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DEVIL'S TAIL¹
Resistance, Testimony And Fight.
From Pen to Arms

"Improve yourselves, because we will need
all your intelligence.
Shake, because we will need
all your enthusiasm.
Prepare yourselves, because we will need
all your strength. "
(Antonio Gramsci)

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ABSTRACT

The current importance of the thinking of Antonio Gramsci all over the world is indisputable. The circulation of his thinking generated various uses of his theoretical categories to understand a complex reality. Therefore, here we propose a tour of some of those categories that made him become one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century; this influence was materialized in Latin America in the 1950s, with the appropriation of Gramsci's output by the intellectuals and the leftist political discourse,.

KEY WORDS: Historical Bloc - Hegemony - Intellectuals – Intellectual and Moral Reform – Left – Latin America – Peronism

LA COLA DEL DIABLO
Resistencia, Testimonio Y Lucha.
Desde La Pluma A Las Armas

¹ Title taken from the book by José María Aricó on Gramsci's itinerary in Latin America: "The Devil's Tale in Latin America: Gramsci's itinerary in Latin America". Aricó was an Argentinean intellectual, editor of the Cordovan journal *Past and Present*, former member of PCA.

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“Instrúyanse, porque tendremos necesidad de toda vuestra
inteligencia.
Agítense, porque tendremos necesidad de todo vuestro entusiasmo.
Organícense, porque tendremos necesidad de toda vuestra fuerza.”
(Antonio Gramsci)

RESUMEN

Es indiscutible la actualidad del pensamiento de Antonio Gramsci en el mundo entero. La circulación de su pensamiento generó diversos usos de sus categorías teóricas para la comprensión de una realidad por demás compleja. Por ello, lo que aquí se propone es un recorrido por algunas de esas categorías que lo transformaron en uno de los pensadores más influyentes del Siglo XX; influencia que se materializa en América Latina en los años '50, con la apropiación, por parte de intelectuales y del discurso político de izquierda, de la producción gramsciana.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Bloque Histórico - Hegemonía - Intelectuales – Reforma Intelectual y Moral – Izquierda – América Latina – Peronismo

1. INTRODUCTION

Antonio Gramsci, his name, his ideas, his convictions, his background and the theoretical instruments he made during his imprisonment, to understand and change the reality of his time, become fundamental referents, even to the generations after his physical disappearance, since the dissemination of his writings after his tragic end is unceasing.

Given the string of injustices in a world dominated by capital, this Italian intellectual is a benchmark for the global lefts, but especially for the Latin American, which begin to emerge hungry for justice and struggle. Revolution is what they want, and Gramsci seems to be the way. His theory widespread in our continent, is not just limited to being a cultural asset, it is much more: it is the requirement of a society that in this theory finds, or thinks if finds elements to account for itself, to achieve "self-awareness ". This dissemination involves an extensive travel throughout Latin America and particularly in Argentina, with its "multiform" realities.

2. Gramsci: A short but intense life

Antonio Gramsci (1891 - 1937), has a short life. Being born in 1891 in the Italian island of Sardinia, where he lives and suffers with the misery of peasants and the repression of miners, and he dies in 1937, just six days after leaving, already very ill,

the fascist prison, where he is confined when he was 35, since 1926, to 20 years and four months in prison, of which he served nine.

In 1911, at the age of 20, young Gramsci moved to Turin and, thanks to a scholarship, he entered the University to study linguistics, glottology and literature, approaching journalism, where very early he begins to get involved with the conflicts of the workers of automaker factories and the revolutionary left of the Socialist Party.

Both from the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and then from the Communist Party (PCI), Gramsci is particularly concerned about the autonomous development of the masses, and the works on the formation of workers' councils in the factories, aiming to organize an institution in his country that put an end to the inertia of labor unions, which only fight for wage demands and working conditions, without transcending the political arena.

His idea is that all workers, all employees, all technicians, all farmers and all active members of society, whether they belong or not to a labor union or party, must move from being simple carriers to being leaders of the production process; from being objects of the capitalist organization of production to being subjects to the organization and evolution of the production process (Della Rocca, 2013: 25).

The inaction of his party leads him to criticize it harshly and, in view of an imminent breakdown of the PSI, Gramsci says:

The Socialist Party sees the development of events like a spectator, it never has an opinion to express regarding the revolutionary theses of Marxism and the Communist International, it does not launch slogans that the masses can gather, that draw an overall orientation and unify and concentrate the revolutionary action ... (Fiori, 2009: 376).

While starting his leadership in the PCI, Italy is on the brink of a workers' revolution, and the right begins to reconstitute itself behind fascism, which then imposes a reign of terror.

In this context, the great concern of Gramsci has to do with the cultural field, his educational, literary and journalistic task and his and political propaganda to raise the awareness of the subordinate classes, in pursuit of the revolution:

.. And that thought (the Marxist one) never places raw economic facts as the maximum factor of history, but always man, the society of men, men who come together, understand one another, develop, through these contacts (culture), a social, collective will and understand the economic facts, judging them and adapting them to their will ... (Gramsci, 1918).

Here his analyzes begin to focus on the role of intellectuals - in the broad sense and their interference in politics, the construction of the subject of social change and an ideological and political hegemony in the sphere of civil society (Della Rocca, 2013 : 29).

