

# Antonio Gramsci

- ⌘ Antonio Gramsci
- ⌘ 1881-1937
- ⌘ Born in Sardinia
- ⌘ Family
  - ⌘ Father, Albanian
    - ⌘ Employee
  - ⌘ Mother, Italian
- ⌘ Education
  - ⌘ University of Turin
    - ⌘ Faculty of Letters



# The Life and Times of Antonio Gramsci



- ⌘ In 1915, despite great promise as an academic scholar, Gramsci became an active member of the PSI (Socialist Italian Party), and began a journalistic career that made him among the most feared critical voices in Italy at that time.
- ⌘ His column in the Turin edition of Avanti!, and his theatre reviews were widely read and influential. He regularly spoke at workers' study-circles on various topics.

# The Life and Times of Antonio Gramsci



- ⌘ In 1917 and 1918, he began to see the need for integration of political and economic action with cultural work, which took form as a proletarian cultural association in Turin.
- ⌘ The outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917 further stirred his revolutionary ardor, and for the remainder of the war and in the years thereafter Gramsci identified himself closely, although not entirely uncritically, with the methods and aims of the Russian revolutionary leadership and with the cause of socialist transformation throughout the advanced capitalist world.

# The Life and Times of Antonio Gramsci



- ⌘ 1919-1921 Gramsci devoted most of his time to the development of the factory council movement, and to militant journalism, which led in January 1921 to his siding with the Communist minority within the PSI.
- ⌘ The years 1921 to 1926, years "of iron and fire" as he called them, were eventful and productive. They were marked in particular by the year and a half he lived in Moscow as an Italian delegate to the Communist International (May 1922- November 1923), his election to the Chamber of Deputies in April 1924, and his assumption of the position of general secretary of the Italian communist Party.

# The Life and Times of Antonio Gramsci



- ⌘ In November 1926, Gramsci was arrested in Rome and, in accordance with a series of "Exceptional Laws" enacted by the fascist-dominated Italian legislature, committed to solitary confinement in prison.
- ⌘ This began a ten-year odyssey, marked by almost constant physical and psychic pain as a result of a prison experience that culminated, on April 1937, in his death.

# Gramsci's Assumptions



- ⌘ His major work is the posthumous **Prison Notebooks**, written between 1926 and 1935.
- ⌘ He also wrote approximately 500 letters from prison.
- ⌘ Gramsci is one of the most celebrated 20th-century interpreters of Marx
- ⌘ He propounds a humanistic Marxism, stressing the need for a transformed self-consciousness - **or battle of ideas**- in society before revolution would occur, and therefore dismissing of orthodox Marxism.

# Marxism (Politics)

- ⌘ The central idea of Marxism is perceiving the social world in terms of categories of class as defined by relationships to economic and productive processes.
- ⌘ Bourgeoisie-Proletariat.
  - ☑ The bourgeoisie is the class of capitalists, who own the means of social production and are the employers of wage labour. In this sense the bourgeoisie does not include the intermediate middle class, whose labour is supervisory and intellectual.
  - ☑ The proletariat or working class is the political force that will destroy capitalism and effect the transition to socialism.

# Marxism (Economics)

- ⌘ The *Labour theory of value* is the view that the value of a commodity reflects the amount of labour involved in its production. It denies any real productive role to capital.
- ⌘ Rejection of the exploitation\* inherent in private control of productive processes.
  - ☒ \*The term exploitation is applied to the unjust economic and social relationships whereby one class can abuse the labour of others.

# ***The Revolution against “Capital”***

- ⌘ Capital is the most important work written by Karl Marx  
\*3 voll. Appeared in 1867, 1885 and 1893.
- ⌘ Gramsci considers the Bolshevik revolution as a revolution against Marx's *Capital*.
- ⌘ 1. Gramsci shows as Marx's vision of historical materialism, that is a framework for historical explanation, is correct.
  - ☑ According to historical materialism, changes in the productive forces of a society lead to social conflict and the specific forms of social organizations that emerge reflect the structure of the means of production.

# ***The Revolution against “Capital”***



- ⌘ 2. The second assumption is about historicism.
  - ☒ Historicism is the idea that history takes a determined, inevitable shape, with movements and aims that are not in accord with that shape
  - ☒ In principle historical materialism has no such implication and Marx himself took care to distance it from any fatalistic interpretation.

# Gramsci's Key Words



⌘ Some of his terminology became household words on the left, the most important of which, and the most complex, is the term "**hegemony**" as he used it in his writings and applied to the twin task of understanding the reasons underlying both the successes and the failures of socialism on a global scale, and of elaborating a feasible program for the realization of a socialist vision within the really existing conditions that prevailed in the world.

# Hegemony



- ⌘ It denotes the concealed domination of all the position of institutional power and influence by members of just one class.
- ⌘ The hegemony of one class could indefinitely postpone revolution.
- ⌘ An important revolutionary activity is therefore to infiltrate and weaken the structures that it occupies.

# Gramsci's Key Words



- ⌘ Also extremely pertinent, both theoretically and practically, were such terms and phrases as **"organic intellectual,"**
- ⌘ **"national-popular,"** and
- ⌘ **"historical bloc"** which, even if not coined by Gramsci, acquired such radically new and original implications in his writing as to constitute effectively new formulations in the realm of political philosophy.

# Democracy vs Capitalism?



## ⌘ Conservatives

☑ Pareto = antidemocratic / pro-market

☑ Ferrero = democratic / pro-market

## ⌘ Progressives

☑ Gramsci = socialist / anti-capitalist

☑ Rosselli = liberal-socialist / pro-market