

Editorial

Andrea Catone

The title we have given this double issue is intended to reflect some of the themes discussed here, starting with two anniversaries, the centenary of the founding of the Italian Communist Party (January 1921) and of the Communist Party of China (July 1921): two very different histories in very different areas of the world and political contexts, and with outcomes that are currently diametrically opposed. The one, today the largest communist party at the head of the most populous country in the world, has accomplished in a century an extraordinary path of emancipation that – for the quality of the changes that have taken place and the number of people involved – has no equal in the history of humanity. The other, rich in the great theoretical elaboration of Antonio Gramsci and Palmiro Togliatti and in a heroic history of resistance to fascism and partisan struggle in the War of Liberation, was protagonist in the post-war period of mass social and political struggles. In terms of membership and electoral consensus, it was the largest communist party in the West. It closed its doors in 1991, and today there is still no prospect of a genuine rebirth of Italian communism, due to our great failures and mistakes made during the 30 years that separate us from the inglorious end of the ICP. An abysmal distance seems to separate the destinies of Italian and Chinese communists.

But this is not the case. Chinese communists, with internationalist commitment, look with interest and participation at the events and situation of Italian communists, no less than we do with regard to the CPC and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

On the occasion of the centenary of the founding of the CPC, the Marx21 Association organised an initiative, coordinated by Francesco Maringìò, with the secretaries of the communist parties in Italy belonging to the international network Solidnet (which brings together the world's main communist parties) Maurizio Acerbo (Party of Communist Refoundation), Mauro Alboresi (Italian Communist Party), Marco Rizzo (Communist Party), together with the Chinese communists, represented at the highest level by Professor Gong Yun, deputy director of the Academy of Marxism, theorist of socialism with Chinese characteristics and a leading intellectual of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and by H. E. Li Junhua, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the PRC in Italy. As well as focusing on the history and the long, complex and non-unilinear path taken by the CPC to its current great success, the meeting was also an opportunity for dialogue between Italian communist organisations which, beyond (in some cases remarkable) differences in their reading of their own roots, the history of the international and national workers' movement, and in the conception and practice of the organisation and internal life of a communist party, in the analysis of the Italian situation and in the consequent strategy and tactics to follow, they have found significant points of convergence on the need to mobilise to combat the growing militarisation of international relations and remove the helmet from a mainstream information already ready to enlist as embedded media in the climate of a 'new cold war' that the American administration –

without great differences in this case between Trump and Biden – is fuelling against the People’s Republic of China, accused today of everything and more: a despotic, dictatorial, totalitarian regime, a denial of civil and human rights from Hong Kong to Xinjiang and Tibet; responsible for the origin and spread of the Covid-19 pandemic; a serial violator of the privacy of its citizens and those around the world through diabolical spy software disguised behind seemingly harmless apps; a thief of technological information; intent on establishing world domination using the Silk Road as a Trojan horse, an exploiter of Africa... in short, worse than that ‘evil empire’, as Reagan baptised the Soviet Union, which in the 1980s was subjected to an extremely violent attack that succeeded, at the end of the decade, in destroying it. The communists, together with all the political, social, intellectual, lay and Catholic forces that are authentically democratic, have the task of working seriously and systematically in the fundamental long-term cultural battle in order to build an environment, a cultural terrain, a spiritual climate opposed to the Cold War and the anti-Chinese and anti-Russian crusade, and projected instead towards the *construction of a community of shared destiny for all of humanity*. The construction of a community of shared destiny for all of humanity is the theme that Xi Jinping and the entire Chinese Communist Party have been insisting on for several years, adding it to their constitution in their 19th Congress (2017).

