

# Unity and the Italian far left

## Dear Comrades,

In this letter we would like to explain our view of the present state of relations between Liga Comunista Rivoluzionaria (LCR) and Democrazia Proletaria (DP), and the further developments which we think desirable and possible.

These relations went through a rather difficult initial phase before the 1983 legislative elections and in the following year, as was shown by the absence of any collaboration in the 1984 European elections. Subsequently, relations were re-established and have developed over the last year in ways which we consider, overall, to be increasingly satisfactory, in terms of collaborating to build 'democrazia consiliare' (council democracy) in the CGIL (trade union federation), in local elections and other less important events. This does not mean that our relations are as good as they might be, or that they are good in all areas. We are quite aware of our own limitations in this respect.

However, it seems to us that raising the question of the further development of relations between the LCR and DP requires a clear analysis of three areas:

- the state of the new left in Italy;
- the opportunities for the new left opened up by the bourgeoisie's increasingly anti-proletarian and anti-social policies and the crisis of the PCI;
- the existence of DP as an instrument for exploiting these opportunities.

It is only in this context that discussion of DP's own limitations makes any political sense. Let us explain to you, briefly, our view of these questions.

Through the referendum initiative, taken up by DP in 1982 and supported by you, for the return of a sliding scale of wages, the Italian new left began to overcome the long phase of acute crisis and decline which had set in

after the dissolution of Lotta Continua and the sharp faction fights within the PDUP and Avanguardia Operaia. The new left's recent recovery, although still weak, corresponds to an 'objective' radical need, both social and political. The Communist Party (PCI), itself in crisis, sliding rightwards and paralysed by internal conflicts, is less and less able to provide credible answers. This need can be met, in large measure, by DP—because DP, as a nucleus of ideas and cadre, has inherited the image, as well as some of the social links and political space, that the new left enjoyed in the 1970s. We have, of course, worked hard to acquire this inheritance as well as the much greater potential we could fulfill.

Surviving for ten years in the difficult conditions of a long period of retreat for the workers' movement and the youth movement, with partial defeats for the workers and a collapse of Marxism (even if the native, 'Togliatti' variant was already severely limited) has cost DP dear. DP was formed in 1977, bringing together part of Avanguardia Operaia, part of the PDUP and other smaller forces. These forces which initially made up DP had not really considered the reasons for the crisis of their predecessors in the new left; they were traumatised by the experience of attrition and conflict. The defeat in the 1979 elections for the candidates of the United New Left brought to an end the first phase of DP's existence, a phase that was marked above all by the continuation of those factors which had brought the previous organisations into crisis. Self critical reflection of this experience and its theoretical roots opened the way to a slow process of consolidation, leading, amongst other things, to the 1982 referendum initiative.

At the beginning, therefore, DP drew together forces which were both heterogenous and rather worn out. This 'wear and tear' was manifest in terms both of theory and militancy. Even now, DP is a political organisation that bears the scars of the last decade, and especially of the first part of that decade. Leon Trotsky developed the concept of 'unequal and combined development' to describe the transformation of Tsarist Russia under the pressure of nascent capitalism, partly indigenous and partly imported. You could say, with some poetic licence, that DP itself has been shaped by a similar process, in as much as its different 'component parts' moved largely independent of each other to begin with, and only later began to combine and move in synch, but still without the unevenness between them being fully overcome.

The heterogeneity is not so much the result of different cultural traditions coming together in DP, for example the presence of comrades who are believers, or of 'non-violent' comrades; in fact, we have made an effort to facilitate their presence. It results more from the acute difference in theoretical level between leading cadre and rank and file militants, from the great organisational imbalance between north and south, from the many weaknesses and inequalities amongst the membership on some very important political questions, from numerous traces of primitivism, and from organisational weaknesses.

