

THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT



NEWSPAPER

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"A periodical, like a newspaper, a book, or any other medium of didactic expression that is aimed at a certain level of the reading or listening public, cannot satisfy everyone equally; not everyone will find it useful to the same degree. The important thing is that it serve as a stimulus for everyone; after all, no publication can replace the thinking mind."
Antonio Gramsci
(Prison Notebook 8)



July 19th, 2013 - Forest Houses, Bronx, NY

The Gramsci Monument-Newspaper is part of the "Gramsci Monument", an artwork by Thomas Hirschhorn, produced by Dia Art Foundation in co-operation with Erik Farmer and the Residents of Forest House

IN THE BEGINNING WAS GRAMSCI

Henri Weber



The following text represents a "classical" critique of the Italian Communist Party, i.e. a critique addressed to the ICP from within the tradition of the Worker's Movement.

I. THE ITALIAN STATE

According to a running joke in the Italian left, Italy is the world's first country to realize Marx's prediction: the State has perished and civil society is none the worst for its demise.

This is, of course, merely a joke. The State in Italy continues to be fine, fit and even further fortified. But contrary to the French State, which has long been unified and centralized, the Italian State has for but a century encompassed the many-thousand-headed populations, so rich in traditions and history. As Longanesi explained, "Italy is a collection of families, not a State." And Didier Motchane properly underlines this ponderously important fact: "It is not the State which fashioned the Italian conscience but rather the Church, or better still, that social, mental, and political institution which is Italian Catholicism. . . . The State, that ideological axis of French conscience. . . was never, neither as institution nor as concept, the foundation and the guarantee of social order in Italy."¹

The historical debility of the Italian State vividly explains the considerable importance of certain survivors and archaisms, especially that of the patronage or clientage system; as did the masters and patriarchs of old, the new notaries (the functionary, the entrepreneur, the priest, the secretary of the Italian Communist

ANTONIO GRAMSCI

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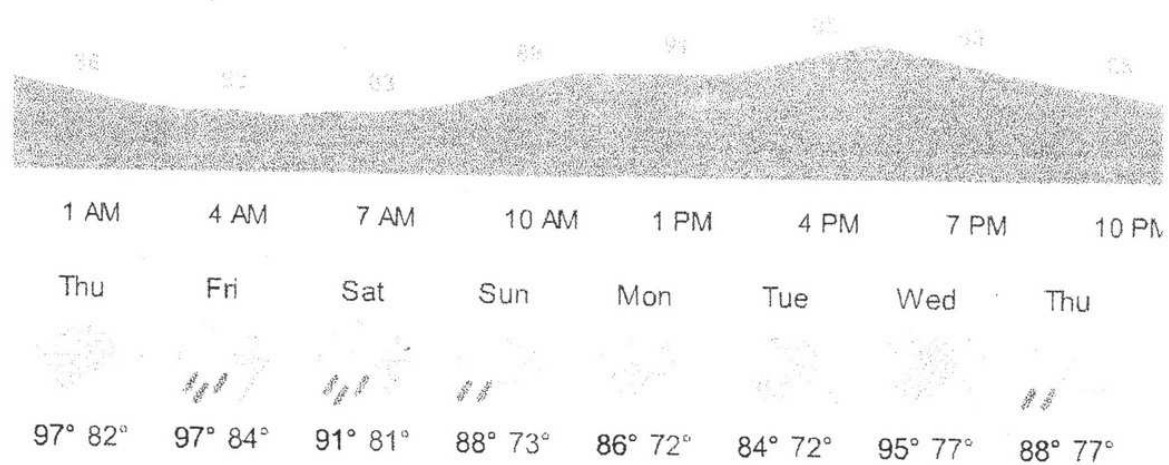
Bronx, NY 10456

Friday
Thunderstorm

 **97** °F | °C

Precipitation: 20%
Humidity: 49%
Wind: 15 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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Party), all those who in any way partake of an iota of power, establish lines from the obliger to the obliged with their "base," a relation of personal protection-subordination, doubling and transcending administrative-legal relations. From this propensity towards patronage, the Christian Democratic Party forged a system of government: the Civil Service is glutted with its proteges, having obtained their positions in payment for services rendered and in token of political fidelity. Even in the rare case in which these posts correspond to a real service, the promised clients regard their job as an annuity more than as an apostolate. . . Thus occurs the paradox of an under-administered county with a behemoth bureaucracy, and a degree of unparalleled interpenetration between the ruling party and the State machinery. The inefficacy, the formalism, the parasitism, the corruption of this bureaucracy of the Italian State are the object of constant denunciation. A fraction of the upper middle class view the contrast between the progress of Italian economy and the archaic state of the State structures as the principal contradiction of modern Italy, the basis of *malgoverno*.

In control for thirty years, the Christian Democratic Party is frayed to the wire, lacking in both imagination and resources, paralyzed by clan warfare, and above all concerned with survival and thus directing towards that end a politics that daily sinks the country further into crisis.

Afflicted with an inefficient and expanding bureaucracy, filled with a demoralized and oft diseased political personnel, the Italian State is also ruled by one of the most parliamentary Constitutions of Europe — proportional representation, preeminence of legislative power over executive power, and provincial and regional decentralization.

Even more than with France's Third and Fourth Republics, these institutions carry a political impact of great importance to the petty bourgeois and the working class. As long as the Christian Democrats easily imposed their ideology on the masses, as long as the economic expansion permitted the financing of a "consensus"; as long as the Cold War and the division of the labor movement kept the workers in line, the strong parliamentary representation of petty bourgeois and working class interests counted for little. But with the emerging crisis in the clerical ideology (for example the referendum on divorce or the abortion legislation), the end of the long period of economic expansion, the radicalization of the popular masses, the parliamentary nature of the regime constitutes an additional critical factor for the ruling class.

The existent institutions, whose democratic content was restored and extended in the whirlwinds of "rampant May," in no way favor a capitalist solution to the crisis: such a solution would severely injure the interests of the middle classes as well as those of the working class. The felt presence of these factions at the center of the elected assemblies effectively precludes this perspective.

