

*Amislawski*

# RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

FREE WORLD

WCM (General)

• 3 September 1964

## ITALIAN COMMUNISTS REJECT THE LENINIST THEORY OF STATE

Pietro Ingrao, a member of the PCI Secretariat, leader of the Young Guard, developed, in articles published in the "Rinascità" on April 25, May 23, and July 4, 1964, the theory of polycentrism and the Italian road to Socialism, and in particular he demanded that the Communists, on coming to power, should take over the traditional parliamentary system, the multiparty system, and the principle of majority rule. At the same time Ingrao, in an article published on May 23, called upon Party theoreticians to revise Communist doctrine, and above all, Lenin's theses published in the book "The State and the Revolution". In reply to this appeal by Deputy Ingrao, an article appeared in the "Rinascità" of July 25, written by Luciano Gruppi and entitled "The Theses of Lenin and Engels on the State".

The article starts with the assertion that the present experiences of Communists bring up the need of revising Lenin's theories:

"The development and practice of the workers' movement and the resulting theoretical conclusions, have led to the formulation of views which, if they are not to remain unclear or ambiguous, must be openly and loyally confronted with that classic Marxist text (i.e. Lenin's "The State and the Revolution" - ed.com.) on which whole generations of Communists were reared."

What is more, Gruppi stresses that the resolution of the 20th Congress of the Soviet CP did in fact carry out a revision of Lenin's views. In confirmation of this, he cites two texts. The first text is from Lenin's "The State and the Revolution":

"The appointment every few years, through the medium

of Parliament, of those members of the possessing class who are to oppress and torment the working people - that is the true essence of bourgeois Parliaments not only under a monarchy, but also in the most democratic republics."

To this view expressed by Lenin, Gruppi opposes an excerpt from a resolution of the 20th Congress of the Soviet CP:

"In present conditions (in some capitalist countries) the working class may... win a solid majority in Parliament and transform it from an instrument of the democratic bourgeoisie into a true instrument of the people's will. In such a case, this traditional institution of many highly-developed capitalist countries may become an organ of genuine democracy for the working masses." (Emphasis supplied.)

Commenting on these two texts, Gruppi writes that whereas "Lenin condemned the institution of Parliament in general... and in its place created Workers' Councils, the Soviets, the 20th Congress, on the other hand, considers that - in the new conditions - the movement of the working masses may revive the institution of the bourgeois Parliament."

Communism's new attitude to traditional democratic institutions:

Gruppi recalls that for Lenin the "peaceful transition to Socialism" (that is by way of the participation of the masses in democratic and State institutions, and through socio-economic reforms) was only a thing "which could be conceived". On the other hand - writes Gruppi - the 20th Congress considers this role to be the goal of the activities of Communist Parties in highly developed capitalist countries.

But such a formulation of the issue - in the light of the programme declarations of the Seventh PCI Congress and its further policy - is still, in the opinion of the Italian Communist, insufficient.

For the Communists are not concerned with "the crude argument that in altered circumstances" one should apply new tactics in the struggle for power. The Italian Communists wish to define "the new relationship between the revolution and the traditional democratic institutions". Why? This is what we read further in the pages of "Rinascita":

"Altered circumstances have caused not only a change in the tactical means of the class struggle. If only the means

were changed, then the Leninist theory of the State would continue to have a *raison d'être*, and could be topical in the most varied tactical circumstances, and suitable to new situations. Meanwhile, together with a change in the actual conditions, there developed new tactics, which undermined the whole Leninist theory of the State." (Emphasis supplied.)

Lenin's error according to the Italian Communists:

Gruppi, invoking Ingrao's advice, recalls that in studying political theories one should study them in the historical situation in which they were formulated. And Lenin wrote the book "The State and the Revolution" in the summer of 1917, "preparing an armed rising politically and organisationally". Moreover, the State which Lenin knew and which he described... - writes Gruppi - was the Russian State, where, as Gramsci has said, the State machine is everything and the people are nothing."

Lenin created his theory of the State thinking of the revolution which he was preparing and "hence - writes Gruppi - comes... the partly one-sided character of the Leninist analysis of the State, in which Lenin sees only its class character and an instrument of oppression".

Here, the Italian Communist introduces a new element into his criticism of the Leninist theory: in adapting Engels' theory about the State to the needs of the Russian revolution, Lenin committed an error, and namely:

"Although Engels wrote that 'the State is a special instrument of class oppression', Lenin went much further, proclaiming that all State institutions and all its organs exclusively serve the oppression of one class by another. That is why for Lenin not only the army and the police but also the Parliament were an instrument of bourgeois oppression and authority."

To support his views, Gruppi cites the following quotations from Engels:

"The State is a product of society and one of the stages in its development, it is an expression of irreconcilable antagonisms which exist in this society. But these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests, did not devour themselves and they did not devour the whole society in this sterile struggle, and of necessity there arose a new force, above society, having as its purpose the maintenance



of order in the society. This force standing above the society - is the State."