At the same time, the leadership team has always believed it would be dangerous to try and push a process of homogenisation from above. Even when sharp internal discussions have arisen, it has preferred to bank on safe, long term measures, generating greater homogeneity amongst militants by collectively working through the political and theoretical questions, both big and small, as they come up.

This long journey through purgatory has had positive results. It has led to a now considerable degree of agreement amongst the cadre, as well as a good atmosphere and a high level of internal discussion. We believe it has also allowed good work to be done in reviewing and updating many important questions of revolutionary theory and class politics, and helped to oil the complicated mechanics of relaunching our public image in order to win greater support.

Less needs to be said about the present possibilities for greatly increasing the influence and organised strength of the Italian new left. Although still precarious the simultaneous recovery of different social sectors, especially the youth, together with the serious crisis in the PCI (which cannot be overcome in the short term, and is indeed likely to deepen), present the new left with tremendous opportunities and responsibilities, both towards itself and towards the workers. It seems clear, given the place DP now occupies, that this is the only political force in a position to take advantage of these opportunities. Therefore it seems to us evident that, once a sufficient basis of political and theoretical agreement has been identified, the duty of revolutionaries is to reinforce DP.

Our proposal to the LCR, therefore, is simultaneously very simple and very complex: to enter DP.

We realise that such a proposal involves various problems and may create difficulties among you. It is this concern which has made us hesitate. We are not interested in winning over bits of this or that organisation. According to our conception of the effort needed to reinforce or 'relaunch' DP, it is essential that we are at the heart of a process of growth involving the convergence of significant forces, both in numerical terms and in terms of their theoretical and political capacity. All convergences should occur on terms of equal dignity for everyone, and with full respect for the human, theoretical and historical contributions of each party.

More precisely, we believe that the LCR's integration could signal a reversal of the tendency over two decades for the new left to disperse and splinter. Furthermore, we believe that with the help of your cadre, it will be possible to strengthen significantly our political and mass intervention, from the teachers' union to the peace movement; while continued separation of our organisations, partly because of conflict of interests which remain, renders the result of our collaboration far too limited, and indeed prevents collaboration.

In our opinion, there is only one serious problem involved in the proposal for the LCR to be integrated into DP. This is the different tradition

and practice on international relations, given that you are affiliated to an international organisation and we are not. However, we do not think that the differences of theoretical tradition are really so serious. Fundamentally, it is a question of the reference to Trotskyism and to Trotsky's analysis of the USSR and other countries of a similar social character.

Let us start with this latter point. It seems to us that the fundamental principles of the political and theoretical battle waged by Trotsky and the communist minorities that he brought together in the Fourth International have won a place in the consciousness of the Italian new left, which is now openly and deeply anti-Stalinist right across the board. (These ideas even prevail, albeit with tremendous ambiguities, within the PCI.) Our theoretical framework is that of revolutionary Marxism, and Trotsky occupies, in our opinion, a position of great importance.

That doesn't mean that DP is 'Trotskyist', in the sense that it shares every point of the Fourth International's theses, in particular the formula which characterises the USSR as a 'degenerated workers' state'. As you know, we think that this formula is inadequate in several respects. However, if we look at the basis of your analyses and ours, and without minimising the elements of difference which exist, we believe that there is a broad and substantial convergence. To paraphrase comrade Trotsky, perhaps a bit unfairly, we could say that the terminological differences do not necessarily reflect differences of substance. What is more, if the differences in question are of limited extent, and above all if they are handled in an open and fraternal way, then the presence of ideas like yours in DP are no problem; on the contrary, they would in fact draw the attention of the membership to some important questions which are often neglected today, including that of the real history of the international communist movement since the 1920s. As we have already pointed out, within DP today there are differences of political culture which represent an entirely positive contribution to its debate and to the increased maturity of its members.

As far as international relations are concerned, we do not think that there is any difficulty in envisaging relations with the Fourth International, just as we have, or seek to have, with different forces of the European and non-European left, and with different liberation movements. At the same time we rule out any affiliation, because we believe that it would not be useful to try and overcome with political-organisational solutions, the complicated theoretical and political differences which mark the world revolutionary movement today and in the future. Such an attempt, we believe, could engender misunderstandings and dangers of sectarianism.

