

X: PC, UFOs

Paris, Dec. 10, 1977

New York

Dear Gus,

Ch-A and I went to Italy Dec. 3-6. This is a brief report on what happened. The trip was decided on quite suddenly. For weeks Livio had been hinting that there were some dangerous developments in the section, but he never reported exactly what was up. We only found out when Ch-A went down to Italy for a central committee meeting a week or so before our joint trip, and found out that the majority of CC comrades would probably have voted to dissolve the GCR if he hadn't been there to argue against it. The CC took place only shortly after Comrade Caronia, a member of the Political Bureau and editor of their paper, Bandiera Rossa, had resigned from the GCR, developing anti-Leninist views. This came after several other leading comrades in various cities had also left, one going over to the "autonomias" and others looking to the "Movement of Boulogna" as the road to build a party. When we arrived in Milan we learned that the comrades in Rome and Genoa had also just recently left the GCR, although many of them still consider themselves Trotskyists and look to the Fourth International. In addition, to give you an idea of the state of the organization, the new issue of Bandiera Rossa had just come out with a full-page interview with Caronia on why he, the former editor, had left the organization. He explains all his views about the "crisis of Marxism" with no answer whatsoever from the GCR!

Also, when we arrived, we found that Livio had sent the comrades a draft political resolution for their upcoming congress, to be considered by the political bureau. He hadn't told the bureau that he was doing this, although the bureau had discussed beforehand the political situation in Italy and what kind of things bureau members could write to aid the comrades in their pre-congress discussion. Livio's document contained an extremely pessimistic assessment of the opportunities for building the party today in Italy. He lays out a theory about the supposed structural weakening of the working class, and paints the new student movement in Italy as a largely dangerous, ~~and~~ phenomenon, with a different logic than the youth radicalization of the 1960s in that it is not headed toward a link with the working class.

First Ch-A and I had a long discussion with ^{Silvio} ~~Silvio~~, who had requested it. (Livio was also part of our "bureau delegation" on this trip, but agreed it might be best for him not to be present at the talk with ^{Silvio} ~~Silvio~~.) On the political situation, ^(Silvio) he agreed with us that the period was one of big opportunities, not downturns and defeats. He said the "structural" changes in the working class (firings of workers in old-fashioned factories, return of ~~unemployed immigrant workers~~ from Switzerland, France, etc, big reduction of women workers) were having the effect of aggravating the social and political crisis, rather than

weakening the workers movement. He gave us an interesting thumbnail sketch of the history of Trotskyism in Italy.

As to his attitude to the International, he says he considers it "centrist sui generis." He says he is in the Massari group now, called the Communist League, which has this same characterization of the International. However, he seems to be very loosely connected with Massari's group, and was speaking with us as an individual, not representing the group in any way. He says the Fourth International is organizationally the continuity of Trotskyism, and that if he were in the U.S. or France or Spain, he would join the SWP or LCRs, but that in Italy he doesn't think the GCR is the framework for building a party, in and of itself. He says the FI is not a real international but a federation of several big parties--SWP, LCR, Moreno--who simply use the International as an arena to fight for their positions. He says if this were admitted openly it would be fine, but that we try to claim we are a real International. Within this framework, he claims loyalty to the FI and says the Massari group is for fusion with the GCR or would like to be a sympathizing group of the International. The group has maybe 25 members.

Next, me, Ch-A, and Livio had a meeting with Dario and another guy from Dario's group, the LSR. The LSR had previously written to the Bureau, requesting a discussion with a bureau delegation and asking to be recognized as a fraternal organization of the FI.

They say they have 300 members, which is probably not too exaggerated. In addition, they have a youth organization that has significant influence in high school and university struggles in Rome and Naples. It has a weekly paper, Punto Rosso, which concentrates on student issues. In addition, the LSR published a newspaper, Avanzada Proletaria, until July, and ~~xxx~~ have decided to publish a party magazine instead, beginning in January. They obviously have a serious organization, even though they said the average age in the LSR was 17-18. They propose fusion with the GCR, and specifically requested leadership discussions with the GCR on how to move forward in building a party in Italy. They consider the GCR too federalist and too much running after the "far left" instead of orienting to the mass of CP and SP workers. But Dario used a formula like this: "Whenever there is a conflict between the far left and the masses under CP and SP leadership, you have to chose which camp, and we are with the masses." The LSR has voted that the organization as a whole should affiliate to the BT.

