own generation".

insight for developing a series of concepts and theoretical postulates which were to become central to Gramsci's theory of the State, hegemony and political strategy. The significance of Croce for Gramsci, to start with, lies in the restoration of man's position as the creator of history, and human subjectivity and collective social, political action as the driving force of history. This resulted in the rejection of the positivistic and naturalistic conception of history.

" I and Cosmo (Umberto Cosmo-a teacher of Italian literature in Turin University), and many other intellectuals at this time(say the first fifteen years of the century)occupied a certain common ground: we were all to some degree part of the movement of moral and intellectual reform which in Italy stemmed from Benedetto Croce, and whose first premise was that modern man can and should live without the help of religion- I mean of course without revealed religion, positivist religion, mythological religion, or whatever other brand one cares to name"(quoted in Fiori, Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary, p.74 emphasis added).

} Enlightenment

The achievement of Gramsci at this point, seen against the background of the dominance of reformism in socialist politics, of taking cognizance of the revolutionary significance of conscious human action, leads him only to lay a unilateral emphasis on it due to the

absence of the conception of the objective mediation between the collective will of the proletariat and the realisation of its ultimate historical objective.

Analysis of Russian Revolution

Now we shall examine the essays of Gramsci on the Russian revolution³ by limiting our discussion to one important theoretical observation of Gramsci in his analysis of the Revolution, which counters any argument inspired by the evolutionary view of Marxism—that Russia in this context and Italy as argued in the Ordine Nuovo writings (given the similarities in the nature of the development of social and political forces in these countries in the post-war period) would have to undergo full capitalist development in order to achieve the proletarian revolution.

In the article entitled 'The Russian Utopia' (SPW, pp.48-55) Gramsci does not see the developments in Russia leading to the October Revolution, locating them in the context of the international capitalism.

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3. The early articles of Gramsci on Russian Revolution betray a misunderstanding of the February Revolution as a socialist revolution leading Gramsci to describe Kerensky and Chernov as 'the present expression of the revolution.....' see also Davidson, 'Gramsci and Lenin' in Socialist Register, 1974, p.128

On the contrary, viewing the causal factors to be totally internal to the Russian society, he explains the revolutionary developments in Russia as the movement and development of freedom, in a characteristically Crocean fashion.

"Every historical phenomenon is 'individual'; development is governed by a rhythm of 'freedom'; research should not concentrate on generic necessity, but on the particular. The casual process must be studied strictly within the context of the Russian events, and not from an abstract, generic perspective" (SPW p.50).

In one of his oft-quoted and indeed very important articles on the Russian Revolution, "Revolution against capital", Gramsci asks "why they (Russian people) wait for the history of England to be repeated in Russia, for the bourgeoisie to arise for class struggle to begin so that class consciousness may be formed and the final catastrophe of the capitalist world eventually hit them?" Without explaining the structural changes occurring in the world capitalist system in the monopoly phase of its development and its specific manifestation in Russia, Gramsci explained that Russia was an 'exception' to the normal course of development.⁴

4. Lenin's pre-war writings deal only with the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia. Prior to the war he never raised the question of proletarian revolution because for his revolutionary situation in Russia was created by the development of monopoly capitalism.

Yet he made an important observation:

"The Russian people-or at least a minority of Russian people-has already passed through these experiences in thought. It has gone beyond them. It will make use of them now to assert itself just as it will make use of Western capitalist experience to bring itself rapidly to the same level of production as the Western world..... Now the Russian proletariat, socialistically educated, will begin its history at the highest level England has reached today. Since it has to start from scratch, it will start from what has been perfected elsewhere, and hence will be driven to achieve that level of economic maturity which Marx considered to be a necessary condition for collectivism. The revolutionaries themselves will create the conditions needed for the total achievement of their goal....."(SPW, p.36).

In these articles Gramsci's critique of 'evolutionary and naturalistic view of Marxism is based on a distinction between nature and society. He rejects any attempt to

(f.n.4 continued)

The development of Bolshevik strategy therefore has to be seen in the context of monopoly capitalism. Lenin formulated the concept of 'weakest link' which was the basis of his strategy, i.e. Russia being the weakest link in the imperialist chain became a strategic possibility for socialist revolution. In other words, Lenin's theory of revolution is the outcome of his theory of imperialism. See, Neil Harding Lenin's Political Thought, vol.2. Lukacs, observing the significance of Lenin's theory of imperialism in the field of political theory, writes:".....Lenin's superiority- and this is an unparallel achievement consists in his concrete articulation of the economic theory of imperialism with every political problem of the present epoch, thereby making the economics of the new phase a guideline for all concrete action in the resultant decisive conjuncture", Lukacs, Lenin, p.41(emphasis in the original) c.f, Althusser, For Marx, p.95.

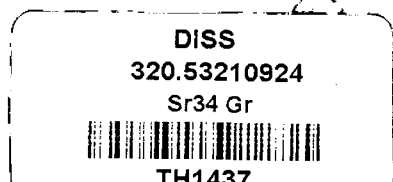
to compare or apply the laws of nature to explain the social development, because both are qualitatively different. For Gramsci, the study of nature and society has to be conducted on different lines due to intrinsically different nature of these two phenomena. What characterises the historical development is the role of masses and collective will. Any attempt to reduce the complex casual process internal to historical process to a few fixed and abstract natural laws and generalisations without taking note of the significance of conscious activity or 'praxis', fails to comprehend the specific nature of the development in its complexity. On the basis of this premise Gramsci rejects the II International position that a society has to undergo all the stages of development to achieve socialist revolution.

"The philistine does not see salvation outside the pre-established schemas; he conceives history as simply a natural organism passing through fixed and predictable stages of growth. If you plant an acorn, you can be sure of getting an oak shoot, and of having to wait a certain number of years for the tree to grow and give fruit. But history is not an oak tree and men are not acorns."(SPW, pp.51-52).

"They (Philistines) do not conceive history as free development- the birth and free integration of free energies- which is quite different from natural evolution, just as man and human associations are different from molecules and molecular aggregates. They have not learnt that freedom is the inner force in history, exploiting every pre-established schema".
(SPW, p.52)

As was observed earlier, due to the absence of a theoretical exposition of the role of objective forces in the unfolding of the revolutionary process in the pre-Ordine Nuovo writings of Gramsci, revolution is seen as a 'creation' by the revolutionaries. Nevertheless these writings succeeded to an extent in making a bold refutation of the 'economistic' and evolutionary problematic of the Second International, which politically led to fatalism in the social democratic political practice.

The objective casual process which created a revolutionary situation in the post-war period in Italy was captured better by Gramsci when the clouds of confusion started diffusing as a result of the inflow of information from Russia and the increasing acquaintance with the writings of Lenin. However, in Gramsci's writings we do not find a systematic analysis of the developments in the world and in the Italian national contexts in terms of their dialectical interrelation, as is the case with the writings of Lenin and Mao-se-Tung in the Russian and Chinese contexts respectively. The understanding of Gramsci is derived from two important texts of Lenin which had a bearing upon the Russian & developments; they are State and Revolution and Imperialism,



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the highest stage of capitalism which were available in Italy by the end of 1918.⁵ The themes of these two texts echo in Gramsci's writings on factory councils. Gramsci, consequently no longer identifies revolution merely with the activity of the revolutionaries or as freedom unfolding through the revolutionary spirit alone but as one mediated by the changes in capitalism ^titself and thereby views revolution not merely as a product of revolutionary subjectivity but as something which becomes a concrete possibility due to the objective conditions created by the historical process itself. Without conducting any detailed examination of the history of Italy and the nature of the development of capitalism in Italy, Gramsci more or less 'uncritically' accepts Lenin's theory. The achievement of Gramsci has not to be sought in the analysis of the economic and historical foundation of the post-war crisis but rather in the elaboration and conceptualisation of this crisis for revolutionary politics and revolutionary political practice in Italy. Gramsci's endeavour, thus becomes a continuation of Lenin's theoretical achievement as applied to the Italian national context.

5. Adler, Franklin, 'Factory Councils, Gramsci and the Industrialists' in Telos, No. 31, 1977, p. 71

Analysis of Imperialism and Crisis in Italian State

Basing on an analysis of imperialism and structural linkages of the Italian capitalism with monopoly capitalism and the resultant changes in the latter in the post-war period, in the Ordine Nuovo writings, Gramsci argues for the necessity of proletarian revolutionary preparation to conquer the State power. The articulation of the Italian national situation into the world capitalist system is essential to examine Gramsci's conception of the crisis in the Italian liberal State which closely parallels Lenin's understanding of Russia being the weakest link in the world capitalist relations, which was central to the Leninist strategy.

Gramsci argues that the concrete reality created by the war in Italy is not an isolated phenomenon but is organically related to the transition from industrial to monopoly capitalism. Monopoly capitalism integrates countries located at different levels of historical development, into the world capitalist system. But following the logic of uneven development of capitalism, these countries belong to different phases of class struggle, thereby differing in terms of strategic goals

depending on the concrete situation prevailing in a particular country. But what characterises this phase in the history of capitalism is that it has created an objective situation which marks the transition to socialism with concrete possibility for the socialist revolution. Historically the transition from industrial to monopoly capitalism rules out any possibility of further development of productive forces within capitalism whereby the replacement of capitalist relations by socialist relations of production becomes a historical necessity.

"Once competitive conditions and struggle have been eliminated from the world capitalist regime reached deadlock. It loses all reason for its existence and progress; its institutions become rigid, parasitical encrustations, without any useful role or prestige. A revolution becomes necessary to restore a dialectical rhythm to world affairs; to reveal a new social class and invest it with the power of controlling history" (SPW, p.69).

The contradiction between capital and labour which is specific to capitalism remains throughout the history of capitalism, and since it originates with capitalism it would disappear only with the withering of capital. This is internal to the "relations of production" and determines or characterises the nature of class struggle in capitalism. This, in itself is not

enough for the transition to socialism, in the theoretical and historical sense⁶. At a certain stage in the development of capitalism, there emerges a new instance in the structure of contradictions of capitalist mode of production. It is characterised by the contradiction between the development and the increasing social nature of productive forces and private ownership of the means of production as a result of the tendency of capitalism to facilitate the rapid and tremendous development of the forces of production.⁷ This contradiction emerges^s due to the inner dynamics of capitalism and therefore has nothing to do with the subjective intentions of either of the classes in capitalism. On the contrary, this development in

6. Carl Boggs, Gramsci's Marxism, P.55

7. According to Godelier this, contradiction, unlike the labour-capital contradiction, is not internal to the structure of social relations of production. On the contrary it is one between the structure of the forces of production characterised by its increasing social nature and the structure of relations of production characterised by the private ownership of the means of production. See: Godelier "Structure and Contradiction of Capital" in Robin Blackburn(ed), Ideology in Social Sciences.

monopoly capitalism goes against the interests of the capitalist class which is forced to constitute itself in a new relationship corresponding to these structural changes. In the process of this colossal development of the productive forces, as Marx held, capital "unconsciously creates the material requirements of a higher mode of production".

Basing on the identification of this contradiction of monopoly capital, Lenin argues that "Capitalism in its imperialist stage leads directly to the most comprehensive socialisation of production; it, so to speak, drags the capitalists, against their will and consciousness, into some sort of a new social order, a transitional one from complete free competition to complete socialisation! In this phase "production becomes social, but appropriation remains private. The social means of production remain the private property of a few. The general framework of formally recognized free competition remains, and the yoke of a few monopolists on the rest of the population becomes a hundred times heavier, more burdensome and intolerable".⁸

8. Lenin, Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism
page 25 (emphasis added)

It is unhistorical to think of restoring the competitive conditions of capital. The development towards monopoly capitalism is the logical and historical outcome of capitalism itself because capitalism provides for an unrestricted development of the productive forces which in turn necessitate the development of competition through the formation of economic and political monopoly in the international arena:

"Italian capitalism has lost its autonomy; it has lost its freedom and cannot regain it. Any attempt to reestablish competitive conditions by armed force, through a new world war, is doomed from the start; for there is a political and military monopoly that corresponds to the economic monopoly" (SPW, p.70).

