



# DOCUMENTS FROM LOTTA CONTINUA

These documents come from the materials prepared for the January 1975 Congress of Lotta Continua. Some are completed translations of theses, and some are summaries which give an idea of the main content of the debate.

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The Conference Report is a brief introduction by comrades from Big Flame who went to the Congress. The Women's Report is an account of the workshop on women. There are also (being prepared) translations of 2 documents on the national and international situation. We hope these will be circulated soon. And, finally, a document that we prepared last year, on Class Struggle in Italy, October 1974.

Further Copies  
available from:

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# \* CONFERENCE REPORT

Lotta Continua had planned for a long time to hold their first national congress to form the revolutionary party but it was repeatedly put off because of the pressures of political work. The National Committee wrote a series of theses meant to express the basic political theory of the party and make suggestions about its rules and regulations and its structures. These were published and distributed to all militants. LC also published all other contributions made by individuals and groups of militants on various subjects which they felt were relevant to the discussion. Because of printing costs not all of these have been published but eventually every contribution - even letters - regarding the congress should be available.

The theses were circulated to every militant by the beginning of December. They were read and discussed in each cell (in some cases cdes. from Avanguardia Operaia were allowed to participate in these discussions because they were working closely with LC in a particular intervention). Usually a comrade from the central office of a particular town or city would go to these cell meetings to answer questions and clarify any points which militants couldn't understand. From these discussions delegates were elected to go to the provincial congresses. These delegates were mandated to put forward any criticisms or suggestions for additions or amendments, but they could also express their personal opinions.

Out of the delegates to the provincial congresses a certain number (4 out of 6?) from each city could go to the national congress and out of these 2 out of 3 had voting power while the other one could participate in the discussions but not vote. Here again these delegates were mandated to say certain things but they could also speak from their personal point of view.

Besides the National Committee and the delegates LC also invited various cdes. who it felt had a contribution to make to the discussions. Representatives from left groups from all over the world were invited as well as from the Italian left groups and the press. At times there must have been well over 2,000 people present.

The congress was held in a large building used for conferences. It was decorated with red banners and posters. Inside there was a huge mural of a Fiat workers march and various banners depicting scenes of struggle. There was a bookstall and a photographic exhibition of the Kids' Cafe in Naples. Security was very strict at all times.

The congress lasted for 6 days. Each day began with workshops on two or three questions. Each workshop was introduced by a worker and workers were given priority to speak. In the afternoon, after lunch, there was a plenary session where report-backs of that morning's workshops were given and then the floor would be thrown open for further discussions. Also during plenary sessions greetings from other revolutionary groups were read, motions of solidarity passed and speeches were made by cdes. from other Italian groups (AO and Manifesto-PDUP) and Chilean, Spanish and Portuguese groups.

It was exciting to see such a large-scale attempt to have political discussions and it was inspiring to see so many working class militants who were clear and articulate and took the initiative in all the discussions. The delegates were already tired out from a month's discussion beginning at local level and going up to the provincial congresses which had just ended. But they remained enthusiastic right up to the very end - ready to leap to their feet to sing, chant slogans and salute their comrades and revolutionaries from other countries.

The Congress adopted all the theses with the changes proposed by the workshops and the revised versions are being published. On the last day elections were held for the National Committee, the Secretariat and the General Secretary (guess who?). From now on the leadership at all levels must be elected. Also the definitions of "militant" and "sympathiser" have been spelled out in the party statutes.

This report which is made up of summaries of the theses, translations and notes taken by the BF representatives is intended to stimulate the discussion within BF about LC and clarify our knowledge of their politics.

BF sent three representatives, who, because of pressures of base work haven't been able to get this report out as quickly and efficiently as was planned. Although we haven't had the time or space in this report to express our personal impressions and criticisms - both with regard to LC and BF - we want this report to stimulate some debate in BF around the questions of how representatives were chosen and how they were delegated and that the most useful and interesting way of reporting our experiences would be.

Note: On page 5 of the Women's Report there's a gap halfway down the page (line 11), where the Italian word was 'ponti'. This means extended layoffs over a holiday period (like the recent FIAT layoffs over Xmas).

# LOTTA CONTINUA ON ITS OWN ORIGINS AND HISTORY

- A TRANSLATION

## THE ORIGINS OF LOTTA CONTINUA

Lotta Continua has different origins to the traditional ones and those of most of the left groups in Italy. The birth of these groups coincides with an ideological definition and a more-or-less direct affiliation - often a break away - from a revisionist organisation (like the origins of Trotskyist, Marxist-Leninist, or neo-revisionist organisations such as Avanguardia Operaia, the ML parties, and Manifesto-PDUP respectively).

The difference in our origins is what some degenerates call "spontaneism". This corresponds to the knowledge that a non-parasitic existence of a party depends on its relationship to the class struggle; that what is new in the party and its relationship to the "old", to the history of the workers' movement, its thoughts and actions, depends on what is new in the working class, its composition and struggles.

Our history, with its serious limits and mistakes, is proof of this. Lotta Continua was born as the party of a struggle of one vanguard section of the working class. A struggle which in its immediacy and particular nature contained, - as something to be drawn from on the basis of Marxist theory - a general meaning, a 'conductive wire' for proletarian unity, for formulating the programme in which the process of the political unification of the proletariat finds an organic expression.

From that struggle with its particular and at the same time universal character we drew, concretely and in our theoretical elaborations, the construction of our organisation and its militants.

## OUR HISTORY

1969 wasn't the year one of workers' autonomy in Italy nor of the political life of the militants who contributed to forming Lotta Continua. Nevertheless, the birth of Lotta Continua in 1969 corresponds organically (and undoubtedly partially) to what was a real leap forward in the struggles and consciousness of the working class in Italy.

The history of Lotta Continua which followed wasn't and shouldn't have been the history of a progressive liberation from some presumed original "spontaneous" sin. On the contrary, other ways of perceiving the building of the party forced their advocates to undergo torturous efforts to get rid of ideologism and detachment from the masses which were compromising or at any rate severely obstructing a real understanding of class autonomy.

Instead this was the far from linear history of a process of going beyond minority interpretation of the task of the revolutionary party and gaining a correct concept of tactics. At its birth Lotta Continua was an immediate manifestation of the most advanced part of the working class which was explicitly regaining a strategic autonomy. Later on it had to confront new tasks; build its capacity to overcome the immediacy of asserting workers' autonomy, and accompany and orientate the process of generalisation and consolidation. For the working class this meant taking into account its own internal composition, the differences with the rest of the proletariat and with the organisations present within it; in short, its own history. A social process of enormous dimensions developed according to the laws of contradiction which govern the movement: the assertion of class autonomy by the most advanced sector of the working class, clearly the fruit of the capitalist method of production and at the same time the most radical and universal hostility to the capitalist method of production in head-on contradiction to the revisionist leadership of the working class; the gaining of wider unity and more advanced synthesis.

The form this assumed is linked, in a non-gradualist way, to the prolonged character of the bourgeois crisis and the revolutionary process. In this process, Lotta Continua too had to take into account the class analysis, the history of the proletariat, the importance of its past and present history, committing serious mistakes and risking serious consequences for its relationship to the masses.

It risked overturning the strategic force, the link and understanding of workers' autonomy because of a very serious tactical weakness. The correct understanding of the capitalist crisis -of the failure of the reformist alliance between advanced capital and the workers' movement, of the continuity of workers' struggle beyond the end of the 'Hot Autumn'- was due to that strategic force. Due to this tactical weakness Lotta Continua forecast that the process of generalisation of workers' autonomy and the unification of the proletariat, would have had to overthrow the mediations of the historic organisation of the proletariat and that therefore it was up to Lotta Continua, without mediations, to stimulate and guide that process. Very late, on the actual development of the class movement, Lotta Continua very nearly underestimated class autonomy. Identifying the broad and multiform political expression with its position, and at the very least with its organisation, thereby risking to put the organisation first and slip towards attempts at bureaucracy or militarisation.

The correction of these errors was moved by a patient return to the working class, the analysis and methodical reflection on the dynamics of its struggle and its organisation and its relation to those dynamics. Our national congress is a destination point of these years of building the party within the class movement. The possibility for the autonomy of building the party is based on the general understanding of the relationship between strategy and tactics.

- DECEMBER '74

## ---ON MATERIALISM---

The materialist conception of reality and history must constitute the theoretical foundation of our politics and the basis for the formation of each of us. This is the only way in which we can guarantee a scientific criterion to verify our political line and to give all the militants the tools to make independent judgements in every field.

### Vulgar materialism

When we talk about materialism, we don't think that a materialist conception of reality is based on physics, chemistry, biology or the other sciences which deal with what is commonly known as matter.

