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Roads to Reconciliation

People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy During the Cold War Period (1949-1971)

edited by
Guido Samarani
Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni
Sofia Graziani

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Tiziana Lippiello e Chen Xiaoming

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This volume include essays originally delivered at the international workshop *Italy, Europe, China: Economic, political and cultural relations during the Cold War years (1949-1971)* held at the Department of Asian and African Studies of Ca' Foscari University of Venice on 13th-14th February 2014 as well as invited research papers by two international outstanding scholars who have made valuable contributions to the study of China's foreign policy and engagement in the '50s and '60s. The book illustrates recent trends in international research on China-Western Europe relations in the years of intense Cold War, complicating the long-held image of Mao-era China as sealed off from the outside world.

Keywords Cold war. China. Europe and Italy. Relations. Exchanges.

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Guido Samarani
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(Università degli Studi di Padova, Italia)

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(Università degli Studi di Trento, Italia)

The birth of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 occurred at a time when the world order was being divided into two opposing geopolitical blocs. China's foreign policy was thus from the very beginning heavily influenced by the logic of the Cold War. The Sino-Soviet alliance, formalised in February 1950, was seen by Communist leaders (especially Mao Zedong) as a necessity for the PRC given the emerging international context. The outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953) further consolidated China's position within the Soviet bloc, causing the majority of Western states not to recognise the newly established Communist government. The new Chinese government also proceeded to eliminate the former Western presence from the country.

International historiography on the Cold War has for a long time been dominated by an emphasis on the bipolar confrontational nature of the Soviet-American conflict as well as by a focus on the superpowers' politics and the role of the United States. With the end of the Cold War and the subsequent access to newly available archival sources from the former Eastern bloc, new approaches to the study of the conflict have emerged, giving way to a more complicated pattern of international relationships (see, for instance, Gaddis 1997; Westad 2007, 2017). Since the '90s, it has thus been possible for historians to further investigate the experience of the Soviet Union from different angles as well as to assess the role of China in the history of the Cold War. The exhaustive studies of Chen Jian, Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, among others, have been important in highlighting the centrality of the Chinese position and deepening the understanding of many important issues and events from China's point of view (see Chen 2001; Shen, Li 2011; for a review of the Chinese scholars' contributions to the wider field of Cold War studies, see Xia 2008).

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At the same time, the historiography on the Cold War had conventionally portrayed Mao-era China as sealed off from the West for almost twenty years, from 1949 until the early '70s when PRC began opening to the United States. Recent studies have started to complicate this image, focusing on connections and people-to-people grassroots exchanges between China and Western (including European) countries (see Hooper 2016; Lovell 2015; Romano, Zanier 2017, among the others). This book builds on and further develops studies recently conducted by a bulk of scholars mainly based at the University of Venice and the University of Padua. These studies examined the role played by non-governmental actors (political parties, cultural personalities, and economic actors) in promoting the opening of Western European countries, such as Italy, France, and West Germany to the PRC (Meneguzzi, Samarani 2014; Samarani, Graziani 2015). In point of fact, since the end of the Korean War, while stressing the fundamental relevance of its close alliance with Moscow and the socialist world, China also began looking at Western Europe, which was generally maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Such interest intertwined with the growing attention that the major European capitals were developing towards Communist China, despite the obligations and constraints imposed by the political and military alliances and by the need of avoiding offending the sensibility of Washington.

Focusing on Western Europe-China relations and interactions beyond conventional diplomatic channels, this book provides new perspectives on China's foreign exchanges in the years of intense Cold War (the '50s-'60s), showing that there was much more going on between Communist China and Western Europe that has yet been brought to the scholarly attention both in China and in the West. At the same time, the book shows how the approaches and range of interactions with China varied depending on the peculiarities of individual countries and their modes of dependency to the US.

This volume consists of nine chapters, most of which are drawn from the papers originally delivered at the International Workshop, *Italy, Europe, China: Economic, Political and Cultural Relations During the Cold War Years (1949-1971)*. The workshop was held at the Department of Asian and North African Studies of Ca' Foscari University of Venice on 13th-14th February 2014 as part of the Ca' Foscari University Research Project on *Italy, Europe, China. Economic, Political, and Cultural Relations in the Cold War Years (1954-1971)*, coordinated by Professor Guido Samarani. Additionally, the volume includes chapters by international and outstanding scholars who have made valuable contributions to the study of the PRC's foreign policy and engagement with the Western world during the Cold War.

The first essay illustrates the main trends in Chinese scholarship on the PRC's foreign policy during the Cold War. Prominent Chinese historians Liang Zhi and Shen Zhihua offer a detailed review of Chinese scholars' research, with a focus on the period between 2001 and 2015. They highlight

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the importance of historical documents made available since 2004, when the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC were opened to the public, in allowing further development of 'The New Cold War History' as a field of study. By opening up many new research questions and focusing their research on high-level, external contacts as well as grassroots exchanges, Chinese scholars have recently contributed to a change in perspective, methodology and research topics in Cold War history studies that were previously dominated by an excessive emphasis on the role of the US as well as on high-level politics.

The following four chapters address Europe-China relations and interactions from different perspectives. Relying on social history sources (including oral history), the contribution by Beverley Hooper, Emeritus Professor at the University of Sheffield, offers an acute analysis of the experience of the small non-official European community in Mao's China (the '50s and '60s). The focus is on the everyday lives of three different groups of Europeans (mostly British and to a lesser extent French and Italians, as well as Swedes) who worked or studied within Chinese institutions at that time. These three groups were 'foreign experts', students of Chinese language and culture, and 'foreign comrades' consisting of long-term residents politically and ideologically committed to the new China. What emerges is that all these groups, albeit with different degrees, were denied genuine contact with many aspects of everyday Chinese life, thus experiencing 'privileged segregation' that caused frustration especially among foreign students. Beverley Hooper's essay also reveals how their everyday lives and intra-group relationships were affected by the tumultuous politics of the Mao years, especially when it came to the long-term residents who had decided to support Chinese communism (being consequently alienated from their home country).

The third essay in the volume addresses the case of the Federal Republic of Germany's non-official relations with the PRC. Giovanni Bernardini focuses on the role played by West German economic elites in shaping bilateral relations and paving the way to the reopening of relations with the PRC, with particular attention to the complex negotiation and the long-term implications of the 1957 trade agreement. Through an accurate analysis of the interplay between economic actors and government authorities largely based on German archival sources, Bernardini shows how the relations with China were influenced by historical experience dating back to the early 20th century (German companies had been among the most active in the Chinese market before 1949) and by purely economic reasons that went beyond the logic of the East-West confrontation.

Another country that could boast close ties with China was Great Britain, the Asian colonial power par excellence until the Second World War, which maintained a fundamental presence in the area through the British Colony of Hong Kong and controlled, through its banks, Europe-China financial

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flows. Roberto Peruzzi's essay addresses Sino-British economic relations through Hong Kong focusing on the crucial years of 1966-1967 when the Cultural Revolution on the one hand and the Hong Kong's disturbances and riots on the other caused the temporary crisis of their mutually beneficial relationship. By connecting the riots involving the Hong Kong Colony to the British Government's decision to implement the Sterling devaluation in November 1967, Peruzzi argues the existence of a linkage between British authorities' official interpretation on the nature of the riots and the financial measures adopted. Peruzzi also suggests that the management of the Hong Kong emergency by the British colonial authorities marked the beginning of the end of British power in Hong Kong.

Among Western European countries, the case of France is also extremely significant considering that in 1964, searching for an autonomous foreign policy – albeit within the framework of the alliances – the French government decided under the impulse of Charles de Gaulle to recognise the PRC long before other partners of Western Europe did. Yet, De Gaulle's decision can be understood as the culmination of a process of increasing economic and commercial contacts that developed in the previous decade. Thierry Robin's essay addresses this issue, looking at the role played by economic actors in defending French economic interests in China – interests that predated the establishment of the Communist government in 1949 – and promoting the opening to the PRC. Robin's essay reconstructs the history of Sino-French unofficial relations since 1949. Additionally, he identifies the 1956 French economic mission (led by Henri Rochereau) to China as the starting point of a gradual process of Franco-Chinese collaboration that would see a growing number of private players involved and forging business links with Beijing, providing the basis for 1964's decision to establish full diplomatic relations with the PRC.

The other three essays in the volume focus on the case of Italy's relations with the PRC and provide new insights into the role of different Italian non-governmental actors in promoting dialogue and exchanges and contributing to shaping the understanding of China in Italy.

In her essay, Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni makes use of both diplomatic documents and personal archives and diaries of eminent Italian politicians. She reconstructs in detail the Italian position vis-à-vis the People's Republic of China, at a time when – similarly to other Western European countries – Italian official policy was compelled by membership in the Atlantic alliance and by relations with the United States. What emerges is a complex interplay between economic actors like Dino Gentili and Enrico Mattei and politicians, such as the Socialist Pietro Nenni, who worked in favour of China-Italy exchanges as early as the '50s. Then, in the '60s centre-left governments accelerated the process, favouring, in 1964, the conclusion of the commercial agreement between Italy and China. Thanks to the Socialist Pietro Nenni and the Christian Democrat Aldo Moro's

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initiative, the PRC was recognised, two years before the more celebrated Nixon's visit to Beijing.

A key political actor in the unconventional diplomacy between Italy and the PRC in the '50s was the Italian Communist Party. Mainly relying on Italian archival sources and memories by former political leaders, Guido Samarani reconstructs the relationship between the Italian and Chinese Communist Parties from the first exchange of delegation in 1956 up until 1963, when in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split, bilateral relations were interrupted. In particular, his essay sheds light on the significance and implications of the first high-level official Italian Communist Party delegation visiting China in April 1959 at a time when Sino-Soviet relations were deteriorating, and the Italian Communist Party leadership was torn between its search for autonomy and alignment with Moscow.

If party-to-party direct contacts took place no earlier than 1956 when national congresses of both parties provided the occasion for the first exchange of delegations, then it was before that date through indirect channels or at the individual level that contacts were developed. Laura De Giorgi's contribution delved into the personal experience of Velio Spano, the first Italian Communist Party representative to travel to China in Autumn 1949. Making use of Spano's personal archives, she explores his short-term sojourn in China against the backdrop of the complex political environment of that period. The focus is on his personal experience, as well as on his perceptions and the implications of his presence in Mao's China. De Giorgi's essay shows that Velio Spano's journey to China was a significant episode in the relations between the Italian Communist Party and the Chinese Communist Party as well as in the history of broader Sino-Italian relations, as she writes: "Even a partial overview of Spano's personal archives shows that the network of contacts he had had the opportunity to create in China during those weeks in 1949 were considered, at least in Italy, an important asset for the development of informal relations between the two countries".

At the same time in the 1950s, important avenues for early encounters between Italian and Chinese Communists were offered by international 'front' organisations. Sofia Graziani's essay delved into this issue, examining contacts established and developed within international youth organisations linked to the Soviet-sponsored peace movement at a time when the direct exchange between the Italian and Chinese Communist parties had yet to start. Relying on a large variety of primary and secondary sources, she provides evidence of how participation in Soviet-led international organisations made early political contacts and interactions possible, laying the foundation for future dialogue and exchanges. The focus in Graziani's essay is on Bruno Bernini, whose personal experience in China is examined within the context of the World Federation of Democratic Youth's policies and initiatives in the early and mid-'50s.

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Together, the essays in this volume offer new insights into the complex history of Sino-European relations in the Mao years and shed light on the existence of a breadth of vivid interactions and connections in the realm of politics, economy and culture, contributing to dismiss the long-held idea of Mao-era China as an isolated country.

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The Research on China's Foreign Policy in the Cold War Period
Chinese Scholars' Exploration and Thinking (2001-2015)

Liang Zhi 梁志 and Shen Zhihua 沈志华
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Abstract China was a very important regional power that influenced the fundamental pattern of confrontation and détente between the two blocs. With the emergence of new historical documents and the adoption of new methods, Chinese scholars have conducted a few discussions on China's foreign policy during the Cold War period since 2001. Their research activity is important for at least three reasons: first, thanks to the analysis of new historical material Chinese scholars have opened up many new research questions; second, it has constantly enlarged the field of analysis focusing on high level external contacts and lower strata grassroots exchange; third, a research team characterised by a reasonable age distribution is being formed in China. Moreover, China has already created two major institutions for scientific research and documentary collection located in the south and the north of the country: the Centre for Cold War International History Studies at East China Normal University and the School of History at Capital Normal University. Certainly, there are still shortcomings in Chinese research on China's foreign policy during the Cold War and Chinese scholars themselves are attempting to address the problems.

Keywords China. Foreign policy. Cold war. Chinese scholars. Review article.

Leaving aside the two superpowers (the US and the USSR), the People's Republic of China (PRC) was the regional power that most greatly influenced the Cold War between the East and the West, to the point that "it even occupied a central position when it comes to some nodal points and key issues in the development of the Cold War" (Chen 2001, 17). China has, to some

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degree, influenced the fundamental pattern of confrontation and détente between the two blocs in at least three ways. In the first place, over time, it has formed an alliance with the Soviet Union, competed with the Soviet Union for the leadership of the Communist movement, sought Sino-American reconciliation, and then, wittingly or unwittingly, transformed the balance of power between the East and the West; furthermore, it has played its part in local wars (Korean and Vietnam for example), intervened in the internal disputes of the socialist camp (Poland and Hungary, for instance) and in Third World crisis (such as Laos), and participated in international meetings (such as Geneva and Bandung), producing changes in the region; and, finally it has benefitted from economic and technical aid and cultural exchanges to win the 'hearts and minds of the people' with the US or Soviet Union, influencing the development path of other Socialist or Third World countries.

Perhaps because of this, study and debate concerning China's foreign policy for a long time has been a focus of Cold War international history studies, while Chinese scholarly research has aroused the interest of international academic circles. This article investigates the results of the research by Chinese scholars into China's foreign policy in the Cold War period between 2001 and 2015[1] and discusses recent progress, existing shortcomings and future prospects.

1 New Historical Material and New Methods

In the last ten years, Chinese scholars have obtained original results in the study of China's foreign policy during the Cold War. From a purely academic perspective, such progress has been made possible first of all thanks to the emergence of new historical documents and to the adoption of new methods.[2]

On September 5th, 1987, the 22nd meeting of the Standing Committee of the Sixth National People's Congress passed the "Archives Law of the People's Republic of China". Article 19 stipulates that: "historical records kept by state archives shall in general be opened to the public in less than 30 years; archives in economic, scientific, technological and cultural fields may

1 This paper mainly presents research studies based on original archival material published in mainland China: it mainly considers researchers based in mainland China, but also includes overseas Chinese. Considering the time-limit applied to archives declassification, these studies focus on the period extending from the late '40s to the early '70s. Due to length limits, the authors do not intend to provide a comprehensive review of the research carried out by Chinese scholars, but only present the most representative studies in the field.

2 From a non-academic point of view, the most important driving force is provided by increased international academic exchanges and research funds resulting from the rapid development of Chinese economy and China's increased openness to the outside world.

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be opened to the public in less than 30 years; archives involving the security or vital interests of the state and other archives that remain unsuitable for accessibility to the public upon the expiration of 30 years may be opened to the public after more than 30 years. The specific time limits shall be defined by the state administrative authority for archives and submitted to the State Council for approval before they become effective" (Liu Guoneng 2012, 88; Beijing shi dang'anju 1987, 2-6). However, in practice, for a long period of time access to Chinese archives, especially those relating to foreign affairs was by no means been all plain sailing. For, in the process of policy implementation, a great degree of freedom has been allowed regarding application of the restrictions stipulated in the Archives Law and great discretionary power left with the management offices concerning declassified documents.

At the beginning of the 21st century the situation started to change. Since 2004 the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC has opened to the public three batches of archives containing records for clearly identified periods of time: 1945-1955, 1956-1960 and 1961-1965. The total amount exceeds 80,000 files (for details see the table below). The content of the declassified archives is very rich, covering the main fields of China's foreign affairs, such as politics, economics, military affairs, culture, border issues, personnel exchanges and overseas Chinese matters. At the same time, the Foreign Ministry Archives also compiled three collections on the following topics: Geneva Conference, Bandung Conference and diplomatic normalization issues (Lian, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaobu dang'anguan 2006, 2007; Lian et al. 2006).[3] What should also be noted is that, with the exception of Tibet, Xinjiang and a few other provinces and cities, the majority of provincial and municipal archives are all open to the public. Among them, those with the greatest number of accessible records are the Shanghai Municipal Archives and the provincial archives of Jiangsu, Fujian, Hebei, Shanxi, Gansu, Hunan, Hubei, and Guangdong. These documents are also the main sources used in the study of China's foreign policy during the Cold War (Yao 2015, 254-73).