### **National Secretariat of Democrazia Proletaria**

*The reply from Liga Comunista Rivoluzionaria . . .*

#### **Dear comrades,**

We have been slow in replying to you for two reasons. Firstly, because

as you will appreciate, the contents of your letter demanded a full discussion and a well-considered reply. Secondly, because the timetable previously drawn up for our forthcoming national conference prevented us from fitting all our discussions into a single Central Committee meeting.

First of all we would like to give our opinion on a few points which are marginal to the central question you raise, but which nonetheless are important in terms of the political debate between DP and the LCR.

We share your judgement of the development of relations between DP and the LCR. Standing together in elections (in the 1983 legislative elections and the 1985 local elections) and the shared commitment to building 'council democracy' have been important instances of unity in action. The LCR, too, has expressed its favourable evaluation of these experiences, albeit in possibly less optimistic tones than those in your letter.

The quality of the work we have undertaken together shows that there is quite a broad area of convergence in terms of practical politics, that our two organisations sometimes have similar reactions to important questions in the class struggle, and that the experiences of the 1970s forms for both of us a common heritage of struggles and lessons.

However, we think it necessary to make clear that the strengthening of relations between our two organisations is linked firstly to a political conception which is traditional for us and which has always been one of our characteristics, even if on other occasions the political results have been less significant. This is the attempt to achieve unity in action with other forces in the workers' movement for specific objectives on which it is possible to reach concrete agreement. Such a method (that of the united front) is a constant practice and one of the programmatic foundations of the LCR and of the Fourth International as a whole.

Today we are thoroughly convinced that unity in action between the DP and LCR is useful, not only because it allows the convergence of forces which cannot be brought together more generally, but above all because it makes it easier to involve sectors at the base of the PCI and the unions, the vanguards in the different social movements, and unorganised militants who for the time being are not inclined to join political organisations. All this can help to carry out the tasks of resistance and opposition which are an indispensable priority today, as well as promote the arguments and shared research which are equally indispensable for giving the left a fresh perspective.

In this respect, to cite just one negative example, we regret that over the battle against the installation of missiles at Comiso, DP did not clearly opt for the path of unity in action. The lack of a firm commitment on your part in favour of the proposal put forward by the Independent Left for a referendum—the only proposal that was valid at the time—unquestionably reduced its impact and its potential. Our campaign in favour of a referendum, even though it found a certain resonance, was not strong enough to change things significantly. We remain convinced that a united initiative

by our two organisations might have been able to reverse the situation, or at least make more difficult the PCI's blocking manoeuvres and thereby develop the anti-missiles movement's dynamic.

In any case, we hope to be able to discuss in a proper and productive way everything relating to possible joint initiatives by our organisations over the next period, and in the process to overcome the misunderstandings or political difficulties which could impede or prevent further useful agreements. But we want to emphasise that our firm belief in the validity of the method of unity in action goes hand in hand with an equally firm belief that this method does not contradict our commitment to building our own independent organisation, with its own programme, its own strategic perspective, its own theoretical framework, and its own organisational structures.

Such a belief is by no means the result of some residual sectarian mania that would have us separate ourselves at all costs from the rest of the left. It flows from repeated demonstrations of the fact that no other force on the left, not even DP, sets itself the tasks and the aims which we set ourselves.

We come here to the heart of the matter which you raised in your letter—the LCR's entry into DP.

Your proposal that the LCR should dissolve itself and break its political and organisational links with the Fourth International in order to enter DP is based fundamentally on two arguments. Firstly, you say, DP is the only force to have gathered the heritage of 1968 and which now plays the role of catalysing new forces which emerge in the course of political struggle in different fields. Secondly, you continue, the LCR is heir to a historical legacy which is certainly important, but which has now largely permeated the culture of the left. This account renders entirely superfluous the existence of the LCR as a separate organisation and means that our cadre and militants would be better employed building the only organisation able to operate effectively on the left of the PCI—DP.