These sciences are a product of the division of society into classes; and they have developed as instruments of this division, i.e. as instruments of the domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. These sciences, together with the technical applications which embody them (i.e. machinery and capitalist organisation of labour) are one of the main manifestations of this class domination. Therefore a vision of the world which is based on these sciences is tied to the way in which these sciences were born and developed, and so is what Marx called 'ideology', i.e. the justification of the division of society into classes. This does't mean that the whole content of these sciences is false. Through them mankind has increased its domination over nature, i.e. over the rest of the world. But humanity is divided into classes and the domination of man over nature is mediated through the division of society into classes. To understand this we must think of the way in which the productive processes happen ( i.e. the processes through which man appropriates nature. Natural sciences

have this characteristic linked to their origin and development. Any theory which sees them as the basis of a general conception of society is classist and bourgeois. This applies to positivism which has dominated the evolution of Marxism inside the 2nd Internationale, and zdanovism, which dominates in the URSS and tends to present Marxism as a branch of a general theory of evolution.

Any attempt to 'overthrow' the nature of these sciences without having overthrown first the social relationships which have created them is utopian and abstract. This applies to the illusion that intellectuals and scientists can create an alternative culture by an isolated critical rejection of their role. Every attempt which identifies the limits of these sciences with a limit of knowledge in absolute, is an attempt to limit the knowing power of humanity and to concede the knowledge of social relationships to irrationality. This after all is the last shelter of bourgeois ideology which is not able to justify the existing reality and only tries to contest the scientific and theoretical foundation of those who want to overthrow it.

### Marxism

In order to have an effective knowledge of the world and history we must base our theory on that science that presupposes the division of society into classes and is also the product of the struggle to overcome this division. This science is MARXISM, i.e. the accumulation of the knowledge that the proletariat has got together and verified in the course of its struggle for communism. It becomes clear then what relationship exists between Marxism and the other sciences: without marxism they give a distorted and ideological understanding of reality; with marxism they too can become a terrain of struggle to overturn this reality. But this is a practical link, not an abstract one: it is determined by the real struggle of the proletariat to conquer a different relationship with nature and among human beings.

materialist conception of reality is that which explains scientifically and rationally not only class struggle, but also the possibility that class struggle in this epoch, i.e. the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie, will lead to communism the society without class division. In other words we must be able to analyse the nature of the contradiction between proletariat and bourgeoisie.

Marx said that the nature of this clash lies in the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the relationships of production. Every time that this contradiction has gone beyond a certain limit a revolution has given birth to a new historical form of society, still dominated by the ~~relationship~~ division into classes. Capitalism for the first time gives rise to ~~development~~ such a development of the productive forces that the division of society into classes can be overcome.

~~XXX~~ WHAT ARE THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES AND WHAT ARE THE RELATIONSHIPS OF PRODUCTION?. This is where the most profound differences lie and this is the root of the contrast between revisionism and communism.

The revisionist theory of the productive forces.

The first conception, still present in the revisionist labour movement and in several revolutionary components, identifies the relationships of production with relationship of property, i.e. with private property.. Consequently all the rest is productive forces: everything which has accompanied the evolution of the relationships of work and their socialisation in the course of ~~the~~ capitalist development: science, technology, the growth and concentration of plants and machinery, the organisation of work, the market. The consequence of this conception is ~~the~~ conviction that the nationalisation of the means of production eliminates the fundamental contradiction of capitalism; where this process has already taken place (USSR), 'socialism' is based on an abstract and utopian concept, which is not founded on the real development of class struggle, but on bourgeois values; and everything which doesn't follow this 'official' vision is labelled mistake or deviation.

This concept of the productive forces is the ultimate root of revisionism; it goes through a long trajectory from the 2nd international to the stalinist degeneration of the 3rd. But it ~~was~~ still shows up in those revolutionary positions which ~~consider the USSR and the eastern european countries~~ define the USSR and the eastern european countries with the label 'degenerated workers states' and refer to a 'socialist field' which ~~puts together state capitalist countries like the USSR and countries where the dictatorship of the proletariat is established, like China.~~

This theoretical conception can be found in the ~~political~~ practice of italian revisionism; it starts with the exaltation of the productive role of the worker, it develops with the corporative defense of professionalism (skill), with the acceptance of the ~~organisation of work based on it;~~ ~~it is shown by the fact that its organisation is founded on the skilled sectors of the working class, and by the difficulty that revisionism had in recognising and accepting the new contents of workers autonomy, put forward the most unskilled sectors of the working class born with Taylorism and the assembly line. Those contents express in radical form the rejection of wage labour starting from the struggle against the most elementary aspects of the organisation of work: gradings, hierarchies, speeds and manning, health, incentives, etc.~~

The subjectivist reaction.

The first reaction against the revisionist theory of the productive forces takes the form of subjectivism. Historically, the origin of this position lies in an attempt to interpret Rosa Luxemburg in an antileninist way. In France this position flows into ~~the~~ the exaltation of 'autogestion' (selfmanagement) without putting into question the existence of the capitalist market, its anarchy, and the problem of overcoming it (eg ~~the~~ LIP). In Germany-- and the USA-- this position is taken up by a cultural current which has reduced marxism to a critique of culture and society in the name of a rationality without history: in a situation of general integration of the proletariat or even of disappearance of classes the intellectuals are seen to be the only subject capable to conduct this critique. ( Marcuse and the Frankfurt School).

In Italy, the very high level of class struggle has directed in a very concrete way the critique to the revisionist theory of the productive forces; leading it towards the terrain in which the contradiction between workers and capital expresses itself in a most antagonist way: that of the organisation of work. The work of Raniero Panzieri is central from this point of view. ~~work~~

Whereas Panzieri's work can't be identified with a precise defined theory, his followers will divide into two main currents.

Workers control

The first current concentrates its attention on the problem of the organisation of work in its dimension restricted to ~~xxx~~ each single firm, factory, or even worse, 'homogeneous group'. ( In other words this tendency doesn't see Fordism as a general science of the organisation of work in society , a scientific method of regulating the social cycle of production, (production, distribution and consumption) and simply concentrates on the firm. Trans. note). Their emphasis is posed on the problem of control ( workers control, control over the conditions of work) and class struggle is reduced to an abstract struggle for power inside the factory. The problem of state power and its seizure is totally absent ( Manifesto-PdUP, Union left, Avanguardia Operaia in its early stages and their organisations in the factory, the CUB'S ; in this country in my opinion this current is best represented by IS and the rank & file organisations which it has formed). ~~xxxxxx~~

The most important innovation lies in their interpretation of the parts of Marx which deal with machinery and industry. They correctly deny the neutrality of technology and organisation of ~~xxxxxx~~ work whose function is shown to be that of instrument of capitalist domination. From this fact they deduce that machinery , technology, science the organisation of work, and even the 'labour force', i.e. the working class in so far as it is a 'function' of capital, are all 'relationships of production'. The other pole of the contradiction, that of the productive forces, remains therefore empty, with nothing well defined. In their theory the material foundations of the contradiction tend to dissolve in pure subjectivism. Paradoxically, their lack of a theory ~~scientific~~ which explains scientifically the autonomy of the working class leads their praxis towards flat objectivism: the workers organisation must go through the internal articulations of the capitalist division of labour: the jobs, the sections, the lines, the plants, the sectors. This conception leads this current to the theory of 'inquadramento unico', 'new way of producing' and 'new model of development' ~~characteristic, this last xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~

The mythology of the class

The second current puts the emphasis on the opposite character, the objective one. The rationality of capital, identified in the 'plan', to which all aspects of capitalist development are mechanically reduced, is counterposed by the 'counterplan', the ~~f~~ rationality of the proletariat - or ~~the~~ rather of the Working Class - whose ~~pro~~ objective behaviour has an inherent coherence, directly antagonist to the plan of capital, independent from the ~~xxxxxxx~~ 'consciousness'. Here the polemic is against the counterposition between 'capitalist anarchy' and '~~xxx~~ accomplished socialism' as it was presented by those revisionist theoreticians who identified capitalism with private property and socialism with planning.

But in this current as in the other one the fundamental terrain of class confrontation is that of 'power' conceived in an abstract way, outside its historical determinations: in the ~~st~~ first current it was the power of the individual workers or of the homogeneous group, in this current it is the power of the Class. The objectives of the workers programme are posed independently from their material foundation, based on the fact that ~~these~~ they have the power to 'disrupt the capitalist plan'. The history of capitalism is seen as the series of cycles always equal: the working class disrupts the plan and the capitalist rationality recomposes at a higher level. On the practical level this position leads either to opportunism ( i.e. the acceptance of status quo, including the revisionist party. This is the position lead by Tronti and Cacciari both of whom have been in the C.P. since 1968. ) ; or to voluntarism, i.e. ~~the xxxxxxxx of the~~ subjective research of ~~xxxxxxx~~ violent solution to the ahistorical cycle. (this is the position of the late P.O., with ~~xxxxxx~~ strategy of the insurrection, the Red Brigades and other 'autonomous' positions.)

Capitalism without a crisis

~~xxxxxx~~ Revisionism ~~is~~ refuses to put into question the capitalist mode of production. Both the above currents do, but in relation to revisionism the demarcation line between productive forces and relationships of production has rotated 180 degrees.



In revisionism ~~everything good which has been achieved~~ all that advances the job organisation is considered a factor of progress and even as part of the productive forces. In the subjectivist positions we've analysed before everything is seen as part of the relationships of production: not only the judiciary and cultural superstructure, but also science, technology, technological development, the organisation of work, the ~~xxxx~~ concept of reason, and the proletariat itself which one current fetishises as Working Class, whereas the other reduces it to labour force, passive mass at the disposal of capitalist development.

