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GRAMSCI AND THE SOUTHERN QUESTION

by

Salvatore N. Albanese

B.A.(Hons.) Simon Fraser University, 1975

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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of

Sociology and Anthropology

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Gramsci and the Southern Question


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ABSTRACT

The debate on modern Italian history was precipitated in the late Fifties by Rosario Romeo's contention that Gramsci's views of the Risorgimento can be reduced to the thesis of a frustrated agrarian revolution during the unification of Italy. He then tried to disprove this so-called "Gramsci thesis" with a barrage of statistics to show that the absence of radical agrarian reforms during the Risorgimento assured the rapid development of Italian industrial capitalism, whereas a peasant revolution alongside the political revolution for national unification would have postponed Italian industrialization indefinitely. His work was attacked for proposing a theory of Italian capitalist development which does not in fact provide an adequate account of Italian economic history and for presenting an oversimplified version of Gramsci's position charged with strong ideological overtones. Romeo was chastised in particular for overemphasizing the "progressive" results of the northern industrialization policies of the new Italian state without at the same time providing an adequate evaluation of the legacy of economic backwardness and social disintegration in southern Italy, which he recognized as the result of national policies initiated by post-unification Italian governments.

This thesis explores Gramsci's writings on the Risorgimento and those aspects of post-unification Italian society which he linked directly with its historical outcome. The main objective of this exploration is to clarify the framework of analysis in which Gramsci placed his discussion of this subject. The approach utilized to accomplish this goal provides a chronological account of the development of Gramsci's views from the beginning of
his career as a political and intellectual personality in the Italian working class movement to the end of his career as an imprisoned leader of the Italian Communist Party. This approach is highlighted by the use of the complete critical edition of the Prison Notebooks published in 1975.

The results of this study reveal that Gramsci focused primarily on the political and social aspects of Italian unification and the influence of the historical outcome of the Risorgimento in determining the subsequent development of political and social institutions in the various regions of the country. While part of his concern was to understand the reasons why an agrarian revolution failed to materialize in southern Italy, the complexity of his analysis makes clear that apart from the presence of objective historical factors which made a social revolution during the Risorgimento a near impossibility, the failure to overthrow the backward agrarian structure in southern Italy was a symptom of the national character of the ruling class that determined the subsequent development of Italian society, rather than the cause of that development. Therefore it will be argued that Gramsci's views on the agrarian aspect of the Risorgimento are part of a complex plan to provide a clearer conceptualization of the problem of explaining the form of state apparatus which developed in post-unification Italy as it relates to the heterogeneous character of the social changes which took place simultaneously in the northern and southern sectors of the country. If there is a central point in Gramsci's frame of analysis it consists of the view that the political outcome of the Risorgimento determined the development of a bourgeois state dependent on southern backwardness for its existence, and a form of industrial capitalism in northern Italy dependent on the parasitic exploitation of the South by the North.
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INTRODUCTION

The history of Italy's transition from "traditional" to "bourgeois" social formations contains what may well be some of the most elusive features of social change found in any European society. Attempts to elaborate conceptual models of the growth of Italian capitalism and its state-apparatus have occasioned some highly speculative debates. While such debates are obviously not unusual, scholarship of the Italian case has had to contend with unique problems, such as the revolutionary nature of Italian political unification and the growing rather than diminishing structural disequilibria between different territorial regions of post-unification Italian society. Controversy has centred in particular on the relationship between the movement for Italian unification (the "Risorgimento") and the nature of subsequent structural and political developments.

In the first half of the Nineteenth century Italian political and social thought looked towards the achievement of national unity as the gateway to quick and progressive solutions for long-standing problems of economic, social, and cultural backwardness. Opinions differed on what constitutional form an Italian unitary state should take, whether it should be a federal republic or a centralized monarchy. However there was near unanimous consensus in giving priority to national emancipation from foreign domination over more immediate economic and social problems. But far from turning into a panacea for the cure of economic and social ills, the unitary state once established engaged in national policies which led many bourgeois scholars to question its political premises in the light of its inability or unwillingness to eradicate what were viewed as feudalistic
structures in southern Italy. This issue has figured prominently in every attempt to formulate explanations and interpretations of Italian development and modernization from the Risorgimento onwards.

After the Second World War Italian scholarship became preoccupied with the interpretation of this issue formulated by Gramsci in the 1920s and 1930s. Gramsci, like his most prominent predecessors, focused on the territorial aspects of Italian capitalism and the relationship between the bourgeois state-apparatus which came out of the Risorgimento and the various geosocial divisions found within Italian society. Gramsci's views on this problem have attracted repeated attention over the last three decades mainly because his work represents one of the earlier attempts to formulate a Marxist historical model of the structures and dynamics of Italian bourgeois society; and also because this model has been claimed by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) as the premise for its political strategy to bring about that country's transition from capitalism to socialism. Criticism has concentrated mainly on the method of Gramsci's analysis. Gramsci dealt essentially with the political and cultural peculiarities of Italian society but did not even attempt an economic analysis of Italian or European capitalism. Both Marxist and bourgeois critics have interpreted the paucity of economic considerations in Gramsci's historical observations as a sign that his knowledge of Marx's work was at best partial and defective. Some have even argued that he completely lacked any effective understanding of Marxist economic theory. While the political and ideological motive for wanting to refute Gramsci have varied from writer to writer, most who have attempted have done so on the strength of the argument that Gramsci's "deviation" from Marxist methodology induced him to overturn the conventional arrangement
of the interrelation between structure and superstructure, thus allowing him to attribute unusual importance to political and cultural components in history and in modern Italian society.

This argument was first advanced in the 1950s by a bourgeois historian whose intentions were set more on casting aspersions on contemporary Italian communist historians than on seriously examining the full scope of Gramsci's work. Nonetheless, his contentions concerning Gramsci's method are shared by many Italian Marxist scholars whose approach to Italian history and society has been inspired by such recent versions of Marxist economic theory as may be found in the work of Paul Baran, Andre Gunder Frank, and Louis Althusser. As well as accepting the premises of the original bourgeois critique of Gramsci's method the new wave of Italian Marxist scholars shares a similar feeling of contempt for the political and philosophical outlook of the PCI. Polemics against the present state of the PCI in fact tend to predominate in such critiques of Gramsci's method. Another common trait of the original bourgeois critique and the practice of the new Marxists is the tendency to read Gramsci in "theses," i.e. by taking into account only arbitrarily selected parts of Gramsci's writings with the intention of confirming or discrediting some predetermined thesis. Until recently this practice was abetted in part by the incompleteness of the published works of Gramsci and the rather biased way in which materials that were published had been re-arranged by the various editors.

At the 1967 Convention of Gramscian Studies participants stressed that all existing interpretations of Gramsci's writings should be considered premature because of the incompleteness of the texts with which scholars had been forced to work. Also noted was the fact that much crucial evidence
concerning Gramsci's political and intellectual biography lay buried in archives controlled by the PCI, which until then had been reluctant to make it accessible to researchers. Since then there have been a number of new studies documenting Gramsci's intellectual life, including Davidson's book which incorporates the more recent work of Italian writers as well as presenting the English-speaking reader with his own well informed critical assessment of Gramsci's intellectual biography. However, the most important achievement in Gramscian studies to come out of the 1967 Convention was the publication in 1975 of the critical edition of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* under the editorship of Valentino Gerratana. As well as containing the complete notes in the order in which they were written by Gramsci, the new edition includes an index volume of more than a thousand pages of documentary evidence which, among other things, assists the reader to gain a critical insight into the way Gramsci worked with specific concepts and thus learn to trace the correspondence of ideas which are often separated by the fragmentary nature of the text, although their significance may be intimately interrelated. The new edition of the Notebooks therefore makes it possible for anyone willing to work attentively to formulate an informed opinion of Gramsci's overall view and aims concerning specific topics or the intentions of his work as a whole.

The present study was motivated by a desire to examine Gramsci's views on the Risorgimento and post-unification Italian society from the fresh perspective offered by the new edition of the Notebooks along with an examination of Gramsci's earlier writings. The new information about Gramsci's political and intellectual formation presented in studies such as Davidson's makes earlier disputes concerning the links or breaks between
Gramsci's writings prior to his incarceration and the Prison Notebooks somewhat academic. This thesis takes the view that a chronological reading of all of Gramsci's writings on modern Italian history and society shows them to be part of a continuously developing articulation of his overriding concern for the peculiar problems of southern Italian society and the difficulties inherent in such problems for creating a revolutionary political party which could bring together the northern working class and the southern peasant masses. By 1926 Gramsci had formed definitive views on the exact historical and political terms of his framework of analysis.

His work in the Prison Notebooks was intended as a systematic effort to construct an appropriate method of analysis which could then be applied to study the themes that had been already distilled in the earlier writings. He died leaving only an incomplete and fragmentary similitude of the ambitious study projects outlined at various intervals of his life in prison.

In the case of Gramsci, it is difficult if not impossible to isolate individual topics and treat them in a closed systematic manner. His career as a university student, journalist, political activist, leader of a party singled out as a scapegoat for fascist persecution, and imprisoned intellectual was lived in a world of great social and personal turmoil which allowed him no more than a furtive chance for an adequate formation of his thought. By the end of his life Gramsci felt that he was only beginning to perceive something of the problematic character of the many questions he was trying to unravel. From the structural configuration of the Prison Notebooks it is easy to see that Gramsci's work did not progress much beyond the point of ordering the bulk of the materials derived from his readings according to tentatively selected headings. Although a few areas of the
materials and certain complexities of the contents are dealt with in depth, the whole did not benefit from the necessary labour of synthesis to make possible a definitive categorization of his substantive views on any fundamental theme. His consideration of problems relating to Italian history and society, for example, stops at a level of analysis in which theoretical reflection and historical data collection are often left standing in seemingly remote areas from each other. For the sake of authenticity, this displacement must neither be disguised nor must it be made to seem absolute. It must always be kept in mind, so that any attempt to either integrate specific views or to reduce any given number of statements into a particular proposition may remain within the bounds of what can be legitimately justified by reference to the context in which they were placed by Gramsci. At the same time, any reading of Gramsci would be useless and senseless if it did not seek to interpret the interrelation between even seemingly disjointed but still implicitly topical elements.

However, not all the breaks in Gramsci's writings can be attributed to the incomplete nature of his work. Fundamental to his method of analysis is the conception of a dialectical relationship between everything conceptual and everything factual. Of course, the definition of such a relationship within the Marxist tradition in general has been and still is the subject of controversies and debates going on between participants who would probably all claim that the dialectical conception of history and society and therefore of truth and reality is basic to Marxist thought, but who appear deeply and perhaps unremittingly divided over fundamental issues. Indeed, concern over such issues constitutes a central point of Gramscian scholarship. A look at the range of attempts to grapple with what must be the basic
question for an overall evaluation of Gramsci's work exemplifies the problematic nature of the philosophic origins of Gramsci's particular conception and the theoretical constructs based upon it. The issue of whether Gramsci took Marx or Croce as his starting point is obviously important in dealing with his observations on the structures and dynamics of Italian history and society.

Yet this thesis had by necessity to be limited in some way. Marxist critiques of such fundamental aspects of Gramsci's thought raise questions which would certainly deserve fuller treatment than the scope of the present study permits. Specific considerations of these criticisms therefore were ruled out; although an earlier attempt to weave them into the discussion has yielded a wealth of materials and insights which could conceivably provide the basis for a more comprehensive evaluation of Gramscian studies. This is a field in which the variety of opinion and analysis is still expanding. So far there have been only preliminary comparisons made between certain features of Gramscian thought and the doctrines of non-Marxist classics of social science such as Weber, Durkheim, and Michels. The little that has been done however reveals a range of promising possibilities which have yet to be fully explored.

This thesis takes as its starting point a critique of Gramsci's views on the Risorgimento published nearly a quarter of a century ago. Even though that critique and the debate to which it gave rise have long been superseded by other, better informed and conceptually more appropriate considerations of Gramsci's work, its relevance has by no means all been exhausted. So far that publication has marked the major turning point in the brief history of Gramscian scholarship. Before its appearance Gramscian thought
had been looked at almost exclusively from perspectives grounded on early Twentieth century Italian idealistic philosophy and historiography. That publication marked perhaps the first attempt to place certain of Gramsci's views in the context of more recent developments in Western social thought. More than being simply a first for Gramscian studies, in many respects it has since been recognized as a propeller which helped move some areas of Italian social science out of the Nineteenth century and place it in line with current European and American trends. That critique however accomplished all this not out of its own scholarly merits, but unintentionally.

As a critique of Gramsci's historical observations it was generally shown to be hopelessly inadequate in its attempt to reduce political and social problems of great historical and theoretical importance to grass economic terms. But it also drove home the realization that existing interpretations of Gramsci were also partial and equally inadequate. The ensuing debate therefore paved the way for subsequent phases of Gramscian scholarship. The fact which perhaps continues to make it relevant is that the bifurcation of opinion and analysis into essentially sociological perspectives on one hand and economic ones on the other, which dominates Gramscian studies even now, came into existence in the course of that debate. This is a point which needs to be examined in conjunction with an in-depth consideration of paradigms developed in the Sixties and Seventies.

By drawing directly from all the parts of Gramsci's writings which make either direct or indirect reference to the Risorgimento and post-unification Italian history, the main body of this thesis attempts to show that the specific concepts and materials with which he worked are indeed political and sociological. While the texts examined here may be said to
represent a reliable survey of Gramsci's views on this subject, a study of this sort could not exhaust the range of historical and theoretical considerations found in them. Rather than a systematic treatment what is being offered is a selective examination of the 'key notions' informing Gramsci's interpretation of those historical problems which seem to have demanded most of his attention. Although this approach may help reveal the relationship between the theoretical elaboration of specific concepts and their use as instruments of historical analysis, it is not intended to provide an extrinsic evaluation of the methodological efficacy of Gramscian theory. The latter is a goal towards which effort could begin where this thesis leaves off.
CHAPTER I

ROSARIO ROMEO'S CRITIQUE OF THE GRAMSCI THESIS
AND THE RELATION BETWEEN THE RISORGIMENTO AND
THE RISE OF CAPITALISM IN ITALY

Rosario Romeo first focused attention on what he called the
"Gramsci thesis" of the political failures of the Risorgimento in an essay
published in 1956. The stated purpose of his undertaking was to provide
a critical assessment of the work of Marxist historians in Italy during
the decade following the Second World War. The nub of Romeo's discussion,
however, consists of a critique of a section of Gramsci's Prison Notebooks
containing some of Gramsci's views on the political history of the move-
ment for Italian unification. What Romeo sought to show was that the
premises of Marxist studies of the Risorgimento and post-unification
Italian history originated in the "practical-political" character of
an interpretative theme, first construed by Gramsci, which envisioned the
Risorgimento as a "frustrated agrarian revolution." The attribution of
this conception of the Risorgimento to Gramsci attracted much attention,
not only from Marxists but from the wider community of scholars, with most
critics protesting that the significance of Gramsci's notes on the Risor-
gimento cannot be reduced to the simple terms of the so-called Gramsci thesis
advanced by Romeo. In the aftermath of the controversy stirred by his
first article Romeo published a second in 1958, in which he tried to re-
inforce his original contention by taking a more detailed look at certain
aspects of Italian economic history in the period encompassing the quarter
century following national unification. The views expressed in the second
essay do not make Romeo's interpretation of Gramsci more convincing, but were instead received by his critics as further evidence that the historical problems addressed by him differed from those which seem to have been of most interest to Gramsci.

The Gramsci Thesis Defined

The gist of the Gramsci thesis was said by Romeo to consist of the assumption that the differences which seem to distinguish the character of the Risorgimento as a bourgeois revolution from that of the French Revolution were determined by the absence of a Jacobin party in Italy. In accordance with the "Marxist-Leninist" interpretation of the revolutionary role played by the French Jacobins, Gramsci visualized a situation in which an agrarian revolution represents the crowning moment of every bourgeois revolution. The Gramscian concept of agrarian revolution was thus described by Romeo as possessing the same "determining and eschatological" intent which may be found in the idea of proletarian revolution.

An agrarian revolution led by the radical bourgeoisie is said to provide the political vehicle for the bourgeoisie as a class to assume the leadership of all "national-popular" forces. In a pre-industrial society these forces are overwhelmingly rural, that is to say, peasant. In order for the bourgeoisie to defeat feudalism in the countryside it must be prepared to bring the peasants over to its own camp. Failure to do so will ultimately force the bourgeoisie to compromise its revolutionary aims by having to come to terms with the traditional ruling class, whose continued domination of the countryside would otherwise pose a formidable political threat to the bourgeois state.
The French revolution was spared this fate by the agrarian policy of the Jacobins, which is said to have made rural France accept the leadership of Jacobin Paris and thus carried the revolution to the countryside. The Italian bourgeois revolution, on the other hand, was marked by the absence of a radical bourgeoisie with a political vision comparable to that of the French Jacobins. In the Risorgimento, the Action Party collapsed under pressure from the Moderate faction of the bourgeoisie and proved unable to bring the peasants into its political fold. The outcome of the Risorgimento, therefore, left the bourgeois revolution incomplete; it excluded the majority of the national forces from the creation of the bourgeois state and included the semi-feudal agrarian property owners from southern Italy instead. Hence, the victory of the Risorgimento was part bourgeois and part feudal. This became the cause of growing national divisions which made the political life of the unitary state unstable and limited the extent of Italian capitalist development.

The frustrated agrarian revolution thesis of the Risorgimento was thus characterized by Romeo as a feeble attempt to reduce the explanation of Nineteenth century Italian economic history to the simple equation of the political aspects of the agrarian question; without concern for the broader economic problems impinging on the possibilities of capitalist development in Italy. Gramsci's views, according to Romeo, presuppose that a revolutionary solution of the agrarian question in favour of the socio-economic aspirations of the peasantry would have automatically augmented the potential for capitalist expansion. The dissolution of the bonds which kept the peasants economically and culturally if not legally tied to the semi-feudal agrarian structures would at the same time free the structural elements of the capitalist system.
The primary concern of the Gramsci thesis is with conditions in the southern half of the country. It was there that the victory of the Risorgimento was compromised. Conditions in the South were much more backward than in the rest of the country. For centuries the South had been dominated by absentee landlords and a rural gentry too traditional in their ways to acquire the economic and cultural outlook of a modern entrepreneurial class. In the South, therefore, the Risorgimento confronted a still feudal situation with the peasants representing the only potentially revolutionary force. An agrarian revolution there would have served to give the peasants control of the land along with the establishment of bourgeois civil liberties. The result would have been the creation of an agrarian democracy from which would have arisen a new spirit of individual initiative and entrepreneurship to change peasant producers into bourgeois farmers.

Consequently, a Jacobin agrarian policy would have had the effect of bringing the southern masses economically and culturally closer to the modern urban civilization which was already taking hold in the more advanced northern regions of the country. By clearing the path for the creation of effective bourgeois institutions in the South an agrarian revolution would have made possible the achievement of closer national unity in economic, social, and cultural forms. It would have done away with inherited structural barriers between North and South and prevented the emergence of new ones or the strengthening of old ones. An agrarian revolution would have thus created the conditions for the emergence of political homogeneity in the ranks of the national ruling class. This would have given the bourgeois state a permanent foundation supported by the creation of a modern Italian nation as a compact unity.
The Gramsci thesis therefore does not consist of a mere reshuffling of dead wood from the annals of Italian history. It constitutes an attempt to explain the single most important national problem in post-unification Italian society, namely, the disparity between North and South which became apparent soon after national unification and has continuously grown bigger and bigger until the present day. No other aspect of Italian society over the last hundred years has attracted as much attention as the so-called "southern question." The blame which the Gramsci thesis lays on the Action Party for its failure to follow the Jacobin example is part of a strongly critical attitude towards the southern policies of successive Italian governments. The Marxist historians evaluated by Romeo see the southern question as the result of deliberate policies initiated by the first Moderate government to develop the northern part of the country while leaving the South in a state of abandonment. The suggestion is that these policies reflect the price the Moderate faction of the Risorgimento bourgeoisie agreed to pay in return for the political support it received from the southern landlords: hands off the economic and social structures of the South in return for political support at the national level. Thus, although the South was brought into political union with the rest of the country it remained economically, socially, and culturally cut off.

Herein lies the genesis of Gramsci's explanation of the causes of unequal development between northern and southern Italy from the time of national unification to the present era. As a result of the political alliance between the Moderates and the southern landlords the persistence of southern backwardness became entwined with the very existence of the bourgeois state. The unitary state created by the victory of the Risorgimento
is thus assumed to have given new vigour to the traditional agrarian structures in the South. It identified its political interests with the economic and social interests of the agrarian propertied classes and against the peasants.

The institutions of the bourgeois state in the South were grafted onto precapitalist agrarian structures and were either made ineffective or transmuted into forces of mass repression. Bourgeois values and bourgeois norms were kept from taking root in the South by the utilization of bourgeois state institutions as instruments of traditional domination. Economic growth was similarly prevented. Italian capitalism made incursions into the South only to take out resources or to find new markets for northern industries. The national character of capitalism in Italy thus assumed a parasitic form: The capitalist system developed in the North at the expense of the South; the political heterogeneity of the bourgeois state made it impossible for northern capitalism to eventually expand its productive mechanisms into the South; this dwarfed the development of Italian capitalism, making it permanently dependent on southern underdevelopment as a condition for its continued existence. The Gramsci thesis, therefore, concludes with the suggestion that the bourgeois state created a unified Italy as a pathological capitalist society which can be eradicated only with the overthrow of the bourgeois state.⁹
Romeo's Argument Against the Gramsci Thesis

The essence of Romeo's argument against the Gramsci thesis is presented in the form of an evaluative survey of the historical situation of Italian society in mid-Nineteenth century projected against a scenario of the effects which an agrarian revolution would likely have had on the economic aspects of this situation. He wanted to prove that the differences between the Risorgimento and the French Revolution were not caused merely by the absence of a Jacobin party in Italy but are the reflection of two very different historical situations. Furthermore, by comparing the effects of Jacobin agrarian policy on the subsequent development of French capitalism with the economic policies instituted by the Moderates in Italy he hoped to show that an agrarian revolution would have had disastrous consequences for the development of Italian capitalism.

Romeo took issue in particular with Gramsci's evaluation of the failure of the Action Party to follow the Jacobin example. He agreed that from a strictly political-military point of view the opportunity was there for the Action Party to take the initiative against the Moderates and the military power of the Kingdom of Sardinia and create a unitary state in the "republican and democratic" sense. But the reluctance of the Action Party to follow up this opportunity was not due to the lack of Jacobin spirit on the part of men like Mazzini and Garibaldi. The answer, according to Romeo, is to be found "in the intrinsic development of the new national economy and politics." The refusal of the Action Party to lead the peasants into armed revolt was part of a decision to give priority to solving the problems of economic backwardness confronting the whole nation. Italy, as well as
being politically dismembered had also been for centuries one of the most stagnant economic areas of Europe. As well as struggling to achieve the political unification of the country, therefore, the leadership of the Risorgimento had also the responsibility of planning the fastest route to overcome economic underdevelopment and prepare the conditions for the rise of the capitalist system. In the general frame of things they discerned the need to move in the direction of industrial development and set their aim on "the forced development of the urban capitalist economy of the North and the integration of the market" as the fastest and perhaps the only way to secure the country's economic priorities. In deciding to set the country's economy in this direction, both moderate and radical leaders took note of the deeply rooted backwardness of the southern structures and concluded that concentrating all the national resources into northern industrialization was "historically indispensable for the future redemption and transformation of the southern countryside." Romeo, therefore, surmised that the failure of the Action Party to champion the cause of the southern peasants was due primarily to the fact that there were more urgent problems to be solved than bringing democracy to the southern countryside. But the solution of the more urgent economic problems was creating at the same time the conditions for the solution of the southern problem.

For Romeo, therefore, the reluctance of the Action Party to side with the peasants was not merely the result of a conscious political decision. More to the point is the fact that the Risorgimento coincided with what he described as an age of "accentuated antagonism between city and countryside, between bourgeoisie and peasants." It was only in the second half of the Eighteenth century that some Italian cities began to replace traditional,
precapitalist modes of exploiting the countryside with new, more effective technology and forms of labour organization. These innovations, restricted largely to northern Italy, increased productivity and were slowly transforming a good proportion of the old estates in areas such as Piedmont and Lombardy into profitable agricultural enterprises and giving rise to agrarian and commercial entrepreneurship. Romeo, therefore, visualized the economic structure of northern Italy in the course of the Risorgimento as being in the midst of what he called the "typical phase" of primitive accumulation which England and France had experienced in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries. The cities were making new and bigger demands on the rural economy and the peasants were under increased economic and social pressure as their traditional way of life was being uprooted. The Risorgimento, thus, came at a time of extreme polarization between city and countryside in which historically determined structural contradictions inhibited the possibility of a political alliance between peasants and bourgeoisie.

Essentially, Romeo argued that an agrarian revolution in the course of the Risorgimento was not workable because of the extent of economic backwardness in Italy. The country had too much catching up to do vis-à-vis the already highly developed national economies of western Europe. The elimination of feudal residues in the countryside would have cost the country dearly in terms of further delays in the development of the urban economy:

the underdeveloped state of the Italian cities, which dated back to the decadence of the centuries following the Middle Ages, no longer allowed, in the Nineteenth century, the urban ruling classes to lead an antifeudal revolution to the bottom, that is to say based on the alliance with the peasant masses, other than by paying for this alliance a price historically too great in terms of delayed capitalist development.
An agrarian revolution could have had progressive social repercussions to the extent that it would have dissolved the bonds of feudal patronage and made way for bourgeois democracy in the countryside. And to this extent Rome granted that it would have enhanced the political complexion of the Risorgimento. If, as in the Gramsci thesis, only the potential political results of an agrarian revolution are considered, it can be made to seem as if the actual outcome of the Risorgimento was not as revolutionary as it could have been. Romeo, however, argued that when the prospects for national development are brought into the picture, it soon becomes evident that if a Jacobin policy had prevailed, the outcome of the Risorgimento would have been a Pyrrhic victory, not only for the urban middle class whose representatives stood at the helm of the Italian unification movement, but for the future of the whole nation.

The predominance of agriculture in the country's economy, which in the North at least held the promise of an exceptional period of agrarian capitalist development, when the industrial and service branches of the urban economy were underdeveloped and unable to keep pace with the country's growing requirements for technological and structural implements of modernization, made increased agricultural productivity the conditioning factor of Italian economic life. Romeo thus emphasised that agriculture provided the only conditions in which capitalism could take root in Italy. The seed of industrial and urban development lay in the expansionary trends of surplus production in northern agriculture. With the realization of national unity the incubation period of Italian capitalism entered a critical stage, the outcome of which would be determined by whether the political victory of the Risorgimento would allow the trends in northern agriculture to continue and even accelerate the process.
One of the basic assumptions of the Gramsci thesis is the belief that an agrarian revolution could have been restricted to the South and its effects prevented from expanding into the northern countryside. Romeo dismissed this as a gratuitous presumption and for his part argued that once started a peasant uprising against feudal residues in the South could not have been stopped from spreading northward, inciting the class of farm-labourers in the Po Valley, and the peasants who lived under the traditional system of mezzadria (share-cropping) in central Italy, to rise against the capitalist farmer and the metayer. In fact, he maintained that an agrarian revolution as an alternative to the Risorgimento, if it had succeeded in establishing an agrarian democracy in Italy, would have done so in the North, where the "objective conditions" existed, and not in the South, where a peasant revolution would have "probably found insurmountable obstacles in the extreme backwardness and poverty of southern agriculture, as well as in the excess of peasant population." It is, therefore, strictly against economic conditions in the North that the probable effects of an agrarian revolution alternative to the Risorgimento must be measured. And these effects, according to Romeo, would have caused the disruption of primitive accumulation which was taking place there at the expense of the peasants:

In the historical conditions of Italy at that time the agrarian revolution would have represented an effort to go against the tendency which for over a century had been moving ... over most of the countryside of the North and the Centre of the peninsula, towards capitalist accumulation at the expense of the peasants, that is to say, [an agrarian revolution] would have represented an effort intended not to reinforce and to accelerate the real historical development, but to deviate it violently in a different and contrary direction.
Briefly stated, Romeo's position is that the historical conditions of Italy in the middle of the Nineteenth century had not as yet evolved to a point where urban development could have gone ahead without the forced exploitation of the countryside. Property relations at the time of the Risorgimento were still partially "feudalistic." This fact alone meant that the relationship between the new urban world of the bourgeoisie and the old feudal world of the countryside could not be based on a revolutionary alliance between bourgeoisie and peasants because the process of primitive accumulation in the countryside, i.e. the transformation of property relations in the countryside, and the political revolution of the bourgeoisie came hand in hand. In more advanced countries like France, the process of primitive accumulation, and therefore changes in the organization of property relations in the countryside, evolved slowly through many centuries, and was no longer a determining factor of city-countryside relations by the time of the French Revolution. This is why, according to Romeo, the French bourgeoisie was able to take the side of the peasants against the remaining elements of feudal property.22 Commercial and financial capitalism in the French cities was already highly developed prior to the Revolution. In France, it was historically possible to base city-countryside relations on the political alliance between peasants and bourgeoisie without thereby disrupting the expansionary process of the urban economy.

According to Romeo, the list of economic and social indicators of the very different conditions which prevailed in Italy at the time of national unification bears no resemblance to the French experience. Geography, as well as national history, helped shape the uniqueness of city-countryside relations in Italy. For example, while agriculture was the mainstay of
Italian economic life, neither the area under cultivation nor the fertility of the Italian soil could compare to that of more fortunate countries like France. This natural disparity was aggravated by demographic differences as well. To give an illustration, Romeo pointed out that in 1861 Italy had an agricultural population almost equal to that of France in 1789. In Italy, however, this population lived in an area equivalent to half that occupied by the French population. The mountainous topography of the Italian peninsula is also a factor in this comparison; mountains have traditionally acted as a barrier against the development of commercial structures in the countryside as well as a hindrance to modern techniques of production. In short, the mountainous landscape presented a formidable natural obstacle to the cause of modernization in Italian agriculture by making the adaptation of modern modes of production and economic exchange difficult or outright impracticable. The dearth of agricultural resources was a problem intensified by the lack of other natural resources in Italy. Nor were there colonies to exploit. Agriculture, therefore, as full of disadvantages as it was, provided the only wealth-producing mechanism to finance the cost of urban economic development in Italy.

Having outlined the main historical differences between the socio-economic bases of the Risorgimento and the French Revolution, Romeo then turned to a more specific consideration of Jacobin agrarian policy in France. His aim was to provide a complete rebuttal of Gramsci's conception of the revolutionary role played by the Jacobins. Romeo argued that the Gramscian characterization of the Jacobin-peasant alliance as a "progressive" step forward in the general evolution of the capitalist system in French society is irreconcilable with the evidence of French economic history in the
Nineteenth century. In particular, the research data gathered by the 
Annales school of French economic and social history make evident, accord-
ing to Romeo, that Jacobin agrarian policy was not as great a factor in 
determining the socio-economic outcome of the French Revolution as has been 
the assumption of "Leninist orthodoxy." The findings of Georges Lefebvre 
were cited by Romeo as evidence that the agrarian revolution, while changing 
the legal basis of the ways of rural society, did not cause fundamental 
changes in the economic structure of the French countryside. Free small 
proprietors had been in existence in France long before the Revolution. 
The social changes brought by the Revolution merely formalised this trend 
by removing the last feeble remains of feudal privilege in the country-
side. "Jacobin agrarian policy, therefore, was a political device which 
made legitimate a system of democratic land tenure deeply rooted in the 
agrarian conditions of pre-revolutionary France.

The fact that the French peasantry was able to become a democracy of 
small, independent proprietors is thus assumed to have not resulted primar-
ily from Jacobin agrarian policy. The political alliance between bourgeoisie 
and peasants did not cause the rural economic structure in France to change 
from feudal to democratic moulds. Feudal economic relations had already 
by and large disappeared in France. More and more peasants in France in 
the Eighteenth century owned their land. Many members of the rural middle 
class (lawyers, doctors, civil servants, merchants) were by then holders of 
invested income and lived in bourgeois fashion. The countryside was thus 
intermixed with the world of the urban bourgeoisie. And that is why the 
Jacobins were able to assume the political leadership of the peasantry. 
It was the already developed state of socio-economic relations in the
countryside, therefore, that made the Jacobin agrarian policy politically possible.

