

science abstracts the element "will", and does not take account of the end to which a particular will is applied. The attribute "utopian" does not apply to political will in general, but to specific wills which are incapable of relating means to end, and hence are not even wills, but idle whims, dreams, longings, etc.

Guicciardini's scepticism (not pessimism of the intelligence, which can be combined with an optimism of the will in active and realistic politicians)<sup>75</sup> has other sources: 1. diplomatic habit: i.e. the habit of a subordinate, subaltern activity (executive-bureaucratic) which has to accept a will (the political will of the diplomat's government or sovereign) which is extraneous to the diplomat's individual convictions. (He may, it is true, feel it as his own, in so far as it is in line with his own convictions: but he may also not do so. The fact that diplomacy has of necessity become a specialised profession has led to this consequence, of allowing the diplomat to become independent of the policies of changing governments, etc.). The result is scepticism and, in scientific discussion, extra-scientific prejudices; 2. the actual convictions of Guicciardini, who, in the general context of Italian politics, was a conservative, and hence theorises his own opinions, his own political position, etc.

Guicciardini's writings are more of a period piece than they are political science, and that is De Sanctis' judgement. Just as Paolo Treves' work too is more of a period piece than it is history of political science. [1930-32]

#### ANALYSIS OF SITUATIONS. RELATIONS OF FORCE

The study of how "situations" should be analysed, in other words how to establish the various levels of the relations of force, offers an opportunity for an elementary exposition of the science and art of politics—understood as a body of practical rules for research and of detailed observations useful for awakening an interest in effective reality and for stimulating more rigorous and more vigorous

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<sup>75</sup> See PP. p. 6: "On daydreams and fantasies. They show lack of character and passivity. One imagines that something has happened to upset the mechanism of necessity. One's own initiative has become free. Everything is easy. One can do whatever one wants, and one wants a whole series of things which at present one lacks. It is basically the present turned on its head which is projected into the future. Everything repressed is unleashed. On the contrary, it is necessary to direct one's attention violently towards the present as it is, if one wishes to transform it. Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will." [1932] Romain Rolland's maxim "Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will" was made by Gramsci into something of a programmatic slogan as early as 1919, in the pages of *Ordine Nuovo*.

political insights. This should be accompanied by the explanation of what is meant in politics by strategy and tactics, by strategic "plan", by propaganda and agitation, by command structure<sup>76</sup> or science of political organisation and administration.

The elements of empirical observation which are habitually included higgledy-piggledy in works of political science (G. Mosca's *Elementi di scienza politica* may be taken as typical) ought, in so far as they are not abstract and illusory, to be inserted into the context of the relations of force, on one level or another. These levels range from the relations between international forces (one would insert here the notes written on what a great power is, on the combinations of States in hegemonic systems, and hence on the concept of independence and sovereignty as far as small and medium powers are concerned)<sup>77</sup> to the objective relations within society—in other words, the degree of development of productive forces; to relations of political force and those between parties (hegemonic systems within the State); and to immediate (or potentially military) political relations.

Do international relations precede or follow (logically) fundamental social relations? There can be no doubt that they follow. Any organic innovation in the social structure, through its technical-military expressions, modifies organically absolute and relative relations in the international field too. Even the geographical position of a national State does not precede but follows (logically) structural changes, although it also reacts back upon them to a certain extent (to the extent precisely to which superstructures react upon the structure, politics on economics, etc.). However, international relations react both passively and actively on political relations (of hegemony among the parties). The more the immediate economic life of a nation is subordinated to international relations, the more a particular party will come to represent this situation and to exploit it, with the aim of preventing rival parties gaining the upper hand (recall Nitti's famous speech on the *technical* impossibility of revolution in Italy). From this series of facts one may conclude that often the so-called "foreigner's party"<sup>78</sup> is not really

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<sup>76</sup> *Organica* has no exact equivalent in English—it means the organisation of armed forces, their division into different arms and corps, their system of ranks, etc.

<sup>77</sup> See NM, pp. 141 and 167 ff.