All the components of this subjectivist reaction appear in that unhappy theory called 'model of alternative stagnation' (Manifesto Pd IP).

If we go to the roots of the confusion of these comrades we see that it lies in the fact that they avoid the problem of the crisis; in this way they don't have the possibility of founding a dynamic theory, historically determined, and not static, i.e. outside the history of the contradictions between proletariat & bourgeoisie. They are not able to point out, inside the capitalist mode of production, the basis of the antagonism between classes. This basis lies in the material condition of the proletariat i.e. its being commodity among the other commodities. This leads us back to the existence of the market, its contradictions, its anarchy; this is what the subjectivist theories have ~~forgiven~~ taken away from their theories, either because they haven't even considered it or because ~~they~~ they have thought that it was totally overcome by the existence of the plan.

### The conditions for resuming the struggle

~~As a result of all this~~ The work of Raniero Panzieri has been fundamental in the formation of the Italian revolutionary left, despite all distortions. In the years of subjectivism, (~~the~~ when Che Guevara chose to go to Bolivia; the explosion of the student movement, the birth of several revolutionary organisations) a sharp demarcation line existed between the so-called M.L. groups (in reality dogmatic-stalinist) and all the others. The first ones in an infantile and fantastic version of ~~Mao's~~ Mao's thought, have avoided any relationship with the development of reality and class struggle. The second ones, in different ways, find a reference point in the works of R. Panzieri, mixed with other tendencies mainly of third internationalist and revisionist derivation. The contribution of R.P. has been that of opening the way towards the rediscovery of workers autonomy, showing to the revolutionary generations where it must be found: in the relationships of production.

It is the development of workers autonomy in the years 68-70 which ~~gives~~ gives the possibility to refound in a materialist way that theory that the subjectivist reaction to revisionism had developed upside down. It is the reality of class struggle which in practice makes valid the positive and right aspects of that theory: the criticism of the organisation of work in capitalism and the research of a definition of the class confrontation which permits the identification of the fundamental needs of the proletariat. This development and relationship allows the redefinition of the WAGE as the fundamental terrain of clash between capital and labour in that phase, (even if only now we can understand all the theoretical implications of that discovery). On the one hand the wage, as price of the labour force, is linked to the nature of the labour force, i.e. commodity among the others, and therefore ~~re~~ reopens the way towards an analysis of ~~capitalism~~ the contradictions of capitalism, which must take into account the existence of the market; in other words it leads us to a theory of the crisis. On the other hand, the analysis of the structure of the wage, i.e. its internal composition (fixed part, variable part, incentives), relates the struggle ~~about~~ over the problems of the organisation of work, (of which the structure of the wage is the historic representation) to the market and its functioning; in this way the 'factorist' dimension is totally overcome. The stages of this theoretical rediscovery and the battles that have accompanied them, are part of the history of Lotta Continua. In the best part of our studies, the 'rigidity of labour', i.e. the strength conquered by the working class on the terrain of the struggle against capitalist organisation of work, is directly linked, not in a mechanistic way, to the historic evolution of the labour market, and thus with the capitalist cycle and with the crisis. In this way we find the link between the heart of workers autonomy and the crisis that the capitalist system is going through at a worldwide level.

## Productive forces and relationships of production

What is then our finishing point in this attempt to redefine the contradiction between productive forces and relationships of production in the light of the historic experience and the developments of class struggle in these last few years? (This is a temporary position and it will need a lot of articulation and further detailed consideration).

The main productive force, that to which in the last analysis all the others are linked, is constituted by the proletariat itself, by its qualitative and quantitative growth by its class interests which root themselves in its material needs, i.e. in the historic conditions of its existence. All the other 'productive forces', the force of nature, science and technology, are the product of historical evolution and ~~xxx~~ are productive forces only in relationship with that evolved form of social cooperation ~~xxx~~ which has been made possible by the very existence of the proletariat. In other words, productive forces are not definable outside of their ~~xx~~ link with the relationships of production.

This is to say that there doesn't exist an 'autonomous' history of the productive forces that grow in a linear way passing from one social formation to the following. Such a theory of the 'autonomy' of the productive forces lies at the root of the revisionist conception which we've seen before. This conception in the last analysis sees the passage from capitalism to socialism in terms of gradual evolution and not in terms of class struggle; this conception does not succeed in understanding the fact that the existence of the proletariat represents for the history of the productive forces a qualitatively new stepping stone and therefore can't explain why the contradiction between relationships of production and productive forces should produce a society without classes when it has always produced a society divided into classes in the past. That conception always postpones to a far future, to the quantitative development of the productive forces, what in reality constitutes the central problem of proletarian struggle in every phase: the abolition of the division of society into classes, COMMUNISM.

According to the revisionist conception of the productive forces, capitalism, ~~through its conditions increasing~~ by increasing the socialisation of work ~~and so gradually and automatically and continuously itself~~ can lead to the automatic and gradual overcoming of itself provided that some obstacles are removed. X These obstacles, according to the most gradualist forms of revisionism which don't even put into question the existence of the market, are the judiciary and political superstructure of the state; according to those revolutionary positions which haven't totally overcome the revisionist theory of the productive forces and yet identify in the market and the crisis that it generates the historic limit to the development of the productive forces, these obstacles are in fact the state and the market. Consequently their prediction of the final crisis of capitalism is linked to the necessity of the violent overthrow of the state apparatus.

But both these conceptions stop at the gates of the factory: they see a limit to the development of the productive forces in the state and the market; they don't see it in the relationships of production as they manifest themselves inside the factory. The contradiction between productive forces and relationships of production becomes for them a contradiction between factory and society and not a contradiction inside the factory and in society. The next step, even if not a conscious one, is to deny the the working class and the proletariat any decisive role in the contradiction.

### The roots of idealism

This denial is historically expressed and continues to be expressed ~~ix~~ by the separation between economic and political struggle. The ~~firm~~ economic struggle is seen as the daily manifestation of the antagonism between workers and bosses starting from their place in the productive process, but does't contain anything revolutionary. In other words what they define as economic struggle does not contain anything which expresses the need and the possibility to overcome the capitalist mode of production and the division of society into classes. Political struggle, both in the parliamentary and gradualist version, and in the revolutionary one, is seen as the only one with which the working class and the proletariat take ~~xxxx~~ upon themselves the historic task to overthrow the capitalist mode of production, but they can't understand starting from their daily experience and must be taught to them from the 'outside'.

We see then that in the revisionist conception of the productive forces is rooted another fundamental separation which, like the one between economic and political is totally absent in Marx; the separation between class consciousness and the material conditions of existence of the class; the separation between the being and the consciousness; the denial that the ideas of mankind are the product of its needs; in the last analysis the rejection of materialism.

Hence, only a conception which defines the productive forces ~~itself~~ as the ~~proletariat~~ proletariat and the antagonisms which counterpose it to the capitalist mode of production in all its aspects, starting from the most elementary levels, allows us to ~~redefine~~ give class struggle back the role of main contradiction (primary) and allows us to avoid idealism which separates consciousness from its material base.

We therefore pose the question in the following terms: do we have the possibility to define the proletariat, its class interests, its needs, its material condition, in scientific and therefore non-empirical way? Do we have the possibility of defining the proletariat not with a list of needs which are identified casually but having as a starting point the way in which capitalism determines the existence of them? In other words is there a theory of the needs of the proletariat? Our answer is YES. We think it is the heart of Marx's thought and can't be separated from the way in which Marx criticised the most evolute form of bourgeoisie ideology in his time: Political economy.

#### The labour theory of value.

Political economy presents the capitalist mode of production as an harmonic entity, i.e. capable of finding its own equilibrium through its own laws, or harmonizeable, i.e. capable of finding that equilibrium through the external political power acting against the tendencies of the market. Marx's critique excludes both possibility, and presents the crisis, i.e. the tendency of the system to the destruction of these productive forces which it has created, as a permanent data of capitalism.

The centre of this criticism lies in the proof that capitalism cannot find inside itself, i.e. in the market, a 'way out' (sbocco) to the value which the productive force started by capitalism has produced. This explanation leads us to Marx's labour theory of value; according to this theory the relationship according to which products are exchanged on the market tends to coincide in capitalism with the relationship between the socially necessary ~~time~~ working time needed to produce each of them. This rule is valid only in capitalism because in capitalism human labour is reduced to abstract labour, without any specific content, and so universally interchangeable. In other words capitalism allows the comparison of products of different persons on the simple basis of the quantity of their labour and not on the quality. The process which creates forms of labour more and more abstract and interchangeable coincides both with what is commonly called capitalist development (in Marxian terms called accumulation of capital), and with the process of proletarianisation, which continues throughout the history of capitalism. The analysis of this process is thus linked to the analysis of the development that work has undergone in the course of time pushed by the conflictual forces of class struggle and the accumulation of capital.

#### Its critics

It is inside the factory and in its organisation that we must look for the root of the ~~theory~~ labour theory of value; it is in the factory that the analysis of capitalism and its contradictions starts. All the theories that have rejected this theory and those which have revised it substantially, have always shown a total lack of interest for the factory and the organisation of work, or have taken them into account but in a separate way to an historical analysis of capitalism and its crises.