The bourgeois-peasant alliance, however, did not benefit all segments of the French peasantry. The sale of the confiscated estates favoured those who already possessed the financial means to make the purchase. The proportion of landless peasants remained unchanged or diminished only slightly as a result of the agrarian revolution. Although the agrarian revolution may have spared the French peasant from the 'enclosures,' it is an incontestable fact, according to Romeo, that the agrarian revolution did not improve the economic lot of the French peasantry, while "at the same time it blocked the development of capitalism in the French countryside." The establishment of agrarian democracy, therefore, was not a feature of technological and productive progress in French agriculture. During the whole first half of the Nineteenth century French agriculture was marked by a state of deep stagnation, showing little signs of progress; and only in the second half of the century the accelerating pace of urban capitalism made some inroads on the countryside without, however, "being able to push agriculture on the way of developed capitalist production." With the introduction of protective tariffs in 1880, French agriculture entered a new phase of stagnation, highlighted by a marked decrease of modern technology and an anachronistic increase of traditional, peasant modes of production. Even in the middle of the Twentieth century the agrarian structure of France was predominantly oriented to small-scale peasant production.
Ron rex, thus argued that the predominance of small, individually owned properties inhibited the emergence of agrarian capitalism in France largely as a consequence of the peasant tendency to channel their savings into bank deposits rather than making capital investments to expand and mechanize their agricultural operations. In the course of the Nineteenth century the massive savings produced by French agriculture were thus mobilized by the banks to finance capitalist development in many parts of Europe and beyond, while France was unable to modernize its own system of agricultural production. Romeo attributed this state of affairs to the establishment of agrarian democracy in the French countryside. The democratic legacy bequeathed by the agrarian revolution is thus assumed to have had a direct influence on the forestalling of French agrarian capitalism. The resulting stagnation of the rural economy caused the temporary setback experienced by the French economy in the first half of the Nineteenth century. But in the long run,

The forestalling of French agrarian capitalism was in large part coped with and compensated by the powerful ascent of financial, industrial, and commercial capitalism which . . . had already reached a high level of development in the preceding centuries.28

Romeo's evaluation of French economic history was thus designed to refute Gramsci's thesis on the Risorgimento.

Had an agrarian revolution taken place in Italy, there would have been no compensating mechanisms for the resulting stagnation of the rural economy.

The more backward the development of industrial and commercial capitalism in Italy, so much graver would have been the consequences of an agrarian revolution which, by defending the peasants against exploitation, would have, nevertheless, overrun the only existing form of capitalism, destined to function, in the historical conditions of Italy, as an essential mechanism for the accumulation and transfer of agricultural profits to the service of urban and industrial development.29
While in France the regressive consequences of the agrarian revolution were restricted, in large measure, to the countryside, the consequences of a Jacobin alternative in the Risorgimento would have been drastic for Italian national development as a whole.

Once the more advanced agrarian capitalism would have been liquidated by the peasant revolution... the country would have suffered a retarding blow in its evolution toward a modern society, and not only on the level of economic life, but in civil and social relations generally.\(^{30}\)

That is the main reason why Romeo objected to Gramsci's assumption that French history was an exemplary model of capitalist development and modernization.

Underlying the Gramscian conception of French history as a "near perfect" model of bourgeois society there is what Romeo called a "provincial attitude" which harks back to the "Francophile tradition" of Italian democratic thought.\(^{31}\) Gramsci, according to Romeo, lamented the fact that the Risorgimento had failed to create a deep seated harmony between the state and the "national-popular" forces of Italian culture and society. He pointed his finger at the lack of vigour of the Italian bourgeoisie for the failure to convert the Risorgimento into a "national revolution." In doing so Gramsci assumed that such a revolution would have been able to promote the expansion of capitalist relations in Italy to a higher extent than was achieved. Romeo, however, countered this alleged assumption with the pessimistic suggestion that a Risorgimento victory based on the political alliance of peasants and bourgeoisie could have realistically been expected to transform Italy into a country of peasants and artisans akin to the ideals championed by the petty bourgeoisie of European countries in the first half of the Nineteenth century. Even so, an agrarian revolution
could not have created any lasting unity between city and countryside. This much, according to Romeo, is made apparent by the French experience. Although the Revolution in France laid the foundations of a solid democratic tradition, and wrapped the rural masses into the folds of the bourgeois state more closely than in Italy, the revolutionary crises of 1848 and 1871 show that city and countryside in France were again divided by the emergence of revolutionary masses in the cities and the bulldog conservatism of the peasant middle class that had surfaced with the Revolution. Marx was among the first to point out this rift in French society. While in Italy the gulf dividing the cities from the countryside was wider than in France and has remained so even in the present century, Romeo said that this situation is quite consistent with the fact that traditional city-countryside relations in Italy were intact for a millenium and were further aggravated by the decadence and inertia which for centuries marked the history of Italy: the same centuries during which more fortunate countries like France were undergoing fundamental structural changes.

While French historians, and those inspired by Marx's historical insights in particular, have long understood that the conquest of the land by the French peasants did not resolve but rather compounded the structural problems of French agriculture, Romeo argued that Italian Marxists became obsessed with an ideal conception of French history that made them distort the history of Italy as well as that of France.

Romeo was thus adamant that the relation between the Risorgimento and the rise of capitalism in Italy can be genuinely gauged only when the real structural problems faced by the policy makers of the newly founded Italian state are taken into account. He considered any method of enquiry into the
history of Italian capitalism that begins with a built-in assumption as
to the "incomplete" or "passive" character of the Italian bourgeois state
vis-à-vis the nature of the French or any other European state "illegitimate."
A"truly historical method," he said, must make it possible for the historian
to take national peculiarities into account, so as to establish an empirical
basis for the explanation of structural and political discrepancies in the
modernization process of individual countries. This is how Romeo envisioned
his own investigation of the economic history of the first quarter century
of Italian unification: an empirical analysis of Italian economic peculiar-
ities as the basis of an allegedly "historical" and "scientific" evaluation
of the developmental initiatives taken by the newly founded Italian state
during those years.

Primitve Accumulation and Industrial Upswing

Apart from the discussion of the Gramsci thesis, Romeo's presentation
focused on the history of Italian industrialization in the second half of
the last century. This is the central topic of his second essay. He
carried over the thesis elaborated in the first article, that the agrarian
structure of unified Italy tended to accelerate rather than retard indus-
trial development, and endeavoured to confirm its empirical validity. The
highlight of his examination of pertinent historical data consisted of a
quantitative analysis of the magnitude of Italian capitalist development
in the period between 1861 and 1887.

Romeo's approach to this period of economic history is based on
modernization theories of development. He adopted these so as to view
development as a process of modernization consequent upon the creation of "prerequisite" infrastructural and financial mechanisms which are compatible with the growth of industrial productivity. He concentrated his attention in large measure on two economic categories which are one of the focal points of modernization theories: "capital formation," and "market mechanism." His other main concern was with the ability of the Moderate Italian governments which followed the Risorgimento to manage the national economy and to program the course of its future development. Romeo envisaged capital and technological development as the most important components of the process of change from old to modern social formations. Economic development determines a country's adaptive capacity to modernize its social, political and cultural institutions. His treatment of the problem of capitalist development in Italy is thus geared to show the extent to which the outcome of the Risorgimento was successful in securing the infrastructural and fiscal conditions to promote industrial investments and the growth of industrial productivity.

Capitalist development is thus equated with industrialization. Capitalism, therefore, is narrowly defined as a transition from agricultural to industrial activity. The mechanism which sets this transition in motion is a process of primitive accumulation, defined by Romeo as a drastic movement, in a country in a preindustrial economic phase, of the relation between consumption and investment, aimed at intensifying the flow of savings produced in other economic sectors to the sector of industrial investment. Agricultural modernization, resulting in increased output, is the traditional economic branch from which precapitalist wealth is most abundantly derived. Therefore, the utilization of surplus-value produced in agriculture is the
crucial determinant for continued economic growth. It is assumed that a greater flow of agricultural savings towards increased personal consumption will result in the structural discontinuity of the modernization process began in agriculture. This is the greatest problem that arises during the period of transition when old patterns of production and distribution continue to survive while new "compatible" ones have not yet been institutionalized.

A process of primitive accumulation as defined by Romeo, is assumed to create the preliminary conditions for industrial production by diverting the savings produced in agriculture into capital investments to develop the infrastructures of industrialization and the capitalist market.

Romeo claimed to have found evidence of rapid increases in Italian agricultural output for most years between 1861 and 1880. The main source he used to allege such increases is a volume of statistics on the long-term development of Italian economic productivity published by the Istituto Centrale di Statistica (ISTAT).36 The statistics offered by the institute's study suggest that during this twenty year period there was a drastic increase in Italy in the volume of domestic savings. Concomitant to this increment in bank deposits other data shows a substantial expansion of national capital assets concentrated mainly in the services sector of the economy: most notably in the building of new railroads, roads, canals and the establishment of a national post and telegraph network. Whilst agricultural output was registering hefty increases, the real income of the rural population remained unchanged or went into a downward spiral. Although the rural population grew significantly at the same time, only a minimal portion of increased agricultural output was taken to satisfy the growing natural demand for subsistence consumption. The greater portion of increased
production in agriculture thus served to boost land rents and agrarian profits. The expanding volume of savings resulting therefrom was assumed by Romeo to have played a crucial role in financing the development of the aforementioned infrastructures.

The imposition of heavy taxes on such basic consumer items as grains and salt is also assumed to have made considerable contributions to the accumulation of investment funds. Romeo, in fact, interpreted the voracity of the Italian taxation system as a reflection of the important role played by the state in accelerating the process of capital accumulation. He argued that the utilization of national savings for investments in the service and industrial sectors of the economy could not have been effective if the state had failed to assume extraordinary responsibilities by formulating and implementing appropriate policies of national development. While admitting that much of the capital used to finance the building of infrastructures in the 1860s and 1870s came from foreign sources, Romeo argued that domestic accumulation, both in the form of private savings and taxation, was the indispensable factor which gave the drive for Italian industrialization momentum and direction. 37

Romeo seems to have considered the accumulation of agricultural wealth "primitive" in a double sense. First, because it was not the result of capitalist production but the starting point of capitalist accumulation. Second, therefore, this accumulation was primitive because the accrued funds were used in a predetermined manner, viz., according to government policy-directives, to create the necessary conditions for a crash program of industrialization. Romeo assumed that this process of so-called primitive accumulation came to an end around 1880. By then agricultural output had
ceased to expand and the structural deficiencies of the countryside were showing growing signs of incompatibility with the incipient modernization of the urban economy: "agriculture was becoming more backward than any other branch, and its problems ended by casting a shadow over the entire economic life of the country." The potentially disastrous consequences of the agrarian crisis, however, were prevented by exceptional progress in the industrial branch of the economy from 1880 to 1887.

After relying on the ISTAT volume for the bulk of his information on Italian economic performance in the Sixties and Seventies of the last century, Romeo ignored the institute's data for the next decade because it shows an unusually low rate of growth in the 1880s. In order to substantiate his assessment of the preceding two decades as a period of frantic preparation for industrialization, Romeo needed to find historical evidence to show that industrial expansion took place once primitive accumulation and the building of infrastructural prerequisites had seemingly reached a peak. He claimed to have found such evidence in two indices of Italian industrial development constructed independently by Alexander Gerschenkron and Silvio Golzio. Gerschenkron and Golzio tabulated estimates of industrial output in the 1880s which gave relatively higher annual growth rates than those contained in the ISTAT study. On the basis of the higher figures offered by Gerschenkron and Golzio, which are simply interpretative variations of the same unverifiable data cited in the ISTAT calculations, Romeo characterized the 1880s as a period of "discreetly higher development" in industrial investments and growth in industrial output. This decade is said to have marked the birth of large-scale industry in Italy: "there was brought about in Italy, if not an industrial revolution proper, without
a doubt the birth of large-scale industry, and of great concentrations of industrial capital." Although the first real industrial boom did not take place until the late 1890s, Romeo was adamant that the industrialization of the 1880s brought to an end the country's dependence on agriculture, as evidenced by the fact that the industrial and public works sectors of the economy continued to grow even though agriculture entered a phase of rapid decline in productivity.

Romeo concluded that the economic changes which took place in Italy between 1861 and 1887 were the most that could have been expected. They established the prevalence of industrial productivity in record time. These economic achievements paved the way as well for social and cultural modernization. He emphasized the fundamental role played by the alleged process of primitive accumulation and credited the victors of the Risorgimento for providing the most opportune political conditions for its development. The interconnection between the political outcome of the Risorgimento and the sequential acceleration of savings produced in agriculture occupies a special place in Romeo's scheme and which reflects positively on the political comportment of the leaders of the Risorgimento. There is an orderly procession of historical necessity and logical plan in the way these two elements are brought together in the model proposed by Romeo. This model assumes that a process of primitive accumulation is a necessary prerequisite for the rise of capitalism. Therefore, given that in large measure the conditions for accumulation existed in agriculture in northern and central Italy, the next logical assumption converges felicitously with what is said to have happened historically, namely, that
The historical function of the dominant class in the Risorgimento, and the Moderates in particular, on the socio-economic level, would thus be to conquer (and to guarantee) the political conditions necessary for the completion of this process at the expense of the peasants; and to channel the proceeds into a course of modern economic development which was in fact inaugurated with the liberalism of Cavour and the Right, and which some decades after 1860 would transform itself into a self-conscious policy of industrial development, when the capital accumulation derived from agriculture had already created the necessary preconditions.42

Accordingly, Romeo appealed to historical necessity and moral-political virtue to justify the motives of the Moderates' alliance with the southern landlords, arguing that the protraction of backwardness in southern Italy was necessary a hundred years ago and may still continue to be necessary for some time yet in order to complete the great industrializing and civilizing mission of liberalism. No errors, no injustices, no human suffering can blur the nimbus surrounding the outcome of the Risorgimento. It was, according to Romeo,

in virtue of the very sacrifice imposed for many decades on the countryside in the South, [that] a country poor in territory and natural resources and subject to very strong demographic pressures, such as Italy, managed, alone among countries on the Mediterranean shore, to create a great industrial apparatus and a highly developed urban civilization which, over the greater part of the country, has diffused more civil and free relations between classes, a more modern conception of life, a wider participation of Italians in the material and moral goods of the modern world.43

Romeo, who promised to deliver the history of the Risorgimento from the "anti-historical," "practical-political," "abstract moral and political ideals" of the Gramsci thesis, thus reveals his own penchant for the confident prose of liberal historiography, which is a worn-down ideological expedient used whenever the manipulation of statistics does not suffice for him to gloss over the colossal failures of the Italian state to assure the conditions for capitalist development in the South as well as the North.
The Critics' Appraisal of Romeo's Study

The debate that followed the publication of Romeo's first essay was taken up largely by recriminatory exchanges between Romeo and some of those who had been the target of his initial attack. The stage for this rather heated confrontation had been set by the jarring and often insolent overtones of Romeo's remarks on the philosophical and psychological characteristics of the historians whose work he treated in his survey. In addition, the tone of Romeo's argument was attuned to political and ideological issues of the Cold War. Consequently, the main theme of the debate was distorted in the course of what became a verbal brawl fuelled by political and personal ill-will.\(^4^4\)

It remained for more detached observers, some of them foreigners, to evaluate the historical and theoretical conjectures of Romeo's study. These critics, non-Marxists and Marxists alike, have usually praised Romeo's work for drawing attention to an important chapter of Italian economic history. A commonly held assumption among such observers is that Italian scholarship in the Fifties was not receptive to new trends in social science. Italian historians in particular are thought to have been completely enmeshed in Italian neo-idealistic philosophy. The fact that Romeo based his studies on the theories of certain American and British economists has thus been viewed as a pioneering endeavour to expose Italian historians to new currents of thought.\(^4^5\) This accolade, however, has been extended largely by way of a negative commentary on the plausibility of the historical conjectures and theoretical inferences in Romeo's analysis.
To start with, reviewers have almost unanimously taken exception to Romeo's inclusion of Gramsci's writings on the Risorgimento in a discussion that deals with a set of problems which are not directly pertinent to those aspects of Italian history which interested Gramsci. This objection was first raised by those whom Romeo identified as adherents to the Gramsci thesis; in particular, Emilio Sereni who was identified by Romeo as co-founder of the Gramsci thesis. Romeo's study came under fire as well for presenting an exaggerated view of Italian economic achievements, and for what in light of the evidence are thought to have been unwarranted tributes to the supposed effectiveness of Italian developmental policies. From a strictly economic point of view the model of Italian industrialization proposed by Romeo has been criticized for its simplistic conception of the process of primitive accumulation as a mechanistic transfer of capital from agriculture to those sectors of the economy concerned with industrial expansion. Romeo's special concept of primitive accumulation has in fact raised a number of issues which have a bearing on his approach in general.

Romeo claimed to have derived his definition of primitive accumulation from Marx's treatment of the concept in the First Volume of Capital. It has been repeatedly pointed out, however, that the process of extracting through taxes portions of land rent and of the peasants' subsistence income to finance infrastructural investments bears very little resemblance to the historical components of the process that is described in Capital. Marx envisioned fundamental changes taking place in the system of production and distribution, forcing the disintegration of the old social order concomitant with the emergence of new social formations. A major component of
these changes is a process involving forced savings. But this accumulation is determined by a more complex historical process of divorcing the producers from the means of production, with the latter producing profound alterations in the social organization of economic relations. The essential mechanism of precapitalist accumulation as described by Marx thus lies in the creation of a class of free labourers, "in the double sense that neither they themselves form part and parcel of the means of production... nor do the means of production belong to them." It, therefore, also creates at the same time a class of proprietors: "owners of money, means of production, means of subsistence, who are eager to increase the sum of values they possess, by buying other people's labour-power." Accumulation of wealth, therefore, is primitive, in so far as it precedes the capitalist mode of production and exchange, only when it is part of that historical process which results in the creation of a labour market where the expropriated labourer and the proprietor of accumulated wealth confront each other as seller and buyer of labour-power; thus giving way to capitalist accumulation proper.

Marx's exposition of the concept of primitive accumulation, however, invests the question of the historical origins of capitalism in all its political and cultural as well as material complexities. Romeo makes it abundantly clear that his particular conception of primitive accumulation is based simply on the notion that the development of the financial market, in the form of increased savings taken out of agricultural production by a mixture of capitalistic and traditional techniques of exploitation to be used for capital investment in infrastructures, is a sufficient mechanism for the development of the capitalist mode of production proper. Romeo's
concept thus consists of increased savings generated from within the structures of the traditional economy by the continuous flows and adjustment of market changes. According to the perspective elaborated by Marx, however, this is an inadequate explanation of the process of primitive accumulation since he makes evident that even pre-capitalist economic formations employ money (merchant capital) in trade activities and, indeed, also make possible the accumulation of large amounts of wealth without thereby giving rise to the capitalist mode of production. Marx, however, also says that the existence and the size of a commercial market does affect the producers, hence the mode of production: "commerce imparts to production a character directed more and more towards exchange-value." Romeo's concept therefore is in accordance with Marx's views in so far as the process of savings described by Romeo actually helped increase the size of the Italian commercial market in ways which had a direct bearing on the material, technological, and social character of production, since as Marx says, "its existence and development [i.e. of the commercial market] to a certain level are in themselves historical premises for the development to a certain level of production." But as a rule Marx did not place significant importance on increased savings and their effects on the commercial market as the vehicle of the historical transition from the feudal to the capitalist mode of production.

On the basis of what Marx actually wrote about the question of primitive accumulation it can be stated without any reservation that the most important component of his concept is the view that the accumulation of the resources necessary for the large-scale productive undertakings of the capitalist system was a process carried out with unrestrained boldness and brute force.
The disruption of traditional ways of life caused by the violent and sudden nature of the historical process of primitive accumulation is what in Marx's view helps to explain the dynamic elements which brought about the transition from feudal to capitalist social formations. The process of primitive accumulation, or the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a distinct group of powerful men, as described by Marx for those countries which were at the forefront of European civilization in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth centuries, consists of two courses of action for which there is ample historical documentation. The first is concerned with the expropriation of the land from the peasants and the second with the exploitation of colonial resources. Both activities were thought by Marx to have had enormously greater importance in determining the development of capitalism than either bourgeois parsimony or the gradual and intrinsic transformation of European society. The crucial point on which Marx focused his attention is the fact that in both these historical events "it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part." 55

In short, therefore, the irreconcilable difference between Romeo's and Marx's conception of primitive accumulation is that Romeo views the accumulation necessary for capitalist development as a process generated strictly by factors which are assumed to lie within the conditions of pre-capitalist economic formations, whereas Marx was at pains to stress that the primitive accumulation of capital is the result of factors which are external to the economic reality of pre-capitalist society. 56 On the basis of Marx's discussion of the problem, therefore, the most that could be made of Romeo's notion of primitive accumulation is that the phenomena to which
he ascribes that name are the result rather than the cause of the historical changes which Marx considered necessary for the development of the capitalist mode of production.

The most noted criticism of the methodological short-comings of Romeo's concept in relation to the more complex articulation of primitive accumulation provided by Marx was made by Luigi Dal Pane. Dal Pane observed that Marx's concept presupposes two basic elements: the availability of accumulated wealth to make the initial purchase of labour-power, and the separation of the labourer from the means of production with all the legal and social changes this entails in order to place the labourer and the owner of capital in a position to exchange one commodity for another. Romeo's concept instead consists of only the first of the two components denoted by Marx. Consequently, Romeo is left with a statistical device which allows him to fill in the numerical data on the accumulation of wealth required by his model of Italian industrialization, but fails to bring into focus the dynamic elements at play in the process of dissolution of traditional socio-economic structures, and of the assertion, in the latter's place, of new socio-economic formations. The data utilized by Romeo, in other words, fails to account for the formation of the capitalist market in Italy. This failure is what makes Romeo's position a paradoxical one. Since Marxist historians like Sereni, whom Romeo attacked with a vengeance, base their negative historical accounts of Italian capitalist development from the Risorgimento onwards on the argument that the movement for Italian unification and the bourgeois state which it established failed to provide the historical conditions for the creation of a capitalist labour market in the country as a whole, notably in southern Italy, where by their account the mass of
the peasantry remained under "feudal" or "semi-feudal" conditions, which in turn became an insurmountable obstacle to the expansion of capitalism into these regions,** it follows that Romeo's alleged refutation of the Marxist thesis should have been able to provide an empirical account of the history of Italian labour showing that the absence of a class of "free labourers" (in the sense that Marx used this expression) in large areas of post-unification Italy was in fact a necessary condition for the development of Italian capitalism. Romeo, however, ignores this problem completely.

The most telling criticism which can be made of Romeo's concept of primitive accumulation, then, is that it led him to side-step the most pressing questions in the history of Italian capitalist development. Alexander Gerschenkron, for example, noted that the results yielded by Romeo's model make a trenchant case for what was accomplished in the economic development of Italy during the first quarter of the century after unification, but at the same time Romeo failed to take account of the "inadequacies and shortcomings of that evolution."**59 Gerschenkron and others have pointed out that this failure helped to make government economic policies appear in a positive light.**60 Hence, there are what Gerschenkron called "very legitimate questions regarding the slowness and belatedness of Italian industrialization" which remain unanswered in Romeo's model essentially because of the polemical character of his writings.**61 The questions which Romeo failed to consider are in fact the questions which for proponents of the Gramsci thesis are crystallized by the absence of an agrarian revolution in the Risorgimento. They see the elements which produced the economic development described by Romeo as conditioning the unequal relation between North and South, first by preventing the expansion of the capitalist market
in the southern regions, and subsequently by making of this condition an integral component of Italian capitalism as it has historically developed over the last hundred years.

In refuting Romeo's interpretation of the results yielded by his model of Italian economic development critics have noted that the data utilized by Romeo is insufficient to produce such conclusive generalizations. The fact that much of this data is of dubious origin, as well as the arbitrary interpretation to which it was subjected by Romeo, has also been brought into question. Most importantly, however, Romeo's conclusions are contradicted by historical evidence relating to the backward conditions which continued to hamper the development of Italian civil society even while government policies were forging ahead with programs of forced industrialization in northern Italy. Indeed, one of the more conspicuous features of the results of Romeo's study of Italian economic development is the total lack of elements for an historical explanation of the other phenomena involved in the process of transition from traditional to capitalist society, in particular, of those phenomena relating to the social and political structuralization of Italy from the Risorgimento onwards. The fact that modern structures did not take complete hold and were weakened by the persistence of old structures for an unusual length of time over many parts of Italian society is not adequately appreciated by Romeo as a negative element obstructing the development of a capitalist economy. The offhand manner with which Romeo brushes aside the significance of the southern question for Italian capitalist development points to the other major flaw of his study. In terms of delayed structural changes in the southern countryside, delayed political modernization and neglect of southern cultural
and educational institutions, the southern question adds enormous costs to Italian modernization on top of the incalculable material losses caused by the protracted underdevelopment of the southern economy.

Such a host of related problems cannot be separated from the purely industrial aspect of the process of capitalist development in Italy. Between the specious contentions of Romeo's interpretation of Gramsci and the need for further verification of data and phases of economic development, there is a broad area of concern with questions relating to the relation between structure and superstructure in post-unification Italy and the social and political make-up of the Italian liberation movement that preceded it. Over the last century, this area has been explored many times over by successive waves of scholars seeking to come to terms with the various aspects of the southern question. Gramsci's approach to problems of Italian history is also rooted in this tradition. By the time he wrote the notes on the Risorgimento in the Prison Notebooks, however, Gramsci's interest with problems of Italian history had become part of a broader theoretical design. His observations on the Risorgimento, therefore, cannot be separated from the terms of reference of the Prison Notebooks as a whole, much less reduced to the simple terms of the frustrated agrarian revolution thesis presented by Romeo. The following chapter will examine the evolution of Gramsci's thought on the Risorgimento and post-unification Italian society up to 1926, when Gramsci was imprisoned.
NOTES


3. Rosario Romeo, "Problemi dello sviluppo capitalistà in Italia dal 1861 al 1887," in Nord e Sud (July-August, 1958). Both essays were subsequently republished as a monograph: Risorgimento e capitalismo (Bari: Laterza, 1963); hence forth abbreviated ReC.

4. ReC, p. 46.

5. The "Moderates" were a party of conservative-liberals constituted in 1848. As well as recruiting many of its members from the neo-Guelph movement (a liberal catholic political and cultural movement prominent in the first half of the Nineteenth century but which disintegrated in the course of the political upheavals of 1848-49), the Moderate Party incorporated also some of the latter's ideals, notably its stand for a confederation of autonomous Italian states proposed by prominent neo-Guelphs like Vincenzo Gioberti. The Moderates suffered a temporary political set-back in 1849 as a consequence of the military defeat suffered by the Piedmontese in the 1 War of Italian Independence. However, in the following decade their influence grew considerably under the direction of politically astute men like d'Azeglio and Cavour. In the process, the party abandoned its federalist stand in support of a monarchical policy which in effect favoured the territorial expansion of the Piedmontese state as a means of achieving Italian unification. This policy carried the Moderates to victory and they became the architects of Italian unification in 1859-61. The main opposition to the aspirations of the Moderates was provided by the "Action Party," established by Mazzini in 1853 as the rallying point of Italian radicals advocating a revolutionary and republican solution to the question of national unification. Mazzini outlined the political tenets of the Action Party in a pamphlet entitled Del dovere d'agire (On the duty to act). As a revolutionary party the Actionists aimed to bring about armed popular insurrections on the basis of Mazzini's strong belief that the political education of the masses could be accomplished only with examples of concrete political and military activities. In its brief life-span of seven years the Action Party embarked on numerous ill-fated military adventures which gained for its leaders the reputation of incompetent political "hot heads" and fumbling strategist. The most important initiative taken by the Action Party was Garibaldi's Sicilian expedition of the Thousand in the Spring of 1860. After a victorious campaign in southern Italy, this too ended in failure as Garibaldi handed the South over to the King of Sardinia and hence to Cavour's Moderates. It has become a
widely held belief among historians that while the Actionists won the military battle in southern Italy they completely lost the political war for Italian unification mainly because of the inability of their top leaders to see eye to eye in crucial moments requiring fast and decisive decisions. After 1861 the party disintegrated with a majority of its members going over to the parliamentary "Left," while others went on to form the politically insignificant Republican Party and a few individuals, like Mazzini, chose to return to exile once again.


7. The term "southern question" was coined soon after Italian unification to refer to the set of problems associated with social backwardness and economic underdevelopment in southern Italy. In the literature the term has become the standard technical locution specifically denoting the relation between conditions in southern Italy since 1861 and the history of national policies affecting the South.

8. ReC, pp. 52-89 (for Romeo's review of Italian Marxist historiography).

9. If taken out of context the thesis can be construed out of Gramsci's critique of the political role of the Action Party in the course of the Risorgimento.


11. Ibid., p. 44.

12. Ibid., p. 46.

13. Ibid., p. 47.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.


17. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

18. Ibid., p. 35.

19. Ibid., p. 38.

20. Ibid., pp. 36-37.


22. Ibid., p. 39.

23. Ibid., p. 29.

25. Lefebvre does list these factors. However it is a well known fact that the relationship between socio-economic structures and the political outcome of the French Revolution has been the focus of a hot debate stirred up in particular by non-Marxist historians who have attempted to turn Lefebvre's research data against his own neo-Maoist interpretation. The line of interpretation adopted by Romeo is akin to the controversial revision of Lefebvre's studies suggested by Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1965).

27. Ibid., p. 30.
28. Ibid., pp. 31-32
29. Ibid., p. 36.
30. Ibid., p. 32.
31. Ibid., p. 44.
32. Ibid., p. 45.
33. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
35. ReC, p. 104.
37. ReC, pp. 111-130.
38. Ibid., p. 169.

40. ReC, p. 188.

41. Ibid., p. 185.

42. Ibid., pp. 31-36.

43. Ibid., pp. 197-198.

44. The most notable reply to Romeo's thesis was penned by Emilio Sereni, "Il nodo della politica granaria," in Politica ed economia (1958-59), reprinted in Sereni's Capitalismo e mercato nazionale (Rome: Riuniti, 1966), pp. 102-278. Replies by A. Romano, A. Macchioro, and others among those whose work was the object of Romeo's criticism were met by more contumelious counter-replies by Romeo, as in his response to Sereni: "Capitalismo e disonestà scientifica: ovvero del senatore Emilio Sereni," in Nord e Sud (August-September, 1959), see also ReC, pp. 93-101.


46. Thus Gerschenkron, op. cit., p. 96: "Romeo's thesis presents itself as a refutation of Gramsci's... Nevertheless, it is probably more correct to suggest that Romeo cannot disprove Gramsci because he is interested in a different set of problems." Also Dal Pane, loc. cit., p. 104: "Gramsci... has developed in particular details and directives of an ethicopolitical character. [His work] deals with an ethicopolitical history... permeated with large social and therefore economic apertures. But for reasons inherent in the conditions in which he lived and even in part due to his neo-idealistic formation, economics in him remained beyond the vital center of research... A point of reference, contained in embryo, but is not assumed as the focus of research, it is postulated in the background of historical
processes, but in an abstract manner more than with minute and concrete analysis." As a whole, the issues raised by Romeo's work were best summed up by D. Beales: "This is a polemical work, and it is not surprising that Professor Romeo oversimplifies Gramsci's position and does scant justice to his contribution to a less romantic and less flocculant approach to the history of unification than is traditional; and it is a tribute to the influence of Gramsci and his 'school' that Professor Romeo should now be defending idealist historians with a barrage of statistics. His arguments are often stimulating and the detailed sections of his book will be found to contain much useful information. But it is hard to see how such a case as his could ever be satisfactorily proved. If anything, Professor Romeo is more doctrinaire than Gramsci: witness his view that one region or one generation can justly be made to suffer in the interests of another. Professor Romeo is very critical of historians whose interpretations of the past are dictated by their present politics, and he seems to think it possible to write history without bias. He may have avoided strictly political partiality, but his economic theory distorts his economic history." Review of Risorgimento e capitalismo, by R. Romeo, The Economic History Review vol. 12 (December, 1959), p. 338.

47. Sereni was working on the economic history of Italy from the Risorgimento to 1900 at the same time that Gramsci was writing the Prison Notebooks. To the extent that the Gramsci thesis as defined by Romeo raises questions of economic history and economic theory these questions were dealt with in Sereni's study from what he described as an "orthodox Marxist" perspective on the relationship between "socio-economic structures and historical process," in Il Capitalismo nelle Campagne (1860-1900) (Turin: Einaudi, 1968), p. VIII. This study was first published in separate articles in the Thirties and as a monograph in 1946.

48. Gerschenkron, Economic Backwardness, pp.111-112; and Continuity in History and Other Essays, p. 103.

49. Gerschenkron, Economic Backwardness, p. 112.


54. Ibid., p. 327.


CHAPTER II

THE CENTRALITY OF THE SOUTHERN QUESTION
IN GRAMSCI'S POLITICAL WRITINGS

As a revolutionary leader of the Italian workers' movement Gramsci's approach to problems of Italian history grew out of his special concern for the political aspects of the southern question. In order to appreciate the political and intellectual context of Gramsci's later analysis of the Risorgimento it is therefore necessary to keep in mind Gramsci's preoccupation with the problems of the Italian South from the formative years of his political personality to his analysis of Italian society as leader of the Italian Communist Party. This concern pre-dates Gramsci's adherence to the Italian Socialist Party. Indeed it was first nourished in him by his personal experience as a Sardinian and by the influence exercised on his intellect by the writings of the so-called "meridionalisti" (Southernists) through whom he formed his first impressions of contemporary Italian society while still a student in Sardinia. Before he became a socialist Gramsci had in fact entertained strong views in support of Sardinian separatism. To a large extent these views had been fermented by his limited provincial experience of the material and cultural poverty of his native island. But even after he developed a wider perspective of national issues from the vantage point of Turin, the problems he was concerned with remained the same, although the solutions he was willing to accept were being modified by his exposure to the political culture of the Turinese working class movement on one hand, and the influence of Crocean philosophy on the other.
It is significant that Gramsci's commitment to socialism evolved through a slow and tortuous process of self-reflection. As Gobetti was later to write, "His socialism was first of all a reply to the offences of society against a lonely Sardinian emigrant" and "he joined the Socialist Party, probably for humanitarian reasons which matured in the pessimism of his loneliness as an emigrant Sardinian." Gramsci's life as a university student in Turin was marked by ill health aggravated by a desperate financial situation which forced him to live a poverty stricken existence.