<sup>78</sup> Term used especially of communist parties by the nationalist Right, and, in an earlier period, of parties influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution. The latter—Mazzini's Action Party is a good example—did in fact often have links with liberals in other countries.

the one which is commonly so termed, but precisely the most nationalistic party—which, in reality, represents not so much the vital forces of its own country, as that country's subordination and economic enslavement to the hegemonic nations or to certain of their number.\* [1933–34: 1st version 1931–32.]

It is the problem of the relations between structure and super-structure which must be accurately posed and resolved if the forces which are active in the history of a particular period are to be correctly analysed, and the relation between them determined. Two principles must orient the discussion: 1. that no society sets itself tasks for whose accomplishment the necessary and sufficient conditions do not either already exist or are not at least beginning to emerge and develop; 2. that no society breaks down and can be replaced until it has first developed all the forms of life which are implicit in its internal relations.\*\* From a reflection on these two principles, one can move on to develop a whole series of further principles of historical methodology. Meanwhile, in studying a structure, it is necessary to distinguish organic movements (relatively permanent) from movements which may be termed “conjunctural” (and which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental).<sup>79</sup> Conjunctural phenomena too depend on organic movements to be sure, but they do not have any very far-reaching historical significance; they give rise to political criticism of a minor, day-to-day character, which has as its subject top political leaders and personalities with direct governmental responsibilities. Organic phenomena

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\* An allusion to this international element which “represses” domestic energies can be found in G. Volpe's articles published in *Corriere della Sera*, on 22 and 23 March 1932.

\*\* “No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions for their existence have matured in the womb of the old society. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.” Marx, Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*.

<sup>79</sup> On PP. pp. 148–49 Gramsci wrote: “The conjuncture can be defined as the set of circumstances which determine the market in a given phase, provided that these are conceived of as being in movement, i.e. as constituting a process of ever-changing combinations, a process which is the economic cycle . . . In Italian the meaning of ‘favourable or unfavourable economic situation (*occasione*)’ remains attached to the word ‘conjuncture’. Difference between ‘situation’ and ‘conjuncture’: the conjuncture is the set of immediate and ephemeral characteristics of the economic situation . . . Study of the conjuncture is thus more closely linked to immediate politics, to ‘tactics’ and agitation, while the ‘situation’ relates to ‘strategy’ and propaganda, etc.”

on the other hand give rise to socio-historical criticism, whose subject is wider social groupings—beyond the public figures and beyond the top leaders. When an historical period comes to be studied, the great importance of this distinction becomes clear. A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts (since no social formation will ever admit that it has been superseded) form the terrain of the “conjunctural”, and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organise. These forces seek to demonstrate that the necessary and sufficient conditions already exist to make possible, and hence imperative, the accomplishment of certain historical tasks (imperative, because any falling short before an historical duty increases the necessary disorder, and prepares more serious catastrophes). (The demonstration in the last analysis only succeeds and is “true” if it becomes a new reality, if the forces of opposition triumph; in the immediate, it is developed in a series of ideological, religious, philosophical, political, and juridical polemics, whose concreteness can be estimated by the extent to which they are convincing, and shift the previously existing disposition of social forces.)

A common error in historico-political analysis consists in an inability to find the correct relation between what is organic and what is conjunctural. This leads to presenting causes as immediately operative which in fact only operate indirectly, or to asserting that the immediate causes are the only effective ones. In the first case there is an excess of “economism”, or doctrinaire pedantry; in the second, an excess of “ideologism”. In the first case there is an overestimation of mechanical causes, in the second an exaggeration of the voluntarist and individual element. The distinction between organic “movements” and facts and “conjunctural” or occasional ones must be applied to all types of situation; not only to those in which a regressive development or an acute crisis takes place, but also to those in which there is a progressive development or one towards prosperity, or in which the productive forces are stagnant. The dialectical nexus between the two categories of movement, and therefore of research, is hard to establish precisely. Moreover, if error is serious in historiography, it becomes still more serious in the art of politics, when it is not the reconstruction of past history

but the construction of present and future history which is at stake.\* One's own baser and more immediate desires and passions are the cause of error, in that they take the place of an objective and impartial analysis—and this happens not as a conscious “means” to stimulate to action, but as self-deception. In this case too the snake bites the snake-charmer—in other words the demagogue is the first victim of his own demagogy.