In the revisionist conception the theory of value has been transformed into a theory of the relative prices and equilibrium, i.e. of the harmony of the system. For years the revisionists have tried to prove that the labour theory of value could go together with a general theory of the equilibrium of the market. They and the bourgeoisie economists have taken as their presupposition what Marx had always denied that capitalism could reach: an equilibrium founded on the general 'evening out of the rate of profits', which in capitalism is always a tendency but never a reality.

The understanding of the antagonism between a theory of the equilibrium - i.e. the harmony of the system - and the labour theory of value has led many modern intellectuals to deny the validity of the latter. This turning point lies at the origin of the subjectivist reaction both in USA and in Italy. The finishing point of these positions is either an acceptance of status quo, or a utopian and petty bourgeoisie conception of socialism, which criticises capitalism starting from a subjective hierarchy of values rather than from an ~~analysis~~ objective analysis of class struggle and the interests which it expresses.

### COMMUNISM

What sort of general formulation ~~we can~~ can we make of the needs of the proletariat, on the basis of ~~the~~ Marx's labour theory of value? Capitalism develops the proletariat; and together with it, the need to get away from relationship with nature and the other humans which is determined ~~by~~ by a series of impositions from the 'outside'. In fact the development which leads to a overwhelming importance of abstract labour in the relationships of production ~~produces~~ produces as consequence the fact that the links ~~between~~ of all the members of the proletariat with each other and the specific content of their labour, of their activity of their existence presents itself as an imposition from the outside, as power of one class over the other, and not as an intrinsic necessity as it used to happen with the productive classes in the social formations before capitalism. The following need therefore implies all the others: THE NEED TO APPROPRIATE THE CONDITIONS OF THEIR LABOUR AND THEREFORE OF THE WHOLE PRODUCT OF THAT LABOUR. This is true because of the fact that in the separation of the proletariat from its product, lies the origin of the process of the accumulation of capital which produces the concentration of all the wealth at one pole of society and the poverty at the other and thus perpetuates the conditions of capitalist exploitation and of the division of society into classes. THE NEED TO ABOLISH TOGETHER WITH WAGE LABOUR, THE CONDITIONS WHICH ALLOW THE FACT THAT LABOUR FORCE IS A COMMODITY LIKE ALL THE OTHERS: I.E. THE MARKET; which will happen only when the measure of social wealth will cease to be the working time and will instead coincide with the effective satisfaction of the needs. That will be the day when we will put on the agenda the motto written on the flags of the proletariat: "to each according to his/her needs, from each according to her/his ability."

# \* ON TACTICS

Today the task of the revolutionary Left is more than merely to act as a spur to the class movement, or to represent some of its manifestations. It has to confront the question of the general leadership of the class movement.

## COMMUNISM IS TO BE FOUND WITHIN THE STRUGGLE OF THE WORKING CLASS.

We are Communists. Marx said that Communism is the real movement that abolishes the present order of things. It is worth returning to this statement by Marx, in order to examine its 'strategic' nature.

In recent years we have seen this real movement growing, and we have worked at its growth. We have been able to recognise the way in which, step by step, the working class has again re-appropriated its strategy, has put Communism on its feet again, and has re-affirmed its class autonomy.

It is here, in this real movement, that the possibility for developing the party of the Communist revolution is rooted. It is in this movement that we find the possibility for the working class to win back in more mature form its own theoretical and political history.

At the point where bad theory meets (and clashes) with this new phase of the real movement, with its strategic contents, it turns from being bad theory to being very bad theory. Correct theory, on the other hand, has found again the connection with its essential life-force - with practice. And in the fires of practice, correct theory has gone through transformations and has taken on life. Marxism has shaken off the bookish encrustations and the degenerations of revisionism, and has once again become a decisive weapon in the war for the emancipation of the proletariat.

In the crisis of the monstrous system of imperialist domination of all time, once again the gravedigger of this system emerges, stronger than ever before; more directly capable of directly attacking the basic roots of the capitalist organisation and division of labour, and more immediately capable of unifying its own forces.

Communism is not a prerogative of the party. It exists within the struggle of the masses, and the aim of that struggle is for emancipation, to triumph over its sworn enemy, capitalism - over capitalism's bourgeois lackeys, its State and its national and international armed might.

## A BASIC ASPECT OF TACTICS: NECESSITY OF THE PARTY.

In the party, the most conscious and disciplined members of the revolutionary class unite their forces; they bring together, on the basis of correct theory, the strategic lessons of class autonomy and of the autonomy of its mass vanguards; and on the basis of these, they orientate the fundamental process of the formation of proletarian unity, building on these mass vanguards.

In the party, the most conscious and disciplined members of the revolutionary class build the general form of a tactics - in other words, they create a body of general principles, derived from practice and capable of orientating the proletariat in the long march that leads finally to the seizure of power and the destruction of the bourgeois State.

Many comrades are asking themselves: "Do we have a 'tactics'?", "Do we have a 'strategy'?"

Without underestimating our insufficiencies, the mistakes and shortcomings of the revolutionary Left, we believe that we do. We have no intention of wasting time on the trivialities of those who define tactics as the short-term

and strategy as the long-term; nor those who define strategy as the "principles" or the "maximum programme" and tactics as the pure and simple evaluation of present reality (in short, simple good sense). We say that the contents of workers' autonomy have a strategic character: the real negation of wage labour, the unification of the proletariat under the leadership of the working class.

It is this strategic character of working class autonomy that the reformists and revisionists are incapable and unwilling to recognise or express; it is this strategic character that guarantees the autonomy of the revolutionary party as a Communist party.

Tactics is either an arbitrary shifting between empirical choices, or it is the organic application of a correct relationship with strategy - in other words, organic application of a correct theory.

#### THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF TACTICS.

Tactics is the intermediate point between the process of unification of the proletariat and the angry and many-formed reaction of the ruling class.

We maintain that, at the heart of the question of tactics, lies the question of the relationship between class autonomy and majority organisation of the class.

The process of the unification of the proletariat has to develop not only through overcoming the diversity of material and ideological conditions imposed by the bourgeoisie on the various sections of the proletariat; it also has to develop through the majority role of an organisation of the proletariat (in Italy this means the Communist Party) which is the overall outcome of many different factors, which is the outcome of the very divisions of the class, and which has to pose the nature of general organisation.

This majority organisation - hegemonised, in the parties and the Unions by the Communist Party - is strategically opposed to communism, to the "real movement that abolishes the present order of things": in other words, is opposed to workers' autonomy.

The position of this majority organisation is basically bourgeois - wavering and shifting from a line that is petty-bourgeois to a line which increasingly with time becomes that of the big bourgeoisie.

However, our understanding of the nature of this organisation would be deficient if we did not add that, in the final event, its choices are related to the necessity of maintaining its influence over the working class: this is the precondition of its strength and its authority.

It is this specific contradiction which permits, and makes it imperative for the revolutionary party to develop a richness of tactics and to bridge - or at least try to bridge - the gap between its own minority presence and the necessity of leadership of the class movement.

This is the responsibility that the revolutionary party must measure up to - the general leadership of the class movement. Only thus can it strengthen itself in real ways and avoid being a mere administrator of a peripheral area of consensus. Only thus can it avoid rushing in greedily to take over the areas (and the slogans) abandoned in the continuous retreats and backtrackings of the revisionists and reformists.

It is completely improbable that the majority of the proletariat will suddenly emerge from the ranks of the Communist Party into the ranks of the revolutionary party.

This is unlikely to happen because the revisionist machine is relatively solid (of course, this is tricky, since their strength is obviously linked to the political strength of the Italian working class, a strength which is incomparably greater than in any other capitalist country). Also, because of the

prolonged nature of the capitalist and imperialist crisis, which alters any notion of a sudden collapse of political and social stability, of the broad masses suddenly changing political allegiance, of a rapid development of insurrection led by the revolutionary party.

#### OUR EXPERIENCES IN THE RECENT PERIOD.

The testing point of all this is already past history. We are not referring only the Chile (where, however, these problems were revealed with crystal clarity).

We are referring to the frequent, direct, lived experience of all of us during these past years, in among the dissolutions, the political mistakes and the painful rebuildings; those who see the explosion of workers' autonomy in 1969 merely as a sharpening of the wage struggle have been proved to be blind and deaf to the reality of that experience - with all the inevitable tactical opportunism that this entails.

So, what has happened, in our experience? We have seen how, in 1969-70, the working class, through its mass vanguards, launched a frontal attack on the organisation of the factory, and clashed radically with the old majority organisations of the working class when they stepped forward saying that workers' autonomy would recede and become again a cog within capitalist development.

From then on, as the capitalist machine has become increasingly incapable of normal functioning, the CP and the Unions have been striving to recover the working class. But they have had to pay a high price - ie, they had to accept a generalisation of the struggles, of the forms of struggle, of the modes of organisation of workers' autonomy, from the bigger factories to the smaller, from the "key" areas to the "backward" areas.