The third day we met with the Political Bureau of the GCR. The comrades began discussing the roots of "the crisis" and what they could do to get out of it. The key comrade in the Montifiori FIAT plant in Turin was for dissolution when he arrived, but Ch-A changed his mind during the lunch break. The worst one in the discussion was Pelligrini, who argued that the GCR was

an obstacle to building a revolutionary party. He said through the "Movement of Boulogna" we now have the chance to build a new leadership out of this mass movement which has many common points of reference with revolutionary Marxism. We can win hegemony on many axes of the debate that is taking place among these people, and it is wrong to lose this opportunity just because of a desire to preserve the banner of the GCR (these are roughly quotes).

Here are some of the points that the non-dissolution comrades made: We have underestimated the organization question. We have had no capacity to intervene politically because of lack of a link between analysis and what to do. We never thought: how can we build a leadership? We thought leadership just had the function of making analysis, not leading on what to do. We reduced the leadership to Livio, and he had no roots in the real work....

We have had no concrete perspectives for building the organization. We made catastrophic analyses, exaggerating the degree of the crisis and leaping to substitutionist projects. We have had a tradition of workerism, which meant marginalizing many possible spheres of work to build the party. The "privileged relationship" we adopted with Lotta Continua at our 1975 congress was not seen as a tactic to build the party, but it was thought that the relationship with LC would automatically give us more influence....

We have lost the identity of the organization by not wanting to appear sectarian and always saying we were not the nucleus of the revolutionary party.

These are just some of the best points that came out in a confused discussion that went from 10 in the morning until midnight.

Ch-A made a long intervention which was generally quite good and based on what we had discussed beforehand. He made the following points: "Livio's analysis is wrong; we face a rather long period of big opportunities to build an organization. Yes, there is a big politicization and debates taking place in the new student movement, but we must project a clear programmatic and organizational alternative; Pelligrini's view is liquidationist....

"The "crisis of identity" problem is partly a responsibility of the IMT. We always stressed the fact that the party will only be built through fusions with bigger forces, but overstressing this led to some confusion. We must recognize that we are the programmatic nucleus of the revolutionary party....

"The key problem for the GCR is to build a team leadership, integrating people who think differently, instead of always pushing them out, as happened with Dario, Silvio, and others. Linked to this is the necessity for investigating fusion with the ISR. Must put aside sub-

jective hostility to the LSR comrades and look objectively at what they mean for the Trotskyist movement. The international implications of this question--how it is necessary and strengthens the International to press for the integration of all the currents in the International....

The organization question is a political question. We must learn to make political choices to build the organization, not just analysis. The GCR didn't win over a single member of Lotta Continua through its orientation toward it. It was seen not as a way to build the organization...."

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We will need to send bureau people down there several more times in the coming months, I think. The comrades want it very much--most of them, that is. ~~Some~~ see it as a war opening up against them. *Others*

What struck me during the trip was the extent of agreement between Ch-A and me on what had to be done. He still doesn't ~~see~~ see the whole consistency of the new mass vanguard orientation as the problem, but I think that's going to become clearer and clearer in the pre-congress debate that will have to address the whole crisis.

I think the Italian discussion will be a help in clarifying the discussion on the European resolution. Questions like the new mass vanguard orientation, trade union work, CP-SP government slogan, pressure from the radical feminist current, and the whole counterculturalist pressure are posed concretely in the record of the Italian section. While the French and Spanish LCRs, the IMG, and other former IMT-led groups have made some corrections of vanguardist errors in the past, the GCR seems never to have done this, and now, combined with the special leadership problems they have, these errors have exploded in a big crisis.

That's all for now. We'll have more to tell you after I discuss this all with Barry and we have the U Sec discussion on Italy this weekend.

Comradely,

Caroline

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