Quantity of declassified and opened archives of the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Open batch	Period	Official opening date	Opened files	Total number
First group	1949-1955	16 January 2004	More than 4,000	15,003 files
		19 July 2004	More than 5000	
		10 January 2005	5,706	
Second group	1956-1960	10 May 2006	25,651	

3 It is no exaggeration to say that the opening of the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC was an exciting and encouraging event for the international academic community.

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Third group	1961-1965	12 November 2008	41,097
Total number	81,751		

Since the mid-'80s, China's official research agencies such as the Archival Research Office of the CCP Central Committee (*Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiu shi*), the Academy of Military Science of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (*Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexueyuan*), the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (*Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan*) and archival departments have edited and published a number of impressive publications related to Chinese leaders such as biographical chronologies, selected works, collected works, manuscripts, biographies and official archival collections. Among them, the publications with the largest number of documents relating to China's foreign diplomacy include: "Mao Zedong manuscripts since the founding of the State" (*Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*) (1987-1998), "Selections from archival materials on the economy of the People's Republic of China (1949-1952)" (*Zhongghua renmin Gongheguo jingji dang'an ziliao xuanbian*, *1949-1952*) (1989-1996), "A Selection of Zhou Enlai's Writings on Diplomacy" (*Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan*) (1990), "Chronology of Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Activities, 1949-1975" (*Zhou Enlai waijiao huodong dashiji*, *1949-1975*) (1993), "Collected writings of Mao Zedong" (*Mao Zedong wenji*) (1993-1999), "A selection of Mao Zedong's Writings on Diplomacy" (*Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*) (1994), "Chronological Biography of Liu Shaoqi, 1898-1969" (*Liu Shaoqi nianpu 1898-1969*) (1996), "Chronological Biography of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976" (*Zhou Enlai nianpu 1949-1976*) (1997), "Zhou Enlai's Biography" (*Zhou Enlai zhuan*) (1998), "Liu Shaoqi Biography" (*Liu Shaoqi zhuan*) (1998), "Selections from Archival Materials on the Economy of the People's Republic of China, 1953-1957" (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jingji dang'an ziliao xuanbian, 1953-1957*) (1998, 2000), "Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976" (*Mao Zedong zhuan 1949-1976*) (2003), "Liu Shaoqi manuscripts since the founding of the state" (*Jianguo yilai Liu Shaoqi wengao*) (2005, 2008), "Chronological Biography of Ye Jianying, 1897-1986" (*Ye Jianying nianpu 1897-1986*) (2007), "Zhou Enlai Manuscripts Since the Founding of the State" (*Jianguo yilai Zhou Enlai wengao*) (2008), "Chronological Biography of Deng Xiaoping, 1904-1974" (*Deng Xiaoping nianpu 1904-1974*) (2009), "Mao Zedong Military Manuscripts Since the Founding of the State" (*Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao*) (2010), "Selections from Archival Materials on the Economy of the People's Republic of China, 1958-1965" (*Zhonghua Renmin gongheguo jingji dang'an ziliao xuanbian 1958-1965*) (2011), "Chronological Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976" (*Mao Zedong nianpu 1949-1976*) (2013), "Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Selected documents, October 1949-May 1966" (*Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanbian, 1949.10-1966.5*) (2013), "Works of Deng

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Xiaoping, 1949-1974" (*Deng Xiaoping wenji, 1949-1974*) (2014), "Deng Xiaoping Biography, 1904-1974" (*Deng Xiaoping zhuan, 1904-1974*) (2014). Even though these documents are generally not so detailed and exhaustive as are archival collections, they can nonetheless be of enormous help to researchers in filling the gaps in historical knowledge, and thus prove to be extremely precious research material.[4]

In a certain sense, in China the research on China's foreign policy during the Cold War can be classified as contemporary Chinese history (or PRC history) studies. At the same time, it can also be incorporated into the field of Cold War history studies. Before the end of the Cold War, so-called Cold War history studies "almost completely took as its basis the documents of the US and other Western countries; as a matter of fact, this is often one part of US diplomatic history studies and US-Soviet relations studies, at most we can only say that it is an extension of the studies on the history of US external relations" (Chen, Yu 2003, 7). As a result, the choice of perspective, methodology and research subjects clearly reflects the tendency to put 'the US at the centre', with its excessive emphasis on power and a focus on high-level politics. In the first half of the '90s, prominent American Cold War history expert John Lewis Gaddis actively promoted the development of 'The New Cold War History' or what is also known as 'Cold War International History Studies', meaning a totally new post-Cold War framework in which researchers could use archival material from many different countries, overcome the restraints of 'US as the centre', focus on the Second and Third worlds and also once more acknowledge the influence of ideology in the Cold War. In fact, the reason why 'The New Cold War History' could form a new academic trend is mainly owing to the influence of Chinese scholars, especially those living in the US (Chen, Yu 2003; Dai 1999). Most importantly, in recent years still more Chinese scholars within China, including a group of doctoral students, wittingly or unwittingly drawing a lesson from the historiographical notion of 'The New Cold War History', have used newly emerged Chinese archival data, thus developing research on such issues as, for instance, China's position in the East-West Cold War, the role and function of ideology in China's foreign policy during the Cold War as well as the influence of Cold War politics on ordinary Chinese people.

4 Apart from archival materials in China, access to archives in US, Russia and Japan to a large extent has also pushed forward research by Chinese scholars on China's foreign policy during the Cold War, allowing them to cross-check foreign sources against the Chinese ones.

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2 General Introduction to China's Foreign Policy

Chinese scholars have conducted a few discussions on China's foreign policy during the Cold War period based on concrete evidence. For convenience, this article will group the results under three main categories: China's overall foreign strategy, single foreign policies and participation in international conferences or organisations.

Zhang Baijia takes China's diplomacy in the 30 years after the founding of the new China in its entirety. In his view throughout this period, China's main goal was "to establish diplomatic relations with every country in the world on the basis of equality" (Zhang 2002, 11). Specifically the whole period can be divided into three phases: from the establishment of the PRC until the mid-'50s when China made great efforts to create an international environment conducive to its own development; from the mid-'50s to the end of the '60s, China gradually took the road of confrontation with both the US and the Soviet Union; lastly, in the '70s, by relaxing relations with the US, China extended the scope of its diplomatic activities to the entire international arena (Zhang 2002). Relatively speaking, Yang Kuisong attaches even more importance to the continuity of China's diplomacy. His research reveals that class struggle and the united front experience moulded Mao Zedong's radical revolutionary diplomacy, ultimately pushing China into the position of having enemies on all sides in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution (Yang 2010a).

Similarly, Chen Jian defines the New China as a 'revolutionary state' determined to pose an all-out challenge to the existing international order and norms. In his view, the 'Bandung spirit' that China actively initiated in the mid-'50s was not really a retreat from the revolutionary principle of its foreign policy, but instead a deepening and a redefinition of this principle. By pursuing the 'Bandung spirit', China brought decolonization into the discourse system of the socialist countries during the Cold War, launching a new challenge to the international system. Hereafter, with the rise of the Great Leap Forward, China's diplomacy underwent a change: it further acquired a revolutionary character and opposed at the same time the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union (Chen 2008, 2010).

Niu Jun considers China's external policies even more closely from the perspective of independent diplomacy, believing that soon after the PRC was founded Chinese leaders regarded Asia as a 'stopover' and a 'starting point' even more enduring than the Sino-Soviet alliance, the main arena external to the two camps (US-USSR) in which to develop new strategic competition. For Niu Jun, the alliance with the Soviet Union and participation in the Korean war as well as the establishment of diplomatic relations with the US and the launching of the counterattack in self-defence against Vietnam, clearly show that Beijing never allowed hostile powers, especially the military power of great nations, to come close to China's

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borders, and was determined to curb the strong and help the weak, taking the initiative to establish a balance of power within the region. Similarly, he also stresses the domestic reasons for the directions taken by China's foreign policy, pointing out that the dispute and different opinions among policy makers regarding how to evaluate the 'Great Leap Forward' and how to react to economic recession resulted in spurring China's diplomacy toward a radical leftist turn in the first half of the '60s (Niu 2003, 2012b, 2012c, 2014).

A prominent geographical feature of China is that it has long borders along which are many neighbouring, periphery countries. Therefore, the proper resolution of border disputes soon became for the New China a major question that could not be ignored. Shen Zhihua has discussed China's policy of settling land boundary disputes. He believes that in the context of the cold war between two main camps, the motivation behind China's settlements of land boundary issues was to break the imperialist blockade and encirclement, thereby easing the often jittery relations with neighbouring countries so as to guarantee and safeguard China's territorial sovereignty. The result was that, on the one hand in nearly all border-related negotiations and talks China either took the initiative or was forced to compromise; on the other hand, initially the guiding principles for legal settlement of a border issue (whatever the basis: 'peaceful coexistence'; a spirit of 'equal cooperation, mutual understanding and accommodation'; 'peace negotiation'; observing the basic principle and practice of international law; recognising an existing border treaty; safeguarding the nation's interests; or progressively resolving border disputes with neighbouring countries) were often not consistent from start to finish and in some circumstances were even abandoned (Shen 2014a; on the same topic see also Liu Xiaoyuan 2011). Humanitarian aid is an important component of China's foreign aid. Yin Qingfei's research shows that between 1949 and 1965 the main purpose of China's provision of foreign humanitarian aid was to develop relations with the countries of the Third World. So the main aim of this aid was to serve China's diplomatic strategy, and gain moral superiority over the US and the Soviet Union. In the process of deciding the form and scope of aid, a proper balance was occasionally maintained among a few receiving countries and changing governments; at other times aid was used to express closeness with or distance from the other (Yin 2011). After the founding of the New China, the practice sprang up of expressing friendship to other countries through gifts and exchanges of animals, development of international academic exchanges, and cooperation in the field of the protection of wild animals, or the so-called 'animal diplomacy' (*dongwu waijiao*). Liu Xiaochen demonstrates that in the Cold War period China's 'animal diplomacy' to a large extent was a result of studying the advanced experience of the Soviet Union and Eastern socialist countries. Yet in the process of implementation, it was subject to perceptions and divisions towards the line

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and camps in different periods. This kind of external interaction often had a strong ideological flavour: its success or failure largely depended on the success or failure of China's external policy and changes in the patterns of international relations, rather than on anything directly concerning the animals themselves (Liu Xiaochen 2013).

In the mid-'50s, thanks to the Geneva Conference and the Bandung Conference, New China started to participate in major discussions on international affairs acknowledged as a great nation in the area. Li Danhui points out that, through the Geneva Conference, China achieved the strategic goal of preventing the US from forming an alliance with Laos and Cambodia and from establishing military bases, while guaranteeing Vietnam's status as Democratic Republic. China was therefore able to create in the periphery a relatively stable situation, which was crucial for its own economic development. But issues unresolved by the Conference, such as the division of Vietnam as well as capitalist control over Laos and Cambodia after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese army, undoubtedly did little in the way of strengthening the power of the whole socialist camp. It was for this that, at the beginning of the '60s, Mao Zedong, who was reviving revolutionary spirit, went against the ideology based on compromise and flexibility while working for the Indochina armistice (Li Danhui 2013). Liu Lei says that China actively used the Bandung Conference to expound its peaceful diplomatic policy, improving to a certain degree the international political and economic environment determined by the Korean War. However, it should be pointed out that although the Bandung conference clearly promoted trade between China and Afro-Asian countries, it did not change the situation of China's being dependent of the Socialist camp, in particular the Soviet Union, in international trade matters. China still had to strive to further develop economic and trade contacts with Western nations (except the US) (Liu 2010).

From the second half of the '50s to the mid-'60s, China actively participated in various kinds of Afro-Asia organisations and conferences. On this issue, Li Qianyu developed a series of research projects. He believes that China's position regarding Afro-Asian joint meetings, economic conferences, economic cooperation organisations and the second Afro-Asian conference indicates that the focus of Beijing policy regarding African and Asian countries was already turning from allaying their suspicion and worry about the New China and preventing such countries joining US military bloc against it, to establishing an anti-imperialist united front and eliminating revisionism, clearly reflecting the diplomatic strategy of 'to oppose imperialism we have to oppose revisionism', 'both sides bowed'. China's policy concerning Afro-Asian countries at that time was unable to obtain the understanding and support of all countries; in certain situations it even became an obstacle to relations between China and Asian and African countries (Li Qianyu 2010, 2012, 2014). Since its foundation, the PRC actively sought to join the

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United Nations in order to promote its national interests and cooperate in the struggle of the socialist camp against the US. The Universal Postal Union was the first UN agency, which New China successfully joined replacing the GMD, and thereby gaining a representative role. Han Changqing and Yao Baihui have carried out researches into this question. They believe that in striving to join the Universal Postal Union, China adopted suitable policies and tactics, and obtained the support of the USSR and East European Countries. This experience, on the one hand proves the effectiveness of the diplomacy of 'leaning on the one side' (*yi bian dao*) and on the other, reflects the diplomacy of laying equal stress on both Chinese national interests and international obligations (Han, Yao 2009a, 2009b).

3 China's Policy Towards Socialist Countries

In the minds of Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders, New China was a new and developing independent nation, but still more, it was a socialist country. Regardless of the changes taking place in the relations within the socialist camp, and regardless of whether one considers unity or struggle, in almost all the Cold War period the policy towards the socialist countries was in any case an important component of China's diplomacy. For a time, it even became a matter of utmost importance.

With regard to China's policy concerning socialist countries, the most comprehensive and systematic research by Chinese scholars regards Sino-Soviet relations at state level, the prime example being the research conducted by Shen Zhihua, Li Danhui and Niu Jun (their focus being on the '50s, the '60s-'70s and the '80s, respectively). These three scholars provided new perspectives in the study of this topic.

Shen Zhihua's main point of view can be set out as follows: during negotiations for the Sino-Soviet Treaty, Chinese leaders did not consider the drawing up of a 'supplementary agreement' and the establishment of four Sino-Soviet joint-stock companies humiliating; instead, they were pleased at the outcome; both the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Soviet Union considered the question of an alliance from the point of view of their respective strategic interests – ideology was not the basic motive but certainly represented an essential condition; the firm decision by Mao Zedong in 1950 to dispatch troops to Korea to resist the United States, ensured the Sino-Soviet treaty would not be set aside; and, initially, the Central Committee of the CCP completely approved the line taken by the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. In his heart of hearts, Mao Zedong was satisfied with the criticism of the Stalin personality cult, but he did not agree with the general idea of condemning it (the personality cult *per se* could be good or bad, it is up to us to insist on the correct personality cult). Moreover, Mao felt dissatisfied with the

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fact that the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in criticising Stalin's personality cult had not consulted the CCP and obtained its approval in advance. The 1957 Moscow Conference marked the peak of the Sino-Soviet alliance, but at the same time also raised the question of the leadership of the international Communist movement. Regarding the long wave radio station and the united fleet, Mao Zedong reacted radically, thereby setting up a psychological obstacle to further Sino-Soviet military cooperation, although Khrushchev was forced to surrender; the Chinese side in 1958 bombarded Jinmen without consulting the Soviet Union, and also without informing them in advance (Shen 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c 2007, 2010, 2013).

According to Li Danhui, at the beginning of the '60s, Mao Zedong indicated that the CCP must influence the Soviet Communist Party, assisting Khrushchev. In part because of this, a series of new conflicts arose between the CCP and the Soviet Communist Party. Facing the economic recession brought about by the Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong and the CCP – while standing up to Soviet pressure – could not but search for a compromise with the Soviet Union. In 1962, following Mao's reaffirmation of the importance of class struggle, the intensification of Sino-Soviet divergences regarding foreign policy and the emergence of international leftist forces, the CCP judged Sino-Soviet contradictions as contradictions between 'the enemy and us', and Khrushchev as a mouthpiece of the capitalist class, beginning the dispute with USSR regarding the general line of the international Communist movement. In October 1964, Khrushchev's fall from power did not bring new opportunities for Sino-Soviet reconciliation, as the CCP insisted on pushing the Soviet Communist party to refute the 20th Congress, while the Soviet Communist Party refused to negate itself; in the '60s, following the worsening of Sino-Soviet Party and state relations, border disputes between the two countries gradually became politicised, and the Chinese government's guiding principle in resolving Sino-Soviet border issues underwent a corresponding change, making known to the public that the partnership between the two countries was an unequal one (Li Danhui 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2009).