The Italian political crisis is developing in the context of an ideological crisis so profound that the ruling clerical-liberal ideology is further alienated from the conditions and modes of existence created by the wave of industrialization from the years 1950-1970.

The combination of all of these elements in the context of an economic crisis so severe that Italy could not even count on its exports for help, ignites a crisis in the Italian State that verges on paralysis: power declares itself unable to master the situation: the rate of inflation reaches 3% per month (26% per year); the lire experiences free fall; the imbalance in the balance of payments continues to dive; unemployment attacks two million workers, not yet counting the "under-employed." Capital interests take flight in all directions, the postal and public services function poorly if at all, the trains are not on time, a mysterious disease strikes at all small change. . . The citizens feel each day that they are entering deeper into an inextricable chaos. The ruling class appears involved in an irreversible collapse. The labor movement, under the aristocratic mien of Berlinguer, appears as the last recourse.

Thus, a period of social destabilization inaugurated in 1968 by the so-called "rupture of all balances of system" present all the fundamental characteristics of a pre-revolutionary situation. On at least two occasions, in 1968-9 and 1975-6, this pre-revolutionary set-up coalesced into an acute crisis, capable of deepening into an irrevocable division of power if a significant fraction of the labor movement had acted appropriately. Unfortunately, in both cases, the Italian Communist Party (the I.C.P.) placed all of its political clout behind the stabilization of the system. As with the pre-1914 Social-Democratic party in Germany, it had simultaneously offered a platform for expression and national centralization to the resurgent working-class, partially adapting itself to their aspirations, as it channeled this surge into the goals of rationalization of the established order. Its reformist politics appeared as the surest support for the declining power of the bourgeoisie.

In the light of the Italian example, the I.C.P.'s own proposal can be reversed to read: it is not true that the bourgeois democracies of western Europe are invulnerable to revolutionary crises. It is precisely the strategy of the I.C.P., the line of "historical compromise," which impedes the development of pre-revolutionary situations into characteristic revolutionary ones (situations of split power).

Of all the Communist parties of western Europe, the I.C.P. pushed first and furthest the movement for autonomy as regards the State Party of the U.S.S.R. Not a week passes without *Unita* denouncing the repressive or arbitrary acts of the Eastern countries, and the Party itself is involved in a tremendous public debate concerning the bases for the "authoritarian degeneration" of the socialist countries and the means to avoid its repetition in the West.

Unlike the French Communist Party, this autonomization does not stop at the repudiation of the lapses of "socialist legality," for it is beginning to assert itself as well in international affairs, as seen by the I.C.P.'s stance towards Europe. For example, in Berlinguer's astonishing interview with *Corriere della Serra*, during the electoral campaign of June 1976, Italy's membership in NATO is presented not as irreversible misfortune but as a guarantee against the onslaught of Russian tanks in the event of a "Roman spring."

If Stalinist parties are national Communist parties absolutely subordinated to the ideological, political, material and organizational purpose and practice of the Soviet bureaucracy; parties which because of their subordination value foremost the defense of the interests of the Soviet State, as conceived by the secretariat of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; then clearly the I.C.P., for all the Stalinist elements heldover from its past, is not Stalinist.

As regards the Soviet Union, autonomization is adaptation to both the national bourgeoisie and to its State: at the heart of Italian society, the I.C.P. assumes a function analogous to that of the German Social-Democrats prior to 1914. As a bureaucratic labor party it tries to rationalize instead of revolutionize the existing society. According to Rossana Rossanda, its ambition is "to transform all of Italy into Emilia-Romagna," that is, into a society jointly directed by the labor movement and the bourgeoisie, within the confines of the present framework.

The I.C.P.'s destalinization thus resembles the process of social-democratization: if the Communist bureaucracy has long assumed principally a function of mediation between the interests of the Italian working class and those of the Soviet bureaucracy (to the benefit of the latter), it hereafter assumes a function of mediation between the interests of the working class and those of the bourgeois State.

No longer Stalinist and not yet (if ever) Social-Democratic, the I.C.P. appears as a workers-reformist party with Stalinist origins: a national Communist party.

Its strategy reflects the specificity of its relations to the ruling class, the bourgeois State and the masses.

II. THE STRATEGY OF "EURO-COMMUNISM"

NATIONAL-COMMUNISM

IN THE BEGINNING WAS GRAMSCI

To establish its concept of the "Italian road to socialism," the I.C.P. appeals to the authority of Gramsci, for in the *Prison Diaries* he underlines the specificity of the revolution in the West as differentiated from the Russian October revolution.

This difference is based on the difference among social structures and political superstructures. In the West, capitalist development engenders a complex social stratification and organization particular to power: the ruling class reigns primarily through consent rather than coercion. Its power does not materialize in an autocratic State that overhangs and mixes a barely structured society but rather in a democratic State that rests on a dense network of social institutions. The Western State is not the singular locus of all power but "an advance trench behind which stands an active line of fortresses and casemates." While in the East it may be possible to conquer and destroy the State by means of a revolutionary explosion of the masses, in the West, this conquest first involves the conquest of the "casemates" and "fortresses" on which the State rests and which represent the real defenses at the heart of bourgeois society.

The socialist revolution is envisioned as a slow process of the working class's assumption of hegemony after a protracted "war of positions" in which the "casemates" and "fortresses" are besieged and overthrown one by one: the intervention of the workers' movement at the heart of institutions, recognized by ever increasing doses of "socialist elements" in the economy and society.

As the Italian communists readily admit, this entails a manifest revision of the Marxist-Leninist analysis of the democratic bourgeois State: the representative bourgeois democracy, no longer simply the political regime most favorable to the development of class conscience and workers' organizations, is also the regime under which the transition to socialism can come about by means of a series of modifications.

At that point, the threshold is crossed and the social realities change: political democracy ceases to be formal and becomes real. The ruling mode of production ceases to be capitalist and becomes socialist. The quantity of "socialist elements" progressively injected into society is transformed in quality.