In order to provide food for thought on the situation, characteristics and trends of the world community at the beginning of the 21st century, we are publishing as the first article in this double issue an interesting and stimulating text by the Russian historian, recipient of the Lenin Prize in the Soviet era, LENNOR IVANOVICH OLSHTYNSKY, taken from the theoretical-political journal of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), *Politicheskoe Prosveshchenie*, with which since 2016 (since the special issue of *MarxVentuno: Imperialism and wars in the 21st century*) our journal has maintained relations of collaboration and exchange. The author profiles the post-World War II period, divided into 2 periods, 1945-1991 and 1991-2021. The victory in the Cold War provided only a respite from the crisis of world imperialism, which reached the limits of its expansion and saw its sources of economic growth shrink. The United States has lost its role as the world’s leading producer, largely overtaken by China. The phase that is opening up is fraught with dangers, because imperialism, which in the US is strongly impregnated with fascism, tends, as the history of the twentieth century shows, to resolve its contradictions with war. Russia can play an important role: its military power inherited from the USSR, in alliance with China, is the main deterrent to the aggression of American imperialism. For this reason, the leaders of the two big countries must not fall into the trap of a partnership with the US, which attempts to play one country off against the other.

In this regard, it may be useful to examine the role of the European Union and the ideology it has elaborated in recent decades through its official documents, among which one of the heaviest and most reactionary is certainly the *Resolution* approved by a large majority by the European Parliament in September 2019, which equates in responsibility for the unleashing of World War II USSR and Nazi Germany, lumped together under the category of “totalitarianism”. The *Resolution* provoked a certain reaction at the time and there were several critical stances. Since we believe that the issue has not lost any of its topicality and that the critique of this reactionary ideology of the EU should be developed in the most reasoned manner, we publish three texts here. An article written explicitly for the magazine by historian Enrico Maria Massucci (*The drift of the Eu project. Critical notes*)

states that the *Resolution* moves along the lines of that revisionism which, as it attacked the French Revolution in its time, has never stopped applying its ferocity against the legacy of the Russian Revolution. L. I. Olshtynsky (*The Fascist Threat of World Domination. The Beginning of World War II. A history lesson*), noting that the history of World War II – for more than 70 years an arena of ideological, media and political struggle – is part of the West’s “cold war” against the USSR, and now against Russia, questions the dating of the start of the world war to 1st September 1939 as being vitiated by Eurocentrism. The Portuguese historian João Arsénio Nunes (*The angelic wings of the European Parliament: a hidden fascist cat with democratic tail on the outside*) notes how the *Resolution* constructs a false and apologetic narrative of the history of Europe, whose peoples, after suffering the ravages of totalitarianism, would finally be found and reunited in the free and anti-totalitarian Union, whose member states absolve themselves of any responsibility for the two world wars. The Europeanist narrative erases from history not only the decisive contribution that the USSR made to the defeat of Hitler’s Germany, but also that of the anti-fascist resistance in Europe, of which the communists were the predominant force. Anti-fascism is not a value for the ideology of the EU.

The internationalist attention of Chinese communists towards Italian communists has been manifested in the proposals and initiatives of the Academy of Marxism, the World Socialism Studies Center and other institutes of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), with which the association Marx21, our magazine and publishing house, the Italian Communists have started for several years a fruitful collaboration, which took shape in the organisation of five consecutive “European forums”, from 2014 to 2018, in which dozens and dozens of Chinese scholars from different institutes, study and research centres, universities, from the different regions of the People’s Republic participated together with Italian scholars. They were chaired, as long as his health allowed it, by Domenico Losurdo, whose books are known and appreciated in China¹, and, for the CASS Academy of Marxism, by Deng Chundong, whose strong internationalist passion and search for possible unity among Italian communists and Marxists, as well as among communists and Marxists around the world, we have been able to appreciate on many occasions. In these forums, the issues of the Chinese path to socialism², the PRC in the international context (October 2016), the relationship between China and the EU, the Belt and Road Initiative and a new globalisation in the “new era” (2017 and 2018) were explored in depth. The collaboration with Marxist scholars at CASS also took the form of the publication in 2017 of *Interviews with Chinese Marxists* edited by Francesco Maringò³, which allowed us to have an initial outline of the remarkable elaboration of Marxism in China, in particular on the economic theory of “socialism with market”, on which Professor Cheng Enfu, one of the most eminent Marxist theorists at CASS, has recently written a substantial volume that we are committed to publishing in Italian.