These methodological criteria will acquire visibly and didactically their full significance if they are applied to the examination of concrete historical facts. This might usefully be done for the events which took place in France from 1789 to 1870. It seems to me that for greater clarity of exposition it is precisely necessary to take in the whole of this period. In fact, it was only in 1870–71, with the attempt of the Commune, that all the germs of 1789 were finally historically exhausted. It was then that the new bourgeois class struggling for power defeated not only the representatives of the old society unwilling to admit that it had been definitively superseded, but also the still newer groups who maintained that the new structure created by the 1789 revolution was itself already outdated; by this victory the bourgeoisie demonstrated its vitality *vis-à-vis* both the old and the very new.

Furthermore, it was in 1870–71 that the body of principles of political strategy and tactics engendered in practice in 1789, and developed ideologically around '48, lost their efficacy. (I am referring to those which can be resumed in the formula of “Permanent Revolution”; it would be interesting to study how much of this formula passed into Mazzini's strategy—for example, in the Milan insurrection of 1853—and whether this happened consciously or not.) One piece of evidence for the correctness of this point of view is the fact that historians are by no means of one mind (and it is impossible that they should be) in fixing the limits of the group

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\* Failure to consider the immediate moment of “relations of force” is linked to residues of the vulgar liberal conception of which syndicalism is a manifestation which thought itself more advanced when in reality it was taking a step backward. In fact the vulgar liberal conception, stressing relations between political forces organised in the various forms of party (newspaper readerships, parliamentary and local elections, the mass organisations of parties and trade unions in the strict sense), was more advanced than syndicalism, which gave primordial importance to the fundamental socio-economic relation and only to that. The vulgar liberal conception took implicit account of this socio-economic relation too (as many signs clearly indicate), but it insisted besides on the relation of political forces which was an expression of the former and in reality contained it. These residues of the vulgar liberal conception can be traced in a whole series of works purporting to be connected with the philosophy of praxis, and have given rise to infantile forms of optimism and folly.

of events which constitutes the French Revolution. For some (Salvemini, for instance) the Revolution was complete at Valmy: France had created its new State and had shown itself capable of organising the politico-military force necessary to assert and to defend its territorial sovereignty. For others the Revolution continues until Thermidor—indeed they speak of various revolutions (10 August<sup>80</sup> is a separate revolution, etc.).\* The interpretation of Thermidor and of the work of Napoleon provokes the sharpest disagreements. Was it revolution or counter-revolution? For others the history of the Revolution continues until 1830, 1848, 1870 and even until the World War of 1914. All these views are partially true. In reality the internal contradictions which develop after 1789 in the structure of French society are resolved to a relative degree only with the Third Republic; and France has now enjoyed sixty years of stable political life only after eighty years of convulsions at ever longer intervals: 1789, 1794, 1799, 1804, 1815, 1830, 1848, 1870. It is precisely the study of these “intervals” of varying frequency which enables one to reconstruct the relations on the one hand between structure and superstructure, and on the other between the development of organic movement and conjunctural movement in the structure. One might say in the meantime that the dialectical mediation between the two methodological principles formulated at the beginning of this note is to be found in the historico-political formula of Permanent Revolution.

The question of so-called relations of force is an aspect of the same problem. One often reads in historical narratives the generic expression: “relation of forces favourable, or unfavourable, to this or that tendency”. Thus, abstractly, this formulation explains nothing, or almost nothing—since it merely repeats twice over the fact which needs to be explained, once as a fact and once as an abstract law and an explanation. The theoretical error consists therefore in making what is a principle of research and interpretation into an “historical cause”.

Meanwhile, in the “relation of forces” various moments or levels must be distinguished, and they are fundamentally the following:

1. A relation of social forces which is closely linked to the structure, objective, independent of human will, and which can be measured with the systems of the exact or physical sciences. The level of development of the material forces of production provides a basis for the emergence of the various social classes, each one of which

<sup>80</sup> On 10 August 1792 the Tuileries Palace was stormed and the Monarchy fell.

\* See *La Révolution française* by A. Mathiez, in the A. Colin series.

represents a function and has a specific position within production itself. This relation is what it is, a refractory reality: nobody can alter the number of firms or their employees, the number of cities or the given urban population, etc. By studying these fundamental data it is possible to discover whether in a particular society there exist the necessary and sufficient conditions for its transformation—in other words, to check the degree of realism and practicability of the various ideologies which have been born on its own terrain, on the terrain of the contradictions which it has engendered during the course of its development.