It is undeniably true that DP has drawn together most of what remains of the 1970s' 'new left', and that it represents today a real point of reference for radicalizing sectors of society. But the second argument in your letter is entirely false. The anti-Stalinist political basis on which the existence of the LCR and of the Fourth International is founded can by no means be reduced to our battle for the defence of democracy in the USSR and in the workers' movement, even if that battle has featured throughout much of our political existence.

In fact, the battle in defence of workers' democracy and the Stalinist Thermidor was, as Trotsky saw it, an integral part of defending the revolutionary and internationalist character of the Third International, as founded by Lenin, and which Stalin transformed into an instrument for the defence of 'socialism in one country'. For Trotsky, therefore, it was not simply a question of opting for democracy. It was a question of grasping the central element

of the hellish political and organisational mechanism through which Stalin had managed to disperse and bury the Third International's great revolutionary tradition.

The Fourth International, even after Trotsky's death, has continued to provide an important laboratory for theoretical reflection. It was, for example, the only political current to grasp the prolonged crisis of the capitalist economy that began at the beginning of the 1970s, when all other currents on the left, the 'new' ones included, thought that the boom would last forever and that the crisis was only apparent, or that it was merely the result of diabolical manoeuvres by the bosses or the rising struggle of the masses.

But the essential point is not that the Fourth International has succeeded in bringing revolutionary Marxism up to date. Rather it is a question of clarifying what this revolutionary Marxism, to which both the LCR and DP lay claim, is. In fact, we believe that beyond the formula there are really deep differences over a core of ideas, strategic perspectives and programmatic contents, which lie behind the words themselves.

We do not want to launch into an inevitably complicated dissertation on the subject here. But we do think we need to mention a few significant points which in our opinion necessarily flow from an acceptance of revolutionary Marxism and which form an integral part of the programme of the Fourth International and of the LCR.

Firstly, the Marxist and Leninist conception of the state and of proletarian revolution means recognizing the need to *destroy* the bourgeois state apparatus and replace it with a new apparatus, based on organs of workers' power and the dismantling of the coercive instruments which the bourgeoisie uses to maintain itself in power (the army, police, etc). This seizure of power by the workers and exploited layers of society will not be possible without a rupture, in all probability a violent one. This is what we call a revolutionary rupture. This rupture leading to the seizure of power is obviously not an *end in itself*; it is *the means* to begin expropriating the ruling classes (who will not surrender their power spontaneously, but on the contrary will use every means available to organize their resistance, including armed struggle). This is equally valid for developed capitalist countries, at the moment when the concrete dynamic of class struggle lays bare the absolute incompatibility between existing class relations and the social, political and spiritual needs of the working class and of the vast bulk of the people. This, too, is a fundamental part of our programme. If other roads were possible, the proletariat would certainly take them. But never in history have the old ruling classes let themselves be expropriated without a fight. And without such expropriation it would prove exceedingly difficult to achieve that 'new, self-managed, ecologically balanced, socially oriented, culturally tolerant and democratic world' for which both DP and LCR are struggling.

Secondly, there is a clear difference in principle between bourgeois democracy and socialist democracy. The two cannot be reduced, respectively, to representative democracy and direct democracy. This means it

is clear that there will be no gradual transition from the one (bourgeois democracy) to the other (socialist democracy). It is equally clear that the co-existence of mixed forms is not appropriate or achievable as a model (this is the illusion of Ingrao's old ideas<sup>1</sup>); it can only exist under exceptional circumstances during a phase of rising class struggle where the proletariat deploys its organisational and political energies to the full (dual power). Such a situation leads either to the workers seizing power or to the bourgeoisie restoring its social, political and ideological control and suppressing or neutralizing those instruments of democracy created by the workers.