His initial contact with Turin has thus been characterized by Paolo Spriano as a "bloody encounter." The tone of the accounts of his predicament which he sent back to members of his family attest to his growing embitterment. "The misery of cold, hunger and lack of money encouraged him to retreat into himself," a tendency which he described as having led him to live "For two years ... outside the world: in a dream world. One by one, I let each strand tying me to the world and to my fellow men be cut." At the nadir of this personal crisis Gramsci still grasped on to his self-identity as a Sardinian and a Southerner in a world which otherwise appeared to him to be alien and hostile. Even as he began to emerge from his defensive shell under the influence of Tasca and other young socialists, Gramsci continued to pose as an impassioned exponent of southern Italian interests in the socialist movement. Davidson has aptly characterized Gramsci's initial commitment to socialism as a commitment to the ideal of a socialism which would solve the problem of Sardinia and the Italian South—an extension of Gramsci's Sardism, via a moral idealism, to a Salveamerican position.
At the university a number of his professors strengthened his intellectual views he had obtained from reading La Voce, and Croce and Salvemini. Gramsci would later recall that at this time he shared a common ground with many other young intellectuals:

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 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.

Gramsci wrote of Salvemini and his professor of Italian literature Cosmo:

They taught that the proletariat cannot be set free, that the working people, composed of workers and peasants, cannot be emancipated by creating workers' aristocracies, like those of Reggio Emilia, at the expense of the Southern peasants; they taught that capitalist protectionism cannot be vanquished by creating a workers' protectionism; they taught that the division between North and South is not overcome, and thus the unity of all Italian proletarians is not obtained by promoting privileges for some categories of workers.

As a reader of La Voce during his latter days as a student in Sardinia and the early years of his stay in Turin Gramsci was influenced by the journal's campaign against the Giolitti government and the socialist deputies from northern Italy, who supported its social democratic policies in favour of the industrial proletariat and at the expense of the rural working class and the southern peasantry in particular. The editors of La Voce viewed the southern question as the key to changing the face of Italian society. As such, the journal played host to a medley of conservative, radical, and socialistic viewpoints on the socio-economic and political problems of the South. As noted by Davidson, the logic which brought them all together was their common disdain for Giolitti, "the ally of the southern camorra, against whom it favoured the arch-conservative Sonnino who knew the South well."
The anti-positivistic outlook of the journal's contributors, most of whom had matured in the tradition of southern neo-idealism, was also a factor which influenced not only Gramsci but the intellectual formation of many of the younger Turinese socialists with whom Gramsci was beginning to associate. 10

Pre-Gramscian Analyses of the Southern Question

The complex of socio-economic and political factors which became known as the southern question has been the subject of a voluminous literature dating back to the first decade of Italian unification. The one central thread in this literature is the thesis that the political revolution of 1860 which overthrew the Bourbon regime and united the Kingdom of Naples with the rest of Italy represented only half a step forward in the process of transition from traditional to modern social formations. Beginning with the earliest exponents of the southern question, southernists have assumed that the Risorgimento renewed the political structures but not the economic and social structures in southern Italy and Sicily. After the establishment of the unitary state in 1861, economic and social conditions in the South became closely linked to the presence of the political institutions of the Italian state in such a way as to prevent agrarian reform. The failure of the Risorgimento to bring about a bourgeois social revolution left the traditional land-owning class in control of the economic and social life of the South and allowed the corrupt petty bourgeois bureaucracy of the old regime to gain control of the institutional framework of the unitary state. In the South, therefore, southernists charged that the state was
deformed into a controlling organism of a local ruling class whose economic and social aspirations were hostile to the rise of a capitalist bourgeoisie. The state became the protector of the old agrarian elites in the contest between liberal democracy and the remnants of feudalism. This fact, according to the southern question thesis, explains why the peasant question in southern Italy assumed new intensity after the Risorgimento and remained a burning political question for many decades afterwards.11

The problem of land tenure and land reform lies at the heart of the southern question debate. The parliamentary commission established in 1863 to report on the phenomenon of political brigandage in southern Italy and Sicily linked the social unrest of the peasantry to the system of land tenure.12 In the 1870s, the depressed conditions of the peasantry in the South were the centre of attention in the writings of the earliest exponents of the southern question.13 Concern over the escalating pauperization of the peasants mounted as time went on, reaching a state of virtual alarm at the turn of the century, as peasant rebellions flared again, first in Sicily and then on the southern mainland.14 The peasant question resurfaced as a burning national political issue in the aftermath of both the First and Second world wars, as each time the southern peasantry shifted from passive discontent to acts of rebellion.15 In their quest for a solution to the peasant question in southern Italy the various schools of thought on the southern question have, without exception, closely linked agrarian and constitutional reform, arguing that under the pressure of the land-owning class and the corrupting influence of the southern petty bourgeoisie in the ranks of the bureaucracy, economic legislation and its implementation had deviated more or less widely from the basic bourgeois principles of
the unitary state. From these deviations stemmed most of the difficulties that bedeviled the post-Risorgimento period of agrarian history in southern Italy and Sicily.

This is a theme which was first expounded by conservative and radical bourgeois reformers. In the early decades of the Twentieth century the same theme was given new impetus by the reformist socialists, in particular through the writings of Gaetano Salvemini. It was mainly through Salvemini that it exercised a strong influence on Gramsci.

Salvemini was a socialist disillusioned with Marxism and doubly so with the Italian Socialist Party. He fought against the PSI alliance with the Giolitti government because of his concern that the party was seeking to advance the immediate material interests of the northern workers at the expense of the southern peasantry. Salvemini, along with the southernists of all political stripes who collaborated in La Voce, resented the southern policy of the Giolitti government for shoring-up the position of the local political clienteles against the southern peasantry. Under the leadership of Filippo Turati the PSI officially ignored the plight of the peasant and semi-proletarian masses of the South. Turati himself expressed contempt for southern Italy, calling it the "Vendée of Italy" and sought to identify the party solely with the industrial proletariat and the agricultural day-labourers of northern Italy. Salvemini became perhaps the most vehement opponent of Turati's doctrine. He accused the "reformist" socialist deputies of becoming another, obedient Giolittian clientele whose personal greed for the crumbs of bourgeois power blinded their vision of the national mission of the party. In La Voce in 1910 he wrote:
Socialist parliamentarians have become the spokesmen of the petty-interests of their constituents, hanging around the tables like dogs for whatever morsel the capitalist government would throw them in return for their support.  

The same year Salvemini withdrew from the party with the declaration, published in the party newspaper, Avanti, that there had been "a universal degeneration in our movement." Salvemini carried on his impassioned crusade against the PSI's indifference to the plight of the southern masses in a newspaper which he founded in 1911, entitled L'Unità. This name was meant to be a reminder that the real unity of Italy, i.e., on the basis of equality between North and South in economic and social matters, and with provisions for democratic representation for workers and peasants, remained an unfulfilled ideal. L'Unità became particularly noted for the criticisms it presented of the systems of exploitation of the South by the North. At the level of political structures, the paper attributed the perpetuation of inequality between North and South on the wanton alliance between Giolitti, socialist "reformism," and the southern agrarian elites, whose representatives in parliament were characterized as petty bourgeois cliques lacking political or moral commitment to the planks of the parties to which they belonged.

Salvemini's critique of aspects of the southern question incorporated the analyses of the conservative and radical bourgeois southerners in a synthesis which explained how the southern question and its solution was linked to the system of rule in Italy since the Risorgimento. He defined the political outcome of the Risorgimento as a kind of "revolution/reaction": revolutionary in the North, reactionary in the South. Whereas in the North the Risorgimento had created the political conditions for the development
of capitalism and the advancement of bourgeois social life, in the South the Risorgimento had widened the traditional gap separating the "governed" from the "governors." In the South, the bourgeois principles which had guided the political revolution in the North were let go in exchange for the political support of the southern agrarian elites. As a result, control of the new state structures fell in the hands of the local coteries of landowners and petty bourgeois intellectuals.  

Salvemini reserved some of his most colourful but incisive attacks against the social character of the southern petty bourgeois. The position of this class was particularly strong in the provincial towns and the villages throughout southern Italy and Sicily. He said that the incrustation of this class in the political and social reality of the South "is to the moral life what malaria is to the physical life of the country." The petty bourgeois who controlled the villages were especially hated by the peasants who bore the brunt of this power in their everyday life. The urban elements of the petty bourgeoisie lived a life beyond the peasant worldview. The rural petty bourgeois, however, was part of an elaborate clientele system which led to the bigger towns, and from the towns to the cities and ultimately to the bigger political personalities who were the main intermediaries between the South and the central government. The rural petty bourgeois to whom the peasant had to turn if he wished to obtain anything administratively was the shallowest and the most hypocritical of the bunch. Salvemini listed "vacuity, cowardice, and no sense of dignity" as the "psychological characteristics" of the rural petty bourgeois. Yet in the absence of a capitalist bourgeoisie these people held a virtual monopoly over every aspect of southern society. Until 1913 they constituted
the bulk of the electoral body as the great mass of the peasantry were
denied the right to vote because of their illiteracy.

Salvemini made the call for universal suffrage the foundation of his
southernist campaign. He believed that the democratization of the electoral
system would open the way for the peasantry to take part in the political
process as an active element, and allowing them to cleanse the South of
political corruption.

With universal suffrage the southern petty bourgeois oligar-
chies will find themselves drowned and suffocated in the
rural mass. For the first time in history the working class
of the South will find itself invested with permanent politi-
cal power. The revolution of 1860 was a superficial fact, it
was the revolution of gentlemen. Universal or almost univer-
sal suffrage will be the revolution of the yokels. 23

The other major element of Salvemini's reformist plank consisted of a plan
for a federal constitution to replace the centralized state structure be-
queathed by the Risorgimento.

Suppose . . . that in southern Italy there was universal
suffrage; suppose that the army, charged with keeping the
peace in the South, were made up of southern peasants,
rather, that every peasant were required to defend public
order in the same town in which he is a voter; suppose that
matters of local interest were deliberated not in Rome, in
offices no one knows, according to standards no one under-
stands anything about, but were handled in the Commune and
the Region concerned, inviting everybody to take part by
way of referendum and thus awakening everybody's attention,
in other words, give southern Italy a federal constitution.
Then, some years hence, be prepared to tell me what will have
become of the landlords' (latifondisti) political power.
Few in number, ignorant and unfit for any kind of serious
work, absentees and unknown to their subordinates, deprived
alike of material force -- the last defense of conservative
classes -- they would soon have to change or perish. 24

Salvemini characterized the contrast between the petty bourgeoisie
and the peasants in the South by using suggestive language which manages
to capture something of the anthropological dimension of the southern
condition while revealing a sense of the personal hatred most southerners have felt for their own southern middle class background.

Go any summer afternoon to one of those clubs (circoli di civili) where the finest flower of these country idlers meet, listen for some time to the conversation of these corpulent people, with their lifeless eyes, with their idiotic and fractious voices, coarse and vulgar both in words and acts, take note of the stupidity, the nonsense and the unreality which cram their speech. ... I don't know where this difference of intellectual capacity between the petty bourgeois and peasant populations of the South comes from. Perhaps manual work and life in the open air preserves the peasants from the degeneration which very quickly takes hold of these sluggard families in that soft climate, largely infested with malaria. This much is certain: between the 'gentlemen' (galantuomini) and the 'yokes' (cafoni) there exist not only profound and easily visible differences in dress, dialect, everyday life, but also real somatic differences. The peasant is thin, willowy, tenacious in his work: the miles quadratus of Roman times cannot have been very different. The gentleman (il civile) is fat, flaccid, slothful, and good-for-nothing. The gentleman when he shouts at the peasant, tries to counterfeit his voice, making it deep and masculine when it is normally feminine and false: he thinks he is satirizing the peasant when, in fact, he is proving his personal degeneration. Very often what allows the southern gentleman to appear intelligent beside northerners, who are in every way realist, but a bit slow, is his promptness of reply, an inferior quality which all neurotics possess in abundance. 25

Salvemini, like most southerners concerned with the southern question, tended to be puritanical in his crusade against public corruption in the South. This puritanical streak often led to excessive idealization of peasant virtues. Salvemini imagined the peasants to be naturally industrious and thrifty, with their lives dedicated to sobering work. Consequently, the obstacle to progress was not to be found in the social character of the southern masses, as anthropological positivism led public opinion in the rest of Italy to believe, but in the social environment which condemned them to a miserable existence. Salvemini maintained that the peasant character was redeemed by the conduct of the peasant emigrants who had left the
savagery of the South behind them: "as soon as they find themselves in a less savage environment they give proof of their capacity for work and thriftyness." However, in their own world they lived a life of enforced cultural apathy, without education or intellectual reserves to fall back upon, as victims of the outside world and a malignant social environment.

Given the general state of socio-economic and cultural backwardness of southern society, Salvemini believed the way to meet the requirements for social change in the South was through a nationally co-ordinated plan of working class struggle, with the industrial proletariat becoming the leading force of southern as well as northern socialism. The idea of allying southern peasants and northern workers was proposed by Salvemini as early as 1900. It was inferred from his analysis of the southern class structure and of the relation between the Italian state and the South.

He argued that the South lacked the intellectual energies and the political strength to develop an effective socialist movement independently. These conditions were the result of the actual course of Italian history from the Risorgimento onwards. The southern petty bourgeoisie, from whose intellectual ranks should have emerged the socialist leadership to organize the peasants, was without "a spark of intelligence or morality." In turn, the system of rule in the South was backed by the full rigour of the force of the Italian state; reflecting the fact that the South was subordinate to the dominance of the northern ruling classes. Although the southern oligarchies were organically incapable of ruling in their own merit, they were maintained in power by the support of an external force, in the same way that a colonial elite is maintained by the political and military backing of a foreign state.
When in a country the corruption of the dominant classes has reached the point of bestiality, as the southern bourgeoisie has, sooner or later a crisis is inevitable: the subordinate classes break the rules of the game that oppresses them, they turn to pillage and slaughter, thus forcing the dominant class to renew itself.  

After a crisis of this type the political and moral regeneration of society can take place very rapidly. However, if the dominant class is too degenerate and fails to provide new and energetic leadership, the initial crisis is followed by a more or less long period of "bloody anarchy," in the course of which a new ruling class is formed. Social change, in other words, can take place either through reform or revolution. But there is a third possibility, where the disintegration of the old regime is met neither by reform nor revolution, but by the intervention of a foreign state.

A foreign state which intervenes in the historical process of development of another society is free to follow any of a number of different policies in relation to the system of rule of that society. It can buttress the dominant classes against the oppressed. Or else it can abandon the old putrefied oligarchies to their own destiny, and substitute them with its own personnel, leaning on the favour of the subordinate classes. Or it can promote the gradual formation of new local leading classes, better than the old ones, in such a way as to renew the country socially and morally, little by little, without sudden and sanguinary flurries.

Salvemini compared the situation which evolved in southern Italy after the Risorgimento to the intervention of a foreign state which chose to support the old ruling classes:

The 'foreign state' which continuously intervenes in the South is northern Italy. It intervenes exclusively to defend the delinquent and putrefied petty bourgeoisie against the discontent of the peasants.
The capitalist bourgeoisie of the North threw its support behind the social dominance of the petty bourgeoisie in the South because it wanted the latter's political acquiescence in parliament. As long as the interests of the South in the Italian parliament were represented exclusively by the petty bourgeoisie the economic and fiscal policies of the state could be made exclusively in the interest of northern capitalism, because the southern deputies could be easily bought off with bureaucratic appointments and other favours for themselves and their clienteles. Ultimately, therefore, the political complicity between the capitalist bourgeoisie of the North and the petty bourgeoisie of the South catered to the economic interests of both groups at the expense of southern economic and social development.

Since the South was in every way subordinate to the North, and since this subordination was institutionalized in the system of rule in Italy, to change conditions in the South it was first necessary to change the system of rule in Italy. To achieve the latter goal required a simultaneous renewal of the ruling classes of both North and South. Salvemini's analysis of the southern question thus resolves the problem into an aspect of the national question which he claimed was left open by the political outcome of the Risorgimento. The unitary state was founded on a restricted social basis which left the Italian working masses outside the new social order. The actual course of Italian history after the Risorgimento was responsible for the continued oppression of the southern masses. Salvemini thus proposed the formation of an alliance between southern peasants and northern workers as the only concretely possible way to defeat the system of rule bequeathed by the Risorgimento and expand the social order to include the Italian working classes. Over the years, Salvemini's political stance
changed a number of times. Although he had never advocated revolution as a solution to the national question in Italy, his reformist views were progressively watered down, and the moral zeal of his earlier writings became in his old age simply another voice of cynical pessimism. His vision of a peasant/worker alliance, and the replacement of the centralized state structure which came out of the Risorgimento with a federal system of government, more amenable to the socio-economic reality of southern Italy, became the inspiration of a more revolutionary perspective.

These themes were steeped in a specifically Italian tradition going back through Salvemini and Antonio Labriola to Carlo Cattaneo. After the First World War Gramsci became the most ardent proponent of the tradition. He sought to give it a new revolutionary impetus in a historical situation which seemed to make it "concretely possible to overcome the social contradictions inherited from the Risorgimento." Gramsci's analysis of the historical origins and the sociological character of the southern question reveals nothing which Salvemini and the earlier southernists had not already clarified in great detail. It is only in its proposed solution that Gramsci's analysis of the problem seems to break new ground.

Gramsci's Analysis of the Southern Question

Gramsci first dealt with the southern question in what have become known as the "Political Writings." These consist of journalistic articles written between 1916 and 1926, Gramsci's contribution to the Lyons Theses presented at the PCI's Third Congress in January 1926, and an essay on the southern question which was left incomplete because of his arrest in
November 1926. Constant in Gramsci's mind during this period was the assumption that the political and social reality of southern Italy was distinguished from that of northern Italy by the absence of a modern entrepreneurial class, and therefore of capitalism. In 1916 he wrote that the Spanish rulers and the Bourbon monarchy had impeded the emergence of a capitalist bourgeoisie in the South at the same time that changes in this direction were beginning to take place in some areas of northern Italy. In 1919 he stated that the large estates (latifundi) still found in the South were essentially feudal in economic and social character. And in 1924 Gramsci stated that capitalism and its state structures were alien to the South.

The Lyons Theses represent the first systematic attempt to place the southern question within the global perspective of the PCI's analysis of the structural composition of Italian society. The Theses describe southern Italy as a subordinate society dominated by northern Italian capitalism through the maintenance of its pre-capitalist structures: the southern agrarian middle class and the petty bourgeoisie are the exploiters of the peasantry and the guardians of capitalist exploitation, but their social character remains that of a traditional oligarchy, something very different from the social, political, and cultural character of a modern capitalist bourgeoisie. In thesis seven it is stated that the Italian unitary state was founded on a compromise with the southern landowners and petty bourgeoisie. "Thence derives a heterogeneity and weakness of the entire social structure, and of the State which is its expression." Thesis eight adds that:
As a result of this, all the conflicts inherent in the country's social structure contain within them an element which affects the unity of the state and puts it in danger. The solution of the problem is sought by the bourgeois and agrarian ruling groups through a compromise. None of these groups naturally possesses a unitary character or a unitary function. The compromise whereby unity is preserved is, moreover, such as to make the situation more serious. It gives the toiling masses of the South a position analogous to that of a colonial population. The big industry of the North fulfils the function vis-à-vis them of the capitalist metropolis. The big landowners and even the middle bourgeoisie of the South, for their part, take on the role of those coteries in the colonies which ally themselves to the metropoles in order to keep the mass of the working people subjugated. Economic exploitation and political oppression thus unite to make of the working people of the South a force continuously mobilized against the state.

In Alcuni temi Gramsci outlined the communist program for the creation of a political alliance between southern peasants and northern workers. Gramsci's discussion of his own evaluation of the worker/peasant alliance expresses the Salveminiian view in so far as he takes the actual course of Italian history as the determining factor of the unequal relations between North and South.

The northern bourgeoisie has subjugated the South and the Islands, and reduced them to exploitable colonies; by emancipating itself from capitalist slavery, the northern proletariat will emancipate the southern peasant masses enslaved to the banks and the parasitic industry of the North. The economic and political regeneration of the peasants should not be sought in a division of uncultivated or poorly cultivated lands, but in the solidarity of the industrial proletariat. This in turn needs the solidarity of the peasantry and has an 'interest' in ensuring that capitalism is not re-born economically from landed property; that southern Italy and the Islands do not become the military base for capitalist counter-revolution.

The fact that the southern peasants were in "perpetual agitation" showed their potential as a revolutionary force. However, the fact that as a mass they were unable to make common cause of their needs and aspirations made
it evident that they should be organized by the vanguard of the Communist Party.

The necessity to bring the southern peasants over to the revolutionary camp of the industrial proletariat was not envisioned by Gramsci as a mechanistic imposition of the political and cultural superiority of the industrial proletariat. The industrial proletariat becomes heir to the economic and cultural achievements of the highest stages of bourgeois society. And as the working class directly subjugated to capitalist domination, the industrial proletariat alone is capable of the revolutionary efforts to overthrow capitalism. In Italy therefore the socialist revolution could ultimately take place only in the North.

It can only happen in Milan, Turin, Bologna, in the great industrial cities that generate those millions of threads which make up the network of industrial and finance capitalism's dominance over the rest of the country's productive forces.40

However, given the division of Italian society into economically, politically and culturally distinct territories, Gramsci believed that the arbitrary imposition of the rule of the northern proletariat on the peasant working classes would have resulted in a paradoxical perpetuation of the structural contradictions produced by capitalist society. In other words, a dictatorship of the industrial proletariat in the specific Italian situation would have left the question of national unity unresolved through its exclusion of the southern masses from full and equal participation in the new social order. From Gramsci's point of view the role of the Communist Party was not to dominate but to organize the working classes that were indirectly dominated by the capitalist state. For Gramsci, organization was the result of a given type of culture.41 In Turin, Gramsci had witnessed the partly
spontaneous establishment of a flourishing network of factory councils in a historical situation which was highly advanced in both industrial and cultural terms. The Turin Councils impressed on him the possibility of workers' self-government as producers, and of making the revolutionary party the conscientious representative of the workers' interests and aspirations in society. Gramsci then extended this conception of the role of the party as an expanding organizational force carrying the new type of culture into the less advanced regions of the country. In order to achieve this goal it would be necessary first to analyze the political and social reality of the country in general and the territorial regions in particular. Secondly, the urban culture in which the new forms of working class organization had emerged would have to penetrate into the world of the countryside and prepare the "spiritual" conditions there for the emergence of political and cultural organizations of the revolutionary type produced in Turin.

La Aloumi Temi Gramsci thus proceeded to analyze the traditional organization of class relations in southern Italy as part of the party's appraisal of the agrarian question in Italy. He defined the southern question as the most crucial aspect of the national agrarian question, while noting that in Italy

the peasant question is historically determined ... and is not the "peasant and agrarian question in general." In Italy the peasant question, through the specific Italian tradition, and the specific development of Italian history, has taken two typical and particular forms -- the southern question and that of the Vatican. Gramsci believed that winning the peasants over to socialism required a profound understanding of the political aspects of these two forms of the
agrarian problem in Italy. The greatest challenge to socialism in the
countryside, at least in the North, came not from the bourgeois parties
or the state but from the emergence of Catholic political organizations.
Gramsci saw this phenomenon as the culmination of a long-standing process
reflecting, in part, the Church's response to the loss of its temporal
power to the Italian liberal state. The indifference of the Italian state
to the needs and aspirations of the rural masses had created a vacuum of
political and moral authority in the countryside which the Church sought
to fill with Catholic institutions of an "earthly" character. The culmina-
tion of this process was the establishment of the Italian Popular Party
(PPI). The PPI gave the Church a renewed secular arm with which it could
challenge the power structure of the Italian state by its control over the
economic and social life of the peasantry. In northern Italy, the Catholic
party had proved the only rival to socialism for mass support in the elections
of 1919. In an article written that same year Gramsci described the electo-
ral success of the Catholic party as a necessary stage in the "process of
spiritual renewal of the Italian people." It represented the emergence of
a "reformed" catholicism with a human face incarnating the material and
cultural aspirations of the backward masses of Italian workers, who were
thus made to experience, for the first time a sense of mass "associationism"
and "solidarity." "Democratic catholicism accomplishes that which socialism
could not: it amalgamates, sets in order, vivifies, and then destroys it-
self." Gramsci therefore respected Catholic populism as a real political
force which paves the way for socialism where socialism could not itself
advance because the objective conditions do not exist. 43
The populist movement, however, had no success in the South. There
the peasant remained "tied to the big landowner through the intellectual," a fact which for Gramsci underlined the sociological difference between the northern and southern side of the agrarian question in Italy. The village priest and the populist politician were the main intermediaries in the daily social activities of the northern peasantry, and represented the peasants' interests independent of the direct control of the bourgeois state. The southern intellectuals were recruited from the ranks of the rural petty bourgeoisie. The southern intellectual, wrote Gramsci, derives from his class background "a fierce antipathy to the working peasant -- who is regarded as a machine for work to be bled dry, and one which can be replaced, given the excess working population." In the South, the agrarian question was fuelled by the hatred between the intellectuals, in which category Gramsci included the southern clergy, and the peasantry.

The southern intellectuals fear the peasant's "destructive violence; hence, they practice a refined hypocrisy and a highly refined art of deceiving and taming the peasant masses." The southern intellectual is "Democratic in his peasant face; reactionary in the face turned towards the big landowner and the government: politicking, corrupt and faithless."

The difference between North and South is evidenced in the features which distinguish the southern clergy from the northern clergy.

The northern priest is generally the son of an artisan or a peasant, has democratic sympathies, is more tied to the mass of peasants. Morally, he is more correct than the southern priest, who often lives more or less openly with a woman. He therefore exercises a spiritual function that is more complete, from a social point of view, in that he guides a family's entire activities. In the North, the separation of Church from state and the expropriation of ecclesiastical goods was more radical than in the South,
where the parishes and convents either have preserved or have reconstituted considerable assets, both fixed and movable. In the South, the priest appears to the peasant: 1. as a land administrator, with whom the peasant enters into conflict on the question of rents; 2. as a usurer, who asks for extremely high rates of interest and manipulates the religious element in order to make certain of collecting his rent or interest; 3. as a man subject to all the ordinary passions (women and money), and who therefore, from a spiritual point of view, inspires no confidence in his discretion and impartiality. Hence confession exercises only the most minimal role of guidance, and the southern peasant, if often superstitious in a pagan sense, is not clerical. All this, taken together, explains why in the South the Popular Party (except in some parts of Sicily) does not have any great position or possess any network of institutions and mass organizations.47

In the South, peasant movements were always absorbed by the state structures, the "communes, provinces, Chamber of deputies," through the process of "composition and decomposition of local parties, whose personnel is made up of intellectuals, but which are controlled by the big landowners and their agents," before they could reach the stage of "independent mass organizations." The peasants, therefore, who made up the great majority of the southern population had no "cohesion among themselves."48

Gramsci placed great emphasis on the organizing role of intellectuals in explaining the causes of the southern question and in outlining a program for its solution. Industry, he said, "has introduced a new type of intellectual: the technical organizer, the specialist in applied science."49 Where capitalism becomes the dominant social formation the new type of intellectual replaces the traditional intellectual who "was the organizing element in a society with a mainly peasant and artisanal basis."50 The traditional intellectual is under the direct control of the dominant class, and his role encompasses every aspect of social, political, and economic organization. The traditional intellectual
provides the bulk of the state personnel; and locally too, in the villages and little country towns. He has the function of intermediary between the peasant and the administration in general. In southern Italy this type predominates, with all its characteristic features.51

Gramsci defined southern Italian society as a "great agrarian bloc" of peasants, medium and petty bourgeois intellectuals, and big landowners and "great intellectuals." From a social point of view, he described the structure of this system as a "great social disintegration" kept together by the mediating role of the intellectuals.52 Nationally, the agrarian bloc exists for the sole purpose of safeguarding the interests of northern capitalism. "Its single aim is to preserve the status quo."53 From within, the agrarian bloc appears as a closed system in which everything is reduced to the political power of the dominant elites, and every subordinate class functions as a means of that political power. The political structure of the agrarian bloc served to maintain the southern economy as the exclusive preserve of the big landowners and northern capitalism. The landowners exploited the working population through the system of agricultural production. The capitalist bourgeoisie exploited the southern economy indirectly through the system of taxation and trade tariffs which favoured the industrial sectors of the national economy. And directly by monopolizing the southern market and by controlling whatever capitalist ventures were found in the South. Thus,

The nexus of relations between North and South in the organization of the national economy and the state is such, that the birth of a broad middle class of an economic nature (which means the birth of a broad capitalist bourgeoisie) is made almost impossible. Any accumulation of capital on the spot, any accumulation of savings, is made impossible by the fiscal and customs system; and by the fact that the capitalists who own shares in southern
enterprises do not transform their profits into new capital on the spot, because they are not from that spot.\textsuperscript{54}

Gramsci was adamant that the structural heterogeneity between North and South had its roots in pre-unification Italian history. The relative backwardness of the Italian economy compelled the capitalist bourgeoisie to base the economic disposition of the bourgeois state upon a national unity obtained by compromises between "non-homogeneous groups."\textsuperscript{55} The intrinsic weakness of the national bourgeoisie is reflected in the fact that the construction of the unitary state was "only made possible by the exploitation of factors of international politics."\textsuperscript{56} The political reinforcement of the state, in the absence of a nation-wide economic and social base of a modern bourgeois type, necessitated a compromise with traditional classes upon which the incipient industrial class could exercise only a "limited hegemony."\textsuperscript{57} The compromise with the agrarian ruling classes, however, meant that the mass of the national population would remain excluded from the new bourgeois social order. This arrangement proved inadequate for the purpose of uniting the various elements of the economy and society because it kept alive pre-capitalist social formations at the expense of capitalist expansion. The heterogeneity and conflicts of interests among the various territorial ruling classes gave way to a series of different combinations of ruling political alliances. Every form of compromise between the different groups ruling Italian society, however, became an obstacle placed in the way of the development of one or other part of the country's economy. Thus new conflicts are produced and new reactions from the majority of the population; it becomes necessary to intensify the pressure on the masses; and the result is a more and more decisive tendency for them to mobilize in revolt against the state.\textsuperscript{58}
Gramsci therefore concluded that the intrinsic weakness of Italian capitalism became conditioned, permanently, by the political dependence of the bourgeois state on the perpetuation of the heterogeneous organization of the national economy.

The Socialist Revolution as the Historical Completion of the Risorgimento

In anticipation of the schism between reformist socialists and communists, in January 1921, Gramsci wrote that only the overthrow of the bourgeois state could bring the process of national unification began by the Risorgimento to completion.

What is indisputable is that only the working class, by seizing political and economic power from the hands of the bankers and the capitalists, is in a position to resolve the central problem of national life in Italy — the southern problem.59

This claim was based on the thesis (ultimately derived from Lenin) that the proletarian revolution can arise in those societies where capitalism is likely to offer the least resistance because of its structural weakness.60

In Italy, the intrinsic weakness of the capitalist system was revealed by its inability to solve the structural contradictions between North and South. Six decades after national unification the bourgeoisie had only "unified the Italian people in terms of territory," while at the same time it had intensified rather than diminished the conditions of economic, social, and cultural disunity. Thus,

The working class has the task of concluding this work of the bourgeoisie and unifying the Italian people in economic and spiritual terms. This can happen only by smashing the
bourgeois state, which is constructed on the hierarchical
dominance of industrial and financial capital over the
nation's other productive forces.61

The proletariat therefore must create a system of class alliances which
allows it to mobilize the rural proletariat and the peasantry.

The break between communists and reformists that will occur
at Livorno will have the following significance. The revolu-
tionary working class will break with those degenerate
socialist currents that have decayed into state parasitism.
It will break with those currents that have sought to
exploit the position of superiority enjoyed by the North
over the South in order to create proletarian aristocracies;
that erected the cooperative protectionist system alongside
the bourgeois protectionist system of tariffs (the legal
expression of the predominance of industrial and financial
capitalism over the other productive forces of the nation),
in the belief that they could emancipate the working class
behind the backs of the majority of the working population.62

The creation of an alliance between northern workers and southern peasants,
in fact, became the central thesis of the political program of the new
Italian Communist Party constituted at Livorno.