¹ A recent interesting publication by Roland Boer, professor at the School of Marxist Studies at Dalian University of Technology is dedicated to him: *Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. A Guide for Foreigners*, Springer, Singapore 2021.

² On the first forum in October 2014 devoted to this topic see Francesco Maringò, *The Chinese way and the struggle for socialism*, published on pages 55-62 in no. 1/2015 of the journal *MarxVentuno* (A4 format). For the second forum in 2015 see the proceedings volume, *La via cinese*, MarxVentuno edizioni, Bari 2016.

³ See: Francesco Maringò (a cura di), *Interviste ai marxisti cinesi*, MarxVentuno edizioni, Bari 2017.

A few years ago we started collaborating with important Chinese theoretical-political journals, from *World Socialism Studies*, directed by Li Shenming, which publishes monthly articles by scholars and militants from China and all over the world focusing essentially on the activity of the communist parties and the organisations of the workers' movement, to *Marxism & Reality*, of which we are publishing in this issue some essays of considerable theoretical relevance on Engels and Lenin; and with the journal sponsored by the Federation of Social Sciences of Tianjin *Theory and Modernization*, whose editor Zhang Boying the MarxVentuno editions have published, translated directly from Chinese in collaboration with the Tianjin People Publishing House, an organic book – the first of its kind in Italy – on socialism with Chinese characteristics⁴.

For the centenary of the founding of the ICP, the researcher of the CASS Academy of Marxism Li Kaixuan, who is a scholar of the Italian labour movement and welfare state, wrote an article for our journal. She has been since 2014 the main connection point for the organisation of the Italian-Chinese forums mentioned above and now offers us her considerations on the situation of communists in Italy. In her text (*The dilemma and chances of rejuvenation of communist parties in Italy*), she points out how in the thirty years that separate us from the end of the ICP, the life of Italian communists has been characterised by constant friction and internal divisions that have brought them to the margins of the political arena. The article briefly outlines the vicissitudes of the communists in Italy and their heavy and continuous decline since 2008, identifying subjective and objective factors, including the inability to define and practice with clarity and consistency the relationship between the party's communist identity and its role in political alliances, the lack of theoretical innovation and strategic determination, the lack of attention and care to political and cultural training. Li Kaixuan hopes that there can be a 'rejuvenation' of Italian communism, resuming and developing in a way appropriate to the 'new era' the path traced by the great leaders Gramsci and Togliatti.

With regard to the latter, we publish a review of the *Aginform notebook* dedicated to the fundamental role of the communist leader from the "Salerno turning point" of 1944 to the "Yalta memorial" of 1964: an interesting and precious anthology of texts, preceded by a theoretical-political introduction by the editors Paolo Pioppi and Roberto Gabriele. On the subject of the history of the ICP, the reader will also find in this issue Francesco Galofaro's critical review of Luciano Canfora's book *The metamorphosis*. But by Galofaro, a researcher in Semiotics and Philosophy of Language at the University of Turin and an active contributor to the magazine and the website of the Marx21 association, we also publish a text on the different interpretations of communists faced with the dissolution of the ICP. It consists of ten articles recently published in explicitly communist and Marxist journals and websites on the occasion of the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party, examined through a semiotic analysis framework that does not tell us what sense a text has, but how the text constructs its own sense. The author focuses on narrative structures. From the analysis it emerges that among the different parties and organisations in Italy that refer to communism there is no shared reading of the history of the ICP and the causes of its dissolution in 1991. This merciless analysis strengthens us even more in the conviction that it is necessary to work – and the magazine "MarxVentuno" feels strongly committed to this – on our history, to draw up a balance sheet of the path taken, of the successes achieved and the defeats or real reversals suffered, analysing and understanding

⁴ Zhang Boying, *Il socialismo con caratteristiche cinesi. Perché funziona?*, MarxVentuno edizioni, Bari 2019.

why, for what reasons, through what political line – in its elaboration and in its historical-concrete implementation – victories and defeats have occurred. No self-respecting communist organisation can avoid drawing the fundamental lines of its political action in history. The Secretary General of the world’s largest communist party, Xi Jinping, did just that on 1st July this year at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the CPC, using the metaphor of the *journey* over and over again in his speech. The balance sheet of the past is the basis on which the strategic political line for the future is drawn.