2. A subsequent moment is the relation of political forces; in other words, an evaluation of the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organisation attained by the various social classes. This moment can in its turn be analysed and differentiated into various levels, corresponding to the various moments of collective political consciousness, as they have manifested themselves in history up till now. The first and most elementary of these is the economic-corporate level: a tradesman feels *obliged* to stand by another tradesman, a manufacturer by another manufacturer, etc., but the tradesman does not yet feel solidarity with the manufacturer; in other words, the members of the professional group are conscious of its unity and homogeneity, and of the need to organise it, but in the case of the wider social group this is not yet so. A second moment is that in which consciousness is reached of the solidarity of interests among all the members of a social class—but still in the purely economic field. Already at this juncture the problem of the State is posed—but only in terms of winning politico-juridical equality with the ruling groups: the right is claimed to participate in legislation and administration, even to reform these—but within the existing fundamental structures. A third moment is that in which one becomes aware that one's own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too. This is the most purely political phase, and marks the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures; it is the phase in which previously germinated ideologies become "party", come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to gain the upper hand, to propagate itself throughout society—bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle

rages not on a corporate but on a "universal" plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups. It is true that the State is seen as the organ of one particular group, destined to create favourable conditions for the latter's maximum expansion. But the development and expansion of the particular group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the "national" energies. In other words, the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and the life of the State is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria (on the juridical plane) between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups—equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point, i.e. stopping short of narrowly corporate economic interest.

In real history these moments imply each other reciprocally—horizontally and vertically, so to speak—i.e. according to socio-economic activity (horizontally) and to country (vertically), combining and diverging in various ways. Each of these combinations may be represented by its own organised economic and political expression. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique and historically concrete combinations. A particular ideology, for instance, born in a highly developed country, is disseminated in less developed countries, impinging on the local interplay of combinations.\* This relation between international forces and national forces is further complicated by the existence within every State of several structurally diverse territorial sectors, with diverse relations of force at all levels (thus the Vendée<sup>81</sup> was allied with the forces of international reaction, and represented them in the heart of French territorial unity; similarly Lyons in the French Revolution represented a particular knot of relations, etc.).

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\* Religion, for example, has always been a source of such national and international ideological-political combinations, and so too have the other international organisations—Freemasonry, Rotarianism, the Jews, career diplomacy. These propose political solutions of diverse historical origin, and assist their victory in particular countries—functioning as international political parties which operate within each nation with the full concentration of the international forces. A religion, freemasonry, Rotary, Jews, etc., can be subsumed into the social category of "intellectuals", whose function, on an international scale, is that of mediating the extremes, of "socialising" the technical discoveries which provide the impetus for all activities of leadership, of devising compromises between, and ways out of, extreme solutions.

<sup>81</sup> See note 47 on p. 79.



3. The third moment is that of the relation of military forces, which from time to time is directly decisive. (Historical development oscillates continually between the first and the third moment, with the mediation of the second.) But this too is not undifferentiated, nor is it susceptible to immediate schematic definition. Here too, two levels can be distinguished: the military level in the strict or technical military sense, and the level which may be termed politico-military. In the course of history these two levels have appeared in a great variety of combinations. A typical example, which can serve as a limiting case, is the relation involved in a State's military oppression of a nation seeking to attain its national independence. The relation is not purely military, but politico-military; indeed this type of oppression would be inexplicable if it were not for the state of social disintegration of the oppressed people, and the passivity of the majority among them; consequently independence cannot be won with purely military forces, it requires both military and politico-military. If the oppressed nation, in fact, before embarking on its struggle for independence, had to wait until the hegemonic State allowed it to organise its own army in the strict and technical sense of the word, it would have to wait quite a while. (It may happen that the claim to have its own army is conceded by the hegemonic nation, but this only means that a great part of the struggle has already been fought and won on the politico-military terrain.) The oppressed nation will therefore initially oppose the dominant military force with a force which is only "politico-military", that is to say a form of political action which has the virtue of provoking repercussions of a military character in the sense: 1. that it has the capacity to destroy the war potential of the dominant nation from within; 2. that it compels the dominant military force to thin out and disperse itself over a large territory, thus nullifying a great part of its war potential. In the Italian Risorgimento the disastrous absence of politico-military leadership may be noted, especially in the Action Party (through congenital incapacity), but also in the Piedmontese Moderate Party, both before and after 1848, not to be sure through incapacity but through "politico-economic Malthusianism"—in other words, because they were unwilling even to hint at the possibility of an agrarian reform, and because they had no desire to see a national constituent assembly convoked, but merely waited for the Piedmont monarchy, free from any conditions or limitations of popular origin, to extend its rule to the whole of Italy—sanctioned only by regional plebiscites.