In 1924, as party leader, Gramsci defined the central tasks of the
PCI not only in terms of the need to create a revolutionary awareness in
the ranks and spread the slogan of revolution to the masses, but most
important of all to give the motto of a "worker and peasant government"
a "national" as well as a class meaning. This could only be done by con-
centrating attention on the southern question. He made his views clear
in an outline of the objectives to be served by a new party newspaper which
had been decided upon by the party's Central Committee in 1923:

I propose that the paper be called L'Unità, both because it
means something to the workers, and more generally because
I believe after the decision of the Enlarged ECCI (June 12-
23, 1923) in favour of a 'worker and peasant government' that
we must lay special stress on the southern question, that is,
on the question in which the problem of worker/peasant
relations is not only a problem of class relations, but is
also a special territorial question, that is, is one of the aspects of the national question. Personally, I think that the slogan of 'worker and peasant government' should be re-adapted in Italy as the 'Federal republic of workers and peasants.' I don't know whether the present time is favourable to that, I do believe however that the situation that fascism is creating ... will make our party adopt this slogan.63

Gramsci therefore pressed two basic themes on which the party should be organized. First, it would have to include the peasantry in any effective revolutionary movement, and thus would have to study the southern question closely. Second, it followed that the party would have to view itself as an educator. Gramsci would later return to these themes in the "Prison Notebooks" and make them the starting point of his study of two major problems of political theory and modern Italian history, namely, the structure and functions of the political party, and the role of intellectuals in Italian history.
NOTES


2. As quoted in Davidson, Antonio Gramsci, p. 71.


5. Letter to his sister Grazietta Gramsci, as quoted in Davidson, p. 70.

6. Davidson, p. 63. The term "sardism" is a synonym for "Sardinian nationalism" which, as Davidson explains, influenced Gramsci's first political beliefs: pp. 48-62, 72, 94.

7. Letter, as quoted in Davidson, pp. 59-60. La Voce, mentioned earlier in this paragraph, was a political and literary journal published in Florence in 1908-16.


11. The first exponents of the southern problem were moderate liberals belonging to that current of bourgeois conservatism that had been the main instrument, at the level of political institutions, of national unification in 1859-61, and the main beneficiary of the Risorgimento. After Cavour's death in 1861, this group became known as the "historical Right" (la Destra storica) in the Italian parliament, and held power until 1876. Pasquale Villari, a Neapolitan historian and conservative member of the Italian parliament, wrote various articles in the course...
of the 1860s denouncing the corruption of public officials and the extreme poverty of the masses in the South. His writings provided the first sociological analysis of the nature of the Neapolitan Camorra and the Sicilian Mafia. He defined these clandestine organizations as instruments of political and social oppression involving all levels of public administration and economic life. They were, he stated, the most important manifestation of anachronistic abuse of public institutions by the dominant agrarian classes. In 1875 Villari published a series of articles entitled "Le lettere meridionali" in which he extended his analysis of southern society to include the relations between the South and the political structures of the Italian state. The letters expressed for the first time the idea of a southern question as a problem imbedded in the social order created by the Risorgimento. Villari pointed out the existence of a "social question" in southern Italy which was being officially ignored by the national government. At the same time he warned that the institutional framework of the unitary state had become an instrument of reaction used to defend the old class privileges and the agrarian power structure of the old Bourbon regime. Villari traced the root of this southern problem to the outcome of the Risorgimento, which he described as a revolution which had renewed the political structures but not the "social spirit" of the ruling class in southern Italy. See, P. Villari, "Il Mezzogiorno e la questione sociale," in Rosario Villari, ed., Il Sud nella storia d'Italia (Bari: Laterza, 1963), pp. 105-117; and P. Villari, "La Mafia," in Bruno Caizzi, ed., Nuova antologia della questione meridionale (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1962).


13. The same year Villari wrote the "Lettere" Leopoldo Franchetti published the results of on-the-spot surveys of agrarian conditions in the southern mainland conducted in 1873-74. In 1876 Franchetti and Sidney Sonnino jointly published the results of a similar survey they had undertaken the year before in Sicily. The writers, who were from Tuscany, were alarmed by the extreme pauperization of the southern peasantry. Both studies depict a socio-political landscape of authoritarian agrarian elites, peasant rebellions, and a cultural atmosphere hostile to bourgeois economic and social values. They expressed views on the causes of these problems similar to Villari's. The failure of the Risorgimento to bring about a "social revolution" had kept intact the dominant position of the traditional agrarian elites. They also felt that until then the national government had knowingly or otherwise condoned the local abuses of state authority which kept this whole world from being swept away by the mounting discontent of the peasantry. See, L. Franchetti, "Il governo e le influenze locali in Sicilia," in R. Villari, op. cit., pp. 118-127; S. Sonnino, "Proprietari e contadini,"
14. Among those who picked up on the conservative reformist themes advanced by the likes of Villari, Sonnino, and Frachetti were Pasquale Turiello and Giustino Fortunato, two young southerners who had witnessed first hand the ineptitude or unwillingness of the national government to deal effectively with the illegalities perpetrated by the ruling class in the South. Turiello was a man of the "historical Right" who viewed with disdain the rising influence of the southern political clienteles in Italian political life, a phenomenon associated with the coming to power in 1876 of the "historical Left" (la Sinistra storica). He was one of the first to denounce the system of trasformismo, a term first used to describe the political method of Depretis, whereby after 1876 parliamentary factions of the "historical" Right and Left started to converge, gradually dissolving the traditional distinction between "Right" and "Left" until it made no sense to speak of two separate parties. In 1882 Turiello wrote a book, entitled Governo e governanti, in which he presented a scathing critique of the Italian ruling class. He characterized Italian governments as opportunistic coalitions of regional potentates who looked upon the liberal institutions of the bourgeois state as bastions of abusive power which they could exploit to ingratiate their local clienteles. In the South, in particular, he suggested that bourgeois democracy was unworkable because of the cultural inclination of the ruling oligarchies. For his part, Fortunato stands as one of the major liberal conservative expounders of the southern question in parliament and in public. He began his political and literary career as an avid supporter of Crispi's policies of colonial expansionism and "statism." With the fall of Crispi from grace and the failure of colonial expansionism as an outlet for the excess southern rural population, and thus a potential solution to the peasant question in the South, Fortunato abandoned some of his earlier political views, in particular, his support for a highly centralized state structure as the only guarantee to national unity. Although critical of the political and economic treatment received by the South from 1860 onwards, and of the political outcome of the Risorgimento in the South, Fortunato's views on the southern question always carried with them a litany of national reconciliation between North and South, stressing the positive side of national unification against real and imagined voices of doom. He maintained that the southern question had been ultimately caused by ignorance on the part of Italian statesmen of historical and environmental conditions in the South at the time of national unification. He wrote extensively on the geopolitical aspects of southern Italian history. His central thesis stated that rural overpopulation and the natural poverty of southern agriculture had concurred with a millenial history of foreign conquest and domination to produce an extraordinarily backward society. Historically, therefore, the southern question was the inevitable culmination of adverse natural and political conditions, with the "natural factor" being the "major determinant of social life." See, Giustino Fortunato, "Povertà naturale del Mezzogiorno," in Caizzi, op. cit., pp. 193-204; Fortunato,

15. With the advent of the agrarian crisis in the 1880s the discussion on the southern question shifted to the economic aspects of the problem. The two outstanding contributors in this respect were P.S. Nitti and A. De Viti De Marco. De Viti De Marco exposed the negative effects of industrial protectionism on southern agriculture and in general viewed the customs policies of the Italian state as the most significant manifestation of the unequal economic relationship between North and South. Nitti produced the first extensive economic histories of the first forty years of the post-unification South. He suggested that the monetary and fiscal policies of the Italian state had expropriated the South of its capital assets in favour of northern industrial development and thus caused an actual regression of the southern economy. Both writers maintained that at the time of national unification the southern economy had been one of the most dynamic in Italy, with a healthy balance of trade, virtually no public debt, large sums of accumulated capital, and showing positive signs of incipient industrialization. Although these claims were widely disputed they nonetheless brought to the fore the structural contradictions which lay at the base of the economic edifice erected by the Italian state. The waves of social unrest which swept southern Italy in the 1890s were seen as a direct consequence of the growing economic inequality between North and South and became the central point of reference of a renewed call for reforming the state mechanisms (economic structures, political structures) which more and more begun to be viewed as the fundamental cause of southern underdevelopment. See, N. Colojanni, "Le cause del movimento dei Fasci Siciliani," in R. Villari, op. cit., pp. 225-245; E. Ciocotti, "Il Mezzogiorno alla fine dell'Ottocento," in R. Villari, op. cit., pp. 291-307; Cecchi, "Il Mezzogiorno della storia," pp. 199-206; De Viti De Marco, "Il Mezzogiorno mercato coloniale," pp. 343-352; in R. Villari, op. cit.; and De Viti De Marco, "La politica commerciale e l'interesse dei lavoratori," in R. Villari, op. cit., pp. 311-342.


17. G. Fiore. The Life of a Revolutionary, as quoted in Davidson, p. 54.

18. Gaetano Salvemini, in La Voce, 1910, as quoted in Davidson, p. 54.
19. Salvemini, in *Avanti*, 1910, as quoted in Davidson, p. 54.


22. Ibid., p. 381.


26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 390.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., pp. 390-91.

30. "There is a conflict between the masses of the South and the reactionaries of the South; there is a conflict between the masses of the North and the reactionaries of the North; and just as the reactionaries of North and South unite together to oppress the masses of North and South, so must the masses of both sections of our country unite to defeat reaction in a cross-fire, be that reaction delinquent as with the Camorra or the Mafia, be it hypocritically honest . . ., or be that it lives on the unpaid labour of the Apulian yokels or that of the Emilian rise-fields." Salvemini, "La questione meridionale e il federalismo," loc. cit., p. 475.

31. In 1949 Salvemini wrote: "I no longer have the bold confidence in the political capacity of southerners that I had when the age of thirty was for me still a thing of the future. For the southern peasantry I have the same respect that I had then. But the peasantry, in southern Italy, as in all countries of the world, needs "guides." These guides can only come from the intellectual petty bourgeoisie. Now for the most part this class in southern Italy is morally rotten . . . To confess the whole truth, at that time I believed that the peasantry could find its own path. According to the Marxist doctrine the "proletariat was the chosen vessel." At the time that doctrine was floating in my head, as it was in that of many of my contemporaries, for a while I derived certain fantasies from it, which subsequently
I had to overcome. One of these fantasies was the capacity of the "proletariat," and therefore of the southern peasants as well, to act on its own. As this illusion vanished, and having become aware of the intellectual rack and ruin of the intellectual petty bourgeoisie that was to provide guides for the peasantry, the merry optimism of pristine youth became -- alas! -- rarefied. But I continue to believe that universal suffrage is the only political weapon which can benefit the peasantry, as they learn to make use of it. It will be a much slower process than I had imagined. But even as it is today, that anonymous and imposive mass, for the sole fact that it can vote, exercises a pressure of fear on the petty politicians of all parties. Neither clericals, nor communists, nor socialists, nor liberals of the right or of the left, would talk so much of land question and agrarian question if the southern peasantry did not possess the right to vote. Only, I repeat, the process will be much slower than I had once anticipated. The social machine, wrote Cattaneo, is slow in moving, and it does not move without a great uproar, and many times it produces a great uproar and does not move at all." "Prefazione di Gaetano Salvemini," in Caizzi, Nuova antologia, pp. 9-11.

32. For an explication of this point see, Cammett, The Origins, pp. 32-33.


It should be noted here that the exact authorship of the Lyons Theses has never been clearly established. Theses 3-18, however, are generally considered to reflect Gramsci's ideas on Italian history and society (see Cammett's comments on this, pp. 170-71). Gramsci's influence on the Theses is authenticated by the minutes of the Political Commission of the Lyons Congress (included in Selections from Political Writings vol. 2, pp. 319-339), and by Gramsci's report on the Lyons Congress published in L'Unità, 24 February 1926. The latter is reproduced in Antonio Gramsci, La questione meridionale; ed. and intro., Franco De Felice and Valentino Parlato (Rome: Riuniti, 1966), pp. 105-130. Gramsci's essay on the southern question, Alcuni temi della questione meridionale, was first published in Paris in Stato Operaio in 1930, and was accompanied by a prefatory note which said: "The manuscript is not complete and the author would have probably retouched it again, here and there. We reproduce it without any correction, as the best document of communist political thought, incomparably profound, powerful, original, full of wide ranging developments." As quoted in De Felice and Parlato, p. 131. Alcuni Temi has had many republications in Italian. References to the Lyons Theses and Alcuni Temi will be from Hoare's English translation. Other references to Gramsci's writings here will be from the same translation except in cases where Hoare does not present an English translation. However, even when quoting from Hoare's translation, changes have sometimes been made to the English rendition of the Italian original.
34. After national unification, Gramsci wrote, "the new Italy found the two stumps of the peninsula, southern and northern, in absolutely antithetical conditions. . . . On one side the tradition of a certain independence had created an audacious bourgeoisie full of initiative, and there was an economic organization similar to that of the other states of Europe, favouring the ulterior development of capitalism and industry. In the other region of the country, the patriarchal administration of Spain and the Bourbons had created nothing: the bourgeoisie did not exist, agriculture was primitive and insufficient to satisfy even the local needs; no roads, no ports, non-utilization of the little water afforded by the region's special geological conformation." Gramsci, "Il Mezzogiorno e la guerra," in Scritti giovanili (Turin: Einaudi, 1958), p. 31.

35. Gramsci lumped together Russia, Italy, France, and Spain as countries "still backward in capitalist terms." Explaining that "In agriculture, more or less feudal economic patterns have survived, together with a corresponding mentality. The idea of the modern liberal-democratic state is still unknown. . . . In reality big landed property has remained impervious to free competition -- and the modern state has respected its feudal essence, devising judicial formulae . . . which effectively perpetuate the investitures and privileges of the feudal regime." Gramsci, "Workers and Peasants," in Selections from Political Writings vol. 1, p. 83.

36. "The South has manifested once again its territorial distinction from the rest of the state . . . in a period in which the decline in emigration poses, with increased violence, the problems of class which tend to become 'territorial' problems because capitalism presents itself as a stranger to the region and as a stranger appears the government that administers the interests of capitalism." Gramsci, Unsigned article in L'Ordine Nuovo, as quoted in De Felice and Parlato, pp. 83-88.


38. Ibid., p. 345.


41. Culture, Gramsci wrote in 1916, "is organization, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness," that is acquired historically and then "only by degrees, one stage at a time," as the result of "intelligent reflection," first by a few men, and later by a "whole class," and this leads to conscious understanding of the reasons why certain patterns of human organization have existed historically, why these patterns of organization were "imposed" on humanity by "minorities," and "how best to convert the facts of vassallage into signals of
rebellion and social reconstruction." The revolutionary significance of culture, thus suggested Gramsci: "means that every revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism, by the diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas amongst masses of men who are at first resistant, and think only of solving their own immediate economic and political problems for themselves, who have no ties of solidarity with others in the same condition." Gramsci, "Socialism and Culture," in Selections from Political Writings vol. 1, pp. 11-12.


45. Ibid., p. 445.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., pp. 455-56.

49. Ibid., p. 456.

50. Ibid., p. 454.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., p. 455.

53. Ibid., p. 454.

54. Ibid., p. 457.

55. Ibid., p. 458.


57. Ibid., p. 344.

58. Ibid., p. 346.


60. This theme was present in Gramsci before he knew Lenin's writings and can be traced back to Salvemini's influence. The political theory underlying Gramsci's conception of the worker/peasant alliance was
fully developed only in the *Lyons Theses*, where Lenin's influence becomes superimposed on the traditional Italian historical analysis of the problem. Thus, in the conclusion of Thesis 8 it is stated: "In Italy, there is a confirmation of the thesis that the most favourable conditions for the proletarian revolution do not necessarily always occur in those countries where capitalism and industrialism have reached the highest level of development, but may instead arise where the fabric of the capitalist system offers least resistance, because of its structural weakness, to an attack by the revolutionary class and its allies"cit., p. 344. For Lenin's writings on the necessity of the peasant-worker alliance, see V.I. Lenin, *Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1959).


63. Letter to the Executive Committee of the PCI, in *Selections from Political Writings* vol. 1, p. 162.
CHAPTER III

GRAMSCI AS "ANTI-CROCE"

When he first mentioned his intentions to dedicate his time in prison writing what in the end became the Prison Notebooks, Gramsci stated that he wanted to expand on the thesis he had developed in the "hasty and superficial essay on southern Italy and the importance of Benedetto Croce." He felt that Alcuni Temi along with the rest of his political writings had been written from the point of view of the daily political struggles of his activities as a politician and intellectual of the working class movement and were not intended as a final statement of his ideas, as not enough thought had gone into them. He now wanted to reconsider the same themes from a "disinterested point of view, für ewig." The chief item in the list of subjects which he proposed to study in prison was described as "a research of the formation of the public spirit in Italy in the last century," focusing in particular "on the Italian intellectuals, their origins, their group formations according to cultural currents, their different modes of thinking." By 1932 Gramsci had decided that this project should be divided in two separate studies on modern Italian history. "Two works: one on the Age of the Risorgimento and one an Introduction to Risorgimento." In one of the latest notebooks on which he was working in 1934–35 he outlined in detail the full scope of this plan.

This notebook, in which he attempted to collect all the notes on the Risorgimento from the earlier notebooks, starts as follows:
A double series of researches. One on the age of the Risorgimento and a second one on the preceding history which has taken place on the Italian peninsula, in as much as it created cultural elements which have had repercussions on the Age of the Risorgimento (positive and negative repercussions) and continue to operate (even if only as ideological items of propaganda) as well in Italian national life as it was shaped by the Risorgimento.6

The study which was to serve as an introduction to the Risorgimento was visualized as including in its scope

the stages of world history in their Italian reflections; after the fall of the Roman Empire: Middle Ages (or age of the Communes or epoch of the molecular formation of new urban social groups); Age of Mercantilism and of the absolute Monarchies (or epoch in which these new groups become powerfully integrated in the state structure, reshaping this structure and introducing a new equilibrium of forces that allows their rapidly progressive development) prior to the Age of the Risorgimento.6

In another instance Gramsci envisioned a scaled down version of Risorgimento and pre-Risorgimento history as a single essay in which he would have compared the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution as embodiments of the two most important epochs of world history with the Italian Renaissance and the Risorgimento as Italian reflections of these world epochs.

The scattered observations made on the historical importance of the Protestant Reformation and the Italian Renaissance, of the French Revolution and of the Risorgimento (the Reformation sticks to the Renaissance as the French Revolution does to the Risorgimento) can be gathered in a single essay with a title which could even be "Reformation and Renaissance" and which could take its cue from the publications that appeared between 1920 and 1925 precisely around this argument: "of the necessity that in Italy there should take place an intellectual and moral reform" linked to the critique of the Risorgimento as a "royal conquest" and not a people's movement.7

That Gramsci never did write any of these books or essays, and the various explanations proposed as to why he was not able to do so, are facts which the various biographical studies have made generally known and need
not be considered here. What is important to note by way of introduction to Gramsci's analysis of the Risorgimento is that the themes which Gramsci elected to study in prison make apparent that his concern lay overwhelm-
ingly with problems of the "superstructure." He made a deliberate decision to concentrate on those aspects of political and cultural history which he thought to be the most outstanding problems of Italian history, as well as that part of "world" history most neglected by conventional Marxist concern with the "substructure." Gramsci's discussion, both in relation to the history of the Risorgimento as to the other subjects in the Notebooks, takes problems of economic history and places them to one side, not as something of less importance, but as factors which in relation to the set of problems which were the focus of his analysis had to remain in the back-
ground, for methodological if for no other reason. This is not to say that he ignores completely questions of economic significance, for in order to develop his analysis of political and cultural structures he must pre-
suppose the existence of specific economic formations. But he does so in the most general way, with the use of descriptive terms such as "feudalism" and "capitalism" without any attempt to establish a precise historiographic or theoretical meaning for such concepts. This is a point on which Gramsci's work is susceptible to very serious methodological criticism which ultimately could serve as a premise for still stronger criticism for some of the historical assumptions which he made as to the "capitalistic" or "feudal-
istic" nature of this or that territorial region of the Italian economy. The fact remains, however, that Gramsci's interest in modern Italian history intentionally focussed almost exclusively on the superstructural aspects of the Risorgimento.
The Historico-Political Significance of Crocean Philosophy

When Gramsci's remarks on aspects of the history of the Risorgimento are viewed in the context of the broader theoretical design in which they appear in the Notebooks, it shows that the frustrated agrarian revolution thesis which, Romeo attributed to Gramsci bears no resemblance to Gramsci's ultimate views on the Risorgimento and the subsequent development of Italian society. The operational concepts used by Gramsci in his analysis of the Risorgimento do not relate to problems of "primitive accumulation" and "industrial growth rates." His notes are rather completely absorbed with sociological considerations of the theory of "hegemony" and the "historical bloc" which he developed especially in his notes on Machiavelli and the role of the "Modern Prince." Another sign that Gramsci had no interest in interpretative schemes of economic history is revealed by the almost total lack of mention of the work of economic historians and his constant referral instead to the work of political and cultural historians, in particular his consistent return to the "ethical-political" themes of Croce's histories. Gramsci once described his method for writing the Notebooks as an "Anti-Croce." In every major subject dealt with in the Notebooks, in fact, Croce's work figures always as the starting point of Gramsci's discussion. This is true of Gramsci's analysis of the Risorgimento as well. Gramsci considered Croce the greatest hegemonic figure of modern Italian culture. Croce's philosophy, he thought; dominated in practice as well as in theory the social, political, and cultural function of Italian intellectuals. Croce's theories represented the most advanced possible views in Italian philosophical, political, and cultural life. And precisely because his
ideas were the most advanced of any Italian intellectual he was the greatest figure of bourgeois reaction in Italy. Gramsci therefore believed that a critique of Croce’s thought was the necessary starting point for any Marxist analysis of Italian history and society.

Croce’s function as the master of Italian intellectual life had been, in Gramsci’s view, to return “national culture to its origins, deprovincializing and purifying it of all the bizarre and bombastic dregs of the Risorgimento.”

Gramsci maintained that Croce’s thought had carried out the only "intellectual and moral reform" possible in Italian bourgeois society. But it was a reform restricted to intellectual elites. "Croce did not 'go to the people,' did not wish to become a 'national' element." Croce emancipated Italian intellectual life from what remained of Catholic hegemony. He replaced the traditional cosmopolitan culture of the Church with a modern European cosmopolitanism. But Croce did not wish to create a band of disciples ... who could have popularized his philosophy and tried to make it into an educative element, starting in the primary school (and hence educative for the simple worker or peasant, i.e. for the simple man of the people).

In this he acted just like the intellectuals of the Italian Renaissance who also were cosmopolitan intellectuals detached from the mass of the people and unlike the Lutherans and Calvinists who created first "a vast national-popular movement through which their influence spread and only in later periods did they create a higher culture." Italian intellectuals, according to Gramsci, have historically displayed a Malthusian fear of, or contempt for, the masses. And this fact has determined the character of every attempt to reform Italian society from the Renaissance onwards.

In the history of Italy, intellectual and moral reform has always been
divorced from economic and social reform, because such reforms always started from above and were directed against the "depressed strata of society." Thus, traditional social formations remained dominant in Italy until the present century largely because Italian reform movements were always led by intellectuals unable or unwilling to detach themselves from the status quo. This was the character of the "reformation" represented by Croce as well.

The Nineteenth Century Philosophical Roots of Crocean Historiography

The outstanding problem of modern Italian history, according to Gramsci, rests in the historic fact of the absence of a unitarian popular initiative in the unrolling of Italian history and the other fact that the development happened as a reaction of the dominant classes against the sporadic, elementary, and disorganic subversiveness of the popular masses with 'restorations' which have met a few of the demands from below, hence 'progressive restorations or revolutions-restorations' or even 'passive revolutions.'

Gramsci believed that this problem had been made evident in Croce's "ethical-political" histories. Croce, however, was unable to escape the speculative terms of his neo-idealistic frame of mind. His theory of history transformed these facts into an abstract vision of Italian history as a "temperate reformistic conservatism" which he interpreted as a "history of liberty" whereas in fact it was a history of the actual mechanism by which such a conception of Italian history arose and was spread as a "religion" among Italian intellectuals and a "superstitious" belief among the masses of being an "organic" part of this history or "historical bloc."
The interpretation of Italian history presented by Croce was considered by Gramsci to have its roots in the thought of the Catholic reformers of the early part of the Nineteenth century and the Hegelian liberal reformers of the second half of the Nineteenth century. The idea of a "passive revolution" had been originally put forward by Vincenzo Cuoco in the belief that comprehensive economic and social reforms were the most effective method of preventing "active revolution" of the French type. In his analysis of the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799 Cuoco suggested that the Neapolitan experiment ended in tragedy because it had been the work of an "enlightened" urban minority that failed to enlist the support of the masses and antagonized the peasantry by not moving swiftly to abolish feudalism. The Neapolitan revolutionists were deeply split on the question of land reform with a minority of Jacobins on one side and a majority of Moderates on the other. Cuoco, who had himself played a minor role in the Neapolitan Revolution, reported that the spokesman of the Moderates believed the time had not yet come to decide the controversy: he recognized the abolition of the feudal rights as necessary and just, but he expected the land not to be touched, as if a people should not be oppressed, but could be legitimately wretched.

"The fear of disgusting ten thousand powerful men," thus concluded Cuoco, "made ... the Republic loose the occasion to gain the souls of five million."17

Cuoco's views were influential in the early stages of the Risorgimento in spreading awareness of the agrarian question in the movement for Italian independence. Gramsci, however, noted that Cuoco's admonishment of the fumbling Neapolitan revolutionaries became converted, through the brain and the social panic of the moderate neo-Guelphs, into a positive conception, into
a political program and an ethic which behind the glowing rhetorical and nationalistic false glitter of 'primacy,' of 'Italian initiative,' of 'Italy will bear by itself . . .' was hiding the intention to abdicate and to capitulate at the first serious threat of a profoundly popular Italian revolution, that is to say radically national. 19

Following the annihilating defeats of 1848-49, and the retreat of the papacy from its short-lived liberal and pro-Italian policies, the initiative in the movement for Italian unification passed from the neo-Guelph to the moderate liberal camp advocating national unification under the political and military leadership of the Kingdom of Sardinia. The liberals picked up the pieces of the shattered neo-Guelph ideology and reconstructed it in Hegelian terms. Theirs, however, was

a degenerate and mutilated Hegelism, because its fundamental preoccupation is a panic fear of Jacobin movements, of every active intervention of the popular masses as a progressive historic factor. 20

Liberal intellectuals, Gramsci thought, incorporated the theory of "passive revolution" in a speculative conception of Hegel's philosophy which they used to propagate the belief that the struggle for Italian unification was the beginning of a process of national restoration out of which would emerge a revived Italian nation as one of the supreme powers of the modern European world. Neo-Guelph historians like Gioberti had interpreted this vision of Italian nationhood as a restoration of the medieval supremacy of Italian culture, what Gioberti termed "classicità nazionale." Hence the idea of the Risorgimento as a "revolution-restoration": revolution against foreign domination to restore Italy to the position of old. Hegelian historians like Bertrando Spaventa recognized, in Gramsci's view, that such a way of conceiving the dialectic of "revolution-restoration" was "wrong and politically dangerous" because it pre-
supposed keeping the mass of the population perpetually "in the cradle." Spaventa's interpretation of the Risorgimento, however, was no less of a "mutilated Hegelism." He justified the exclusion of the mass of the population from the movement for Italian unification by characterizing the Risorgimento as the infantile stage of a new age in which consciousness of the break between old and new is as yet developed only in the mind of enlightened minorities. Intermediate stages would follow, but in the meantime the old must be preserved to nourish the new. Thus the history of the Risorgimento becomes the story of the Bildung of the mind of the nation. With the Risorgimento, Italian historical development takes a qualitative leap forward, it gives birth to a new baby, as it were. As an infant, the new Italian state must necessarily undergo a process of development, it must mature slowly and quietly towards the new form, just as a new born child is endowed only with the potential to educate itself, and the potential becomes actual only in stages of development, through a long process of cultivation.

The Relevance of Crocean "Ethico-Political" History for a Marxist Analysis of the Political and Cultural Aspects of the Risorgimento

In examining the underlying dialectical principle of Spaventa's interpretation of the Risorgimento Gramsci termed it "abstract" and "speculative" because it gives rise to a kind of historiography in which it is 'mechanistically' presupposed that the thesis should be 'conserved' by the antithesis in order to not destroy the process itself, which consequently becomes 'foreseen' as a mechanistic, arbitrarily pre-established repetition ad infinitum.
Gramsci maintained that this same presupposition is found in Croce's theory of history. "Croce's philosophy," wrote Gramsci, "remains a 'speculative' philosophy . . . barely liberated from the grosser mythological layer" of its earlier incarnations as Catholic "theology" and Hegelian "transcendence." His history was described by Gramsci as

a formal history, a history of concepts, and in the last analysis a history of intellectuals, indeed an autobiographic history of Croce's thought, a history of bumbling twitters (mosche cocchiere).

Croce's method of historical analysis was based on the principle of "identity of history and philosophy." Although Gramsci considered this identity "immanent in historical materialism," Croce, whom Gramsci believed to have appropriated it through the influence of Antonio Labriola, had contributed to the development of a Marxist view of the function of culture. Croce's historical writings were of great importance in focusing attention to the study of cultural facts and of thought as elements of political domination, to the function of great intellectuals in the life of states, to the moment of hegemony and consensus as a necessary form of the concrete historical bloc.

The limitedness of Croce's study of cultural facts lay in the failure to extend the principle of identity of history and philosophy to include the identity of "history and politics," and therefore also of the identity of "politics and philosophy."

As is revealed in his histories, Gramsci believed that the formal distinction established by Croce between history and philosophy attempts to separate "mechanistically," the moment of "struggle," the process whereby opposing forces in society become organised into contrasting "ethical-political" systems and fight out their differences in actual battles (war
of manœuvre), from the moment of "cultural and ethical-political expansion" which follows every great revolutionary age, as well as junctures in history where opposing forces confront each other in a "war of position". What Croce presented as "ethical-political" history, therefore, was dismissed by Gramsci as:

a mechanistic and arbitrary hypothesis of the moment of hegemony, of political direction, of consensus, in the life and development of the activity of the state and civil society.28

Gramsci attributed Croce's interpretation of cultural facts to the ideological belief that political domination is always a reflection of cultural leadership. All manifestations of power in society therefore are reduced to the function of hegemonic relations, i.e. dominance or leadership in every aspect of human interaction requires a basis of "consensus" and is never the result of unilaterally "coercive" forces. Croce propagated this belief as a refutation of the Marxist theory of class relations and the role of force in the development of the state.29

Gramsci rested his critique of Croce's system on two fundamental points. He argued that Croce's philosophy does not amount to a refutation of Marxism because Croce misrepresented the full scope of Marxist thought. Whereas Croce maintained that Marxism reduces the holistic view of historical development to a limited empirical perception of economic life, Gramsci suggested that a critical analysis of Croce's own histories can be made to show that Croce's concept of ethical-political history is derived from Marxist thought. "Indeed," Gramsci wrote, "it is even possible to claim that the essential trait of the most up-to-date philosophy of praxis consists exactly in the historical-political concept of hegemony."30 Croce's ethical-political
history is "essentially a reaction to 'economism' and fatalistic mechan-
icism, even though it purports to overcome the philosophy of praxis."

