AN ESSAY ON REVISIONISM
IN
THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

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The following essay explores the evolution of Italian Communist revisionism. In general when we speak of "revisionism" in the Italian Communist Party (PCI) we usually refer to the question of whether the conquest of power is possible and of what strategy the Party puts forward in order to achieve it: the classical questions, in short, which were at the center of the first great revisionist debate in the Second International. Extensive comparisons have therefore been made between Italian "revisionism" and its classical antecedents.

But first a brief review of the PCI's attitude toward the Italian Constitution may be illuminating. At a particularly significant moment in its recent history, the Eighth Congress of December 1956, the PCI approved the "Elements for a Policy Declaration" which regards the Italian Constitution that went into effect in January 1948, as an "important victory on the Italian road to Socialism," and illustrates one fundamental aspect of it in the following manner:

As far as private property is concerned, it is guaranteed by law, 'with the aim of safeguarding its social function and making it accessible to all,' and it is precisely for this reason that the Constitution lays down limits for it and even provides for expropriation, with compensation, for 'reasons of general interest.' It is not, therefore, unreasonable to state that the Republican Constitution . . . sets up some of the conditions which may, when they are put into effect . . . allow some remarkable progress to be made by the nation's society on the road toward its transformation in a Socialist direction.¹

¹ "Elementi di una Dichiarazione Programmatica" (Elements for a Policy Declaration), pp. 27-28.
Now, Article 41 of the Constitution states that "private economic initiative is free." This fundamental statement is ignored in the PCI's "policy declaration." Concerning property, Article 42 of the Constitution lays down: "Private property is recognized and guaranteed by law, which specifies its means of acquisition and enjoyment, and its limits, with the aim of safeguarding its social function and making it accessible to all."

As may be seen, this does not say that private property is guaranteed "with the aim of, etc.," but that it is guaranteed in any case, as a matter of principle. Once this principle has been laid down, its limits are then fixed "with the aim of safeguarding its social function and making it accessible to all" (this last phrase denoting a far from Socialist objective.)

It may seem strange that this essay should begin by pointing out a legal falsification, that is, the PCI's failure to mention Article 41 and its distortion of Article 42, in order to portray the Italian Constitution as a "victory on the Italian road to Socialism." But in fact the PCI's so-called revisionism consists far more of such subtleties of interpretation and verbal ambiguities than of serious formulation of doctrine or clear ideological statements. The PCI's attempts to portray a typically liberal Constitution as the "initial step on the Italian road to Socialism" have been based for years on quasi-legal sleights-of-hand; yet when the Constitution was promulgated, it was described by another important Party Congress, the Sixth, in January 1948, in these terms:

In the first part . . . when there was more democratic enthusiasm, important new principles were laid down . . . although we did not
succeed in establishing guarantees that they would be carried out. . . . In the last part . . . such obstacles had been placed to legislative activity that it would have been almost impossible to carry out profound structural modifications on the basis of the Constitution.  

It should be noted that the "principles" laid down in the Constitution were not Socialist, but simply democratic; and that the PCI emphasized that there were no "guarantees that they would be carried out"; not only this, but the "obstacles to legislative activity" made "structural modifications" "almost impossible" (and these, too, would not be in a Socialist direction, but in a liberal democratic one.)

A written Constitution of this kind, which in 1948 made profound democratic modifications impossible, was being portrayed a few years later, around 1953-54, as a text which, if put into effect, would radically transform the Italian State; and by 1956 it had become, and has remained to the present day, "an important victory on the Italian road to Socialism." The PCI has never explained what magic transformed the stunted liberal Constitution of 1948 into the bold pre-Socialist Constitution of 1956; and here we find another characteristic of the PCI's so-called revisionism, that of juxtaposing statements made at different periods without any explanation (and sometimes even statements of the same period: see the Theses for the X Congress.

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2 La politica dei communitisti dal quinto al sesto congresso (The Policy of the Communists from the Fifth to the Sixth Congress) (Rome, 1948), p. 386.
These characteristics of the PCI's "revisionism"—that is, ambiguity in interpretation and persistence of contradictions—are not, however, accidental; they make up the very essence of a phenomenon which is one of the most significant features of international communism today.

Whereas Marxist revisionism at the beginning of this century (often summarized as Bernsteinism) consisted of an explicit theoretical statement of the need for a re-examination of some of Marx's hypotheses on the basis of social and economic evolution during the preceding decades, Communist revisionism consists of an empirical adaptation to reality, coupled with a claim to be changing none of the validity of the theoretical principles of the movement, which are called Marxism-Leninism. In this respect, Communist revisionism still bears the decisive imprint of Stalinism, which overturned for opportunist political reasons some of Marx's and Lenin's fundamental doctrines at the very moment when it was making references to their thought into a kind of ritual cult, embodying the homage usually reserved for charismatic personalities.

Communist revisionism, therefore, does not date from the Twentieth CPSU Congress in 1956; it goes back more than three decades before, to the time when the formula, "building Socialism in one country," became an expression denoting a radical alteration of all the hypotheses about historical

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3 I have talked about "so-called" revisionism, and used the quotation marks here, to express the same idea; hereafter the term will be used without any adjective and without quotation marks, as the essay will explain the full meaning of the word.
and social development that had guided Marx, Engels, and Lenin. The stages of this revisionist process are marked by the decay of the Third International, the tactics of the Popular Fronts (the Seventh Comintern Congress in August 1935), and the "Great Patriotic War" proclaimed by Stalin, thus uniting the shade of Lenin to those of Nievsky, Suvorov, and Kutusov.

Marxist revisionism at the beginning of the century was imbued with one fundamental hypothesis, right or wrong as it may have been: namely, that the situation of the working class in capitalist society, as far as its standard of living and opportunities for economic and social progress were concerned, was different from, and better than that which Marx had predicted. The strategic and tactical suggestions about Social Democracy drawn up by the revisionists were the result of this assessment of basic principles.

Communist revisionism, however, is not imbued with any fundamental hypotheses, even though its tactics and strategy, as they are put forward, for example, by the PCI, present many analogies with typical revisionist views of the early twentieth century.

But this strategic and tactical viewpoint of the PCI coexists with (and seems to be profoundly contradictory to) a fundamental assessment of capitalist society which claims to be the same as that of Marx and Lenin. The new element in the Communist universe is not an examination of Marxism in the light of the

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present reality of capitalist society, even one designed to reconfirm the truth of the doctrine, but the mere statement that Marx's forecast of the coming of a Socialist society has been a reality for almost half a century, understanding by "Socialist society" the society achieved in the Soviet Union, the Chinese People's Republic, and the so-called "People's Democracies" in Europe and Asia, recently joined by Cuba.5

Considered as theory, therefore, the PCI's revisionism consists of a series of adaptations to particular political situations which the thorough Marxist training and dialectical skill of the party's ruling class tends to confer a certain ideological dignity. This training and skill succeed in making every party document, taken in isolation, more or less acceptable from a logical point of view. Only a collection and comparison of a series of texts from the whole twenty-years span of the party's political activity reveal how the PCI's implicit revisionism is deeply rooted in the party, and how at the same time it is completely lacking in any theoretical or rational foundation, on the basis of the principles which the party claims to profess.

5 It is, of course, well known that within the framework of Marxist thought itself there are some people who on ideological grounds deny the Socialist nature of the Soviet Union and the other countries mentioned. These views are supported in Italy by some traditional currents of opinion, which regard the Soviet Union as embodying a kind of State capitalism (for example, the Social Democrats; and also the "internationalist Communists" led by Bordiga, the first secretary of the PCI in 1921, who publish the fortnightly Il Programma Communista; or regard it as a "decadent workers' State" (for example, the Trotskyists of the "revolutionary Communist groups" who publish the monthly Bandiera Rossa); or regard it as a regime of bureaucratic collectivism (the most interesting writer of this current is Bruno Rizzi, with whom Trotsky had a dispute in 1939, and who has recently published The Lesson of Stalinism [Rome: Opere Nuove, 1962]).
Although, from the ideological point of view, the PCI's revisionism is contradictory, ambiguous and inconsistent, from the point of view of political strategy the party has pursued--despite occasional tactical variations--a consistent strategy for the whole twenty-year period; this strategic and political consistency is clearly revealed by its documents, and the PCI's coexistence with doctrinal ambiguity is expressed succinctly by the following sentence.

"The Communist Party has declared from the beginning that it does not regard the Republican Constitution as an expedient for using the instruments of bourgeois democracy until the time comes for armed insurrection to conquer the State and transform it into a Socialist State, but as a pact of unity freely drawn up by the great majority of the Italian people and set up by them as the basis for the organic development of the nation's life for a whole period of history." (Theses for the Eighth Congress.)

This statement of principles contains some of the fundamental elements of the PCI's revisionism:

1. Renunciation, on principle, of armed insurrection and violence as a means of winning power; this renunciation on principle has been, and still is, a de facto renunciation, given that this type of policy has been excluded from the PCI's strategic plans since 1944; this choice reveals the main basic line of Communist strategy, which is, as has been said, a consistent one.

2. As will be seen, this renunciation changes one of the basic component doctrines of Marxism-Leninism; therefore, the PCI is forced to justify it theoretically. The justification comes about on two levels: in the first place, by allowing for an exception to the general rule, thus depicting violent action not as a choice by the Communists, but as a subordinate
alternative which the actions of the class enemies might force the Communists to use. The document quoted above in fact continues: "Armed insurrection is an act into which the working class and the people may be forced by open violation of legality and recourse to violence on the part of the capitalist ruling classes, in obstinate defense of their privileges and in order to destroy democracy." Defensive violence is therefore permissible, and there is even an attempt to portray the Bolshevik coup d'état of October 1917 in the same way, as an attempt to prevent a coup by Tsarist generals, after a previous period in which Lenin had supposed a possible "peaceful path" for the Russian Revolution. In the second place, renunciation of violence on principle is justified by asserting, as has been seen, that the PCI may remain within the framework of the Constitution because this by itself creates the conditions for a peaceful progress toward Socialism.

Since renunciation on principle of armed insurrection--which had been excluded on the practical level "from the beginning"--was theorized as a general precept in 1956, it will be understood why the pre-Socialist character of the Constitution was enunciated at the same time; it had to justify a particular explicit position. Armed insurrection was renounced, in fact, because the Constitution contained guarantees for the "natural" development of Socialism. How unfounded this argument is has already been shown.