What are the concrete changes monopoly capital has brought into being in the sphere of factory production, which are pre-conditions in the objective sense of the term, for the replacement of capitalist relations by a new social order arising from the contradiction between the socialisation of capital and its private ownership ?

Firstly, monopoly capital has led to the separation of the ownership of capital from the management of capital,

which were inseparable aspects of industrial capitalism and in this phase the factory is no longer an autonomous unit run by an individual capitalist.

"The factory is not an independent entity. It is not run by an owner-entrepreneur who possesses the commercial know-how (stimulated by the interest that is inherent in private ownership) to buy the raw materials wisely and sell the manufactured object at a profit. These functions have been displaced from the individual factory and transferred to the system of factories owned by the same firm. And it does not stop here: They are concentrated in the hands of a bank or system of banks, who have taken over real responsibility for supplying raw materials and securing markets for sales" (SPW, p.165) 9

Secondly, the replacement of industrial capital by monopoly capital and the separation of the ownership from the management of capital as a result of the development of productive forces at unmanageable proportions for an individual capitalist, has made his role in the production

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9. Lenin expresses this process in the following words: It is characteristic of capitalism in general that the ownership of capital is separated from the application of capital to production, that money capital is separated from industrial or productive capital, and that the rentier who lives entirely on income obtained from money capital, is separated from the entrepreneur and from all who are directly concerned in the management of capital. Imperialism or the domination of finance capital, is that highest stage of capitalism in which this separation reached vast proportions" Lenin, Ibid, p.57.

process, which was indispensable to factory production earlier, historically redundant. This has led to the assuming of the task of organising production by the State.

"the State has become the sole proprietor of the instruments of labour and has taken over all the traditional functions of the entrepreneur" (SPW, p.165) and "the private owner has automatically been expelled from the immediate domain of production, he has sought refuge in the power of the State, the monopolizer of the distillation of profit" (SPW, p.166).

Thirdly, the displacement of the property owner from the factory has created a vacuum in the immediate authority or domination which in turn has resulted in the autonomy of the worker.

"The working class has attained a very high degree of autonomy within the domain of production; for the development of commercial and industrial technology has done away with all the useful functions once fulfilled by private property, by the person of the capitalist" (SPW, p.166).

Fourthly, the formation of monopoly capital resulting from the increasing social nature of capital is not a one-sided development. It has a revolutionary significance, due to its dialectical nature, in the sense that it has brought about a revolutionary transformation in the working class life in the production process, by

laying the foundations for the socialisation of the working class life itself

"Capitalist concentration, determined by the mode of production, produces a corresponding concentration of working human masses. This is the fact that underlies all the revolutionary theses of Marxism, that underlies the conditions of the new proletarian way of life, the new communist order destined to replace the bourgeois way of life and the disorder of capitalism arising from free competition and class struggle" (SPW, p. 73).

Now arises the question as to whether the bourgeois State in Italy is in a position to carry out the factory production in the absence of capitalist-individual and facilitate the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production and the maintenance of the bourgeois hegemony over the Italian society.

Gramsci's answer is in the negative. He maintains that the bourgeois State itself being in crisis, is incapable of taking up this task. The crisis in the State is necessarily related to the developments in the monopoly capitalism or is rather an internal correspondent to the crisis in monopoly capitalism: "The current disorder in Italian economic and political life arises from these conditions of economic and political oppression and slavery systematized on the world scale!"

The following instances are identified in his argument: Theoretically, liberal conception of politics, with the *laissez-faire* spirit, maintains a separation between politics and economics as two distinct, unrelated realms and accordingly any intervention of politics into the realm of economics is seen as a negation of the liberal democratic theory. Theoretically bourgeois democracy operates on this thesis. In the bourgeois democratic system, therefore, an individual participates in the electoral process in the capacity of a citizen, irrespective of his economic position and his role in the production process. The maintenance of this separation between the State(or political society) and civil society (it is not viewed as a methodological distinction but as an "organic" one)¹⁰ justifies the existence of private property because the existence of economic inequality is seen as unrelated to political equality, not as affecting the political participation. But in the monopoly^{phase}, new relationships were emerging as a result of the realignment of politics and economics necessitating State intervention in order to defend and maintain

10. See Gramsci, Selections from Prison Notebooks, pp.159-60.

private property. In the changing situation it is no longer possible to argue that bourgeois democratic system was based on the equality of the political subjects. The monopoly development, for Gramsci, not only initiated the crisis of democracy and the State, but also exploded the myth of the State expounded by the liberal democratic theory.

In the context of Italy-^ebesides a theoretical exposition establishing a logical and structural relation with monopoly capitalism- a specific analysis of the historical background to the formation of the modern State becomes important for Gramsci's understanding of the crisis in the Italian liberal State. In the Prison Notebooks, he locates the origins of the weakness of the Italian State in the Risorgimento. The Risorgimento, being a passive revolution, failed to create the classical bourgeois hegemony on par with the English or the French revolution. As a result of this, it never succeeded in bridging the gap between the northern and the southern Italy, i.e integrating the southern peasantry into a unified Italy by forming a national-popular

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collective will. On the contrary, due to its inherent weakness, it perpetuated the uneven development of capitalism in Italy and the backwardness of the South with its 'historical alliance' with the rural landowning classes of the southern Italy. The crisis in the Italian State is the result of this absence: the absence of hegemony and popular will (which would have made the bourgeoisie a national force). The war had amply demonstrated the shallow foundations of the Italian State. The arguments of 'the crisis in the State' closely parallels with Lenin's concept of 'weakest link' in the Russian context. This understanding is the basis of Gramsci's Factory Council Strategy just as the conception of the weakest link led Lenin to formulate the Bolshevik strategy.

What conception of the State did Gramsci have when he was arguing that the bourgeois State was in crisis? Gramsci did not view the State as merely an

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11. Gramsci's argument that the Communist Party in the post-war period has to become a 'Modern Prince' a force which represents the national will - a force that occupies a strategic position in a multiclass alliance in the absence of a binary development of class struggle in the modern capitalist societies, is based on the study of the Risorgimento and Italian State formation.

instrument of the bourgeois class, managing its affairs but as a social relation which pervades all aspects of social existence. In other words, the State, here, for Gramsci, is an organisation which ^a facilitates the capitalist rule through the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production.¹² The bourgeois State, by providing the capitalist class with its most needed internal coherence and homogeneity makes it a hegemonic class. Only through the State the capitalist class succeeds in transcending the 'economic-corporate' moment and becomes the 'protagonist of history' by attaining the

12. See A.S.Sassoon, Gramsci's Politics, p.37, also SPWI, p.111. " What does the State represent from the socialist point of view ? The State is the economic-political organisation of the bourgeois class. The State is the bourgeois class in the modern concrete expression. The bourgeois class is not a unified entity outside the State...SPW pp.39-40(emphasis added)" The state has always been the protagonist of history. In its organs the power of the propertied class is centralised. Within the State, the propertied class forges its own discipline and unity, over and above the disputes and clashes of competition, in order to keep intact its privileged position in the supreme phase of class struggle for power, for pre-eminence in the leadership and ordering of society".SPW, p.73 (emphasis added)

position of a directing and leading class (i.e. a hegemonic class).¹³

What can clearly be inferred from this argument is that the distinction between politics and economics or the State and civil society as public and private realms of social reality is, for Gramsci, an unrealistic and speculative proposition. And this was clearly demonstrated in the post-war period. So, for Gramsci, the State is not a supra-class "public power" but one which enables the maintenance and further reproduction of the capitalist relations in the every day life of the bourgeois society.

The crisis generated by the monopoly capitalism is not a 'conjunctural' crisis. On the contrary, since it rendered the historical function of the bourgeoisie redundant, it is an organic crisis pervading all the spheres of the bourgeois society. As a consequence, the State which is an organic expression of the class is also crisis-ridden. The solution to this crisis, cannot be sought within the system, instead a new social order is the historical necessity.¹⁴

13. Buci-Glucksmann in Gramsci and the State observes that the concept of hegemony in these early PWS, is not explicit but 'operative'.

14. One force alone can arrest this process of dissolution: communism. On the bourgeois plane, international competition has been abolished by monopoly. But a different dialectical rhythm can be substituted for the one that has been smashed: class competition and class struggle" SPW, p.71

The proposition that the 'actuality of revolution' is on the agenda presents two interrelated arguments. Firstly, the developments fostered by monopoly capitalism had objectively demonstrated the crisis in the Italian state and society, and the historical redundancy of the capitalist class. This transformation, according to Gramsci, had a revolutionary significance for the nature of the class struggle in the post-war period, because in this period the historical initiative no longer rested with the bourgeoisie; instead the proletariat was invested with the responsibility of leading the Italian nation and directing the course of history.

Secondly, the spontaneous working class and peasant movements truly indicated the direction of historical movement toward the assuming of this historical responsibility. This leads Gramsci to emphasize the necessity of a conscious preparation and organization of the proletariat to assume this task. This is a fundamental theme of Ordine Nuovo. Let us attempt to understand this aspect of Gramsci's analysis of the post-war situation.

In the monopolistic transformation of capitalism, Gramsci identifies a decisive shift in the strategic position of the working class vis-a-vis the bourgeoisie

in the factory context. The expulsion of the capitalist from the production sphere leading to the freedom and autonomy of the worker, in his immediate presence in the factory, accompanied by an increasing concentration of the workers in the factory leading to a greater interaction and collective activity, initiated a new socialization process in the factory. This resulted in the phenomenal rise and growth of 'internal commissions' in the post-war period. The autonomy and the unity of the workers in the factory accompanied by a spontaneous awareness of their freedom, according to Gramsci, is what characterizes the working class life and its position in the realm of class struggle. As a result of this, the worker no longer feels himself as an object in the industrial production but as a producer of the commodities, as a subject (this phenomenon is antithetical to the earlier phase characterized by competition and expressed through trade union activity (this will be discussed in the next chapter)). In these new working class organisations, Gramsci finds the unfolding of the new consciousness, one going beyond the barriers of economism of the trade unions. Gramsci sees this newly emerging subjectivity of the workers as a 'grass root revolt' against the existing social democratic practice and the bourgeois rule; and positively, the basis of the future proletarian State.

"The working class is closing ranks around its machines; it is creating its own representing institutions based on labour, based on its newly-won autonomy and its newly-won awareness of self government. The Factory council is the foundation of its positive experiences and its appropriation of the instruments of labour. It is the solid foundation for the process which must culminate in the workers' dictatorship and the conquest of State power- a power which can then be used to eliminate chaos, the cancer that threatens to suffocate, corrode and dissolve human society (SPW, p.166)

In an article entitled 'Workers and Peasants' Gramsci analyses the impact of the war on the peasantry. Due to the uneven development of Italy and the failure of the bourgeois democratic revolution to integrate the southern agrarian economy into the Italian capitalism, there existed a very clear gap or separation between the working class of the North and the peasant masses of the South. The peasantry as a result of its backwardness and its feudal subordination retained an individualist and composite psychology, characterised by elementary feeling rendering the development of an organized, collective personality and a consistent struggle against feudal oppression impossible. The consequence of this was the prevalence of social banditry in rural Italy. The war changed the situation radically. The participation of the peasants in the factories and on the war front facilitated

an interaction with the oppressed of the north, changing the instinctive jealousy and hatred towards the north into a feeling of solidarity.

*Gramsci describes the impact of the war on peasant psychology in the following passage:

"Selfish, individual instincts were blunted; a common, united spirit was fashioned; feelings were universalized; the habit of social discipline was formed. The peasants came to see the State in all its complex grandeur; its measureless power its intricate construction. They came to see the world... as a concrete reality consisting of States and peoples, social strengths and weaknesses, armies and machines, wealth and poverty. Links of solidarity were forged which would have taken decades of historical experience and intermittent struggles to form. Within four years, in the mud and blood of the trenches, a spiritual world emerged that was avid to form itself into permanent and dynamic social structures and institutions"
(SPW, pp.84-85)

The post-war period witnessed the emergence and development of peasant organisations on a large scale leading to a series of organised peasant revolts in the countryside. For Gramsci, the spontaneous mass movement shows the direction of the historical process, on the basis of which he arrives at the understanding that the socialist revolution was imminent. The task of the proletarian party is to systematize and consolidate these spontaneous mass movements by uniting the peasants with the workers, who together form the 'back bone of the revolution' in Italy.