Croce's system merely pretends to be anti-Marxist for ideological and
political reasons, but it "must be evaluated and criticized not for what
it pretends to be, but for what it really is as it makes itself apparent
in concrete historical works."31 Croce's historical thought, concluded
Gramsci, is not really ethical-political history:

It seems to me that Croce's history cannot be called but
'speculative' or 'philosophical' and not ethical-political
history; and its opposition to historical materialism is to
be found in this characteristic and not in its being histor-
icopolitical, in as much as Marxism is the history of the
'hegemonic' moment, whilst from it is excluded 'speculative'
history as well as every 'speculative' philosophy.32

Gramsci, however, did not reject Croce's thought outright. Croce, he said,
"has translated in speculative language the acquisitions of the philosophy
of praxis and in this re-translation lies the best of his thought."33

As a refutation of positivism, "economism," and "fatalistic mechanicism,"
Gramsci believed that Croce's thought offered an instrument of critique
against such currents of thought found within the Marxist camp. This belief
is consistent with Gramsci's overall view of Marxism as a holistic conception
of history and society.34

The second basic point of Gramsci's critique of Croce's thought con-
cerns the ideological nature and the social function of Croce's interpret-
ation of Italian history. In this context Gramsci characterized Croce as
a modern "Erasmus." Croce's interpretation of Italian history as a history
of "intellectual elites," based as it is on a "mutilated" conception of
the "dialectic process," was considered typical by Gramsci of
those intellectuals who perceive themselves as arbiters and mediators of real political struggles, those impersonating the 'catharsis' from the economic to the ethico-political moment, i.e. the synthesis of the dialectical process itself, a synthesis which they 'manipulate' speculatively in their heads by attributing (passionately) an arbitrary weight to each element. This position justifies their incomplete 'commitment' in the real historical act and is undoubtedly convenient: this is the position taken by Erasmus toward the Reformation.35

Erasmus' position, however, was elaborated at a juncture in history that had not as yet witnessed the "active" participation of the masses in the organization of a new "ethical-political system," i.e. before the Reformation became apparent as the incipient superstructure of a new social formation and the age of bourgeois revolutions had given rise to the modern state. Croce's view of history as the history of intellectuals, however, came at a time when as well as the history of bourgeois revolution there was now the history of the working class movement to show that the distinction between the "ethical-political" capacity of intellectual elites and the mass of the population could no longer be explained in terms presupposing that the capacity for "ethical-political activity" resides only in intellectual elites, or that revolution is always an unconscious storm worked up by the children of Luther's "drunken peasant."36 Thus, wrote Gramsci,

it is understandable that Erasmus could say about Luther: "Where Luther is present, culture dies." What is not understandable is how Croce could reproduce Erasmus' position today, since he has seen how classical German philosophy and the vast cultural movement from which sprung the modern world emerged from the primitive intellectual crudeness of the man of the Reformation.37
Croce's position, however, while untenable historically, offered the best document of the historical contradictions lacerating Italian bourgeois society. Croce was correct in assuming that the development of Italian society from the Renaissance to the Risorgimento had been the work of exclusive intellectual elites. In admitting this, however, Gramsci noted that this fact cannot be justified with "generic" principles of philosophy, such as the assumption underlying Croce's interpretation of Italian history that the lack of mass participation in the process of development of modern Italian society gave that history a more sublime character, producing as it were a more refined form of political and social thought and a bourgeois social system which under the circumstances was the best that could be hoped for. 38

According to Gramsci, Croce's rationalization of the history of the Risorgimento as a "positive" history and a "history of liberty" does not explain the real factors which determined the exclusion of the masses from active participation in the movement for national unification. Croce's stress on the positive role played by intellectuals in the course of the Risorgimento was repeatedly dismissed by Gramsci as an ideological and political distortion of the facts. Croce's conception of "ethical-political" history, in so far as it purports to explain political history, was considered methodologically limited by Gramsci because, he noted, it poses as the only method of political action one which views progress, historical development, as the outcome of the dialectic of conservation and innovation. In modern terms this conception is called reformism. 39

In Italy in the early decades of the Twentieth century, Crocean historiography functioned as the most refined articulation of the hegemonic role
played by what Gramsci referred to as the so-called "liberal" political party

that of the speculative and contemplative position of Hegelian philosophy has made an immediate political ideology, a practical instrument of domination and social hegemony, a means of conserving particular political and economic institutions founded in the course of the French Revolution and as a consequence of the effects of the French Revolution in Europe.40

Italian liberalism attempted to represent the history of the Risorgimento as a turning point in European history, as the beginning of a new epoch marked by renewed forms of bourgeois culture and political thought which one neo-idealist historian labelled the "Age of the Risorgimento." Gramsci contended that in reality there was no such thing:

From the European point of view, the age is still that of the French Revolution and not the Italian Risorgimento, of liberalism as a general conception of life and as a new form of state control and civil culture, and not only of the "national" aspect of liberalism.41

What neo-idealist historiography presented as "national" history was a synthesis of the dominant values and attitudes of an "age" which in Italy had not in fact had a national development. Gramsci argued instead that the development of bourgeois society in Italy was made possible in the first place by the modification of "the general structure of the international relations of force" that, on the one hand, unleashed forces "opposed to the formation of a great unitary state on the peninsula," and on the other hand, paved the way for "those currents that . . . from the international world extended into Italy, encouraging the local autonomous forces of a similar persuasion and making them stronger.42 The development of Italian bourgeois society therefore started from above as an extension of innovative political and cultural ideas generated by the French Revolution.
These ideas were appropriated by minorities of intellectual elites who thus became part of an international community of liberal values and interests. Italian liberalism, however, remained confined within this social milieu, expanding horizontally by incorporating wider circles of intellectuals but not vertically in the mass of the population. Thus, beneath this bourgeois superstructure various levels of traditional Italian culture continued to exist in complete isolation of the culture of the dominant class. This cultural separation between the mass of the population and the bourgeois intelligentsia was regarded by Gramsci as a reflection of the traditional economic and social relations which continued to dominate Italian society after the Risorgimento. He argued that the dominance of "liberalism" at the level of political and cultural structures became a function for the conservation of traditional interests at the level of economic and social structures. The liberal intelligentsia thus became the organizers of the various elements of Italian society under the umbrella of a unitary state structure. From this point of view, the main task of a Marxist historiography of the Risorgimento should be to determine how the various levels of culture found within Italian society interact within and between each other in the process of historical development in order to make evident the real contradictions underlying their apparent separation. In his treatment of the Risorgimento and subsequent Italian history Gramsci made this concern the focus of his analysis.  

In this analysis Gramsci stressed the importance of Croce's historiography because he viewed it as a continuation of the means of organization and domination employed by the Italian liberal intelligentsia to first establish the bourgeois state and then to maintain this establishment under
their exclusive control. The purpose of Crocean historiography was thus
to make Italians conform to the established bourgeois order by accentuating
the conciliatory aspects of a presumed national culture while glossing over
the real national contradictions existing in the economic and social reality and therefore also in the political reality of the country. In present-
ing his analysis of the Risorgimento largely in the form of a critique of
liberal historiography Gramsci remained faithful to his vocation as a
politician and intellectual organizer of living social groups. His aim
was to understand the present state of things and to exemplify the problems
of political and cultural organization of the Italian working class move-
ment and not to 'revise' the academic paradigms of Italian bourgeois
historiography. He viewed methodological divergences between historians
as reflections of political differences between various systems of thought
or, as he called them, different "conceptions of the world." In the last
analysis, therefore, his appraisal of Italian history should be viewed
as an inseparable component of his contribution to Marxist thought and not
as a revision of formal history. "The interpretations of the past," he
wrote near the end of his writing days, "when what are looked for in the
past are its errors and deficiencies are not 'history' but politics in
an embryo (in nuce)."44 This statement embodies what Gramsci considered
the concreteness of the "dialectical process" mediating the relation between
thought and being, theory and practice, or even history and philosophy.
The unity between these apparent polarities which for Croce existed only
in the realm of 'pure' thought existed for Gramsci in the history of
concrete historical subjects, acting in relation to actual historical
conditions, and developing their interests historically from within the
material contradictions of their time in complex structural and super-
structural manifestations.

Towards a Gramscian Method for the Analysis
of Political and Cultural History

The method of Gramsci's analysis of Italian history represents a form
of critical historicism differing both from orthodox schools of Marxist
thought as much as from Crocean neo-idealism. Gramsci paid special
attention to problems of exposition and analysis in his writings, striving
to achieve a critical equilibrium between form and content or, in the
terminology of linguistics which he frequently used, 'weighing' the relation
between the structure and subject of speech employed to state his position
on any of a number of issues ranging from problems of natural science to
the interpretation of poetic works. In the Prison Notebooks there is evident
a consistent reluctance on Gramsci's part to commit himself to definitive
views for fear of misrepresenting the full nature of the subject of his
discourse. His concern for capturing every side of a problem led him to
rewrite most of his earlier notebooks, sometime changing, deleting, or
adding single words, repeating the same process with sentences within
paragraphs and paragraphs within longer passages in his persistence to develop
his own critical insights in ways which often appear to give contradictory
views on the same issue.

This characteristic of Gramsci's thought is suggested most fully in
his attitude towards Croce. Although clearly not sharing the latter's
views on any of the fundamental problems of social thought and history,
Gramsci did not fall back on any standard Marxist position in arguing against Croce. Rather than blanket statements Gramsci offered multi-pronged criticisms of Croce's views which are contradictory and yet constructive evaluations. He appropriated those aspects of Croce's thought which emphasized the dialectical and historical side of objectivity, what Croce called the "non-definitiveness" of human thought, to develop his own argument against economic determinism. Gramsci disagreed strongly with "vulgar" materialism. He thought that Marxists who ascribed to the latter position suffered from the old metaphysical tendency of wanting to reduce everything to a single cause: "the ultimate cause, the final cause."

Gramsci dismissed this tendency as "one of the manifestations of the 'search for God'." 45 Such schools of thought, he said, failed to understand that

the function and significance of the dialectic can be conceived in their entire fundamentality only if historical materialism is conceived as an original and integral philosophy which gives rise to a new phase in the history and world-wide development of thought in that it overcomes (and in overcoming it includes in itself the vital elements) both idealism and materialism as traditional expressions of the old societies. 46

Gramsci believed that "vulgar" materialism had no conception of the importance of "cultural" problems for the development of Marxist thought as the ideology of a mass movement and as a science of society. As a whole, he felt that Marxism was riddled with too many residues of traditional philosophies which were not left there by Marx and Engels but were finding their way in through the various arbitrary interpretations made of the latters' work. He suggested that the originality of Marxist thought was being bastardized at the top by groups of intellectuals who were either
consciously or unconsciously tied to the cultural hegemony of the "old societies." The integrity of Marxist thought was thus being torn apart in the same manner that the "speculative" unity of the two "essential" moments of human thought, "materialism and idealism," envisaged in Hegel's concept of the dialectical process, was subsequently dismembered by his followers, who "have destroyed this unity and thus returned to materialistic systems on one side and spiritualistic ones on the other." Marx and Engels, by reliving all "moments of Hegelianism, Feuerbachism, and Anglo-French materialism," had reconstructed the synthesis of the dialectical unity of human thought in the concrete historical terms of the theory of historical materialism. But the "laceration" which destroyed Hegelianism has been repeated for the philosophy of praxis, i.e. from dialectical unity there has been a return to philosophical materialism on one side, while modern idealistic high culture [read "Croce"] has sought to incorporate that part of the philosophy of praxis which it found indispensable in order to find some new elixir.

Gramsci believed that this disintegration had been caused largely by the composite character of Marxist intellectuals who,

as well as being few in number, were not tied to the people, did not bloom from the people, but were the expression of traditional intermediary classes, to which they returned in times of great historical 'turning points'; others remained, but to subject the new conception to a systematic revision, not to assure its autonomous development.

Only through serious work on the part of new Marxist intellectuals could Marxist thought extricate itself from the lines of revisionism in which it was led by the "momentary equilibrium" of cultural and social relations in the bourgeois societies in which it had developed. This work would have to start with the realization that while "the philosophy of praxis is a new independent, original conception," it does not escape being but "a moment
of the historical development of the world." The affirmation of its
"independence and originality," contains "a new culture in incubation."
But this culture can only develop "with the development of social relations."
Until such a time as the mass movement represented by Marxism takes over
control of the state, the philosophy of praxis will remain "a variable
combination of old and new, a momentary equilibrium of cultural relations
corresponding to the equilibrium of social relations." 50

Gramsci maintained that any attempt to represent Marxist thought as
a collection of "absolute" laws of historical development is doomed to
failure simply because the juncture of historical development of human
society reflected in the Marxist "conception of the world" has not as yet
reached a stage of maturity. On the other hand, Gramsci did not consider
the primary purpose of Marxist thought to lie in the development of
"classical" theories of knowledge. The primary purpose of Marxism is to
advance the concrete position of the mass movement it represents from within
the real historical conditions in which the struggle for cultural hegemony
and political domination of society is waged. In this context Gramsci
considered it much more "scientific" to present the problems faced by the
development of Marxism in concrete historical terms, as "opinions which
appear verified and beyond discussion, at least formally," without the
"vulgar" pretension

that science must absolutely mean 'system,' and therefore
systems are built regardless, that of the system of science
don't have the intrinsic and necessary coherence but only
the mechanic externality. 51
Gramsci backed this argument with constant reference to pertinent passages from the works of Marx and Engels as found in particular in the Theses on Feuerbach and the much later book by Engels on Feuerbach. He asserted that the founders of Marxism were not guilty of the philosophical innocence displayed by their followers. Marx, he stated, was "the writer of concrete historical works," in accordance with the principles of historical materialism which were first outlined in the Second of the Theses on Feuerbach. As Gramsci interpreted this thesis, the method of historical analysis established by the concept of historical materialism resolves the "power and reality" of the past in the concreteness of the present. The act of interpreting the past and the act of exerting one's will on the ensemble of social relations found in the present cannot thus be separated without the result yielding an abstract view of the past and an incomplete commitment to the reality of the struggles which are taking place in one's own historical time. History, therefore, exists as a concrete entity only in relation to the problems created by the practical activity of the present. It follows that the originality of historical materialism consists of the fact that "it strives to unite practical movement and theoretical thought." As a method of historical analysis Marxism achieves this by reducing the act of historical interpretation to a position of reciprocal correspondence with the practical activity of the Marxist intellectual whose function is to develop the revolutionary praxis of the masses, as the need arises through the masses' practical activity. Marxism therefore replaces the abstract identity of "history and philosophy" worked out in Hegelian philosophy and restated by Croce in terms of an abstract historicism, with a concrete principle of identity between "history and politics."
Whether he is dealing with problems of history or any other aspect of human knowledge, Gramsci was adamant that the purpose of the Marxist intellectual should not be to ascertain the truth of "human thinking" as 'pure' thought but to establish the relation of this truth to the reality of the world in which it is thought. The truth of human thinking, therefore, is relative always to "history" and to "man" as concrete entities, and the reality of this world is only that which appears as "humanly objective," and which must therefore be "historically subjective," because man can know "objectively" only the concreteness of the "universal subjective."55

The truth of human thinking is "immanent" in history and has been historically realized in the form of "non-universal" ideologies espoused by particular groups of men striving to defend and advance their interests in society against opposing groups of men. Objective reality therefore has historically corresponded to the particularly subjective "conception of the world" of the groups of men who "temporarily" assume control of the ensemble of social relations. As the material forces which gave particular groups their position of dominance in society are transformed in the process of historical development, the hegemonic function of their ideology declines as well, and is replaced by others, as the development of new material forces places other groups of men in a position of dominance. It is only through this process that the truth of human thinking is realized, as particular ideologies are replaced by other ideologies encompassing the worldview of ever wider groups of men. Real knowledge, then, emerges out of the concrete struggle of men to conquer historical necessity. "Man knows objectively," wrote Gramsci, only to the extent that "knowledge is real for the whole human species historically unified in a unitarian cultural
system." But this process of unification advances only as "the internal contradictions which rend human society disappear." Thus there is "a struggle for objectivity ... which is the same struggle as the struggle for the cultural unification of the human species." This notion of an inseparable unity between cultural and material conditions of historical development is basic to Gramsci's discussion of the role of the political party and the function of intellectuals.

Gramsci described the complexity of the ensemble of social relations making up the social system as a "historical bloc" in which material forces are "content" and ideologies "form" of the unity between "structure and superstructure." He argued that material forces would be inconceivable without form and ideologies mere figments of imagination without material forces. The unity formed by "structures and superstructures" was thus, presumed by Gramsci on the assumption that the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production. From this, one can conclude: that only a totalitarian system of ideologies gives a rational reflection of the contradiction of the structure and represents the existence of the objective conditions for the revolutionizing of praxis.

If there could be a social group that is one hundred per cent "homogeneous" in its ideological formation, it would be feasible to infer from this "that the premises exist one hundred per cent" for the revolutionizing of the contradictions found in the organization of social relations. As long as contradictions exist in the structure, however, these contradictions will be reflected in the existence of heterogeneous ideologies, and the reciprocity between structure and superstructure remains subject to forms of arbitrary mediation that seek to bridge the gulf between political society
and civil society, rulers and ruled, intellectuals and masses. As long as these conditions exist the free movement of thought will be trammelled either by ideologies that are "arbitrary, rationalistic, or 'willed," or by the intellectual underdevelopment engendered by the contradictions in the world of material production. In assessing the value of ideologies Gramsci asserted that it is necessary to "distinguish between historically organic ideologies . . . which are necessary to a given structure," and ideologies that are "the arbitrary ravings of particular individuals." Organic ideologies serve a necessary "psychological" function: "they 'organize' human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc." Organic ideologies therefore reflect the historical reality of social classes and are indicated by the names of the various political parties existing in modern society.

In elaborating his views on the contemporary role of the party, Gramsci made it clear that he was not interested in the party as a "sociological category," but as a "party which wishes to create a state, and which is always a concrete reality." He begun his discussion as a series of notes on Machiavelli, where he developed the idea of the political party as the "Modern Prince." He suggested that political parties are to the modern world what the "Prince" had been for Machiavelli's world:

The modern prince, the myth prince, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual; he can only be an organization. . . . This organization is already obvious from historical development, and it is the political party. The starting point of the development of the political party is the moment of "catharsis" which marks "the passage from the purely economic (or egoistic-passional) to the ethico-political moment," in the life of a
The development of the political party represents the culmination of the historical development of a social group from its original function as a tool of material production under the domination of the ruling class which created it, through all the intermediary phases of the material and psychological changes caused within it by changes in the structure which first acts upon the group as an external force that determines its entire existence; until in time it becomes transformed into an instrument of freedom that makes it possible for the subordinate social group to advance its own interests in society. The party therefore is the mature expression of class interests: "in that it is a concretely operative historical conscience." A social group, however, does not become a social class, and thus it does not develop its own party structure, as a mechanistic reflection of changes taking place in the social organization of productive relations. A party is formed only under certain conditions. And after it is formed it may break into factions for a variety of reasons.

The principal condition for the progression of a social group to the status of a social class is that it should become aware of its historical position in society. This progress will normally come about as the practical activities of a group expand from "specialized" productive labour-functions to socially diffused intellectual-functions. The collective practical experience of labour-functions must, at some phase of the group's historical development, undergo a qualitative transformation giving rise to new group functions and to the creation of "organic" intellectuals to perform these functions: "from the labour-technique the group accedes to the science-technique and to a historico-humanistic conception, without
which it remains 'specialist' and does not become 'directorical' (specialist+politic)." Practical experience alone however is not sufficient to bring about this development. The subordinate social group cannot educate itself prior to producing its own intellectual cadres, and it cannot produce intellectuals without education. Its initial education therefore must be provided by existing intellectuals from traditional social classes. The subordinate social group is in need of instrumental knowledge of the "ethico-political" system which rules over them. Since it initially stands as a culturally and politically undistinguished social grouping, the subordinate social group is "passively" assimilated into the dominant conception of the world. It is up to the traditional intellectuals who come to its aid to "unveil" the real character of the system of domination. The group gains consciousness, it becomes a "class for itself," as its conception of the world is gradually detached from the dominant superstructures and takes initiatives to create a new "ethico-political form."

It is apparent that a party does not come into being as the autonomous expression of a single social group. A social group progresses usually with the "consensus and aid of allied groups, if not even of decisively opposed groups." The extent to which the party becomes actively involved in the political struggle as the representative of the values and interests of its social group or groups is ultimately determined by the extent to which it develops its structural elements. The organizational structure of a party contains three basic parts: the rank and file, the leaders, and the party bureaucracy. The first part consists of a "difuse element of ordinary men whose participation is characterized by discipline and faith, not by a creative or organizational spirit." The leaders on the other
hand are "the principal cohesive element, centralized in the national field and developing efficiency and power in an ensemble of forces that are worthless individually." The bureaucracy constitutes the "middle element that articulates the first with the second element by putting them in contact 'physically,' morally, and intellectually." Gramsci considered leadership as the most important component of a party. Without leadership it is impossible to create a political party. Nor would a party survive for long if at some point it loses its leaders: an existing army without captains, he noted, will be "destroyed," but a group of captains, "cooperative and in agreement on common ends," will not be slow in forming an army, even where none exists. Leaders must be able to organize the cultural and political scope of the party. They must possess "foresight" and prepare the conditions which will enable the party to conquer political power. In the first place the leaders must strive to elaborate an "organic" ideology which reflects the concrete role of the represented class in history.

Gramsci emphasized the importance of political and cultural leadership above every other aspect in the life of the political party. Revolutionizing praxis results only with "the superior elaboration of the structure into superstructure in the minds of men." Above all, political parties must serve as instruments for this elaboration in the minds of the members of the social groups whom they represent. Ultimately, the success or failure of a political party depends on the ability of its leadership to lead the class it represents to a position where it stands politically and culturally equipped to face the "hegemonic struggle" against the existing ruling class. The leaders of a revolutionizing party, therefore, must learn to make use of the most sophisticated ideological weapons
of their age, as they must struggle not only to educate their represented class but to conquer, ideologically, wide segments of traditional intellectuals and try to assimilate them in cultural as well as in political terms. The struggle for "hegemony" thus presupposes a situation of total cultural mobilization which may prove even more decisive than immediate economic crises as a "cathartic" force of revolutionizing change. Gramsci claimed that there can be no economic transformation of social relations which is not at the same time a reflection of "ethico-political" transformation. The struggle for "hegemony" as understood by Gramsci in fact means that a revolutionizing class must exercise the function of cultural hegemony in every sphere of social life before it can conquer political power. Thus, after a class assumes control of the state structure it must continue to exercise cultural hegemony in order to remain politically dominant. State control is thus maintained in two ways: as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership."

To dominate means to liquidate or subjugate with the use of force antagonistic groups "that do not 'consent' either actively or passively." To lead means to possess the cultural superiority to exercise intellectual and moral leadership over subordinate groups who give their "consensus" to the system of rule imposed by the class which dominates the social complex. 70

The necessary reciprocity between structures and superstructures forming the "historical bloc" is thus resolved in the historical development of "hegemony" as the concrete manifestation of the "level of homogeneity, self-consciousness, and organization" reached by a given social class. From mere awareness of its specific labour-functions the class acquires awareness of its political interests and passes from "objective to subjective"
knowledge of historical reality. At this point the class becomes a party and engages "actively" in "the struggle for objectivity" as it seeks to elaborate its own forms of intellectual and moral mediation between nature and society, structure and superstructure, until it creates a new equilibrium between "cultural relations" and "social relations" which lasts as long as the historical conditions of its dominance prevail. This conceptual scheme appears as the unifying framework of Gramsci's analysis of Italian history.
NOTES


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.


8. See, for example, Davidson, p. 257.

9. The inadequacy of Gramsci's conception of economic categories in this respect has been the target of a new school of Italian Marxist historians influenced by the theories of Andre Gunder Frank and Paul Baran, as well as by the critique of Gramsci's conception of Marxism proposed by Louis Althusser. For an extreme example of this school see: E. Capocelatro and C. Carlo, Contro la questione meridionale, (Rome: Samona e Sovelli, 1972); in particular the first appendix: "La concezione Gramsciana della questione meridionale," pp. 149-155.

10. Gramsci often equated the prospect of an "Anti-Croce" with a modern equivalent of Engel's Anti-Dühring. In one of the most candid passages in the Notebooks he explains that he first realized the need for such a work in 1917: "I wrote that as Hegelianism had been the premise of the philosophy of praxis in the Nineteenth century . . . so Crocean philosophy could be the premise for a renewal of the philosophy of praxis in our own days, for our own generations." But he adds that in those days his conception of Marxism was rather confused, being "tendentially rather Crocean." Even as he was writing this, sometime between 1932-1935, he felt that he still did not possess "the maturity and the capacity needed" to develop this "assumption." Nonetheless, he stressed that such a study was essential to counter the "vulgarizing" tendency which was holding back the development of Marxism to a level where it could take on "tasks more complex than the present development of the struggle proposes; i.e. to develop a new integral culture, which may contain the mass characteristics of the Protestant Reformation and the French Enlightenment, and which may also have the characteristics of classicity of Greek culture and the Italian Renaissance; a culture which in the words of Carducci may synthesize Maximillian Robespierre and Emmanuel Kant, politics and philosophy in a dialectical
unity intrinsic of the life of a social group that is not only French or German, but European and universal." In order that the legacy of classical German philosophy should not become only an "invented form" ("inventoriata"), but made to become "operative life," Gramsci argued that there is no other way than "to come to terms with the philosophy of Croce, i.e. for us Italians being the heirs of classical German philosophy means being the heirs of Crocean philosophy, which represents to-day's world-movement of classical German philosophy." Thus the need for "an anti-Croce which in the cultural atmosphere of the modern world may acquire the significance and the importance the Anti-Dühring had for the generation preceding the First World War, it would be worthwhile for a whole group of men to dedicate ten years of activity to this." (Q., vol. 2, pp. 1232-1234).

12. Ibid., p. 1294.
13. Ibid., p. 1293.
15. "Croce continues the historiography of the pre-48 neo-Guelph current as it was strengthened through the Hegelianism of the Moderates who continued the neo-Guelph trend after '48." (Q., vol. 2, p. 1220). As for Croce's conception of "ethico-political" history, he defined it as comprising "what is considered State and what is considered society, what is approved as State and what is fought against as anti-state; in short, the positive element and the negative element, the latter being in its own way positive also, de facto, if not de jure. . . . namely, the formation of moral institutions, in the broadest sense of the word, including religious institutions and revolutionary sects, including sentiments, customs, fancies, myths that are practical in tendencies and contents" (Benedetto Croce, Politics and Morals; trans., Salvatore S. Castiglione, New York: Philosophical Library, 1945, pp. 103-104).
17. Ibid.
18. Cameron, for example (op. cit., p. 217), cites evidence which suggests that the question of land reform was given considerable attention in the course of the Risorgimento. In particular, by the Carbonari Revolutionary cells which were first organized in southern Italy in the 1820s.
20. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p. 1221.
23. Ibid., p. 1225.
24. Ibid., p. 1241.
25. The identity of history and philosophy as a future phase of the historical development of the working class is implicit, according to Gramsci, in Engels' suggestion that the "German proletariat is the heir of classical German philosophy," and the Eleventh of the Theses on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." For Gramsci's remarks on this see (Q., vol. 2, p. 1241). As for Labriola, his work was held in high esteem by Gramsci. As well as being the most significant Italian Marxist of the generation preceding the First World War, it may also be noted that Labriola was Croce's professor at the University of Rome. By his own admission, in fact, Croce was first introduced to Marxism by Labriola. The extent of this influence and Croce's eventual reaction against Labriola are evident in Croce's Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx; trans., C.M. Meredith, (London: Frank Cass, 1966 (1914). For Labriola's Marxism see his Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History; trans., Charles H. Kerr, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966).
29. Croce's basic argument against Marxism as a method of historical analysis rests on the assumption that it views economic life as the only real basis of social relations, "and moral life an appearance, an illusion or a superstructure" (Croce, Historical Materialism, p. 95)
30. Gramsci, Letter del carcere, p. 616. In the Notebooks Gramsci argued that the usefulness of Croce's work is made evident "by the fact that at the same time as Croce, the greatest modern theoretician of the philosophy of praxis, in the field of struggle and political organization, with the use of a political terminology, has, in opposition to various 'economistic' tendencies, re-evaluated the front of cultural struggle and constructed the doctrine of hegemony as a complementary element of the theory of the state-force and as the actual form of the 1848 doctrine of 'permanent revolution'" (Q., vol. 2, p. 1235).


34. Gramsci used the work of Nikolai Bukharin as the main target of his criticism of "mechanistic" and "fatalistic" reductions of Marxism to "philosophical materialism." See (Q., vol. 2, pp. 1411-1450). For Bukharin's theory see the English translation of his: The Theory of Historical Materialism, a Manual of Popular Sociology, first published in Moscow in 1921, and in English under the title: Historical Materialism, a System of Sociology, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1926). The edition read by Gramsci may have been the Russian original, see (Q., vol. 4, p. 2539, no. 4). Gramsci also read, in English, Bukharin's paper in the volume Science at the Cross Roads (Papers presented to the International Congress of the History of Science and Technology held in London from June 29th to July 3rd 1931 by the Delegates of the USSR). London: Kniga, 1931: N. Bukharin, "Theory and practice from the standpoint of dialectical materialism," (pp. 1-23).


38. Croce's History of the Kingdom of Naples offers perhaps the most lucid examples of his views in this respect, such as the view that "the historian . . . must not give primacy to the negative element, to the inert and heavy and reluctant mass . . . , but to the active element, to that intellectual class which represented the developing nation and which alone was truly the nation" (pp. 195-196).


40. Ibid., p. 1230.

41. Gramsci made these remarks about a book by Adolfo Omodeo, L'Età del Risorgimento Italiano, 2nd. ed., (Messina: Principato, 1931). Gramsci considered Omodeo as a perpetrator of the crudest form of Italian neo-idealistic history (Q., vol. 3, p. 1961). Although he made a clear distinction between lesser lights like Omodeo and the brilliance of Croce himself, Gramsci ultimately held Croce responsible for promoting a vulgarized form of his historical work through lesser writers such as Omodeo.

42. Q., vol. 1, p. 117.
44. Q., vol. 3, p. 1815.
45. See note 34, above.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., p. 1862
50. Ibid., pp. 1862-1863.

51. Since Marxism is "a doctrine still at a stage of discussion, of polemics, of elaboration," Gramsci emphasized that the scientific format of a "popular manual" of Marxist thought is merely a formality which may prove instrumental to impress an audience "that from the point of view of scientific discipline is in the preliminary conditions of a youthful age, and which therefore has immediate need of 'certainties,' of opinions that appear verified and beyond discussion, at least formally." The writer of such a manual, however, cannot take the scientific form of his discourse seriously, he must not himself believe that the opinions he expressed to a popular audience in the form of certainties are in fact beyond discussion, since "If a doctrine has not yet reached a classical phase of development, every attempt to 'manualize' it must necessarily fail, its logical systematization is only apparent and illusory." (Q., vol. 2, p. 1424; see also pp. 1059-1060).

52. Croce, according to Gramsci, distorted the meaning of the Theses on Feuerbach, while making use of the new world outlook outlined by Marx to develop his own theory of history. Thus: "what is the Crocean thesis of the identity of philosophy and history if not a mode, the Crocean mode, of presenting the same problem posed by the Theses on Feuerbach and confirmed by Engels in his booklet on Feuerbach? For Engels, 'history' is practice (experiment, industry); for Croce, history is still a speculative concept" (Q., vol. 2, pp. 1269-1275).

53. "The question whether objective (gegenständliche) truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness (Dissensitzigkeit) of thinking. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question" (thesis two of "Theses on Feuerbach," in Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970, p. 2). According to Gramsci, confirmation of this methodological principle should be sought in the least formal
of Marx's works; such as the 18th Brumaire, The Eastern Question, The Civil War in France, and other minor works. "An analysis of these works allows one to better establish the Marxist historical methodology, integrating, illuminating, and interpreting the theoretical affirmations scattered throughout all his [Marx's] works. From this it will be possible to see how many real precautions Marx introduces into his concrete researches, precautions which could not find a place in the general works [read, "Capital"] (Q., vol. 2, pp. 871-872).

56. Ibid., p. 1426.

57. Ibid., p. 869.
58. Ibid.; Gramsci discussed this point at length with respect to the relationship between "philosophy" as a formal system of knowledge accessible only to "professional philosophers" and the worldview and practical activity of the ordinary "mass man." See (Q., vol. 2, pp. 1375-1395).

60. Ibid., pp. 1051-1052.

62. "The modern prince, the myth prince cannot be a real person, a concrete individual; it can be only an organism; a complex element of society in which there is already an initial concretization of a collective will finding recognition and partial affirmation of itself in activity. This organism is already given by historical development and it is the political party, the first cell in which germs of collective will come together and tend to become universal and total" (Q., vol. 3, p. 1558).


66. Ibid., p. 1602.
67. Ibid., p. 1733.
68. Ibid., p. 1734.
69. Ibid., p. 1244.
70. Ibid., pp. 2010-2011.
CHAPTER IV

HEGEMONY AND THE FORMATION OF THE BOURGEOIS STATE

IN GRAMSCI'S INTERPRETATION OF THE RISORGIMENTO

In considering the content of Gramsci's thought on the Risorgimento, some preliminary remarks on the scope of Gramsci's reflections on Italian history as presented in the preceding two chapters are necessary. It should be apparent from what has been already said that Gramsci did not have in mind a "revision" of the history of the Risorgimento. His statements on questions of method presented in the preceding chapter show clearly that it was not his intention to create a novel contribution to history. Apart from the fact that formal history per se did not interest Gramsci, the circumstances in which he wrote the Prison Notebooks would have made historical research physically impossible in any case. Instead, Gramsci took to prison a series of assumptions regarding the course of modern Italian history which at that time were held as established truths by large numbers of Italian historians and social thinkers. As shown in the second chapter, the underlying theme in these assumptions was the belief that the Risorgimento, while uniting Italy under a single political jurisdiction, did not create the conditions for the economic, social, and cultural unification of the differing Italian territorial regions. The limitations of the Risorgimento as a bourgeois revolution were thus indicated as the cause of the southern question, which Gramsci, as well as the older bourgeois and socialist southernists, viewed as the most burning domestic issue in post-unification Italian society.¹
It was on the basis of such underlying assumptions that Gramsci sought to present an analysis and interpretation of certain forces and developments of the Risorgimento, the understanding of which he viewed as a necessary prerequisite to the organization of the future development of Italian society. In particular, Gramsci wanted to understand the political and cultural reality that enveloped the process of development of the bourgeois state in Italy. In the first place, Gramsci wanted to explain how a bourgeois social group which did not as yet possess a broad economic base, and whose social predominance was only beginning to make itself felt in some of the more advanced cities of northern Italy, in the course of the Risorgimento had nonetheless become politically and ideologically dominant over the country as a whole. In the second place, given the structural heterogeneity which he considered to have become a permanent characteristic of Italian capitalism, Gramsci wanted to understand, as well, how the Italian bourgeoisie was able to ensure the continuance of the kind of political and economic dominance described in his Political Writings. These are the fundamental questions which Gramsci posed in his analysis of the Risorgimento presented in the Prison Notebooks. His interpretation of the problems which are raised by these questions is given almost exclusively in terms of the "hegemony" of the dominant class in Italian society from the making of the bourgeois state in the course of the Risorgimento to the developments that culminated in the emergence of the Fascist state in the Twenties, and its institutional expansion until the mid-Thirties.
From what was said in the preceding chapter it is apparent that for Gramsci "hegemony" is not something which happens automatically, as a mechanistic superstructural derivative of economic and social predominance. Unlike orthodox Marxist views of the state, Gramsci did not believe that the controlling mechanisms of the state can be reduced to the nature of "political" society. That there is more in the nature of the state than material instruments of coercion seemed evident to Gramsci because dominant classes have historically enjoyed the active support of subordinate or allied social classes for extensive periods of time without the use of coercive methods of domination. Why this has been so was considered by Gramsci as one of the most crucial questions for which Marxism, as a holistic conception of society, must provide a concrete answer, which should begin by recognizing the importance of cultural facts and the function of intellectuals in civil society as elements of political domination.  