Nevertheless, whenever the PCI's implicit revisionism becomes explicit, its similarity to the revisionism of the early years of this century becomes more obvious. It is enough to refer to an essential point in Lenin's arguments against the Social Democracy of the Second International, which he considered permeated by Bernstein's revisionism:
The doctrine of the class struggle, when applied by Marx to the question of the State and of the Socialist revolution, leads of necessity to the recognition of the political rule of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, i.e. of power shared with none and relying directly upon the armed force of the masses . . . the necessity of systematically imbuing the masses with this--and precisely this--idea of violent revolution lies at the root of all Marx' and Engels' doctrine. The betrayal of Marx' and Engels' doctrine perpetrated by the social-chauvinist and Kautskian tendencies dominant today is expressed with particular emphasis by the oblivion into which the idea of violent revolution is relegated in the propaganda and agitation of both these tendencies. 6

Ignoring "the necessity of systematically educating the masses in the idea of violent revolution" "which relies directly on the armed force of the masses" is, therefore, for Lenin the characteristic feature of the Social-democratic backsliding of which he accuses the "Social-chauvinists" and the "Kautskians." And this is so obviously one of the fundamental features of Leninism that the PCI hesitated a long time before assuming a clear-cut

6 "State and Revolution," in Selected Works, Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1949), pp. 142-144 (Italian edition). It is obvious that expressions of this kind exclude any theorizing by Lenin of the "peaceful road" before the summer of 1917; and it is significant that this theme has become very important in the arguments used by the Chinese Communist Party against the PCI, in which Togliatti has personally been accused of having gone further to the Right than Kautsky himself.
position on the question of an armed insurrection, and especially on the question of renouncing an attempt at armed insurrection when this seemed theoretically possible (1945-1948).

The importance of this point is derived from three factors:

1. "Violent revolution" is an essential characteristic of Leninism.

2. The Italian situation in 1945-1948 had some remarkable analogies to the Russian situation in 1917.

3. The PCI had considerable semimilitary strength at its disposal, deriving from its prominent role in the armed resistance movement against Nazism and Fascism.

In this situation, renunciation of violent action meant the first, decisive step on the path of implicit revisionism; but how was this renunciation justified?

Initially, the official motive was the need to avoid a "Greek perspective," that is, civil war with the possibility of Anglo-American intervention while the anti-German struggle was still on; on the eve of the partisan insurrection of April 25, 1945 Togliatti denounced to the PCI's National Council "the tendency that aims at a progressive accentuation of political and class struggles . . . so as to create disorder and complications . . . this tendency would impose on Italy what I would call a 'Greek perspective,' that is, violent clashes and armed conflict between the organized forces of anti-Fascism and the forces of the police and the army, led by anti-democratic elements."7

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Some years later Togliatti took up this concept again and amplified it in a context that claimed to be historical, still referring to 1945:

In this situation it was not easy to choose the right path. The danger was that we might become deluded by temporary successes and drive ourselves into a path with no way out, leading inevitably to a conflict which would break up not only our necessary collaboration with the allied military authorities, but also our unity with a part of our own population, would compromise the fate of the war, and would eventually lead to catastrophe. The correct line was to work so that collaboration with the allied authorities could be maintained, and so that the broadest, firmest possible democratic anti-Fascist unity could be created in the country, by organizing the masses of the people. . . . The greatest positive result of all this activity was the conquest of the Republican regime. A different policy to the one put forward and pursued by the Communists, a policy, that is, leading to open conflict with the Allied authorities and a profound breach in the democratic front, would have made this victory impossible, as was proved by the very narrow margin of votes in the plebiscite. 8

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8 Idem, in the essay "Appunti e Schema per Una Storia del Partito Communista Italiano" (Notes and Schema for a History of the Italian Communist Party). The essay was reproduced in Togliatti's Momenti della Storia d'Italia (Moments in Italian History) (Riuniti, 1963, pp. 156-157), a book which contains passages of history writing dating from the Stalinist period, and which nevertheless was commended as a praiseworthy historical essay by the judges of Italy's most important literary prize, the Premio Viareggio (the summer of 1963). It was on this occasion that the main financial backer of the prize, the industrialist Arrigo Olivetti, who is a member of a Jewish family, intervened to prevent the prize being conferred on Guido Piovene, who is now a
At the same time, a document designed for a larger readership summed up the same situation in these terms:

"The Party knew that the struggle was not an easy one because Italy, unlike some other countries in Eastern Europe which had been liberated by the popular forces of the anti-Fascist coalition, was controlled by the representatives of the Anglo-American reactionary imperialist forces." 

It is no coincidence that whereas Lenin's views on the "violent revolution" were restated in a coherent theoretical work written at the height of Revolutionary events themselves, the "State and Revolution," the PCI's renunciation as much in fact as in propaganda and agitation of the idea of "violent revolution" was not made in any coherent theoretical conceptual way, contained in one particular work, but by means of individual phrases which have to be laboriously tracked down here and there in the various Communist publications that refer to the moments of greatest tension in the class struggle in Italy. This is, in fact, a further proof of the implicit character of the PCI's revisionism, a revisionism which is a posteriori with regard to specific political choices, which permeates all its attempts to

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Communist sympathizer but who used to be a Fascist and wrote for the periodical *La Difesa della Razza*, the most extreme of all the anti-Semitic journals in Mussolini's regime. This episode aroused much comment in the Italian cultural world.

9 Paolo Robotti and Giovanni Germanetto, *Trent' Anni di Lotte dei Comunisti Italiani* (Thirty Years of Struggle by the Italian Communists) (Rome: Edizioni di Cultura Sociale, 1952), p. 233. Paolo Robotti, who was an exile in the Soviet Union and was then arrested and tortured under Stalin (see his speech at the famous meeting of the PCI Central Committee in November 1961) is still, nevertheless, regarded as being hostile to Khrushchev's "new course."
generalize its judgments, but which is never expressed in a precise, coherent text or series of texts.

At the end of the twenty-year period Togliatti returned to the same theme: at the Tenth Congress (December 1962) he affirmed that renunciation of an armed rising in 1945-1948 was a voluntary choice made after an independent assessment of the situation by the PCI, quite independently of the presence of Anglo-American armies, and he took up this theme once more at a lecture on the history of the PCI, given at one of the leading Italian Universities, the Scuola Normale Superiore at Pisa:

There was complete and utter silence when Togliatti answered the question which agitated the meeting: Why did we go no further? The Partisans' command of units were in our hands; could we therefore have used this force—as some people said—to seize power and achieve our objectives? Togliatti replied that in Italy at that period, occupied by foreign armies, armed struggle would have been a reckless adventure involving much bloodshed. However, this is not the fundamental reason why we did not go any further. The fundamental reason is that the great problems of the nation were not mature in the minds of the great masses of the people. It therefore seemed to us to be indispensable to draw up a program of development for Italian democracy, embodying it in institutions. Hence the Constitution, which is not an expedient, but a pact of unity freely signed by the majority of the Italian people.10

The immaturity of the "great masses of the people" is, therefore, "the fundamental reason" for "not having gone any further" in attempting the seizure

10 L'Unità, March 5, 1964.
of power. Yet in 1946 Togliatti described the level of maturity of the "masses" in Northern Italy in these terms:

It has come about . . . that in the course of the war of liberation the masses who took part in the struggle, and who formed the most militant section of the Italian people, succeeded in setting themselves very advanced objectives which could not, however, become the objectives of the whole people after the Liberation, because of the conditions in which the political struggle was being waged in the rest of Italy and in the rest of Europe. 11

Once again, the ambiguity of the implicitly revisionist language used requires an exegesis that is far from easy. Compared with typically Leninist positions (a comparison which is made difficult by the fact that these texts talk about "popular masses" and not about "working class") the fundamental theoretical position of the PCI may be interpreted thus: in 1945 the "masses who made up the most militant section of the Italian people" (that is, the industrial proletariat of Northern Italy) had succeeded in setting themselves "very advanced objectives," that is, they aimed at "seizing power and achieving our objectives" with the armed force of the "Partisan commando units." But the PCI restricted itself to less advanced objectives (the Republic and the Constitution) because the masses in the "rest of Italy" (that is, the South) were more backward (it may be noted that this distinction, which had been made in 1946-1947, disappeared in 1964 when the concept of immaturity was extended to all the "great masses of the people.")

11 La politica dei commissari dal quinto al sesto Kongresso, pp. 79-80.
The Leninist concept of the working class' avant-garde which, under the
guidance of the Party, draws the more backward masses (workers and peasants)
toward the conquest of power by means of armed insurrection is here literally
stood on its head. The working class avant-garde, inspired by the Party, in
fact restricts itself to less advanced objectives, renounces armed insurrec-
tion, and waits for the process of maturity to run its course among the most
backward classes--and this not through the aggravation of class struggle,
but within the framework of parliamentary institutions.

The Leninist theory according to which it is the aggravation of the
class struggle, leading to violent action for the seizure of power, and not
any process of institutionalizing a "peaceful" struggle in a representative
democracy, that fulfills the process whereby the working class avant-garde
organized by the Party puts itself at the head of the backward masses, was
put into practice in 1917, when Lenin aimed at seizing power the moment he
was guaranteed the support of the decisive elements in the working class and
the poor peasantry. Lenin certainly never put forward the immaturity of the
immense illiterate peasant masses as an argument for limiting the objectives
of the struggle to merely setting up a democratic Republic (although this was
the position of the Mensheviks). And nobody can seriously maintain, on the
basis of any criteria Leninism might adopt to measure the maturity of the
masses, that the masses of the Italian people in 1945-1946 were more backward
than the Russian masses in 1917. This is so obvious that, as has been seen,
this thesis has been fully developed by the PCI only after a period of twenty
years from the events themselves, because it could not have been maintained
during the actual situation of 1945-1946.
Thus the PCI goes from contingent reasons (the need to avoid clashes with the army and the police while the war against the Germans was still being fought; and the presence in Italy of Anglo-American troops, "unlike several countries of Eastern Europe") to reasons of a more general nature, such as the backwardness of a section of the population (peasants, especially in the South), and finally ends up with the general thesis of the "immaturity of the great masses of the people," which makes it "indispensable" to limit the PCI's perspective to that of a Constitution of the liberal type.

The intermediate stage outlined by the PCI in the first ten years after the war was, therefore, that of promoting the evolution of the backward South in order to bring it up to the level of the Center and the North and achieve a political homogeneity under Communist leadership in the country, which would then enable more advanced objectives to be set. Reference to the Leninist theoretical model was continued, by speaking of the democratic bourgeois revolution in the same way that the Bolsheviks had spoken of the events of 1905 and February 1917, this latter being destined to flow very rapidly into the "Socialist Revolution" of October. Thus the Fifth Congress at the end of 1945, in discussing the problem of the struggle for the Constituent Assembly, the problem of great structural reforms and the problem of defending national unity, discussed problems whose solution might lead to the completion of the democratic bourgeois revolution in Italy, and the first steps toward more advanced forms of democracy. At the Congress Palmiro Togliatti declared: "There is taking place in Italy the democratic revolution that has never been brought to a proper conclusion in our country,
which began in the nineteenth century and has made further strides forward, but has never succeeded in triumphing!"\(^12\)

In reality, Communist penetration in the South (which is without doubt one of the main characteristics of Italian evolution during the last twenty years, especially on the electoral level) took place when the objective conditions of the country were very different from those existing in 1945-1948. In the meantime the fundamental choice of the earlier period had been put into a new context, on the one hand by extending the earlier "immaturity" to the whole "mass of the people," and on the other by regarding the objective of a Constitutional Charter containing the premises for the first steps on the road to Socialism as already achieved.