These ideas, which make him become a political being in all his dimension and help him to capture the true essence of fascism and its development, are a profound contribution to politics to combat the rise of fascism, and together with the imposition of his speech at the Party Congress in Lyon in 1926, form the beginning of his persecution and later detention.

Antonio Gramsci is a tireless revolutionary fighter while he is free and then a lucid thinker in solitude and in the harsh conditions of his confinement: *"We have to prevent this brain from working for 20 years."* Obviously, this fails to materialize, since during his confinement he produces the immortal work that is his own monument, the *Prison Notebooks*, enriching several generations of activists and scholars of Marxism in general.

3. Gramsci, between Marx and Lenin: the concept of hegemony in civil society)

Antonio Gramsci is an Italian intellectual who, influenced by Marxism, develops another original thinking based on the Leninist version, though he never ceases to recognize he is a continuator Lenin. The statement, of which only sketches are found in the works of Marx, of a theory of politics that emphasizes its relatively autonomous sphere of action³, the emphasis on consensual, ideological and cultural aspects that make up the state domination, the weight he gives to national traditions and the idea of nation people, the importance he attaches to the role of intellectuals, are all contributions of Gramsci's thinking whose current influence seems to be summed up in the renewed importance of the concept of hegemony. This notion, to Gramsci, differs from the way in which it was understood in most cases by the Communist Parties. To the Italian theorist, hegemony is not so manifested in organic subordination to the leading force but it requires renewed consensus resulting from an intellectual and moral reform (Jozami, 2013: 11); consensus called "Civil Society" as one of the moments of the superstructure, where the State is the absorption of the political society into the civil society, where the hegemony is exercised, freed from political society. While attempting to define civil society, it is difficult to do so positively (Bobbio, 1989: 58).

What would the civil society be?

For now, you can set two large superstructural "planes", one that can be called of the "civil society", ie, the set of bodies commonly called "private", and one of the

³ Eric Hobsbawm considers Gramsci to be a creator of the political theory of Marxism. See Eric Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World*, Barcelona, Crítica, p 319.

"political society or State", both planes corresponding to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and "direct domination" or command that is manifested in the State and in the "legal" ... government (Gramsci, 2014)

In the words of Norberto Bobbio:

In a first approach, we can say that civil society is the place of emergence and development of the economic, social, ideological, religious conflicts that state institutions have the task to solve, mediating them, preventing them or repressing them. The subjects of these conflicts and, therefore, of civil society, precisely as opposed to the State, are the social classes or wider groups, movements, associations, organizations that represent them or claim to be their representatives... (Bobbio, 1989: 20).

To Gramsci, the Society of consensus is that society destined to emerge from extinction of the State. Conversely, the totalitarian, extreme State emerges when it gradually takes back that space conquered by the bourgeois civil society to fully absorb it.

The crisis of political processes and theorizing about them would find their solution in civil society, where there are sources of legitimacy and new areas of consensus (Bobbio, 1989: 21).

The preparation of the political theory and the possibility to bring it to concrete praxis comes together in him; therefore, he identifies and attempts to develop Marxism as a "philosophy of praxis" with possibilities of critical adaptation to different national realities. An authentic and unique interpreter of his time (Della Rocca, 2013: 21) that states the inexistence of a "reality" fixed by itself, but only in historical relation to the men that modify it. To Gramsci, reality does not exist outside the movement of praxis, which is the process through which men take charge of the social and natural constraints.

The complexity of his object of study leads him to redefine the subject of the revolution according to traditional Marxist conceptions, introducing the concept of alliances of all groups dominated by and subordinated to the capitalist power. Gramsci sees the particular need of a worker - peasant alliance to which he sums the joint with intellectuals, both in their individual and collective aspects through the political party.

Hence the concept of "historical bloc", with the highest level of homogeneity and unitary leadership that is capable of driving the tasks of the revolution in a country. His concept of revolution is based on the maturation of that historic bloc and not in the conquest of power by a revolutionary party, as Lenin affirmed (Della Rocca, 2013: 31).

The historical bloc is formed by attaching, in an increasingly organic way, the direction of a political force, as an intellectual subject, to the subaltern social sectors that it intends to represent. The bloc must address the cultural and moral reform, build hegemony in society for the sake of transformative changes at political, economic and social level in pursuit of a new society (Della Rocca, 2013: 47).

To achieve the same result as Lenin's, it is essential to open again the problem of the relationship with Marxism and modern philosophical culture and find in this area a new approach to the problem of the general theory.

The Leninist political science therefore refers to a revolution in the field of philosophy, which has put Marxism into a diverse and more consistent communication not only with the objective problems but also with the forms of awareness of contemporary times. Through this interpretation of Leninism, Gramsci actually expresses his general conception of Marxism and gives it a particular expressive form.

From Lenin he takes the idea of hegemony (domination + intellectual and moral direction), pointing out that Hegemony makes the synthesis between the political and cultural dimension and determines the conquest, construction and exercise of power. The process of Hegemony requires the social group in question (as the proletariat at the time of Gramsci and Lenin, and the subject - people in modern times) to reach a high degree of homogeneity and obtain hegemony before seizing power, socialism emerging out of on consensus.