The function of intellectuals holds a central place in Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The "equilibrium" between cultural relations and social relations which characterizes the hegemony of one social group over the whole of society is the outcome of persistent and pervasive effort, commencing with the deliberate action of the leadership of one class or group's political party to create a new system of rule. The hegemonic expansion of the revolutionizing class or group at this stage consists of a process of legitimation of deliberate political activity. This process begins in the form of what Gramsci described as a "capillary" modification of the social norms and moral values which govern both public and private life in society. Everything else being equal, it is the intellectuals, whom Gramsci characterized as "experts in legitimation," that by virtue of their position in
civil society, as leaders of "so-called private organizations," such as Church, schools, and newspapers, are the most effective purveyors of intellectual and moral changes.  

Given this function of intellectuals, therefore, the ideological dominance exercised by the ruling class over subordinate or allied classes need not be explicit. In other words, it is not necessary for the state to exercise direct political control over public and private cultural institutions in order to maintain its ideological dominance. Nor is it necessary for subordinate groups to be overtly affiliated with the social and cultural organizations of the dominant class in order for them to be effectively controlled by the norms and values perpetuated by such organizations. Instead, the function of intellectuals tends to make the establishment and maintenance of the ideological hegemony of the dominant class a predominantly covert process of cultural engineering. The intellectuals are the producers of "consensus" in civil society, with the state maintaining the required equilibrium between "force" and "consent" in the institutionalization of the regime of political and social relations that marks the crowning moment of a revolutionary class struggle for domination of society.  

Gramsci's only attempt to confirm this conception of the modern state in the light of historical evidence is found in his notes on Italian history. Gramsci, however, went further than this, for he used the conception of the state outlined above to pose the possibility of the Risorgimento giving rise to a bourgeois state established on a different type of consensus than that which was in fact achieved. This possibility remains intrinsic to Gramsci's view of the state as more than the coercive instrument of the
ruling class, itself defined in terms which go beyond the ownership and control of the means of production.

"The Problem of Political Leadership in the Risorgimento"

During the decisive phase of the Risorgimento, the period between 1849 and 1860, the movement for Italian unification was represented by two parties: the Moderates and the Party of Action. As their names suggest, the former espoused a conservative political program for Italian unification while the latter advocated a more "radical" constitutional and institutional organization of the unitary state. The central issue of contention between the two parties was whether Italy should be a constitutional monarchy, united under the auspices of the Kingdom of Sardinia, and inheriting the latter's centralized state structure and the liberal constitution proclaimed by the Piedmontese parliament in 1848; or if it should become a federal republic instead, with a new constitution, to be drafted by a national assembly of representatives from all regions of the country. The way that this issue was resolved historically became the focus of Gramsci's interest in the history of the Risorgimento, which he defined as "The problem of political leadership in the formation and the development of the nation and the modern state in Italy." In this definition Gramsci distinguished three main aspects of the problem: 1. "the connection between the various political currents of the Risorgimento"; 2. "their relations with each other"; 3. "their relations with the homogeneous or subordinate social groups existing in the various historical sections (or sectors) of the national territory." All three aspects were considered part of a single
basic fact by Gramsci. Namely, that "the Moderates represented a relatively homogeneous social group ... whereas the so-called Action Party did not base itself specifically on any historical class." Although the leadership of both parties underwent "fluctuations," these were considerably limited in the case of the Moderates but rather widespread among the leading cadres of the Action Party. In any case, what wavering there was among the moderate leadership was "in accordance with an organically progressive line of development." On the other hand, the ripples in the radicals' leadership were ultimately resolved in favour of the Moderates and to the detriment of their own political program: "In other words, the Action Party was led historically by the Moderates."7

That the problem of political leadership in the Risorgimento should have been resolved in accordance with the interests of the Moderates was accepted by Gramsci as an inevitable result of Italian historical conditions. In the last analysis, the kind of bourgeois state which could be realistically expected to come out of the Risorgimento depended on the economic and social conditions of Italian society. From Gramsci's point of view these conditions were not at all favourable to the establishment of a bourgeois state of any kind. The main obstacle in this respect was the relative backwardness of Italian economic structures:

the Italian economy was very weak, and capitalism incipient: there did not exist a strong and diffused class of economic bourgeoisie, but instead many intellectuals and petty bourgeoisie.8

Under the circumstances, therefore,

the problem was not so much to liberate already developed economic forces from archaic legal and political fetters, as to create the general conditions so that these economic forces could be born and develop on the model of the other countries.9
Consequently, neither the Moderates nor the Action Party were "organic" class parties. The implication here is that by itself neither party possessed sufficient resources to bring the Risorgimento to a successful conclusion. This intrinsic weakness made it historically necessary that both parties should seek to establish systems of political alliance with other social forces existing in the various "sectors" of the country. Gramsci however maintained that both in their relations with each other and in their relations with other social forces the Moderates were historically placed in a stronger position than the radicals because of the economic, social, and cultural character of the social groups which stood behind them.

Gramsci described the Moderates as "intellectuals in the organic sense" of small but dynamic capitalist economic groups located in parts of northern Italy. By virtue of their social origins and of "their relations with the social groups whose expression they were," the Moderates evolved into a compact coterie of modern intellectuals. They were indeed the embodiment of the "specialist" and the "political" in most of whom there was realized the identity of the represented and the representative, i.e. the Moderates were the real, organic vanguard of the upper classes to which they economically belonged: they were intellectuals and political organizers and at the same time company chiefs, rich agriculturalists or estate administrators, commercial and industrial entrepreneurs, etc.10

They were thus equipped with a new, forward-looking conception of the world which made them "naturally" superior to the leading cadres of the Action Party and of the intellectual ranks of every other social group or class existing in Italy. Their superiority in this respect was the artifact of their "organic condensation or concentration" as an intellectual elite,
which made their position of supremacy far greater and more extensive than
the actual power exercised by the economic groups whom they represented.
It was Gramsci's belief that the ideological and political network establish-
ed by the Moderates after 1848 created a "ruling class" out of hegemonic
activity involving "the gradual but continuous absorption of allied and
even antagonistic groups that seemed irreconcilably hostile." What is
more significant is that the means employed by the Moderates to expand
their domination over other social groups did not involve the use of coercive
methods but was carried out instead in the form of "'liberal' ... individual,
'molecular,' 'private' enterprise." 

How they managed to achieve a position of undisputed political supremacy
without the use of material force was attributed by Gramsci both to the
objective historical position in Italian society of the groups represented
by the Moderates and to the individual talents of their intellectuals.
The crucial factors were historical, but as will be shown later the element
of will is ultimately invoked by Gramsci as an independent determinant of
historical development. As an intellectual and cultural vanguard,
the Moderates exercised a powerful attraction, in a 'spont-
aneous' way, on the whole mass of intellectuals of every
degree that existed in the peninsula, in a 'diffused,'
'molecular' state, by necessity, to provide for the require-
ments, however rudimentarily satisfied, of education and
administration. 

The "spontaneity" of this power of attraction which was the historical
attribute of the Moderates was cited as proof by Gramsci of the "methodol-
ogical consistency of a criterion of historico-political research" concern-
ing the status and the function of intellectuals in society; a "criterion,"
it should be added, which is intrinsic in Gramsci's concept of hegemony.
Gramsci asserted that while there does not exist "an independent class of intellectuals," and "every social group either has or tends to form its own intellectual stratum," it is nonetheless true that the intellectuals of the class that is "historically," and therefore, "realistically" progressive, in given historical conditions, exercise a strong power of attraction over all intellectual strata, and

in the last analysis, they end up by subjugating the intellectuals of the other social groups; they thereby create a system of solidarity between all the intellectuals, with bonds of a psychological nature (vanity, etc.) and often of a caste character (technico-juridical, corporate, etc.).

The worldview of the dominant intellectuals, according to Gramsci, closely reflects all the changes, economic, social, cultural, and political of the "really progressive" class or group. It is thus that an intellectual elite is said to be "organic," and its worldview expresses an "organic ideology" that informs and shapes the thought of all social groups in society. This intellectual domination lasts as long as the dominant social group continues to cause "the whole society to move forward." It declines when "the dominant social group has exhausted its function," and then "'spontaneity' may be replaced by 'constraint'," as new social forces rise to demand their share of power and to finally topple the old established order. In this sense political leadership becomes but one aspect of the function of domination and is inseparable from its more pervasive ideological and social aspects. Ultimately, Gramsci considered this the great achievement of the Moderates who went about solving the problems of rising to their position of domination in Italian society. From what they did, wrote Gramsci,
it seems clear that there can and there must be hegemonic activity even before moving to assume power, and that there is a need not to rely only on the material force which power gives in order to exercise effective leadership.

The highlight of the Moderates' policies, for Gramsci, is provided by the effects which the absorption of the intellectual elites of their enemies had in determining the outcome of the Risorgimento.

By extending their ideological influence over subordinate and antagonistic intellectual strata while their own social groups were too weak to assume power on the strength of their material force, the Moderates provided a "brilliant solution" to their problems. For the absorption of their enemies' intellectual elites meant the "decapitation" and the political "annihilation" of real or potential antagonistic social groups "for a very long time." It was thus that the policies of the Moderates "made the Risorgimento possible, in the form and within the limitations in which it was carried out, without 'Terror,' as a revolution without a revolution." 17

It follows from this evaluation of the leadership role of the Moderates that the Action Party did not represent an independent and concrete alternative in the Risorgimento. Given the historical factors which propelled the Moderates to a position of dominance, the leading organs of the Action Party could not escape the hegemonizing influence of the moderate intellectuals. In accordance with the theoretical criteria established by Gramsci, the political program of the Risorgimento radicals was bound to prove either ineffective, in the sense that it could not pose a real threat to the interests of the Moderates, or it would ultimately have to be supportive of these interests in a direct or indirect way. The position of the Action Party therefore was paradoxical, for while in appearance it could claim to occupy
a more revolutionary position than its conservative counterpart, in actual fact it could not go beyond the most progressive limits of the Moderates' capacities. In evaluating the leadership role of the radical intellectuals the central question addressed by Gramsci was to determine whether this paradoxical position did not in fact offer possibilities which the leaders of the Action Party apparently failed to capitalize in favour of what might have resulted in a limited realization of their democratic principles.

Gramsci's evaluation of the leadership role of the Action Party is actually very complex. It consists of two basic parts: one dealing with historical facts and the other with a hypothetical alternative arising from possibilities which Gramsci believed were immanent in the Risorgimento but remained unexploited. The present discussion will focus on the historical part first and leave the second part of Gramsci's evaluation for later consideration.

Gramsci described the Action Party as a disparate collection of intellectuals of various degrees who were held together only by common adherence to vague political ideas. Whilst they could find enough agreement on the principles which held them together as a group, they were unable to develop a practical political program to translate their principles into axioms of real political activity. But even as regards the basic principles of their political platform there was constant bickering between the top leaders of the Action Party: a situation which kept the party in a state of internal disunity and intellectual confusion. One such example cited by Gramsci concerned the question of whether an eventual Italian republic should consist of a federation of autonomous provinces or of a national republic based on a system of general representation. The two major disputants of
this issue were Cattaneo and Mazzini, the latter animated by his "religiosity" and the former by his "economism." The conflict between Cattaneo and Mazzini, showing in effect that a party whose rallying ideal was the establishment of a democratic bourgeois system could not find agreement, as a party, on a workaday conception of bourgeois democracy, exemplifies the internal tribulations which caused "the Action Party to fall completely short of a concrete government program." It is this fact, i.e. the lack of an established plan for setting up a government, which in Gramsci's view made the Action Party, in practice if not in appearance, "an organism of agitation and propaganda at the service of the Moderates."19

Gramsci argued that the Action Party should have responded to the "spontaneous attraction" exercised by the Moderates with "a resistance and a counteroffensive 'organized' according to a plan." In order to formulate such a plan the intellectual cadres of the Action Party would have had to make a realistic appraisal of Italian historical conditions. Furthermore, to effectively resist the dominant influence of the expanding conservative political and ideological framework the Action Party should have had strong political leadership. Gramsci asserted that in reality the Action Party met neither of these conditions and thus failed to become "an autonomous force" or to "at least impress a more noticeable popular and democratic character on the Risorgimento movement." In making this assertion, however, Gramsci also made it a point of stressing that in the last analysis the Action Party could not have done more than this, it could not have established a popular, democratic republic, because of "the fundamental premises of the movement itself."21
The Geosocial Division of Italian Society in Relation to Possible and Actual Solutions to the Problem of Political Leadership and State Formation in the Risorgimento

According to Gramsci, the most crucial aspect of the historical conditions affecting the movement for Italian unification was the division of the various social groups into isolated geographic units with differing interests and expectations which could not be simply reconciled with the ideal of national unification. The problem of political alliances which confronted the parties of the Risorgimento was compounded by the structural heterogeneity between the major territorial and political regions of the country. Such divisions made it virtually impossible to find groups with common material and cultural bonds of a national as opposed to a regional character. Yet the formation of a national state necessitated the creation of a national political alliance with enough energy to subjugate, integrate, or neutralize those regional social forces that were actively or passively opposed to Italian unification. Gramsci identified at least five major geosocial groupings which together account for all classes existing in Italy during the Risorgimento:

1) the northern urban force; 2) the southern rural force; 3) the northern-central rural force; 4-5) the rural force of Sicily and Sardinia.22

Gramsci employed this scheme as both a general indicator of city-countryside relations in Italy as a whole and as a point of reference for determining the material and cultural basis of the relations between North and South that evolved in the course of the Risorgimento. It was his belief that in reality the problem of creating a national political alliance for the parties...
of the Risorgimento presented itself in the concrete form of how to deal
with the question of city-countryside relations in the country as a whole,
and what to do about the fact that northern and southern urban forces were
separated by material and cultural differences.

In attempting to evaluate the response of the Moderates and the Action
Party to this problem Gramsci isolated two sets of factors to be considered.
The first set consists of all those factors making up the objective histori-
cal conditions: economic and social conditions, geography, internal politics
of the various Italian states, their interrelations as sovereign states,
the Italian question in relation to the international political situation
and in relation to the unique status of the Church in its combined role of
temporal state and spiritual leader of world Catholicism. The Moderates'
power of attraction, to the extent that it was exercised "spontaneously,"
is also part of this first set; as is the ultimate subordinatition of the
Action Party by this same power of attraction. The second set consists of
indeterminate or subjective factors of an ideological and psychological
nature making up the element of reason in the human response to objective
conditions, including residues of older dominant ideologies and rudiments
of new incipient group ideologies as well as differences of character or
temperament between individuals. To the extent that practical activity is
a spontaneous response to objective historical conditions, determined by
the historical position of the individual and his group in society, this
is "empirical activity." To the extent that practical activity is influenced
by subjective factors it is a "willed" response to historical conditions.
When the two are combined as elements of a logical plan, such that activity
functions as a means to an end, the result is "organic" activity or "praxis."
In evaluating the actual activity of the Moderates and the Action Party, as this activity was expressed in concrete historical facts, Gramsci thus assumed that within the limits of the objective historical conditions there was a maximum and a minimum range of possibilities for subjective factors to influence the type of revolutionizing praxis which brought the Risorgimento to its concrete historical resolution.

Within the framework of geosocial divisions described above the northern urban force constituted the most progressive material and cultural "historical bloc." In any serious attempt to unite Italy this force would thus have to function as a "locomotive" in relation to the other forces. Gramsci maintained that the only question left open was to determine which combination of forces would be "most useful" to construct "a train" that could advance "the most speedily in history." It was also natural that this question would have to ultimately be solved by the representatives of the northern urban bloc, for it was there that the need for national unification developed as a conscious expression of concrete historical interests. In other words, the movement for national unification originated in the North as a superstructural expression of the structural contradictions felt by the social groups who were at the head of the northern urban bloc. The obvious contradiction was between the political status quo and the incipient capitalist development of the region's economy. The economy of the various northern states was highly interdependent due to geographic and historical factors. This, plus the cultural homogeneity between northern Italian cities made the existence of political and administrative barriers disfunctional as well as anachronistic. Thus the need for a unitarian state, once awoken, found a real and a rational basis to expand and actualize.
the political power inherent in the economic and cultural unity of the northern urban force. In practice, the northern urban bloc led the struggle for national unification by organizing an "intransigent" political movement against foreign domination and by exercising a function of "indirect" cultural and political leadership over the social forces of the country as a whole.25

In expanding its hegemonic function over the rest of the country the northern urban bloc thus faced the problem of organizing the urban forces existing in the other sectors of the national territory, i.e. the southern urban force, in the movement for national unification. This, according to Gramsci, presented an insurmountable national contradiction which continued to haunt the stability of the political structures of the unitary state long after national unification was achieved. The reason: the fact that while both were "urban" forces, they were of a different historical type. The northern urban force was of the "modern" type, representing incipient capitalist interests while the southern urban force was of the "traditional" type, representing pre-capitalist interests. North and South were at two different levels of historical development corresponding to different forms of city-countryside relations. In the South, the city was still dominated by the countryside while the inverse was basically true in the North. Thus, "the urban forces of the North were clearly at the head of their national section, while for the urban forces of the South the same was not true."26

In the South the historical conditions did not as yet exist for the local urban forces to assert their independence from the traditional system of domination. Any alliance between northern and southern urban forces could not thus be based on a position of "perfect equality" but would require
instead that the urban forces of the South accept to function as representatives of the urban forces of the North in the national framework of city-country relations: "that is to say, the leadership function of the urban forces of the South could not be other than a subordinate moment of the more vast leadership function of the North." 27 The only "progressive" elements in the southern urban forces were traditional intellectuals who were pulled along by the organic intellectuals of the northern urban bloc, while the mass of southern intellectuals remained attached to the traditional agrarian classes that ruled the South. The southern "progressive" intellectuals therefore lacked the material and cultural cohesion to undertake independent revolutionary initiatives, and as the revolutionary episodes of 1820-21, 1831, and 1848-49, show, they were never able to act "simultaneously" with the northern movement but followed instead in "synchronized" fashion. This was true also during the final phase of the Risorgimento revolution, when the North and the Centre were united almost a full year ahead of the South, and the South had to wait for the arrival of the northern forces before being able to overthrow a regime which offered relatively little military resistance.

Gramsci took this fact as proof that in the South the movement for Italian unification lacked "organic" leadership and that the annexation of the South to the unitary state was the result of a political and military plan organized by the North. The question for Gramsci was whether this plan could have been organized differently. He argued that in the North there was no other possible "progressive" solution than for the Moderates to advance the interests of the social groups they represented, as they did, and for these social groups to function as the "historico-political mechanism"
of national unification in general. The absence of the same type of
social groups in the South, however, meant that the leadership which the
Moderates could exercise in that part of the national territory could not
possess the condensed organic character which it had in the North. In the
South, therefore, the position between the Moderates and the Action Party
was not as determined by historical conditions, for neither party was ex-
pressive of concrete southern interests, and the problem for both was to
find potential allies from among the various southern forces. Thus for
both parties the problem of political leadership in the South was based
on indeterminate factors. Both parties were confronted by a historical
situation which was alien to their empirical activity and access to which
therefore depended on willed activity. Each party could thus move according
to the strategic plan most favourable to its particular political program.

In the campaign for the annexation of southern Italy which took place
in the Spring and Summer of 1860, the Action Party was cast in the role
of a cathartic revolutionary force, while the Moderates under the leader-
ship of Cavour seemed reluctant bystanders, fearful that the success of
Garibaldi's expedition could unleash a radical social revolution or trigger
international intervention. The official stand taken by the Moderates, how-
ever, was based on a subtle diplomatic and political scheme which ultimately
gave them control of the South on their terms. Although it appeared as if
the Moderates had abandoned the initiative for the completion of Italian
unification to the Action Party, Gramsci noted that in reality the annexation
of the South was the result of "mechanical" collaboration between the two
parties. In the process, the Moderates played the most determining role,
for they not only managed the international front but all along had control
of Garibaldi as well, and were thus able to bring the revolution in the South to a halt as soon as it had fulfilled their political objectives. The main objective of the Moderates was to assure "the organic expansion of Piedmont, they wanted soldiers for the Piedmontese army and not insurrections or too large Garibaldinian armadas." 28 For them, therefore, the solution to the national question "required a bloc of all the right-wing forces, including the classes of great land owners, around Piedmont as state and as army." 29 Now, while this solution promised to solve the problem of political leadership on a national scale, it was destined to have differing material, social, and cultural effects in the various regions of the country. It was historically progressive in the North because it provided political respite for the capitalist social groups there to solidify their position of power and thus advance the cause of capitalist development. But it was utterly reactionary in the South because it reinforced the dominant position of the pre-capitalist, semi-feudal agrarian classes and thus perpetuated the traditional organization of the social relations of production and the subordination of the city to the traditional economy and culture of the countryside. Although the subordination of the South to the North was historically inevitable because of their unequal development, Gramsci argued that the social basis for this subordination could as well have been provided by the overthrow of the traditional agrarian classes without thereby damaging the capitalist interests of the North.

Gramsci held to the view, already discussed in the second chapter, that the chief contradiction in southern Italian society was the agrarian question. Gramsci's concern with the agrarian question in the Risorgimento
focused on the role of the Action Party in southern Italy because in his view it was up to this party to solve the contradiction, given that its leaders exercised the function of political and military organizers in the campaign for the annexation of the South. Gramsci believed that in the Spring of 1860 the means for solving this contradiction found spontaneous expression in the enthusiastic acclaim with which Garibaldi's volunteer forces were received by the peasant masses, first in Sicily and then on the southern mainland. Although as a social group the peasants were completely disorganized, their instinctive support for the northern invaders offered an empirical demonstration of their potential as a revolutionary force. The peasants looked upon Garibaldi and his men as harbingers of social change, and their arrival was taken as a signal for social revolt. Thus, although the national movement was not strong in the South, and it was certainly far removed from the mind of the peasants, for a while the political rebellion ushered by the Garibaldinians spread conjointly with social uprisings in the countryside. In the South, therefore, the Action Party had found a natural ally which could have served as the immediate driving force for a more radical solution of the national question side-by-side with a decisive solution of the southern agrarian question. Garibaldi, however, "vacillated" under the influence of his own advisors and the king of Piedmont, and in the end turned against the peasants to restore social order and defend the property of the traditional agrarian classes. Gramsci argued that in effect the Action Party failed to exploit the only historical possibility it had of becoming a concrete political force with enough power to influence the outcome of the Risorgimento.30
The Concept of "Jacobinism" in Gramsci's Analysis

Could there have been a "Jacobin" or "active" revolution in the Risorgimento? An undistorted view of Gramsci's consideration of this question will show that he had no simple answer for the absence of Jacobinism or of agrarian revolution from the Risorgimento. He believed that the failure of the Action Party to develop a Jacobin-like political program greatly influenced the outcome of the Risorgimento. However he did not believe that a full-fledged Jacobin revolution was actually possible in the Risorgimento. This is a point worth remembering, for while Gramsci was critical of the Action Party this criticism does not exhaust his interpretation of the Risorgimento as a historical movement which in the final analysis he believed had been successful in establishing an Italian unitary state. In its complex totality, therefore, Gramsci did not view the Risorgimento as a failure because it was a "passive" rather than an "active" revolution. Such arbitrary evaluations were alien to Gramsci's conception of the Risorgimento. Gramsci in fact argued that a clear distinction must be maintained between hagiographic accounts of the role of individuals or particular groups and the historical evaluation of the whole Risorgimento movement. He stressed that in evaluating the whole nothing must be excluded or taken out of its historical context for the sake of producing a consistent explanation of the contradictory elements which are the concrete manifestation of the complete historical synthesis. As he defined it,

The Risorgimento is a complex and contradictory development, the whole of which becomes evident from all its antithetical elements, from its protagonists and from its antagonists, from their struggles, from the reciprocal modifications brought about by those struggles, and even from the function
of latent and passive forces such as the great agricultural masses, in addition, of course, to the preeminent function of international relations. 31

This definition is particularly instructive in helping to place Gramsci's discussion of the absence of Jacobinism from the Risorgimento in the wider historical context which Gramsci kept always present, even while constructing the hypothesis of a Jacobin alternative to the political failure of the Action Party.

Gramsci's conception of Jacobinism as a form of political activity is intertwined with his evaluation of Machiavelli's political thought and the idea of the political party as the embodiment of the Prince in modern history. From Machiavelli's political program for the establishment of a "modern" Italian state Gramsci elaborated a heuristic definition of Jacobinism as an abstract category of the purely political aspects of revolutionizing praxis. The Jacobin is a "realistic" politician whose approach to the problems of society combines the logical detachment of the scientist with the "sentiment/passions" contained in the consciousness of the people. The basic characteristic of a Jacobin-like political program is determined by the capacity of the Jacobin to fuse political ideology and political science in the form of a "dramatic myth" that moves the people (the "national/popular forces") to act in accordance with given political ends. 32

The Jacobin political program is thus the "creation of concrete fantasy," in the process of which the logical character of the Jacobin becomes confounded with the self-identity of the collective will which he stirs in the people. The Jacobin now becomes and feels conscience and expression, there is a feeling of sameness: the 'logical' work now appears as nothing other than an auto-reflection of the people, an
inner reasoning, which works itself out in the popular consciousness and reaches its conclusion in an immediate, impassioned cry. The passion, from excitement turned upon itself, regenerates itself as 'infatuation,' fever, fanatical desire for action.\textsuperscript{33}

In its historical manifestations Jacobinism embodies the material and cultural features of the society in which it comes into being. The theoretical definition of Jacobinism therefore cannot be made to serve as "a principle of philosophy of history."\textsuperscript{34} Gramsci defined historical Jacobinism as the "union of the city and the countryside."\textsuperscript{35} However, no particular example of such a union taking place according to the conception of Jacobinism discussed above can be established as an abstract model for all other possible examples of Jacobin-like political programs emerging in a given time and in a given place. Such a model may prove useful as a tool of analysis but it does not thereby replace the need to consider the concrete historical conditions of each situation to which the model is applied. In this sense Gramsci described the French Jacobins as "a 'categorical embodiment' of Machiavelli's Prince,"\textsuperscript{36} and historical examples drawn from the history of the French Jacobins can thus be employed in a scheme of comparative analysis without thereby equating French history with the history of other countries. Gramsci was careful in pointing out that the language, ideology, and methods of action of the French Jacobins reflected "exigencies" of their time "according to the French cultural tradition."\textsuperscript{37} This point must be emphasized, for while Gramsci made ready reference to the history of French Jacobinism in his efforts to determine why Jacobinism was absent from the Risorgimento, it is clear that he did not intend to establish the French Revolution as an arbitrary yardstick for interpreting the Risorgimento.\textsuperscript{38}
The thing which reveals a form of "precocious Jacobinism" in Machiavelli's program for the establishment of an Italian nation-state, according to Gramsci, was his understanding of the fact that "Any formation of a national-popular collective will is impossible, unless the great mass of peasant farmers bursts simultaneously into political life." This necessity holds true in every historical situation where the peasantry constitutes the great majority of the national population. It was exactly their ability to achieve a mass mobilization of this kind that made it possible for the French Jacobins to become the party of "the revolution in progress." The French Jacobins emerged out of the political contradictions harboured within the heterogeneous nature of the Third Estate. The Jacobins were a group of energetic men who "won their function of leading party [partito dirigente] by a ruthless struggle" against the originally strongest groups of the French bourgeoisie that were "spontaneously" interested in advancing only "their immediate 'corporate'... and narrowly selfish interests." The latter were economically progressive but politically conservative. They were the representatives of the capitalist bourgeoisie proper. The future Jacobins did not belong to a particular economic group, they were a mélange of mainly lower bourgeois and middle class representatives found within "the disparate intellectual elite" of the Third Estate. They became a distinct political group out of the gradual crystallization of a new elite "which did not concern itself solely with 'corporate' reforms, but tended to conceive of the bourgeoisie as the hegemonic group of all the popular forces."
This selective process was triggered by two specific factors: "the resistance of the old social forces, and the international threat." The new Jacobin elite was isolated from the main intellectual body of the Third Estate by a common sense of the perils which these factors posed for the Revolution. The formation of the Jacobin party thus reflected the revolutionary necessities of the moment. They were "realists of the Machiavelli sort."42 The Revolution was faced with political opposition from within and a military attack from the outside. The Jacobins responded with a concrete program to meet both necessities:

the first necessity was to annihilate the enemy forces, or at least to reduce them to impotence in order to make a counter-revolution impossible. The second was to enlarge the cadres of the bourgeoisie as such, and to place the latter at the head of all the national forces; this meant identifying the interests and the requirements common to all the national forces, so as to set these forces in motion and lead them into the struggle.43

The mobilization of the popular masses allowed the Jacobins to oppose "a wider target to the blows of the enemy," as well as "depriving the enemy of every zone of passivity in which it would otherwise have been possible to enrol Vendée-type armies."44

In all its facets, then, the activity of the Jacobins created a political and a military situation which was favourable to the national scope of the Revolution. By allying themselves with the peasantry against the Girondin party, the Jacobins erased all traces of feudalism in the countryside and at the same time established the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the peasantry; thus aborting the danger of the Revolution being swept away by a massive Jacquerie, while gaining the support of the country's greatest social force. By executing "the revolutionaries of yesterday, who had become the reactionaries of today" alongside the elements of the old society,
the Jacobins created a complete break between the old and the new society;
leaving no outlet for any "intermediate" arrest of the revolutionary process. 45
Thus,

If it is true that the Jacobins "forced" their hand, it is
also true that this always occurred in the direction of real
historical development; for not only did they organize a
bourgeois government, i.e. made the bourgeoisie the dominant
class, they also created the bourgeois state, turned the
bourgeoisie into the leading, hegemonic class of the nation,
viz they gave the new state a permanent basis and created
the compact modern French nation.46

For Gramsci, therefore, the achievements of the French Jacobins represented
a real historical example of a "national/popular," "Jacobin," or "active"
revolution.

Comparing the French revolutionary process with that of the Risorgi-
mento, Gramsci believed that the former was greatly influenced by the success
of the Jacobin program over the Girondists, whereas the latter was equally
influenced by the success of the Moderates and the failure of the Italian
radicals to develop a Jacobin program. Under the leadership of the Jacobins
the French revolutionary process developed as far as the historical condi-
tions of the French bourgeoisie could carry it. It could not go any
further than it did, and the Jacobin party disintegrated as soon as

The Revolution had found its widest class limits and the
policy of alliances and of permanent revolution had finished
by posing new questions which at the time could not have
been resolved, it had unleashed elemental forces which only
a military dictatorship would succeed to hold back.47

The "restoration" ushered by the rise of Napoleon, however, was based on
the advances made by the Jacobins. Although Napoleon represented the
victory of the "organic" bourgeois forces over the Jacobin "petty bourgeois"
forces, the Jacobin policies lived on in the development of the institutions
of the new French state which they had created. By contrast, the "restoration" which followed the revolutionary process in the Risorgimento was based on a compromise of the old with the new: proof that as a bourgeois revolution the Risorgimento did not develop far enough to place the bourgeoisie firmly in control of the new state.