A number of articles and essays are dedicated to the path of the CPC, in which the reader will find fundamental elements for understanding and studying the path and developments of this extraordinary communist party, together with a number of points for reflection which, from the elaboration of the past, open up prospects for the future. Some of the texts published here have been translated by *Marxism & Reality*, such as those by Shi Zhongquan (former deputy director and researcher at the Centre for Research on Party History of the CPC Central Committee), who uses a line by Mao Zedong from the poem *The People’s Liberation Army Occupies Nanking, April 1949*, as the title of his article on the CPC centenary; and Chen Li (Director of the Academy and Editorial Committee of the CPC’s Institute of Party History) on the CPC and China’s modernisation.

Modernisation was also one of the central themes of the 3rd World Congress of Marxism⁵ organised by Peking University with the participation of around 300 scholars, including a substantial Italian “patrol”.

An effective and useful summary of the fundamental strengths that have allowed the CPC to achieve its extraordinary path is in the article by Jiang Hui, member of the CPC Committee of the CASS, Director General of the Institute of Contemporary China Studies and of the Academy of Marxism, and among the main speakers at the 3rd World Congress of Marxism in Beijing: *A Glorious Centenary. The whole world recognises the great achievements of the CPC*.

On the occasion of the centenary of the CPC, the CASS Academy of Marxism and the World Socialism Center addressed an outline of questions to the main exponents of communist parties and communist and Marxist journals and newspapers around the world. The response to them resulted in the text by Andrea Catone, reproduced here, which was, in its essential parts, published in Chinese in No. 2/2021 of the journal *World Socialism Studies*, translated and edited by Li Shuqing, associate professor at China Agricultural University.

It is not only the CPC that is celebrating a very important anniversary this year. From 25 January to 1 February, the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) was held in Hanoi, attended by 1,587 delegates representing over 5.1 million party members⁶. It is another important communist party, at the helm of a country and a people whose epic, formidable and glorious victorious resistance against American imperialism

⁵ See a short report from the Xinhua Agency Congress of 19 July 2021, http://t.m.china.org.cn/convert/c_pGxL8NXz.html, translated by Marco Pondrelli and published in <https://www.marx21.it/comunisti-oggi/studiosi-di-tutto-il-mondo-hailing-the-success-of-marxism-in-china/>

⁶ See the Briefing on the main contents of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of the Communist Party of Vietnam, reported on the ICP website: <https://www.ilpartitocomunistaitaliano.it/briefing-on-the-main-contents-of-the-xiii-national-congress-of-the-communist-party-of-viet-nam-cpv/>

(after having freed itself from the yoke of French colonialism) under the enlightened and wise leadership of 'Uncle Ho' impassioned and directed to the ideals of communism the young generation that was entering politics in the 60s and 70s. We publish here a text, *Theoretical and Practical Issues on Socialism and the Road to Socialism in Vietnam*, of considerable theoretical-political depth, for its reflections on the processes of transition to socialism in Vietnam, written by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong. In it, after an essential examination of the unresolved contradictions of the capitalist system and its current neo-liberal policies, which have accentuated the gap in the distribution of wealth and maintain, behind the mask of liberal democracy, the dictatorship of big capital, the author strongly reaffirms Vietnam's socialist choice. The introduction of the new policy of renewal, the "*Doi moi*", in 1986 gave a very strong impetus to the development of productive forces in a framework of market economy oriented towards socialism with a strategic role of the socialist state. Vietnam, with nearly 100 million inhabitants, is still in the transition phase to socialism, where the struggle between old and new, socialist and anti-socialist elements, is open and requires the firm direction of the Communist Party, led by the compass of Marxism-Leninism and the Thought of Vietnam's founding father, Ho Chi Minh. Proceeding along the path of socialism "is an immensely challenging and complex long-term task, because it must bring about profound and qualitative changes in all fields of social life".