For his theoretical development on Hegemony, Gramsci is closely linked to the work of Lenin. In the work of Hugues Portelli: "Hegemony and Historic Bloc" (1977: 70) four important aspects of this relationship are mentioned:

1. The first is the class-based foundation of hegemony in insistence to show the classist character of the political and ideological direction. In Gramsci, the importance of cultural and ideological direction is emphasized, extending it by adding that that, if hegemony is ethical – political, it cannot help being economic too, based on the critical role of the leading group.
2. In a second point, Gramsci and Lenin agree on the intellectual organization of hegemony. Returning to the Leninist analysis and conception of party, Gramsci insists on the role of the educator.
3. A third aspect makes reference to the concept of "social foundation" of hegemony: the need for the class to rely on allied groups: the working class is the peasantry.
4. A fourth point is oriented to the analysis of the role of the Party of Action during the Risorgimento, which resembles that of the bourgeois revolution in Russia made by Lenin: understand if the working class must "play", in the bourgeois revolution, an auxiliary passive role or whether it should participate

in the political leadership and promote the extension of the social foundation of the revolution, including the peasant foundation.

5. Where the concept of hegemony splits up from that of Gramsci is in the preeminence of the cultural and ideological direction, while Lenin insists on its political nature, there being a priority of the political society on the civil society, which Gramsci contrasts by defining the essential area of the fight against the ruling class in civil society: hegemony is the primacy of civil society over political society, for which Lenin's prior analysis was fundamental.

Thus, the way the Hegemony is difficult, considering that the subordinate groups always suffer the initiative of dominant groups and the target thus partly breaks up. Given this, Gramsci proposes, first, to achieve a hegemony based on the constitution of a historic, alternative bloc, which expresses the link between the social and economic plane of existence of classes and social groups and the ethically, legal, ideological and cultural plane, thus arousing a clash between the traditional historical bloc and the new one.

Thus, unlike Gramsci, within the strategies of the world revolutionary left, or warfare of maneuvers (or movements) and the warfare of positions: the warfare of maneuvers is based on a frontal attack and its most important success was the Russian Revolution, whose reproductions ended in defeat, because, according to Gramsci, of a stagnation of the world revolutionary movement, indicating the end of this period and the beginning of a recovery will not have the same characteristics. For him, it was necessary to pass to warfare of positions (or siege). In politics, the siege is reciprocal, and this warfare is conducted by the huge masses as large reserves of moral strength that can withstand the wear and with a necessary and very skillful political leadership in order to prevent defeat (Bignami, 2004: 2).

The essential aspect of the hegemony of the ruling class lies in its intellectual monopoly, ie in the attraction its representatives have among the other layers of intellectuals, submitting the intellectuals of the other social classes as subordinates, creating an ideological or intellectual bloc linking the intellectual layers to the representatives of the ruling class (Portelli, 1977: 71).

4. POLICY AND CULTURE: THE ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS

Gramsci extensively studies the role of intellectuals in society, affirming that all men are intellectuals, as we all have intellectual and rational faculties, but at the same time, he believes that not all men play the role of intellectuals socially. There are the traditional intellectuals, like a class isolated from the social question, and those groups that society itself produces organically

To Gramsci, the task of the intellectual extends in relation to the traditional conception and, for this reason, it should be especially valued socially and politically. Most intellectuals are part of social blocs at each unique and unrepeatable moment in the history of a society. Scarce and socially irrelevant are those who can play the

role of intellectuals totally autonomously, impartially or independent of the ideologies of their time. Gramsci says about the role of intellectuals:

Every social group emerging on the original basis of an essential function in the world of economic production establishes, together to it, organically, one or more intellectual layers bestowing it homogeneity and awareness of its own function, not only in the economic field , but also in the social and political field... (Gramsci, 1967).

And every man participates in a conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct and helps sustain or modify a worldview, to arouse new ways of thinking, and the school is the instrument to develop the intellectuals of various degrees awarded by the complexity of culture and civilization of the State (Gramsci, 2004: 392).

The way of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist of eloquence but of actively getting involved in practical life, as a constructor, organizer, permanent persuader precisely for not being a pure speaker and yet, above the abstract mathematical spirit; of the technique – work passes to technique - science and historical humanistic conception, without which one keeps being a specialist and cannot become a leader (specialist + politician") (Gramsci, 2014: 392).

Organic intellectuals

Those being part of an organization of the ruling class play a totalizing role as they are a justifying part of the form taken by a social structure at a particular historical moment. They are those who tend to be part of the ruling class to which they are linked to a community of interests and a homogeneous and autonomous conception of world, and they do so at the level of both knowledge and dissemination.

Organic intellectuals are carriers at the level of the symbolic field of the hegemonic function exercised by the ruling classes on civil society. They can also be part of the state apparatus and, directly or indirectly, of the political parties that constitute the dominant groups.

5. THE COLLECTIVE SUBJECT AND THE MODERN PRINCE

Gramsci Marxism shares with Marxism that the political party is the "*collective intellectual*" par excellence, but the idea of working on the culture and awareness of society, on the will of the masses, gets him away from Leninism, to whom the forefront of the party inoculates the working class, from outside, the revolutionary awareness that alienation prevents them from acquiring as they live in conditions of exploitation by capital. To Gramsci, there must be a dialectical relationship between the feelings of the masses and the knowledge and capacity of the Party and its

leaders, if a complex society like the one he has in mind is to be transformed (Della Roca, 2013: 38).