The great importance, both theoretical and political, of the decisive choice made by the PCI in 1945-1948 when it renounced the use of force in the seizure of power, is therefore evident. In fact, we can say that:

1. The motives put forward were an implicit revision of Lenin's thought; but even more important is the fact that the consequences of this policy allowed the rebuilding of Italian society on largely traditional foundations, thus creating social and economic conditions which were to have an increasing influence on the very structure of the PCI from the point of view of its social composition, the attitude of its militants, and the role of its ruling class.

2. These very conditions, and the PCI's assessment of them, also implied in their turn a growing separation from the Leninist analysis, and an

\(^12\) Trent'Anni di Lotte, p. 233.
acceptance—still implicit but constantly increasing—of theoretical assessments similar to those of the Social Democratic "revisionists."

The fundamental components of Italian Communist revisionism were therefore created in the final phase of World War II and immediately afterward; and on this revisionism is based renunciation of the fundamental principle of the use of violence for the seizure of power and for the setting up of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was the fundamental reassessment made by Lenin and the Bolsheviks to the revolutionary interpretation of Marxism, when they were faced with what they considered the reformist distortions of the Second International, permeated with revisionism.

Moreover, even as early as the last decade of the nineteenth century, the process of gradualist evolution of Social Democracy had begun as a theoretical development of the same type.

In 1891 Social Democracy took up a new program known as the Erfurt Program, modifying the famous Gotha program of 1875 which had been the subject of Marx's well known criticism. One of the most acute Italian scholars of that period, Saverio Merlino, who played an important part in the revisionist arguments at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, took the opportunity to make a series of critical judgments that deserves to be reproduced. It is worth recalling that an article by Bernstein entitled "Blauquism and Socialism," written for the Neue Zeit but which that journal refused to print, appeared in the April and May 1899 issues of the review founded by Merlino, Rivista Critica del Socialismo. Merlino was an anti-authoritarian Socialist, a critic of the Marxist conception
as a whole, and it was partly for that reason that Bernstein refused to con-
tinue his contributions to the review. But the clear-sightedness with 
which Merlino saw the origins of the evolution of German Social Democracy 
which were later to give rise to revisionism makes him perfectly suited to 
our argument.

Examining the Erfurt program and criticizing the delay with which the 
German Social Democrat leaders had published Marx's criticisms of the previous 
Gotha program, Merlino wrote in 1891:

The word invented by the German Social Democrats, Volks-
Staat (People's State) is nonsense; is absolutely meaningless. 
It does not indicate what the nature or structure of such a 
State will be, whether it will be centralized or decentralized, 
and in the latter case to what extent; ... finally it tells 
us nothing about the intentions of those who use this word 
with its "dark color."

Marx remarked on this quite correctly in 1875; yet nevertheless the German 
Socialists have continued to use this word, and to portray it as the non 
plus ultra of 'scientific' radicalism. This is another reason why Marx's 
criticism could not be published. The German Socialists have now found 
another subterfuge on this issue; they have declared that there is no need

13 The episode is described in Concezione Critica del Socialismo 
Libertario (Critical Ideas on Free Socialism) (Florence: ed. la Nuova 
Italia, 1957), p. 273ff. This book is an anthology of Merlino's writings, 
and the author appears from it to have been one of the most significant 
figures in the debate on Socialism at the turn of the century.
to concern themselves with the future because it is impossible to tell exactly how things will turn out. They have discovered a similar subterfuge on this issue; they have declared that there is no need to concern themselves with the future because it is impossible to tell exactly how things will turn out. They have discovered a similar subterfuge with regard to the 'revolutionary dictatorship,' and they refuse to declare themselves either for or against it nowadays, because they say that everything depends on the wisdom or folly of the bourgeoisie's behavior when faced with the proletariat's demands. Obviously these maneuvers reveal a higher degree of ability than of strong conviction or sincerity. 14

Here Merlino has grasped the beginning of an implicit revisionism in the attitude of German Social Democracy, a starting point similar to that of the PCI. Unlike the PCI's revisionism, however, German implicit revisionism was to turn into explicit revisionism a few years later.

We can see the analogies between the two situations especially on the ideological level, the essential point being renunciation of the twin concepts of revolutionary (armed) action and of the dictatorship of the proletariat. These twin concepts (the second being the immediate consequence of the first) cease to be the historical perspective of the party, or a description of the characteristic features that will necessarily distinguish the phase of transition from capitalism to Socialism, and become a mere possibility which may or may not be carried out—this depending not on the

14 Ibid., p. 56-57. The reference is to an article published by Merlino in the April and May 1891 issues of the review La Société Nouvelle.
will of the proletariat, but on the attitude of the bourgeoisie. There is an obvious analogy between the "wisdom or folly of the bourgeoisie's behavior" (in Merlino's apposite phrase) and the PCI's statement, already quoted, according to which "armed insurrection is an act into which the working class and the people may be forced by open violation of legality and recourse to violence on the part of the capitalist ruling classes."

Armed action, then, becomes a subordinate path, a secondary hypothesis, compared with the fundamental strategic perspective of the working class movement, that is, the legal seizure of power within the framework of the legal State institutions of capitalist society. The theoretical point of reference for this perspective can be traced back to the last important work of Engels, his preface to Marx's work The Class Struggles in France from 1848 to 1850. This preface was written in 1895 and it is necessary to quote it fully:

The German workers had . . . provided their comrades in every country with a new weapon, a very sharp one, by showing them how universal suffrage could be used . . . the successes obtained by the exercise of universal suffrage revealed to the proletariat a new method of struggle, and this method quickly developed further. It was found that the institutions of the State, in which the rule of the bourgeoisie is organized, offer the working class still greater opportunities to fight these very institutions. The workers took part in elections to local Diets, to municipal councils and industrial tribunals; they competed with the bourgeoisie for every post in which a sufficient number of workers had a vote. And so it happened that the bourgeoisie and the government came to be much more afraid
of the legal action of the workers' party than of its illegal activities, more afraid of the results of elections than of rebellions. For here, too, the conditions of the struggle had undergone an essential change. Rebellion in the old style, street fighting with barricades, which decided the issue everywhere until 1848, had become to a considerable extent obsolete. . . . Since that time there have been many more changes, and all of them in favor of the military. . . . Does the reader now understand why the ruling classes actually want to get us out to where the guns fire and the sabres flash? . . . The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of the complete transformation of the social organization, it is essential to have the masses' active participation, it is essential that the masses should themselves have grasped what is at stake and what they are fighting for. This is what the history of the last fifty years has taught us. But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long persistent work is required, and it is just this work that we are now pursuing with a success that drives our opponents to despair. Even in the Latin countries it is beginning to be realized that the old tactics must be revised. Everywhere the German example of using the suffrage, of winning all posts that are within our grasp, has been imitated . . . even in France it has come to be realized that slow propaganda work and parliamentary activity are the immediate tasks of the party . . . in Belgium last year the workers won the right to vote and were victorious in a quarter of the constituencies. In Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, yes even in Rumania and Bulgaria, the Socialists are represented in parliament . . . of course, our foreign comrades do not thereby in the least renounce their right to revolution. The right to revolution is,
after all, the only really "historical right." . . . But whatever may happen in other countries, the German Social Democrats have a special position and consequently, at least at present, a special task. The two million voters that they attract to the ballot box, together with the young men and women who support them as nonvoters, form the most numerous and most compact mass, the decisive shock force of the international proletarian army. This mass already supplies over a quarter of the total votes cast; and as the recent by-elections show . . . it is continually increasing. Its growth proceeds as spontaneously, as steadily, and as irresistibly, and at the same time as tranquilly, as a natural process. All government intervention has proved powerless against it. We can count even today on two and a quarter million voters. If we continue in this way, by the end of the century we shall have conquered the majority of the middle strata of society, the petty bourgeoisie and even the small landowners in the countryside, and we will have grown into the decisive power in the country, before which all other powers will have to bow whether they like it or not. To keep this growth increasing steadily without interruption, until it overwhels the present regime by itself . . . this is our main task.

And there is only one means by which the steady rise of the Socialist fighting forces in Germany could be temporarily halted, or even thrown back for some time: a large-scale conflict with the army, a blood letting like the one in Paris in 1871. In the long run even that would also be overcome. To shoot a party which numbers millions of adherents out of existence is too much even for all the magazine rifles of Europe and America together. But the normal evolution would be impeded, the shock force would perhaps not be available at the critical moment, the decisive combat
would be delayed, protracted, and attended by heavier sacrifices. 

This passage is so clear that comment is superfluous, and there is no doubt that it supports the interpretation of those who trace the implicit revisionism that began to permeate German (and later European) Social Democracy even before it became explicit, back to these views expressed by Marx's closest and most faithful colleague. Even though Engels reaffirms the "right to revolution," the passage as a whole certainly can not be regarded as "propaganda and agitation for the idea of violent revolution," to repeat Lenin's expression quoted above.

The perspective of a "tranquil process like a natural process" is based, however, on the possibility of the working class winning "preponderant power" within the framework of the bourgeois State by means of a continual expansion of its electoral influence. This is also an expression of growing maturity and awareness among the masses, to achieve which "a long period of hard work is necessary." The bourgeoisie can resist and react against this process only with the use of violence, by calling in the army, thus causing "a blood letting like in Paris in 1871."

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15 Engels' text is quoted from the edition published by Critica Sociale in 1896, p. 13-20. Critica Sociale, founded in 1891 by a group led by Filippo Turati, was the first Socialist review in Italy, established a year before the Socialist Party itself. It was the mouthpiece of the gradualist wing of Marxism, which ruled the Socialist Party in its early years at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, when the party was decisively influenced by the views expressed in this passage by Engels.
Hence, action within the framework of legality is proposed, considering as a premise for Socialism the setting up of a "People's State" (the German Social Democrats at the end of the nineteenth century)\textsuperscript{16} or the implementation of the Italian Constitution (the PCI today); in both cases there is no talk of "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the transition period between capitalism and Socialism, just as the related concept of the necessity of violent action, or of armed insurrection, is also abandoned as a principle.