In addition, Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui have put forward their own original view about the rupture of the Sino-Soviet Alliance – the 'theory of unbalanced structure' according to which: firstly, after changes took place in the leadership structure of the socialist camp, the two communist parties were on an equal footing, and the competition for power became the main way the two handled political divergences, the main goal being the dominance within the world Communist movement; secondly, party-to-party relations covered and even replaced State-to-State relations. In substance, within this structure there was no awareness of sovereignty and equality. The above-mentioned structural shortcomings became the underlying cause of the inevitable Sino-Soviet split (Shen, Li 2012).

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According to Niu Jun's analysis, soon after the founding of the PRC, the development strategy of Chinese leaders was to adhere to the Soviet model, and to form an alliance with the Soviet Union. After 30 years of upheavals and setbacks, the Chinese government raised the concept of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', and chose an 'independent nonaligned and peaceful diplomacy'; this marks the fundamental harmonization of China's national development and diplomatic strategies. Specifically, it can be seen in Sino-Soviet relations: in the process of achieving normalisation with Moscow, Beijing progressively handled Sino-Soviet relations to avoid antagonism, with no formal alliance and thereby to ease tensions. Here, perhaps Chinese leaders did not make a conscious decision when they chose to withdraw from the Cold War, but Sino-Soviet diplomatic normalisation itself was the outcome of the fact that China's foreign policy was progressively shaking off the thinking pattern formed in the international Cold War climate (Niu 2008, 2011).

Similarly, worthy of attention is the fact that Chinese scholars discussed China's policy towards the USSR from the perspective of 'lower strata, the grassroots' (*diceng*) contacts. In the '50s an important aspect of Soviet economic assistance to China was the approximately twenty thousand experts sent to China. Shen Zhihua's research reveals that from the very beginning China considered the Soviet Union's provision of experts and other aid personnel as a government action taken for granted under the principle of internationalism; yet, Khrushchev viewed the dispatching of experts as diplomatic leverage to force China to give in when it came to theoretical and policy divergences. The result was that Soviet experts in China became political victims (Shen 2015; see also Zhang Haixing 2009; Hu Xiaojing 2012). Similarly, after the signing of the Sino-Soviet alliance China also sent a large number of students to the Soviet Union. You Lan believes that in the '60s, the worsening of Sino-Soviet relations put Chinese students in the Soviet Union – a product of Sino-Soviet friendship and collaboration – in an embarrassing position: since they had to continue and finish their studies, they had to withstand Soviet government pressure, while being at the forefront of domestic instruction in the struggle against revisionism. Essentially, personal qualities and circumstances determined the fact that these students were by no means suited to engagement in political struggles. As such, the Chinese side used these Chinese students in the USSR to develop, within the 'bastion of revisionism', anti-revisionist activity that, however, suffered repeated setbacks: not only could they not 'take struggle to promote unity', but instead they further pushed Sino-Soviet relations (which were already in a state of mutual hostility) toward antagonism (You 2014). From 1954 to 1963 China sent 2,000 workers to the USSR. According to Gu Jikun's analysis, Chinese workers sent to the Soviet Union to help build carried out their work in a state of misunderstanding in which both China and Soviet Union yielded with a show of reluctance. National sentiments in both countries were also involved at

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that time and both sides demonstrated a regard for the other, which was full of speculation and questions (Gu 2013).[5]

Although China's policy towards the countries of Eastern Europe depended to a great extent on the policy of the Soviet Union, however in some specific circumstances it also had its own characteristics. Shen Zhihua discussed China's reaction to Poland and Hungary's incidents, and revealed the following important historical facts: on 10th October 1956 China did not yet know that the USSR had already planned a military intervention in Poland, and could not advice Moscow not to dispatch troops; at the end of October, Chinese leaders mediation work had an important influence on the resolution of the Poland issue. On 23rd October, when the Soviet Union for the first time decided to dispatch troops in Hungary, it had not yet solicited China's opinion; at the time the USSR again took the policy decision to send troops in Hungary, Chinese leaders took up a position that played a subtle influence and a guiding function on the USSR. On this basis, Shen proves that rather than saying that China helped the Soviet Union resolve the crisis, it is better to say that Mao Zedong through dealing with the crisis realised his objective both to criticise Moscow great-nation chauvinism and preserve the unity of the socialist bloc. More importantly, the CCP in this way thus started to intervene in European affairs (Shen Zhihua 2005). Li Danhui considers that in the '60s the Sino-Soviet alliance was beginning to crack and China relations with five countries of Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary and Poland) followed the ups and downs in the Sino-Soviet relations. In the '60s, China's policy towards these five countries was generally in line with the policy concerning the Soviet Union, but it also presented a different content and specific features. China tried to foster an anti-ruling party influence in these five countries: not only was it unable to achieve the goal of disintegrating Soviet Union and Eastern European countries bloc, but rather it stirred the enhancement of these five countries' hostile feelings against China (Li Danhui 2011). Niu Jun's research shows that at the end of 1982, after the end of the XII CCP Congress, China decided the policy towards these East European countries on the basis of the transformation of China's development and security strategy: first take the initiative to improve the relations with the five East European countries under a circumstance in which it was difficult to obtain fast progress in Sino-Soviet relations (Niu 2013).[6]

Besides this, Chinese scholars also studied China's relations with Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia and Cuba. Shen Zhihua challenged the traditional

5 Chinese scholars who have investigated China's policy towards the Soviet Union also include Yao Yu (2010a, 2010b, 2011), Wen Ting (2011), Wang Zhenyou (2014).

6 On China's policy towards Eastern and Central European countries see also Chen Tao (2012, 2013), Ge Jun (2015), Liu Yong (2011), Cheng Xiaohe (2008) and Jiang Huajie (2012).

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wording 'mutually dependent' for Sino-Korean relations, believing that during the Korean war many contradictions emerged on questions related to military tactics and after the end of the war Kim Il-Sung's purge of the 'Yan'an faction' brought about a crisis in the Sino-Korean alliance. But with the emergence of Sino-Soviet divergences, Mao Zedong needed Korean support, and rather adopted a tolerant attitude toward Kim Il-Sung to improve Sino-Korean relations. The Sino-Korean alliance was an extremely unstable 'political marriage', permeated with internal contradictions (Shen Zhihua 2009). Dong Jie pointed out that after the launching of the Cultural Revolution, under the influence of leftist diplomacy, Sino-Korean relations were at a low ebb. At the end of the '60s, the two countries were even faced with increasing security issues and both sides undertook to restore good relations. As China started to assume the responsibility for the worsening of Sino-Korean relations produced by the Cultural Revolution, North Korea did not hesitate to approve the previously negated Cultural Revolution (Dong 2014b). Regarding China's policy toward North Korea at the time of Sino-American reconciliation, Shen Zhihua argues that Sino-Korean relations were maintained as friendly and even advanced to a certain extent. Generally speaking, even though China provided aid to North Korea, Pyongyang was not satisfied. Xia Yafeng proved that China's policy toward North Korea was not based on conformity in the ideology of the two countries but rather stemmed from considerations pertaining to national security interests and regional political affairs (Shen Zhihua 2014b; Xia 2013). Shen Zhihua and Dong Jie's research also revealed that after the end of the Korean war, despite the fact that China was beset with difficulties, it continued to provide aid to Korea so as to bring about economic reconstruction: the initial sum of money provided to Korea exceeded the combined total given by the USSR and East European countries (Shen, Dong 2011).

Further discussing China's economic aid to Korea in the first half of the '60s, Dong Jie believes that stemming from political and regional factors, China did all it could and calculated only the political costs (not taking into account economic costs) (Dong 2014a). Along the same lines, China's scholars also started to analyse China's Korean policy from the perspective of relations at lower levels. At the beginning of the '60s, huge numbers of Koreans residents were crossing the border in northeast China illegally. Shen Zhihua points out that the Korean government did not enforce the Sino-Korean agreement on how to deal with those persons who crossed the border illegally, and the Chinese government was unwilling to do so in order to preserve Sino-Korean relations, thus further aggravating the problem (Shen Zhihua 2011). Training Koreans was one of the most important matters covered under China's economic aid program to Korea. Dong Jie and Liang Zhi have examined the phenomenon of Sino-Korean relations' dependence on party-to-party relations, by focusing on

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Korean trainees in Beijing and in Shanghai in the ’50s and ’60s (Dong 2011; Liang 2014).

Since 2000, China scholars started to carry out empirical research on China-Vietnam relations (Li Danhui 2000). According to Niu Jun’s analysis, the motivations behind China’s support of Vietnamese resistance against France have to do not only with an intrinsic impulse to support revolutionary movement in East Asia but also with fundamental considerations regarding the country’s security. Moreover, the policy of aid for Vietnam was also influenced by the Sino-Soviet alliance (Niu 2012a). Yang Kuisong’s analysis affirms that the reason why at the Geneva conference Beijing advocated the ceasefire is closely linked to the fact that the foreign policy of the New China was changing from emphasising the ideology of ‘leaning to one side’ to a pragmatic tendency that gave more importance to the country’s interests (Yang 2001). Li Danhui points out that from the late ’60s to the beginning of the ’70s, China promoted Sino-American reconciliation by handling the Vietnam issue. She identifies three stages: the first stage is characterised by using the Vietnam issue to spur high-level Sino-American dialogue; the second stage saw China insisting on supporting the fundamental policy line of Vietnam, and promoting Sino-American reconciliation; the third stage was characterised by attempts to persuade Vietnam to move towards negotiations and so end the war, and fulfil the grand strategy of joining with the US and opposing the USSR (Li Danhui 2002). In recent years, China’s policy regarding Vietnam has attracted the attention of Chinese scholars. Among them, Zhang Mianli has made a positive evaluation of China’s economic and technical aid to Vietnam during and after the Vietnam war against France, believing that China’s aid had the following characteristics: it started early, covered a broad field, had ample scope, lasted long and achieved notable results. Zhao Yanghui and Wang Shu also show the effectiveness of China’s technical aid by taking as their example Vietnamese students trained at the Harbin Institute of Military Engineering (Zhang Mianli 2010; Zhao, Wang 2010).

You Lan and Fan Liping’s research, however, further reveals the problems encountered in the efforts to aid Vietnam. The former scholar believes that, from the Chinese point of view, the key issue that would determine the success or failure of the job of training Vietnamese trainees, was not just to help them acquire specialised skills but even more importantly it was to urge them to keep up a high level of political consciousness. Lastly, since there was evident divergence regarding the relations between the country’s interests and its ideology, frictions between China and Vietnam continually emerged and the political and ideological education that China was instilling into the Vietnamese trainees encountered difficulties. Fan Liping affirms that, being affected by the planned economic system and a low level of development of the Sino-Vietnam railroad system, as well as by the Vietnam war (American bombs and the ever-changing demands of the

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war) and by political factors (Vietnamese aid demands were too high and the Soviet Union increased the volume of transferred goods to help Vietnam), Sino-Vietnam joint international railway transport failed to resolve the contradiction presented by the difference between the railway transport project and its actual implementation (You 2012; Fan Liping 2014).

In the period of 1949-1973, regarding the incident concerning overseas Chinese who had travelled to Mongolia and asked to return to their country in the early years of the PRC, China maintained that under requests from the Mongolian government, more than 26,000 Chinese workers had gone to Mongolia to help building development. Gu Jikun discusses this issue, believing that from the beginning to the very end, there was divergence and contradiction between the leaders of both countries with regard to Chinese workers going to Mongolia: the Mongolian side was ever wary of Chinese workers; Chinese leaders, instead, refused to answer Mongolian demands regarding the dispatch to Mongolia of large numbers of Mongolian ethnic minority workers from Inner Mongolia (Gu 2015). In the first half of the '60s, China helped Cuba train a group of trainees. Taking Shanghai as an example, Ge Jun points out that because of differences in the realms of language, knowledge, habits, customs and traditions, many frictions and contradictions emerged between Chinese and Cuban workers. The Chinese side not only undertook the technical instruction of Cuban trainees, but also made greater efforts to promote propaganda related to 'anti-imperialism, anti-revisionism' and 'three red banners' (that is, the general line of socialist construction, the Great Leap Forward and the People's communes) among these people, in an attempt to influence their political stance (Ge 2011; on China's aid to Cuba see also Wang Yongzhong 2015).

4 China's Policy Towards Capitalist Countries

In the early days of the Cold War, China's policy towards the members of the capitalist camp was characterised to a great extent by struggle. However, in certain historical moments this policy did not prevent Mao Zedong from seeking contacts with Western countries on the basis of the theories of the 'intermediate zone' (*zhongjian didai*) and the 'second intermediate zone' (*di er zhongjian didai*). To be more precise, disintegrating the enemy's internal relations was in itself a form and tactic of struggle.

In recent years, Chinese scholars have discussed China's US policy from political, economic, military and cultural perspectives. Yang Kuisong believes that soon after the founding of the new government Chinese leaders were not yet eager to eliminate US cultural influence and power from China. But the outbreak of the Korean war and China's participation in it forced China to sweep away the 'pro-US' attitude, 'worship of US' and 'the fear of US' among the masses in the field of religion, education, radio, film (Yang 2010b).

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The two Taiwan Strait crises in the '50s have also received the attention of Chinese scholars. Yang Kuisong argues that, having taken into consideration the precedents of both the Korean and Vietnam war armistices and the need to take advantage of the opportunity to seize Dachen island and other offshore islands and prevent the US and Taiwan from signing a military treaty, Mao Zedong decided to bombard Jinmen in 1954. At the end of 1957, the US downgraded Sino-American ambassadorial talks. This action stirred Mao Zedong's national pride. On 23rd August 1958, China once more bombarded Jinmen (Yang 2003).

Niu Jun's research lays even greater emphasis on the military nature of these two Strait crises and the interrelations among them. He says that in 1954-1955 the factors behind Chinese leaders determination to launch a military attack in the Taiwan Strait were mainly: US promotion of the so-called 'unleashing Chiang Kai-shek' policy, and the rapid increase of Chinese and Taiwanese military operations on the offshore islands; the beginning of US consultations with Taiwanese authorities for a 'mutual defence treaty'; the acceleration of the 'two Chinas' activities by the US and other allied countries; and the shooting down of two Chinese People's Liberation Army planes by US military forces on 26th July 1954. The 1958 bombardment of Jinmen, despite having a certain political significance, was, in the first place, a military action, a part of China's military plan (formulated in 1954) to seize the islands along the southeast coast occupied by Chiang Kai-shek and also a continuation of the military operations commenced in spring 1954 in a peculiar internal and external situation (Niu 2004, 2009, 2012b, 350-77; on China's role in Taiwan Strait crises, see also Dai 2003).[7]

Regarding the US position behind the 1962 Chinese policy decision on the Taiwan Strait, Wang Dong affirms that in this case what concerned Beijing in the first place was how effectively they could eliminate the threat of a GMD military counterattack against the mainland. Only after they came to know – through informal talks – that the US had no intention to support Chiang Kai-shek, did Beijing let out a sigh of relief. We must say that both China and the US found a common interest in preserving the 'status quo' on the Taiwan issue (Wang Dong 2010). Wang Dong also addresses the question of why China and the US did not reach reconciliation despite the fact that at the second Geneva conference they were both willing to seek a compromise. On China's part, their leaders clearly realised the strategic effectiveness of maintaining an anti-American stance, believing that the goal of becoming a great nation could be achieved by strengthening the country's leading position within the socialist camp and by initiating national liberation movements in the Third World (Wang Dong 2009; on

7 Studies on Sino-American relations in the '50s also include Li Bingkui, Feng Xiaoli (2008) and Li Bingkui (2008).

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Sino-American relations in the '60s, see also Chen Jimin 2010). The development of China's nuclear weapon received extremely close US attention; Zhan Xin's research on US nuclear strategy regarding China in the '60s shows that following the worsening of Sino-Soviet relations, the US policy of nuclear containment concerning China also changed, the nuclear factor becoming the catalyst that accelerated the change (Zhan 2011). Before Sino-American rapprochement, Sino-American ambassadorial talks represented the most important channel of communication between the two countries. Xia Yafeng's research indicates that, as did American leaders, Chinese leaders also attached equal importance to the Warsaw channel, believing that its existence was helpful in managing fragile, nervous Sino-American relations. Because of this, even though it was during the most radical period of the Cultural Revolution, Beijing had not yet nullified Sino-American ambassadorial talks (Xia 2007). Zhang Shuguang has discussed the plan and implementation of US policy in relaxing Sino-American relations, including the previously neglected issue of communication strategy and technique between the leaders of the two countries at the time of Nixon's visit (Zhang Shuguang 2008). In addition, Ouyang Xiang and He Hui shed light on the positive effects of Sino-American reconciliation in terms of trade, by taking as an example the China export trade fair (since these meetings were held in Guangzhou, the abbreviated name is Guangjiaohui-Guangzhou Export Commodities Fair) (Ouyang 2012; He 2008).