THE HISTORICAL COMPROMISE

According to Enrico Berlinguer, "The strategy of reform can advance only if it is supported by a strategy of alliances, which constitute the decisive condition; for if the alliances of the working class are restricted and if the social base of the ruling groups expands, the very realization of reforms, before or after, will be impossible and the whole political situation will rebound into a total reversal."

The accord with the Social-Democratic leadership is indispensable if the collective action is to attain its widest scope. The dynamics of the struggle which the united proletarian front continually invokes forces the reformist masses to the left and allows for the ultimate obviation of the earlier agreements.

Just as simple denunciation cannot destroy the Social-Democrats' grip on its organized masses, diatribe and confrontation do not affect the Social-Democrats' hold over the Catholic masses. Once again one must follow in the footsteps of the United Front and promote the unified action of socialist, communist and Catholic workers. This assumes an accord among the organizations, the conclusion to which—the Historical Compromise—firmly anchors the Catholic workers in the left, favors the development of their class conscience, and enhances their receptivity to the I.C.P.'s logic. Finally, it exacerbates the contradictions of Christian Democrats, dispersing them into all directions, isolating their right, paralyzing the whole party in the face of the workers' initiative.

III GRANDEUR AND POVERTY OF GRADUALISM

The I.C.P.'s strategy does have the benefit of coherence. Does it embody a "creative application of Marxist theory to the conditions of western Europe," as its partisans claim? Does it define a "realistic revolutionary line" for the workers' movement? Or is it instead the most recent and sophisticated avatar of gradualist reformism, as the extreme left claims?

On four essential points, the revolutionary Marxist critique strikes home.

CONCERNING THE MISUSE OF GRAMSCI

Gramsci's view of the specificity of the revolutionary process in the West is part of a general theoretical movement, borne of the speculation of members of the Communist International concerning the failure of the revolutionary wave of 1917-1923 in Europe.

The endorsement by the 3rd and 4th International of the "United Front," in many ways constitutes a first step towards the elaboration of a specific strategy for the traditionally democratic, advanced capitalist countries. A progress which was soon interrupted by the Stalinist degeneration and then followed by massive regression.

Gramsci's contribution takes place in stride with this effort of strategic re-orientation prior to the great ice age.

This contribution properly clarifies the emphasis on the decisive importance of preparatory work for the revolutionary seizure of power: disorganization of the bourgeois hegemony; endangering of the ruling ideology; dislocation of the conservative block; penetration and, where possible, neutralization of the State machinery; affirmation of the working class and its allies as the country's potential leadership, etc. He does not examine the *revolutionary conquest* of power itself.

The proletariat's struggle for hegemony constitutes a preparation for the revolutionary rupture rather than the actual accomplishment of the revolution; it represents the condition for a victorious revolution but does not stand in for one. It opens directly onto the political-military struggle with the bourgeois State and does not avoid it. It forces the communist party to prepare itself and the masses for this confrontation and does not absolve them.

Only through some fraudulent alchemy can Gramsci appear as a theoretician of gradualism, the strategist of the peaceful road to socialism, the champion of the snail's-pace accumulation of reforms creating an economy of revolution.

THE DISCONTINUOUS CHARACTER OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE

As with all gradualist strategies, the I.C.P. strategy presents only the weakpoints of rendering the class struggle abstract. Confronted with a full-blown popular revolt, the capitalist bourgeoisie releases its ballast, puts on airs, and avoids the waves: as the late Chairman Mao explained, they relinquish space to gain time.

Faced with the State's inability to clean up the mess in the factories, the Italian bourgeoisie reacts as do all other bourgeoisies: by the withdrawal of investments, the flight of capital, and speculation against the *lira*. Which for the workers means at least massive unemployment, galloping inflation, serial bankruptcy and general instability.

One does not need a financial Machiavelli to orchestrate this economic chaos: the capitalists, forced to respect the "laws of the market," do not invest when profit is risky and place their capital where at least a moderate profit is assured.

This "spontaneous behavior of economic factors" creates the conditions for the bourgeoisie's political counter-attack: for this it can count on the manifold cooperation of the State machinery: The I.C.P. is correct in emphasizing the importance of the Democratic thrust in Italy: the organization of the popular masses was never so widespread nor the presence of the workers' parties so palpably felt in the Parliament and the local assemblies. *But the elected assemblies are not at the core of the modern State.*

In Italy as elsewhere (though in fact a little less than anywhere else) the centralization of capital has occurred in tandem with the shift of real power from Parliament to the administration and in general towards centers of decision-making that are safe from the democracy's scrutiny.

We now turn to the second erroneous presupposition of gradualism: no more than the bourgeoisie can tolerate indefinitely an alliance of strength impeding the accumulation of capital, the working class, in its mass, cannot mobilize itself permanently around objectives as advanced as the organization of control, etc.

The "molecular process" of the constitution of the proletariat as a potential hegemonic class never represents a definitive attainment: if a period of extreme social crisis should arise, or the proletariat should fail to formulate and impose its solutions, or the initiative should revert to the ruling class, Trotsky's molecular process is reversed. Discouragement, demoralization, and scepticism seize the least advanced among the masses. Beneath the veneer of a socialist education, the "old man" sleeps, with his drives, his anxieties, his ancient values. The "Marxist" workers are not immunized against an overwhelming return of the irrational: the mystique of the State or race can subsume the socialist conscience, as occurred in Germany in 1933, Italy in 1921, and, to a lesser extent, France in 1940 and 1958.

There is no reason this involution could not occur today.

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY

The Marxist critique of the formal character of bourgeois democracy does not stop at considerations of the inequality of social classes before the law—inequality that could be corrected by compensatory measures. Above all it is a demonstration and critique of the process by which the bourgeois State—representative democracy included—atomizes, tranquilizes, vampirizes the social body, stripping it even of the capacities for self-administration which it conceals, to concentrate all its power in its diverse mechanisms.