Thirdly, there is the question of the 'three sectors of revolution' in the world. Recognizing the existence of these three sectors means having a consistent, internationalist approach to our political action. This must be based on recognition, and if possible unification at all levels, firstly through solidarity, of the workers' interests in the capitalist countries, in the semi-colonial, oppressed or at least dependent countries, and in those countries where they are dominated by the bureaucracy. This also means correctly grasping the different character of the revolutionary path in these sectors: socialist revolution in the imperialist countries; antibureaucratic revolution in the countries which have gone beyond capitalism; and in dependent countries 'socialist revolution or caricature of revolution', to quote from Che Guevara, who had experienced in the flesh the impasse of revolutions that began on the terrain of democratic and anti-imperialist struggle, but did not grow over towards socialism.

Fourthly, we want to recall the method of the Transitional Programme, that of adopting aims which are capable, on the one hand, of really satisfying the workers' needs, and, on the other, of helping them to realize that their interests and those of the ruling class are irreconcilable, and therefore preparing them at all levels for a consistent anti-capitalist struggle. That means putting forward a programme that encourages the masses' self-organisation, their participation in decision-making and in the drawing up of proposals, and which helps them to understand that so long as the present relations of production continue to exist, no qualitative transformation of society for the better can be begun. On the contrary, the only perspective is one of regression, as capitalism in the 1980s is showing us.

Thus the Transitional Programme is firmly opposed to the method that separates *minimum* immediate aims from *maximum* aims (which are never achieved), just as it is opposed to the illusion that little islands of socialist happiness can be created here and now within capitalism.

This list does not exhaust the subject matter of revolutionary Marxism, but it does indicate some of the essential themes. There is, however, another point to which we would like to draw your attention. This is the need to build not just an *alternative* revolutionary leadership to that of the workers' movement's traditional leaderships, but also to build an *international* revolutionary leadership. Such an international leadership is indispensable both

to respond to capitalism's world crisis and to co-ordinate at a strategic level the proletarian struggles in different sectors of the world.

Already in the last century, when Marx and Engels were working to build the First International (before any national party), they started not from any abstract theoretical considerations but from undeniable political facts, including the fact that in its struggle for socialism the proletariat was obliged to organise on an international scale in order to respond to the bourgeoisie's world-wide organisation. Other great leaders of the workers' movement, like Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci and Che Guevara, have had the same approach. Of course, it is not that we have a fetish about 'great leaders', any more than we have a fetish about particular writings or bits of programme inherited from the past. It is simply a question of whether such ideas are still valid, and whether an international organisation of the proletariat is still necessary. This is a crucial question facing the international workers' movement today.

Following the emergence of multinational companies and supranational economic and political bodies (including NATO and other military pacts), the worldwide organisation of the bourgeoisie has now been greatly strengthened compared to Marx and Engels' day, or even those of other leaders. For us, those ideas retain their validity because they have been borne out by the reality of contemporary capitalism, by the reality of the class struggle. That is why we belong to the Fourth International. For this is the embodiment of our idea of internationalism, understood not merely as solidarity with liberation struggles in dependent countries, which it goes without saying is a task of the first importance (and the different sections of the Fourth International can always be found in the front line of such work), but above all as organising workers on a world scale. In defending this idea and the practice which flows from it, we are confident we place ourselves firmly in the tradition of revolutionary Marxism.

We do not think this is at all an abstract, ideological question. Unfortunately, so far, the only proof has been of the negative variety. But it is still useful. The lack of adequate internationalist awareness and international organisation is undoubtedly one of the European proletariat's most serious weaknesses in its struggles against the bourgeoisie's offensive (and we should add that this is one of the most harmful and long-lasting consequences of Stalinism).