Britain was the first great Western nation to recognise the PRC. Mao Zedong and other leaders attached extreme importance to relations with Britain. Xu Youzhen argues that in 1950-1954 the history of Sino-British diplomatic negotiations indicates that from the beginning to the end China occupied a leading position, dominating the rhythm and direction of the negotiations. Here, Beijing's attitude and position changed from a cautious and procrastinating approach to a proactive and flexible one. This reflects the change of China's diplomatic strategy from a 'revolution diplomacy' (*geming waijiao*) giving prominence to national security and regime stability to a 'peaceful diplomacy' (*heping waijiao*) striving for a peaceful environment and peaceful coexistence with countries with a different ideology and different values (Xu Youzhen 2013). Zhou Hong has studied communication with Britain in the early PRC, focusing on the China–Britain National Day Reception. She believes that the Chinese side fully used this to combine together struggle and cooperation, properly replying to some concrete issues related to Sino-British relations, while sticking to their principles (Zhou Hong 2013). Moreover, Shi Shantao discusses the 1954 China-Britain aeroplane incident, proving from different perspectives that the incident was really not intentionally caused by China as Great Britain officially suspected, but a mistake. The reason why the incident could successfully be resolved has to do with the adoption by the Chinese government of a flexible and pragmatic policy response, particularly with

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China actively providing Great Britain with compensation (Shi 2010; on Sino-British relations see also Zhang Minjun 2013).

Regarding China's policy toward France, Chinese scholars have focused the attention on Sino-French normalisation, termed by the media 'a nuclear explosion in diplomacy' (*waijiao hebaozha*). Zhai Qiang believes that in the history of PRC external relations, the normalisation of diplomatic relations between China and France in 1964 is a peculiar case because it was the first time and also the only time that Chinese leaders agreed to establish diplomatic relations with a country that had not first broken off ties with Taiwan. Sino-French diplomatic normalisation was the first great diplomatic breakthrough sought for by the Chinese government under Mao's principle of the 'two intermediate zones' (*liang ge zhongjian didai*); it was an important event that finally brought China into the international community (Zhai 2012). Yao Baihui's research reveals important historical facts that the French government and French scholars alike tend to neglect: first of all, "The main points of Premier Zhou Enlai's talks" (*Zhou Enlai zongli tanhua yaodian*), reflecting the importance the Chinese side attached to the question of Sino-French normalisation, is not a unilateral document, but the result of Sino-French consultation on the basis of equality. Moreover, France's establishment of diplomatic relations with China was not at all unconditional. France promised to recognise the PRC as the only legitimate government representing the Chinese people, to support the right of representation of the New China within the UN and to not continue French-Taiwanese diplomatic relations. Although the Chinese side did not yet request that France break off relations with Chiang Kai-shek, the abovementioned commitments made by the French former prime minister Faure had already made breaking off France's diplomatic relations with Taiwan inevitable (Yao Baihui 2012, 2014).

Apart from policy concerning the US, Britain and France, Chinese scholars have also attempted to address the question of China's relations with West Germany, Italy, Denmark and Japan (Ge 2013; Wang Ruoqian 2012; Yin, Wang 2013; Qi Jianmin 2014).

5 China's Policy Towards the Third World

Granted that for a quite long time after the founding of the New China Beijing's diplomacy had a clear 'revolutionary nature', the most important arena of this revolutionary diplomacy can be said to be the vast area of the Third World. The concrete patterns of this diplomacy include: providing the countries of the Third World with economic, technological and military aid; supporting the national liberation movements of those countries; encouraging their acceptance of anti-imperialist thought; and preventing

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them from falling into the US camp through international negotiations.[8]

Regarding Southeast Asia, the topmost priority among Chinese scholars is the evolution of China's policy regarding Burma. Of these, Fan Hongwei's research is the most systematic (Fan 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2009, 2010a, 2012). What we need to point out in particular is that the Sino-Burma border issue aroused widespread interest among Chinese scholars. Fan Hongwei believes that successful negotiation of the 'Sino-Burma border treaty' was brought about mainly because China accepted substantial compromise (Fan 2010b). Relatively speaking, Qi Pengfei and Zhang Mingxia stress even further the positive aspect of the Chinese policy decision and in a very detailed way outline the history of the resolution of the Sino-Burma border issue (Qi, Zhang 2012). Guan Peifeng points out that the border negotiations succeeded on the one hand because both countries were in good faith and determined to reach a peaceful resolution of the issue, and, on the other, because during negotiations China took the interests of the other side into great consideration (Guan 2014).[9]

Sino-Indonesia relations is another topic on which Chinese scholarly research is rather thorough. Zhang Xiaoxin's research shows that from the start, China's Indonesia policy received close attention from Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi and other prominent CCP leaders. In the early '60s, the CCP Central Committee regarded the task of supporting national democratic revolutionary movements just as important as the task of moving international socialist revolutionary movements forward, and thus embarked on a policy of vigorous support for Indonesia's struggle against imperialism and colonialism (Zhang Xiaoxin 2011, 2013).

According to Li Yiping and Zeng Yuleng's analysis, from 1958 to 1965 China's aid to Indonesia was by no means perfectly coordinated with the development of Sino-Indonesia friendly relations, the main reason being that China took 'revolution' as the most important priority in its Indonesian aid policy (Li, Zeng 2012).

Zhou Taomo discusses the contradictions in China's Indonesia policy from the late '50s until the early '60s: the widening of Sino-Soviet divergence on the one hand made China happy to see that USSR interference in Indonesia provided checks and balances on the US; on the other, it was an indicator of possible future conflicting interests between China and the USSR in Indonesia. At the same time, within the international Communist movement, the Indonesia Communist Party's abandonment of the philosophy of armed struggle did not prevent the CCP from approaching the Indonesia Commu-

8 Empirical research on the relations between China and Latin American countries by Chinese scholars is very scarce, Sun Hongbo's study being among a handful of studies published so far (Sun 2013). For this reason, in this chapter the authors only present the main results in the study of Chinese policy concerning Afro-Asian countries.

9 For a detailed study on the history of Sino-Burma border issue resolution see Feng Yue 2014.

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nist party with the intention of establishing an anti-USSR coalition. In the handling of overseas Chinese issues and party-to-party relations between the CCP and the Indonesia Communist Party, Chinese diplomacy clearly favoured pragmatism compared with loud propaganda (Zhou 2010).

As regards Sino-Cambodian relations after the Geneva conference, Zhai Qiang affirms that China's main policy consideration was how to win Sihanoukville's good opinion of China and to strive for his cooperation to prevent Cambodia from joining the anti-China encirclement of US organisations, and to spread – via Cambodia – Chinese influence in neutral Afro-Asian states (Zhai 2013; see also Zhang 2014; on China's policy concerning Thailand and Laos see, Wang 2011; Pan 2014; Feng Yiming 2014).

With regard to China's policy towards South Asia,[10] Chinese scholars have mainly focused on Sino-Indian relations. Among them, Dai Chaowu's research is the most representative. His analysis of the reform of the Tibetan currency system, Indian trade control and embargo on Tibet and India's occupation of the south of the 'McMahon demarcation line', reveals the asymmetric nature of Sino-Indian relations: in the case of external relations, the New China depended greatly on India; in consolidating stability in Tibet it also needed Indian support. As such, relations between the two countries were clearly asymmetric. Following the changes in Chinese foreign policy strategy in the mid- and late '50s, especially because of the ever-widening divergence between the Chinese and the Soviet Communist parties on a series of significant international strategic questions, the CCP leaders, especially Mao Zedong, started to reconsider the nature and functions of this kind of 'nationalist country' under Nehru's leadership, considering India's to be 'reactionary nationalism'. Sino-Indian asymmetric political relations thus no longer existed. Yet, the inauguration in December 1954 and October 1957 of the Sichuan-Tibet highway, the Qinghai-Tibet highway and the Xinjiang-Tibet line to a great extent resolved the transportation problems Tibet had with inland areas and significantly changed unbalanced Sino-Indian economic relations (Dai 2012, 2013a, 2015). Moreover, Dai Chaowu also discusses the question of the 1962 Sino-Indian border war and China's handling of Indian prisoners, clarifying Indian censure on a series of important related questions and also pointing out the inappropriateness of China's related policies (Dai 2013b; on Sino-Indian relations see also Gao, Gao 2011; Zhu 2012). Chinese scholars have also considered Sino-Pakistan relations. According to Cheng Xiaohe's analysis, the hostility between China and India in the first half of the '60s caused China to gradually abandon the bias of its ideology and form an alliance with Pakistan. In 1965 during the Indo-Pakistani war, China gave full aid and support to

10 Chinese scholars have also paid attention to the relations between China and Afghanistan (Zhou, Qi 2011; Zhang An 2012, 2015, among others).

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Pakistan in accordance with the agreement. But the space barrier between the two countries and the deficiencies in the mechanism of military co-operation as well as China's diplomatic isolation and its limited strength, limited the effects of Chinese aid. Consequently, after the end of the war, Pakistan changed its previous international attitude of 'being close to China and estranging the US' (*qin Zhong shu Mei*), and adopted a policy of equal distance between China, the US and the Soviet Union (Cheng Xiaohe 2009, 2012; on Sino-Pakistan border issue see Han 2011).[11]

In recent years, Chinese scholars have focused their attention on China's Africa aid policy, most prominent among the studies being the research by Jiang Huajie. Considering many instances such as Chinese training of Zambian armed forces, its aid in building the Tazara railway, China's replacement of Taiwan in African agricultural aid, training African students and providing aid to African medical teams, Jiang studied China's aid policy towards African countries from 1960 to 1978 and reached the following conclusions: Chinese aid action in Africa is very different from development aid as generally defined. This action was not only a policy tool to build a united international front against imperialism and revisionism, but it also reflected the Cold War policy of exporting its own economic development model. Finally, China's own experience in social, political and economic development was not accepted and put into practice by African countries, the underlying reason being complex: both political and international relations issues obstructed implementation as did social, ethnic and cultural differences (Jiang 2013, 2014; Shen Xipeng 2009; Hu 2013; Xu 2010).

6 Review and Prospects

In the past 15 years, Chinese scholarship on China's foreign policy in the Cold War era has made notable progress in at least three aspects: first, thanks to the analysis of new historical material it has opened up many new research questions (such as China's resolution of border issues), revealed a wealth of previously neglected historical facts and to a certain extent laid a solid foundation for future analysis of the history of the foreign affairs of the PRC. Secondly, it has constantly enlarged the field of analysis focusing on high level external contacts and lower strata grass roots exchange (such as in the case of Soviet experts helping China, the training of foreign experts, students studying abroad and aid workers), while discussing the role and function of ideology in China's foreign policy action from different perspectives. Moreover, it has also provided a new understanding of some

11 Chinese scholars have also focused on Sino-Nepal relations (Mu 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Qi 2011).

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major theoretical questions (such as Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui's research on Sino-Soviet relations, for instance, aimed at refining the theory of 'unbalanced structure' when it comes to relations between Socialist countries; Dong Jie, Liang Zhi and Gu Jikun's related research verifying how applicable this theory is). And, finally, at the turn of the 21st century Chinese scholars involved in the study of China's foreign policy in the Cold War were born in the '50s, as for instance, Shen Zhihua, Li Danhui, Niu Jun and Yang Kuisong.[12] At present, these scholars are still at the forefront of research work, while emerging scholars born in the '60s and especially in the '70s and '80s are joining the group. A research team characterised by a reasonable age distribution is being formed. Most importantly, as regards China's foreign policy during the Cold War, China has already created two major structures for scientific research and documentary collection located in the south and the north of the country. These are the Centre for Cold War International History Studies at East China Normal University and the School of History at Capital Normal University, the former being engaged in researching on and collecting a large quantity of archival documents related to China's relations with Socialist and periphery countries while the latter focuses on the relations between China and capitalist countries as well as on the situation of archival sources on Cold War history in every country and collects a large amount of archival documents on Western countries' relations with China.

Without doubt, at present, Chinese scholars' research on Sino-Soviet relations, Sino-Korean relations and Sino-Indian relations is at the forefront of world research. But, we cannot deny that, generally speaking, there are still obvious shortcomings in Chinese research on China's foreign policy during the Cold War: apart from researchers engaged in Sino-Soviet relations, Sino-American relations, Sino-British relations and Sino-Indian relations, other Chinese scholars are still using only Chinese archival materials to conduct research on China's foreign policy. On some major questions, research is done but is of a somewhat cursory nature, when addressing the changes in China's attitude and stance towards the question of the return to the UN for instance, or, Sino-Mongolian relations, Sino-Cuban relations and China's relations with countries of Latin America. A part of young scholars' research is even more limited to restoring historical facts, the field of vision being rather narrow and lacking the necessary awareness of the issues and theoretical concern, demonstrating a scarce critical understanding of China's foreign policy.

Of course, on these issues Chinese scholars themselves have already gained some understanding and are attempting to resolve the problems. In 2013, the Centre for Cold War International History Studies at East China

12 Their books have already been translated in several languages (English, Russian, Japanese, Korean, and European languages), circulating among the international academic community.

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Normal University started a large research project on "The Relations Between China and Periphery Countries and Frontier Issues During the Cold War" and in 2015 was awarded financial aid from National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Science. The members of this research project are divided into four research sub-groups covering Central Asia, North Asia, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. These are involved in gathering, arranging and translating archives pertaining to periphery countries' relations with China, and also in re-discussing China's foreign policy during the Cold War on the basis of bilateral and even multilateral archival research. To date, the project groups have already visited archives in Russia, Australia, Japan, Mongolia, Burma, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia among others, conducting documentary investigation and collection.[13]

In order to coordinate the research work, the Center for Contemporary Documentation and Historical Materials of Oriental History Studies Foundation, East China Normal University was established on 10th October 2014. This center is mainly devoted to Cold War archives in every country (including China) relating to Chinese domestic and external affairs, especially to arranging, classifying and creating a database of materials related to periphery country relations with China. Similarly, what deserves attention is the fact that in the last two or three years the North East Normal University, Xinjiang Normal University, the Sun Yat-sen University, the South China Normal University and Ji'nan University, one after another, have established academic centres dedicated to Cold War history. These academic centers are located in provinces in the border area of China and their research is mainly related to the relations of periphery countries with China as well as to border issues. Moreover, in recent years the Centre for the Study of PRC History and the Centre for Cold War International History Studies at East China Normal University have sponsored a series of scientific activities for doctoral students and young scholars with the idea of strengthening the young researchers' competence in deciphering documentary material.[14]

We believe that through perseverance and hard work, in the near future Chinese research on China's foreign policy in the Cold War period, a field that has not yet been completely explored, will bear even more substantial fruit.

13 Since 2013, the archives of the PRC Ministry of foreign affairs are closed "due to technical reasons" and access to local archives have also been restricted. As such, the use of foreign archives has become especially necessary for the study of China's foreign policy during the Cold War.

14 For instance, on 17-27 July 2015, an advanced course on "Contemporary History: Documents and Methods", sponsored by the Oriental history research foundation, has been organised by the Institute of Culture and History at South China Normal University. It was attended by nearly 30 students, selected through a national examination, and saw the participation of ten professors from East China Normal University, Beijing University and other colleges and universities.

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China and Western Europe

Roads to Reconciliation
People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy
During the Cold War Period (1949-1971)

edited by Guido Samarani, Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Sofia Graziani

Living in Mao's China
The European Experience 1949-1969

Beverley Hooper
(The University of Sheffield, UK)

Abstract During the Mao era a small number of Europeans lived in the PRC – most of them for two or three years, a few for the whole period. This article focuses on those who, unlike diplomats and a handful of foreign correspondents, worked or studied in Chinese institutions: 'foreign comrades' (both long-term residents and sojourners), 'foreign experts' and students. The article shows how the everyday lives of these Europeans were strongly influenced both by Mao era's 'politics in command' environment and by PRC policies that utilised them for political and pragmatic purposes while at the same time marginalising them from everyday Chinese life. It also illustrates the divisive impact of Maoist politics on each group. The Cultural Revolution brought a temporary halt to both the foreign expert and student presences in China, as well as being a traumatic period for the foreign comrades.

Keywords China. Mao Era. Foreign experts. European students. European residents.