In turn, the working class, in its own way, was aware that its struggle was going to be long. The mass movement was beginning to win back a sense of "tactics", seeking to generalise the struggle where it was possible to do so (which was not within the organisation of the political groups, or in the substitutes for "mass organisations" that they presumed to fabricate), while all the time preserving its own autonomy. In the drive towards unionisation in 1971, in the drive towards the impressive mass mobilisation behind the CP in the Spring of 1972, we should see not a relapse of the class movement into revisionism, but the overflowing of a class tension which, without abdicating its own autonomy (as the struggles showed), sought and found the opportunity to unite itself, in order to field a general strength against fascism and against the crisis.

It was only in this period (thanks to the strength of the lessons of the mass struggle) that we really thought and learned a lot about "tactics", a process which then became the organic basis for decisions about our political line, ranging from the question of mass organisation to the question of the government etc.

Now, as in the past, we have preserved the capacity to criticise errors of schematic judgement - errors which risk to cost us dearly. In particular we are aware of the danger of separating the fundamental affirmation of the strategic nature of workers' autonomy (from which we were born) from its tactical articulation.

#### A NEW POSSIBILITY FOR CONFRONTING AN OLD PROBLEM.

The concept of tactics, and of the principles on which this concept is to be based is not something that has been handed down to us by the traditions of revolutionary thinkers, as a complete heritage (as many comrades who choose to call themselves Leninists would have us believe).

What is "tactics"? It is the way in which we think it is possible to win the majority of the proletariat to a revolutionary leadership. This is a completely general preliminary definition, but it is nonetheless necessary. Not only are there many people who pose the problem of the conquest of the majority of the proletariat only in words; but there are also still some who confidently proclaim that the revolution is the product of a minority, that the question of the majority is the hobby-horse of opportunists and social democrats, and that this has always been so.

It is worth recalling that this "theory" is not new. On the contrary, this "theory" is old, and it would have us take an alarming step backwards, not only as regards our own experience, but also as regards the heritage of lessons that have been passed down to us from the historical experience of the revolutionary movement.

In 1917, in Russia, in the course of a violent and accelerated social crisis - the imperialist war, the fall of Tsarism, famine - the small Bolshevik Party succeeded within the space of a few months - even a few weeks - in winning the leadership of the majority of the proletariat and the peasantry, and succeeded in winning power. Within the collapse brought about by the imperialist crisis, a few months were enough to complete a journey, which in other circumstances would take years. The new International, the new Communist Parties, formed themselves under the banner of this first victorious revolution, and, in their structures and their tactics, assumed a rapid spread of the revolution by insurrectionary means into Europe, aided by the crisis and the collapse of imperialism.

Just 2 years later, in 1921, the Italian Communist Party had barely been born, and in the 3rd Congress of the International there was a discussion that is worth recalling. Lenin was speaking, and this was the theme to which he kept returning: "The movement has not been as linear in its development as we expected"... "The international revolution has not been as linear as we thought" etc. It was this awareness, this lesson in realism, that led "the 3rd Congress of the Communist International to begin a revision of questions of tactics".

Here the conditions are set for a shift, in full awareness of the basic problems of tactics - even if Lenin's subsequent fate and the fates of class struggle in the West, of the Soviet revolution and of the International will not be such as to resolve them organically. But nevertheless, already at that time these problems were posed, and one cannot help admiring the greatness with which Lenin questions a political schema (that same "schema" in which some Leninists would like to embalm him) by comparing it with the lessons of reality.

As Lenin said: "Anyone who does not understand that in Europe (where almost all the workers are organised) we must win over the majority of the working class - such a person is lost to the communist movement, and will never understand anything." But there were still those "ingenious" comrades, those "pure" revolutionaries who thought they knew everything, and who wanted the theses to be altered and the word "majority" removed. Lenin was implacable: "The peasants," he said, "we're won over by us not in a matter of days - as I had mistakenly expected - but within a few weeks. Show me in Western Europe a country in which we could win over the majority of the proletariat in a few weeks!" And he insisted: "Can you even begin to think that you, in the West, have similar conditions? It's ridiculous!" And he explained: "When the revolution is already sufficiently prepared... the concept of "mass" alters, inasmuch as with this word we mean the majority of all the exploited, and not merely the majority of the workers; any different interpretation would be inadmissible for a revolutionary." "An absolute majority is not always necessary, but in order to be victorious we need not only the majority



of the working class, but also the majority of the exploited people and the rural workers." And again: "The more the proletariat of a capitalistically developed country is organised, the greater the seriousness that history demands of us in the preparation of the revolution, all the more basically must we prepare to win over the majority of the working class." And he also explained what "winning over the majority" means for revolutionaries:

"Our principal task is to win over the majority of the proletariat. The winning over of the majority is certainly not understood by us in a formal sense, as it is understood by the philistine Don Quixote "democrats" of the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  International. When, in July 1921, the whole of the proletariat - the reformist proletariat within the Unions and the centrist proletariat of Serrati - followed the communists against the fascists in Rome, this was the winning over of the majority of the working class by us."

"We are still a long, long way from the decisive winning-over; this was only a partial winning-over, momentary, local. But it was the winning over of the majority. Such a winning over is possible even when the majority of the proletariat formally follows bourgeois leaders, or leaders who carry out bourgeois policies (like all the leaders of the 2nd International and of the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  International), or when the majority of the proletariat is wavering. This process of winning over proceeds continuously, in all sorts of ways, all over the world. Let us prepare it more solidly and more accurately, let us not miss a single serious occasion in which the bourgeoisie forces the proletariat to rise up in order to struggle; let us learn and determine exactly the moments in which the masses of the proletariat cannot avoid rising up together with us."

So, in 1921, faced with the "resistance" of Western capitalism - a resistance made up of blood and starvation - faced with the "resistance" of social democracy and its Unions, Lenin posed powerfully the problem of revision of tactics, and indicated the basic elements of the problem: the characteristics of the capitalist crisis and the political weight of the reformist organisations; and against them he measured the fundamental task of the "winning over" of the majority.

What a lesson for the comrades - and there still are some! - who are again posing an impatient disdain for the "winning over of the majority", and who stress the role of the minority, blind to their own obstinate minoritarianism.

To win over the majority to revolution - this is the problem of tactics! And, let us repeat, it is a problem which the revolutionary movement and its history have handed down to us. In the East, in "backward" Asia, this problem was resolved in the great experience of the Chinese Revolution, in the Long Revolution. In the West it has had to follow a tortuous path: sometimes it has been diverted, and has lost its way, disappearing underground like a stream, only to reappear again in the full light of day, with all its strength, when the start of a new and profound crisis of the system of imperialist domination finds common meeting place/coincides with a new initiative of the masses. It is then - and we have seen and lived it - that revolutionary militants and the workers' vanguards snatch the slogan "winning over of the majority" from the hands of those who had reduced it to a means for pacifist and electoral competition with the bourgeoisie; and it is then that they snatch the banner of the party from the ranks of electoral mass parties of the Rightwing revisionists and the sectarian and conspiratorial "cadre parties" of the Leftwing revisionists, detached from the masses.

Here, then, we see that the problem of tactics has re-acquired its secure foundation - workers' autonomy, the real movement that identifies communism with the abolition of the present order of things. The problem of tactics can now be seen in the terms that it needs in order to make progress: the nature of the imperialist crisis, and its form; the nature and the role of the revisionist workers' movement. The crisis that we are living through looks likely to be a

long-term crisis, different from the imperial crisis of 50 years ago; it therefore precludes the sudden collapse of the capitalist regime and a sudden reversal of the power relations within the masses, as between the revolutionary minority and the majority organisations of the revisionists and reformists. The problem of tactics, and we must spell it out, is to win over the majority to revolution within this very specific crisis.

At the general level, we orientate our tactics in relation to the problem of establishing majority leadership of the proletariat, based on an analysis of the contradictions it contains. In the final event, these are reduced to the contradiction between a bourgeois leadership, and its need to maintain representation of the class movement. When the anti-capitalist autonomy of the working class is relatively weak, this contradiction is dominated by the revisionist organisations; but as the crisis grows and capitalism has less and less space to absorb workers' autonomy, the more autonomy grows, the more explosive this contradiction becomes. Revisionism does not change its spots, but conceals its nature as the servant of two bosses - both equally demanding.

In this situation, what is the correct revolutionary tactic? It is certainly not the tactic of following revisionism, ideologically, in its bankruptcy, with the intention of becoming executors of its last will and testament. No, the correct tactic is to strengthen the autonomy of the movement; to be within its struggles and its organisations, and to work from the base upwards towards winning revolutionary leadership; to reduce the space for revisionism to use these struggles in the bosses' interests; to increase the contradictions with the national and international requirements of the capitalist Restoration; and to use the contradictory relationship between the revisionist organisations and the masses as a means towards general and united action of the masses.

It is through the effects of these contradictions that our action, the action of the revolutionary Left, succeed in arousing the actions of proletarian masses that are enormously more numerous than those tens and hundreds of thousands of proletarians that we influence directly.

Our own strengthening as a party, our own direct recruitment, we see entirely within this "majoritarian" conception of the class struggle, this majoritarian way of seeing the needs and consciousness and the actions of millions and tens of millions of people.