The realization of the principles of the proletarian democracy—effective control of elected officials sanctioned by their permanent revocability, rotation of elective functions, etc.—implies the grounding of political power in the actual collectivities: the business and the neighborhood community; enforced functional units in which people recognize each other, act and live together, and thus can really define common positions and make them stick.

For this reason between the proletarian democracy and the bourgeois democracy lies not continuity but institutional rupture. The institutions, the procedures, and the personnel who for centuries served to depoliticize society are now inadequate to the rediffusion of power throughout the social domain, for the demise of the State, the self-organization of "associated producers."

To forego this rupture in favor of the integration of parliamentary councils is to choose bourgeois parliamentarism instead of socialist democracy.

A COMPROMISING COMPROMISE

The utopianism of this strategy is reinforced by its politics of alliances. One can admit various things concerning the specificity of the Christian Democrats, its ties to the Catholic world and thus to the workers, but only with great difficulty could one claim that the Christian Democratic Party represents a "multi-class bloc," at the heart of which diverse social classes appear on the same plane.

In reality, the Christian Democrats form the political instrument par excellence of the upper bourgeoisie. As in all parliamentary democracies, this bourgeoisie strove to endow itself with a party of popular support. It did this by adapting to the traditions and prejudices of the Italian petty bourgeoisie and proletariat, that is, to Catholic traditions and prejudices. It grafted itself onto the Catholic movement through agreement and symbiosis with the clerical hierarchy. The success of this operation did not create a multi-class party, regardless of its basic heterogeneity, but a bourgeois party with a mass base. The interests which the Christian Democrats have always represented and defended are those of the major Italian capital interests. The interests of the petty bourgeois and Catholic workers are not equally represented and defended but systematically subordinated to the former, even if the Christian Democratic Party assures its popular "clients" the scraps necessary to maintain the conservative block.

Today, the aggravation of the crisis of Italian capitalism strips the Christian Democrat of his means of sedating the petty bourgeois and populist base. Patronage reached its limits and then begins to produce contradictory effects. The Christian Democratic Party has entered the age of decline; progressively, large sectors of its base are breaking and falling away.

Rather than seizing the times and actively striving to detach the Catholic masses from the Christian Democrat politicians who place them in bondage to the bourgeoisie, the I.C.P. encloses itself in a static analysis, treats its directors as the legitimate spokespeople of Catholic workers, and sees an alliance with these workers as merely a union with the party that served them until today for parliamentary representation but from which they have begun to turn.

The I.C.P.'s line of Historical Compromise, especially, is offset by a support without serious counterpart in the Christian Democratic government, at the precise moment that, under cover of an "austerity plan," that government is launching an unprecedented assault on the workers' gains.

From there to say, with the Italian extreme left, that the Historical Compromise

acts like a rejuvenating spring on the Christian Democrats, while the I.C.P. is forced to play the ignominious usurer of Italian capital, there is only one response possible, which many party militants are making at this moment.

The Christian Democratic Party is the political instrument of the Italian upper bourgeoisie. *Union with it can occur only on the lines of defending Italian capitalism against the global crisis.* It implies the subordination of workers' interests and aspirations to the imperatives of valuation of capital in an already dilapidated international context. This means the workers sacrifice without recompense other than that of remaining the working class of a capitalist country well ranked in the international division of labor.