In the Gramscian perspective on history, the masses are the protagonists of history.¹⁵ What happens in history, the progressive or retrogressive, the good or evil, does so not only because of the active and conscious participation of the masses to bring about certain transformation but also because of their indifference to the activity of other social groups, which are active on the stage of history. Both ways the masses have to account for the developments in history. This way of looking at the historical process, which can be called a 'bottom-up' approach or 'history from ~~from~~ below' approach led Gramsci to argue that the spontaneous factory council and peasant movements which dominated the Italian political scene in 1919-20 showed the direction of history to be towards the socialist revolution.

15. "For the communists who hold to Marxist doctrine, the masses of workers and peasants are the only genuine and authentic expression of the historical development of capital. By the spontaneous and uncontrollable movements which spread throughout their ranks and by relative shifts in the position of strata due to changes in intellectual outlook the Masses indicate the precise direction of historical development"SPW.p.173(emphasis added)

Following from his understanding of the structural changes occurring in the monopoly capitalism and the nature of the spontaneous mass movements in the post-war Italy, Gramsci understood that the 'actuality of revolution' was on the agenda, both in its subjective and objective dimensions because the "necessary and sufficient conditions for the proletarian revolution are present on both the national^{al} and international levels"(SPWI, p.156).

The task of the proletarian party was to give a revolutionary orientation to these movements by providing them with a conscious leadership and direction. Failure of the party to take up this would only lead to " a tremendous reaction on the part of the propertied classes and governing caste".

This was what happened in Italy. The failure on the part of the PSI and dominant Bordiga-led group to provide leadership to the factory council movement consequently led to the ascendancy of fascism. Gramsci captures this in the following passage:

"It is almost always the case that a 'spontaneous' movement of the subaltern classes is accompanied by a reactionary movement of the right-wing of the dominant class, for concomitant reasons. As economic crisis, for instance, engenders on the one hand discontent among the subaltern classes and spontaneous mass movements, and on the other conspiracies among the reactionary groups, who take advantage of the objective weakening of the government in order to attempt coups d'etat. Among the effective causes of the coups must be included the failure of the responsible groups to give any conscious leadership to the spontaneous revolts or to make them into a positive political factor(SPN, p.199).

THE QUESTION OF STRATEGY AND TACTICS

In the preceding chapter we have argued that the concept of 'actuality of revolution' is the central theme of Gramsci's Political Writings. This understanding raises the following question of immediate practical significance: how to translate the 'actuality of revolution' into concrete political practice of the working class movement? According to Gramsci, since the PSI did not acknowledge this reality of post-war Italy, its social reformist practice logically remained unchanged. The point of departure for Gramsci and the PSI leadership was different, due to their differential reading of the concrete reality; and they differed not only on the question of the point of arrival, but also on the question of mediations which relate these two. Gramsci draws a detailed critique of the traditional working class organisations and the actual political practice of the PSI to show their inadequacy to take up the tasks facing the proletarian movement in the post-war period, on the basis of his analysis of the objective historical foundations of these organisations. Through the analysis of these questions, Gramsci establishes the historical significance of the factory councils for the proletarian revolution.

The choice of the factory councils for this purpose, far from being arbitrary, is deeply rooted in the social reality, that is, in the structural changes of capitalism itself.

Social democracy, treating the questions of everyday political significance as isolation, that is, without relating them to the long term questions of the proletarian revolution and socialism, failed to realise the dialectical mediation between the particular and the universal in practice. As a result, the question of translating the socio-transcendent objective of establishing the socialist society became a distant possibility, leading to the restriction of the everyday activity of the workers to the questions of immediate importance, like the betterment of the living conditions of the workers within the bourgeois reality. In other words, the failure of Social Democracy to relate the everyday life of the working class to the 'future' by consciously and collectively transcending the limitations imposed by the bourgeois social reality had led to economism as the dominant practice of the proletarian everyday life. The political practice of this phase (i.e. of the II international) in the history of the international proletarian movement can be summed up with

precision in the Bernsteinian formulation: "the movement is everything, the ultimate goal nothing."

Divorced from the concrete working class life, the social democratic parties failed to see the inadequacy of the traditional working class organisations to face the challenge posed by the post-war period. There was an absence of the understanding of the qualitative difference between strategy and tactics and its significance for the formulation of the proletarian revolutionary programme. The result was the adaption of the institutions and practices of tactical importance for strategic purposes. The PSI, for Gramsci, imprisoned in the general and abstract formule, never succeeded in formulating a concrete course of action.

The failure of social democracy and the II International raises the following questions: how does one translate the Marxist theory of history, which establishes the primacy of class struggle in the social transformation, in general terms, into a specific political action in a specific historical conjuncture?¹

1. According to Gramsci, "in reality one can 'scientifically' foresee only the struggle, but not the concrete moments of the struggle", A.Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Note books, p 438.

How does one relate the immediate political practice of the revolutionary party of the working class to the ultimate objective of realising the proletarian revolution ? What is the relationship between strategy and tactics in the Marxist theory ?

In the Marxist problematic, the relationship between strategy and tactics is not an ethical question. It is incorrect to judge the propriety or suitability of a tactical means employed in a particular struggle or situation in an abstract manner on the basis of the ultimate objective. To do so, is to consider tactics as an end and no longer as a tactical means. Nor can the concept of 'expediency' be an appropriate yardstick to determine the correctness of the tactics, because the objective of realising the socialist revolution is antithetical to the bourgeois social order. The final goal is a socio-transcendent objective and not an imminent one. Hence it cannot be judged on the basis of the immediate benefits it provides within the existing legality.²

Thus, neither the end justifies the means nor does the question of expediency. Any attempt to resort to either of the criteria would only be divorced from the

2. See G.Lukacs, Political Writings, Chapter 'Tactics Ethics'.

specific nature of class struggle. The former would lead to an ultra-left position, i.e the position of intrasigence, as for instance on the question of parliamentary participation. The latter on the other hand, would end up in reformist practice.

The relationship between strategy and tactics³ cannot be defined abstractly and established apriori. On the contrary, it is a concrete political question to be solved on the basis of the oncrete study of the relation of forces, in a particular situation with the purpose of changing it.⁴

3. The distinction between strategy and tactics was made only during the period of the III international. Trotsky defines it in the following manner:
By the conception of tactics is understood the system of measures that serves a single current task or a single branch of the class struggle. Revolutionary strategy on the contrary embraces a combined system of actions which by their association, consistency and growth must lead the proletariat to the conquest of power"
See Trotsky, L, Third International After Lenin, p.75
4. The conscious transformation of social reality is the central question or concern of the theory-practice dialectic..." the concrete analysis of the concrete situation removes the issue of real politik only for those who do not think dialectically. For Marxists the concrete analysis of the concrete situation is not the opposite of pure theory, on the contrary, it is the culmination of all genuine theory, its consummation, the point where it therefore breaks into practice". Lukacs, G., Lenin: A Study in the Unity of his thought, p.43.

How has this analysis to be made ? What are the different instances of such an analysis ?

Marxist analysis, according to Gramsci, distinguishes three 'moments' or 'levels', which are fundamental to the 'relations of forces'.

(1) The first moment studies the exact nature of of the terrain of contradictions in the objective class situation, i.e, the objective determination of the oposition and relation of fundamental social classes in the mode of production, their strengths and weaknesses, to identify the historical tendencies for social transformation with precision.

" A relation of social forces which is closely linked to the structure, objective, independent of human will, and which can be measured with the systems of the exact or physical sciences. The level of development of the material forces of production provides a basis for the emergence of the various social classes, each one of which represents a function and has a specific position within production itself....By studying these fundamental data it is possible to discover whether in a particular society there exist the necessary and sufficient conditions for its transformation- in other words, to check the degree of realism and practicability of the

various ideologies which have been born on its own terrain, on the terrain of contradictions which it has engendered during the course of its development"⁵.

(2) The second moment deals with the objective class position: the determination of the position of different social classes and their relation on the terrain of class struggle to identify their political and organisational preparation at a particular historical conjuncture to change the course of history or to maintain the existing social order.

"A subsequent moment is the relation of political forces; in other words, an evaluation of the degree of homogeneity, self awareness and organization attained by the various social classes".⁶

(3) The third moment of the analysis studies the relation of military forces for the preparation of confronting the State decisively. According to Gramsci, "historical development oscillates continually between the first and the third moment, with the mediation of the second".

5. Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, pp 180-81

6. Ibid, p.181

Gramsci showing the relationship between these three moments states:

"It may be said that all these elements are concrete manifestation of the conjunctural fluctuations of the totality of social relation of force, on whose terrain the passage takes place from the latter to political relation of force, and finally to the military relation which is decisive".⁷

The first moment is the basis of the formulation of a revolutionary strategy for a particular country at a particular historical conjuncture, whereas the second moment determines the formulation of tactics of a revolutionary party. The third moment is necessary to prepare for the 'war of movement', that is to confront the bourgeois State to resolve the contradictions of capitalism decisively, through the 'war of position', i.e. the pre-revolutionary preparation of the proletariat in the realm of civil society to establish its hegemony by dismantling the bourgeois hegemony.

Gramsci makes a distinction between 'organic' and 'conjunctural' movements. The organic movements are 'relatively permanent' and have a 'socio-historical'

7. Ibid, p.185.

significance in the sense that they determine the course of history, either regressive or progressive, involving the fundamental social classes, whereas 'conjunctural' movements are the ones which do not have "any very far-reaching historical significance; they give rise to political criticism of a minor, day-to-day character, which has as its subject top political leaders and personalities with direct governmental responsibilities".⁸ It is on this terrain that the political forces attempt to resolve the contradictions of capitalism. Its importance for revolutionary politics is, therefore, to "expose" the organic and historical weaknesses of the political forces which struggle to conserve the existing structure by not admitting that it has historically been superseded. Gramsci observes that the relationship between these two movements is not mechanical or unilateral as the reductionist Marxist position believes it to be thereby not allowing the possibility of error on the question of political decisions and choices. On the contrary, it is a dialectical relation, in the sense that

8. Ibid. P.177

the changes in the organic situation, in the final analysis, determine the 'conjunctural' fluctuations. But this is not to rule out the possibility of the 'conjunctural' instance effecting changes on the organic terrain. Because only by operating on this instance the ruling classes struggle to reinforce their position in the economic structure.

But here, for our discussion on strategy and tactics, it would suffice to point out that the organic situation (i.e. the relation of social forces) helps us to determine the strategic position of different social classes and the historical tendencies favourable or unfavourable to execute the historical will of the proletariat to revolutionise the social forces of production. This is the basis of the formulation of a revolutionary strategy while the conjuncture is related to the formulation of tactics: "the conjuncture is the set of immediate and ephemeral characteristics of the economic situation... Study of the conjuncture is thus more closely linked to immediate politics, to 'tactics' and 'agitation', while the 'situation' relates to 'strategy' and propaganda, etc."⁹

9. Ibid.p.177

It is understood that the conjuncture involves rapid fluctuations of different forces-political and organisational in nature. This precise nature of the conjuncture, according to Gramsci, necessitates flexibility of tactics, which need to be formulated by keeping in view the fluctuating and rapidly changing nature of the political forces, always being informed by the necessity of realising the ultimate objective. Therefore, neither an ethical view nor a purely 'expediency' criterion can be applied in the formulation of tactics.

Then arises the question as to whether it is possible to know the correctness of tactics in advance, given the fact that at any point of time there is a wide range of options, whereby the opposite of what is possible could also be possible. Gramsci, in his conception of tactics, does not view the 'concrete analysis' as something motivated by a purely 'scientific' concern. On the contrary it is part of revolutionary practice and only to the extent one is part of a conscious collective practice one would be able to know the correctness of his actions.

"In reality one can 'foresee' to the extent one acts, to the extent that one applies a volutary effort and therefore contributes concretely to creating the result 'foreseen'. Prediction reveals itself not as a scientific act of knowledge, but as the abstract expression of the effort made, the practical way of creating a collective will"¹⁰.