E.L.B.F.  
24.2.75.

# \* ON INTERNATIONALISM

## ON INTERNATIONALISM - SUMMARY OF CONGRESS THESIS

Lotta Continua feel that internationalism is a fundamental strategic part of class struggle - and becomes more important as capital extends and develops.

They analyze the first three Internationals and criticise them. In particular, they criticise the 2nd International for its 'theory of productive forces' which created the idea of a separation between politics/economics, party/trade union, maximum demands/minimum demands - and as a result concerned itself only with a small organised part of the proletariat (those at the point of production). In addition, they criticise it for its mechanical idea that the possibility of revolution depended on the 'inevitable' crisis of capitalism - and that its day to day tactics became defensive and economic, with an emphasis on parliament to legitimise the workers' economic gains!

They recognise the contribution of the 3rd International in 'seizing the time' and creating the party which was necessary to make the revolution when conditions were ripe for insurrection. However they criticise the 3rd International model for:

- 1) The incorrect idea that conditions throughout Europe were homogeneous and developing at the same pace at the time of the Russian Revolution.

- 2) The resulting idea that there was a single tactic throughout Europe for revolution - and that this could be centrally directed by the single organisation of the 3rd International.

- 3) The ideas they retained from the 2nd International of the split between politics and economics, and the resulting distinction between defensive economic battles and political propaganda.

- 4) The way this process developed so that the 3rd International became ultimately a tool for the 'defence of the USSR' and an instrument of Stalin's foreign policy.

They pay no attention to the 4th International.

## CONDITIONS FOR A NEW INTERNATIONALISM

LC says that the conditions that gave rise to the 3rd International's concept of revolution no longer exist. In fact the 3rd Int. is now getting in the way with reformist tactics as the crisis gets under way. This crisis is a 'prolonged' crisis and the revolutionary development of the working class is no longer mechanically tied to the development of capital, but expresses itself more autonomously in opposition to this process.

They maintain that the main development of the revolutionary forces takes place in a national context. They use the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions as examples of struggles which developed in a unique way - what distinguishes the latter in particular was its ability to mobilise international forces around the international contradictions set up by the revolution.

## UNITY BETWEEN REVOLUTIONARY FORCES

However all this doesn't mean that there should not be international practice and mutual help between revolutionary groups - this becomes more important as the enemy gets more aggressive. This particularly applies to Europe and

the Mediterranean - a zone of great contradictions. In particular, the creation of an international immigrant workforce in Europe by the bosses as a 'safety valve' - a single market situation for the sale of labour power - has created the means by which the idea and experience of autonomous working class struggle can be carried throughout Europe.

#### NOTES ON DISCUSSION OF THESIS AT CONGRESS

1. The discussion reflected the fact that the thesis was 'strong' on criticism of past models of 'internationals' but weak on a precise program for building international cooperation today.

2 Reflecting their analysis that the main development of revolutionary forces will take place in a national context, the usefulness of international contacts seem to be judged at present by LC by how they can aid the Italian situations. So more emphasis was placed on links with Spain, Portugal, MIR since their experience is very similar to the Italian one - both in their strategic situations, and in the internal situations in these countries - strong reformist forces (CP), strength of fascism, question of armed forces and preponderance of immigrant workers.

3 The organisation was criticised for its relative lack of practical work around the contradictions of emigrant workers - but again this seemed to be judged more in terms of the Italian situation than in terms of a n 'international' practice.

4 It was stressed that the prolonged crisis was increasing the homogeneity between different European countries. But it was not up to LC to exist in other countries but to make links with the appropriate groups. One comrade said that the importance of linking up with other revolutionary forces must be measured by the extent to which they were developing and expressing the politics of working class autonomy.

5 It was suggested that the 2 things to debate with foreign groups was tactics and strategy (which points of unity in combatting the crisis). This would involve in particular a discussion around how the bosses are using the crisis to restructure and how the working class are resisting.

.....  
In an international discussion which took place at the congress (involving Spain/Portugal/France/Germany/Holland/G.B.) and in contributions invited to the assembly - the choice of speakers was largely determined by LC's priorities (see para 2 ) regarding those in similar situations.

# \* ON THE NEWSPAPER

## THE NEWSPAPER 'LOTTA CONTINUA' AND ITS ROLE IN ORGANISATION

(This is a summary of notes taken during a congress workshop about the newspaper. Much of the discussion was very specific so I've tried to draw out the general points )

"The shortcomings of the paper reflect the shortcomings of the organisation"  
Lotta Continua comrade

At the time of the congress LC had a four page newspaper produced centrally in Rome and distributed throughout the country 6 days a week. It had a centralised editorial committee of about 6 people based in Rome who had been working on the paper for about 5 or 6 years solid. Contributions to the paper from all parts of Italy arrive daily by means of a machine which basically types out phone calls. The editing and decisions about content are carried out almost exclusively by the editorial committee and national executive.

### PROBLEMS OF CENTRAL ORGANISATION

It was generally agreed that there was a continuous problem in the organisation. A weak unrepresentative centre which was 'out of touch' leads to mistakes and deficiencies in mass work at the base. But by drawing experienced 'in touch' cadres from various branches to the centre means that the branches lose their leadership. And since the strength of the org. depends on contacts with the masses both in the branches and at the centre there were big problems - particularly expressed from the South and smaller places where the organisation wasn't very large or strong. At the present time, areas in the North are in general better organised than in the South. Also different areas have different needs which aren't always reflected in the centre.

### THE NEWSPAPER

The two roles of the paper are 1 for the masses to read and express themselves, and 2 to express the general political direction of the organisation. These two roles often conflict. Many comrades complained that many political articles were too 'heavy' for the mass readership; and that too small a proportion of the paper was given to expression of the mass struggle. Altho' LC could express itself to the masses, it was difficult for the masses to talk to the masses through the paper, especially in expressing their different situations to each other.

It was felt that the general line needed to be expressed through the selection of local items. At present a lot of local news was excluded on the grounds that it was too specific. In general a problem of space and proportion.

It was proposed that the paper should expand to 6 pages. That more comrades be brought onto the editorial committee. That the distribution system be improved and expanded to increase sales from 18000 to 25000. That routine in selling should be combatted, and that the way the paper was written should be improved.

# WORKSHOP ON WOMEN

FOR THIS REPORT THE NOTES TAKEN BY BOTH BF  
WOMEN DELEGATES WERE USED IN AN ATTEMPT  
TO GIVE THE FULLEST ACCOUNT POSSIBLE  
OF THE DISCUSSION

When we arrived a woman comrade from the Rome Women's Commission was finishing the introduction to the discussion (she had been talking about the history of women's struggle in Italy...):

Capitalism is trying to use women in a particular way in the crisis because of their additional passivity and ideology. They are being sacked from hundreds of small factories which are those hit first by the crisis and in the family they have to 'make do' as the attack on living standards intensifies. Part of the bosses' attack is the reduction in public spending which means even worse social services - it is a direct attack on the female labour force. But the attempt by the bourgeoisie to use women and the family in a reactionary way during the Divorce Referendum Campaign backfired completely. Women are on the move again and we have to reassess the role of women in the struggles in factories and schools. In schools women are in the worst position both as students and as teachers. Then we must recognise that women are the most important force in the community as they are showing in housing struggles etc. We must look at places like Naples and see the particular role played by women in the General Strike (1) in order to understand where they fit into the workers' programme and the organisation.

The struggle of women also includes the contradictions between men and women because of the level of violence exercised by the bourgeoisie against women through this. We have to look at the stand taken by women in the 'Autoriduzione' Campaign (2) when men wanted it to be run through the trade unions (because men are more influenced by revisionism in the factory) and women were tending to want to stop paying the bills altogether. Look at the march by women here in Rome. (3) The CP front organisation for women (Unione di Donne Italiane - UDI) has gone far beyond the bureaucracy of the party. Some women from the Lotta Continua Women's Commissions have actually joined the UDI because it is a forum for pushing forward our politics.

Finally, the question of abortion is without a doubt the most important aspect of women's struggle now. It must be part of the battle when the abortion law is being read in Parliament (4).

- 1) the General Strike of February '73 (we believe) where there was a big demo in Naples with a large participation by women... (?)
- 2) see "Italy, October '74"
- 3) see PNS - No.81
- 4) a bill similar to the one which has been passed in France has had its first reading but may take years before it is voted on by Parliament...

## WOMAN COMRADE FROM THE TURIN WOMEN'S COMMISSION

(She began with criticisms of the 3rd International and talking about women's role in politics in China... Couldn't follow what she was saying well enough to make notes.)

Women are essential in the question of winning over the majority. We want to involve the majority of proletarian women and it's not a problem of alliances. With regard to Falchera (5) in Turin: women find equality with men out in the streets. Women are more involved in community struggles. They know more people in the community and they are the vanguard. We haven't worked around women in the factories - we have only seen the spontaneous fights of women and can't jump to identify these with workers' autonomy - how they react to unions for example. In Turin the Area Committee (6) ignored the importance of women's self-organisation. After winning the fight for housing the women were left with the problems of nurseries and schools etc. and no way to resolve them because there was no organisation. The women didn't grow politically. By specialising, women were isolated from the general political movement. From the point of view of the home their outlook on the community was left unchanged. We have to regard the technical problems of women with kids. This discussion is only beginning to happen within Lotta Continua. Up to now we have worked only with already organised workers...