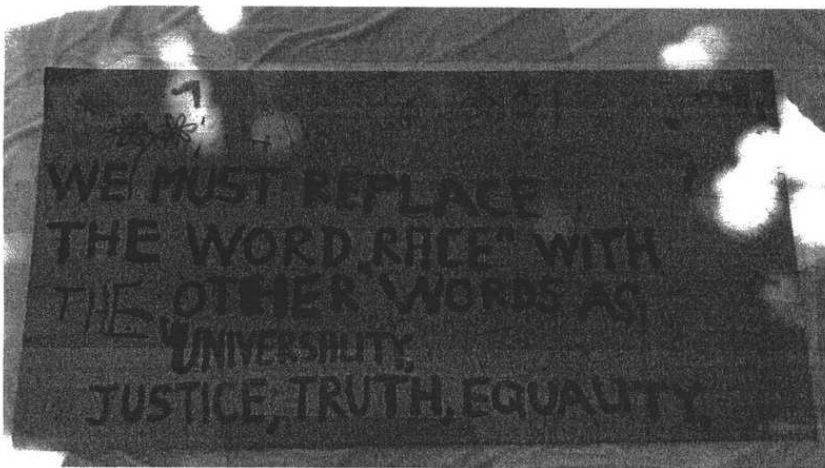
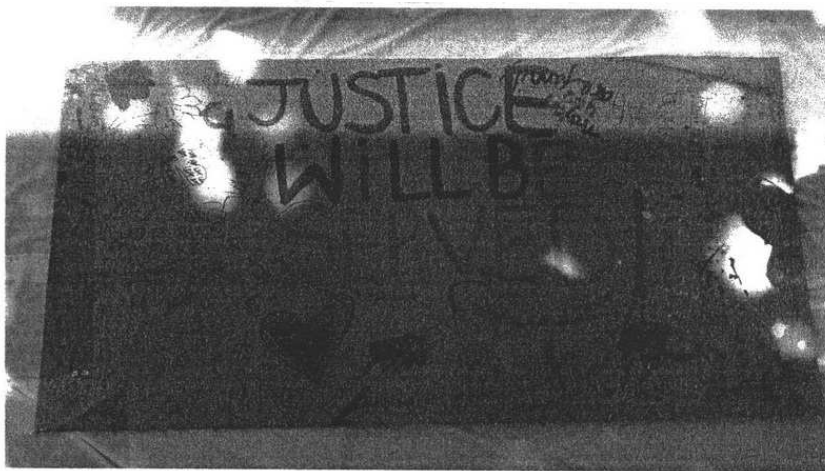
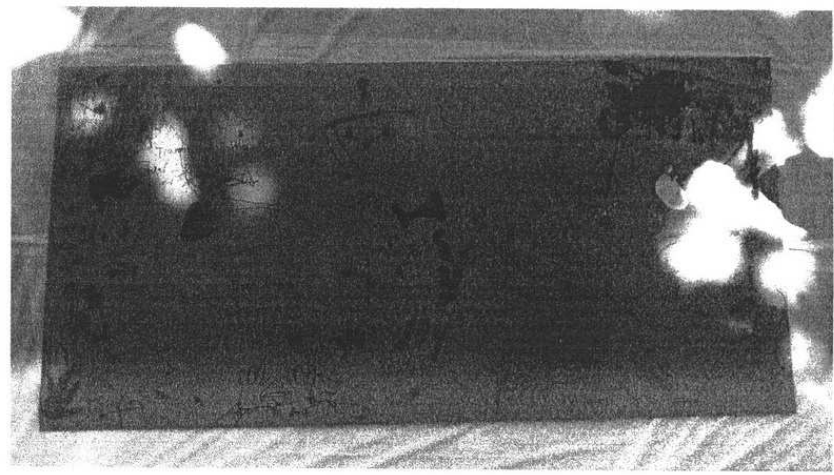
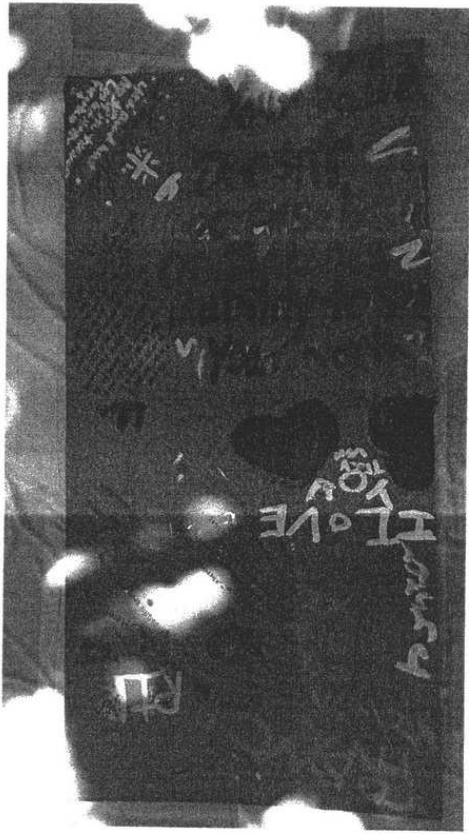
The strategic demands created by the collapse of the Stalinist monolith, the extremity of the capitalist crisis, the striking inequivalence between neo-reformist gradualism and the revolutionary potentialities of the period require a massive work of elaboration. It is at this level, perhaps, that the European extreme left has revealed most clearly its own shortcomings. It is on this point, apparently, that it will direct its efforts.

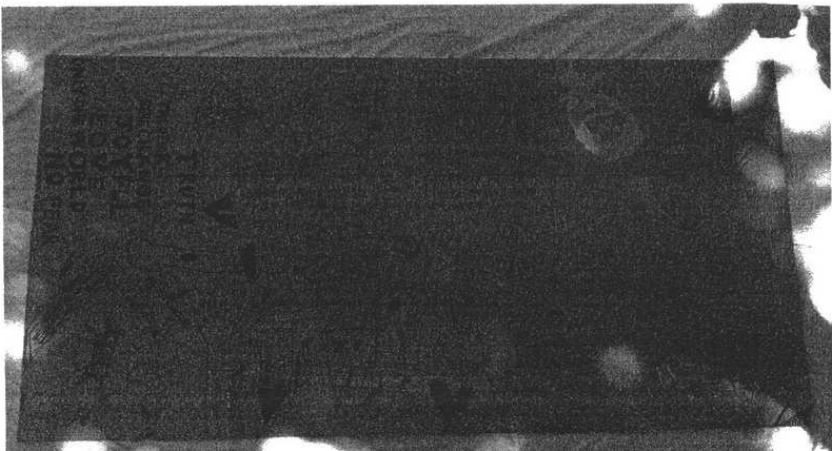
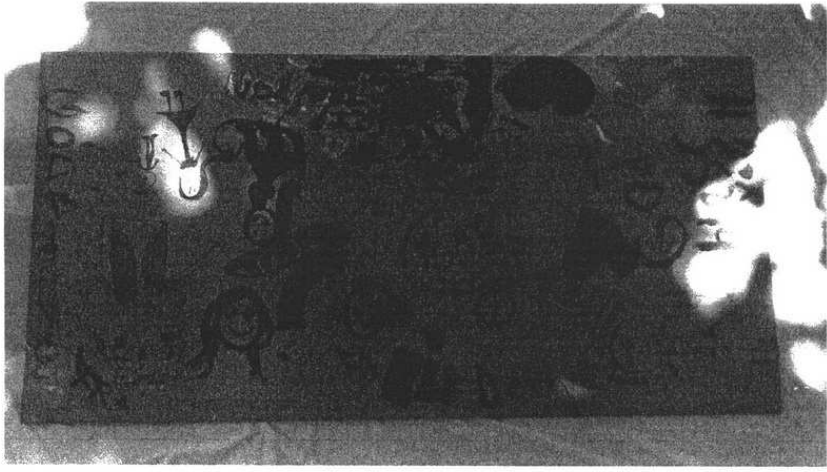
Translated by Daniel Moshenber,

1. Didier Motchane, Preface to *Workers' Struggles in Italy* by D. Grisoni and H. Portelli.
2. Enrico Berlinguer, *Reflections on Italy after the events in Chile*, *Rinascita*, Oct. 9, 1973.
3. This is precisely the assertion of Giorgio Amendola, the secretary of the I.C.P. and a major figure of the rightwing part of the party. In a rallying piece, published in September 1976 under the suggestive rubric of "Coherence and Rigor" and presented to the Central Committee in October 1976, Amendola attacks the whimsical incoherence of the Communists leadership, and especially the unionists, who support the Christian Democratic government in Parliament while warring against it in the factories. He also lashes out at certain sectors of the working class who balk at the mention of sacrifices: "When we talk of the necessary sacrifices that the workers must agree to in order to emerge from the crisis, it would be wrong, as it happens, to view those sacrifices as 'concessions' given to the capitalists and the government or as the 'price' of some pretended communist manoeuvre to enter at all costs into the government. On the contrary, the sacrifices are necessary in order to serve primarily the interests of the working class by pulling the country out of the crisis: so that the young might find employment, for the betterment of the living conditions of the people, etc. . . . For this reason it is incorrect to demand some equivalent sacrifices in exchange for the sacrifices necessary to the effort at transformation. The counterpart is not something that the others (the government or the capitalist bourgeoisie) could concede but rather the realization of objectives that concern first of all the workers: the welfare of the country and the pursuit of its progress."