1 Introduction

The lives of European residents in China from the Opium Wars to the communist revolution have been researched by a number of historians (for example Bickers 1999; Wood 2000; Goodman, Goodman 2012), while the growth of a foreign, including a European, expatriate community since the 1980s has featured in media discourse in recent decades. In contrast, the Mao years have usually been seen as a period when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was closed to Europeans – and more broadly to Westerners – in a Cold War environment where China's 'bamboo curtain' was even more of a barrier than the Soviet Union's 'iron curtain'. Even before the PRC's tentative reopening to the West from the early 1970s, though, Mao's China was not only open to visiting 'friends of China' and

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a range of delegations but had a small resident European community – or more accurately communities.[1]

While the new Chinese government was eliminating the former European presence (Thompson 1979; Hooper 1986; Howlett 2016), which it denounced as representing a century of imperialist aggression, it implemented its own policy towards accepting foreigners in China. Highly restrictive, this combined an ideological stance that only foreigners who were 'friendly disposed' to the PRC would be admitted,[2] with a slightly more pragmatic one in accordance with the principle of *yang wei Zhong yong* (using foreign things to serve China). The new non-official European presence was very different from the previous one, which revolved around businesspeople and Christian missionaries, and consisted basically of three categories of people. Two were short-term sojourners: 'foreign experts' recruited as polishers of foreign language texts and as foreign language teachers, and students who studied Chinese language and/or history, literature and a few other subjects. The third, a tiny group of 'foreign comrades' with an ongoing commitment to 'new China', lived in the PRC for all or a large part of the Mao era.[3] These three groups were distinctive in that, unlike diplomats of the few countries that recognised the PRC and a handful of foreign correspondents,[4] they worked or studied within Chinese institutions and were responsible to the PRC authorities, not to a European government or news organisation.[5]

Within the broader but still very small Western community, Europeans dominated the foreign expert and student groups, which also included a few Canadians and Australasians, and constituted a substantial proportion of the foreign comrades (the other major group was American). The

1 This article is about Western Europeans. It does not include foreign experts or students from the Soviet bloc whose experiences in the PRC during the Cold War years were of a different political nature.

2 Zhou Enlai enunciated the policy in some detail in discussions with Soviet Foreign Minister Anastas Mikoyan on 1 July 1949. Translated in 'Memorandum of Conversation between Anastas Mikoyan and Zhou Enlai, 1 January 1949', Cold War International History Project. *Bulletin* 16, 138.

3 I have put the terms 'foreign experts' and 'foreign comrades', both translations of Chinese expressions, in quotation marks only the first time I use them and in headings.

4 The only European countries with diplomatic representation in China before the 1970s were Britain, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries (which all recognised the PRC soon after the Communist victory) and France which established diplomatic relations in 1964. Reuters and AFP each had a representative in Peking from 1956 and the German news agency DPA (Deutsche Presse Agentur) from 1964. Communist correspondents during the period included representatives of the Italian newpaper *L'Unità* and the British *Daily Worker*.

5 All of these groups are discussed in detail in Hooper (2016) which deals more broadly with Western residents in the PRC during the whole of the Mao era.

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national makeup of the European foreign expert community was mostly British and to a lesser extent French and Italian, and that of the foreign comrade community largely British. The students included Swedes and Italians in the early years, with French students dominant from 1964. Up to 1963-64, the total number of people was tiny: probably less than 100 (including families) at any one time. The establishment of the student exchange with France and the recruitment of some foreign experts, both of which were done for pragmatic rather than political reasons, increased the size of the total community, but it was still very small even compared with the early to mid-1970s when China began opening tentatively to the West.

This article examines the nature of the community and argues that its members were partially isolated and insulated from everyday Chinese life in accordance with an official policy of 'privileged segregation'. At the same time, their working or studying lives were influenced by the Mao era's 'politics in command' environment which in some cases compromised their *raison d'être* for being in China. Relations within individual groups were also influenced by the highly politicised environment, while the Cultural Revolution brought a temporary halt to the foreign expert and student presences as well as proving traumatic for the long-term residents. Individual sections of the article focus on the factors that were most pertinent to each group, while revealing the qualitative differences between being a short-term sojourner and a long-term resident for whom living in Mao's China involved an ongoing process of identity negotiation.

This article is part of a broader project on the Western (including the European) experience in China for the whole of the Mao era, published as *Foreigners Under Mao: Western Lives in China 1949-1976* (Hooper 2016). Like that project, the focus in this article is on everyday experiences, interactions and identities, not on the formulation and implementation of communist policy *towards* Europeans (or more broadly foreigners) which was examined by political scientist Anne-Marie Brady in *Making the Foreign Serve China* (2003). Utilising familiar social history sources, the article draws mainly on memoirs, letters, and personal interviews and communications.

2 'Foreign experts'

During the 1950s and 1960s, the PRC Government recruited a small number of Europeans as 'foreign experts' (*waiguo zhuanjia*) to help fill its need for foreign language expertise.[6] This section focuses on their recruitment,

6 Although most of the long-term residents were also classified as 'foreign experts' in terms of their working roles and salaries, they essentially fell into that category rather than being recruited to it.

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how their experience was characterised by privilege and segregation, the impact of Maoist politics on their teaching and text-polishing work, political divisions within the community, and their targeting during the Cultural Revolution.

The foreign experts, mostly from Britain and to a more limited extent France and Italy, started as a trickle of people in the 1950s. They were assigned to the PRC by their respective Communist parties in response to requests from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for assistance with its 'foreign propaganda work' (*duiwai xuanchuan gongzuo*) to supplement the foreign comrades who were already living in China. While appointees usually spent three or four years in the PRC, the British party encouraged them to stay longer because it had difficulty persuading members to go there.

In 1963-64, the demand for foreign experts increased when, with the Sino-Soviet split, English and French replaced Russian as the PRC's major foreign languages. China was also expanding – and attempting to improve – its foreign language teaching following Zhou Enlai's dissatisfaction with his interpreters during a visit to French-speaking Algeria. But this was happening at a time when the European Communist parties (which eventually supported the Soviet Union) were decreasing their contacts with the PRC.

It was in this context that the Chinese government implemented a new policy for the broader recruitment of foreign experts, mostly on two-year contracts. With pragmatism outweighing politics, its appointees were the first European sojourners admitted to the PRC for whom a declared allegiance to 'new China' was not essential. "All we ask of you is that you're not an enemy of the Chinese people and that you do your work well", Frenchman Maurice Ciantar was told (1969, i-ii). The positions were publicised, mostly by word of mouth, through China friendship associations and the PRC diplomatic missions in London and Paris.[7] By early 1965 an estimated fifteen British teachers had already gone to China, according to the scholarly journal *China Quarterly* (Note, 1965, 25, 207). Most of the appointees travelled to the PRC individually or as couples, but the first twelve French teachers were escorted as a group by a Chinese diplomat.

While the early foreign experts had been communist party members, those recruited in the mid-1960s were among the most diverse of all the European residents and fell into three categories. The first saw 'new China' as the bright new hope for socialism after becoming disillusioned with the Soviet Union. They included British journalist Eric Gordon and his wife Marie who had first met at a Communist Youth League meeting. Political idealists Monica and Peter Seltman had fallen out with the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) during the Sino-Soviet split, joined an 'anti-revisionist' group, and hoped that the PRC would give them "the opportu-

7 The PRC and France established diplomatic relations in January 1964.

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nity to learn valuable political lessons" and to "make some small contribution to building socialism and opposing imperialism" (Seltman 2014, 101).

The second category, some of whose members were also sympathetic to 'new China', were Chinese language graduates for whom the foreign expert route presented a rare opportunity to spend a few years in the country they had been studying for many years. Most were single, like French graduate Marianne Bastid, while a few were accompanied, including British graduates Bill Jenner (with his wife Delia) and Andrew Watson (with his wife Maggie). The third, more disparate, category of foreign experts included language teachers who had previously worked in international schools (some of the French had taught in Algeria before its independence) and others who were simply interested in China, like fifty-year-old Parisian writer and adventurer Maurice Ciantar. Altogether, the foreign experts were a mixed bunch, thrown into – and often thrown together in – a highpoliticised and restrictive society.

One of the most striking features of the foreign experts' experience in the PRC was privilege and segregation, the combination of which isolated and insulated them from much of everyday Chinese life. This was in line with the Government's aim to project its official version of 'new China' to foreigners and to prevent Chinese people from potentially becoming contaminated by 'incorrect' ideas. The foreign experts received free accommodation, medical expenses, and a foreign expert salary (depending on experience) of around 400-500 *yuan* a month, five or more times that paid to a senior Chinese professor.[8] In Peking, where the great majority worked, they were housed at the Friendship Hotel (*Youyi Binguan*), a huge walled complex on the city's north-western outskirts which had been the focus of the Soviet expert presence before the Russians were suddenly withdrawn in July 1960.[9] The Youyi, as it was commonly known, was a self-contained and segregated community; its facilities included dining rooms, club, bank, chemist, shops, hairdresser, gymnasium, outdoor swimming pool and tennis courts. When Maurice Ciantar arrived in 1965, it housed some 600 foreign experts – a catchall term including not just those specially recruited to serve China's foreign expert needs but a range of political exiles and would-be revolutionaries from regions including South America and Asia. The foreign experts were driven to and from their place of work – and even back to the Youyi for lunch – by car or special coach, and were kept busy in their free time with officially supervised visits and excursions.

8 For details of the foreign experts' salaries and conditions, see *Guowuyuan waiguo zhuanjia ju ji zhongyang youguan bumen guanyu waiguo zhuanjia wenti de wenjian* 国务院外国专家局及中央有关部门关于外国专家问题的文件 [Documents of the Foreign Experts Bureau of the State Council and relevant departments of the central government on foreign expert issues].

9 I am using 'Peking' rather than 'Beijing' when writing about the Mao era as it was the term used by my interviewees and also in the English-language documents of the period.

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While the government insisted, probably with some justification, that Europeans (along with other foreigners) needed 'special consideration' (*youdai*) because they were not accustomed to China's poor living conditions, not all of the foreign experts wanted to lead a segregated, expatriate style life. Their efforts to break down the barriers, though, brought them up against a stubborn bureaucracy. Bill and Delia Jenner's perseverance did eventually pay off when they finally received approval, two-thirds of the way through their two-year China sojourn, to move from the Friendship Hotel to the living accommodation attached to Delia's workplace (Jenner 1967, 76). Others were less successful in gaining access to regular Chinese institutions. Italian Communists Marisa Musu and her husband Aldo Poeta, for example, tried in vain to get permission for their children to attend Chinese schools (De Giorgi 2014, 11).

Despite their segregated lifestyle, foreign experts shared with Chinese colleagues the experience of working in the 'politics in command' environment of the Mao era. The text polishers corrected English, French or other translations of official releases about domestic and international developments for publication in the *Peking Review* or *Pékin Information*, before/since 'liberation' stories about the economy, culture, women and children for *China Reconstructs* or *China Pictorial*, and short stories about Communist heroes and Guomindang enemies for the Foreign Language Press. Morris Ciantar could be outspoken about the politicised content of *Pékin Information* and on one occasion refused outright to polish an article, proclaiming that he refused "to serve up rubbish" (1969, 362).

Even some dedicated socialists became frustrated that the quality of their work was being stymied by the stilted political discourse. Working at *China Reconstructs* in the late 1950s, British Communist Nan Green wondered whether the ceaseless before/after Liberation formula might bore and antagonise readers, only to be told: "It is what we *want to say*, comrade" (2004, 180). At Foreign Languages Press in the mid-1960s, Eric Gordon complained to his Chinese colleagues about not being allowed to rewrite the "jargonised, constipated language" which he had assumed would be his job as a professional journalist (1972, 53-4).

Foreign experts teaching language had the advantage of close everyday contact with young Chinese people, though their efforts to produce effective foreign language speakers were affected by the politicised language as well as the PRC's foreign language teaching methodology. Vocabulary was essentially restricted to Maoist discourse, with beginners' texts using examples of happy peasants labouring in the people's communes, earnest factory workers striving to build 'new China', and conscientious students reading the works of Chairman Mao. For more advanced classes, where written materials were selected and approved by a committee that included a Party official, the most contentious issue was whether 'authentic texts', i.e. those published in the country of the target language, should be

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used given their 'undesirable' (bourgeois, capitalist, imperialist) content. By the mid-1960s, materials produced in the PRC were dominant, with Western texts largely restricted to a few approved writers like Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. Of even greater concern to some teachers was the fact that the materials had usually been translated from Chinese, not written in the target language; some had already been published in *Peking Review*, its French equivalent *Pékin Information*, or another foreign language magazine.

"The foreign teacher is faced with teaching a bastardised version of his own language", British teacher Diana Lainson, who taught at the Second Foreign Languages Institute in 1964-65, complained in an article following her return to Britain.

> It is hardly good English to talk about 'going to the countryside to take an active part in physical labour, going all out faster, better and more economically than ever before to realise the aims of the three red banners and to adhere closely to the thinking of our great and glorious leader'. Yet thousands of sentences like this are produced every day in Peking. (1965, 1)

Even away from the working environment, Maoist politics pervaded everyday life. New arrivals sometimes found themselves targeted by one or more of the long-term residents to participate in political study sessions, though not always with positive results as Bill Jenner recalled over fifty years later: "I think I was written off as a hopeless case within a few months'".[10] Although Mao's China was difficult to avoid as a topic of conversation, the foreign experts' political diversity often inhibited rational discussion. Those criticising the PRC found themselves being denounced by some as 'anti-China', while those praising it were labelled as 'pro-China' or even "100 percenters". "There are quite violent quarrels all the time between the anti-Chinese and those who see China in a more realistic light", PRC enthusiast Sofia Knight wrote to her mother in September 1965 (1967, 50).

Tensions only increased following the launch of the Cultural Revolution in mid-1966. When the Government eventually endorsed the participation of foreigners in the movement in January 1967, some of the enthusiasts (including Eric Gordon and his wife Marie) initially became involved with a group calling itself the Bethune-Yan'an Revolutionary Regiment which supported the political rebels among the Friendship Hotel's Chinese staff. They were mostly side-lined, though, when the group was taken over by a few 'radical' long-term residents (Milton, Milton 1976, 256-7). Over the 1967 summer, the atmosphere at the Youyi degenerated into name-calling

10 Communication with Bill Jenner, 17 August 2015.

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and mud-slinging, with rivals posting up *dazibao* denouncing one another in vituperative language (Gordon 1972, 101).[11]

Nor were the foreign experts, whatever their political persuasion, immune from becoming targets of the Cultural Revolution itself as the movement became increasingly xenophobic during 1967. Even the process of leaving China when two-year contracts expired was fraught with anxiety, with aggressive customs officers searching every piece of luggage and confiscating anything that looked 'official' or suspicious. When Eric Gordon and his family were leaving Peking in November, Eric tried to hide some 130 pages of typewritten notes (he intended writing a book on the early stages of the Cultural Revolution) in three picture-frames behind photos of Chairman Mao. The outcome was his detention, along with Marie and the couple's ten-year-old son Kim, for twenty-three months at the Xinqiao Hotel. Although the family's experience was not as uncomfortable as that of some of the imprisoned long-term residents, they were confined to one room and Eric faced constant pressure to confess that he was an 'imperialist spy' (Gordon 1971, *passim*). By the time the Gordons were released in October 1969, virtually all of the European foreign experts had already left China and, with the country in turmoil, no replacements were being recruited.

3 Students

To the envy of some of their fellow students or graduates, a tiny minority of people learning Chinese in Europe had the opportunity to study in China in the first two decades of the PRC. After examining the nature and dimensions of the small European student presence, this section focuses on official efforts to keep the students apart from Chinese students, the influence of Maoist politics on their everyday lives and studies, and how – despite the limitations imposed on their contacts – they were personal witnesses to the political campaigns of the era.

The admission of European students to the PRC, like that of foreign experts, was subject to political criteria until the mid-1960s. Most arrived in China through arrangements made by friendship or other associations which had national communist party and/or PRC links. In 1957 three Italian graduates (Edoarda Masi, Renata Pisu and Filippo Coccia) were awarded scholarships to study in Peking by the Centro Cina which was connected with the Italian Communist Party. In 1958 the France-China Friendship Association sponsored two graduates (Jacques Pimpaneau and Michel Cartier), and in 1959 Per-Olow Leijon, the son of a journalist on

11 See also Yang to Jenners, 10 September 1967, Gladys Yang Papers.

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the Swedish Communist newspaper *Ny Dag*, was awarded a scholarship through the Swedish association. Two other Swedes, Cecilia and Sven Lindqvist, were highly unusual in that, after a lengthy struggle, they managed to get visas to study in China as self-funded 'private' students.