Writing on the significance of the "concrete analysis of concrete situation" for the formulation of strategy and tactics in the revolutionary preparation, Gramsci states:

"The most important observation to be made about any concrete analysis of the relations of force is the followings: that such analyses cannot and must not be ends in themselves (unless the intention is merely to write a chapter of past history), but acquire significance only if they serve to justify a particular practical activity, or initiative of will. They reveal the points of least resistance, at which the force of will can be most fruitfully applied; they suggest immediate tactical operations, they indicate how a campaign of political agitation may best be launched

10. Ibid.p.438

what language will best be understood by the masses etc. The decisive element in every situation is the permanently organised and long prepared force which can be put into the field when it is judged that a situation is favourable(and it can be favourable only in so far as such a force exists, and is full of fighting spirit). Therefore, the essential task is that of systematically and patiently ensuring that this force is formed, developed and rendered every~~where~~ homogeneous, compact and self aware. This is clear from military history and from the care with which in every period armies have been prepared in advance to be able to make war at any movement"¹¹(emphasis added).

The theoretical mediation of the conception of 'concrete analysis' is important for Gramsci's understanding that in the post-war period the 'actuality of revolution' was on the agenda because the "necessary and sufficient conditions for the proletarian revolution are present — on both the national and international^{al} levels' (SPWI, p.156). — This leads hi^m to discover the concrete manifestation of the revolutionary process and as to how the objective revolutionary situation has to be moulded and given a concrete form.

11. Ibid. p.185

Gramsci's Critique of the Traditional Working Class

Organisations:

In his critique, Gramsci related the bankruptcy of social Democracy to its lack of understanding of the concrete situation created by the imperialist war. His theoretical stand point, informed by the Leninist theory of imperialism, facilitated the break with the existing socialist institutions and practice, and served as the basis for his critique of the CG'dL dominated trade unions and PSI itself. Springing from this fundamental difference in the theoretical perspective, Gramsci's critique did not limit itself to the then dominant practice of the trade unions and the PSI, but questioned the very purpose and meaning of these institutions, thereby calling for a redefinition of their role in the proletarian revolution and therefore a corresponding restructuring of these institutions. Having originated on the terrain of bourgeois legality and embodying the principles which are central to the liberal democratic State, ^{these institutions} according to Gramsci were incapable of embodying the revolutionary spirit

of the working class.¹² This fact- the inadequacy resulting from its inherent principles and the loss of understanding of the concrete post-war situation by its leadership- was amply demonstrated by the factory council movement, which was a grass-root revolt against the trade union bureaucratism and the Parliamentarism of the PSI.¹³ These new working class organisations, the factory councils embodying the 'principles of combination and solidarity' central to the proletarian revolution are suitable to be the basis of the future proletarian State.

12. "The actual process of proletarian revolution cannot be identified with the development and activity of revolutionary organisations of a voluntary and contractual nature, such as political parties and trade unions. The organisations arise in the sphere of bourgeois democracy and political liberty, as affirmations and developments of this political liberty". SPW, p.260
13. Gramsci's critique of the traditional working class organisations and the reformist, economist practice, it must be noted, does not only originate from his understanding of the bourgeois State and these organisations being a correspondent to it, but also from his understanding of the mass movements being the indicator of the precise direction of history, since the masses are the protagonists of history. In other words, in keeping with the theory-practice dialectic, the validity of these theoretical views ought to be tested in practice. The spontaneous working class movement does affirm this theoretical perspective.

The traditional working class institutions originating in the phase of capitalist development, characterised by the capital-labour contradiction and governed by the laissez-faire principle, played an essentially defensive role, i.e. of improving the position of the workers in the competitive labour market. The central principle governing these institutions was not internal to the working class; they did not develop out of the inner necessity of the proletariat. The bourgeois State being the protagonist of history in that phase governed the development of these institutions.¹⁴ Thus originating within the bourgeois society, these organisations could never transcend the logic of capitalism and overcome the crisis of the bourgeois liberal state. Instead the crisis was reflected in them; here in lies the cause of the bankruptcy of the Social Democracy.¹⁵

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14. "The development of these proletarian institutions and of the whole of proletarian movement was not, however, autonomous. It was not constrained wholly by laws inherent in the living conditions and historical experience of the working class. In fact, the laws of historical development were laid down by the property owning class organised in the State" SPW, p. 73.
15. See Ibid p. 74.

Drawing a parallel between the bourgeois parliamentary institutions and the traditional working class institutions, which were born on the terrain of liberal democracy, Gramsci stated that the crisis in the bourgeois liberal State had not limited itself to its institutions alone. On the contrary, this being an 'organic' crisis generated by monopoly capitalism, it prevailed all these institutions of the working class. The solution to this crisis lies in the establishment of the socialist state:

The proletarian organisation which, as a global expression of the worker and peasant masses, is centred on the headquarters of the Confederation of Labour is passing through a constitutional crisis that is similar in nature to the crisis in which the democratic-parliamentary State is vainly floundering. It is a crisis of power and a crisis of sovereignty. The solution to one will be the solution of the other, in the sense that, by resolving the problem of the will to power within the sphere of their own class organisation, the workers will succeed in creating the organic frame work of their own class organisation, the workers will succeed in creating the organic framework of their State and will victoriously counterpose it to the parliamentary State. (SPWI, p.98)

The PSI and the trade unions conforming to the bourgeois liberal distinction between politics and economics, operate independently of each other as two separate and unrelated spheres of working class activity.

While the PSI operating in the realm of politics through its parliamentary strategy enters into competition with bourgeois political parties for electoral gains, the trade unions on the other hand being the economic organs of the proletariat limit their activity to economic struggle to defend the workers' interests by treating them as a commodity in the labour market. What is under attack is the failure of the PSI to unite the political and economic aspects of the working class life. For Gramsci, these two aspects are, in reality, dialectically related. The bourgeois democratic system projects them to be separate. The working class organisations by conforming their activity to the bourgeois legality as something 'given', never understood that their function had to be essentially antithetical to it. The result is the perpetuation of the bourgeois hegemony and strengthening of the private property as something 'natural'.¹⁶

The craft unions, the Chamber of Labour, the industrial federations and the General Confederation of Labour are all types of proletarian organisation specific to the period of history dominated by capital. It can be argued that they are in a sense

an integral part of capitalist society, and have a function that is inherent in a regime of private property. In this period, when individuals are valued only to the extent that they own commodities and trade their property, the workers too have had to obey the iron laws of general necessity and have become traders in the only property they possess' their labour power and their professional skills (SPW, 99) (emphasis added).

The trade unions, according to Gramsci, are inherently bureaucratic as the very organisational structure betrays ~~it~~. The selection of the trade union leadership is never based on its immediate participation and role in the production process; on the contrary, the factors which are external to the work process like the legal and demagogic expertise of the candidates play an important role. Given the massive organisational structure of the trade union, the possibility of a free choice of the leaders is denied to the workers. Like any large scale organisation, the trade union tends to become bureaucratic as it expands. In the absence of any internal mechanism to check this tendency and reinforced by the 'bureaucratic reformist mentality' of the leadership, the trade unions essentially end up in the usual reformist practice and even play a counter-revolutionary role as in Hungary leading to

the collapse of the revolution¹⁷ (SPW, p.104).

This apart, the very formation of the trade union organisation on the basis of craft differentiation, calls into question its revolutionary purpose. For Gramsci, the trade union is not a suitable organisation for the proletarian revolution, because, instead of unifying the workers as a class, it on the contrary organises the workers on the basis of their craft specialisation. Its very method of organising the workers and its internal composition merely confirms to the differentiation or division of labour created in the working class activity by the bourgeois industrial legality and thereby reinforces the fragmentation of the proletariat in the field of class struggle. The result is the absence of any concrete effort to forge the unity of the workers, belonging to different crafts and to different levels in the hierarchy of factory system, into one class of producers as against the capitalist class, by infusing and internally strengthening the class consciousness of the proletariat.

17. Ibid, p.104

"The Union represents legality, and must aim to make its members respect that legality. The trade union is answerable to the industrialists, but only in so far as it is answerable to its own members: it guarantees to the workers and his family a continuous supply of work and wages, i.e food and a roof over their heads...the trade union, by virtue of its bureaucratic form, tends to prevent class war from ever breaking out" (SPW, p.266)

What follows from the above discussion is that the trade union, given its essentially capitalist and bureaucratic nature, is incapable of bringing about class unity among the workers. Operating on bourgeois legality, by inheriting its essential principles, it treats the workers only as atomistic, isolated individuals; and aims at a grouping of the workers into a bloc of wage-earners, so that they can bargain with the capitalists in the labour market and settle the disputes peacefully. Its aim is only to establish a contractual relationship between them;¹⁸ never to forge an organic unity among the workers to prepare them to challenge the bourgeois State power. On the contrary, Gramsci observes- as it really happened during

18. Ibid, p.265 and p.101.

the factory council movement—that the union leadership due to its fear of being challenged and expelled from the privileged position it occupies, tends to view the proletarian mass struggles with awe and contempt.¹⁹ This leads Gramsci to conclude that the unions, apart from being incapable of serving as institutions for revolutionary preparation, tend to be retrogressive due to their specific character and distance from the spontaneous mass struggles. The unions, in effect, reproduce bourgeois hegemony by perpetuating reformism and economism in the working class life and never visualise the transformation of the working class into a hegemonic force.

19. "In Italian conditions, the trade union official sees industrial legality as a permanent state of affairs. Too often he defends it from the same perspective as the proprietor. He sees only chaos and wilfulness in everything that happens amongst the working masses. He does not universalize the worker's act of rebellion against capitalist discipline as rebellion; he perceives only the physical act, which might in itself be trivial...In these conditions the trade-union discipline can be nothing other than a service rendered to capital; in these conditions any attempt to subordinate the councils to the trade unions can only be judged as reactionary" (SPW).

"The trade union has an essentially competitive, not communist, character. It cannot be the instrument for a radical renovation of society. It can provide the proletariat with skilled buraucrats, and with technical experts on general industrial matters, but it cannot form the basis of proletarian power. It offers no scope for the selection of proletarian individuals who are capable and worthy of running society. It cannot throw up the hierarchies which will embody the clan vital and the rhythm of progress of communist society". (SPW, pp.99-100).

Gramsci's Critique of Parliamentarism

To examine Gramsci's position on parliamentarism, it is necessary to make the following observations:

Firstly, the proletarian revolution cannot be embodied in the institutions of the bourgeois society and the institutions to found the proletarian State and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat have to be internal to the working class as an expression of the development of the 'internal dialectic' of the proletarian life activity itself.²⁰ Therefore, the

20. For Gramsci, the proletarian revolution is the unfolding of 'destruction/reconstruction' dialectic. It has to, on the one hand, aim at the dissolution of the bourgeois State and its institutions at the level of politics and at the same time weakening its economic base. On the other hand the proletarian revolution must elaborate its own

the institutions of the bourgeois parliamentary system cannot serve a strategic purpose for proletarian revolution.