The French steelworkers' struggle, the 35-day long struggle at Fiat, the mobilization throughout Europe against the installation of missiles, to mention just a few of the more important examples, would not have ended as they did if there had been a European trade union organisation or a real European co-ordination of the anti-missiles movement. Even solidarity with Nicaragua, with South Africa, and more generally with Third World struggles would be infinitely more effective. It is not a matter of rewriting history on the basis of hypotheses, but of reckoning how much the absence of consistent international awareness and organisation has already cost the workers'

movement and all opposition movements, how much it is still costing, and how much it is likely to cost in the future.

You explain quite rightly in your theses that the programmatic project which revolutionaries should put forward in opposition to the irrationality of capitalism must be a full and rounded whole. That is fine, but how is it possible not to realise that such a programmatic project can only take form if the problems and proposals are seen in an international and internationalist perspective? Faced with the bourgeois crisis and offensive, there are in fact only two alternatives open to the workers' movement: either that advocated by reformists, namely the alliance of each national working class with 'its own' bourgeoisie against the working class of other countries; or that of solidarity and alliance between workers in all capitalist countries (beginning, in this case, with Europe) against their respective bourgeoisies. Any alternative proposal which is not clear on this fundamental point will, in the final analysis, be *unconvincing and will lend credibility* (albeit marginally) *to the reformists' line*.

Confronted with this list of programmatic and strategic differences you may object that it is just a lot of words and abstractions, that maybe we are right and maybe we aren't, we'll see later on, but that now the important thing is to build something, to carry out now the concrete tasks that are posed.

We too are entirely convinced of the pressing need to build, and to come to grips with concrete tasks. To the best of our ability we are doing just this, and we have every intention of doing it better. But we are equally convinced that there is a very close link between immediate tasks and the basic axioms which we have tried to indicate, and that being or not being in agreement on these fundamentals is not without political consequences for the concrete battles being waged and for the kind of political organisation that is being built.

Allow us to give a few concrete examples. We did not agree with the positions which DP expressed at several crucial moments over the last year, namely on the Sigonella events<sup>2</sup>, on the twists and turns of the 1970s and the arrest of former Avanguardia Operaia comrades<sup>3</sup>, and on the attitudes to be taken towards Libya<sup>4</sup>.

As far as the Sigonella events were concerned, DP had an ambiguous and contradictory attitude towards the imperialist character of Italy and its foreign policy. This was not merely a question of written formulations, but had, in our opinion, negative political effects on your party's public statements over the formation of Craxi's second government, when you demanded the exclusion of the ultra-Atlanticist Spadolini. It is true that in your journal you reaffirm the imperialist character of Italian capitalism. But you do not draw the necessary political conclusions. In fact, you continue to accept the idea of an American 'super-imperialism', or, worse still, of a worldwide confrontation between superpowers (USA and USSR), thereby suggesting the progressive implications of a battle for Italy's 'na-

tional independence', 'autonomy' or 'sovereignty'.

The contradictory character of your approach was also revealed over the Craxi government's decree of sanctions on arms sales to Libya (with your parliamentary question on the subject). Here your strategic pacifism—misconceived and inappropriate as it was—got the better of a badly needed anti-imperialist fight against the combined US-Israeli aggression against Libya, which the Italian government supported. It is the view of the LCR that such a stand should be the guiding principle of all political responses in a situation where an imperialist power is attacking, or threatening to attack, the people of a country which, in spite of everything, remains, like Qaddafi's Libya, a dependent country.

As for the arrests, DP's positions have been various and contradictory. The entirely unacceptable remarks made by comrade Basilio Rizzo in the Milan town council were not repeated by other party leaders whose statements we agree with—but nor were they disowned. What is more, your youth section in Milan expressed positions not very different to those of comrade Rizzo.

Two lines therefore, and not two lines coming from different sectors of DP, but two lines from the DP leadership as a whole, depending on who they are talking to. That is the consequence of deciding not to test out seriously where the line of 'strategic pacifism' and 'Italy's national sovereignty' leads. We could continue the list of things on which we do not agree, drawing on your written statements and documents. But we do not think it useful to do that here.