The breakthrough for those without political connections, though, came in 1964 when, following France's recognition of the PRC, the French government negotiated an exchange scheme with China which was keen to send its own language students to France. Under this scheme, twenty students arrived in Peking to study for two years: the forerunner of exchanges in the mid-1970s. A second group arrived in 1965, only to have their sojourn cut short by the early stages of the Cultural Revolution.

Before the Sino-Soviet split, the European and other Western students were vastly outnumbered by those from the Soviet bloc. In 1958 there were reportedly only fifteen Western students (mostly Europeans but including at least two Australians) in Peking – but more than two hundred Soviet and East European students, plus some from Vietnam, Indonesia, India and Arab countries (Goldman 1965, 135). The European students were still in the minority after the withdrawal of Soviet bloc students as China cultivated a number of African and Southeast Asian countries, as well as maintaining good relations with North Korea, Albania and Romania.

Until the early 1960s, the students lived and studied at Peking University (*Beijing daxue*, often known as *Beida*), China's most prestigious tertiary institution. From 1962 most were at the nearby Peking Language Institute (*Beijing yuyan xueyuan*), established to cater mainly for the new wave of African and Asian students. Although the European and other foreign students were less privileged and segregated than the foreign experts, neither factor was absent from their lives. Swedish student Sven Lindqvist might have described his living conditions at Peking University as 'grim', but foreign students still had superior accommodation to Chinese students: usually two to a room (instead of eight or more) on a separate floor of a dormitory building and with periodic access to hot water (1963, 23). They were also allocated their own dining facilities, with tables and chairs instead of low stools and better food than the Chinese students' canteen.

Physical segregation was compounded by official pressure on Chinese students not to mix informally with foreigners, fearing they may be contaminated by non-socialist influences and 'bourgeois' behaviour. European students' personal contacts were restricted compared with those of students in the Soviet Union who, despite the intense Cold War environment, were able to make friends and even have personal relationships with Russian students (Fitzpatrick 2013, *passim;* Walden 1999, 3-24). The barriers were an ongoing frustration, not least because a student's basic *raison d'être* for being in China was to improve his or her language skills and to learn more about the country. They were only partly ameliorated by the official provision of what Italian Edoarda Masi called an 'artificial friend'

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whose role was to keep a student up-to-date with the latest developments in 'new China' (1998, 7). Renata Pisu was unimpressed when, having asked for a 'friend' who could help her read classical Chinese, the duly allocated student told her that she knew only modern Chinese and that they would read Chairman Mao's works instead (2004, 73-4).

Living as well as studying in a Chinese institution meant that students were exposed to Maoist politics on a daily basis. The day started with the 6.30 am morning political broadcast relayed over loudspeakers. There were regular encounters with the educational bureaucracy in the form of the Foreign Students Office (*liuxuesheng bangongshe*), often shortened to *liuban*, which was responsible for virtually all aspects of the students' everyday lives: from room and class allocation to issuing meal tickets, ensuring that the rules were obeyed (for example, class attendance and obtaining a medical certificate for any absence), and dealing with complaints. Even fifty years later, Swedish student Per-Olow Leijon had vivid memories of his encounters – and conflicts – with the *liuban* at Beida.[12] According to Polish student René Goldman, who was friendly with some of the Italian students, *liuban* officials "were unable to understand the problems we faced, the habits, values and feelings of young people of such diverse backgrounds, resulting in the relationship being tense and characterised by mistrust and repeated frictions" (1965, 139). From the other side, the *liuban* officials, who were always vulnerable to political criticism as 'bourgeois intellectuals', did not have an easy time coping with European students who even in the 1950s were used to more independence than were Chinese students.

Like the foreign experts, students spend their days immersed in the language of Maoism. "Political and linguistic progress should go hand in hand", Sven Lindqvist commented on his classes (1963, 20). Chinese texts paralleled the English texts being used by foreign language teachers, with a heavy focus on the achievements of 'new China'. Students who already had a degree in Chinese from a European university moved on to courses, most often in history or literature, taught from the perspective of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought. Like foreign students from other countries, they experienced what René Goldman called the "thorough indoctrination and extreme politicisation of the teaching" (1961, 111). The set expressions of Maoist discourse, together with the controls on personal contact, meant that they got rather less out of their PRC sojourn than they might have done.

Despite official efforts to segregate the students as far as possible, living on a university campus enabled them to have first-hand experience – and in some cases feel the impact – of the Mao era's political campaigns. Beida, in particular, was a major centre of political activism throughout the period. When the first three Italian students arrived in September 1957, the uni-

12 Interview with Per-Olow Leijon, Paris, 27 March 2008.

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versity was in the midst of the anti-Rightist Movement which had put an abrupt end to the Hundred Flowers Campaign. Teachers and students who had responded to Mao's call to express their views about the Communist Party were now being denounced as rightists. "Our teacher Wang has been suspended on charges of being a *youpai*" (rightist), Renata Pisu wrote in her diary not long after she started classes. "We tried to get in touch with him by going to his house, but his wife told us it would be better not to try to contact him" (2004, 17). According to one report, the authorities partly attributed the high number of 'rightist students' uncovered at Beida to the presence of foreign students from capitalist countries, as well from as Poland and Yugoslavia (Goldman 1961, 110).

Following their arrival in Peking in early 1961, Swedes Cecilia and Sven Lindqvist soon became aware of the drastic food shortages (the 'three hungry years') which followed the Great Leap Forward, even in the nation's capital. "When spring came strange things happened", Cecilia recalled[13] almost fifty years later.

> There were students all over the shrubbery, up the trees, out on the branches, as they ripped and tore like goats at the fresh leaves. I complained to my teacher. "They damage the trees", I said. "You must understand", she answered quietly. "They haven´t had any fresh greens all winter... none of us has".

Even though foreign students received special treatment – their dining hall still had some meat and vegetables – Cecilia's hair started falling out. "The doctor said I had a grave lack of protein and sent me to the old Rockefeller Hospital [Capital Hospital] east of Wangfujing to get protein injections once a week" (2008 Communication).

By the time the first cohort of French exchange students arrived in late 1964, the Socialist Education Movement was under way, bringing more tensions and culminating in the launching of the Cultural Revolution in May 1966. Once again, Beida – where French student Marianne Bastid was doing postgraduate research – was a major focus of activity, with the denunciation and dismissal of President Lu Ping, classes giving way to revolutionary activism, and scholars coming under assault for alleged bourgeois behaviour and connections. Within weeks, Marianne's research supervisor, Professor Shao Xunzheng, apologised that he could no longer have contact with her, even though they had developed quite close scholarly relations.[14]

13 Communication with Cecilia Lindqvist, 3 July 2008.

14 Marianne Bastid had spent her first year in China teaching French as a foreign expert, but obtained one of two research places on the French student exchange in 1965. Interview

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Unlike foreign experts living in China at the time, the European and other foreign students witnessed only the first few weeks of the Cultural Revolution. With university campuses already descending into chaos, all foreign students were informed they had to leave China by 8 July.[15] The first cohort of twenty French exchange students had been able to complete their two years in China but the second group had their studies cut short by a year. And those who were already planning to go to China in September 1966 would have to wait seven years before there was another opportunity to study in the PRC on a government exchange scheme.

4 'Foreign Comrades': the Long-term Residents

In contrast to the PRC's short-term sojourners, the European 'foreign comrades' (*waiguo tongzhi*) or 'international friends' (*guoji youren*) lived in China for all or a large part of the Mao era. Along with a few Americans, they were a tiny group of no more than a score or so people, compared with the thousands of Americans and Europeans who moved to the Soviet Union following the 1917 revolution (Tzouliadis 2008).

The foreign comrades' identities *vis-à-vis* Mao's China were qualitatively different from those of the foreign experts and language students. For the two latter groups, the PRC sojourn was usually limited to around two years, something of an adventure which might or might not be important to their careers or political activities back home. For the long-term residents, Mao's China *was* home: the country in which they brought up families and to which they were committed in the face of political alienation from their former countries which were denounced as lackeys of American imperialism. At the same time, the long-term residents were still 'foreigners' and regarded as such by the Chinese, entailing an ongoing process of identity negotiation. The major themes of this article – privilege/segregation, experience of the extreme 'politics in command environment', and political differences and impacts – each had their distinctive features for the long-term residents.

Labelled as 'Reds' or 'Commos' in their home countries – and denigrated by diplomats in Peking as 'the twilight brigade', 'the misfits' or 'the miscreants' – the long-term residents were actually diverse in their makeup and reasons for being in the PRC. A few, who became known as the 'old-timers', had ventured into Communist-held territory before the CCP victory and stayed on after the establishment of the PRC. They included medics Hans Műller and Richard Frey, both Jewish refugees from Nazism, who arrived at Yan'an in 1939 and 1941 respectively, British couple David and Isabel Crook (Isabel

with Marianne Bastid-Brugiere, Paris, 1 April 2008.

15 Communication with René Flipo, 24 January 2011.

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had dual British-Canadian citizenship) who went to a liberated village near Shijiazhuang in 1947 to research land reform, and Alan Winnington who arrived in Harbin in 1948 to work with the fledging New China News Agency (Xinhua). Others went to the PRC after the Communist victory. They included Michael Shapiro and Dr Joshua Horn who, like the Crooks and Winnington, were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).

A distinctive group in this community – though sometimes on its margins – was a handful of European women who had married Chinese men studying in Europe during the 1930s or 1940s. Some, like Gladys Yang, were already back in China when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power and decided to stay on. Others, like Dutchwoman Selma Vos and Frenchwoman Denise Lebreton, moved to China with their husbands when the CCP urged patriotic intellectuals living abroad to contribute to the development of 'new China' (Peterson 2012*)*. Lebreton later wrote that she had been keen "to help in the building of socialism … I felt that life was just beginning and I would be sustained by the eager belief in the future of justice and progress" (1982, 96).

As foreigners, the long-term residents had similar privileges to those of the foreign experts. There was actually a hierarchy of privilege, based largely on when they first had personal links with the CCP. For example, Hans Műller, Richard Frey and Alan Winnington, who had all lived and worked in Communist-held territory before the establishment of the PRC, were allocated their own substantial houses. Most others lived in complexes attached to their workplace, for example the Foreign Languages Press or the Foreign Languages Institute, though often in accommodation of the type allocated to senior officials rather than to their Chinese colleagues. While only a few lived at the Friendship Hotel, most often when they became ill or elderly, all had access to its superior facilities. Commenting on his family's life during the food shortages following the Great Leap Forward, David Crook (2004, chapter 11) wrote: "We 'foreign comrades' were given special treatment and spared the effects of the shortages from which the Chinese suffered […] For we could supplement our diet with food bought at the special shop at the Friendship Hotel". A further marker of their distinctiveness as privileged 'foreigners' was their high income (relatively speaking). Following the establishment of the Foreign Experts Bureau in 1955, they were placed on the 'foreign experts scale' and had similar salaries to the foreign expert sojourners.[16]

The foreign comrades' privileges implied a degree a separation, if not segregation, although their long-term residence in the PRC facilitated closer relations with Chinese colleagues than the short-term sojourners

16 Before the establishment of the Bureau, they were remunerated by way of the 'allowance system' which provided basic necessities for everyday life and a small amount of pocket money.

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normally enjoyed. This did not extend to being included in all of their colleagues' activities. A *dazibao* (big character poster) written by four American residents in the early phase of the Cultural Revolution revealed dissatisfaction at not being allowed to participate in Maoist-style activities including physical labour, contact with workers and peasants, and class struggle (Chou 2009, 341-3).[17]

At the same time, the everyday lives of the long-term residents were pervaded by Maoist politics even more than those of foreign experts and students. They had not just decided to support Chinese communism rather than their former countries in the Cold War; as *foreign* comrades they were expected to keep demonstrating their commitment, both publicly and internationally. Some became an integral part of the PRC's 'foreign propaganda work' (*duiwai xuanchuan gongzuo*) which aimed to win 'friends' abroad and further the cause of world revolution (Xi 2010, 55-8). Individuals helped to present the PRC's 'smiling face to the world', as Lazarick (2005) described it, writing stories about everyday life in China for foreign language magazines: happy peasants, enthusiastic workers and liberated women. Second and more controversially, they publicly supported the Communist government's rhetoric and actions against their own former countries, from the Korean War to Vietnam, which provoked denunciation as 'Reds' and even as traitors to the 'free world'. In individual articles and signed petitions, they denounced American imperialism and its allies. Alan Winnington and Michael Shapiro, who reported the Korean War from the Communist side and had contact with British POWs in prison camps near the Chinese border, were accused in Britain of treason and had their passports withdrawn.

The long-term residents' native language skills in a foreign language (rather than the professional skills some had in law, economics or anthropology) were also utilised by the PRC Government in developing its foreign propaganda network, which ranged from radio broadcasts and news releases to general magazines.[18] They provided the major expertise throughout the period (supplemented at times by short-term foreign experts) for polishing material that had already been translated into English, French or another language. Michael Shapiro and Alan Winnington polished news releases for the New China News Agency (Xinhua). Some others, including Briton Elsie Fairfax-Cholmeley (together with her husband Israel Epstein, the English-educated son of Russian refugees) worked at *China Reconstructs*. Gladys Yang and Denise Lebreton polished short

17 Dao-yuan Chou included an English-language version of the *dazibao* in her biography of two of the signatories, American long-term residents Joan Hinton and Sid Engst.

18 The main exception was medical practitioners, who were in short supply in the PRC, including surgeon Joshua Horn, Hans Műller and Richard Frey.

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stories and novels in the English and French sections of Foreign Language Press. A few (including some of the wives of Chinese men) taught English, most notably David and Isabel Crook who spent their entire PRC careers at the Foreign Languages Institute, the premier tertiary institution for training China's future diplomats and others involved in foreign relations.

While they were publicly professing their loyalty to Mao's China and its policies, as *foreigners* the long-term residents were also negotiating their personal identities *vis-à-vis* the PRC. This was strikingly illustrated in the experiences of the British Communists who formed their own Party group (or cell) and whose members met regularly for political study sessions. David Crook, Alan Winnington and Michael Shapiro, who had all been in China since before or just after the Communist victory, disagreed on the question of their basic identity in relation to Chinese communism and even to China itself. David Crook later wrote:

> The root of the differences was: how much of the Thought of Mao Zedong applied to Britain and how far should we go, for instance, in practising criticism and self-criticism and ideological remoulding (which Alan Winnington said reminded him more of Moral Rearmament than Marxism); how much should we try and merge with Chinese society and how much should we retain of our British identity. The chief representative of the "True Born Englishman" was Winnington; the hundred per cent pro-Chinese spokesman was Michael Shapiro. Isabel and I found Winnington intelligent, amusing and professionally accomplished, as a journalist; but politically and ideologically we supported Shapiro. (2004, ch. 11)

One basic identity issue was that of citizenship. Should one become a Chinese citizen or retain the citizenship of a country that the PRC regarded as a bitter enemy in the Cold War confrontation? (Dual citizenship was not an option.) In practice, virtually the only Europeans – indeed the only Westerners – who became Chinese citizens were those who were previously stateless and/or had already undergone a partial identity shift by marrying Chinese people, for example Richard Frey, Hans Műller and Ruth Weiss.[19] Even after living in China for more than forty years, David Crook admitted that his emotional and cultural attachments were still divided between China, Britain and the United States (where he had studied). "I have never wanted to give up my British citizenship" (2004, ch. 11). Others, like Briton Pat Adler (who was married to American 'defector' Solomon Adler), considered their lack of ability to read Chinese and to speak it reasonably fluently – even after living in China for many years – was a major inhibitor

19 American long-term residents, George Hatem, Sidney Shapiro and Grace Liu, who became Chinese citizens, were also married to Chinese but not previously stateless.

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to assuming any sort of 'Chinese' identity.[20] And Gladys Yang, who did read and speak Chinese, was not the only one for whom practical considerations played a role: most notably the advantage of having a British or other European passport for the occasional visit to relatives outside China (and possibly as a safety net 'just in case').

It was the issue of political identity, though, that came to the fore when the PRC's relationship with the Soviet Union deteriorated from the late 1950s and developed into an open rift in the early 1960s, undermining the international Communist movement. "It was terrible. We were basically split in two", Isabel Crook told me.[21] "When the British party eventually supported the Soviet Union against China, it put everyone here in a very difficult situation". Alan Winnington, the 'true born Englishman', was already disillusioned with China and the CPGB arranged for his transfer to East Berlin (Winnington 1986, 251). When Nan Green, who was considering staying on in China indefinitely, was asked about her political loyalties, she replied that she "was a member of the British Party and adhered to its 'Line'". Under pressure from some colleagues in China to commit to the PRC, she wrote to the British party asking that it send for her (Green 2004, 211-2).