Secondly, the bourgeois legality has a concrete material basis; since it has not yet been transcended in reality, its institutions must be utilised as tactical means by the revolutionary party to reach the masses and to wage a propaganda struggle against the

20.(f.n.contd)

institutions by organising the workers and training them to take up the task of running the future State. This preparation has to be realised within capitalism. Therefore proletarian revolution, according to Gramsci is not an 'event' identified with the capturing of the Winter Palace. On the contrary, being a process, it involves a colossal pre-revolutionary preparation. In other words, proletarian revolution is the creation of the proletarian hegemony.

cf. Lenin, State and Revolution and Colletti, L, 'Lenin's State and Revolution' from Russia to Lenin.

bourgeois state by participating in its institutions.²¹

The formulation of strategy and tactics for proletarian revolution has to be based on the concrete analysis of the overall social reality at a particular historical conjuncture. Gramsci, in his critique of the reformist parliamentary practice of the PSI,

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21. The role of parliamentary group of a revolutionary party has to be essentially negative. By using the parliamentary platform the proletarian party has to wage a revolutionary criticism against the State and remove the democratic mask away from the ambivalent face of the bourgeois dictatorship and reveal it in all its horrible and repugnant ugliness" (SPW, p.128); by doing so shed the masses of their democratic illusions. This parliamentary group, according to Gramsci, cannot act as an independent centre; instead it has to be under the party discipline and supervision. The revolutionary party being the guiding force or vanguard of the revolutionary movement would only be able to control and direct the 'war of position'. Hence an independent parliamentary action is denied. What had gone wrong with the PSI was that, being preoccupied with electoral politics, it defined itself in terms of its parliamentary gains and never attempted to supersede the limits of the bourgeois legality; instead it was subsumed by it. "The gravest error of the socialist movement was...Participating in the general activity of the human society within the State the socialists forgot that their role had to be essentially one of criticism, on anti thesis. Instead of mastering reality, they allowed themselves to be absorbed by it" SPW, p. 75.

relates it to two important factors, which according to him have caused the bankruptcy of the social democratic practice in the working class history:

(i) the failure of the PSI to understand the concrete transformation of the working class movement and capitalism itself in the post-war period; (ii) this failure not being an innocent one but rather having sprouted from its theoretical perspective, informed by the theory of breakdown. This deterministic theory and abstract generalisations on concrete questions have led to reformism in everyday practice. The result is that the socialist party, instead of becoming an organisational expression of the proletarian revolution, remained within the bourgeois reality, forgetting that its activity has to be directed against it. It is reflected not only in its theory and practice but in its organisational structure as well which betrays the characteristics of the parliamentary State. This theme echoes throughout Gramsci's political writings.

"The socialists have simply accepted, and frequently in a supine fashion, the historical reality produced by capitalist initiative. They have acquired the same mistaken mentality as the liberal economists: they believe in the perpetuity and fundamental perfection

of the institutions of the democratic State. In their view, the form of these democratic institutions can be corrected, touched upon here and there, but in fundamentals must be respected. An example of this narrow minded conceit is evident in Filippo Turati's Minoan judgement that Parliament stands in relation to the Soviet like the city to the barbarian horde" (SPW, p. 76; see also SPW, p. 88).

The Bordiga-led faction took a position of the other extreme. It denied any possibility of tactically utilising the parliamentary platform for revolutionary propaganda. Divorced from the concrete political situation, Bordiga failed to realise that in the changing situation the parliamentary institutions, though transcended in an historical sense, were still playing a significant role in the everyday political life as they were not superseded in the immediate political sense. Therefore they cannot be simply ignored.²²

22. Lenin writes: "Comrade Bordiga, and his 'left' friends draw from their correct criticism of Turati and company the wrong conclusion that any participation in the parliament is harmful in principle".

The reasons for the failure of the reformist leadership and the ultra-left faction to pose the question of proletarian revolution in a concrete, overall perspective has to be seen in the absence of a conception of totality. These political positions dealt with the question of proletarian revolution only in a partial way. The understanding of the bourgeois State was lopsided due to the instrumentalist view of the State, which was the logical outcome of the economistic problematic. The result was the identification of the State with the parliamentary institutions and politics with parliamentary politics.

'politics' became synonymous with parliamentary politics or the politics of personal cliques. Conviction that the constitutions and parliaments had initiated an epoch of "natural" "evolution", that society had discovered its definitive, because rational, foundations, etc. And, lo and behold, society can now be studied with the methods of the natural sciences! Impoverishment of the concept of the State which ensued from such views. If political science ~~of means science of~~ the State, and the State is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules... (SPN, pp 243-4)

Gramsci in his critique of parliamentarism, views parliamentary abstentionism and the intrasigent position as merely different forms of economism.

Here a correspondence or a parallel can be identified with his critique of liberal democracy. For Gramsci, both are based on the same conviction that the social development is governed by the objective laws on par with the natural laws. This has given rise to ' a belief in a predetermined teleology' and a belief that socialism is objectively inevitable irrespective of the subjective intentions of the masses thereby undermining the significance of mass participation.

In the West, where the preparation for the war of position is a strategic necessity given the fact that bourgeois 'civil hegemony' is strong, adherence to an instrumentalist view of the State is fatal for revolutionary praxis. The result of this conception of State identified with governmental institutions is the failure to see the dynamics of mass movement and the revolutionization of their politics. In parliamentary reformism, we have seen an effort to capture the State machinery by gaining electoral & victory, thereby becoming one with the existing reality. On the other hand, in the ultra left position we find an effort to destroy the bourgeois State without any elaborate preparation for

the war of position. Due to the 'mechanicism' inherent in the intransigent position, Bordiga never understood the tactical significance of "compromises" and alliances. As a result of a binary view of class struggle, for Bordiga the importance of tactical alliances of an 'inessential' nature- i.e. which do not disturb the unity of revolutionary process- are ruled out because the proletariat would bring about socialism by itself without any alliance with other classes following the objective laws of social evolution:

" One point which should be added as an example of the so called intransigence theories is the rigid aversion on principle to what are termed compromises and the derivation of this, which can be termed 'fear of dangers'. It is clear that this aversion on principle to compromise is closely linked to economism. For the conception upon which the aversion is based can only be the iron conviction that there exist objective laws of historical development similar in kind to natural laws, together with a belief in a predetermined teleology like that of a religion: since favourable conditions are inevitably going to appear, and since

these, in a rather mysterious way, will bring about palingenetic events, it is evident that any deliberate initiative tending to predispose and plan these conditions is not only useless but even harmful...(what logically flows from this is)... a belief that the intervention of will is useful for destruction but not for reconstruction (already under way in the very moment of destruction). Destruction is conceived of mechanically, not as "destruction/reconstruction" (SPN, pp.167-68).

Gramsci, on the contrary, poses the problem differently. For him, the State is a complex reality, a 'social power' originating from and deeply rooted in complex social relations. Given the complexity of the nature of social development and the hegemonic influence in advanced capitalism, the question of proletarian revolution cannot simply be posed in pure class terms. What is necessary is the political mobilisation of all the anti-capitalist forces under the leadership of the proletariat and the elaboration of its own intellectual strata to wage a counter-hegemonic struggle against the bourgeois social order and to build the proletarian hegemony. Through this process the revolutionary party

has to become the living embodiment of the 'national popular collective will'. Any revolutionary strategy would be mechanical and unilateral if it fails to take account of the bourgeois State and society in its complexity and entirety. The revolutionary process does not form a 'straight line', but on the contrary, it involves a complex strategy: firstly, the weakening of the bourgeois hegemonic influence and the mass consent for its rule; secondly, the expansion of the proletarian hegemonic influence - which can be called a mass line approach. They are not two separate aspects but form part of a unified revolutionary process. This is broadly the basis of Gramsci's factory council strategy.

Gramsci's Critique of Syndicalism

Can syndicalism be an alternative to the reformist trade unionism and electoralist strategy of the social democracy? The answer we obtain from Gramsci, in the form of criticism, seen in the historical context of Gramsci's political activity- the accusations of Gramsci being a syndicalist for his views on the councils- gives us an important insight into his own conception of revolutionary political praxis and philosophy of praxis.

Syndicalism, according to Gramsci cannot be a revolutionary alternative to the trade union reformism because it is another manifestation of economism and an aspect of laissez-faire capitalism.

Despite its ineptness to pose the question of proletarian power correctly and effectively, the trade unionism at least succeeded in ameliorating the material conditions of the workers within capitalism. Syndicalism, on the contrary, in spite of all its revolutionary pretensions, only served the interests of the bourgeoisie by making the workers politically passive to their own detriment, for in effect, it had only attempted to divert the working class movement from the prevalent reformism for the worse, and disorient the proletariat by cutting it adrift from its concrete struggles.

"...so long as the propertied class and the democratic-parliamentary State are dictating the laws of history, any attempt to remove oneself from the sphere of operation of these laws is insane and ridiculous. There is no denying the fact that within the general configuration of an industrial

society, each man can actively participate in affairs and modify his surroundings only to the extent that he operates as an individual and citizen, as a member of the democratic-parliamentary State... The apoliticism of the apoliticals was merely a degeneration^{ne} of politics... The syndicalists worked outside of reality, and hence their politics were fundamentally mistaken. On the other hand, the parliamentary socialists worked in close contact with events, and while they could make mistakes, "succeeded in their attempt to "transform the proletariat into something...(from)...nothing, to give it an awareness, to point the liberation movement firmly and enthusiastically in the direction corresponding in its general lines to the process of historical development of human society." SPW, pp. 74-75(emphasis added).

Syndicalism, through its abstract revolutionism 'presenting itself as the initiation of a 'sponteneist", libertarian tradition,'retards the revolutionary potential of the working class. It is a more pernicious tendency within the working class movement because through its "apoliticism," it renders the proletariat

politically passive and prevents it from becoming a hegemonic class.

"Here we are dealing with a subaltern group, which is prevented from this theory (syndicalism) from ever becoming dominant, or from developing beyond the economic-corporate stage and rising to the phase of ethical-political hegemony in civil society, and of domination of the State" (SPN, p.160).

Gramsci locates the main weakness or limitation of the syndicalist position in the absence of a conception of the State. Herein lies the inability of syndicalism to prepare the working class for the revolutionary task of destroying the bourgeois State and reconstructing a new proletariat State. Syndicalism, conceiving proletarian emancipation as the outcome of the working class spontaneity unfolding through the unions, never posed the question of politics, the terrain on which the class struggle takes place. What distinguishes the 'philosophy of praxis' from other working class ideologies is that for the former, revolutionary practice has to be shaped and directed by the strategic question

of the State.²³

This takes us to the next problem in our enquiry: How does Gramsci view the revolutionary practice of the working class in its every day activity? What are the institutions capable of embodying this process? We shall discuss in the next chapter the following problems: (1) the conception of revolution as a process- the process dimension of revolution; (2) the revolutionisation of the every day life of the workers; (3) the factory council as the institution for the unfolding of revolutionary process.

23. Lukacs observes: "The great flaw in syndicalist thinking is that it localises the antagonism between labour and exploitation, centering it on the immediate area of exploitation, the factory. Hence it confronts the workers only with the capitalist State. Thus it is that syndicalism, although it emerged as opposition to the opportunism of social-democratic parties, has never managed to overcome precisely the essence of this opportunism. It must be now be evident to every Marxist who can think properly that the salient difference between reformism and revolution lies precisely in the understanding and assessment of the capitalist State. Only by falsely judging the State, as a struggle for, rather than a struggle against, the State. However, in rejecting (correctly) parliamentary-cum-oppositional opportunism, the syndicalists also rejected all forms of meaningful political activity. In doing so, they have in essence put themselves on the same footing as the opportunists after all: apolitical ideology of syndicalism". Lukacs, G, 'The Crisis in Syndicalism in Italy', Political Writings, p84.

CHAPTER -IV

FACTORY COUNCILS, CONCEPTION OF REVOLUTION AND
REVOLUTIONIZATION OF EVERY DAY POLITICAL PRACTICE

In the earlier chapters we have discussed the conception of the 'actuality of revolution' in the context of the post-war Italy and the inadequacy of the reformist political practice of the PSI to cope with the changing situation and the causes for its being absorbed in every day life within capitalism rather than orienting it to the 'future' on communist principles. This raises an important question: how to restructure the working class every day activity to prepare the proletariat for revolution ?

With this question in mind, we shall examine the concept of proletarian revolution, especially in its process dimension. This necessitates an elaborate discussion of (a) the pre-revolutionary preparation as an essential phase in the revolutionary process; (b) the question of proletarian revolutionary organisation, i.e, the factory council and its relation to the working class State; (c) the unification of the working class activity through communist political practice and thereby evolving voluntary discipline

and a sense of moral responsibility on the part of the masses to organise production and society after the revolution through their own institutions which are essentially non-repressive and democratic;

(d) the relationship between the spontaneous common sense world view and the proletarian consciousness; and

(e) the concept of everyday political practice.

The Proletariat State as the Creation of Proletarian Revolution.