We must look at two things with regard to women:

FIRST: Women in relation to workers' autonomy.

Workers' autonomy doesn't include certain contradictions which attack women like the crisis in traditional values which is a cultural thing. The working class has undergone a cultural revolution inside the factory with regard to the work ethic, hierarchy etc. but hasn't in the family. We must challenge these bourgeois values. Women are being proletarianised very quickly because they are being cast out of the labour market and their job of maintaining family living standards is getting even tougher.

SECOND: The problem of uniting women NOT just on feminist objectives.

There's a similarity between women's struggles which shows how women struggle and the urgent need to bring out clear objectives. Challenging the nuclear family is very important because community struggle is the main outlet for women's most advanced struggles. Very little has been done around small factories where women work and there isn't any analysis of how women struggle against restructuring, rationalisation, lay-offs etc. and women's particular family problems and their effect.\* This has held back women's full potential revolutionary role in struggles.

\* on how they struggle.

5) a large housing occupation in Turin - see "Italy, October '74"

6) Area Committees were originally set up by the trade unions to co-ordinate struggles between different factories but they have expanded to include all struggles in an area including schools, housing etc. All left parties and groups take part in these committees which exist throughout the country.

Next a working class woman who has taken part, with her family, in the housing occupations in Magliana, (a district in Rome) spoke. Her husband is a building worker and they both used to be in the CP before deciding to join LC during their involvement in the housing struggle.:

In Magliana it was the men who took over the houses and then moved the women in. Of course we had to take over guarding the houses after that because our men had to go to work but it was men who taught us in the first place how to struggle and explained why we had to do it. - (ed. note: at this point there were signs of embarrassment and annoyance among the comrades in the workshop). Of course men understand that we have the problems of house and kids but you can't expect them to suddenly say we can leave the kids and go to meetings. It happens gradually as we learn together. Men recognise how important our role is but they had to give us the first push to become the vanguards...

#### WOMAN COMRADE FROM THE MILAN WOMEN'S COMMISSION

The condition of women isn't defined by men or by culture. Women's role isn't sectorial but comprehensive because women experience ALL the other contradictions of society as well as those of being women. There have been many good women's struggles but they haven't been able to create revolutionary organisation and programmes - women alone can't hegemonise the proletariat. We mustn't only struggle\* but also to gain political consciousness. Our objective isn't "liberation" to the outside labour market - we want the total liberation of the whole working class.

Capitalist society effects all social structures and the most basic one is the family. We demand wages for housework because this creates a structure for all women, because all women work in the home. The CP women's organisation (UDI) does contact the mass of women but it has limited goals. Without women you can make a revolution but you can't have communism (this is also an internal problem for LC).

Milan is asking for the National Committee to present documents for discussion towards the eventual analysis on women. The national Women's Commission should be restricted to women comrades only because any analysis of women should be the result of the liberation of women comrades within the organisation. Women must be autonomous to decide their own goals and when we realize what the mass of women want we must be ready to go out and fight with a complete political programme.

Our work around schools is particularly important with regard to women. Women going to school has a certain "liberating" effect in that it gets them out of the family and gives them a broader outlook. Selection (7) effects men and women differently. For example if parents have to decide whether a son or daughter should continue his/her education, they decide that the daughter should be the one to leave school. Women who do go on to university are advised to study the humanities. Certain kinds of schools are only for women (secretarial colleges, teachers training for primary and elementary school teachers) and lead to low paid jobs. All lower levels of teaching are for women because it's "natural" for women to be with kids. The economic boom education for the masses - including women - but no jobs. For women this means housework. Women are a reserve labour force - small factories, teaching, offices, services, outwork - they have precarious or part-time jobs with no trade union organisation.

Lotta Continua must always take women into account because they are the numerical majority of the population but it's not good enough just to add what women want to the list of objectives in the workers' programme. Women must become protagonists of struggles for these objectives because

7) Selection is the process of steaming/creaming students into different levels and types of schools. For w/c students this is often determined by the economic situation at home.

\* for social services

\*\* meant



of their role in capitalist society. The struggle of organised women in factories must be united with that of unorganised women in the home. We don't have a classless analysis in favour of feminism, but we can't ignore that all women have an ideological handicap.

We put the following proposal to our Provincial Congress:

Housework must be waged because it is productive work and must be recognised as such. There is obviously a contradiction between the objective and how to start an intervention around it.

The number of women in the organisation must grow along with their representation in all structures. This means working with proletarian women must be a priority for Lotta Continua.

We don't want parallel structures like feminist groups are trying to throw up because women must be part of the comprehensive revolutionary structures.

#### WOMAN COMRADE (not sure where from)

A national Women's Commission isn't so important right now. Discussion at a local level and also our work with sympathisers is more important because our line on women must come out of our practice at base level. When there is mass intervention on women at a national level then we can discuss a general line. We must campaign around abortion as a way of discussing the general condition of women in society.

We also need to understand better how to intervene on women students. Women are the majority numerically in LC and we must begin to express a qualitative presence. This doesn't mean telling male factory workers that their programme must include creches or something. It means opening up the debate on wages for housework. Obviously women as the rest of the proletariat are being effected more and more by the workers' programme but we must begin talking about how women confront the crisis and what the new aspects of women's struggle are...

#### WOMAN COMRADE FROM ROME

There hasn't been any mention of the fact that the contradiction isn't between men and women but between bourgeoisie and proletariat. Women's role is conditioned by society which also conditions them in the organisation. As a revolutionary organisation we must define our tasks for changing this. In a period of crisis women's ability to overturn her role is very powerful.

In Rome women in the working class are a central question now. Because Rome isn't an industrial city most women are at home but in small factory struggles that are going on women are fighting hard to keep their jobs. These struggles express women's growing class consciousness and their search for organisation. LC women comrades had to use new ways of intervening - different meeting times and different kinds of meetings - but once this was realised, women workers became very active. Women who know about the housing struggles have begun approaching us looking for organisation. In some places they go to the CP because it's the only alternative. Women comrades must battle within LC for our own time and ability to organise just as women outside LC must.

#### WOMAN COMRADE FROM MILAN

The organisation must be enriched by the experiences of women's struggles. The contents of workers' struggles are challenging society and women's role in the workplace is part of this - exploitation and ideology. We need a general strategy for women's liberation.

Who is the vanguard of women - women factory workers or housewives? This is the wrong way of posing the question. It sees women only in relation to production. In Milan we're divided on this point. We can't find a specific vanguard right now. Women workers in factories fight workplace struggles but still their fundamental contradiction is the home. They bring other contents (husband, kids, food etc...) to their struggles at work and are just as open to the question of women's condition as full-time housewives are. Women Factory Council delegates have put forward demands for creches for example. Around lay-offs we should be saying that women workers must fight for increased social services and say NO to I see three positions: 1) those who say wages for housework is the correct feminist objective, 2) those who say the wages for housework is correct but it's not possible to struggle for it now, 3) those who are against wages for housework because it perpetuates a traditional division of labour and is abstract because not all housewives are in the same situation.

SOLDIER (a comrade who is serving his obligatory military and is active in the Proletari in Divisa organisation - Proletarians in Uniform)

We've discussed the question of women in my barracks and talked about the factory struggles of women and the work which was done in the referendum campaign in our area.

Women were always the most militant in the factory fights but during the referendum campaign we had to work with full-time housewives as well. Women have a more total view of society, able to identify the bosses and feel the role of the working class. Women are trying to defend what jobs they have outside the home, occupy houses and still have to look after husbands and kids. Women are the majority of the proletariat and they've made great leaps in consciousness recently. I personally think that certain comrades who are doctors should leave leadership position in the organisation and go into the community to work around health with women and kids.

We never talk enough about women's role in the resistance during the last world war. We don't talk about women's history. There are many women comrades in prison too but we always talk more about the men. We must discuss how men and women relate within the organisation because we are an example of what we believe and we have to make the organisation open to the masses by having open relations. Discussion on this point is very uneven at present but it's emerging from base level - not coming down from the top.

In the Army men do women's jobs and we know what hard work it is to do housework. Then we can't visit our girlfriends because of rigid family controls etc. This organisation must take up the thread of women's struggles and work around women's role in the party and in society must be priority. The family mustn't stop women from organising. Who the fuck cleaned this hall up last night when the meetings broke up then? WOMEN. We have to break down these divisions of labour. It's essential that our organisation gives women the maximum space to develop as part of the expression of the proletariat. As soldiers who have to clean and cook we know how much our women comrades are repressed. Women working in the fields and the factories are still slave - going out to work doesn't emancipate women... (got confused and sat down)

#### AN COMRADE FROM LATINA

The problem is not men vs. women. It is how to unite the class. In the crisis who will respond to the bosses? Separating men and women can be a threat (women could be used as scabs). In a factory struggle (mixed workforce) we were involved in, the women took the lead because they had more problems. They were more radical in fighting against the scabs

and police and they made their men help them on the picket lines on the week-ends. We can't resolve the ideological problems but we can resolve the problem of unity. Wages for housework is anti-working class. It would mean that women wouldn't have to confront the problem of restructuring. Women must fight for more social services so they can go out to work and unite with men.