The Political Party is the organization able to decisively contribute to transform relations in a society, to form intellectual cadres and to dispute the hegemony to a ruling class and he thinks of it as part of a historical popular bloc – socially transforming the bourgeois order, a collective national will - to ensure the advancement of intellectual and moral reform in order to change the balance of power in society. This party is the working class, representing their class interests (Della Roca, 2013: 43-45).

Gramsci follows the line of the "*Prince*" of Machiavelli (symbolized by an individual vested with power), arguing that the "Modern Prince" - the revolutionary party - is the force allowing the working class to develop organic intellectuals and an alternative hegemony within Civil Society. The complex nature of modern civil society means that the only tactic that can undermine the hegemony of the bourgeoisie and lead to socialism is "*warfare of positions*". The Warfare of Movements (or frontal attack) carried out by the Bolsheviks was a strategy more appropriate for the existing "*primordial*" civil society in Czarist Russia (Gramsci 1979: 66) strategy.

The modern prince cannot be a real person, a concrete individual, it can only be an organism, a complex element of society in which a collective and recognized will partially affirmed in action begins to take shape. The political party is the first cell in which the seeds of collective will tending to become universal and total are summarized. Any formation of national-popular collective will is impossible if the large masses do not erupt simultaneously in the political life and a big part of the Modern Prince must be dedicated to the issue of an intellectual and moral reform, which means creating the ground for further development of the national popular collective will towards achieving a higher and total form of modern civilization.

6. INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL REFORM

Gramsci's thinking reinforces the unceasing quest to achieve recognition of intellectual work as a form of militancy itself:

When the momentum of progress is not closely linked to a vast local economic development that is artificially limited and repressed, but it is instead a reflection of the international development that sends to the periphery its ideological currents born on the basis of productive development of the more advanced countries, then the carrier group of new ideas is not the economic group, but the layer of intellectuals, and the conception of the State that is propagandized changes its appearance: it is conceived as a thing in itself, as a rational absolute. The question can be raised like this: the State being the concrete form of a productive world and the intellectuals being the social element from which the ruling staff is extracted, it is proper to the intellectual not strongly anchored to a powerful economic group to present the State as

an absolute: thus is the same function of intellectuals conceived as absolute and preeminent, its existence and its historical dignity are abstractly rationalized. (Gramsci 1981).

An intellectual and moral reform where historical materialism is the culmination of this movement, a popular aspect of modern historicism that affects the entire society to its deepest roots. To Gramsci, this reform is the realm of the popular collective / national will in the search for a successful and complete form of modern civilization. This action must inevitably detach itself from the orbit of discourse, not just staying as an expression of reasoning (Gramsci, 1931-1932).

Therefore, Gramsci detests culture understood as encyclopedic knowledge and opposes it to culture understood as spiritual creation in a historical process:

Culture is very different (from the encyclopedic one) thing. It is organization, discipline of the inner self, empowerment of one's own personality, achievement of higher awareness through which one comes to understand the historical value one has, one's role in life, one's rights and duties (Gramsci 1974: 285) .

Culture and politics are ultimately the real spaces of dispute and where this intellectual and moral reform and the deep and lasting social change over time that will change the civil and political society forever will materialize.

His vision of social transformation as a process growing from the bottom (intellectual and moral reform) and structuring a frame of institutions to build a new order, proposes a Latin American populism that, from the perspective of Marxism, sets out the relationships between intellectuals and masses, intellectuals and people-nation.

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To the author, the "Modern Prince", the revolutionary party, in developing, upsets the whole system of intellectual and moral relations. And it develops an intellectual and moral reform (popular revolution in some passages of the Prison Notebooks) that conducts at the national level nationally what liberalism failed to make except for the restricted groups of the population (Gramsci, 1932).

For many Argentine intellectuals, Gramsci is the first Marxist who, from politics, seems to speak for them. Somehow he expresses what the intellectuals of that time

wanted to be: "... *politicians capable of retaining the cultural density of the facts of the world ...*" (Arico, 2005: 39).

In Latin America, the crisis of the populist compromise does not generate revolutionary movements able to break these rigid structures, but a string of coups d'état, with the implementation of systematic violence that structurally destroys a historically constituted cultural fabric, which sadly causes a modification in the conditions of intellectual work. But exile, inside and outside, creates an opening to debate based on interregional contact, greater academic discipline and greater political accountability.

Given this, the contribution of Gramsci forms a proposal that brings with it the idea of a renewal of the political culture of the left, which is trying to restore a, let us say, lost capacity of interpreting the real phenomena in society, taking as a starting point experiences, traditions and concrete struggles of a plurality of subjects.

The category of *national - popular* is central to his thinking, since it refers to the issue in the relations between intellectuals and people and its effect upon the issue of building the nation and socialist transformation. This is related to absence of a profound popular revolution able to overcome the distance between elites and people-nation. And indeed there is a gap and absence of a political and social movement, and this gap is linked to the cosmopolitan function of the intellectuals, aloof from the people, from the nation, tied to a tradition of caste that was never broken by a strong political – national – popular movement from the bottom (Arico, 2005: 146).