Gramsci's conception of revolution has at its centre the strategic question of the State. The proletarian revolution is viewed as the unfolding of the destruction-reconstruction dialectic: the destruction of the bourgeois State and the creation of the socialist State. It is a process in which these two aspects need to be realised. Negatively, the proletarian revolution involves a systematic destruction of the bourgeois State and the abolition of private property and every social relation based on it. This can be only accomplished fully with the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and positively, it necessitate the development and coordination of the institutions which embody the principle of socialism to

counterpose as an alternative reality creating non-alienated and non-repressive work-process within capitalism and facilitates the transcendence of bourgeois hegemony by unifying the entire working class as a class of producers as against the prevailing division of labour.

The capitalist State alienates human beings from one another and reifies human relations into relations between objects. The possibility of transcending alienation is absent in its institutional structures. This phenomenon of alienation is 'total' in capitalism, in the sense that every sphere of human activity is compartmentalised and the possibility of integrating these spheres and experiencing life activity as a unified process is rendered impossible within the institutions of the bourgeois State. The division of labour in capitalism is the source of alienation of man from himself, that is from his own labour and from his fellow men. Man, as a result, loses his intrinsic human nature. He does not view himself as the creator of history. On the contrary, being under bourgeois hegemony, he can only perceive or understand himself as an object- as one determined by

the social conditions which otherwise, are products of his own praxis. This is also reflected in the every day life of an individual who takes his every day activity as an end in itself. In bourgeois democracy, the participation in the political activity, as we have observed in the earlier chapter, is not associated with the labour process. In other words, the role of a citizen is not related to his activity as a producer. The proletarian revolution has to negate this reified reality and reified consciousness of the people in capitalism. In other words, revolution has to become a living experience, through which the worker realises his potentiality and acquires the consciousness of the subject, the producer. But the traditional proletarian institutions are inherently inadequate to unfold this process, because they operate within the boundaries of the bourgeois parliamentary State and are subjected to the reified laws of the bourgeois society.

Proletarian revolution can only unfold through the institutions which embody the principles of 'combination and solidarity' expressing the unity of the working class. These institutions have to originate

from the 'associative experience of the working class' itself. Gramsci discovers them in the internal commissions which originated in the factory system in the early years of this century in Italy. The internal commissions transformed into factory councils would serve as the basis of the proletarian revolution by transcending the reified life activity manifest in the division of labour maintained by the bourgeois hegemony.

Proletarian State Emerging from the Collective life of the Working Class

These institutions, which, for Gramsci form the 'nucleus' of proletarian State, are present within the working class life itself.

The socialist State already exists potentially in the institutions of social life characteristic of the exploited working class. To link these institutions, co-ordinating and ordering them into a highly centralised hierarchy of competence and powers, while respecting the necessary autonomy and articulation of each ~~is to~~ is to create a genuine workers' democracy here and now- a workers' democracy in effective and active opposition to the bourgeois State, and prepared to replace it here and now in all its essential functions of administering and controlling the national heritage (SPWI, p.65).

We have discussed in the earlier chapters that the capitalist State, based on private property and

division of labour, has amply been demonstrated to be historically incompatible with the changed post-war reality leading to the socialisation of production and the unity of the masses, thereby necessitating its replacement by an entirely different set of social institutions corresponding to the newly emerging social forces. This revolutionary phenomenon, according to Gramsci, cannot be limited to the institutional structures alone, but has to be accompanied by the transformation of the existing ones towards a qualitatively different type of social relations involving a constant restructuring of both. In other words, the establishment of the socialist State does not mean simply the replacement of the capitalist institutions by a new set of structures but the demolition of the social relations by unifying the entire working class. Herein lies the significance of the factory councils:

The internal commissions are organs of workers' democracy which must be freed from the limitations imposed on them by the entrepreneurs, and ~~infused~~ infused with new life and energy. Today the internal commissions limit the power of the capitalist in the factory and performs the functions of arbitration and discipline. Tomorrow, developed and enriched, they must be the organs of proletarian power, replacing the capitalist in all his useful functions of management and administration(SPW I, p.66, emphasis added)

These institutions, according to Gramsci, being 'State oriented' are capable of replacing " the private and public institutions of the parliamentary democratic State. The very institutions which will replace the person of the capitalist in his administrative functions and his industrial power, and so achieve the autonomy of the producer in the factory. Institutions capable of taking over the management of all the functions inherent in the complex system of relations of production and exchange that link the various workshops of a factory together to form a basic economic unit, link together the various activities of the agricultural industry, and through horizontal and vertical planning and international economy, liberated from the obstructive and parasitical tyranny of the private property owners ".(SPW p.77)

The fundamental objective of the revolutionary activity of the proletariat, Gramsci argues in his Factory Council writings, is the establishment of the socialist State, not on the basis of the institutions arbitrarily chosen, but on the contrary, they should be organic part of the collective activity "generated by the associative experience of the proletarian class" (SPWI p.76) This is also because it is the dynamics of

mass movement which show the direction of history.

Economism as Degeneration of Politics

The view point that the proletarian State has to be based on the institutions internal to the working class as an expression of 'its own internal dialectic' is what differentiates Gramsci's theory from the then prevalent working class theories. Gramsci's critique of reformist, syndicalist, intransigence theories and the problematic of 'spontaneism', as we have shown in the earlier chapter, is essentially a critique of economism. Economism manifests itself in these different forms in the history of the international working class movement. But what characterises it, principally, is the failure to visualise the dialectical inter-relatedness or unity of different activities in the society due to the fact that it takes the division of labour and the resultant fragmentation of class struggle for something 'permanent'. The consequence is not only the failure to pose the strategic question of the 'conquest of State' decisively by unifying the working class activity and totalising its collective experience but also the reinforcement of the bourgeois hegemony on the working class by integrating it into the capitalist system.

Implicit in the economistic problematic is the understanding of revolution as an event. This, through its 'breakdown' theory of revolution presents the proletarian revolution as a final event i.e as a culmination of the inner contradictions of capitalism; socialist society is inevitable from such a crisis because it is the stage which follows capitalism in the development of human society. This theme is also implicit in the spontaneist problematic with certain variations. The fatalism and mechanical determinism, professed by the 'breakdown' theory, as a faith in the inevitability of socialism, inculcates optimism and becomes a tremendous force of moral resistance for the revolutionary activists and masses during the period of defeat and failure of revolution because of the belief that ' " I have been defeated for the moment, but the tide of history is working for me in the long term" ' (SPN.P.336) Given the 'mechanicism' in this approach, it also renders men inactive in a revolutionary situation.

The danger involved in this approach is that, by underrating the resilience of capitalism, it invariably undermines the importance of conscious political preparation

and the necessity of organising the proletarian masses to pose a concrete alternative to the capitalist State. This is because of the assumption that the socialisation of the means of production is necessarily followed by the socialist transformation of the relations of production, as a result of the primacy given to the development of the productive forces. The productive forces reaching a certain level of development must necessarily lead to the socialist relations of production due to their incompatibility with the private ownership. As a result, it also assumes a corresponding change in the psychic structure of man in socialism. In other words, the fundamental transformation in the social ownership is assumed to be creating a new socialist man, thereby it underestimated the complexity of human psychology and moral factors in man.¹

Revolution as a process

Gramsci's conception is a negation of the economic problematic. As against the positivistic understanding of revolution as being ^{the} culmination of the capitalist crisis, he views revolution as a process.

1. See Erich Fromm, The sane Society, p.264

From this reconstitution of the process dimension of revolution flows the extension or development of the concept of revolutionary subjectivity and the primacy of revolutionisation of every day practice. The point of departure for the elaboration of the theory of revolution, in Gramsci, is Lenin's State and Revolution. From this develops Gramsci's theory of factory councils.

The proletarian revolution as a process, for Gramsci, consists of the dissolution of the bourgeois social order and the creation of a new proletarian order as two interrelated phases based on the concrete historical conditions and institutions originating therefrom. Revolutionary praxis, therefore, has been moulded and transformed with the aim of establishing the proletarian State power by negating the capitalist State and by transcending the alienated labour process through alternative structures. This process, according to Gramsci, has to be initiated within the bourgeois society. But of course, it would be accomplished only with the establishment of socialist State and society.

In an article entitled 'Two Revolutions' Gramsci, refuting an instrumentalist definition of revolution, maintains:

1... that the revolution is not necessarily proletarian and communist simply because it proposes and achieves the overthrow of the political government of the bourgeois State; 2. nor is it proletarian and communist simply because it proposes and achieves the destruction of the representative institutions and administrative machinery through which the central government exercises the political power of the bourgeoisie; 3. It is not proletarian and communist even if the wave of popular insurrection places power in the hands of men who call themselves (and sincerely are) communists. (SPWI p.305)

Quite the contrary, proletarian revolution for Gramsci, has to be defined as the establishment of the proletarian State based on the fundamental changes in production system, which would facilitate the process of creation of new human social relations:

The revolution is proletarian and communist only to the extent that it is a liberation of the proletarian and communist forces of production that were developing within the very heart of the society dominated by the capitalist class. It is proletarian and communist in so far as it advances and promotes the expansion and systematization of proletarian and communist forces that are capable of beginning the patient and methodical work needed to build a new order in the relations of production and distribution: a new order in which a class divided society will become an impossibility

and whose systematic development will therefore eventually coincide with the withering away of state power, i.e, with the systematic dissolution of the political organization that defends the proletarian class, while the latter itself dissoles as a class to become mankind. (SPWI p.305)

Once the proletarian revolution is defined as the realisation of the communist society it obviously follows that the revolutionary political practice of the working class was to be moulded by organising the working class and making it increasingly conscious of the necessity of realising this objective. This process can't be realised independently of every day practice, instead, only through it, by consciously reorienting the working class every day life towards this end. Recaptulating Gramsci's critique of the traditional working class organisations, it must be pointed out that in the earlier phase, the working class in its everyday activity was limited to the objective of achieving 'better' living conditions within capitalism by accepting all the tenets of bourgeois legality. To achieve socialism, it is necessary to revolutionize the working class life by drifting away from this limited legal activity to one based on a qualitatively different

set of principles. It is, therefore, necessary to view the worker as a producer^{and} no longer as a wage earner. This counter position of the worker as a producer to the worker as a wage earner is the basis of Gramsci's conception of revolutionary praxis and the essence of his Marxism.²

The understanding that the revolutionary situation was present in the post-war Italy, reached as a result of the analysis of monopoly capitalism in its specific relation to the Italian social reality, presents the proletarian revolution as a concrete problem. In this context it would be necessary to state two basic propositions of historical materialism: that no society poses problems and sets tasks until it has produced the means for its solution and that no society disappears before it has exhausted all of its potentialities. For Gramsci, the post-war reality amply demonstrated the historical inability and outdateness of the bourgeoisie to resolve the crisis in the bourgeois hegemony and social order. Alternatively in this situation, there have developed new forms of social order to replace capitalism, Gramsci discovers the socialist institutional structure in the factory

2. See Nicolai Badaloni, 'Gramsci's theory of revolution', Chantal Mouffe(ed), Gramsci and Marxist theory, p.88.

council as a fundamental unit for the founding of the new State. What is pertinent to be noted in Gramsci's conception of councils is that the monopoly capitalism inspite of being a global development andthe revolutionary situation being created, ^{thereby,} the main basis of class struggle has not shifted from the factory. In other words, the factory, being the site of class struggle characterised by labour-capital contradiction, has to be the basis of the organisation of the proletarian State.

Proletarian Revolution to be rooted in the Production Process:

In his conception of factory councils, Gramsci maintains that theproletarian revolution being essentially antithetical to the bourgeois democracy can't be embodied in the institutions which,are its affirmations(i.e, the trade union and parliamentary organisations p.51) that is, express an abstract relationshp between citizens and thereby conceal the deeper class antagonism and inequalities. Instead the revolutionary organisations have to originate from the production sphere, as an expression of the true class reality, in which the workers participate as members of a class whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of the capitalists.

The revolutionary process takes place in the sphere of production, in the factory, where the relations are those of oppressor to oppressed, exploiter to exploited, where the freedom of the worker does not exist and democracy does not exist (SPWI p.261 emphasis added)

The working class as a fundamental social class can attain its unity and become an opposition to capitalism only by organising itself in the production process and thereby continuing itself, through its representative institutions, as the working class State.

