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Leonardo Bertulazzi, a former member of the Italian radical leftist group 'Red Brigades' ("Brigade Rosse" in Italian), has been arrested in Buenos Aires, according to reports in *Yeni Demokrasi*, an Argentine political newspaper. [1]

According to the report, Interpol, Italian police, and Argentine intelligence deprived Bertulazzi of his political refugee status and went to his home, where he had lived for the past 20 years. They searched the house and seized personal property. Minutes before the arrest, the activist was contacted by his lawyer and told that his refugee status had been canceled, indicating that Italian and Argentine authorities were working closely together. [2]

Now the detainee faces extradition to Italy and the start of his sentence, which, given his age (he's now 72), will likely be life imprisonment.



Leonardo Bertulazzi during the arrest

The arrest of Bertulazzi, raises intense questions about the communist movement and, in particular the history of the Italian revolutionary movement. Multiple "communist" organizations try to justify his actions and the actions of the Red Brigades, blatantly radical and often adventurist or even terrorist, by explaining his arrest as repression of revolutionary figures.

We do not deny the fact that the arrest of Leonardo Bertulazzi represents an act of continuity of capitalist repression against those who sought to overthrow the bourgeois order - it would be strange to think otherwise - but the problem lies in the tactics and strategy implemented by the Red Brigades in the past years of the 20th century. They operated in a context in which the strategy of armed struggle proved to be increasingly isolated from the working class and the mass movement, which led to a progressive delegitimization of their actions. In short, their actions led to controversial conclusions in the eyes of the working class people.

The reasons for the armed strategy are to be found in incorrect theories of these militants which arose largely from the historical context in which the organization developed: the postwar period, increasing inequality and poverty, the blossoming of the Mafia and terrorist gangs pursuing profit through the massification of workers. In addition the so-called "Italian Communist Party" had a strong right-wing parliamentary deviation.

In this regard, Franceschini, one of the founders and a leading exponent of the Red Brigades, wrote: «We remember that Italy was living dark years. State massacres, coup attempts [...] this was the context in which the Red Brigades began to act.» [3]

Workers and communists (defending the rights of the proletariat) have always responded, and even today are obliged to defend themselves from the terror exercised by the ruling class with harsh class confrontation. However, this did not give them a reason to use this method of terrorist acts and assassinations of the ruling elite and state officials. This was completely counter-revolutionary on the part of such organizations and turns the masses away from the revolutionary road.

However symbolic they may seem, attacks on individuals (however deplorable) do not undermine the capitalist system and, worse, often alienate the working class from coordinated mass mobilization. Individual acts of terrorism tend to cause confusion and panic among the population rather than inspire it, and often prompt the state to take repressive measures, making the movement even weaker. Socialist revolution cannot arise from the isolated actions of small armed groups, it must and can only come about as a result of the collective struggle of the mass of the working class realizing its interests. The role of the Communist Party is to identify these interests, to show the way, to give the working class a theory with which to build a more progressive society.

Instead of gaining the popular support necessary for a successful revolution, the Red Brigades alienated the workers by presenting the revolutionary movement and communists as a group of violent fanatics rather than as representatives of their interests. This is particularly obvious because in cases where the leaders of real revolutionary movements do maintain close ties with the masses, it becomes difficult for the authorities to arrest them for fear of mass strikes with political demands, including the release of these leaders - something that did not happen with the arrest of Bertulazzi. He instead relied on the Argentine bourgeois state, its laws and "refugee status", which was taken away as easily as it was given.

Therefore, the position of the communists in relation to the Red Brigades should be a critique of it in several aspects, as it represented the abandonment of genuine revolutionary work in favor of conspiracy, radical, spontaneous and consequently opportunistic-counterrevolutionary tactics.

Bertulazzi's arrest is just another illusion for opportunists and ordinary people, who are unaware of the real strategy of communists based on Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution and tactics of struggle in class confrontation. It is necessary to struggle against opportunists who discredit the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism, the transfer of the means of production to the hands of the workers and the establishment of workers' power.

Sources:

[1] [ansa.it](#) - "Arrestato in Argentina l'ex Br Bertulazzi, sequestrò Costa" dated August 30, 2024;

[2] [governo.it](#) - "Arresto di Leonardo Bertulazzi, la nota di Palazzo Chigi" dated August 29, 2024;

[3] Alberto Franceschini, Pier Vittorio Buffa e Franco Giustolisi, *Mara, Renato ed io (Mara, Renato and I)*, Milan, 1988.

Original article