A further question connected with the foregoing is whether the fundamental historical crises are directly determined by economic crises. The answer is contained implicitly in the foregoing paragraphs, where problems have been considered which are only another way of presenting the one now under consideration. Nevertheless it is still necessary, for didactic reasons, given the particular public which is being aimed at, to examine each of the ways in which a single question may present itself as if it were a new and independent problem. It may be ruled out that immediate economic crises of themselves produce fundamental historical events; they can simply create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life. Moreover, all assertions concerning periods of crisis or of prosperity may give rise to unilateral judgements. In his historical outline of the French Revolution, Mathiez, in opposition to the vulgar traditional history which aprioristically "discovers" a crisis coinciding with every major rupture of social equilibrium, asserts that towards 1789 the economic situation was in an immediate sense rather good, so that it cannot be said that the downfall of the absolute State was due to a crisis of impoverishment. It should be observed that the State was in the throes of a mortal financial crisis and considering which of the privileged social orders would have to bear the sacrifices and burdens necessary for the State and Royal finances to be put back in order. Furthermore, if the economic position of the bourgeoisie was flourishing, the situation of the popular classes was certainly not good either in the towns or, especially, on the land—where they suffered from endemic poverty. In any case, the rupture of the equilibrium of forces did not occur as the result of direct mechanical causes—i.e. the impoverishment of the social group which had an interest in breaking the equilibrium, and which did in fact break it. It occurred in the context of conflicts on a higher plane than the immediate world of the economy; conflicts related to class "prestige" (future economic interests), and to an inflammation of sentiments of independence, autonomy and power. The specific question of economic hardship or well-being as a cause of new historical realities is a partial aspect of the question of the relations of force, at the various levels. Changes can come about either because a situation of well-being is threatened by the narrow self-interest of a rival class, or because hardship has become intolerable and no force is visible in the old society capable of mitigating it and of re-establishing normality by

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

If this process of development from one moment to the next is missing—and it is essentially a process which has as its actors men and their will and capability—the situation is not taken advantage of, and contradictory outcomes are possible: either the old society resists and ensures itself a breathing-space, by physically exterminating the élite of the rival class and terrorising its mass reserves; or a reciprocal destruction of the conflicting forces occurs, and a peace of the graveyard is established, perhaps even under the surveillance of a foreign guard. [1933-34: 1st version 1930-32.]

But the most important observation to be made about any concrete analysis of the relations of force is the following: that such analyses cannot and must not be ends in themselves (unless the intention is merely to write a chapter of past history), but acquire significance only if they serve to justify a particular practical activity, or initiative of will. They reveal the points of least resistance, at which the force of will can be most fruitfully applied; they suggest immediate tactical operations; they indicate how a campaign of political agitation may best be launched, what language will best be understood by the masses, etc. The decisive element in every situation is the permanently organised and long-prepared force which can be put into the field when it is judged that a situation is favourable (and it can be favourable only in so far as such a force exists, and is full of fighting spirit). Therefore the essential task is that of systematically and patiently ensuring that this force is formed, developed, and rendered ever more homogeneous, compact, and self-aware. This is clear from military history, and from the care with which in every period armies have been prepared in advance to be able to make war at any moment. The great Powers have been great precisely because they were at all times prepared to intervene effectively in favourable international conjunctures—which were precisely favourable because there was the concrete possibility of effectively intervening in them. [1933-34: 1st version 1931-32.]

#### ON BUREAUCRACY

1. As political and economic forms develop historically, a new type of functionary is increasingly being produced—what could be