III/1 Italian Communist leader Enrico Berlinguer takes office
III/2 Berlinguer attends funeral services for slain Aldo Moro, 1978

SARAH GAMBITO ART WORKSHOP





SARAH GAMBITO

POETRY WORKSHOP

Dear Traylon.

I am sorry.

Sarah

I feel bad
to what happen to
that young African
American because he
had more life to live to.
Trayvon was just an
innocent teenager. There
should be new laws written
because young African Americans
are getting shot, just because
they have a hoodie on. That
is called stereotyping. Stereotyping
should be stop immediately.
A African American can be attending

DEAR TRAYVON,

~~THE~~ HOOD IS FOR YOU!!!

THE PEOPLE ARE STANDING

!! FOR YOU!!



A DAILY LECTURE BY MARCUS STEINWEG ON MARGUERITE DURAS

19th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 19th July 2013

ON DURAS

Marcus Steinweg

Why Marguerite Duras?

1. Because in every moment of her writing Duras circles the "origin" of the origin.
2. Because this circling is related to an unrelated emptiness.
3. Because circling around the empty origin is touching truth.
4. Because to touch a truth means to relate to the namelessness of your origin.
5. Because the circling reference on namelessness connects the poetic form with the philosophical form.
6. Because this form is intimacy with the uncanny.
7. Because Duras knows that there is intimacy only with the untouchability of a universal exterior.
8. Because Duras calls touching the untouchable love.
9. Because real knowledge is knowledge of the unknowable.
10. Because in the thinking and writing of Duras there exist the idea of truth-knowledge.
11. Because truth-knowledge implies touching the limit of knowledge.
12. Because to touch the limit of knowledge is the only challenge, necessity, and legitimization, the unique ability of literature and philosophy.
13. Because what Duras calls writing, is the insistence on the most necessary — of inevitability itself.
14. Because Duras knows that truth-knowledge includes the cancellation, the reduction, the restriction, the neutralization and the destruction of fact-knowledge.
15. Because every "journalistic" intervention of Duras is suspending the imperialism, authority, legitimacy, plausibility, and persuasion of fact-dictates.
16. Because Duras affirmed the suspension of fact-knowledge as the necessity, evidence and intensity of her writing process.
17. Because Duras' writing, adventure, venture, rocklessness, madness and life commits itself to the paradox, contradiction and conflicted-ness of the formulation of the non-formulatable.
18. Because Duras placed her full ignorance in the service of truth-knowledge.
19. Because the knowledge that sacrifices itself to truth finally begins to approach knowledge as truth-knowledge.
20. Because this knowledge is opening of the closure of truth, opening of the subject to the extreme limit of it's subjectivity.
21. Because for Duras the courage of the opening to closure is fundamental for (her) life.
22. Because this courage, this rocklessness, this blindness and haste and charm is articulated as precise language, as mathematical turbulence.
23. Because in Duras' writing the will for precision is unresolvable from hyperbolic courage.
24. Because writing is the experience of the conflictuous compossibility of knowledge and truth.
25. Because Duras generates her own concept of absolute knowledge.



WHO IS MARGUERITE DURAS?

Marguerite Duras is a french writer and filmmaker that was born in 1914 and died in 1996.

From the very beginning of her work -- with novels like *Les impudents* (1943), *La vie tranquille* (1944), *Un barrage contre le pacifique* (1950) -- Duras confronts us with the human subject as an inconsistent -- ghostly -- subject. It is a subject that experiences itself beyond itself. It is irreducible to the consistency of its situation, of the historical moment it lives in, its reality. It is, what I call a subject without subjectivity. A subject that is not guaranteed by any substantial or transcendental or transcendent structure like for example the transcendental subjectivity (in the philosophy of Kant and Husserl) is. The subject evoked by Duras is the subject of its essential solitude. Close to Maurice Blanchot Duras developed an idea of the human subject as originally lost, originally disorientated, originally beyond any stable identity. The whole work of Duras is directed against the identity phantasm that is the cardinal phantasm of occidental philosophy. Her work opens up the human subject to the order of the inhuman that is its proper inconsistency, its proper incommensurability. Writing (in the sense Duras gave this word by differentiating it from literature) and philosophy share this affirmation of incommensurability in the very heart of the human subject and its so called reality. In at least 2 books Duras wrote on this void or inconsistency in the centre of the human universe:

1. In *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (from 1964), where this inconsistency is associated to what she calls there the *mot-trou*, the *whole word*. There is a whole or a void in each word we normally ignore because of the supposed consistency -- the meaning -- of words and language as such. Writing means to get in touch with that emptiness in the heart of language, with those abyss above all sense architectures, like f.e. literature, are built or constructed.

2. In *Emily L.* (a novel published in 1987) you can find another expression close to the *mot-trou*. Emily is writing a poem that touches on the abyssal structure of reality itself. The poem is about the "différence interne au coeur des significations"/ "the internal difference in the heart of meanings". This difference is simply nothingness itself. The nothingness that I call the incommensurable that indicates the limit of the social-symbolic paradigm, the limit of the universe of facts, the limit of the ontological world order.