Commenting on these words of Engels, the Italian Communist says that the State, moderating the conflicts between classes and imposing order for the good of society as a whole, employs an apparatus of force and oppression. But - Gruppi continues - "does not Engels, when he speaks of the moderating and normative function of the State, leave the possibility of recognising the factor of legal balance in the State?... Does not the State, according to Engels, even if through the medium of the governing class, perform these historical functions in relation to society which belong to it?..."

Gruppi further charges Lenin that in his theory about the State he does not take into account the following views which Engels expressed in the introduction to "The Class Struggle in France". There Engels, as quoted by Gruppi, wrote:

"The right to vote has been turned (by German workers) from a tool of deceit into a tool of liberation... By taking advantage of general elections the proletariat has quickly developed a new method of struggle... It came to that that the bourgeoisie and governments fear much more the legal activity of workers' parties than illegal activity. They are more afraid of their election victories than of a revolution... We, the so-called 'revolutionaries' or 'conspirators' act much more effectively through legal than illegal methods or revolts." (Emphasis supplied.)

Commenting further Engels' views, Gruppi writes:

"Lenin has left aside this whole stage of Engels' deliberations as it did not fit the revolutionary situation in which Lenin was active and as it did not serve the aims of his revolution."

And so we can say that in the opinion of the Italian Communist Lenin, when forming his theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, deviated from Engels' teachings about the state in order to create the "Russian road to Socialism."

Gruppi - after quoting and confronting the views of Engels with those of Lenin, is in favour of Engels' views, and this because:

"Engels' theses are a stage of Marxist thought which is most suitable to our idea of the Italian road to Socialism

worked out in the resolutions of the Eighth Congress of our Party and at previous Congresses starting with the fifth... Parliament and general elections are not - as in Lenin's conception - identical with the instrument of State pressure but are opposed to it."

The Italian road to Communism:

In his lengthy deliberations Gruppi demonstrates that the theory of Gramsci (the founder of the Italian Communist Party) and the theories of the Italian Communist Party firmly reject Lenin's theory about the State and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Italian Communists reject Lenin's theory about the State because it exclusively applied to the Russian State where "the State apparatus was everything and the people nothing", and they chose the teachings of Engels and Gramsci instead because they apply to the State in which - as Gruppi writes:

"A highly civilized society has numerous institutions such as political parties, trade unions, co-operatives, cultural associations and others which make it possible for the society to influence the State and to transform it." (Emphasis supplied.)

Most of Gruppi's arguments are intended to demonstrate that the Italian State is not something alien and hostile to the working masses, something which must be destroyed just as Lenin destroyed Russian Tsarism. On the contrary - Gruppi demonstrates in his arguments - that the Italian State today is to a large extent an expression of the democratic aspirations of the masses, that it has emerged from the struggle with Fascism, that it has a Republican Constitution which gives the masses the possibility of a legal influence on a reform of the State and of the economic system and on the halting of the activities of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie.

Therefore - Gruppi writes further:

"Today there exist conditions which make it possible to make the transition to Socialism not only through obtaining a majority in elections but also in a constitutional way... without the suspension of democratic legalism, its institution and its method of activities... this provides for the working class, acting within the framework of the wide coalition of Parties, the possibility of guaranteeing freedom for all in accordance with liberal postulates." (Emphasis supplied.)

### Democratic Communism:

The Italian Communists are not only rejecting the theory of coming to power by way of revolution. They are of the opinion that the exercise of power by Communists in a Communist state should not be a dictatorship of the proletariat but a normal democracy of the Western type.

The workers' authority is appearing today in a new form... The coalition, which will be led by the workers, must - for the purpose of preserving unity - employ internal democratic dialectics, thus the multi-party system, the complete independence of mass organizations, de-centralization of the authority and of the autonomy of democratic organizations... And so one will not be able to say - as Lenin once wrote - that the indispensable condition for the dictatorship of the proletariat is the application of ruthless pressure with regard to the class of exploiters and the violation of democracy, equality and freedom with regard to members of this class connected with this.

In the conclusion of his article Gruppi states that Italian history makes the adherence to the dictatorship of the proletariat, as Lenin understood it, unnecessary. Instead of this dictatorship the Italians prefer to make the revolutionary changes with full respect for democratic freedom, never limited and without suspending the Constitution even for a moment.

### Conclusion:

Lucian Gruppi's article, published in "Rinascita" when Togliatti was still alive, introduces several new elements to the Communist theory of State and revolution.

1. Lenin's theory about the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, published in the summer of 1917, refers, above all, to the Russian revolution and represents it as "the Russian road to Socialism".

2. Lenin, when creating his theory of the State and the revolution, deviated - for utilitarian considerations - from Engels' theory about the State, as Engels also recognized the peaceful road to Socialism, and he considered the State as a supra-class factor of social order.

3. In its resolution of the 20th Congress the Soviet Party rejected - at least with regard to highly-developed capitalist countries - Lenin's theory about the dictatorship of the

proletariat and the revolution.

4. The Italian Communists reject Lenin's theory about the State and go back to Engels' theory, and this not only for tactical reasons but also because they are of the opinion that a democratic system suits better a society on a high level of civilization than the dictatorship of the proletariat. (Emphasis supplied.)

This translation and commentary was provided by W. Sznarbachowski of the Polish Broadcast Department.