It...discovers itself, acquiring consciousness of its organic unity and counterposing itself as a whole to capitalism. The working class asserts in this way that industrial power and its source ought to return to the factory. It presents the factory in a new light, from the workers point of view, as a form in which the working class constitutes itself into a specific organic body as the cell of a new state and as the basis of a new representative system- the system of councils (SPWI p.263)

Gramsci adds;

The workers' State, since it arises in accordance with a given pattern of production has within it the seeds of its own development of its own dissolution as a State and of its organic incorporation into a world system- the Communist International (SPWI p.263 emphasis added)

Factory Councils to Transcend the Fragmentation of Class Struggle:

In capitalism, the worker participate~~s~~ in the production process as an "instrument of production". He is treated as a commodity to be sold and bought in the competitive labour market. Following the logic of division of labour in capitalism, the working class is mechanically fragmented into different strata on the basis of industrial skills and specialisations individual workers possess, determined by the necessities of the capitalist production system. The trade unions reflect this state of the working class activity.

In the factory, the working class becomes a given 'instrument of production' in a given organic system. Each worker comes to play a part in this system 'by chance' by chance as regards his own intentions, but not by chance as regards the job he does, since he represents a given necessity in the labour and productive process. This the only way he is taken on, this is the only way he can earn his bread. He is always in the division of labour machine, in the working class constituted as an instrument of production (SPWI.p.262-3 emphasis added).

The fundamental thesis in Gramscian conception of revolution is the unity of workers. The unity of workers can't be achieved outside the production system because only through it, it is possible to realise for the worker essential role which he plays in production

as a producer. For Gramsci, it is not possible to achieve this unity of producers as long as the division of labour in capitalism, reflected in the trade union organisation of workers on craft basis is ^{not} transcended. Treating labour as a "commodity" "whose price, whose value, is set by the free play of competition in a national and international market" the trade union succeeds only in inducing 'I -consciousness' or we-objects' consciousness. In other words it succeeds only in organising the workers into a 'bloc' or a linear seriality but near into an organic class of producers, as subjects of history. On the contrary, it is necessary to organise the workers by evolving a producer consciousness in them; only then they would be able to realise their historical significance and to form a collective will ~~be~~ confront the bourgeois State and given the development of history. In the following passage Gramsci presents a graphic description of this process.

The worker can see himself as a producer only if he sees himself as an inseparable part of the whole labour system which is concentrated in the object being manufactured, and only if he experiences the unity of the industrial process which in toto demands collaboration between manual workers, skilled workers, administrative employees, engineers and technical directors. The worker will see himself as a producer if after he has

(contd)

become psychologically part of a particular productive process in a particular factory... and has come to think of himself as a necessary and indispensable factor in the activity of the social complex producing (say) the car- he can now go one stage further and comprehend the whole of the...car-manufacturing process... Starting off from this original cell, the factory, seen as a unit as an act that creates a particular product, the worker proceeds to the comprehension of even vaster units, right up to the level of the nation itself-which is in its entirety a gigantic apparatus of production...At this point the worker has become a producer, for he has acquired an awareness of his role in the process of production, at all its levels, from the workshop to the nation and the world. At this point he is aware of his class, he becomes a communist, because productivity does not require private property; he becomes a revolutionary, because he sees the capitalist, the private-property owner, as a deadhand, an encumbrance on the productive process, which must be done away with. At this point he arrives at a conception of the "State", i.e he conceives a complex organisation of society, a concrete form of society...(SPWI p.110-111 emphasis added)

Through his participation in the factory council, the worker not only comprehends the complexity of the bourgeois production and the State but also organises himself as an indispensable, organic part of the formation of the proletarian State. Thereby, he cultivates the socialist discipline and learns how to

run the State and to organise the society after the revolution on socialist principles. The factory council becomes the organisational basis for the transition to socialism and for the proletarian state, besides being an institution to impart revolutionary experience and training:

The proletarian dictatorship can only be embodied in a type of organisation that is specific to the activity of producers, not wage-earners the slaves of capital. The factory council is the nucleus of this organisation. For all sectors of the labour process are represented in the council, in proportion to the contribution each craft and each labour sector makes to the manufactures of the object the factory is producing for the collectivity. The council is a class, a social institution... Hence the council realizes in practice the unity of of the working class; it gives the masses the same form and cohesion they adopt in the general organisation of society. (SPWI p.100)

Proletarian Consciousness and Common Sense

In his Ordine Nuovo writings, Gramsci sees the significance of the factory council as an institution which serves the purpose of the collective education of the masses through which they acquire the consciousness of a ruling class—a collective historical personality. The workers acquire the mentality of a ruling class through a sharing of their experience and mutual interaction with fellow workers. The factory council

facilitates this process in the work-place itself, because "any revolutionary work has a chance of succeeding only to the degree that it is based on the necessities of their life and on the needs of their culture".(SPW p.86)

Gramsci starts with the premise that elements to be developed into a coherent world view of the working class are present in and 'embryonic' form within the everyday thinking of the workers. The point of departure for the revolutionary vanguard in organising the proletariat into a 'hegemonic' class has to be the every day 'commonsense' world view of the masses.*

Gramsci differentiates 'common sense' from 'good sense'. By common sense he means the composite, disjointed and internally inconsistent body of ideas and beliefs which have been uncritically and unconsciously

*. Reflecting on the achievement of Ordine Nuovo, Gramsci remarks: ...Our work has been of value to the extent that it has satisfied a need, and has helped to give concrete expression to an aspiration that was latent in the consciousness of the working masses. This is why we were so rapidly understood; this why the transition from discussion to realization was effected so rapidly.(SPWI,p.94 emphasis added)

absorbed from the 'environment'. The ideologies of the ruling classes which are in vogue due to their intellectual superiority, govern the thought and action of the subaltern classes in any historical period. In other words, the ideology of the ruling class becomes the ruling ideology of an epoch. Given the intellectual, moral and material supremacy of the bourgeois, the proletariat comes under the hegemony of the ruling classes. 'good sense', on the contrary, refers to the 'practical-critical' element that is present in the everyday common sense thought -process of the proletariat. It has a positive correspondence to the practical activity of the masses, of course, with its critical edge being blunted by the amorphous common sense conception.

Gramsci presents a highly optimistic and humanistic view of man. For him, "all men are philosophers" because every one can think and act in a particular milieu, to which he belongs, by conforming to its norms, however unconsciously and uncritically one may do. This is evident from the very fact that one articulates oneself in a language, which by its very structure contains 'a specific

conception of the world' (SPN p.323). This does not rule out the possibility of making it internally consistent because everyone is potentially capable of making his world view consistent with his practical activity.

In advanced capitalism, the hegemony and the intellectual and moral supremacy of the bourgeoisie holds the subaltern classes in subordination by perpetuating its own cultural values on these classes. As a result of this, the proletarian masses fail to acquire consciousness of their own practical activity atleast in a coherent form -but succeed only in an occasional and 'episodic' manner:

The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to (atleast p provisional stages of) unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups; it therefore can only be demonstrated when an historical cycle is completed and this cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success. Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up: only "permanent" victory breaks their subordination and that not immediately"(SPN pp.54-55)

As a result of the dominance of bourgeois hegemony on the working class common sense world view, there

there develops a gap between the thought and action of the working masses which renders the formation of their collective personality difficult without which they would not be able to execute their will in the transformation of social reality. The consequence of this is the political passivity of the masses:

The active man-in-the mass has a practical activity, but has no theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding of the world in so far as it transforms it. His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousness (or one contradictory consciousness); one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. But this verbal conception is not without consequences. It holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of will, with varying efficacy but often powerfully enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or any choices and produces a condition of moral and political passivity. (SPN p.333)

Commonsense, according to Gramsci, is incapable of becoming an intellectual order on its own, in its givenness. As it is essentially fragmentary and composite, it fails to become a coherent and unified worldview by itself either in the individual or collective consciousness.

The traditional Marxist theory, including that of Lenin, viewed socialist consciousness as external to the world view of the masses. Lenin, in his What Is To Be Done, argues that the proletariat on its own can acquire only trade union consciousness through its every day struggles. Gramsci differs with Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg on the question of class consciousness and the relationship of intellectuals with the party, and their role in the transformation of the proletariat from 'class-in-itself' to 'class- for-itself'.

We shall begin by examining the two passages from Lenin's What is to be done which state his position

(Q I) There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of working class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology...for the spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism, as Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei, and enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence our task, the task of social Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working class movement from this spontaneous trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy (p 41)

(Q.II) ...there could not have been Social Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation etc. The theory

of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia" (pp 31-32)

In the aforementioned passages two themes can be indentified. Firstly, that the working class does not acquire socialist consciousness from its own activity in the facotry production but it has to be introduced from the wider social sphere('from without')than the factory.

Secondly, that the intellectuals (of non-proletarian background) have to bring this consciousness to the masses 'from without'. In other words, intellectuals functioning as the members of the revolutionary vanguard act as 'agency' in the percolation of socialist consciousness into the working class. Rosa Luxemburg, on the contrary, identifies the spontaneous working class consciousness, emanating from its concrete struggle with true revolutionary consciousness. It is not the organisation as a conscious agency which makes the workers conscious of their revolutionary responsibility, on the contrary, truely revolutionary organisation is

a genuine expression of the working class activity.³
 On these two propositions Lenin and Luxemburg hold diametrically opposite points of view.

Gramsci views the problem of development of proletarian consciousness from a different angle altogether. He argues that the 'philosophy of praxis' is not in opposition to the common sense of men because the difference between them is not an essential one. The transformation of the latter therefore, is possible through a cultural and ideological interaction with the former.

It (Marxism) can't be in opposition to them. Between the two there is a "quantitative" difference of degree, not one of quality. A reciprocal 'reduction'... a passage from one to the other and vice-versa, must be possible (SPN p.199)

In Gramsci's view of factory councils we find a refutation of the view that any spontaneous movement generates only the trade union consciousness. According to Gramsci, the spontaneous working class movement, it is amply demonstrated by the factory council movement, is the correct 'indicator of the direction of the historical movement'. Gramsci viewed the factory council movement as a spontaneous grass-root revolt against the

3. for an account of Rosa Luxemburg's conception see Mattick, Paul Anti-Bolshevik Communism, p.44.

dominant bureaucratic trade union leadership of the socialist movement in Italy and as essentially anti-capitalist in its spirit. This historical consciousness has emanated spontaneously from the conditions of class struggle in post-war Italy, thereby going against the leadership of the dominant socialist organisations. This is not to say that Gramsci adhered to Luxemburgian problematic of 'spontaneism'. Before we deal with Gramsci's conception, it would be appropriate to point out that for Gramsci it is undialectical to think that it is necessary to imbibe socialist consciousness into the working class, as it is to take the spontaneous consciousness for the revolutionary consciousness.

The working class common sense consciousness, inspite of being contaminated by bourgeois hegemony contains in itself a positive critical nucleus, which if developed and made sharper can lead to the transformation of the heterogeneous and composite world view into a coherent and 'autonomous' proletarian consciousness. For Gramsci, the development of revolutionary consciousness in the masses is not the result of the introduction or 'imputing' of socialist consciousness into the workers. On the contrary, the

the elements of revolutionary consciousness are already present in the everyday thought process of the individual workers in a rudimentary and embryonic form contaminated by the bourgeois ideologies. This should be the basis of the reconstitution or renovation of common sense. Through a constant criticism of the non-proletarian ideologies influencing the working class, the philosophy of praxis becomes the conception of the subaltern masses by transcending commonsense.

A philosophy of praxis can't but present itself at the outset in a polemical and critical guise, as superseding the existing mode of thinking and existing concrete thought (the existing cultural world)... therefore, it must be a criticism of 'common sense' basing itself initially, however, on common sense in order to demonstrate that "everyone" is a philosopher and that it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life, but of renovating and making "critical" an already existing activity" (SPN p.330-1 emphasis added)

Gramsci identifies different levels on the terrain of ideological class struggle. The critique of mass culture and common sense has to be accompanied by that of high culture that is, 'the philosophy of the intellectuals' (SPN p.331). The philosophy of praxis can become a hegemonic force only by waging, struggle on the mass and intellectual cultural front:

"every revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism by the diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas among the masses of men"(SPWI p.12)

These two are complementary to each other because there always exists a reciprocal relationship between them. It is possible to establish the proletarian hegemony only through an ideological and cultural struggle against the bourgeois hegemony, with the aim of dismantling the unity based on the latter.