Marcus Steinweg
Rosemarie Trockel
Duras

Merve Verlag Berlin

GRAMSCI THEATER WRITTEN BY MARCUS STEINWEG

SCENE 11: STARDUST

(The location of the scenes is to be announced by an actor holding up a sign, in this case "GYM.")

Enter: Müller, Nietzsche, Deleuze, Derrida, Gramsci, Duras, First Marxist

MÜLLER

What counts is the intensity.
The intensity of thought.
The precision of your interests.
The rigor that you invest in your passions.
You need a will for that.
You need to envision something.
Call it an idea if that makes you happy.
I don't need a system.

NIETZSCHE

The will to a system is a lack of integrity.

DELEUZE

There is no bankruptcy of systems.
Nothing is more vital than an open system that incorporates its exterior.

NIETZSCHE

The exterior is the reality that we don't want to think.
The world in which we live.
We have nothing but this world.

MÜLLER

Heraclitus says the universe is a scrap heap.
That is the most likely theory.
The world is rubble.
We live here.

GRAMSCI

You have to think at the height of the scrap heap, otherwise it is not thought.
Your lungs breathe dust.
Your head is buried in the rubble.

MÜLLER

Dirt is life.
I hate the smell of soap.

DERRIDA

I call it originary contamination.

DURAS

Intensify your detachment from reality by intensifying your relationship to it.

GRAMSCI

You're dreaming.
You have to be able to afford detachment!
Where am I supposed to get the time and strength for it?
I'm buried in the midst of things.
In the midst of the pile.
In the midst of this world.
There is no alternative.
There is nothing but the pile.
A bucket of stardust.

MÜLLER

Man is dust in the stardust.
A dead star is a dead landscape.

GRAMSCI

But a star.

MÜLLER

Yes.

FIRST MARXIST

You and your fucking theories!

MATERIAL 11: ORIGINARY SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

The question is: *What part of the subject has survived its death—its critical disempowerment, decentering, and digitalization?* It's obviously not a matter of restituting the fiction of a self-grounded, self-transparent and analog subject. Instead of the restitution of a conventional concept of the subject, the category of subject is updated with a view to the conditions of its impossibility (or permanent deconstruction) on one hand and, on the other, its confrontation with the subject-affirming propositions of contemporary philosophy. It is understood that the subject, far from being a *self-transparent ego cogito*, has never been anything but the index of an indeterminacy that belongs to it by definition. It is the subject of originary self-transcendence on the level of the subject-exterior, which you might call the real, the incommensurable, or chaos.

ANTONIO GRAMSCI WITH COMRADES IN 1916 ON THE ROOFTOP OF THE WORKER UNION IN TURIN

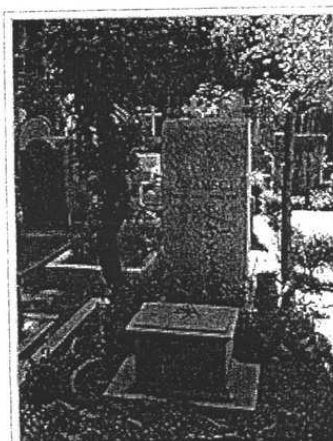
*Gramsci (debout, le dernier à droite) en 1916, avec quelques camarades,
sur le toit de la Chambre du Travail de Turin
(debout, à partir de la gauche :
Mario Guarnieri, Giuseppe Bianchi, Olga Pastore;
assis : Ottavio Pastore, entre les deux secrétaires : Vittoria et Rina).*



Imprisonment and death

On November 9, 1926 the Fascist government enacted a new wave of emergency laws, taking as a pretext an alleged attempt on Mussolini's life several days earlier. The fascist police arrested Gramsci, despite his parliamentary immunity, and brought him to Roman prison *Regina Coeli*.

At his trial, Gramsci's prosecutor stated, "For twenty years we must stop this brain from functioning".^[14] He received an immediate sentence of 5 years in confinement on the island of Ustica and the following year he received a sentence of 20 years of prison in Turi, near Bari. In prison his health deteriorated. In 1932, a project for exchanging political prisoners (including Gramsci) between Italy and the Soviet Union failed. In 1934 he gained conditional freedom on health grounds, after visiting hospitals in Civitavecchia, Formia and Rome. He died in 1937, at the "Quisisana" Hospital in Rome at the age of 46. His ashes are buried in the Protestant Cemetery there.



Grave of Gramsci at the Protestant Cemetery of Rome.

In an interview archbishop Luigi de Magistris, former head of the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See stated that during Gramsci's final illness, he "returned to the faith of his infancy" and "died taking the sacraments."^[15] However, Italian State documents on his death show that no religious official was sent for or received by Gramsci.^[citation needed] Other witness accounts of his death also do not mention any conversion to Catholicism or recantation by Gramsci of his atheism.^[16]

Thought

Gramsci was one of the most important Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century, and a particularly key thinker in the development of Western Marxism. He wrote more than 30 notebooks and 3000 pages of history and analysis during his imprisonment. These writings, known as the *Prison Notebooks*, contain Gramsci's tracing of Italian history and nationalism, as well as some ideas in Marxist theory, critical theory and educational theory associated with his name, such as:

- Cultural hegemony as a means of maintaining and legitimising the capitalist state.
- The need for popular workers' education to encourage development of intellectuals from the working class.
- An analysis of the modern capitalist state that distinguishes between political society, which dominates directly and coercively, and civil society, where leadership is constituted by means of consent.
- "Absolute historicism".
- A critique of economic determinism that opposes fatalistic interpretations of Marxism.
- A critique of philosophical materialism.

Hegemony

For more details on this topic, see Cultural hegemony.