A social group can and should even be a leader even before winning governmental power [...] later, when exercising power and although holding it strongly in its fist, it becomes dominant but must also remain being a 'leader'. [...] It is clear that there can and should be a hegemonic activity even before the rise to power and not to rely only on the material force that power gives to exercise effective leadership. (Gramsci, 1930-1932: 387; Prison Notebooks - Volume 5).

It is therefore necessary to find the way to the "reunion", on the one hand, of workers, transferring their "loyalty" to a political project that incorporates them and, on the other hand, the left side, achieving a shift from the "*liberal -democratic*" field to the "*national - popular*" field. (Tortti, 2007).

The notion of hegemony mentioned by Aricó and developed by Gramsci points to the construction of that intellectual and cultural leadership by the proletariat in the field of superstructures, even before the time of a structural transformation. The concept entails recognizing the relative autonomy of superstructures, making them a terrain of struggle itself, in which the proletariat must strengthen its role in the management of the social process leading to other sectors of civil society in its battle against the

bourgeoisie. In building a new social hegemony led by the proletariat, the Party plays a central role in building consensus with potential allies. And within the Party, the intellectuals who, beyond their class origin, have decided to join the action in that organization - understood as a "*collective intellectual*" - operate through that mediation organically linked to the proletariat.

In changing the awareness of men there is one of the keys in the relationship between culture and politics, as it is at that level of awareness that the revolution can "*get ahead*" of material structural changes. The subject as a carrier and arbiter of their own meanings and practices and as an actor of historical change.

In Argentina, the category of the "popular" and "*Salvationist*" sector of "*social regeneration*" is thus built at the national level (Terán, 1991: 58), from which the intellectuals will appropriate and give it the necessary legitimacy for the popular space inside the literate discourse. Thus, these intellectuals play a key role in the organization and direction of the masses. And in that sense, the creation of an organic intelligentsia also is closely related to the formation of a party, in which the relationship between intellectuals and masses allow the development and strengthening of social, political and economic awareness, and in which the intellectuals get involved with the social group represented by participating in party life.

The training of qualified political intellectuals with transforming awareness is a matter which endows culture with a functional and militant role.

In this fabric of allies, on that front, the working class plays a central role, having reached awareness of their true goals of liberation, and it is in the development of that awareness and its relationship with actual practice.

Being a revolutionary means to establish the necessary alliances and accumulate the greatest number of forces to bring about the great changes that our society requires. " It is, in short, "what Gramsci called *the historical block* which, in particular circumstances of time and development, means bringing together all the forces interested in a social modification that goes beyond mere appearances.

Culture is then presented as an exercise of national awareness. But such an exercise is not only for a privileged elite carrying the "enlightenment" of the whole society. Because culture as a privilege writes and degrades as much as gold. Intellectuals should not be, in this sense, individuals unrelated to society but providers of an inescapable social service. "*The national-popular character of intelligence is unquestionably the first condition of any revolutionary class.*" And it is "national-popular" and not simply "national" because, as Gramsci explained, the latter implies a purely subjective feeling detached from reality and objective institutions, which is identified with the scholars who intend to remain isolated to keep a lonely prestige of little use. (Agosti, 1951).

In a true revolution, culture comes at the same time as a tool for social transformation and as a bankrupt renewed cultural product with the cultural context that spawned it.

This dialectic is what makes culture a paramount field in the revolutionary struggle.

7. THE DEVIL'S TAIL IN LATIN AMERICA

Gramsci's interference in the theoretical and political output of the Latin American left is not loud, but gradual and even distrustful.

On the issue of spreading the work of Antonio Gramsci in Latin America, we may speak of two periods, the first beginning in the 1950s to the early 1970s and the second since the mid-1970s onwards.

In the first stage, the main editing centers of Gramsci's work in Latin America are Argentina (Editorial Lautaro first linked with the Communist Party of Argentina and, from 1963 on, with the journal *Past and Present*), and Brazil, with the publishing house "Brazilian civilization".

In turn, in Argentina, his reading has two stages: in the period between 1950 and 1963, Gramsci appears linked and limited to the sectors of PCA who are active in the cultural work (culturalist matrix of the national-popular). At that time, Gramsci is read only as a cultural theorist.

Then, already outside the structure of PCA, in the hands of those expelled from its ranks, Gramsci is spread linked to other political currents of the time, to criticism of politics and the theory of PCA that are successors of the Leninist tradition (workers-based matrix).

Before the first detailed moment in the early 1940s, when Gramsci is unknown in Latin America, mainly in Argentina, but near the 1950s, an intellectual of the Communist ranks, a brilliant Argentine intellectual, Hector P. Agosti, set out to publish the Prison Notebooks by the Italian intellectual in order to disseminate his thinking; which will be the foundation from which the members that will begin with *Past and Present* and, in turn, will have profound political, theoretical and cultural implications will start. In this decade, even his dissemination is targeted at small circles.

Many consider that the dissemination of Gramsci is something ephemeral, just as a cultural asset, but it is necessary to understand that it emphasizes what a society needs to see itself, to achieve self-awareness and, especially, to remove the past from the present. In the words of Aricó:

... To resonate in the present an echo of what has been removed, it is necessary to turn against everything that the past has set in the memory of the ruling classes ... then the task can only be to remove the past from the tradition in which the dominant ideologies have imprisoned it... (Arico, 2005: 29).