In contrast Michael Shapiro, the 'hundred per cent Chinese spokesman', fell out completely with the CPGB. His correspondence with its general secretary Willie Gallacher became increasingly tense as he continued to defend the CCP. By July 1963 the relationship had reached breaking point, with Shapiro responding to Gallacher's criticisms in vitriolic language.

> No, Willie, there's nothing rotten at this end… You don't have to guess what has happened to me. I'll tell you in a nutshell. I've stuck to Communist principles… [I] have been deeply impressed by the rich store of experience in the Chinese Party which I am convinced could be put to good use in Britain, too, in a hundred and one ways.

He concluded his letter: "With concern as to what has happened to you, one-time disciple of Lenin and comrade-in-arms of Stalin, since the 20th Congress".[22]

If the Sino-Soviet split was difficult for the long-term residents, the Cultural Revolution proved traumatic when their status as foreigners came to dominate that of comrades. Initially they were overwhelmingly enthusiastic in supporting what Denise Lebreton called an 'historical opportunity'

20 Interview with Patricia Adler, Beijing, 25 May 2009.

21 Interview with Isabel Crook, Beijing, 29 May 2009.

22 Shapiro to Gallacher, 31 July 1963, Communist Party of Great Britain Archives, CP/IND/GALL/01/06.

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and wanted to be involved (1982, 118).[23] In January 1967, when foreigners were finally given the green light to participate, some were in the forefront of forming the Bethune-Yan'an Revolutionary Regiment which supported a range of rebel groups. They were subsequently its most active members, particularly when the leadership was taken over by 'radical elements' who included Michael Shapiro. And they were disappointed when, in January 1968, foreigners were officially informed that they were no longer allowed to participate in the Cultural Revolution.[24]

With the political movement becoming increasingly xenophobic, the earlier distinction between 'foreign comrades' (and thus friends of the Chinese people) and 'imperialist spies' (and thus enemies of the Chinese people) was eroded. Despite their proclaimed loyalty, several of the activists (including David Crook, Michael Shapiro and Elsie Fairfax Cholmeley, as well as her husband Israel Epstein) were arrested in late 1967-early 1968 and spent four years or more in prison (Crook 2004; Epstein 2005, 299-319). Isabel Crook protested her husband's innocence but was herself detained for three years in a room on the Foreign Languages Institute campus (2009 Interview). Even Gladys Yang, who had steered clear of political involvement as far as possible, was detained.

Although the Cultural Revolution was a chastening experience for those who had committed themselves to Communist China during the Cold War confrontation, it did not usually shake their basic political faith. Like the Chinese Communist Party itself, they could rationalise the incarceration of foreigners – and a multitude of other 'ultra-left' and 'ultra-right' actions – as an aberration. "It was not 'the Chinese' but Chinese enemies of China", David Crook responded when friends asked him why he did not leave China after his release from five years' imprisonment (Crook, 2004, ch. 13).

5 Conclusion

Living in Mao's China and working or studying in a Chinese institution gave a small number of Europeans a level of personal experience of the PRC in the 1950s and 1960s that was shared neither by other European residents (notably diplomats and correspondents) nor by short-term visitors who were hosted by the PRC as part of its programme of 'cultural diplomacy'. Their experience was characterised by 'privileged segregation'

23 American George Hatem and New Zealander Rewi Alley, both long-time China residents, disagreed with the majority of the foreign comrades and urged them not to participate.

24 The activities of 'foreign comrades' in the Cultural Revolution are discussed in detail by Milton and Milton (1976, 212-302), two American foreign experts who personally observed the developments. See also Brady (1996).

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and immersion in the 'politics in command' environment which in some cases compromised the effectiveness of their work or studies, as well as affecting intra-group relationships.

Although the three groups examined in this article shared these experiences to varying degrees, there were also differences. Foreign experts and students were always conscious that their sojourn in Mao's China was an interlude of a few years, a sometimes frustrating if highly novel experience at a time when very few Europeans or other Westerners had the opportunity to live in the People's Republic. While the personal identities of these groups were still linked to their home countries, those of the long-term residents involved ongoing negotiation between being a 'comrade' and at the same time a 'foreigner', albeit one who was politically alienated from his or her home country. Within the sojourner community, the students' more difficult material conditions were to some extent compensated by their greater incentive to benefit from the experience in terms of their language skills and academic interests, while at the same time they were the most frustrated at being denied contact with many aspects of everyday Chinese life.[25]

The first two decades of the PRC, which have been the focus of this article, can be seen as the first of two phases of the European (and more broadly the Western) experience in Mao's China. Although the final few years of the Mao era are considered part of the 'Cultural Revolution decade', they were marked by a slightly increased openness to the West. The recruitment of foreign experts was revived and then increased. In 1973 student exchanges were established with most European and other Western countries, with the first intake including thirty French students and more than ten Italians, Germans and Britons. This was all a precursor to the 'open door' from the late 1970s when the number of foreign experts and students increased exponentially, along with the gradual growth of a new business-oriented expatriate community which completely dwarfed what remained of the Mao era's 'foreign comrade' community.

25 In this respect the Chinese language graduates employed as 'foreign experts' were more akin to the students.

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Roads to Reconciliation
People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy
During the Cold War Period (1949-1971)

edited by Guido Samarani, Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Sofia Graziani

Between Economic Interests and Political Constraints
The Federal Republic of Germany and the People's Republic of China During the Early Cold War

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Abstract This article deals with the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the People's Republic of China during the early Cold War decades. The traditional historiographical paradigm of the East-West confrontation assumes that any form of cooperation was impossible between the two countries. However, a shift of focus from the political sphere to the economic one reveals how pattern of conduct predating 1949, as well as purely economic reasons, brought actors from both sides to agree on a set of rules for bilateral exchange, and to improve the trade performance despite the highs and lows of the political climate and the bloc allegiance of both countries.

Keywords Federal Republic of Germany. People's Republic of China. East-West Trade. Cold War. German business. COCOM. Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft. Chinese Committee for the Promotion of International Trade. China National Import & Export Corporation.

This essay explores the interplay between the economic elites and the government authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany in relation with the reopening of relations with the People's Republic of China during the early decades after World War II. At that time, the ideological and geopolitical divide produced by the new Cold War paradigm seemed to inhibit any form of cooperation between the two new-born states, despite the long and intense tradition of exchanges and interaction between their predecessors. Nevertheless, the shift of focus from the political to the civil and economic sphere reveals how such traditional interpretation, promoted mainly by the US historiography, falls short of reality. Basing on an institutional approach encompassing both the West German governments and the economic networks, the essay will prove how the relations with China were influenced from patterns of conduct dating back to the interwar years, and from purely economic reasons which diverted largely from the ideological precepts of the East-West confrontation. Concerning the latter point, a vast range of sources available from the German

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private and public archives shows how the relations between the Western European states and post-revolutionary China witnessed a high degree of dissociation between the economic and the political spheres. The Federal Republic of Germany was a special case in point, since the adamant opposition of the government authorities to establish official relations with Beijing, in compliance with Washington's will, conflicted with the lively interest of the economic actors to profit from the appealing opportunities offered by the far Eastern giant regardless of its new political orientation. On one hand, West German interest in the People's Republic of China was destined to merge into the broader economic *Ostpolitik*, which anticipated and in some cases hastened the course of the political one. On the other hand, a mix of traditional reasons and historical processes, which will be analysed later, impressed a peculiar and specific character to the economic relations between West Germany and China in comparison with the other countries of the Socialist bloc. A quantitatively accurate analysis of West-German bilateral trade, as well as a comparison with Chinese bilateral relations with other Western states, falls out of the scope of this contribution. Furthermore, a look at the figures of West German foreign exchange (both as a whole and for each commercial sector) shows how trade with the People's Republic of China until the '80s remained relatively undersized and marginal even in comparison with West German trade with other countries of the Socialist bloc. Nevertheless, the essay will prove how qualitatively crucial the West German economic elites estimated the reopening of business with China since 1949, both from the present and from the long-term perspective, and how they were able to systematically force the Bonn governments to endorse, or at least not to hinder, their strategy.

Although the Deutsches Reich was a latecomer in the age of the 'second' European imperialism, its commitment to expand its military and economic penetration overseas became manifest shortly after its birth in 1871. China was one of the main targets of this strategy, as Berlin authorities aimed at filling the gap with the European competitors (especially Great Britain and France), which had increased their presence and influence since after the First Opium War of the 1840s. At that time the volume of trade between the German states and China was still at an embryonic stage; furthermore, despite the presence of commercial branches of German firms in Canton (such as Siemens and Carlowitz), British patronage and protection over the exchanges was necessary (Eberstein 1988, 49-60; Leutner, Mühlhahn 2001, 21-2). Significantly, it was the joint pressures from Paris and London which 'persuaded' the Chinese authorities to grant the recognition of an official status and of trade privileges to the German states in 1861, after an earlier attempt by Prussia had been dismissed by the Middle Kingdom. Less than a decade later, Chancellor Bismark received a delegation from the Qing court to Berlin, at the time when the German business-military groups were increasing their pressure for a more proactive penetration

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of the Chinese market under the flag of the governmental promotion. Although the Reich remained a smaller player in terms of trade volume, its influence in qualitative terms was increasing at the time when the foreign presence started reshaping the cultural and economic landscape of the Chinese cities (Westad 2012, 45 ff.). However, it was only after Germany established itself as a leader of the so-called second industrial revolution during the last quarter of the 19th century that the country became a model of inspiration for China in its search for its own industrialization. Siemens' export of the first pointer telegraphs in the Asian country (Sun, Lancaster 2013, 81) and the invasion of BASF synthetic dyes in the textile industry (Abelhauser et al. 2004, 95 ff.) were two powerful examples, while the more silent penetration of Krupp and of the German shipbuilding industry were part of the Chinese plans for the modernisation of the national defence. The Chinese authorities hired German military and custom advisers with the consent of the Berlin's government; in turn, the latter encouraged the foundation of the Deutsch-Asiatische Bank to emancipate German business from the British protection, to finance German-Chinese projects of railway development and to gain access to the local bond market (Plumpe 2004, 40 ff.; Peruzzi 2015, 100 ff.).[1] The Chinese authorities played an active role in such remarkable progresses, since Germany appeared not only as an example of late but successful industrialization, but also as a power different from its European competitors due to its alleged lack of territorial claims.

The scenario changed rapidly at the end of the century, when the Kaiser decided to follow the British and French example and to obtain two concessions in Hankou and Tianjin: the third one and the more promising in economic terms, in the Kiaochow Bay (1898), was the result of a military occupation in retaliation for the murder of two German missionaries. The new concessions under the German navy administration proved counterproductive in political and economic terms. On the one hand, due to its imperialistic homologation, the Reich had lost most of its appeal toward the Chinese authorities, which grew cool to the advances of German industry they had previously welcomed (Kirby 1984, 12). On the other hand, the plans of expansion toward the whole Shandong province were abandoned for a series of domestic and international reasons, particularly after the 1900 Boxer Rebellion, when the German presence became one of the targets of the anti-Western insurgence at the point that Clemens von Kettler, the German minister to the Qing court, was murdered during the siege of the foreign legations in Beijing. Harsh retaliation followed when General Marshal Graf von Waldersee was appointed as head of the West-

1 Most of the major German banks took part in the consortium that gave birth to the Deutsch-Asiatische Bank in 1889, while the state authorities exerted a more active role than in the case of the French and Russian competitors in the area.

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ern occupation force in the Chinese capital; moreover, Germany played an active role along with the other imperialist powers in paraphrasing the humiliating conditions of the Boxing Protocol of 1901 (Cho, Crowe 2014, 3-4). In economic terms, the results of Germany's alignment with a more traditional interpretation of its imperialistic mission in China were mixed: as aforementioned, the new adventures seem to have undercut the efforts of the German industry to increase its direct presence in China and to deal directly with Chinese authorities in the fields of military and industrial development. The situation worsened further with the transition from Empire to Republic in 1912, as the new leadership was especially disturbed by the massive foreign presence in the country and one of its main goals, which ultimately led to the country's involvement in World War I, was to regain control over the concessions extorted to the late Qing dynasty (Tanner 2010, 133). On the other hand, of the 122 German firms present in China in 1901 – they were 7 in 1855 – most were import-export houses: at that time the German trading and shipping complex to and from China was second only to the British, and the most important firms among them, mainly based on the Hanseatic ports, improved their position after they founded the Ostasiatischer Verein in 1900, a network for the promotion of German exchange and interaction with Southeast Asia which is still operating today (Eberstein 2000). As a result, in 1913 German firms carried 19% of foreign imports in China, with less than 8% of German origin (Kirby 1984, 13).

The outbreak of World War I impressed the first major break to the development of bilateral relations. Even before the end of the conflict, German physical presence in China was annihilated: Japanese forces took over the Reich's concessions in Tsintao and Kiaochow, while the German holdings in the British and French concessions were taken over by the allied powers. Finally, China declared war to Germany in August 1917 and rapidly took over the German concessions in Tientsin and Hankow and seized the relative properties with only a small compensation after the war. Of the almost 300 German firms active in China before the conflict, only 2 were operative in 1919; German investments in the country, which amounted to 263.5 million $ in 194, were reduced to 40 million after the war.

Officially the reopening of the relations between the two countries was favoured by the Chinese refusal to sign the Versailles Treaty, since it granted the Japanese government control over the formerly German concession in Shandong. A separate bilateral agreement was reached in 1921 to settle the old disputes and to restore peaceful relations between China and the new German Republic; Berlin formally renounced its rights and privileges (including those included in the Boxer Protocol) while avoiding any recognition of the Japanese pretensions, and diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries were restored. As in the case of the more famous Rapallo agreement between Germany and Soviet Russia, the

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agreement paved the road to an increased cooperation in the economic and military field in order to circumvent the limits established by the Versailles Treaty.

It is not a paradox to argue that the forced renounce to territorial pretences became a valuable asset for Germany, as it recovered its pre-war share of the Chinese market within six years with comparatively better prospects for further progress. Part of the Republican leadership expressed its bias for a stronger partnership with Berlin since its loss of its extraterritorial rights had put the German economic actors in a 'superior position' compared with the other imperialist powers, and potentially on a foot of equality with China (Xu 2005, 280). Also the German side appreciated that the forced abandonment of "the time-worn methods of British imperialism" could give an advantage to the national economy right at the time when it was badly in need of new opportunities (Kirby 1984, 24). In their search for escape from the cage of the Versailles Treaty, the new leaders of the Weimar Republic foresaw exciting prospective in China, also because the rampaging civil war made of the country the world's greatest arms market. By 1927 the German companies involved in business with and directly represented in China outnumbered those of the pre-war years; along with the traditional promoters of German-Chinese trade such as Siemens and Krupp, new big groups such as IG Farben and Stahlunion were seeking for new beginnings in Asia, far from the ruinous inflation which affected their home country (Ching 2006, 17). Finally, the private-public cooperation was propelled by the urgent need of new markets and raw materials: apparently China could provide both. The foundations were laid for a golden age of bilateral relations, corresponding roughly to the so-called Nanking Decade (1927-1937). At that time the Guomindang leadership displayed a renewed admiration for Germany as a model for the modernisation of the domestic military-industrial complex. As business and industrial experts followed the German investments, the government decided to accommodate the request of the Chinese authorities and to dispatch some German so-called military advisers to Nanking in 1928; although the revelation of the initiative raised international criticisms, the other 'imperialist' countries were neither willing nor able to counter it effectively (Leitz 2004, 124; Martin 1981, 238).

The identification between the attractive features of European modernity and the German economic-technological power was a constant of the Nanjing decade, which remained unaffected by the transition from the Weimar Republic to the Nazi regime during the early '30s (Leitz 2004, 128-9). It would be misleading to conclude that the renewed cooperation took place mainly for ideological rather than pragmatic reasons; nevertheless, part of the Chinese nationalist leadership estimated that the Nazi experiment embodied a combination of conservatism and modernism consistent with its plans for China. The result was the further increase of the German

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influence in the Chinese economy: during the mid-'30s the German share of foreign trade in China rouse to 17%, not far from the US leadership in the field. On the other hand, China became the third trade partner for Germany worldwide, and the third recipient country of its foreign direct investments. The quantitative progress encouraged the German industry to follow the example of the trade companies at the turn of the century and to undertake the road of coordination and centralization. In this case the sensible nature of the business initiatives (mainly dealing with the production of armaments) led to the creation of shadow firms discretely but strongly supported by the state and the army, thus following the successful example of German-Bolshevik and German-Turkish cooperation during the early '20s (Kirby 1984, 20 ff.).