This institutional analogy between the old type of German Social Democracy and the PCI is coupled with a historical analogy expressed in a legal document: the end of anti-Socialist legislation in Imperial Germany, and the promulgation of the Republican Constitution in postwar Italy. Here is Engels' assessment of the first of these:

Thanks to the intelligent use which the German workers made of the universal suffrage introduced in 1866, the astonishing growth of the Party was made plain to everybody by indisputable statistics: 1871, 102,000; 1874, 352,000; 1877, 493,000 Social Democratic votes. Then came recognition of this progress by higher authority, in the shape of the anti-Socialist law; the Party was temporarily broken up, and the number of votes dropped to 312,000 in 1881. But that was quickly overcome, and then

\textsuperscript{16} It is significant, in showing the recurrence of the same concepts, expressions and arguments in Marxist revisionism either of the implicit or explicit kind, that the phrase "People's State," as opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat, was resuscitated by Khrushchev at the Twenty-second CPSU Congress; this aroused bitter criticism from the Chinese Communist Party.
rapid expansion really began—under the pressure of the Exceptional Law, without a Press, without a legal organization, and without the right of association and assembly: 1884, 550,000; 1887, 763,000; 1890, 1,427,000 votes. Thereupon the hand of the State was paralyzed. The anti-Socialist law disappeared; Socialist votes rose to 1,787,000, over a quarter of all the votes cast. The government and the ruling class had exhausted all their expedients, uselessly, purposelessly, and unsuccessfully. The tangible proofs of their impotence, which the authorities, from night watchman to Imperial Chancellor, had had to accept—and that from the despised workers!—these proofs were counted in millions. The State has come to the end of its tether, whereas the workers have hardly begun theirs.\(^\text{17}\)

There is described here a historical process divided into three periods: first, Socialist expansion; second, special legislation by the government, which proves useless; third, resumption of Socialist expansion under the protection of bourgeois laws.

Let us now compare this passage with a similar one, taken from the afore-mentioned "program" of the PCI at the Eighth Congress:

The Italian Communist Party arose in 1921 at a time of grave international and national crisis, at a time of very great crisis for the workers' movement in our country . . . the first task that had to be faced and resolved'[by the PCI] was that of making the working class regain its independence and political autonomy in opposition to the ruling

\[^{17}\text{Engels' preface to The Class Struggles in France from 1848 to 1850, op. cit., p. 13.}\]
classes gathered round the Fascists, and to make it take the initiative in the reconquest of democratic liberties. . . . The Fascist dictatorship provides proof that the capitalist regime, now that it has reached the era of great monopolies and imperialism, contains within itself the germs of violent destruction of political liberties. . . . Liberation from Fascism and from foreign occupation was the work of a great national popular movement. In the course of a great revolutionary patriotic movement, the working class became conscious of its national role, formed a more concrete kind of Socialist awareness, carried forward the process of its own internal unification, and gathered round itself a very broad alignment of workers, intellectuals, and members of the middle class. Hence at the fall of Fascism there was a generally felt demand, not for a restoration of a parliamentary democratic regime of the old type, but for a new society and a new State; . . . as the expression of this vast movement of renovation, the Republican Constitution . . . is an important victory on the Italian path to Socialism.

Here, too, a historical process divided into three periods is described: first, Socialist expansion; second, destruction of political liberties by Fascism; third, resumption of Socialist expansion under the protection of the bourgeois laws. In historical situations that obviously contain many elements of difference (which are reflected in partial differences of judgment) the historical and logical schema of Engels and that of the rulers of the PCI is analogous, and may be summarized in the conclusion that the (bourgeois) State has "come to the end of its tether, whereas the workers have hardly begun theirs." There is a legal and institutional framework, the culmination of a historical process, within which the Socialist movement
can make peaceful progress, and the use of violence is henceforth merely a weapon in reserve, which may be needed to face up to a last desperate attempt by the bourgeoisie to oppose the inevitable hegemony of the working class.

Engels' analysis—the premise for the German Social Democrats' open revisionism, the further developments of which will be analyzed later—was modified by Lenin with this preemptory judgment:

Constitutional legality was maintained in Germany for almost half a century (1871-1914), for a surprisingly long period, and to a surprising extent; during this time the Social Democrats were much more successful than in other countries in making full use of their legal status and organizing a much larger section of the workers into a political party than in any other country in the world. What is this section, therefore? . . . . A million members of the Social Democratic party out of fifteen million wage earning workers. 18

After disparaging in this way the results of the activity that Engels made the basis of his whole perspective, namely, the process of growing maturity in the masses as a result of the work of the Social Democrats, Lenin went on to express this drastic judgment in direct argument against Kautsky:

The more highly developed democracy becomes, the more chances there are of 'pogroms' and civil war arising out of any deep political conflict that threatens the bourgeoisie. . . . Are we to suppose that the learned Kautsky has never heard the fact that as democracy becomes more highly developed,

the more do bourgeois parliaments fall under the control of
the Stock Exchange and the bankers? 19

There is no need to produce other quotations to show that Engels in
1895 and Lenin in 1917 gave very different assessments of bourgeois democracy
and the role that the working class and the Socialist movement can play
within it. Lenin, beginning his analysis at the same point Engels had
started from (the introduction of universal suffrage by Bismarck so as to
obtain a certain degree of popular consensus for the process of founding
the German Empire) carried it through to 1914, depicting the whole period as
one of "constitutional legality" and regarding the period of the exceptional
anti-Socialist laws as an unimportant parenthesis. He maintained that the
fate of German Social Democracy in that period confirmed his general assess-
ment, according to which the capitalist bourgeoisie exercised closer control
over parliament and the institutions of the State, as democracy (whether known
as "bourgeois" or "representative" democracy) became more widespread.

To understand the root cause of this difference in judgment, we must
go back to considering the nature of German Social Democracy in 1914 as com-
pared to 1895. In fact, it had not used "the institutions of the State, in
which the rule of the bourgeoisie is organized, . . . to fight these very
institutions," as Engels has put it; on the contrary, it had increasingly
come to feel that it had a share in these institutions. The State and capi-
talist society had not halted the expansion of Social Democracy with the one

19 "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky," in Selected
means that Engels thought they might be able to use ("large-scale conflict with the army"), but by bringing the Social Democrats into the system of institutions to such an extent that their representatives themselves voted war credits for the army on August 4, 1914.

Analysis of how it was possible for the workers' and Socialist movement to be integrated into capitalist society at the turn of the century leads to the conclusion that the phenomenon was not only political (a relationship between the working class and the institutions of the State) but also social; that is, it concerns the evolution of the proletariat itself within the framework of society, both as it happened in reality and as it had been predicted by Marx. At this point the leading theorist of revisionism, Bernstein, surmised that some of Marx's hypotheses ought to be "revised," that is, corrected. In the statement of this proposition, and in the critical attitude thus adopted toward the theories of the founder of "scientific Socialism," lies the essence of the revisionism of the PCI—a revisionism which does not admit this proposition and has not adopted this kind of attitude.

In a letter sent to the Stuttgart Congress of the German Social Democrats, in 1898, Bernstein wrote:

I have been opposed to spreading the idea that the collapse of bourgeois society was imminent, that Social Democrats should base their tactics on the idea of this great imminent catastrophe and subordinate their policies to this concept. I still hold to this belief. The partisans of the catastrophic theory invoke the 'Communist Manifesto' in support of their thesis, but they are wrong to do so in every way. The hypothesis about the evolution of modern society expounded in the 'Communist Manifesto'
was correct as far as the general tendencies of this evolution were concerned. But it was mistaken concerning detailed judgments, and especially concerning its estimate of the time necessary for this evolution. This error was clearly admitted by Engels, the co-author of the 'Manifesto,' in his Preface to the Class Struggles in France. It is obvious that since economic evolution has required a longer time than was initially thought, it also had take on forms and lead to situations that were not foreseen, and could not have been foreseen, at the time when the 'Manifesto' was drawn up. The worsening of the economic situation, according to the forecasts of the 'Manifesto,' has just not happened. It is not only useless but idiotic to hide this fact. The number of property owners has not diminished, but increased. The enormous growth of social wealth has not been accompanied by a decline in the number of capitalist magnates, but on the contrary, by an increase in the number of capitalists of every type. The middle classes are changing their characteristics, but are not disappearing from the social scene.20

These words contain all the "revisionist" views put forward by Bernstein, and may be summarized in the following two propositions:

1. Evolution of society is taking place at a slower rate than predicted by the "Manifesto" and by Marxist hypotheses in general.

2. In the course of this "long period" social stratification cannot be reduced to the division between capitalists (whose number is declining) and proletarians (whose number is increasing).

It is this twin aspect of the phenomenon—in itself undeniable, even if the statistics on which Bernstein based his theories are open to discussion—which revisionism made the basis of its political strategy. And it is this same twin aspect that allows us to understand how the workers' and Socialist movement came to be integrated into society, instead of taking up a purely antagonistic attitude to it (which Bernstein only partly understood).

The link between these assessments, the process of growing maturity in the proletariat and the methods by which power is to be seized and exercised (dictatorship of the proletariat and revolutionary violence), which we have mentioned above, can be grasped by analyzing the following judgments made by Bernstein, in which it may also be noted how he continues to regard Marx's chief colleague as a supporter of the classical Marxist position on the dictatorship of the proletariat despite his views on Engels' Preface quoted above:

It is well known how Marx and Engels for a long time considered recourse to revolutionary violence as inevitable almost everywhere, and how a certain number of faithful adherents to Marxist doctrine still do. Many, too, regard it as the quickest method. A big contribution to this notion is made by the idea that the working class is the most numerous class and at the same time the most energetic one, since it is without property. Once in possession of power, it will not stop until it has changed the foundations of the existing system by setting up institutions that will make it impossible to go back to the
old ways. It has already been shown that Marx and Engels, when they were formulating their theory on the dictatorship of the proletariat, took as their typical example the period of the Terror in the French Revolution. In Anti-Dühring, Engels call Saint-Simon's definition of the Terror as the dictatorship of the propertyless crowd---a definition made in 1802---a stroke of genius. This assessment is to some extent exaggerated, but whatever may be thought of the definition, the results of the dictatorship of the propertyless crowd were favored by Saint-Simon no more than by the shopkeeper, Schiller. The 'propertyless' in 1793 were only capable of fighting the same battles over and over again, they could reign only as long as the Terror lasted, and when it ended, as it inevitably did, their reign completely vanished. According to the Marxist-Engelsian conception, this danger does not exist as far as the modern proletariat is concerned. But what, then, is the modern proletariat? If by this term is meant all those who do not derive any income from property or from a position of privilege, then these people obviously make up an absolute majority of the population in the advanced countries. But in this case, this 'proletariat' is made up of a very large number of extraordinarily heterogeneous elements and classes which are far more different from each other than was the 'people' in 1793; and while the present conditions of property ownership last, this crowd may have a greater number of common interests—or at least similar interests—than of conflicting interests. Nevertheless, after the present property owners and rulers have been expropriated or desposed, it will soon be realized just how different the needs and interests of the various component sections are.21

21 Ibid., Chapter 4, "The Mission of Social-Democracy and How to Fulfill It," pp. 51-52.
We may recognize in this undifferentiated "proletariat" ("all those who do not derive any income from property or from a position of privilege") the "crowd" that—under the leadership of the true working class—Lenin and the Bolsheviks led during the October Revolution, and whose needs and interests proved to be so different in the course of later developments during the revolution itself. This method of regarding the relations between the political party and the mass of the nonprivileged classes is, in fact, another of the fundamental differences between revisionism and Leninism: the former emphasizes that "the common interests" deriving from "the present conditions of property ownership" are not sufficient to transform the masses into conscious builders of a Socialist society, in the first phase of which will emerge "different needs and interests" among the various groups; the latter considers it more important that the "common interests" of the masses should be sufficient to make them into shock troops in order to "depose and expropriate the present rulers and property owners." In the first case, the Party is understood as being a trainer, almost a teacher; in the second, as a chosen unit whose example may guide the struggle even of those who do not fully understand its aims.