Reading the Italian communist thinker allows the Latin American culture to adopt various analytical categories of speech; cultural appropriation that goes beyond the academia to engage policy and its languages. A change of logic is thus introduced into the thinking of social transformation in Latin America: from the logic of attacking the power they pass to the logic of building new powers, *the logic of building hegemony*.

So, they try to abandon the old logic of the Leninist theory of the revolution that, to the traditional concepts of historical materialism, adds a number of elements taken mainly from the Russian Revolution, which specify the practical and political problems of the revolution.

Gramsci provides much more than reading and translations. He provides generally applicable methods enriched by a creative contribution in the field of political methodology of culture. But this reading and these methods must start with what the country is, not with what it is ideologically wanted to be.

What captivates the intellectuals of Gramsci's work is mainly its national nature. There is a close identification between the reality of our country and Italy, and the development of concepts that feel like one's own, such as "*organic intellectuals*," "*historical bloc*" and "*hegemony*". A thinker like Gramsci can help subdue criticism of a tradition that seems inadequate to take over and to meet the demands of such a complex reality as Argentina after Peronism.

8. PERONISM, INTELLECTUALS AND PEOPLE

The issue of the historic divorce between the cultural elites and the people takes considerable space in the debates about the Argentinean intelligentsia in the twentieth century. Debates that underwent various stages framed in the political and cultural swings of the country and that undoubtedly found a hinging moment in the 1960s and 1970s.

The intellectual output intended to account for the national reality is highly sensitive to political developments, such as the Peronist phenomenon, which operated on a critical band; from the stay of Juan Domingo Perón in the government to his being overthrown, which generates a process of rereading.

The Peronist phenomenon acts on a critical band and on a complex movement stretching from the opposition while Perón was governing to a process of fierce

rereading from the time he was overthrown on. This movement seeks to create an intellectual space between the liberal field and the Peronist orthodoxy. This schism defines the birth of the *Critical Generation* that will be consummated after the fall of Peronism (Tehran, 1991).

This *critical generation* which Teran talks about will be consummated only after the fall of Peronism, this event, as well as the coup d'état of 1966, being the one which gives meaning to different practices, including the theoretical one, also including a structural reconstruction of the crossing point between cultural modernization, political commitment and revolutionary ideas. (Tehran, 1991).

In the history of Marxism, the people - working class relationship is an axis of the interpretation of the historical development of revolutions, as well as of the strategic issues about the class alliance to be established and the role of the working class in that alliance. A working class that is the center that guarantees the overcoming of economic backwardness, the transformation of the political order and the identification with the interests of the nation. "Popular movements" which are regarded as the "form" par excellence of Argentine historical movements and which, during Peronism, is formed into a true fact of masses that would be gravitating in Argentina's policy and years later would place all their "revolutionary faith" on the events that took place in Cuba.

In our country, the choice between working autonomy or subordination to political party-based logics is present at the origin of the first workers' associations and goes through much stress through the first half of the twentieth century until it is resolved in the massive identification of workers with a political movement, Peronism, which is not planned as a class movement (Gordillo, 2009).

A working class in Argentina which is constituted as a class at the same time as it becomes a member of the Peronist "national movement". The rise of the class is identified with the same time in which it loses its distinct identity and is remains subordinated to a "national and popular movement" for a long historical period; a movement that makes great strides in its "domestication". The point is that, whenever a question or a hegemonic crisis of Peronist labor union is generated, expectations grow or the issue of workers' autonomy is reinstalled.

That was in the context of the late 1960s, when the cycle of open protest that started with the "Cordobazo" May 29-30, 1969, allowed the emergence of grassroots movements that questioned bureaucracies. Among them is the action of "classist" SITRAC and Sitram which aroused much interest in the group linked to the publication of the journal "Past and Present" and goes back to the attention paid by "Pancho" Aricó to the previous conflict and strike in Fiat in July 1965, which, on that occasion, also starred the plant labor unions whose leaders were then displaced by the company. (Gordillo, 2009: 20).

The period of the labor movement prior to the emergence of Peronism, which comprises the experiences of anarchism, socialism and communism, while leaving valuable lessons for the strategy of the proletariat and lasting about the same as or more than the "Peronist cycle" (if you count from the first workers' societies to the meat strikes of 1943), it appears as a period in which the labor movement acts as an independent factor (without losing sight of the increasing development of sectors prone to subordination to the state expressed in the "*labor-union-related*" trend), but without hegemony, that is, without a leading role with respect to the other oppressed sectors, especially the urban middle classes (with the exception of the left wings that emerged in the University Reform). This is relatively logical because the prevailing currents do not have a "*hegemonic*" strategy. The PS is purely parliamentary, anarchists are very combative but their conception is closer to "*populism*". The PC, despite its major role in organizing the new working class during the 1930s, does it with an ultra-left general orientation that later turns into the Popular Front with the "democratic bourgeoisie" and the "*unionists*" are integrated into Peronism.