To draw to the close of what is necessarily a long letter, we want to emphasise that, in the present state of things, DP and the LCR cannot be welded into one because, in spite of valuable joint work, they remain quite heterogeneous forces, aiming to build two substantially different things.

You have chosen to build a party by occupying all the available spaces, exploiting to the full the advantage you have of representing what remains of the 1970s new left. In this effort to build, you regard it as secondary (or perhaps premature) to define more precisely a politico-theoretical identity which might limit DP's purchase on different sectors. The LCR, on the other hand, is trying to develop a precise political project, to build a party whose cadres as a whole are aware of their fundamental objectives.

It goes without saying, since we do not make a fetish of organisational forms either, that we would be perfectly prepared to dissolve ourselves and enter into another organisation, provided that there were sufficient clarity about political tasks and strategic perspectives. It seems to us that this is a necessary condition if you want to build a revolutionary party and not just 'any old' party.

Differences which are merely papered over erupt anew when the political situation demands clear choices. All vagueness in politics and theory makes for militants who soon lose their bearings when faced with a sudden turn in events, with strong ideological pressures and difficult times in the class

struggle.

To conclude, your letter by no means meets the need for that 'rigorous confrontation' which is only possible as a genuine political confrontation. And that is separate from the need to extend the joint work already undertaken, firstly in the trade unions, and to address seriously the differences of orientation and application which may, and in fact do, prevent practical agreements in other sectors, especially in the anti-war movement.

When we talk of 'political confrontation', we mean that it is necessary to lay bare the fundamental differences; in other words, it is necessary to test out where we agree and where we disagree, and to decide the basis for future relations between our two organisations, looking beyond the 'fronts' formed on merely partial, anti-bureaucratic objectives.

This confrontation could be developed through different initiatives and at different levels; symposiums, leadership meetings, debates between our militants on the crucial questions for building a revolutionary party. In our opinion, the discussion on proletarian internationalism is an unavoidable part of this confrontation. To put it simply, we believe that DP should confront the political reality of the LCR as it is, as part of an international political reality.

We believe it is useful for two, far-left, workers' organisations—two *honest* workers' organisations—to take stock of their agreements and disagreements. In our view, such a confrontation can only have positive results in terms of political clarity. What is more, the approach adopted by DP's national secretariat reveals very inadequate knowledge of both the LCR and the Fourth International. What we certainly wish to avoid is precisely that such a confrontation be avoided and the differences made light of (in a more or less concealed attempt to represent the LCR's reluctance to be swallowed alive as sectarian pig-headedness).

To recognize, as we do, that there are two approaches, two programmes, two different political projects, and that at present the conditions for fusion do not exist, does not mean that we wish, like all manner of sectarians, to erect Chinese walls or watertight compartments.

Frank and loyal recognition of differences and their origins is itself a not unimportant factor in that political clarification which we believe to be a central part of the complicated, difficult and unpredictable process of building a really revolutionary party.

### **LCR National Secretariat**

#### **Notes**

(All footnotes added by editors)

1. Pietro Ingrao. Longstanding member of the PCI leadership, traditionally associated with the left of the party.

2. The Sigonella affair refers to the forcing down of a passenger aircraft by USAF fighters to the Sigonella NATO base in Sicily in 1985. A dispute arose between Italian police and US soldiers as to who was to take custody of pro-Palestinian guerillas on board. The final decision by the Italian government to take charge of the prisoners was greeted as an act of national independence by most parties including DP.
3. The arrest of Avanguardia Operaia members in 1985 charged with the murder of a young fascist in the 1970s gave rise to an appeal by DP Milan councillor Basilio Rizzi for national reconciliation and an end to the violence that characterised that period.
4. At the height of the propaganda and military offensive against Libya, DP raised parliamentary questions about the fact that the government's ban on arms sales to Libya was not being enforced.