As far as the true, proper working class is concerned—as opposed to the undifferentiated "crowd"—Bernstein's position is similar:

Despite the considerable progress that the working class has made from the intellectual, political, and economic point of view since the days when Marx and Engels were writing, I do not regard it as sufficiently evolved as yet to take political power into its own hands. I think it is my duty to say this only,
all the more so as a stereotype model is put forward in the working class and this is threatening to make any kind of calm judgment impossible; I know that my remarks will be appreciated above all by that section of the workers who make up the avant-garde of the struggle for the emancipation of their class. . . . Building Utopia does not mean simply transferring into present-day thought what has to be achieved in the future in practice. We have to take the workers as they are. And they are not, generally, plunged in pauperism, as the 'Communist Manifesto' forecast, nor are they without prejudices and defects as their worshippers would have us believe. They have the vices and the virtues natural to the social conditions in which they live, and neither these conditions nor their consequences can be changed overnight.22

"The working class is not sufficiently mature to take political power," wrote Bernstein in 1899; half a century later Togliatti justified the failure to attempt to seize power by citing the "fundamental reason that the great problems of the nation were not mature in the great masses of the people"; these parallel declarations contain the fundamental analogy between the revisionism of German Social Democracy and that of the PCI. Nevertheless, there remains a fundamental difference, that we have already mentioned: whereas Bernstein links his assessment with a reexamination of the forecasts contained in the "Manifesto" and the place of the working class within capitalist society, the PCI reaffirms the complete validity of the "Manifesto" and the assessment of the role of the working class contained therein, from whence is derived the implicit, ambiguous character of its revisionism.

22 Ibid., Chapter 5, "Final Aims and Movement," pp. 82-83.
This situation may be seen clearly in the comments made by Togliatti on the occasion of the centenary of the "Manifesto" in 1948, just at a time, immediately after the war, when conditions of acute social conflict still existed in Italy. Here are some of the essential passages:

It is only the Marxist doctrine that enables us to grasp the internal logic of these hundred years of history and to have a coherent view of them. . . . Not even the 'Manifesto' could foresee everything that would follow the coming of capitalism as a worldwide force of hegemony, and the spread and progressive sharpening of the proletariat's class struggle. It is now a discredited game they play, those who seek in vain to falsify and heap abuse upon our doctrine by trying to reduce it to naive prophecies of immediate upheaval and immediate coming of an ideal regime of justice and liberty. Nobody has ever been, and nobody is today, more prudent than Marxists in making forecasts about the future, and this is precisely because Marxists—unlike cheap idea-mongers and prophets—have a dialectical view of reality, which means that first of all they seek to understand reality in all its various aspects and as a complete whole, they know how the different elements act and react on each other, and in particular they are able to carry out a fundamental analysis of the objective process behind events, which can only be understood by means of dialectical materialism. . . . When the 'Manifesto' was written and published capitalism had not yet reached the apex of its development. This makes the general conclusion it reaches all the more important, especially when it sets up the objective of the proletariat's struggle as 'the rise of the proletariat to be the ruling class, and the conquest of democracy,' that is, the conquest of political supremacy
which the proletariat will use 'to wrest all capital gradually from the bourgeoisie, to concentrate all the instruments of production in the hands of the State, that is to say the proletariat itself organized as the ruling class, and to increase the total of productive forces as quickly as possible."

From this passage it may be seen that:

1. Only Marxism offers a "coherent view of a hundred years of history," and only dialectical materialism gives an understanding of events.

2. Despite this, Marxists are prudent "in making forecasts about the future."

3. The only certain conclusion is "the rise of the proletariat to be the ruling class," and this is not, however, an immediate prospect.

Here, then, there is an explicit restatement of the principle that Marxism and the 'Manifesto' are completely and utterly valid; however, the practical indications to be drawn from this are extremely vague and generic. Revisionism is only implicit, not explicit.

It is interesting to trace the development of Togliatti's reasoning when he refers to the period that followed the Paris Commune:

For more than twenty years, first Marx and Engels, then later Engels alone, led this activity and this struggle in one of the periods of their life that has been studied the least, but which contains, either fully developed or at least in nuclei, all the principal aspects of the theoretical and political struggle

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which was to be waged by Lenin, Stalin, the Russian Bolshevik Party, and the Third International. Of course, this period tends to be forgotten by all the deserters and traitors to the working class, who after making their ritual homage to the 'Manifesto' then go on to reject all its contents with the pretext that a new historical situation has arisen and this means that 'revision' is necessary. The document of 1848 is to be completed, by developing it--it is not to be 'revised.'

. . . The experience of the legal, parliamentary, and Trade Union activity carried out by the German Social Democrats, the British Labor Party, and the French Socialists made it essential, after the final breach with Bakuninist petty-bourgeois anarchism, to open fire against opportunism, which is the main danger for the Socialist movement in the period when the objective and subjective conditions for revolution are maturing. The first documents in this struggle, in the new conditions of the last decades of the nineteenth century, come from the same pens as those that wrote the 'Manifesto.' The Social Democratic traitors were forced, in order to justify their revisionist pretenses, to falsify the famous Preface Engels wrote to the Class Struggles in France in 1895; and to hide from the public the vigorous protests made by the two old Masters against 'the work of shoring-up capitalist society' to which the future German Social traitors were already dedicating themselves. The denunciation of Social Democracy as a party of the bourgeoisie within the working class, and as the main support of capitalism, which was carried out by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, is already contained, in nuclei, in these positions. 24

24 Ibid., pp. 24-26.
Apart from the virulence of certain expressions such as "Social traitors" or "deserters," which are typical of the Stalinist era (Stalin, moreover, was explicitly called "great"), Togliatti's interpretation of events and texts that have already been quoted here may be summarized as follows:

1. The Manifesto is to be "developed," not "revised."

2. No other explanation is given for the evolution of German Social Democracy except that of "betrayal," which turned it into the "main support of capitalism."

3. It is reaffirmed that the merit of Lenin (and Stalin) lies in having restored Marx's and Engels' Marxism, and rescued it from the distortions of the "revisionists."

As far as theory is concerned, it is important to note:

1. The "famous Preface" of Engels has already been very fully quoted; the "revisionists" did not distort it. On the contrary, as has been said, Bernstein himself continued to attribute to Engels a consistent view of the subject of revolutionary violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The idea that this Preface contains "in nuclei" "denunciation of Social Democracy as a party of the bourgeoisie within the working class" is an evident absurdity; not only did Engels speak of Social Democracy as the authentic workers' party but even Lenin considered it as such until August 1914.

2. Marx's criticism of the Gotha Program, on the other hand, were "hidden from the public," for reasons already perceived by Saverio Merlino. When they published them, the German leaders were forced, in their turn, to give an ambiguous interpretation of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."
3. The "objective and subjective conditions of the revolution," which were maturing in this period, refer to the Bolshevik Revolution, which Lenin expressly linked to the Paris Commune after "decades of comparatively peaceful capitalism between 1871 and 1914 had accumulated in the opportunist minded Socialist parties whole Augean stables of Philistinism, imbecility, and apostasy."25

We thus come to one of the essential points of the type of revisionism proper to the PCI, which is different from that of the beginning of this century not only by virtue of its implicit nature, but also by virtue of the fact that it is based not on the experience of a Western country (Italy) alone, but also on Russian experience. It may be said that Togliatti, to use his own words, "after making his ritual homage to the 'Manifesto,'" rejects all its contents, not by affirming that it needs to be "revised," but by "completing" and "developing" it in such a way that the revisionism--since a second "ritual homage" is excluded on principle--gets carried out surreptitiously. "The rise of the proletariat to be the ruling class"--the most essential thesis in the Manifesto and in Marxism--is regarded as a nonimmediate prospect which depends on the degree of evolution the masses have attained and which is to be carried out within the framework of the existing order, revolutionary violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat being dependent on the attitude of the bourgeoisie. All these ideas were drawn up by the German Social Democrats at the end of the nineteenth century.

But these views were not the result of any "betrayal," for it is impossible to understand why men like Bernstein or Kautsky (to name only two,) the faithful disciples of Engels and executors of his will, should have become "deserters." These views were the result of a kind of social evolution which partially changed the Manifesto's perspectives and, as has been seen, inserted the working class more and more into the context of society. Bernstein thought that this evolution would favor the process of growing maturity, in the sense of preparing the working class to exercise political power on its own; in reality, the greater prosperity and the greater dignity achieved by the working class tended to insert it all the more within the social order, and to persuade it not to oppose existing society. What was to seem to many the real "betrayal" (the voting of war credits on August 4, 1914) was the logical consequence and culmination of a process of which neither Engels, nor Bernstein, nor Kautsky had foreseen all the results, even though they might have perceived some of its premises.

The PCI has undergone an evolution of the same kind, and it is the same process which leads it to take up some "revisionist" theses at the very moment when it is reaffirming its Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. The PCI leaves out of its revisionist pronouncements the fundamental fact on which they are based, now as half a century ago, that is, the pace of events and the process of evolution of the working class, as they were predicted by the 'Manifesto' and by Marxism, have been disproved—to an extent which cannot be underestimated—by the "internal logic of these hundred years of history."