After 1955, once Perón was overthrown and the unions intervened, most of the parties of the traditional left join or encourage deperonization of workers, finding the ground to form clusters within the labor unions. In this context, there is "*workers' autonomy*" as sustained by Agustín Tosco in the labor union of Light and Power in Córdoba, when proclaiming labor union independence from any political party and state and defending the labor union as the genuine scope for class struggle (Gordillo, 2009).

The strongest prospect of Tosco is to strengthen the workers' movement from unity and not from the unification of differences. A unity in action despite ideological differences and from the formation of strong though decentralized labor unions able to demonstrate their autonomy before the centralizing leaderships.

It is evident that the long-awaited "*deperonization*" of the working class will not take place; on the contrary, it confirms and reaffirms its political identity in the midst of a revolutionary and combative climate and understands that the links with its Peronist leaders are stronger than they thought. Thus, a "*new left*" seeks the way to the matter of Peronism, but not to integrate it but, instead, to revolutionize it. (Tortti, 2007).

An example of this is what happens in Córdoba, a city with a large industrial belt that contains an emerging combative classist unionism. The concept of "classism" refers to the labor-union-related and political practice of those sections of the working class who manage to build, from a historical process of struggle and confrontation, a social identity, a structure of feeling and a collective awareness of their irreducible antagonism with the exploiting, dominant, hegemonic and leading classes (Kohan, 2011).

The metal-mechanical industry that begins to develop in Cordoba radically transforms the city into an industrial metropolis in less than two decades, generating a series of transformations in the economic and social field: growth and consolidation of a core of highly skilled workers is added to the importance of the industrial sector. This factor favors the further development of the Cordovan labor unionism:

... The main supporters of the Cordovan labor movement of the sixties and seventies were three labor unions: Light and Strength (LyF) which grouped workers from EPEC, SMATA that cored mechanics (including those from the IKA-Renault plants) and the UOM that represented metalworkers... (Malecki, 2009: 34).

From 1955 on, a new type of industrial worker emerges, who would develop combative practices and a high degree of autonomy when faced with the national unionist leaderships, which allows strengthening of a rebellious culture and resistance, which is the real protagonist in the events of May 1969 and early 1970s, which goes into a state of continuous mobilization and expresses a deep crisis affecting all the Cordoba movement, crisis of workers institutions and mobilization of the workers of large monopolistic companies They rely more than ever on the strength of their mobilization.

Always that the working class lives, it thinks of itself and acts as a class, it does so as an autonomous historical subject, developing classist practices. A particular experience of this classism is the one carried out by the labor unions of SITRAC (FIAT - Concord) and SITRAM (FIAT - Materfer) in the early 1970s, although the actual pregnancy begins a decade earlier).

The mains points of the essential features of classism are the adoption of the Marxist conception of society and a claiming strategy to combat the fragmentation of class, claims related to working conditions and tending to the establishment of workers' power within the factory, with the politicization of the struggle and the development of awareness of their own role in the economic, social and political fields, together with an independent labor union policy of the State and the political parties, they take part in the work market and recognize the need to exercise labor union democracy as the core of classism, although the existence of contradictions between the top and the grassroots is assumed (Schmucler, Gordillo, Malecki, 2009).

The abandonment of the struggle by the bourgeois intellectuals requires the revolutionary exaltation of the intelligence of the proletariat, *"of those who want to put thought and action in the work of their days"* The bourgeoisie can no longer respond to class conflicts. They are *"employees"* of the ruling class. Therefore, it is necessary to take culture to the masses, denouncing the cosmopolitan nature of literature, a literature with an intellectual and moral content that is an expression of *"people-nation"*. A literature not linked to what is popular can never be considered

national. It is then that discursive action begins from the public space, idealizing the human models closely linked to political practice.

This emerging group of leftist intellectuals is a heterogeneous movement, where there is a shared language and a political style that gradually gives unit to groups from Peronism, from the left, from nationalism and from the Catholic sectors linked to the liberation theology. Together they are "*people and revolution*" that repudiate military authoritarianism and confirm a distrust of rules and institutions of liberal democracy. (Tortti, 2007).

So there is disappointment with the liberal environment that existed in those years with great critical inability to face reality.

Let us recall that the first Peronist governments put the "*high culture*" in the hands of those who were willing to be stingy with the circulation of knowledge and cultural assets. Therefore, it is very valuable that these intellectuals of the Critical Generation have been able to articulate an enterprise within the enlightened and elite culture that lasts over time even after the fall of Perón. The search for legitimacy by this group that clings to an alternative thinking occurs via numerous journals and publications and through the strict exercise of theoretical-political practice, as in the cases of the journals *Contour*, *Past and Present* and *The Armored Rose*, just to give some examples.

For these groups of intellectuals, it is the moment of truth. The reality brought by Peronism can no longer be avoided and then generates "*self-blaming promoted both because of feeling to be the beneficiaries of a privilege of socially unjust intellectuals and because that placement has finally separated them more from the people and blinded them to perceive the real novelty of Peronism*" (Terán, 1991: 26).

For a rereading of Peronism, in the case of *Past and Present*, at the beginning it welcomes sartrism positively and then deploys in a reexamination ascribed to Gramsci.