#### WOMAN COMRADE

We can't just look for women's objectives but must see what role women have in the struggle and how they express it. We shouldn't look for ideological differences but for material ones. Wages for housework is interclassist; we don't want to add objectives for women to workers' programme but to find the women's objectives already contained within it. The present process of restructuring is an attack on the class. The response of the working class depends on what we bring out. The possibility of discussing women's liberation already exists in the workers' programme. I'm not saying that work frees people but that workers' experience in the factory makes them strong.

#### MAN COMRADE FROM ROME

I work at the telephone exchange. There are few full-time workers there with long-term contracts. Mostly young people and women work there and they work part-time on a short-term contract basis (precarious). There is therefore a high turnover among the telephonists (women) - all the more secure, better-paid jobs are done by men (engineers etc). There is no trade union and has been little political activity among the young people and women because of their precarious position. During a recent strike (ed note: apparently the first in a very long time) the 'stable' workers had to man the picket line so that the others could get off by saying "they won't let us in". The strike lost and the men learned that there is a need to find ways to link up with the women workers...

#### WOMAN COMRADE FROM MILAN

Women accept others as being on an equal level with them so they don't accept divisive pay rises. They are more open to fight for general objectives whereas men only fight for themselves. Wages for housework is the workers' programme because it liberates women from the home. Workers are asking for a guaranteed income. The bosses wouldn't be so eager to send women home from the factories if women had wages for housework. Wages for housework is for full-time proletarian housewives (not for middle class women) and for those who are being pushed out of the labour market. Inside Lotta Continua women should be privileged because they have families and housework and unless they are helped they will not mature politically.

#### WOMEN COMRADE FROM CATANIA

Inside Lotta Continua we need a political line on women so that women can grow politically and draw more proletarian women into the organisation. Women who work in the organisation have sacrificed having kids because those who have kids have to stop working in the organisation. It's important to recognise that women can be leaders too. In a laundry we intervene in there are 100 women workers and 20 men workers. 60 women got sacked and the trade union made a big show of trying to do something but really it was useless so most of the women won't have anything more to do with the trade union. The trade union just selects some women who are militant and makes them feel special and they end up being isolated. As soon as women become active in non-union struggles in the community many more women took an interest. The women fight against lay-offs harder than men because their jobs are an escape from the isolation of the home and give them a chance to organise. We don't ignore the differences between women and men but it's wrong to speak of 'women as women'. Women play a part in workers'

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autonomy and identify with the workers' programme already.

#### WOMAN COMRADE FROM PALERMO

I move that we vote on creating a national Women's Commission - exclusive of men - to co-ordinate discussion, newspaper articles and education about women as well as interventions with women. (ed note: no vote was taken)

#### MAN COMRADE FROM TURIN

I work at Philips. Women are line workers and men do the more skilled jobs. Women used to express workers autonomy by a high rate of absenteeism but now that the crisis is intensifying they are struggling more actively. The big problem is husbands who won't let their wives go on the picket lines. The bosses analysed the problem of women long before us and they are putting it to use. I'm against the Women's Commission being closed to men because we can't set up this kind of division within the organisation when we're trying to create unity.

#### MAN COMRADE FROM PORTO MARGHERA (factory worker)

We must look at how women are involved in community and factory struggles. Wages for housework is revolutionary because it is the motor for the unification of the proletariat. It is revisionist to see the factory as the main arena of women's struggle and say women must go out to be exploited on the labour market. Women\* in Lotta Continua are used for the donkey work. We have to be more communist.

Women's present situation serves the bosses well. It maintains the basis of the capitalist system - women are doing productive work as well as being ideologically productive. Women are the protagonists of the struggle to change the family. There can be a precise, Marxist analysis of this just as with teachers for example. Relationships between men and women aren't abstractly secondary but are at the heart of the problem. There must be a wage for the person who does housework. Women could then gain political maturity and go out to look for work if they want. This is very important as a goal.

The role of women in Lotta Continua is passive. They are rarely the protagonists of the political line of the organisation. They need autonomy to develop their line. They are the majority of militants and the minority of the leadership at every level. Students: struggle against economic selection - Workers: struggle for a guaranteed wage  
women: struggle for wages for housework.

#### WOMAN COMRADE FROM TRENTO

Wages for housework can't only be looked at as an economic demand. Women are subordinate to their husbands and they have a right to live too. We need an ideological and cultural revolution in the heads of all comrades. Often as the husband becomes politically active it puts more strain on the women but at the same time her consciousness is growing. This contradiction must be resolved in the struggle.

#### WOMAN COMRADE FROM ?

Wages for housework ignores the social differences between women. The problems of not enough money, kids, school and medical service etc. remain unsolved by it. Women must fight for these things which will reduce housework and liberate them for outside work. I disagree with the comrade from Magliana - the way I see it, because the men there were militant the women got stuck at home doing all the housework. Women must participate in community struggles and as they grow politically they will challenge their men.

\* and students

## WOMAN COMRADE FROM PISA

It's necessary to be in the UDI. The mass of women work in small factories, in agriculture, doing outwork and the UDI is present in these situations. It has anti-capitalist demands but doesn't completely hegemonize the class and organises only in small explosive situations with limited objectives. Our aim is to unite these situations. The UDI is a contradiction for the CP because the mass of women bring contents of their problems to it and force it to fight for them even when it goes against the CP's line. Women's major contradiction isn't housework but their relation to capitalist structures.

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At this point the workshop broke up because time had run out. The same woman who introduced the workshop gave the report-back on it at the plenary session in the afternoon. The main points of her summary were that women militants within the organisation push for their needs inside the organisation so that all comrades take their problems seriously. That with regard to wages for housework - women don't need to go out onto the labour market to be liberated, they already do productive work and we must look for ways of uniting women in struggle but we can't approach the question in an abstract and interclassist way. Women must fight for political growth and organisation and only when they start fighting will men be forced to consider them as equals. She ended by saying that although the UDI is a bureaucratic institution women have pushed it to fight in their interest and it is a mass organisation of women which must be taken seriously and finally, abortion is one of the biggest struggles for women at present and LC must be active around the abortion campaign all over the country.

There was no thesis on women presented at the Congress. This was because LC hasn't got enough experience of consciously organising with proletarian women and therefore no agreed upon perspectives and analysis on women. That's why it was decided just to hold a workshop where women from the local Women's Commissions and the delegates could discuss the "question of women" and some basic points could be drawn out.

During the plenary session on the next to the last day a statement was made from the platform regarding organising with women and the setting up of a national Women's Commission (it came as part of the discussion and decisions regarding structures of the party and the statutes). The General Secretary of the party announced that there will be a national Women's Commission to coordinate discussion and education on women in the organisation, write newspaper articles and coordinate interventions with women etc. (I don't know if it will be open to men...ed.note).

The point was made that women, while being a majority of rank and file militants are a minority in the leadership throughout the organisation and only made up about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the delegates present at the Congress (although there were many women working on the various teams to coordinate food, accommodation, visitors, press and propaganda etc. outside the conference rooms). Because the revolution will be made by the majority of the proletariat and the party must work towards the unification of the proletariat and women are half of the proletariat, organising with women must be a priority of the party.

Because LC is a working class party, the majority of its leadership at all levels must be workers and because women are 50% of the proletariat and women as housewives have the same relationship to the proletariat as workers do, women must be 50% of the leadership at all levels.

# THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!

Lotta Continua didn't come to these decisions purely from ideological or moralistic reasons but because of their analysis which says that the present economic crisis is a prolonged crisis which capital is trying to utilise to restructure itself. As the crisis develops and the class struggle intensifies a process of unification of the proletariat is going on and ultimately it will be the majority of the proletariat that will make the revolution (not a 'minority' vanguard).

The need to make conscious organising with proletarian women a priority of the organisation was encountered very concretely by militants during the campaign around the Divorce Referendum last year. The Christian Democratic Party gets 85% of women's votes in Italy and the overwhelming vote in favour of retaining divorce showed that women had recognised their enemy in the DC and were rejecting its attempt to use women and the family as a reactionary force.

In trying to work with women in factories, offices and schools as well as full-time housewives militants had to confront the political and organisational shortcomings of LC with regard to women. It was out of this experience that the first Women's Commissions were set up by experienced women militants in LC who had been pushing the debate around the question of women within the organisation and mass work with women for years.

Since last year the Women's Commissions have been involved in trying to develop perspectives for mass work with women and an analysis of women's struggles - against restructuring and lay-offs in the work place, for housing and social services in the community and around women at school both as students and as teachers - as well as trying to raise the consciousness of their male comrades about women's role in society and their own needs and problems as women militants and the question of how it will be possible to bring more proletarian women into the organisation.

Making a national Women's Commission one of the party structures is a recognition by the entire organisation of the need to give women the space within the organisation to develop as cadres and leaders and to take initiatives in developing the theory and mass practice of the party particularly with regard to women as well as generally.