The workers' and Socialist movement in Russia has undergone a different kind of evolution: on the basis of Lenin's views (already quoted) and by means
of the Bolshevik Party, it has enjoyed a type of experience (that is, revolu-
tionary seizure of power, setting up of the dictatorship of the proletariat) completely different from that of Western Social Democracy. This experience seemed to be the authentic realization of revolutionary Marxism, the culmina-
tion of contemporary history, and the beginning of a new period of history, such as Goethe saw arising on the fields of Valmy. It is the fact that it has remained linked to this experience and all its derivations (the installa-
tion in the Soviet Union of a society which is defined as "Socialist") that has allowed the PCI's revisionism to portray itself for a long time as the continuation of a revolutionary tradition. In Togliatti's comments on the centenary of the 'Manifesto' there is another remarkable logical sequence of ideas:

If, in 1848, Socialism ceased being a Utopia and became a science, in 1917 the scientific prediction and distant goal of the conquest of power on the part of the working class became a reality, and the building and growing strength of the new workers' state, the economic transformations begun by it and brought to a successful conclusion, and the transformation of the Socialist State into a great victorious world Power, have dissipated the last trace of any kind of vague Messianism, have replaced faith by certainty, and expectancy by fact; before the eyes of everybody—not only the experts and the initiated—they have integrated the dialectic of thought into the far fuller and more convincing dialectic of the historical reality of our times. . . . The decisive, indispensable step forward by Marxist thought, to adapt itself entirely to the new reality of developing capitalism, was taken by Lenin when he formulated the doctrine of imperialism as the last stage
of capitalism. . . . The doctrine of imperialism is inseparably linked with that of the proletarian revolution in the imperialist period, and of the leading role of the party of the working class in this revolution. In the Leninist doctrine of imperialism there is the same element of general prediction that we found in the 'Manifesto,' and the two predictions were completely fulfilled when the working class, profiting from a profound crisis in the bourgeois world and from the very conflict that divided it into two warring camps, snapped the chain of the bourgeoisie's world domination and opened a new era, the era of the end of this domination and of the building of a Socialist society. Besides the doctrine of imperialism, the arsenal of Marxism has been enriched with many other weapons. Lenin and Stalin, at the head of the Bolshevik Party, have developed all our doctrine, in every field, throughout three revolutions and the great work of building Socialism. . . . The Second World War has seen the chain of imperialism undergo new breakages, and the forces of the proletariat, after first recognizing and fulfilling the task of aligning themselves in the front rank of the struggle to destroy the most reactionary aspects of the imperialist bourgeois regime, have had to fight against their old enemies in new conditions. The people who have been capable of leading the working class and all the avant-garde workers in these new conditions, have been the parties which have remained faithful to the teaching of Marx and Engels in the most scrupulous fashion, and the country of the proletarian dictatorship. Since the Second World War, new paths toward the acquisition of power have been opened up for the working class in some countries, because of the help given by the country of triumphant Socialism, but the fundamental political teaching of Marxism has not been contradicted, according to which the conquest of democracy for all workers and
the transition from capitalism to Socialism demand that the working class should become the ruling class and as such should exercise power. 26

As has been seen, the fulfillment of the predictions in the "Manifesto" --and those of Marxism in general--is deduced entirely from the revolutionary initiative of Lenin and it seems that the doctrine of "imperialism as the last stage of capitalism" is used to prove the "very profound crisis of the bourgeois world" as a premise for the relatively imminent victory of Socialism on a worldwide scale; but it is significant that all the examples taken are based on the Soviet model, and on the seizure of power by Communists in countries other than the industrially advanced ones that were the main subjects of Marx's and Engels' hypotheses, and the ones in which the setting up of Socialism was supposed to take place. In fact, Togliatti's list consists of:

1. The Soviet Union.

2. The "new paths toward the acquisition of power" (that is, its conquest in pseudo-legal forms) in Central and Eastern Europe, where, however, the decisive element in its "acquisition" was not the degree of social and economic development in these countries and the activity of the working class, but the fact that these countries were under Soviet influence and usually controlled by Soviet troops ("the help given by the country of triumphant Socialism.") The economically more backward countries (such as Bulgaria, Rumania, and Poland) had this characteristic in common with more advanced ones (Hungary or Czechoslovakia.) The main difference is in the case of

Czechoslovakia, in which the Communist Party seized power without the material presence of Soviet troops, in an industrially advanced country, but in any case having recourse to force in February 1948 without waiting for the forthcoming election.27

Since Togliatti's comments were written in 1948, they could not have taken into account the greatest of the "new breakages" of the "chain of imperialism," that is, the victory of the Chinese Revolution, which was already practically achieved in that year but was only officially recognized the following year with the setting up of the Chinese People's Republic.

The PCI's revisionism, although already obvious immediately after the war, was concealed behind a veil of orthodoxy because of the fact that the Party was included among "the parties which have remained faithful to the teaching of Marx and Engels in the most scrupulous fashion," that is, the Russian party and the parties which had reentered the Soviet sphere of

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27 It is significant that nowadays it is the PCI that emphasizes the violent nature of the seizure of power in Czechoslovakia, whereas the leaders of the Czech Communist Party portray the events of February 1948 as a process of peaceful installation of Socialism. Here is how L'Unita (April 7, 1964) quotes a passage from Novotny's speech to the regional conference of the Czechoslovak Communist Party at Banska Bystrica: "The secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party then recalled the attacks on the policy of the Czech Communists made recently by an article in Jen-min Jih-pao on March 30, which tried to show that the Czechoslovak working class did not take power in February 1948 in a peaceful manner, but by the use of violence, with the help of the State machinery and the armed forces. These distortions resemble very closely the ones spread around by the imperialists against the great popular movement of February 1948 in Czechoslovakia."
influence, whose "scrupulous faithfulness" was proved by the fact that, unlike the Social Democrats, they had conquered power and set up Socialism, and thus "replaced faith by certainty, expectancy by fact."

Of course, at this point we might stop to consider the question of the character and social nature of the Soviet Union and the so-called "People's Democracies," none of which can be called Socialist in the sense in which Marx and Engels used the term. And it would emerge clearly that the PCI is "revisionist" in this sense too, that in order to sustain the thesis of the Socialist character of these countries it "revises" some of the fundamental statements of the Marxist masters. But such a question goes beyond the scope of this essay.

Resuming, therefore, our analysis of the ideological foundations of the alleged Marxist orthodoxy the PCI parades, it will be seen that the main foundation is the experience gained, on the Russian model, in countries which are not the most advanced from an economic or industrial point of view.

This fact can be more clearly realized from an essential passage in Togliatti's report to the Central Committee of the PCI in February 1962. The secretary of the PCI stated:

There does not exist, in fact, any experience of the way in which the struggle for Socialism in an advanced State monopoly-capitalistic regime can and should be waged with success. The German Social Democrats, faced with this problem, simply capitulated. The British Labor Party, after giving an initial impetus to some structural reforms, fell back into the old empiricism... The French Socialists opened the way to a totalitarian regime. The recent great struggle of the Belgian workers has not been transformed
into any coherent anti-monopolistic policy. Scandinavian experience has no general validity. There are not even any explicit pointers in the classics of our doctrine, except for one very valuable one, by Lenin.

The "one" pointer of Lenin (which the reader will find in the text, and which is very general) is, therefore, the only result of a century of Marxist thought on how "the struggle for Socialism can and should be waged with success in an advanced State monopoly capitalist regime," which was in fact the regime with which Marx and Engels expressly concerned themselves. It is quite obvious that there is an enormous difference between the language used in the comments on the Manifesto in 1948, and the statement made in 1962 that "there are not even any explicit pointers in the classics of our doctrine."

This difference, which shows yet again how uncertain the theoretical premises of the PCI's revisionism are, is justified only by the different general political situation in which the PCI had to work in 1948 (the key year of Stalinism) compared with 1962 (after the second wave of de-Stalinization at the end of 1961.) As is clear from all the texts selected here, which cover a period of almost twenty years, political necessities are always the dominant ones in the PCI, even when the policies and attitudes expressed seem to be matters of ideology or of principle. In fact, as I think I have shown, the PCI's revisionism is based on the same objective reasons as was classical revisionism, but it has never been transformed into any kind of awareness of these reasons, not even to the extent that this occurred in the time of Bernstein.
Even today the PCI considers Marxism, or to be more exact, Marxism-Leninism, as a complete doctrinal corpus, which on principle can be "developed" but has no need to be "revised." There may be problems of application, but there are no fundamental theoretical problems which Marxism has not already been capable of specifying and facing in the most valid possible way. But after making this formal homage, the PCI in fact carries out an analysis and interpretation of Marxism that profoundly alters its character, and at least up until 1961 it was able to do this while enjoying an outside guarantee of its orthodoxy in the endorsement of the international Communist movement and, in particular, the CPSU.

In this situation, it will be realized why the reopening of an increasingly bitter ideological debate within the Communist movement represents a particularly serious problem for the PCI. Having gone further than any other party (more, for example, than the French) on the path of adapting itself to the real situation in which it has to act, the PCI more than any other party needed the guarantee which could be conferred by the most important Communist Party in the world, and the one with the highest prestige. And it was in exactly this way that the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU was portrayed: this Congress, which was to open up a dramatic crisis within the entire Communist movement, was portrayed by the PCI (and by Togliatti personally) as being primarily important for its approval of the theory of the peaceful parliamentary road to Socialism, which was explicitly enunciated by Khrushchev and which could immediately be linked to the position assumed by the PCI since 1944.
But the problems that the PCI refused to see had nevertheless to be faced in reality: it is extremely significant that it is precisely the victorious revolutions in backward countries—which the PCI, too, hails as a confirmation of Marxist orthodoxy—that have given rise, via the Chinese Communist Party, to the wave of discussion about this orthodoxy, which has affected not only the PCI, but even the Soviet Communist Party.

The evolution of Italian Communist revisionism may be broken down into five periods.

The first period covers the collapse of Fascism and the setting up of a representative parliamentary regime in Italy (1944-1947), and it is in this period that the concept of the Italian road to Socialism was formulated. It was put forward in the report of the Secretariat to the Sixth Congress of the Party in January 1948, in the following terms:

An important task of the Party was to acquire sufficient ideological, political, and organizational ability to enable it to find the Italian path to Socialism, the path laid down by the specific traditions and conditions of our country, by the development of democracy, and by the struggle for the implementation of more advanced democratic reforms and for Socialism. Italian democracy, because of its organic weaknesses and also for international reasons, could not stride forward on the basis of the CLN, and it was the PCI, enlightened by the theory of Marxism-Leninism, that had to find new paths for its development.

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28 Comitati di liberazione nazionale (Committees of National Liberation, interparty bodies that led the Resistance.