From Gramsci's point of view, therefore, the basic difference between the French Revolution and the Risorgimento as bourgeois revolutions lies in the role played by the respective "national/popular" forces. In France these forces were brought into the revolutionary struggle as active political elements. In Italy the masses remained passive. Gramsci listed many reasons which help account for the passive character of the Risorgimento as compared to the more radically democratic achievements of the French Revolution. Each single reason indicated by Gramsci ultimately returns to the obvious affirmation of historical differences. For Gramsci, however, this affirmation held a complex truth which cannot be explained away by noting the superficial differences which demarcate the historical development of one country from that of another. Gramsci believed that the historical development of Italian society at least from the Middle Ages was not simply different, but a peculiarity within the European world. This peculiarity was determined by the unique international function of Italy as the seat of the Church and by the special political significance attached to its territory in the confrontations between the Church and the Holy Roman Empire. Both institutions left a cultural and political legacy which dominated Italian history until the Risorgimento. The precocious economic and social development of the late mediaeval Communes in turn left a legacy of "corporativism" in Italian cities which helped suffocate the economic life
of the country until modern times. Gramsci listed these as the fundamental reasons which help account for the failure of every attempt to create an Italian "national-popular collective will." The disintegration of the Communal bourgeoisie left Italy with the distinction of "a special 'rural bourgeoisie'" and its "cities of silence." This and the cosmopolitan character of Italian intellectuals are the two particular characteristics of Italian history which in Gramsci's estimation explain why

An effective Jacobin force was always missing, and could not be constituted; and it was precisely such a Jacobin force which in other nations awakened and organized the national-popular collective will, and founded the modern states. Related to the particular characteristics of Italian history there was also of course the lack of political independence:

Were there in Italy some of the objective conditions necessary for a movement such as that of the French Jacobins? France had already been a hegemonic nation for centuries: its international autonomy was very extensive. For Italy, nothing similar: she did not even possess any international autonomy. Gramsci cited these reasons as historical factors which converged in the Risorgimento to create a situation whereby "diplomacy" had to play a more important role than "creative politics" in the formation of an Italian unitary state. Historical conditions, therefore, imposed limitations on the Italian bourgeoisie. The most urgent problem was in reality to "patch up a unitary state of any kind." And by necessity "The great programs of Gioberti and Mazzini had to give way to the political realism and empiricism of Cavour." The weak international standing of Italy and the relative backwardness of the country's economic and social structures made it impossible for any political group in the Risorgimento to embark on a path of radical revolutionary change involving a national alliance between city
If in Italy a Jacobin party was not formed, the reasons are to be sought in the economic field, that is to say in the relative weakness of the Italian bourgeoisie and in the different historical climate in Europe after 1815. 53

To the extent that Gramsci's concern was to account for the historical factors which determined the outcome of the Risorgimento it is clear that his views were centred around the belief that the success of the Moderates and the failure of the Action Party to develop a Jacobin program are justified by the historical conditions in which the Risorgimento developed.

In this respect Gramsci accepted the basic liberal thesis of the Risorgimento as a "passive revolution." Gramsci, however, strived to elaborate a critical conceptualization of this thesis, and in this respect his views differ from both conventional and revisionist bourgeois interpretations of the Risorgimento.

The "Historico-Political Terms" of the Risorgimento as "Passive Revolution"

In accordance with the principle of the "identity of history and politics" which he elaborated in response to Croce's theory of history as the "identity of history and philosophy," Gramsci argued that liberal interpretations of the Risorgimento should be seen as political responses to the need for historical and social explanations of contemporary Italian society. Although he did not reject the validity of the basic facts presupposed in the work of liberal historians, he wished to prove that the responses of bourgeois historians to these facts were fraught with dangerous interpretative traps and confusions. He argued that the concept of "passive
revolution" raises a problem of "ethico-political" history which as such must be posed in "historico-political terms." Conventional historians like Croce instead posed the problem in "intellectual" terms, and revisionists reduced it to a mechanistic perception of what they called "the relations between the objective conditions and the subjective conditions of an historical event." Although Croce labelled his own work "ethico-political history," Gramsci considered it an impressive attempt to co-opt Italian intellectuals into passive acceptance of the ideas of the ruling liberal regime which came out of the Risorgimento by writing the history of the Risorgimento in terms of the ruling ideology: an intellectual history of the Moderates and their hegemonic role viewed from above, without a concrete conceptualization of the other social forces which were actively or passively involved in the movement for Italian unification. Gramsci therefore considered Croce's view of the Risorgimento abstract and speculative. Even so, Croce's views were considered important by Gramsci because they revealed the determining function exercised by the Moderates in first establishing the Italian bourgeois state and then institutionalizing its controlling mechanisms. On the other hand, Gramsci rejected the revisionist interpretation of the Risorgimento outright.

Gramsci linked the revisionist thesis of the Risorgimento to the political views of bourgeois radicals of his generation, whose stated goal was to carry out a liberal "ethico-political reform" of Italian society. He singled out Piero Gobetti as one of the most significant representatives of this group. Gobetti was one of those who believed that the Risorgimento had been "a royal conquest and not a people's movement." The revisionists placed all blame for this outcome of the Risorgimento and the resulting...
contradictions, such as the southern question, on the political scheming of the Moderates while exempting the Action Party from its responsibility. It is on this point that Gramsci raised his strongest disagreement. He accused these liberal revisionists of distorting the political history of the Risorgimento by making a false issue out of the fact that the struggle between the Moderates and the Action Party took place on unequal terms, with the Moderates coming out victorious simply because they were favoured by objective historical conditions. They went further, wishing to prove that the Action Party, as well as representing a viable political alternative to the Moderates, was also aware of the dangers which the Moderates' policies of political compromise posed for the future development of Italian society. On the whole, they supported this claim on the basis of intellectual biographies of individual members of the Action Party. Gramsci did not question that such individuals existed. But they were few, and their views are of significance only to the extent that they determined party policy. Furthermore, Gramsci argued that to pose the problem in these terms is to miss the central point, which is not to determine how radical was the awareness of the Actionists, but rather to what extent their awareness proved effective in organizing radical-popular forces in their struggle with the Moderates.

It seems obvious that the so-called subjective conditions can never be missing when the objective conditions exist, in as much as the distinction involved is simply one of a didactic character. Consequently, it is on the size and concentration of subjective forces that discussion can bear, and hence on the dialectical relation between conflicting subjective forces.

Awareness of the objective conditions, noted Gramsci, is indispensable for determining the historical terms of a struggle between two conflicting forces.
But this awareness, or "intellectual clarity" alone is not sufficient to cement a mass of people into an effective subjective force. Intellectual clarity on the part of the leading organs of a party "is of political value only to the extent that it becomes disseminated passion, and in as much as it is the premise for a strong will." It is thus that the problem of the relations between objective and subjective conditions of the struggle which determined the outcome of the Risorgimento as a "passive revolution" must be posed in what Gramsci called "ethico-political terms."

In other words, the question for Gramsci was to look at what the Moderates and the Action Party actually did to organize their respective forces according to a political plan, and to determine what in fact became of these organizations. Gramsci posed this question as follows: "Out of the Action Party and the Moderates, which represented the real 'subjective forces' of the Risorgimento?" Not the Action Party, because their political ideas failed to establish any connection with concrete historical reality, "never became a general and operative national-popular consciousness." Gramsci concluded that in the final analysis the radicals were inhibited by their own intellectual incapacity and lack of political determination. The Moderates represented the only organized, i.e. "subjective" forces of the Risorgimento, because their leading organs were staffed by "rationally-formed leaders" who were aware not only of their own historical role, but also of that of their enemies, and "thanks to this awareness their subjectivity was of a superior and more decisive quality." On the other hand, the radicals as a party were not aware of the role of the Moderates. In the long run this
prevented them from being fully aware of their own role
either; hence from weighing in the final balance of forces
in proportion to their effective power of intervention; and
hence from determining a more advanced result, on more
progressive and modern lines. 64

As a revolutionary organization, the Action Party lacked the intellec-
tual capacity to understand the problem of the relations between structure
and superstructure. Its leaders were incapable of a realistic analysis
of the situation. They failed to develop an effective political plan to
resolve the problem of the relations of force at all levels of the "sit-
uation." 65 A situation, according to Gramsci, is distinguished by three
basic moments which make up the "equilibrium of forces": material relations
of production, political relations, and military relations. 66 The most
important of these three moments is the second because in the actual devel-
opment of a situation it mediates between the first and the third: political
relations are a function of all forms of organized human activity. Material
relations and military relations do not exist in the strict sense of the
word but only as economic-political and military-political relations.
A situation therefore does not undergo "organic" transformation by virtue
of changes in any single level of relations of force. Organic change is
always the result of complex interaction between all levels. A situation,
however, may develop through "conjunctural" movements as well as "organic
movements." The "conjuncture," however, is always linked to immediate
politics, to phenomena which "appear as occasional, immediate, almost
accidental," 67 and is ultimately subject to the organic movements of the
whole situation. In a conjuncture, one level of relations may temporarily
create favourable or unfavourable "occasions" for movement within individual
levels of relations. The exploitation of such occasions will nonetheless
determine the organic development of the situation only to the extent that they are exploited according to a plan resulting from a realistic understanding of the situation as a whole. "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." Now, the Action Party contained individuals who were experts in conjunctures, but it did not contain leaders who were aware and understood the situation as a whole. Hence the Action Party lacked an "organic" political plan. Cattaneo, for example, concerned himself with the economic relations of force, and Pisacane was an expert of the third moment. But these individual bodies of expertise were not elaborated into a rational program of revolutionizing praxis. There were "congenital" intellectual defects in the political leadership of the Action Party which prevented it from developing an effective political organization.

Thus, although Mazzini was obsessed with the belief in "popular armed insurrection," this belief was never realized in practice exactly because the problem was not approached "realistically, but with the fervor of a missionary." Mazzini had no understanding of the national economic conditions and the international military-political relations of force which made a "concentrated" nation-wide popular insurrection impossible. He was an "enlightened apostle" who "offered only nebulous statements and philosophical inklings which to many intellectuals, especially Neapolitan, must have sounded like empty chatter." Ultimately, Gramsci maintained that the "vacillating" temperament of Garibaldi (the field general of the Action Party) and the "mystical" character of Mazzini (the political theoretician of the Action Party) made it so that
The popular intervention which was not possible in the concentrated and instantaneous form of an insurrection, did not take place even in the 'diffused' and capillary form of indirect pressure; though the latter would have been possible, and perhaps was in fact the indispensible premise for the former. 74

Mazzini and his followers were obsessed with the idea of a "war of manoeuvre" when in fact the politico-military situation which developed in Europe after 1848 made this idea unrealistic. 75 Gramsci called this change of the situation "The problem of the political struggle's transition from a 'war of manoeuvre' to a 'war of position'." This change "was not understood by Mazzini and his followers, as it was on the contrary by certain others": i.e. the leading organs of the Moderates. 76

After 1848 Mazzini became the exponent of "popular initiative/war of manoeuvre," while Cavour became the exponent of the "passive revolution/war of position." 77 Gramsci argued that both forms of activity were "indispensable" in determining the outcome of the Risorgimento. But they were not so to the same extent, in so far as Cavour's activity was organized according to a realistic understanding of the "conjunctures" in the situation which made a "war of position" historically necessary. Whereas Mazzini possessed no such understanding. Mazzini and Cavour were exponents of a "dialectical opposition" which is found in every historical event. There were structural, objective conditions independent of human will, and international military-political conditions which favoured Cavour's activity. But apart from this there was an intellectual and psychological inequality between Cavour's and Mazzini's character which ultimately accounts for the particular form taken by the political struggle in the Risorgimento and for the form of the "restoration" which followed. Gramsci argued that Cavour, as well as being
aware of his role, "at least to a certain extent," understood the role of Mazzini as well. Whereas "the latter does not seem to have been aware either of his own or of Cavour's."78 What happened then is this: that Mazzini in not being aware of the role of his opposition could not be fully aware of his role either and in the actual struggle his initiatives always ended in failure, followed by "vacillations" about what to do next and more "ill-timed initiatives" that in the end "became factors only benefitting the policies of Piedmont."79 The Action Party failed to establish itself as the concrete embodiment of the dialectical opposition of the Moderates within the Risorgimento movement. It failed to throw into the political struggle all the "resources" which were dialectically opposed to the Moderate forces because it had no understanding of the actual conflicting relations of forces that were present in the situation.80

Where the Action Party failed was in not recognizing which social forces in Italy were "national," and hence potentially organizvable into a popular subjective force. Gramsci argued that the Action Party was ultimately "paralyzed" by the panic fear of the "rural forces" which it shared with the Moderates. In this sense the Action Party "thought like the Moderates and considered 'national' the aristocracy and the landowners and not the millions of peasants."81 The Action Party's conception of popular revolution therefore was an impractical abstraction showing that there was no concrete struggle between them and the Moderates:

It is evident that to effectively counterpose the Moderates, the Action Party would have had to link itself with the rural masses, especially southern, so as to be 'Jacobin' not only for its external 'form,' of temperament, but especially for its socio-economic content.82
The alliance between peasants and the Action Party would have created an "equilibrium" of forces "more favourable to Mazzinism: i.e. the Italian state would have been founded on less backward and more modern bases." The radicals, in other words, would have been placed in a position to counter the right-wing national bloc which was being created by the Moderates. The Moderates were moving in this direction by hegemonizing diverse groups of intellectuals through whom they were extending acceptance of their political program. Gramsci argued that the intellectual hegemony of the Moderates over rural intellectuals in particular could have been "dissolved" and replaced by a "liberal-national" intellectual formation if the Action Party had applied "pressure" in two directions:

- on the lowest peasants, accepting their elementary revindications and making of them an integral part of the new government program, and on the intellectuals of the middle and lower strata, concentrating them and insisting on the motives that could have most interested them (already the prospective of the formation of a new governing apparatus, with the possibilities of employment which it offers, was a formidable element of attraction over them, if the prospective had presented itself as concrete because based on the aspirations of the rural). The consummation of such a union between the southern rural forces and the Action Party could have countered the spontaneous right-wing expansion of the Moderates by pulling the southern intellectuals away from their sphere of influence. Gramsci envisioned a radical peasant policy primarily as a calculated move to force the Moderates to resolve the problem of organizing a national political alliance of regional social forces on democratic terms. The ultimate result postulated by Gramsci, then, was not an Action Party riding to victory on the wave of a peasant revolution, but a leading Moderate Party with its political power-base
restricted to northern Italy, and an Action Party strengthened by the
outright defeat of the southern agrarian elite with the "active" support
of the southern peasants. The Actionists could have thus established a
position of strength to ask for specific political concessions from the
Moderates in exchange for the annexation of the South to the North. In
order for the Action Party to have achieved this bargaining position it
need not have had impose a policy of Terror in the South. To control the
South it ultimately needed to control the southern intellectuals who in
turn held effective control over the peasant masses. Southern intellectuals
in Gramsci's view were predominantly of the "traditional" type, and as such
they were susceptible to peasant pressure and the peasants in turn to the
leadership of the traditional intellectuals. Ultimately, Gramsci believed
that peasants move in the direction that traditional intellectuals lead
them to move.

The peasant's attitude towards the intellectual is double
and appears contradictory. He respects the social position
of the intellectuals and in general that of state employees,
but sometimes affects contempt for it, which means that his
admiration is mingled with instinctive elements of envy and
impassioned anger. One can understand nothing of the collect-
ive life of the peasantry and of the germs and ferments of
development which exist within it, if one does not take
into consideration and examine concretely and in depth this
effective subordination to the intellectuals. Every organic
development of the peasant masses, up to a certain point, is
linked to and depends on movements among intellectuals. 85

The implication here is clear. The "anger" which the peasant feels
towards the intellectual could have initially been exploited by the Action
Party to force the intellectuals over to their side. However, as soon as
this had been accomplished, the peasants could have been kept under control
by the influence which the traditional intellectuals would have been able
to exercise over them. Initially, the Action Party would have had to apply pressure on both groups, because in Gramsci's words,

The relation between these two actions was dialectical and reciprocal: the experience of many countries, first and foremost that of France in the period of the great Revolution, has shown that, if the peasants move through 'spontaneous' impulses, the intellectuals start to waver; and reciprocally, if a group of intellectuals situates itself on a new basis of concrete pro-peasant policies, it ends up by drawing with it ever more important elements of the masses.86

But if a choice has to be made between stirring initial action among the peasants or the intellectuals, "it is best to start the movement from the intellectual groups," because peasant isolation makes it difficult to organize them into concentrated organizations.

However, in general, it is the dialectical relation between the two actions which has to be kept in mind. It may also be said that peasant parties in the strict sense of the word are almost impossible to create. The peasant party generally is achieved only as a strong current of opinion, and not in schematic forms of bureaucratic organization. However, the existence even of only a skeleton organization is of immense usefulness, both as a selective mechanism and for controlling the intellectual groups and preventing caste interests from transporting them imperceptibly over to different ground.87

The historico-political importance which Gramsci placed on the failure of the Action Party to resolve the southern agrarian question is revealed by this last point. By moving in support of the peasants' demands against the agrarian ruling class the Action Party would have in effect emancipated the southern intellectuals from rural domination. The intellectuals and the southern petty bourgeoisie would have been placed in direct contact with the northern urban bourgeoisie, and a process of cultural innovation would have been set in motion in the South and laid the political basis for the elaboration of modern forms of social organization. The North,
in other words, could have extended its hegemony over the South directly, instead of seeking to control southern society indirectly by shoring up the dominant position of the old Bourbon ruling class. Whereas the integra-
tion of the southern peasants into the political organization of the Action Party could have provided a springboard for forcing an "opening to the people" in the country as a whole, the undisputed victory of the right-wing political bloc created by the Moderates condemned the South as a whole into stagnant socio-economic and cultural isolationism, placed the southern intellectuals more firmly in the grip of the semi-feudal agrarian aristocracy, and pushed the northern-central rural force completely under the hegemonic domain of the Church. The concept of "passive revolu-
tion" in relation to the Risorgimento for Gramsci consisted exactly in this: that in the absence of strong and resolute opposition, the territ-
orial contradictions found in Italian society were resolved by way of a political alliance between the various old ruling elites. This alliance not only left the socio-economic bases of such contradictions unresolved, but actually aggravated them by manipulating the unitary state so as to perpetuate these contradictions indefinitely for the sake of defending the interests of the regional elites.

Gramsci thus concluded that the Action Party, in sealing its own fate as a manipulative appendage of the ruling coalition, in effect determined the political structure of the bourgeois state by passively allowing itself to be absorbed into this coalition. It failed to provide effective political opposition, a fact which made the political structure of the unitary state monolithic, as shown by the phenomenon of "trasformismo." A phenomenon which was simply the parliamentary reflection of the absence of national-
popular representation in parliament, and of the subordinate role played by the "Left." Although the parliamentary "Left" considered itself the party of liberal reform, its benches were occupied by the representatives of the petty bourgeois clienteles which were controlled by the regional ruling elites, such as the southern agrarian classes; and ultimately, therefore, they were compelled to accept the political wishes of the ruling coalition. As a consequence, Gramsci argued that "The South was reduced to the status of a semi-colonial market, a source of savings and taxes" for northern capitalism, and was kept 'disciplined' by measures of two kinds. First, police measures: pitiless repression of every mass movement, with periodical massacres of peasants. Second, politico-police measures: personal favours to the intellectual stratum or paglietta, in the form of jobs in the public administration; of licence to pillage the local administration with impunity; and of ecclesiastical legislation less rigidly applied than elsewhere, leaving considerable patronage at the disposal of the clergy.

Gramsci considered the domination of the South by the North historically necessary and inevitable because of his belief that the unequal development between the two regions pre-dated the Risorgimento. But this domination should have functioned as a mechanism for the development and modernization of the South, and thus to provide a "national" basis for the expansion of capitalism:

the hegemony of the North would have been 'normal' and historically beneficial, if industrialism had had the capacity to amplify its framework with a certain rhythm so as to incorporate always newly assimilated economic zones. This hegemony would have then been the expression of a struggle between the old and the new, between the progressive and the backward, between the more productive and the less productive; there would have been an economic revolution of a national character (and of national amplitude) even if its motor were to have been temporarily and functionally regional. All the economic forces would have thereby
been stimulated and the contrast would have been followed by a superior unity. But instead it was not like this. The hegemony of the North presented itself as permanent; the contrast presented itself as indeterminate and therefore apparently 'perpetual' and necessary historical condition for the existence of a northern industry.90

In practice, the Moderates' hegemony over regional intellectual groups became a function of Piedmontese domination over the other territorial regions of the country. This hegemony served to incorporate the most active southern elements 'individually' into the leading personnel of the state, with particular 'judicial' and bureaucratic privileges, etc. Thus the social stratum which would have organized the endemic southern discontent, instead became an instrument of northern policy, a kind of auxiliary private police. Southern discontent, for lack of leadership, did not succeed in assuming a normal political form; its manifestations, finding expression only in an anarchic turbulence, were presented as a 'matter for the police' and the courts.91

The domination of the South by the North was thus based on coercion, and ultimately on the political power of Piedmont as state and as army. Piedmont, according to Gramsci, exercised the function of "domination" without "leadership" outside of its own territorial region, and particularly so in the South. The function of Piedmont in the Risorgimento became that of a "leading class." It placed itself as state and as army at the head of the various territorial ruling elites. These elites did not "lead" their respective social forces.

They wanted to 'dominate' not to 'lead,' and furthermore: they wanted that their interests should dominate, not their persons, i.e. they wanted that a new force, independent of any compromise and condition, should become the arbiter of the Nation: this force was Piedmont and thus the function of the monarchy.92

Gramsci suggested that the function of Piedmont in this respect can be compared to that of a political party. Piedmont became the leading organ of a
social group: its political and diplomatic corps represented the interests of this heterogeneous social group consisting of the various regional "nuclei." Its army provided the power to defend and advance these interests. The social forces dominated by the various nuclei were thus deprived of leadership and of political representation. The function of Piedmont over the national-popular forces of the country thus became one of "Dittatura senza egemonia." Gramsci felt that this fact accounts for the weakness of Italian political parties from the Risorgimento onwards, as demonstrated by the phenomenon of "transformismo" and the various "parliamentary dictatorships" that governed Italy from the Risorgimento to the outbreak of the First World War: Depretis, Crispi and Giolitti. Italian political parties during this period were characterized by "lack of principle, opportunism, absence of organic continuity, imbalance between tactics and strategy, etc." Gramsci interpreted these characteristics of Italian political parties as superstructural manifestations of the backward and uneven formation of Italian economic structures. However, he did not believe that this could account for their persistence. Economic backwardness was an intrinsic factor of the objective conditions which limited the extent to which the Risorgimento movement was able to establish a strong bourgeois state. But once this state was established, however weak in relation to the state apparatuses of more developed European societies, it became a determining factor for the subsequent development of Italian society in its own right. Hence, the initial structural backwardness of the country cannot be held solely responsible for the continued, and in some instances even increased economic backwardness, along with the political instability of the whole
state apparatus, as reflected in the weakness of Italian parties five or six decades after national unification.

The main reason why the parties are like this is to be sought in the flaccidity of the economic classes, in the gelatinous economic and social structure of the country, but this explanation is somewhat fatalistic. In fact, if it is true that parties are only the nomenclature for classes, it is also true that parties are not simply a mechanical and passive expression of those classes, but react energetically upon them in order to develop, solidify and universalize them. This precisely did not occur in Italy, and the manifestation of this 'omission' is precisely the imbalance between agitation and propaganda, or however else one wishes to term it.95

Notwithstanding material and deep-rooted historical factors, Gramsci argued that "The state/government has a certain responsibility in this state of affairs." It is responsible to the extent that "it prevented the strengthening of the state itself" by demonstrating that "the state/government was not a national factor," but that "The government in fact operated as a 'party'."96

For Gramsci, the concrete manifestation of the outcome of the Risorgimento, the socio-political reality which evolved from it and shaped modern Italian society, boils down to the fact that the function of the unitary state and the activity of its governments worked to obstruct rather than to assist the development of Italian society. In effect, the conduct of the state/government which was supposed to build Italian society in modern bourgeois terms worked against both its own and the national interest.

It set itself over above the parties, not so as to harmonize their interests and activities within the permanent framework of the life and interests of the nation and state, but so as to disintegrate them, to detach them from the broad masses and obtain 'a force of non-party men linked to the government by paternalistic ties of a Bonapartist-Caesarist type.' This is the way in which the so-called dictatorships of Depretis, Crispi and Giolitti, and the parliamentary
phenomenon of "trasformismo" should be analyzed. Classes produce parties, and parties form the personnel of state and government, the leaders of civil society and of political society. There must be a useful and fruitful relation in these manifestations and functions. There cannot be any formation of leaders without the theoretical, doctrinal activity of parties, without a systematic attempt to discover and study the causes which govern the nature of the class represented and the way in which it has developed. Hence, scarcity of state and government personnel; squalor of parliamentary life; ease with which the parties can be disintegrated, by corruption and absorption of the few individuals who are indispensable. Hence the poverty of cultural life and the wretched pettiness of high culture: instead of political history, bloodless erudition; instead of religion, superstition; instead of books and great reviews, daily papers and defamatory pamphlets; instead of serious politics, ephemeral quarrels and personal clashes. The universities and all the institutions which develop intellectual and technical abilities, since they were not permeated by the life of the parties, by the living realities of national life, produced apolitical national cadres, with a purely rhetorical and non-national mental formation. Thus the bureaucracy estranged itself from the country, and via its administrative positions became a true political party, the worst of all, because the bureaucratic hierarchy replaced the intellectual and political hierarchy. The bureaucracy became precisely the state/Bonapartist party.97

Although mercilessly criticizing the political ineptitude of the Action Party, Gramsci never betrayed the slightest intention to brush aside the political responsibility of the victorious Moderate Party for the way in which, as the party of the Italian bourgeoisie, it chose to develop the organizational apparatus of the Italian unitary state. In the above-quoted passage it is clear that Gramsci wished to treat the question of the state in a concrete manner, paying meticulous attention to historical detail and background in terms which, in keeping with his principle of the identity of history and politics, looked upon the complex and contradictory manifestations of the present state of Italian society for the verification of the historical evaluation of collective actions
initiated in the course of the Risorgimento. Not unlike Marx's and Engels' analysis of the bourgeois state, two of the institutions which Gramsci considered most characteristic of the unitary state which came out of the Risorgimento are the bureaucracy and the standing army. In the absence of a more "organic" resolution of the struggle for Italian unification, Gramsci argued that these institutions assumed unusual importance for the maintenance of the bourgeois state, and as a consequence stifled the socio-economic and cultural development of post-unification Italian society. This is the question Gramsci raises in response to Croce's conception of "ethico-political" history. He accepts the Crocean notion as a useful instrument of analysis in so far as it can be employed to represent the "moment of hegemony and consensus" in the history of the state and civil society. But, at the same time he rejects Croce's imposition of "ethico-political" history because it views the historical problem of hegemony apart from the concept of the "historical bloc", which for Gramsci constitutes the categorical premise for a Marxist analysis of the history of the state and civil society.

The "historical bloc" is an operational concept which Gramsci intended to use for the reconstruction of the various historical manifestations of the relationship between structure and superstructure. Hence, as a rule of method its scope includes both the socio-economic "content" and the political and cultural "form" of the actual development of the ensemble of social relations. Croce, instead, excluded socio-economic history from his notion of the history of the state by viewing the latter as the exclusive domain of the purest form of the moral life. Gramsci, therefore, was adamant that in Croce's hands the problem of "ethico-political" history was reduced
to speculative and ideological abstractions. The desire to expose the ideological basis of Croce's interpretation of Italian history, then, became one of the strongest motives of Gramsci's approach to the analysis of historical problems. For Gramsci, the clearest indicator of the ideological and abstract nature of the historical interpretations provided by Croce, and by those historians influenced by him, consisted of their reluctance to take into account the history of the Italian masses in the face of the collective activity of the Italian ruling class. Such historians, therefore, failed to determine what changes the great majority of the Italian people did or did not undergo in the process of national development leading from the Risorgimento to the early decades of the Twentieth century. Croce and his followers, according to Gramsci, rationalized this crucial omission from their accounts of the history of Italian political and social development by viewing this history as the result of the logical reasoning of intellectual elites and not of the actual economic, social, political, and cultural developments that provide the factual basis for a concrete reconstruction of the "ethico-political" history of that or any other epoch.

Gramsci, therefore, while not denying the importance of "cultural facts," of "thought," and the function of "great intellectuals" in the life of the state and civil society, did not consider these important in themselves. Their importance, in other words, is not something given, or which can be determined arbitrarily by the philosophical whims of any intellectual or group of intellectuals who pretend to live an existence of serene detachment from the pressures and events of their times. In as much as systems of thought, whether philosophical, religious, or ideological,
constitute integral elements of alternative strategies of collective action aimed at achieving various alternative goals, employing different methods and forms of intervention in the various levels of social life in support of these goals, their importance is determined by the efficacy of their intervention in the life of society, and therefore it is one of the specific questions posed by the problem of the origins and historical development of the state and civil society. As such, this question can only be answered in relation to the other questions raised by the problem of which it is a part. Among the questions raised by the historical problem of the state Gramsci included the act of interpreting history; which, he argued, stands in a relationship of reciprocity with the act of making history. It is precisely this relationship between history and politics that Croce refused to see. Gramsci instead saw it as the way to escape the ideological and abstract speculations of the Crocean identity of history and philosophy. He wrote:

only the identification of history and politics removes this trait [ideological abstraction] from history. If the politician is a historian (not only in the sense that he makes history but in the sense that by operating in the present he interprets the past), the historian is a politician and in this sense (which in the end is evident in Croce as well) history is always contemporary, i.e. politics.

This is the fundamental idea which runs through all of Gramsci's writings, namely, that the most important problems men confront when faced with the collective actions of others, or with the desire to initiate collective actions, are essentially historico-political. The achievement of any social objective presupposes some form of collective action. Without historical awareness men cannot define their social objectives. Thus, the reluctance of Italian intellectuals to move in both directions with
sufficient rigour determined the anachronistic character of Italian political life:

the absence of historical perspective in party programs, a perspective built "scientifically" or in other words with scrupulous seriousness, so as to base upon the whole past the objectives to be achieved in the future, and to propose these to the people as a necessity which elicits conscious collaboration.¹⁰¹

The political programs of Italian parties were thus "ideological elaborations of the Italian national and state function" devoid of social content,

Facing the alternatives of social inaction or some form of social movement involving the mass of the people, Italian intellectuals took the former course and allowed their own activity to be led by a few "ingenious" individuals. This fact, concluded Gramsci,

is a demonstration of the primitiveness of the old political parties, of the immediate empiricism of every building action (comprising that of the state), and of the absence in Italian life of any 'vertebrated' movement which could have had the possibility of permanent and continuous development.¹⁰²

Thus, "the foremost defect of all ideological interpretations of the Risorgimento is that they have been merely ideological, i.e. that they did not address themselves to stir contemporary political forces." Without a social movement on which to base themselves, party objectives could neither be agreed nor implemented, and "in reality they are the premise (the manifesto) of political movements that are abstractly supposed to be necessary, but then nothing practical is done to give rise to them."¹⁰³

2. According to Gramsci, the problem of the "superstructures" as a concrete element of objective reality was first made evident by Marx. "For Marx 'ideologies' are more than illusions and appearance; they are an objective and operative reality, but they are not the mainspring of history, that is all. Ideologies do not create social reality, but it is social reality, in its productive structure, that creates ideologies. . . . Marx states explicitly that men become conscious of their tasks on the terrain of ideology, of the superstructures, which is no minor affirmation of 'reality'." (Q, vol. 1, pp. 436-437). Gramsci was evidently referring to the famous passage in Marx's "Preface to the Critique of Political Economy": "with the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of a natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic — in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out" (Marx and Engels, Selected Works, p. 182). Efforts to determine the relationship between structure and superstructure should take account, in Gramsci's view, of the "methodological canons" which can be gathered from the principles laid out by Marx in the above-quoted work. Thus: "In studying a structure it is necessary to distinguish the permanent from the occasional. That which is occasional gives rise to political critique, that which is permanent gives rise to historico-social critique; that which is occasional serves to judge groups and political personalities, that which is permanent to judge immense social groupings. In studying
a historical period there emerges the great importance of this distinction: there exists a crisis, which sometimes may last for decades. This means that incurable contradictions have become evident in the structure, which the political forces working in favour of the conservation of the structure itself are struggling to cure within certain limits; this incessant and perseverant struggle (since no social formation ever wants to confess being surpassed) forms the terrain of the 'occasional' on which are organized the forces 'seeking' to demonstrate (in the last analysis with facts, i.e. with their own triumph, but more immediately with polemics: ideological, religious, philosophical, political, legal, etc.) that there exist already the necessary and sufficient conditions so that particular tasks can and therefore must be resolved historically'." The "error" which most historians are liable to commit is not knowing how to define the relationship between "the 'permanent' and the 'occasional'; they thus fall back either on the presentation of remote causes as if they were immediate ones, or on the assertion that immediate causes are the only effective causes. On one side there is the excess of 'economism,' on the other the excess of 'ideologism'; one side overrates mechanical causes, the other the 'voluntary' and individual element. The dialectical nexus between the two orders of research is not established accurately " (Q., vol. 1, pp. 455-456).

3. An apt interpretation of the vision of "capillary" transformation evoked by Gramsci's idea of total cultural mobilization is captured in G.A. Williams' definition of the Gramscian concept of hegemony as "an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations" (G.A. Williams, "Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony," in Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. 21 1960, p. 587).