In actual fact one immediate result is achieved, in that the unity based on traditional ideology is broken; until this happens, it is impossible for the new forces to arrive at a consciousness of their own independent personality(SPN p.136)

Here Gramsci differs with Lenin. For Lenin, the proletarian cultural revolution or the 'intellectual and moral reform' of the masses follows the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. According to Gramsci it is necessary for the proletarian class to become a hegemonic class before revolution, given the dominant bourgeois hegemony in advanced capitalism. In other words, the philosophy of praxis has to become the dominant world view prior to the revolution i.e, socialism has to be an 'integral vision of life', a philosophy and a faith of the masses.

Now we shall deal with the question of intellectuals and the significance of the elaboration of intellectuals from the working class. In the Leninist theory, as we have pointed out earlier, the socialist consciousness has to be brought to the working class 'from without' by the intellectuals who by their class origin are not proletarian. The problematic of intellectuals and socialist consciousness has to be seen in the overall perspective concerning the proletarian party. For Lenin the bourgeois intellectuals by joining the proletarian party "declass" themselves and become one with the proletariat. Since division of labour does not exist in the proletarian party, the intellectuals-masses distinction disappears whereby they constitute a single cohesive unit. In Gramsci, as a result of the reconstitution of its elements this problematic undergoes a change. For Gramsci, the proletarian class is not a homogeneous class of non-intellectuals. Identifying⁴ a hierarchy within the working class in terms of its consciousness, he argues that there always exists an advanced and conscious section within the working class, which through its interaction with the remaining sections of the working class (through the factory council) educates

4. For an elaboration of this, See Mandel, Ernest, 'The Leninist Theory of Organisation' in Blackburn, Robin (ed), Revolution and Class Struggle, pp.81-95

them. The part-whole dialectic is central to the discussion of this question.

Some part of subaltern class is always directive and responsible and the philosophy of the part always precedes the philosophy of the whole (SPN p-337).

It is not, therefore the intellectuals of non-proletarian origin who inculcate socialistic consciousness in the workers from outside but on the contrary through their participation in the factory council the advanced section of the working class acts as a critical element and furthers the process of revolutionisation of the actual consciousness of the remaining sections of the working class. Therefore, the party, for Gramsci, is not an 'external' agency which imputes consciousness into the working class from outside. On the contrary, it operates through the advanced section within the working class being in the factory thereby becomes a living experience.

The factory councils, therefore, serve as appropriate institutional structures in the elaboration of organic intellectuals from the working class. It presents a new conception of 'intellectualism' and work process by advancing a dialectical unity between

consciousness and activity, theory and practice or thought and action.

The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists therefore, in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of a general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world. (SPN, p.9)

Philosophy of the masses as a faith

According to Gramsci, any philosophy becomes popular consciousness or the world outlook of masses initially only as collective faith and not as a rationally conceived body of ideas. The process of acquiring socialist consciousness is a slow and gradual one, given its intellectual and moral subordination. The factory council, as an institution deeply embedded in the work process serves this purpose of the cultural ascendancy of the masses by evolving a new faith and new morality that is truly communist. 'maan in the mass' adapts this new conception of the world as a new faith replacing the old one-determined by the bourgeois ideological and cultural

influence. This having a group character can only evolve from the collective activity of the masses.

In particular in the social group to which he belongs, in so far as in a diffuse way it thinks as he does. The man of the people thinks that so many like-thinking people can't be wrong, not so radically...(SPN, p.339)

The creation of this new proletarian faith is made possible through the interaction of the conscious sections of the working class with the remaining sections facilitated by the factory councils. Gramsci argues that the former educate the latter by "repeating its own arguments" because "repetition is the best didactic means for working on the popular mentality (and must) work incessantly to raise the intellectual level of ever-growing strata of the populace" (SPN p.340)

Gramsci's perspective on the question of the proletarian education, the transformation of the thought process and psychic character of the worker differs from the traditional Marxist position. The latter, following the Enlightenment model, assumed the problem of socialist education to be one of the content of education, thereby viewed it to be solved through the induction of socialist principles and norms of collective life to create the character-types in the socialist society. Gramsci, on the contrary, in his factory council

theory, views the democratisation of factory system and creation of representative institutions in the work-place which facilitate the participation of 'the whole of the working class' in a factory, irrespective the political and ideological adherences and party union affiliations of individual workers. Factory council serves as an ~~instrument~~ of mutual education of the workers.

The meetins and discussions in preparation of the factory councils were worth more for the education of the working class than ten years of reading pamphlets and articles written by the owners of the genie in the lamp. The working class has informed itself about the concrete experience of its individual members and turned them into a collective heritage. The working class has educated itself in communist terms using its own means and its own systems (SPWP164 emphasis added)

Factory Councils and the Revolutionization of Everyday Political Practice:

The proletarian revolution as a process has to be realised in the everyday political and social life of the masses. This process is a multi-dimensional one because everyday life consists of different types of activities. The proletarian revolution has to unify the everyday life of the masses, which is fragmented into different unrelated spheres in capitalism. Factory council as a working class organisation facilitates such a process, because, it is the activity of a worker in the factory production, which determines the nature of the

the other spheres of his activity. Thus a new way of life emerges from a non-alienated and an integrated everyday activity of the masses.

The concrete and complete solution to the problems of socialists living can only arise from communist practice: collective discussion, which sympathetically alters men's consciousness unifies them and inspires them to industrious enthusiasm. To tell the truth, to arrive together at the truth, as a communist and revolutionary act... whoever wills the end, must will the means... the work of reconstruction itself will demand so much time and effort that everyday and every act should be dedicated to it' (SPW p.68)

According to Gramsci bourgeois hegemony sets a process of interiorisation of its own values in the popular mind and thereby creates a gulf between the thought and actions of the masses. It is important to comprehend the working of civil society and to discover the implicit structure in an apparently unstructured common sense world view and everyday life in order to create a non-alienated everyday life, which is essential for the realisation of the proletarian revolution. This is the work of political practice. Only through politics it is possible to attain this goal because politics states the world view (which it professes) explicitly and thereby facilitates the restructuring of the everyday life of the masses.

We shall introduce a distinction between particularity and Individuality in order to understand this process.*

" The goal of a particular person is the maintenance of his own self: he identifies himself spontaneously with the whole system of customs and requirements which make his mere self-maintenance possible, conflict-free, 'comfortable'.⁵ Such a particular person has an 'I-consciousness'. Individual person, on the contrary makes an effort to relate his activity to his community in a conscious manner. In other words, he identifying with his community becomes a part of it. His consciousness no longer remains specific and particularistic but as a function of the extent of his identification with the collectivity, he attains 'self-consciousness'. ○ In other words, a particular person with 'I-consciousness' becomes an individual person with 'self-consciousness' only through collectivity. Only through it, it is possible to attain the consciousness of one's own potentialities and realise one's freedom. The actions of a particular person cannot become effective because of the absence of identity with the community. In other words, individuals organised into a collectivity can only perform historical actions:

*. See Heller, Agnes, "Marx's theory of Revolution and of Every day life", in Heller, A, et, all(ed), the The Humanisation of Socialism.

5. Ibid p 46.

An historical act can only be performed by "collective man", and this presupposes the attainment of a "cultural-social" unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogenous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world, both general and general and particular operating in transitory bursts (emotional ways) or permanently (where the intellectual base is so well rooted, assimilated and experienced that it becomes passion" (SPN p 349)

This can be illustrated with the following example.

An unemployed young man looks upon his problem as an individual one as long as he remains isolated. His actions remain individualistic and therefore become ineffective. But once he is capable of relating his 'biography' to the larger social context, then it is possible for him to realise that this problem is not merely his own but a social tragedy with deep rooted social reasons. Once he becomes capable of relating his own specific problem to the social context, his actions no longer remain isolated and particularistic but become effective as part of social action and becomes political. This process of relating individual to the community is realised only through political practice. Gramsci views politics as being at the centre of all human activities. The cultural, social practices in the civil society which are apparently non-political have political content- may not be in an immediate sense- in the sense that these practices only make individuals to conform to the bourgeois way of life

One never tends to doubt the political content of these practices because they do not profess any political ideology explicitly.

Since world one lives in (for Gramsci history is the product of past political practice, what is considered to be objective reality is nothing but an outcome of political practice in the past) and the philosophy implicit in one's thought and action in everyday life in capitalism is mediated by politics of the dominant classes. So the restructuring of the everyday life cannot but be a political act.

To emphasize: it is the political practice that unifies all other spheres of everyday life. Politics states the world view of a social class clearly whereas in other activities- social, cultural etc. a conception of the world is present in a subtle fashion. It is possible to attain homogeneity and a coherent worldview only through the mediation of politics. Through the process of revolutionary politization, it is possible to achieve the unity of a class and coherence in the diverse and varied activities. Gramsci argues that by forging such a unity on the basis of politics, it is possible to

dissipate 'arbitrary' ideologies, alien values absorbed from the 'environment' uncritically. The commonsense world view of the masses can be made coherent and transformed into revolutionary commonsense only through everyday political practice. To conclude: political practice has to be oriented on the basis of the conception of revolution. The revolutionary goal or the strategic objective can be realised only through a concrete political practice. The translation of the revolutionary ideal into the actual is the work of political practice. In order to realise the revolutionary goal of establishing socialism it is necessary to organise the masses and integrate their activity into a unified process. This involves the problem of creating non-alienated individual persons through organisation. Organisation is formed only through political practice by uniting individuals into a collectivity. The concept of political practice, therefore, ~~is~~ central to the discussion on Gramsci's conception of revolution, organisation and consciousness.

IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION

The 'actuality of revolution' is the understanding around which the themes in the Factory Council Writings are developed. This understanding is reached as result of the examination of the post-war developments in Italy seen in relation to the developments in the world capitalist system. Gramsci adopted the Leninist theory of imperialism as a point of departure for the elaboration of the themes in these writings. As a result he viewed the crisis in the Italian State as a concomitant of the crisis in world capitalism. Here it would be necessary to observe that the achievement of Gramsci has not to be sought in the analysis of the material basis of the post-war crisis, on the contrary, in the elaboration and conceptualisation of this to revolutionary politics in Italy. The understanding that the objective conditions were mature for proletarian revolution in the post-war period had led him to discover its specific implications for the revolutionary intervention. Gramsci thereby viewed the factory council movement as the product of the very changes occurring in the material foundations of the capitalist society. Here he put forward the argument that it was not only the crisis in the Italian society

which had shown the objective conditions to be mature for a socialist revolution but also the movement of the masses, which according to Gramsci was a precise indicator of the development of class struggle into the phase of revolution. This specific position that the masses are the makers of history is one of the central themes of Gramsci's theory, ^{which} distinguishes his ^{si} position from that of the Second International. For Gramsci, it is the movement of the masses, ^{which} as a confirmation of the theses of historical materialism.

From this perspective Gramsci developed his critique of the theory and practice ^{of the} Social Democracy. His critique centred around the argument that by treating the political and economic struggles of the working class as two distinct practices, ~~the~~ social democracy only reproduced the bourgeois legality thereby fragmented the working class activity in the field of class struggle. What was characteristic of this ~~phase~~ phase was the parliamentary and economistic practice ~~which~~ ^{following} which treated the worker as citizen and wage earner ~~the~~ the bourgeois liberal distinction thereby failed to integrate the working class everyday activity in its totality.

Gramsci, as opposed to the social democratic position, located the concept of 'producer' to be central to the building of the proletarian revolution. He identified

'combination and solidarity' as the essential principle governing the development of the proletarian revolution.

By attaining the unity of the workers as producers through factory councils it would be possible to give them a collective personality as opposed to the bourgeois class. Therefore for Gramsci, it is necessary to orient the everyday political practice of the workers on the basis of this conception of revolution for transcending the reified everyday life in capitalism. Through this process, revolution becomes an everyday experience for the workers. This is the central theme of Gramsci's Factory Council Writings.

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