Hegemony was a term previously used by Marxists such as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin to denote the political leadership of the working-class in a democratic revolution.^[17] Gramsci greatly expanded this concept, developing an acute analysis of how the ruling capitalist class – the bourgeoisie – establishes and maintains its control.^[18]

Orthodox Marxism had predicted that socialist revolution was inevitable in capitalist societies. By the early 20th century, no such revolution had occurred in the most advanced nations. Capitalism, it seemed, was even more entrenched than ever. Capitalism, Gramsci suggested, maintained control not just through violence and political and economic coercion, but also through ideology. The bourgeoisie developed a hegemonic culture, which propagated its own values and norms so that they became the 'common sense' values of all. People in the working-class (and other classes) identified their own good with the good of the bourgeoisie, and helped to maintain the *status quo* rather than revolting.

To counter the notion that bourgeois values represented 'natural' or 'normal' values for society, the working class needed to develop a culture of its own. Lenin held that culture was 'ancillary' to political objectives but for Gramsci it was fundamental to the attainment of power that *cultural hegemony* be achieved first. In Gramsci's view, a class cannot dominate in modern conditions by merely advancing its own narrow economic interests. Neither can it dominate purely through force and coercion. Rather, it must exert intellectual and moral leadership, and make alliances and compromises with a variety of forces. Gramsci calls this union of social forces a 'historic bloc', taking a term from Georges Sorel. This bloc forms the basis of consent to a certain social order, which produces and reproduces the hegemony of the dominant class through a nexus of institutions, social relations and ideas. In this manner, Gramsci developed a theory that emphasized the importance of the political and ideological superstructure in both maintaining and fracturing relations of the economic base.

Gramsci stated that bourgeois cultural values were tied to folklore, popular culture and religion, and therefore much of his analysis of hegemonic culture is aimed at these. He was also impressed by the influence Roman Catholicism had and the care the Church had taken to prevent an excessive gap developing between the religion of the learned and that of the less educated. Gramsci saw Marxism as a marriage of the purely intellectual critique of religion found in Renaissance humanism and the elements of the Reformation that had appealed to the masses. For Gramsci, Marxism could supersede religion only if it met people's spiritual needs, and to do so people would have to think of it as an expression of their own experience.

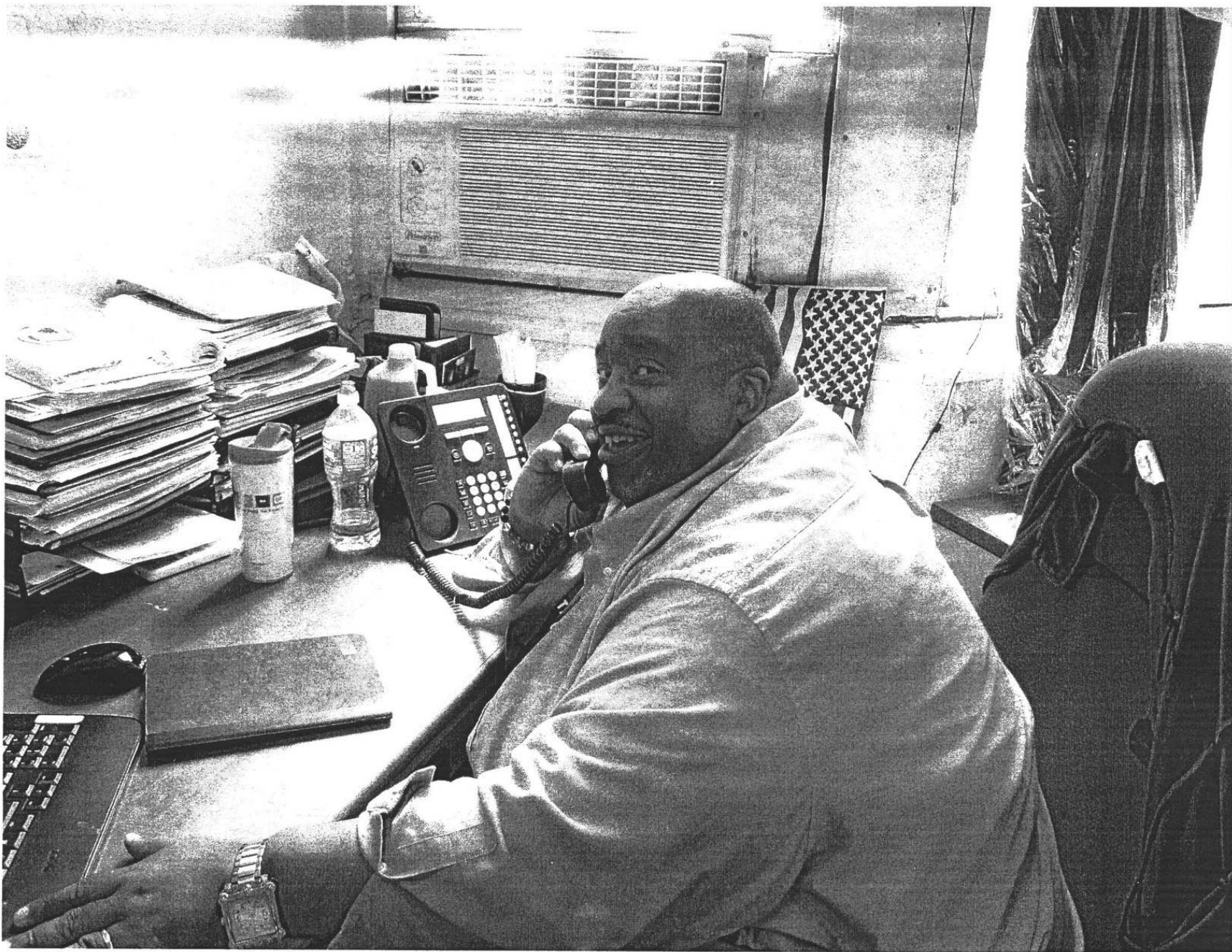
For Gramsci, hegemonic dominance ultimately relied on a "consented" coercion, and in a "crisis of authority" the "masks of consent" slip away, revealing the fist of force.

DID

YOU

KNOW

RESIDENT OF THE DAY



“THE MAN WITH THE MILLION
DOLLAR PLAN”

MR. CLYDE THOMPSON