29 "Due anni di lotta dei communisti italiani" (Two Years of Struggle by the Italian Communists), report on the activity of the PCI between the Fifth and Sixth Congresses (Rome: La Stampa Moderna, 1948).
Despite the reference to Marxism-Leninism, in this period there is no explanation of what the relationship is between "the Italian path toward Socialism" and the general concept outlined by Lenin in one of his fundamental works, according to which "the forms of bourgeois States are extremely varied, but their essence is the same: all these States, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to Communism may naturally produce a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat."\(^\text{30}\) The PCI ignores this problem, it does not specify if "the Italian path to Socialism" will bring with it "inevitably the dictatorship of the proletariat," and to use Lenin's words, never mentions "everything in Marxism that is unacceptable to the bourgeoisie: the revolutionary violence of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie with a view to its destruction."\(^\text{31}\)

Revision of Leninism has been, therefore, a feature of the PCI since the first period after the war, but the cultural backwardness caused by the long period of Fascist dictatorship in Italy made it easy for the PCI to avoid facing the theoretical problems which had convulsed the Italian workers' movement and the Socialist Party after the First World War.

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The second period (1947-1952) is that of triumphant Stalinism, and runs from the phase after the setting up of the Cominform to the death of the

\(^{30}\) "State and Revolution," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 151.

\(^{31}\) "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 351.
Georgian dictator. The "Italian path to Socialism" was partially submerged under a wave of conformism, and at the end of this period a majority electoral law was adopted which would have guaranteed the government a larger majority than it was entitled to under the strict proportional system. This enabled Pietro Secchia to take up the Leninist theme of the falsity of "bourgeois democracy," less than a month after Stalin's death; whereas immediately after the electoral defeat of April 18, 1948, Togliatti had assumed a reformist tone in an article in Rinascita, and had assigned the PCI the role of a constitutional opposition. This deep-seated ambiguity is characteristic of the PCI's revisionism throughout this period.

The third period (1953-1956) may be called the period of silent de-Stalinization, brought about by the confused debate on collective leadership in the Soviet Union after the fall of Beria. The documents of this period are extremely significant in showing not only that the PCI did not play an important role in the first phase of de-Stalinization, but did not even take all the measures that the Soviets were suggesting. The events of this period—which bear, as always, the imprint of Togliatti, even if the most significant writings come from the pen of Secchia and Edoardo D'Onofrio—show how the PCI adopted a passive attitude and was in the rear guard with regard to facing the problems arising after Stalin's death.

Nevertheless, it was in this period—which is characterized by a stand still on the part of the PCI, incapable of seizing all the advantages announced by Togliatti from its electoral victory of June 7, 1953—that the process of revisionism took a step forward, and one completely unconnected with the general context of de-Stalinization, on the occasion of Mauro Scoccimarro's
speech to the Fourth National Conference of the Party on organizational problems (January 1955). This speech is interesting because of the particular clarity with which Scoccimarro outlined the reasons why the PCI now aims at different objectives from those of 1921. Of course, the reasons given are purely empirical and ignore the fundamental problems of theory concerning Marxist doctrine, which the choice of the new objectives involves.

The fourth period is that of open de-Stalinization, between 1956 and 1960. Once again, the PCI adopted an extremely cautious, prudent attitude; it ignored Khrushchev's secret speech and restricted itself to mentioning the fact that the formula of the "cult of personality" seemed inadequate, from the Marxist point of view, to explain "the errors and crimes" of the Stalinist period. Despite this the policeman's view of history was immediately adopted by Togliatti in his comments on the Poznan revolt, written immediately after the Soviet criticism of his suggestions for "polycentric Communism."

Once again, as in the previous period, revisionist proposals were put forward in an increasingly obvious way (as in the "Elements for a Policy Declaration" already quoted), but were completely unconnected with any analysis of the profound implications of de-Stalinization for the Soviet Union and for the entire international Communist movement.

It is obvious that since "revisionism" after the Yugoslav, Polish, and Hungarian experiences, was regarded in this period as the "principal enemy," the PCI too had to join in the anti-revisionist argument. Just at the time when its interpretation of the Italian Constitution placed it, as has been said, in the same position as the classical revisionists, the PCI brought out a small volume written by the Party's Vice-Secretary, Luigi Longo, designed
as a reply to the "revisionist" views maintained within the PCI by Antonio Giolitti, who had written another book which bore the significant title of *Reforms or Revolution*, taken from the title of Rosa Luxemburg's argument against Bernstein at the beginning of the century.

It may seem ironic that the only document of a "cultural" type (that is, not a Party document, or one drawn up for a political occasion) that the PCI has allowed to be published in these years by any of its major leaders, is not a defense of revisionism, but a violent attack on it. This is yet another proof of the ambiguous, implicit character of the PCI's resumption of the old themes of classical revisionism, a resumption dictated by adaption to circumstances and political preoccupations, rather than by theoretical needs.

The same elements are characteristic of the fifth and last period considered here, that of the appearance of open conflict between the CPSU and the Chinese Communist Party (1960-1963). The PCI has never bothered to face the theoretical, ideological problems raised by the conflict, but has always tried merely to avoid undesirable political consequences for itself arising from the increasingly obvious split in the international Communist movement. Even the attitude taken by Longo (for Togliatti preferred to be absent) at the Conference of the 81 Communist parties\(^{32}\) does not raise any problems of principle concerning the interpretation that the Chinese give of certain Leninist ideas such as the role of revolutionary violence and of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but limits itself to criticizing the Chinese attitude

\(^{32}\) See *Interventi della delegazioni del Partito Communista Italiano alla Conferenza degli 81 Partiti comunisti ed operai* (Rome: A cura della Sezione centrale di Stampa e propaganda della Direzione del PCI, 1962.)
on the problems of war and peace; when the Chinese delegates asked ironically what Communist Party had ever achieved power peacefully, by means of elections, Longo replied that it was exactly the PCI that was travelling along that path. It is superfluous to recall at this point that the PCI is not in power, but in opposition, and collects a percentage of votes that is still below the famous "wall of 30 per cent," which was an insurmountable obstacle for German Social Democracy.

The whole attitude of the PCI in the course of the controversy has repeated the characteristic features already mentioned several times, namely:

1. Fidelity to the principles of Marxism-Leninism is repeated; but the Chinese are not refuted when they assert that Lenin never conceived the idea of conquering power by electoral means or of renouncing the setting up of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

2. It is realized that the stratification of capitalist society cannot be reduced to a mere distinction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, such as Marx, Engels, and Lenin insisted on. But at the same time the complete general validity of Marx', Engels', and Lenin's theses is reasserted.

These two unresolved focal points of the PCI's ambiguous revisionism are aggravated by the fact that, as has already been mentioned, the factual presupposition that gave them the guarantee of orthodoxy has in the meantime been destroyed. It has been destroyed because the guarantee given by the CPSU and by its revolutionary tradition has been made the subject of discussion at the same time as the accusations of revisionism and abandonment of the revolutionary tradition were levied against the Soviet party itself.
In particular, the idea that it is the strength, the solidarity, and the continuous expansion of the so-called "Socialist camp" which will paralyze imperialism and intimidate the capitalist bourgeoisie and thus make possible in the second half of the twentieth century what Marx considered impossible in the second half of the nineteenth, and what Lenin thought impossible until the day he died, namely, the conquest of power without the typical use of violence and the setting up of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been destroyed.

The strength, the solidarity, and the continuous expansion of the "Socialist camp" must, in fact, be looked at in a new light when the "camp" begins to split on this very problem--the conquest of power without armed violence.

The main anxiety of the PCI's ruling group within the last three years has been to avoid these questions being posed in their true light. Essentially aligned with Soviet positions from all points of view, the leaders of the Party want to avoid drawing the ultimate consequences of this attitude, not only politically, but also in theory, which is the particular subject of this study. But the reasons why they want to avoid a theoretical debate are, in their turn, political and not theoretical. They do not reflect the need to remain "faithful to the teachings of Marx and Engels in the most scrupulous fashion," given that the PCI's interpretation of this teaching presents greater analogies with Bernstein's interpretation than with Lenin's. The reasons for avoiding the debate are of a political kind, and express the intention of the PCI's leaders to maintain an empirical position which will safeguard their
authority, exercised as it is by means of authoritarian leadership of the Party. This is put forward as "democratic centralism," but is in reality closer to Stalin's interpretation of the phrase than to Lenin's.

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From the political point of view, the PCI's attitude is linked to needs that were felt even in the Stalinist period (for example, the party's cautious attitude after the Cominform's criticisms in 1947) and immediately after Stalin's death (note the attitude in the second half of 1954 to the question of collective leadership,) while from the ideological point of view the worsening Sino-Soviet conflict provided the PCI with the opportunity to specify and outline the views that we have described. Its attitude has, of course, been influenced by the new situation that has arisen in the international Communist movement with the emergence of opposed views (we may refer here to the attitude of the Polish and Rumanian parties).

This emerges quite clearly from Togliatti's report to the Central Committee of the PCI in April 1964, at a particularly critical phase of the Sino-Soviet dispute and at the time when the Party was taking a stand against any international Communist conference designed to "excommunicate" the Chinese Communist Party. Here is the most ideologically significant part of Togliatti's report:

The problem to which we have devoted most of our attention, both in studying and in trying to apply and develop the revolutionary doctrines of Marxism, has undoubtedly been that of the advance toward Socialism in countries of more highly developed capitalism, in a democratic and peaceful fashion. We sought to
give a correct answer to this problem immediately after the
defeat of Fascism and the conquest of the democratic regime,
aware as we were that it was our task to carry out our ac-
tivity in conditions which were profoundly different from
those in which the conquest of power was achieved in other
countries. Our Party's activity, therefore, had its own
particular stamp and its own particular objectives right
from the beginning, and they acquired full theoretical justi-
ification and more precise expression during our last three
National Congresses. This, however, is the point which is
now the subject of the greatest disagreement between us and
the positions now being defended by our Chinese comrades,
and the point which arouses the greatest virulence of
language in their arguments against us. If we reflect,
however, on the contents of their arguments, we see first
of all an obvious distortion of our views, which enables
our Chinese comrades to portray themselves as the defenders
of the elementary principles of historical and doctrinal
interpretation against us. The distortion consists in
claiming that our views consist of stating that violence
and open revolutionary splits no longer have any possibility
of taking place in the modern world, because all political
and social progress should of necessity take place in a
peaceful manner all over the world. We have never stated
anything so ridiculous. We know very well the role that
violence has always had, and still has, in history, in the
struggle of the peoples for their independence and in the
class struggle. It would be very strange if we had forgotten
this, at a time when there are still peoples who are held in
subjection to shameful Fascist regimes, by the use of violence.
. . . We in Italy have freed ourselves from Fascism by a revo-