They present themselves as committed, but mostly as organic, only with the Argentinean masses and spokespersons of the people - nation against outdated liberalism, a reflection of the deformation of democracy:

In the case of "Contour" and "Engaged Intellectual", it is related to the influence of Sartre and the reflection on the consequences of the emergence and downfall of Peronism, on the idea of organic intelligentsia directly associated with a reception Gramsci, by the PyP members who were expelled from the PC, since the PC took Gramsci only from the viewpoint of an "anti-fascism fighter", "*moral example*", etc., in the best case. (Dal Maso, 2013: 1).

The problem of "*overcoming*" Peronism is raised as the main task. All intellectuals think that a new chapter begins in the history of Argentinean left where you can

project and work in an encounter with a world of workers to whom the Peronist experience have moved away from their destination as a class. It is a historic opportunity that must be seized in favor of a policy of transformation in pursuit of a theoretical and political renovation of the left.

In the years preceding and following the downfall of Peronism, a wind of controversy shakes a generation that asks anxiously about the reasons of their uprooting and frustration, but also about the causes of the Argentinean backwardness. Only a transformation in their traditions, in their duties and in their feelings can enable these intellectuals to work together and produce stable organizational forms in a national entity.

Then an *"us"* begins to be defined, which includes the new intellectuals who would make up a model that would later become hegemonic.

Thus the mastermind designs a true reflection space within which the new left learns to recognize itself and think of itself, pushed by a historical, institutional, social situation and proper discoursing.

It is generated as follows:

... A conducive climate of ideas and incitement to the "socialization" and "nationalization" of concerns that should lead to delving into the Peronist phenomenon as that stubborn fact of life that defied understanding of the national situation. (Tehran, 1991: 12).

These intellectuals are then in a crossroads:

... On the one hand, by an ideological demand for commitment to the sociopolitical reality and, on the other hand, by the confrontation with a working class massively attached to that ideology and Peronist practices the effects of which had grievously been felt on their own intellectual projects during the first two presidencies of John Domingo Perón. (Tehran, 1991: 12).

The weld between intellectuals and working class needs no communist mediation. It needs precisely a process of ignorance / recognition of the work of intellectuals and understanding of historical reality; and the previous fracture is always a typical symptom in a process of cultural denationalization, accentuated by a kind of "ideological transvestism" erected by imperialism, with which then they break and with the national bourgeoisie, which imminently lose its role of change and is now unable to do so, and it is replaced by other social actors, the working class then becoming the leader of the nation and the national movement. At the end of the day, anti-intellectualism and the intellectuals - working class schism is what ultimately does not allow many sectors to understand the real phenomenon of Peronism:

Anti-intellectualism comes from traditional Peronism, then it says that, in order to know the people, in order to become a political leader, you do not need knowledge and the value of thinking, but you have to go to the popular masses so that the popular masses deliver and explain their wisdom of life, of existence ... (Paulinelli, 2013: 3).

Thus, a reality falls apart and new generations come to light, demystifying the optimistic view of that reality, a fictional reality where men finally put into practice their transforming will, their faith in the revolution.

The coup d'état of 1966 and its attack on the progressive sectors and aspects of the Argentinean culture were the ones that built a new problematic field about the relationship among intellectuals, politics and violence, on which the theming of the newly armed way then would reach a level of relevance that was unexpected until that moment. (Tehran, 1991: 71).

9. CONCLUSION

Past and Present

A precarious democratic system, authoritarianism, social inequality, conformism to criticism and ideological struggle are the problems that Gramsci faces in his time and place and to which there are similarities in several countries of Latin America.

Unlike other Marxist thinkers, Gramsci understands that the defeat of the European proletariat reveals a cultural and political deficit that must be covered by a reformulation of the traditional analytical tools allowing that a new science of politics can be measured productively with the reality a world that has changed radically.

Therefore, it is possible to think that the message of Gramsci is still relevant because it refers to the unresolved problem of meaning, which modernity has placed so distressingly to the men of the present time.

The devil's tail in Latin America

Many of the categories of Gramsci are taken by the lefts to analyze the Latin American reality, specifically the Argentinean. In the latter case, Gramsci's interference in the theoretical and political output of our left is gradual: from 1950-1963, a reading linked and limited to the Argentinean Communist Party and then analyzed and used outside the PCA (the culturalist matrix of the national and the popular), in the hands of those expelled from its ranks: the Argentinean

Gramscians⁴, through the publications of the journal *Past and Present* (Workers-based matrix, Córdoba, 1963-1965 and 1973).

A thorough analysis of the uses of Gramsci in our continent and particularly in our country is part of a proposal that tries to explore the relationship between theoretical construction and political practice, from one of the most relevant publications that came out since the 1960s: *Past and Present*. This exploration is a kick to understand the link between working class and intellectuals, and the link with the revolutionary lefts and the armed struggle, to finally try a possible understanding between these Gramscian categories and Kirchner's government, its intellectuals, the concept of State, civil society and hegemony again under discussion.

My adherence to the spirit of Gramsci and the consequent and sharp discursive renewal to which he invites us give the necessary conviction to continue on this way, thinking that the young intellectuals of whom Gramsci spoke, together with the young people of *Past and Present*, can be replicated, hopefully, in the youth of today.

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⁴ Title of the book by Raúl Burgos that makes a full summary of the evolution of that group and, in general, of the influence of Gramsci in Argentina. See Raúl Burgos. *The Argentinean Gramscians*, Buenos Aires, 21st century, 2004

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