Another important, heroic and glorious communist party, which has been fighting against the military and economic siege (the increasingly harsh embargo, the bloqueo) of US imperialism for over 60 years, the Communist Party of Cuba, also held its 8th Congress, between 16 and 19 April this year. The congress was called upon to assess the implementation of the Party's Economic Policy Guidelines, launched five years ago by the 7th Congress, the achievement of the goals set out in the First Conference and the 2019 Constitutional Reform, and to draw the course of a transition that, as Vietnamese Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong also wrote, "is an immensely challenging and complex long-term task", marked by economic, political, social and cultural contradictions. These contradictions are typical of the process of transition to socialism, and in Cuba they are greatly exacerbated by the heavy and uninterrupted pressure of US imperialism, which - as was also seen during the protests on 11 July - aims to overthrow communist power by implementing the model of the "coloured revolutions", the social and political counter-revolutions that, between the "velvet revolution" in Prague (1989) and the "Maidan" in Kiev (2014), overthrew governments and imposed regimes under US-NATO control. The article (written in May) by Alessandra Ciattini, who has been collaborating for years with Cuban universities and research centres for La Sapienza University in Rome, offers a dialectical interpretation of Raúl Castro's speech at the congress, highlighting not only the successes achieved by Cuba in 60 years of revolution, but also the problems arising from the economic reforms that introduced - in a similar way to China and Vietnam, but with Cuba's specific features - the privatisation of numerous economic sectors, while keeping strategic sectors in the hands of the State. In order to understand the new Cuban economic policy, the author takes up Lenin's approach at the launch of the NEP (1921), aware of the necessity of this transition, but also of the calculated risks it entailed for the process of transition to socialism. The socialist transition "is not a gala dinner", as Mao Zedong warned. The Cuban communists, who have accumulated a great deal of experience, facing the most difficult situations with courage, intelligence and revolutionary wisdom, without

letting themselves be overwhelmed by the counter-revolutionary wave of 1989-91 (which deprived Cuba of Soviet support, among other things), will know how to respond to the new situation, which has been greatly aggravated not only by the “*Bloqueo*”, but also by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has effectively wiped out the Caribbean island’s income from tourism. We join the full support and solidarity with the Socialist Republic of Cuba expressed by the communist parties of the Solidnet network⁷, as well as by the many friendship associations and solidarity networks with Cuba around the world.

The journal offers two important essays essentially focused on the analysis of the thought of two fundamental pillars of Marxist theory, Engels and Lenin. The first, *On the specific style of Engels’ prefaces in his later years and the wisdom embedded in them*, is by Hailiang Gu, Professor Emeritus of Peking University and one of the main speakers at the 3rd World Congress of Marxism. The essay analyses the twenty or so prefaces of the ‘late’ Engels to reprints or new editions of Marx’s texts. They are illuminating for the understanding of the strategic thinking of the two founders of Marxism.

A careful and philologically grounded reconstruction (based on the 60 volumes of Lenin’s Complete Works published in Chinese) of the economic relationship between socialist and capitalist countries is in the essay by Yang Chengxun, Professor of Economics and Law at the University of Henan: *Theoretical Origins of Collaboration to Build a Global Economy. Practical Implications of Lenin’s Theses on the Global Economy, How to Adapt and Benefit from it*. The indication given by Xi Jinping to work together for an innovative, inclusive and open world economy is, in the author’s opinion, a further development of the Marxist theory of the world economy, the basis of which is Lenin’s elaboration on the adaptation and use of the world economy by socialist countries.

⁷ See the Joint Communiqué of the Communist and Workers’ Parties: Cuba Will Win! of 15 July 2021, <http://www.idcommunism.com/2021/07/cuba-will-win-joint-statementof-communist-and-workers-parties.html>