utionary armed struggle, nor can we keep quiet the fact that
the reactionary ruling classes are always ready to have recourse
to violence in order to prevent political and social progress or
to cancel out the gains that the working classes may have been
able to achieve. . . . After recalling all this, we must
nevertheless add that appeals to revolutionary violence cannot be made under any conditions, and that even more profound revolutionary progress and transformations are possible even without it. . . . The question, therefore, must be examined and cannot be solved except on the basis of a correct assessment of the concrete conditions of the struggle, which determine both the objectives and the manner in which the struggle is organized and waged. And I may perhaps be allowed to say that I think there is something schematic and abstract in the rigid distinction between peaceful development and nonpeaceful development. There exists a movement of the working classes and the working masses, designed to achieve their economic and political demands, reforms and social transformations. This movement has to act in the way required and allowed by the situation, and its leaders must be able to guide it and lead it while facing up to changes and objective alterations in the situation, so as never to lose control of events. Between 1943 and 1945 we fought with weapons. If we had not then, after the victory, passed over to legal struggle, within the democratic framework, it would have been madness. . . . The presence and activity of a great mass movement is essential at every moment. Any kind of arbitrary, schematic distinction, whereby either peaceful action is regarded as renunciation or stagnation, or else a struggle with nonpeaceful means, if necessary, is condemned as recklessness, is extremely dangerous. Discussion carried out in these terms is far from being a concrete analysis of the present situation. But this is the point where the Chinese comrades show their inability to make even the slightest positive contribution. It appears almost that they are not interested in the situations that exist at present in the countries of advanced capitalism. They have not even noticed our great victory on last April 28. But how can they then claim to judge our policies and our activity? To say, as they do,
that we are reduced to opportunism of a Social Democratic type, or that we regard the transition to Socialism as coming about by winning half plus one of all the votes cast in a general election, is simply another distortion. Parliament is part of the political structure of any society of a democratic type, and it may or may not be adequate to represent the nation and to exercise a democratic function; this reduces or increases its importance and the possibility of acting there in a constructive manner, and not simply using it as a platform for denunciation and agitation. We today are able to act constructively in Parliament, and to carry on the struggle of the working masses there, but we carry on this struggle throughout the whole complex of capitalist society's economic and political order, in order to achieve progressive victories, and to secure reforms which will tend to modify this order, which will make the positions of the working classes and their organizations stronger and more secure, and which will attack the positions of power of the capitalist ruling classes, especially the most reactionary and decisive groups of them, the groups of great monopolistic capital. This is, no doubt, a strategy which is partly a new one, as it moves along the twin track of democracy and Socialism. But there are conditions today which make it both possible and necessary. A great increase in the militancy and degree of organization of the working masses, a widespread spirit of democracy, and an ability to mobilize the popular masses, all of which make more difficult any reactionary adventures on the part of the bourgeoisie. An important shift of great masses of the middle class, both in the towns and in the countryside, toward positions maintained by the working class and the struggle against great monopoly capitalism, and hence the possibility of cooperation of a new type. Finally, a
profound crisis in the traditional bourgeois institutions, which forces the bourgeois ruling classes themselves to attempt new ways of directing the economy, and which enables us to wage a struggle for reforms and radical transformations in this field as well. All this makes possible and necessary the search for new ways of access to power, by means of creating a bloc of socially and politically progressive forces. . . .

We do not in the slightest renounce our final objectives, which are the destruction of capitalist exploitation and the creation of a classless society, but we desire to achieve this through a great movement which will maintain and develop all the positive features of the democratic institutions that the people have conquered for themselves at the cost of such bitter struggles and such huge sacrifices. We do not believe it is easy to progress along this path, but it is almost a compulsory path if we do not want to limit ourselves to preaching revolutionary action, which nobody knows how to bring about or how to prepare for in reality. For us, the revolution becomes a process which is being pushed forward even today by a whole complex of actions, involving every field of social life. . . . None of the objections, none of the criticisms, and none of the attacks made on us by our Chinese comrades affect this line of action of ours in the slightest degree or is able to challenge its validity and effectiveness.33

We may paraphrase Togliatti by pointing out that "none of the objections, none of the criticism, and none of the attacks" made on the views expressed by him are absent in the criticisms made of Bernstein and Social Democracy,

33 L'Unità, April 23, 1964.
first by the Left wing of the Second International, and later by Lenin. It has already been pointed out that "this strategy which is partly a new one," proposed by the PCI, is the strategy put forward by the gradualists in the workers' movement at the end of the last century, when they opposed the revolutionary interpretation of Marxism.

Where the "theoretical justification" is lacking, from a Leninist point of view, is precisely on the decisive point: namely, the interpretation of the process of industrial concentration and the increasing integration of capitalist power with State power as a factor which develops democracy and makes easier the rise of the working classes, or alternatively which hinders the former and makes more difficult the latter. The PCI oscillates between these two profoundly contradictory interpretations whereas Lenin, as has clearly been seen from the preceding quotations, maintained that the second assessment was the only valid one.

The fundamental contradiction of the PCI on this point emerges even in the theses approved by its last Congress. The following quotations are taken from these theses, and are reproduced in two groups: in the first, we quote a series of propositions concerning the authoritarian characteristics and the tendency toward centralization of power, which are considered inevitable features of State capitalism:

The rapid development of technology and of the forces of production that has come about... in Western Europe... is accompanied by the spread of the system of State monopoly capitalism and, at the same time, by a marked tendency to a
restriction of democratic life and of the free functioning of the institutions of democracy.\footnote{34}

In many countries, moreover, within the framework of public intervention to regulate the economy, (a policy agreed on among the great monopolistic groups and the institutions of State capitalism), a tendency to induce the Trade Unions to accept prearranged wage levels is becoming increasingly important. It is to this economic situation that the tendency toward limitation of democratic rights, toward a crisis in the institutions of democracy, and toward a diminution of the democratic life of the popular masses, corresponds.\footnote{35}

This development of State capitalism, together with monopolistic expansion, puts its decisive imprint on the present economic regime, and makes it a characteristic kind of State monopoly capitalism. The expansion and domination of great monopolistic capital is a consequence and an example of the laws of capitalist development and of imperialism in the present phase, as revealed by Marxist and Leninist analysis (that is, a tendency to concentration and international integration, and aggravation of the direct exploitation of the proletariat and of the indirect exploitation of the whole of society.)\footnote{36}

These propositions, which hark back to a Leninist interpretation of the phenomenon, are set off and opposed by others, in which State capitalism appears as the expression not of any strengthening of monopolies, but as the

\footnote{34} Tesi peril x Congresso del PCI (Rome: Cronograph, 1962), pp. 8-9.
\footnote{35} Ibid., pp. 10-11.
\footnote{36} Ibid., p. 27.
expression of a crisis within the monopolies, and represents the first steps in progress toward Socialism. Here are some examples, which should be compared with the previous quotations:

The transition to State capitalism is an index of the general crisis of capitalism. It is the proof of the fact that the capitalist system is no longer capable--without State intervention--of facing the problems of increased production and the problems set by the progress of a mass movement. . . . It is in order to overcome the difficulties and contradictions created by this situation that the bourgeois ruling groups themselves are demanding and accepting State intervention in economic life.37

Any planning model that tends . . . to block the path of any further increase in State owned property or of any further extension of State capitalism, is to be rejected.38

The ever increasing extension of the system of State monopoly capitalism signifies the objective ripening of the conditions for the transition to Socialism. . . . The movement aiming at increasing the State's direct intervention in economic affairs . . . must be encouraged on conditions that it is always accompanied by a powerful democratic struggle demanding that State intervention in economic affairs should favor the interests of the great working masses and that there should be public control over all sectors of the economy that are run by the State. . . . A very important role in all this may be played by Parliamentary institutions.39

37 Ibid., pp. 28-29.
38 Ibid., p. 50.
39 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
In order to evaluate the specific characteristics of the expansion of State intervention in the economy in our country . . . we must, moreover, bear in mind . . . the original features of an advanced democratic type . . . ratified by the Republican Constitution. Popular democratic forces maintain political positions, even positions of power, in this State, and this allows them to accept fully and defend the constitutional pact and at the same time to fight against the class nature and the class aims of this State, by acting . . . to push it along the path of progressive democracy, which is capable of developing toward Socialism. 40

It has already been seen what the characteristic features of the Italian Constitution are; to say that in this type of State it is possible "to fight against the class nature and the class aims of this State," to the extent of using "the State's direct intervention in economic affairs" in order to overthrow the aims of the great industrial complexes, means to alter the entire assessment of the relationships between structure and superstructure, between economic and political authority, and between the capitalist class and the legal-State institutions, made by Lenin in the works already quoted.

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This is the point which Communist revisionism has reached in Italy. We have seen the remarkable analogies and the important differences between it and the revisionism that arose more than half a century ago in German Social Democracy and within the Second International.

40 Ibid., p. 30.
The fundamental analogy is dictated by objective conditions that have ripened in Western industrial society, that is, the difference between the pace and manner of this society's real development (and hence the real development of the working class within the society) and some of Marx's predictions. The necessity of adapting political behavior to a real situation which is at least partly different from what was predicted is at the root of the analogies between the two revisionisms, inasmuch as they are a product of the workers' movement in Western society.

The essential difference between them is also dictated by objective conditions, but by objective conditions that have ripened outside Western society, that is, in the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc; it is because the PCI remains linked to the official ideology of these countries, which rule the international Communist movement, that it has not been able to develop and carry to their logical conclusion the premises contained in its revisionist attitude, which is dictated by its Western situation. Anchored to the official ideology (portrayed as a Marxist-Leninist one) of the Communist ruling class in the Soviet Union and the other countries where communism is in power, the PCI's revisionism has remained implicit, in the sense that has been explained several times in this essay. It contains elements of the two main tendencies in which Marxist thought has so far been expressed, that is, of both the gradualist and the revolutionary interpretations of Marxism. The difficulty of reconciling both these interpretations in a coherent way is responsible for the empirical, confused, and contradictory nature of the PCI's revisionism.
The culmination of the process, summarized in the "Theses" of the Tenth Congress, does contain some new elements, however: the complex of contradictions tends to merge into what has always been a focal point in Marxist discussion, namely, the role of the State and its relations with the economy. In the attempt to resolve the contradictions mentioned above, relatively new ideological elements are making progress within the PCI, elements that show the influence of the Western social and economic reality within which the Party has to work, and also of the Soviet ideological components to which it remains linked. These influences may be provisionally summarized as being "technocratic."

Technocratic tendencies are present both in Western and Eastern industrial society; the attempts at interpreting the relationships between the State, the great industrial concentrations (both public and private) of an oligopolistic type, political power, and the political representatives of the working class, which are emerging ever more clearly within the PCI as a consequence of this real situation, may lead to a new interpretation of Marxism. After the revolutionary interpretation and the gradualist interpretation, we may see a technocratic interpretation, or to be more precise, a bureaucrat-technocratic interpretation. In the effort to reconcile two different kinds of experience by averaging out what they have in common, the PCI's revisionism may be transformed into an authoritarian and bureaucratic interpretation of a hypothetical development toward Socialism, an interpretation merging the bureau-technocratical characteristics of Western societies and the ideological-authoritarian characteristics of the Soviet Union and the countries under Communist rule.