5. Using French history as an example, Gramsci maintained that the historical "content" embodied in the Jacobin movement as the party of "permanent revolution" in the most "active" phase of the French Revolution found legal and political "perfection" in the establishment of the parliamentary regime: "which realizes, during the richest period of 'private' energies in society, the permanent hegemony of the urban class over the entire population, in the Hegelian form of government by permanently organized consensus (but the organization is left to private initiative, it is therefore of moral or ethical character, because it is 'voluntarily' given in one way or other" (Q., vol. 3, p. 1636). The expression "Hegelian form of government" was employed by Gramsci to distinguish the "organized" class consciousness represented in the political party as the concrete "association" of a social group or class in civil society from the "generic" form of consensus given in political elections by the members of social groups whose
class consciousness has not yet found expression in the organized form of the political party. Gramsci believed Hegel was the first to formulate a theory of the state not as "pure constitutionalism" but as a "regime of parties" in which "the state enjoys or demands consensus; however, it also 'educates' this consensus with the help of syndical and political associations that are in fact private organisms, left to the private initiative of the leading class" (Q., vol. 1, pp. 56-57).

9. Ibid., pp. 747-748.

12. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Dennis Mack Smith provides a concise description of the conflict between these two men: "Cattaneo called himself a federalist, putting the emphasis on individual liberty within the state, while Mazzini was before everything else a unitarian, with the emphasis on nationhood as something sacred and indivisible" (D. Mack Smith, Cavour and Garibaldi, London: Cambridge University Press, 1968 (1954), pp. 52-53. Carlo Cattaneo is famous both for the political role he played in the Risorgimento, in particular his part in the five days of Milan in 1848, and for his scholarly writings in history, political theory, and economics.

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p. 2042.

24. Ibid., p. 2042.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., p. 2043.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., p. 2045.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 2046.


32. "The fundamental character of The Prince is that it is not a systematic treatise but a 'living' book in which political ideology and political science are cemented in the dramatic form of a 'myth'" (Q., vol. 3, p. 1555).

33. Ibid., p. 1556.

34. Gramsci intended this remark as a criticism of the conception of Jacobinism contained in the writings of Giuseppe Ferrari, a radical activist associated with the Action Party. Gramsci described Ferrari as "the Action Party's unneeded specialist on agrarian questions." His specialty, however, consisted of a "diluted" abstraction of the agrarian policy of the French Jacobins. With him, therefore, Gramsci maintained that a concrete political program, "circumscribed in space and time, became a vague ideology, a principle of philosophy of history" (Q., vol. 2, pp. 961-962). Ferrari's work stood "outside of concrete Italian reality." After living for many years in France he had become "too gallicized." Thus, "his judgements often appear more profound than they really are because he applied French schemes to Italy, representing rather more advanced conditions than could be found in Italy" (Q., vol. 3, p. 2016).


38. For comments on Gramsci's use of historical comparisons and an indication of some of the more significant earlier Italian historians who made comparative illustrations between Italian and French history see Cammett, The Origins, (p. 219).


40. Ibid., p. 2027.

41. Ibid., p. 2028.

42. Gramsci stressed that the French Jacobins were not "dreamers" but very capable political personalities who "were convinced of the absolute truth of their slogans about equality, fraternity, and liberty; and, what is more important, the great popular masses whom the Jacobins stirred up and drew into the struggle were also convinced of their truth" (Q., vol. 3, p. 2028).

43. Ibid., p. 2029.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., p. 2028.

46. Ibid., p. 2030.

47. See note 5, above.


49. Ibid., pp. 1559-1560.

50. Ibid., p. 1560.


52. Ibid. See Gramsci's remarks on Gioberti as a "theoretical" Jacobin (Q., vol. 3, pp. 1914-1915). Vincenzo Gioberti is known for his philosophical writings as well as the political role he played in the Risorgimento. He was one of the most influential Italian spiritualist philosophers of the Nineteenth century. His works on philosophy include: Introduzione allo studio della filosofia (first published in 1840); La filosofia della rivelazione, della riforma cattolica della chiesa (published in 1856); his historical writings articulated the ideology of one of the main political currents of the Risorgimento: Del primato morale e civile degli italiani (published in 1843); Del rinnovamento civile d'Italia (published in 1849).


54. Ibid., p. 1782.
55. Gramsci's attitude towards Gobetti was tempered on one hand by his dislike for the revisionist thesis of the Risorgimento, and on the other hand by his firm belief that neo-liberal intellectuals like Gobetti were potential allies of the working class movement. See, for example, Gramsci's remarks on Gobetti's relationship with the Ordine Nuovo Group in "Some Aspects," Selections from Political Writings vol. 2 (pp. 460-462).

56. See Chapter 3, p. 86, above.

57. Gramsci is not consistent with respect to what he thought of Gobetti's views on Italian history. In some instances Gramsci referred to Gobetti as a disciple of bourgeois historians whose work displays a tendentious "political" and "ideological" and not a "historical" character (Q., vol. 2, pp. 1153-1154). At other times Gramsci made a definite distinction between the "historical novels" of bourgeois revisionists and Gobetti's work Gramsci recognized the "premise of a national political movement" (Q., vol. 3, p. 1815). For an exposition of Gobetti's historical writings see Spriano, Gramsci e Gobetti, (pp. 168-175).


59. Ibid., p. 1782.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., p. 1773.

63. Ibid., p. 1782.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., p. 1562.

66. The "situation" combines the various levels of the relations of force. This notion, therefore, embodies the problem of the relationship between structure and superstructure and is an extension of the "methodological canons" outlined in note 2, above.


69. Gramsci considered Cattaneo's pro-federalist stand an "ideological element" reflecting the concrete interests of Lombardy, which "did not want to be annexed, as a province, to Piedmont: it was more advanced, intellectually, politically, economically, than Piedmont. . . . It was, perhaps, more Italian than Piedmont, in the sense that it represent-
ed Italy better than Piedmont" (Q., vol. 2, p. 961). See also note 18, above.

70. Carlo Pisacane was a Neapolitan aristocrat. He became noted in the Risorgimento as an ardent advocate of armed revolution. His military strategy called for the creation of peasant armies to fight for Italian independence. He committed suicide in 1857 in an ill-fated attempt to mobilize a peasant uprising near Salerno in southern Italy. Gramsci suggested that Pisacane should be compared with the Russian populists of the Nineteenth century (Q., vol. 3, p. 1929).

71. A view of the leadership cadres of the Action Party not unlike Gramsci can be found in D. Mack Smith's Cavour and Garibaldi.


73. Ibid., p. 2047.

74. Ibid., p. 1768.

75. Ibid., pp. 1772-1774.

76. Gramsci, however, noted that this question could not have been comprehended by men like Mazzini "in view of the fact that military wars had not yet furnished the model of 'war of position'" (Ibid., p. 1768).

77. Ibid., pp. 1766-1767.

78. Ibid., p. 1767.

79. These "vacillations" were viewed by Gramsci as the genesis of 'trasformismo', (Ibid.).

80. The failure of the Action Party to develop an effective political strategy exemplifies the necessity to establish in practice the exact basis of the relations between the "permanent" and the "occasional" factors which determine the concrete reality of a "situation." The error committed by Mazzini was failing to understand the type of response necessitated by the historical conditions of the struggle. Marx, according to Gramsci, made clear in The Poverty of Philosophy what the theoretical problem in decisions of this kind involves, namely: "that every member of the dialectical opposition must seek to be himself completely and to throw all his political and moral 'resources' into the struggle, that only in this way it is possible to have a real surmounting was understood neither by Proudhon nor by Mazzini" (Ibid., p. 1768). For the reference to Marx see The Poverty of Philosophy (New York: International Publishers, 1973), in particular the second chapter.

82. Ibid., p. 2024.
83. Ibid., p. 1767.
84. Ibid., p. 2024.
87. Ibid., pp. 2024-2025.

88. "The Moderates continued to lead the Action Party even in 1870 and 1876. [the year the parliamentary "Left" assumed power] and the so-called 'trasformismo' was no more than the parliamentary expression of this action of intellectual, moral, and political hegemony" (Ibid., p. 2011).

89. Ibid., p. 2038.
92. Ibid., p. 1822.
93. Ibid., p. 1823.
94. Q., vol. 1, p. 386. Agostino Depretis started out as a Mazzinian. He was one of the top Garibaldinian political leaders in Sicily. In 1876 he became Prime Minister of the first Italian government of the "Left." However, he had collaborated with the Moderates from as far back as the days of the Garibaldinian expedition to Sicily and southern Italy and recruited many of his ministers from their ranks. He was Prime Minister for eleven years (1876-1887) except for brief periods in-between. Francesco Crispi organized popular uprisers in Sicily in 1859, and again in 1860 in collaboration with Garibaldi's campaign. He was elected to parliament as a representative of the "Left." In 1865 he broke with Mazzini and joined the "Right." He was Prime Minister from 1887-1891 and on different occasions between 1891 and 1896. As Prime Minister he became the chief architect of Italian colonialism. In 1893 he ordered the repression of Socialist-led workers' leagues in Sicily (the Sicilian Fasci dei Lavoratori) with the use of utmost brutality by the army and the police. Giovanni Giolitti served as Finance Minister with Crispi's government in 1889. He was five times Prime Minister: 1892-1893; 1903-1905; 1906-1909; 1911-1913; and 1920-1921. Whereas Crispi advocated ruthless repression of any working class opposition, Giolitti favoured collaboration with the Italian Socialist Party. However, he was opposed to the emergence of any working class movement in southern Italy.

96. Ibid., p. 387.

97. Ibid., pp. 387-388.

98. Referring to Marx's and Engels' analysis of the bourgeois state, Lenin noted that "Two institutions characteristic of this state machine are the bureaucracy and the standing army. In their works, Marx and Engels repeatedly show that the bourgeoisie are connected with these institutions by a thousand threads." "State and Revolution," in V.I. Lenin, Collected Works (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), p. 283.

99. Croce modified his position on this question many times over the course of his literary life. The most notable changes became evident in writings which appeared in the decade after the death of Gramsci. In one of these, for example, Croce argued that there is a dialectical and dynamic unity between "Historia rerum gestarum et res gestae" ("Gli studi storici nella varietà delle loro forme e i loro doveri presenti," in B. Croce. Ultimi saggi (Bari: Laterza, 1948), p. 318. For a complete summary of Croce's position see: Antonio Bruno, Croce e le scienze politico-sociali (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1975), pp. 116-134.


102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.
CONCLUSION

As it stands, the main body of this thesis can be said to provide a reasonable range of material for a critical reading of Gramsci's work on Italian history and society. In the course of seeking to compare the contents of Romeo's critique with what Gramsci really had to say about the specific issues upon which Romeo based his contentions it became apparent that the clearest illumination could be had by presenting Gramsci's views without the embellishment of extensive commentary on the material or theoretical reflection on the efficacy of purely economic or "ethico-political" approaches to those problems of social change discussed by Gramsci and in part reconsidered by Romeo. What is important about Romeo's critique is its didactic value as an example of how readily an interpretation of Gramsci's work based upon logical categories which are alien to the logic of Gramsci's own discourse can result in irrational oversimplification of complex political and sociological propositions. Although Gramsci's account of Italian bourgeois development from the Risorgimento onwards may contain many historical lacunae, his work raises many questions which are rendered especially significant in the light of similar questions which have been raised independently by others in the field of Marxist and other studies of social and political change. The limited scope of this study, however, made it impossible to go into even some of the key implications which specific Gramscian concepts may hold for issues which are of current interest in social science.
These concluding remarks therefore will be limited to recalling only the substantive themes in Gramsci's interpretative scheme of the Risorgimento and its relationship to the socio-political configuration of post-unification Italian society. These remarks could perhaps serve as a point of departure for a broader synthesis of the Gramscian perspective alongside a detailed critique of the many existing analyses of Gramsci's conceptual and methodological premises. Although such a synthetical work now seems called for in the field of Gramscian studies, this is not to say that the very real and sometime fundamental differences between existing interpretations should be glossed over by casting an unrigorous eclecticism for its own sake. The nature of Gramsci's work in fact is such that if a comprehensive synthesis is ever achieved it is likely to be the result of many authors providing independent (and even contradictory) perspectives, but providing for interpenetrating analyses on the basis of the now complete editions of Gramsci's writings.

Though still tentative, it is perhaps possible to summarize Gramsci's scheme by stating that its major concern rests upon an analysis of elements of political conflict and the relation between diverse structural and super-structural factors considered to affect the resolution of political conflict in a given historical situation. Gramsci assumed that economic and technical functions provide the basis for the differentiation of society into antagonistic social groups or classes. Political and cultural functions (including ideology and some aspects of scientific knowledge) for their part provide the basis for the resolution of inter-group and class antagonism. The relations between these two levels of social activity (economic-technical-political-cultural) determine both the internal development of
social classes and their historical role in bringing about changes in the organization of social relations comprising the social system in a given place and time. The configuration of all phenomena relating to the social system is therefore determined by the historical interaction between structural and superstructural conditions.

Thus, within the framework of Gramsci's analysis of the Risorgimento the concrete interests which divided the various social groups and classes existing in Italian society at that time are visualized as consisting of complex elements of reality which defy representation in purely economic terms. For Gramsci, the interests of every identifiable group or class and the conflicts encompassed by their relations with each other represent particular historical ensembles of structural and superstructural elements. Therefore, the interests which divide the industrial bourgeoisie and the urban workers, agrarians and peasants, northern peasants and southern peasants, city and countryside, unitarian forces and reactionary forces, in so far as these originate in different sectors of the national territory and fulfill different functions of a contradictory society, they are considered to embody different worldviews as well, whereby the mere existence of each of them is thought to take political and moral space away from every other. But while Gramsci's scheme defines a number of social groups according to territorial divisions, real or potential political conflict between various social forces is usually defined according to their relations to the means of production. The latter kind of definition in turn becomes the basis of the view that there are in every society two fundamental social groups or classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat) contending for political and "hegemonic" control of the ensemble of social relations. Still,
notwithstanding the fact that the struggle for hegemony and political domination is based upon the mode of production, and this in turn is significantly affected by the level of development of the forces of production in different societies, Gramsci was of the opinion that the historical form which a given struggle may take has "its foundation in the decisive function which the leading group exercises on the decisive nucleus of economic activity." Ultimately, therefore, the resolution of political conflict between contending social forces for supremacy in society is determined by the quality of political and cultural leadership brought into play by each of the contenders.

Gramsci's scheme therefore recognizes at least in principle the existence of a fundamental correlation between the level of economic activity and increasing social differentiation. The bourgeois state can thus come into existence only at a stage of economic development where the functions of bourgeois social groups have become sufficiently differentiated from those of superordinate classes and subordinate social groups, such that the connection between various levels of activity embodied in their functions takes the explicit form of class interests standing in opposition to existing dominant interests. At some point of this process of differentiation the relationship between economic-technical functions and political-cultural functions reaches a state of near perfect reciprocity which finds expression in a general relationship of interdependence between class interest and political affiliation. Hence, economic development, resulting in increased social differentiation, leads to the formation of a political party that is the effective political organizer and representative of the interest of the new class in relation to civil society and the state. It is at this
level of party organization and representation that the function of leadership stands to determine the historical role of a social class even beyond the characteristics of the economic activities upon which its development as a distinct social grouping is based. In Gramsci's view, however, this relationship is by no means simple or precise. The most complex feature of his analytical framework is his conception of political parties as representing diverse elements of a "national/popular" tradition as well as the interest of a specific class. To some degree, therefore, political parties are seen as being concerned with national or general, rather than simply class or corporative, interests. One of the crucial questions which must be answered in any attempt to study a given situation of political conflict between antagonistic social forces in society is to determine to what extent and what specific national interests are represented by the political parties of the contending social classes or groups.

Gramsci's concern for this question produced what is perhaps the most interesting aspect of his writings on Italian history and society. It reveals a consistency of effort to explain social phenomena in concrete historical terms, while recognizing the existence of uniformity in such phenomena and the possibility of inferring schemes of theoretical explanation and some degree of predictability based upon systematic observation and comparative analysis of analogous phenomena originating in diverse historical settings. What is important about this aspect of his work is that it points out problems which at least the more popular Marxist definitions of the connection between political parties and social classes were inclined to ignore. Even if his own studies do not provide adequate investigations, for reasons which on the whole were beyond Gramsci's control, it must be
recognized that he never ceased to strive for higher and clearer plateaus of methodological exactitude; as shown for example by his ever present concern for the empirical details of concrete manifestations of class antagonism even while attempting to elaborate a theory of social integration: hegemony, organic ideology, historical bloc. Rather than any philosophical or theoretical preconception, it was this kind of painstaking attitude towards his own methodological procedures which led Gramsci to recognize that the process of social differentiation produced many other groups with conflicting interests in addition to the two principal contenders in any political conflict.1

Leaving aside other factors which may influence a given situation, Gramsci stipulated at least one condition which must be met in order for effective control of the state-apparatus to change hands from one social class to another. That this should happen, or in other words that a class may either become state or gain control of an existing state, its internal development must have already reached a high level of perfectly organic integration as a complex social grouping of economic-technical-political-cultural functions. This type of internal cohesion provides a social class with the capacity to extend its dominance over a national society as a whole. Thus tending to make of its struggle for political control of the state a unifying force over the whole of humanity forming the nation. In this sense, integration, or the process of becoming organic, implies the general suppression or elimination of moral and intellectual antagonisms as well as socio-economic contradictions and organizational inconsistencies which stand in the way of making the ascending social class the actual representative of the nation-state. In his interpretation of the Risorgimento Gramsci
sought to explain this process at two levels of analysis, referring to two types of integration. There is the integration of the capitalist bourgeois groups, whose internal cohesion displays a highly organic character, and this in turn allows them to exercise a spontaneous power of attraction over allied, subordinate, and even antagonistic social groups and classes. The other type of integration refers to the organizational state of the subordinate masses, which in the Italian case consisted overwhelmingly of a rural population of peasants and traditional urban social groups. In contrast to the bourgeois groups the masses are characterized by various degrees of internal disintegration, reflecting the decline of traditional forms of social integration and the absence, over most of the country, of the objective conditions (economic-technical functions) for the transition, through a modern process of social differentiation, to new forms of group and class integration. While such a process is obviously incipient in the development of bourgeois society, the masses as yet lack completely the cultural and organizational premises for developing their own organic integration. Hence, they are in a position which makes them amenable to the hegemonic influence as well as the political control of the capitalist bourgeoisie. It may even be said that in some ways the mere recrudescence of mass social and cultural life could be seen as facilitating the task of the bourgeois groups by making it possible for them to identify a common enemy in the old agrarian elites who dominated the disintegrated world of the rural masses and were also opposed to the initial bourgeois goal for national unification.
Assuming that a class in a position of historical ascendance, such as the position Gramsci ascribed to the capitalist bourgeois groups in the Risorgimento, has the capacity to use the instruments of hegemony, its organic integration makes it objectively possible for such a class to integrate allied, subordinate, or antagonistic groups, such as may be found among the masses of a still predominantly traditional society, and to place them under its political and cultural control. The mechanism through which this result may be achieved is for the organic intellectuals of the ascending class to saturate the life of society with the ideology of their social class. Ideology in this context was intended by Gramsci to mean a general conception of the world that tends to develop a pervasive system of values and norms. Using an expression taken from Marx, Gramsci suggested that when ideologies assume "the solidity of popular beliefs" they in effect provide the psychological dynamics which hold together a given historical bloc. The latter conception as employed by Gramsci embodies all the elements necessary for the maintenance of an integrated social system in a given time and place. Although an organic ideology can possess an unlimited range of influence, it remains always the ideology of the ruling class, even when it permeates or unifies the greater part or even the whole of society. Outside of the class in which it develops, therefore, the unifying function of an organic ideology always stops short of creating a perfectly organic integration of the heterogeneous social groups and classes existing in society at any given time.

Thus, whether spontaneously attracted or unconsciously subject to the influence of the education, mores, customs, tastes and traditions of a dominant class, or simply excluded from political society, subordinate
groups or classes may be organized in accordance with the interest of the dominant class through such influence, while their own economic activities may actually be increasing their own differentiation as separate and independent social entities. However, as long as subordinate social groupings are susceptible to the ideological influence of another class they cannot become fully integrated or unified as classes 'for' themselves; in as much as their continued subordination is a sign that their internal development is still insufficient to allow them to make the connection between economic-technical activity and political-cultural activity. The history of subordinate groups or classes, therefore, is never really their history but a fragmented or discontinuous function of the political and social history of a ruling class. This is so because the activities of subordinate social groupings, even when they appear to possess a high degree of autonomy in the sphere of civil society, are ultimately determined by a corresponding interest of the ruling class. Even while the functions of subordinate social groupings are being determined by the real situation in which the interests of the ruling class predominate, however, subordinate groups and classes constitute always an immanent force of social disintegration within the existing organization of social relations. Their internal development becomes a source of new ideologies which eventually will pose a concrete challenge to the old ideology.

The revolutionary potential of a subordinate class can thus be realized only as the objective conditions on which the position of the ruling class is based undergo historical change. In the course of this historical transformation the organic reciprocity between state and civil society which made political society the effective representative of the ruling
class interest is undermined by the rise of new contradictions at the level of economic activity and new class antagonisms evolving out of the preceding period of social differentiation. These increasing tendencies of disintegration within the old social system provide subordinate social groups with unforeseen freedom to bring their internal development to a level of organization enabling them to struggle for themselves. The apex of this entire historical process is thus characterized by an organic crisis of the old ruling system and the emergence of a new social formation, usually represented by a political party, which struggles to free itself from the influence of traditional ideologies, learns to manage the instruments of hegemony, i.e. acquires the capacity to create "new historical and institutional values," and establishes a new historical bloc in opposition to the old one which it eventually replaces through a process of destruction and absorption, or "revolution-restoration."

In accordance with this analytical scheme Gramsci formulated the following historical model of the Risorgimento. The formative process of a new state, such as that represented by the history of the movement for Italian unification, is characterized by the activity of contending political parties. In the Risorgimento the revolutionary social groups or classes (the new social formation) were represented by two parties: the Moderates, whose political platform was the spontaneous, or so to speak natural, expression of the most consistently developed social groups in Italian society; and the Action Party, staffed and supported by petty bourgeois groups with disparate economic-technical and political-cultural functions. While the actionists purported to represent a radical alternative to the unification plan of the Moderates, in reality they could do nothing of the
kind because their functions constituted a subordinate moment of the social and cultural world dominated by the social groups represented by the Moderate Party. The real superiority of the latter was evident in particular in the social origins and intellectual predisposition of its leadership cadres. Almost without exception, the Moderate leaders were organic intellectuals of the social groups whose historical development made them the fundamental force of the revolutionary movement. The organic character of their social activity thus enabled them to exercise a real function of "leadership" (dirigenza) over the mass of traditional intellectuals connected with the diverse social groups and classes existing in the various sectors of the national territory.

After 1848 the Moderates created a coherent party organization designed to extend their ideological influence over the institutional and cultural life of the whole country. Their campaign proved so effective that they were able to influence the leadership of the Action Party perhaps even more than objective conditions alone could have made possible. The social base of the Moderates was after all confined to one territorial sector of the country. Outside of this sector, therefore, the subordinate position of the actionists was not as determining a factor of their organizational activities vis-à-vis the Moderates. Hence, Gramsci proposed that it stands to reason to assume that the Action Party should have been able to bring those traditional intellectuals who were most removed from the social base of the Moderates into its own ideological and political fold. In turn, he suggested that this would have enabled the Action Party to use the masses who formed the base of support for the traditional intellectuals as an active social force in the struggle for national unification. However,
because the territorial sector in which the Moderates were naturally dominant was the most historically developed of all the national sectors, and therefore essential for bringing about national unification, the Action Party would have ultimately remained subordinate to the Moderates even if it had managed to bring the social forces of the other national sectors under its influence. One way or the other, the resulting unitary state would have had to come under the control of the Moderates. According to Gramsci, where the influence of the Action Party would have made a difference was in determining the type of effects which political unification was likely to have on the social structure of the more backward sectors of the national territory.

The greatest anomaly of the Risorgimento from Gramsci's point of view lies in the fact that as a bourgeois revolution it neglected completely the historical necessity to organize the popular masses according to the national interest of the bourgeois state. He pinpointed two basic reasons which account for this neglect. Firstly, the desire of the Moderates to ensure their short-term interests. This led them to seek political alliances of convenience among the traditional ruling elites of the various sectors of the national territory. The second and perhaps more decisive reason was the failure of the Action Party to respond to the strategy adopted by the Moderates with a national plan of their own. The Moderates were thus enabled to implement their plan without encountering significant opposition from the Actionists. Gramsci argued that the Action Party could have generated sufficient resistance in southern Italy to prevent the Moderates from striking an alliance with the southern landlords and thus force a more democratic solution of the national question by forcing
the Moderates to come to terms with them as representatives of the southern "national/popular" forces.

As a result of their failure in southern Italy the Actionists were hopelessly weakened. Although the Actionists formed the official opposition in the new Italian parliament, the political preponderance of the Moderate coalition overshadowed their effectiveness as a party by continuously absorbing some of their representatives and manipulating others indirectly through local political clienteles and electoral blackmail. The result was the so-called mechanism of parliamentary trasformismo which guaranteed the political supremacy of the Moderates for many decades after unification, while allowing them to exclude the mass of the population from political society, over whom they imposed their control by means of coercive rather than hegemonic methods. This was particularly true in the South, where the co-optation of the petty bourgeois intellectuals by the ruling coalition of northern capitalists and southern agrarians cut off all links between the state and the peasant masses. The South thus had to be governed with the use of police methods to control the peasants and an ever increasing network of political corruption favouring the personal and corporate interests of the ubiquitous petty bourgeois clienteles of southern politicians.

Ultimately, therefore, Gramsci's analysis of the Risorgimento is pinned on the allegedly superior political capacities of the Moderates compared with the colossal ineptitude of the leadership of the Action Party. Granted the limitations of the objective conditions under which they worked, in the final analysis Gramsci seems to have been convinced, that if not altogether inevitable, the defeats incurred by the Action Party could have
at least been mitigated by the foresight of more capable leaders. He argued that the leaders of that party should have been able to comprehend that the overthrow of the semi-feudal social structures which were noticeably dominant in the society of southern Italy, as well as serving the immediate political interests of their own party, would have also served the long term interests of the bourgeoisie as a whole and, hence, of the country. Instead they were inhibited by an irrational fear of the peasantry, stemming from their petty bourgeois social character, and by the intellectual inadequacies of top leaders like Mazzini. Rather than viewing the aspirations of the southern peasants for socio-economic reform in terms of the immediate struggle between peasants and landlords, Gramsci proposed that they should have realized the historical necessity to extend the political and juridical apparatus of the bourgeois state, along with the system of values and norms accompanying it, over all the geosocial sectors of the national territory. An alliance between the Action Party and the southern masses therefore should have been implemented primarily as a vehicle for achieving this goal.

While such an alliance would have prompted the Action Party to incorporate the aspiration of the southern peasantry in its political program, Gramsci did not actually suggest that this was bound to lead to the creation of an economy of small peasant proprietors. The tone and content of his discussion would tend to indicate that he was thinking primarily in terms of the propagandistic and agitational effects of such a move on the part of the Action Party in mobilizing the peasants for the purpose at hand. For the rest, it must be kept in mind that in Gramsci's view the key to organizing and retaining political control over the peasantry
was to organize on a permanent basis the traditional intellectual cadres of the South under the leadership of the Action Party.

In fact, the theoretical perspective elaborated by Gramsci seems to explicitly deny the possibility of an independent peasant initiative. It proposes instead that the "organic development" of the peasantry, especially in a relatively backward society as Gramsci imagined southern Italy to be, "depends on movements among intellectuals." This seems to leave little room for presuming that the hypothetical agrarian revolution postulated by Gramsci as an alternative to the actual outcome of the Risorgimento was actually envisioned by him as leading the peasants beyond their emancipation from feudal or semi-feudal subordination and into a new form of bourgeois subordination. The overthrow of the traditional landlords, in other words, could have been reasonably expected to alleviate the burdens of the antiquated abuses inherited from feudal times, as found for example in the structure of the latifundia, which was still the dominant form of property in the South. It is reasonable to surmise that the dissolution of this form of property would have been followed by the institution of bourgeois private property.

Although Gramsci is not explicit on this point it can be inferred from his considerations of the nature of social differentiation, the factors which determine the development of social groups or classes, and their role as forces of political and social change. In this respect it may also be noted that Gramsci as a rule spoke of an agrarian revolution as fulfilling the aspirations of the "rurals"; i.e. the peasants, the rural bourgeoisie, and its traditional intellectuals as a social bloc in which the aspirations of the peasants find expression in the activity of the
intellectuals. Hence, considering that the southern intellectuals were bourgeois and not peasant, Gramsci could not obviously have meant that an agrarian revolution in the Risorgimento could have carried the aspirations of the peasantry beyond the farthest class limits of the southern intellectuals. It is in this sense that Gramsci's critique of the Action Party falls in line with the rest of his analysis of the Risorgimento: in that it failed to establish the political and juridical conditions for the development of the southern rural bourgeoisie as an agricultural capitalist class integrated with the leading industrial bourgeoisie of the North.

Gramsci, therefore, saw the failure of the Action Party and the resulting political compromise between northern capitalists and southern landlords as the central historical determinant of the social and political anachronisms characteristic of post-unification Italian society, as exemplified in particular by the persistence of the southern question. In fact, it may be said that the southern question forms the backbone of Gramsci's analysis of the Risorgimento and the post-unification Italian state. Following the lead of earlier bourgeois and socialist scholars of the southern question, Gramsci based his conception of this problem on the assumption that at the time of national unification southern Italy was still in the clutches of a feudal regime. Salvemini, among others, had already presented the thesis that the unitary state which came out of the Risorgimento was a compromise between the reactionary feudal landlords of the South and the revolutionary capitalist bourgeoisie of the North. Consequently, the Risorgimento did not complete the bourgeois revolution. The Italian state thus was neither able nor willing to allow the development of capitalism to engulf the country as a whole. Instead, the remnants of
feudalism remained dominant in the South and Italian capitalism managed only in part to reorganize national production along modern bourgeois lines.

Ultimately, it is perhaps necessary to distinguish between the wealth of political and sociological concepts which Gramsci weaved around this inherited thesis and the thesis itself. The historical validity of that thesis, which can be shown to have been equally accepted by various schools of thought, including for that matter even Roméo, does not depend on any of the interpretative paradigms which have been based upon it, but on the data which can be mastered in its support. In light of some of the evidence unearthed by more recent historical researches, as well as other data which have been known, although generally ignored, at least as far back as the work of De Viti De Marco and S.F. Nitti, there is good reason to doubt that the structural gap between the supposedly feudalistic South and the more advanced North was as great as that thesis suggests. There are historians today who believe that the southern economy was in better financial shape and at least as industrially developed and as exposed to domestic and European capitalist initiatives as its northern counterpart was. Although those historians who have come to hold this view, mainly Marxists intent on redefining the southern question according to current neo-Marxist approaches to underdevelopment in the Third World, may actually be stretching the evidence in their attempt to adapt Italian history to a theory which has evolved in respect of quite different historical situations, their work has in part managed to show that the conventional view of the feudal/capitalistic imbalance between South and North at the time of Italian unification needs to be revised in accordance with the historical evidence. But this is not the place to embark upon a discussion of the theory of
pre-unitarian equilibrium between North and South. It may be sufficient
to note that a wide spectrum of opinion still holds to the view that the
South was placed at a disadvantage in relation to the North for geo-
graphic reasons if for no other. Gramsci after all was not concerned with
the specific details of the pre-unitarian southern economy but with social
and political phenomena which became apparent in the course of the Risorgi-
mento and developed its peculiar characteristics in the decades following
the establishment of the unitary state. Certainly no one would argue that
Italian political and social life was not affected by residual elements of
earlier social formations. To this extent at least, Gramsci's preoccupation
with the anomalies of Italian society can perhaps best be understood with
the help of an observation made by Marx and aptly quoted by Engels to
classify the Italian situation, circa 1894:

We, like the rest of Continental Europe, suffer not only
from the development of capitalist production, but also
from the incompleteness of that development. Alongside of
modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us,
 arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of
production, with their inevitable train of social and pol-
itical anachronisms. We suffer not only from the living,
but from the dead. Le mort saisit le vivant.
NOTES


2. The position of the underdevelopmentalist school on the southern question is examined by Graham Chapman in his Development and Underdevelopment in Southern Italy (Reading, Eng.: University of Reading, 1976).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are three sections to the Bibliography. The first lists a selection of Italian and English editions of Gramsci's writings. There are other Italian editions of Gramsci's writings not included here. The second section lists only the essential works by Romeo on the Risorgimento debate. Romeo has published studies on the history of Italian industrialization, the Risorgimento in Sicily, and various aspects of the history of the Italian Communities which are not of immediate relevance here. The third section contains a selection of other works consulted. This section is restricted to include only the more essential sources of a broader working bibliography.

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