The end of the decade witnessed a sudden decline of the bilateral exchange. This occurred again when political-strategic considerations took the upper hand, namely the preference of the Hitler regime for a tighter alliance with Japan, which in turn was on war with China at least since 1937. The following year the authorities in Berlin commanded to interrupt the trade of weapons and armaments toward China and ordered the advisers to leave the country immediately, despite Chiang Kai Shek's appeal to the neutrality of the German Reich in the Sino-Japanese conflict. The final decision from Berlin to officially recognise the puppet regime established in Nanjing by the Japanese occupation forces in Summer 1941 signed the point of no return and paved the road to the war declaration by the Chiang government against Germany. Nevertheless, most of the German economic actors operating in the Far East were not enthusiastic about the orders from Berlin. A quick comparison between the economic opportunities offered by China and Japan in terms of potential markets and raw materials led to the widespread conclusion that the severance of relations with the first could prove a terrible mistake, not only in times of peace but also for the total war inscribed in the projects of the Nazi regime (Leitz 2004, 130). Although the noncompliance with Hitler's order was first out of question and later impossible due to the increasing role of state authorities in managing the economy, trade relations between the two countries never came to a complete stop. Even when the German authorities imposed an increase in the interchange with the puppet regimes in Nanjing and in Manzhouguo, major groups such as Siemens, Otto Wolff and IG Farben were able to keep the traditional contacts open until the course of the war and the German defeat led to a new geopolitical scenario.

The end of the war did not translate into a new and stable condition for both countries, and the later emergence of the new East-West confrontation, on which China and Germany would play both an important role, reduced further the room for recover of the former economic cooperation. The outbreak of the rivalry between the nationalist and the Communist factions plunged China back into civil war; the final defeat of Chiang

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forces, which were forced to repair in Taiwan, led to the proclamation of the People's Republic in mainland China in October 1949 under the leadership of Mao Tze Dong and the political monopoly of the Communist Party. As a consequence, a fast although not unproblematic development of Chinese-Soviet relations brought the Asian giant into what was perceived from the West as a cohesive geopolitical block under Moscow's leadership. Meanwhile, Germany had ceased to exist as a political entity and its territory was divided into four occupation zones among the victorious powers. The rapid deterioration of the Allied coalition made a common solution for Germany impossible and resulted in the permanent division in two new states: the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG from now on), which was military and politically linked to the West, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR from now on), which adopted the socialist system under tight Soviet tutelage. Thus, the emergence of the new ideological confrontation around the Soviet Union and the United States of America and its geopolitical declination in Europe and in Asia involved both China and Germany in a process of radical redefinition of their identities and of their place in world politics. The ideological proximity between Beijing and Moscow on one hand, and between the FRG and the United States on the other hand, meant that the two countries found themselves entangled in rival political system since their act of birth. The reopening of the traditional links to China proved especially hard for the FRG, whose freedom in international politics was strongly restricted by the occupation status that lasted until 1955. Before and after that date, the interest of the governments in the Far East was further limited by their focus on the management of the new German Question and on the political, economic and military integration of their country in the Euro-Atlantic space. Hardly any room was left for creative diplomacy, especially when it could probably hurt the US sensitiveness about dealing with the new enemies in the East. Furthermore, the adhesion of the PRC to the Soviet field led Beijing to recognise the existence of the GDR as a legitimate state right at the time when the FRG authorities committed themselves to the integral respect of the so-called Hallstein Doctrine: only one German government (in the West) was the product of free elections and thus was entitled to represent the whole German people; the recognition of another German government by a third country would compel the FRG to end its relations with it (Gray 2003). The only exception admitted during the '50s was the Soviet Union, due to its relevance as the occupier power of the Eastern part of Germany. A second reason for West Germany's neutralist stance lied in the condition of China after the end of the civil war, when two governments, one in Beijing and the other in Taipei, competed for the title of the sole representative of the whole Chinese people and territory. Bonn had hardly any reason for being dragged into the legislative and political struggle around this point, especially since the tensions between Beijing and Taipei (strongly

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supported by Washington) constantly seemed on the verge to escalate into a military conflict. Moreover, Adenauer and his ministers feared that the Cold War logic could turn the Chinese division into a permanent *fait accompli*, thus legitimising a two-state solution that could be extended by analogy to the German case.

The decision of the German government to avoid the official recognition of Taiwan was welcomed by those German economic actors who supported the reopening of the traditional exchanges with mainland China despite the victory of the Communists (Rudolph 2004, 156). However, the course of the immediate post-war years revealed how this convergence was a mere accident. The economic sphere did not escape the totalizing nature of the bipolar confrontation both inside the countries and on a global level, and it became a factor of prime importance in the architecture of the containment of the Soviet bloc promoted by the United States. If the generosity of the US support and the intensification of the interaction within the Atlantic sphere was fundamental to the quick recovery of Western Europe, the price that the latter had to pay was the severance of its traditional economic links to the Eastern side of the continent and more generally with all the countries falling within the Soviet sphere of influence. According to the new US doctrine, the so-called free world should refrain from trading strategic goods with the enemy. The first unambiguous step was undertaken when the US Congress passed an amendment to the Economic Cooperation Act (which established the operative framework for the Marshall Plan) barring "any country receiving US aid if it exported any product to a non-participating European country which might contain a US-supplied commodity that would ordinarily be refused a US export license in the interest of national security" (Cain 2007, 5). A few months later Washington exhorted the recipient countries of its help to follow the embargo measures already in force in the US. Although the European partner reserved an unenthusiastic reception to this request, they had hardly any option but to comply and to take part in the birth of the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (best known as COCOM). The new multilateral body was wrapped in secrecy and established in Paris with the goal of monitoring East-West trade on the base of lists of strategic goods mostly redacted following US recommendations.

In comparative terms, the reduction of trade with the East due to an overextended definition of 'strategic goods' had a more severe impact on Western Europe than on the US, whose economic interest in the Soviet Union and in its new satellites had always been marginal. The Federal Republic of Germany was a special case in point, due to the high level that the German-Russian (and more generally German-Easter European) business relations had reached during the interwar period and despite the regime changes. Although the West German economic firms could appreciate the opportunities offered by the integration into the new Transatlantic

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economic area, which proved essential for their quick rehabilitation after the collusions with the Nazi regime and the war destructions, most of them recommended a fast recovery of the old positions in the East grounding on their long experience and their detailed knowledge of the area (Spaulding 1996, 115). Such aspirations were frustrated by the persistence of FRG's status of limited sovereignty on its foreign affairs before and after its official birth in 1949. Until that year the Joint Import-Export Agency supported the Allied High Commission on Occupied Germany (HICOG) in supervising West German exports; thereafter the physical presence of the Allies – and above all of US military authorities – in the country imposed the most rigorous application of the embargo policy, to which the governments in Bonn offered their support to prove their unconditional devotion to the Western cause (Braun 1990, 109). As far as the private sector was concerned, its compliance with the new rules was neither full-hearted nor immediate. According to the black list redacted by the US authorities in 1952, allegations of illegal trade practices with the East were raised against more than 80 German firms; some of them even incurred in the suspension of the Marshall Plan helps when their violations were proven. Due to the sensitiveness of the US public opinion for trade with the enemy, both the Truman and the Eisenhower administration complained with the West German authorities; State Secretary John F. Dulles even hinted the possibility of the "cancellation of all foreign aid" if the internal control was not able to prevent the violations and to sanction them (Neebe 1996, 117). Despite the official position of the German governments, the support to the economic circles came from part of the political spectrum. As an example Ludwig Erhard, the powerful Minister for Economy and later Chancellor, although a staunch advocate of Transatlantic solidarity, estimated that the sacrifice of a liberal trade policy would be a too high price to pay (Neebe 1996, 115). A meaningful progress was achieved in May 1952 when the Bundestag resolved unanimously that "the remaining limits on German freedom of action in the control of merchandise trade and in the conclusion of trade treaties with East bloc countries must be eliminated as soon as possible". It was not by coincidence that the resolution was approved during the same days when the Western victorious powers signed the so-called "Bonn Paris conventions", which put an end to the occupation status of West Germany and restored the full sovereignty of the FRG. Although the final ratification would take place only three years later, the Bundestag resolution was a clear exhortation to the government to play a more active role in promoting German trade with the East (Spaulding 1996, 132). During the same months came the decision by representatives of the German leading chemical, iron and steel groups, as well as from brokerage houses and banks to give birth to the Eastern Committee of German Economy (*Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft*, OADW from now on). The first motivation behind this choice laid in the prospect of dealing with

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Soviet-like economies characterised by state monopoly and a high degree of centralization. In doing so, the German economic actors were building on their experience of the interwar years, when the creation of the Russian Committee of the German Economy in 1928 had produced outstanding results in levelling all the technical-procedural problems affecting German-Soviet trade (Braun 1990, 127-9). The choice of a permanent coordinating forum seemed to fit also the needs of the new times, when a plurality of German economic actors confronted state monopoly of foreign trade in the new socialist countries in Europe and beyond, with the risk of declining profits and internal competition. According to its statute, the new Committee aimed at advising the German governmental authorities when economic relations with the East were at stake; at promoting more fruitful and forward-looking relations with the East; and at signing trade agreements in absence of official recognition between the FRG and each Socialist country (Jüngerkes 2012, 28 ff.; Spaulding 1996, 131). Although the mythology surrounding the early steps of the Committee highlights the conflicting relations with the German government concerning the prerogatives of the newborn organisation, in 1952 the Ministry for Economy in Bonn recognised the Committee as "the sole representative of the whole German Economy for its range of duty" and pledged cooperation "in all relevant matters" (Jüngerkes 2012, 42). More generally, the Committee enjoyed a cross-party support ranging from national-conservative and liberal circles which promoted a more autonomous promotion of FRG's interests, to the Social Democratic opposition in its search for political credit among the entrepreneurs. Although the original target of the Committee was the Soviet-controlled space in Europe, a China Work Group was created since the early months. The continuity with the tradition of the German interests in China was represented by the participation of representatives from the major firms which had operated in that country before the war. The inclusion of China in the range of competencies of the Committee was seen as the consequence of the rapid socialization – when not simple sovietisation – of the Chinese economy. Nevertheless, the outbreak of the Korean War and the ensuing tightening of the US-led embargo made even more necessary a coordinate and proactive attitude by the German economy.

Until then, the US administration had shown understanding for the efforts of the German economy to reestablish the traditional links with mainland China. Even after the victory of the Communist revolution, the internal debate in Washington in 1949-1950 showed a higher degree of tolerance towards the PRC in comparison with the rest of the Soviet bloc, due to Beijing's alleged military irrelevance (Cain 2007, 42). Since the postwar recovery of the FRG's economy was deemed necessary for the cohesion and the wellbeing of the anti-Soviet alliance, Bonn's room for manoeuvre in international trade had to be increased even when the targets, such as the PRC, were included in the embargo list. The result was a short-lived

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boom of West German-Chinese trade which amounted to a remarkable 284 million Deutsche Mark during the first nine months of 1951 (with an increase of 2,000% compared to 1948): as Bonn established itself as the first trade partner in the West for the PRC, Beijing became the most important market for the FRG within the Soviet bloc. During this window of opportunity, most of the German firms seem to have harbored the illusion that the new geopolitical conditions would not affect the plains for new business opportunities. As evidenced by the case of Otto Wolff A.G., one of the leading firms in China before the war, the end of the "unlucky interruption caused by the war" was characterised by the attempt to recover the old personal contacts and even to revive the contracts signed by the Chinese nationalist authorities and not yet repealed by the new rulers.[2] The need for a fast and dynamic strategy toward Beijing was not motivated only by the search for profits in the short run. In strategic terms an integral application of the embargo policies to Beijing was bound to push the PRC further into the arms of the Soviet Union and to hasten the homogenisation of its economy according to Soviet-like standards. The first business reports coming from relevant areas such as Manchuria proved that a high degree of centralization and planning would suit perfectly the need of the new authorities to retake full control of the economy and to increase the production as quickly as possible. As a consequence, the presence of several Soviet 'advisors' at work was signaled even before the signing of the Soviet-Chinese Treaty of Friendship in February 1950. These evidence, coupled with the inexorable nationalization of all economic activities, exhorted the German economic actors to improve their coordination in order to increase both their negotiating power vis-à-vis the new state-owned corporations in China and their ability to avoid Beijing's full dependence from Moscow. The price of failure would be the permanent exclusion of Western (and therefore German) enterprises from one of the most promising world markets, and the blame was clearly on Washington's policy of recognition of Taiwan and on the inclusion of the PRC in the embargo list. As long as the internal authorities and the international conditions allowed, the German firms assumed the mission to avoid any political conditioning and to profit from free trade with China on the base of the superiority of German products.[3]

The Truman Administration profited from The Korea War to impose the reinterpretation of the bipolar confrontation in Asia in military terms. The intervention of Chinese troops in the conflict after October 1950 pushed

2 Letter from Otto Wolff von Amerongen to Chang Shi Kang, China Automotive Ltd., Shanghai, 5 December 1949, RWWA, Abt. 72, 389-1.

3 Letter from David L.F. Sung, Managing Director of United Eingineering Corporation Ltd., Hong Kong, to Otto Wolff von Amerongen, 25 March 1950, RWWA, Abt. 72, 389-1.

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Washington to immediately declare the strictest embargo on trade to and from China and the freeze of all financial assets linked to the Chinese authorities (Cain 2007, 43). The decision had further consequences also on a multilateral level. A special section of COCOM, soon named CHINCOM (CHINa COMmittee) was created in September 1952 to supervise the Western trade of strategic goods with mainland China; due to the *de facto* state of war between the US and the PRC, the controls were stricter than with the other socialist countries, and the figure of goods included in the CHINCOM list was almost double than that of COCOM (the so-called China differential) (Mitcham 2005, 6). The Panmunjom armistice did not change Washington's attitude in this respect: while Moscow enjoyed a softening of the original embargo measures during the '50s, hardly any change was introduced toward Beijing.

Although grudgingly, the US allies had to comply with Washington's desire to give a multilateral mantel to such strategy; the need of Washington's security and economic support and by the apparent sensitiveness of the US public opinion on this subject proved enough to silence the dissenting opinions. The government in Bonn could be hardly an exception, due to its particular reliance on Washington and to its status of limited sovereignty. Although some attempts were made until 1953 to introduce exceptions for the most concerned sectors of German economy, such as the iron and steel industry, the full compliance with the CHINCOM rules was assured and consequently the short-lived boom of West German-Chinese trade came to an abrupt end.[4] The event was interpreted in Beijing as a deliberate act of discrimination, since the non-compliance with contracts sealed with the PRC came at the same time of an encouraging improvement of FRG's trade with other socialist countries. Consequently, in late 1952 the authorities of the PRC issued an Instruction Letter to all Chinese representatives abroad containing such discriminatory measures for West German exporters which made trade between the two countries virtually impossible (Jüngerkes 2012, 142). These evolutions persuaded the OADW to improve internal cooperation without delay, in order to reopen the channels with Beijing and to persuade the authorities in Bonn to promote the lift of the Chinese differential.

As far as the first point was concerned, the OADW engaged immediately in a diplomatic effort to contain the effects of the Instruction letter and to establish direct links with the representatives of the Chinese economy abroad. The choice fell on the China National Import and Export Corporation (CNIEC from now on), which had established its European headquarter in East Berlin. Although the first contacts in 1952 met a cold reception from the Chinese side, the signing of the Panmunjom armistice

4 Letter from Otto Wolff to Fu Sze in Tientsin, 23 February 1951, RWWA, Abt. 72, 389-1.

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the following year contributed to improving the atmosphere. In May 1953 a delegation of the OADW visited East Berlin in order to persuade the CNIEC interlocutors to lift the restrictions introduced by the Instruction Letter and to negotiate a standardisation of West-German trade procedures. The CNIEC representatives recognised the OADW as the official partner in negotiations and proved to be open to work out imaginative solution to overcome the current problems; nevertheless, they requested that the whole matter concerning shipping and payment would be included in a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement (Jüngerkes 2012, 143). Although the West German government had finally withdrawn its objections to the East Berlin meeting, and the Economic Ministries had expressed their understanding for the goals pursued by the OADW,[5] the Chinese request was at odds with the strict policy of non-recognition prevailing officially in the FRG. This evidence however did not bring the negotiations to a halt, since the OADW benefited from its ambiguous nature of private association of public interest. A further although mostly symbolic step was made during the Conference summoned in Geneva in 1954 by the major world powers to find a solution for the aftermath of the Korean War and for the end of the French presence in Indochina. The conference saw the participation of the PRC, although not recognised by some of the participants; for its first appearance in such an important multilateral meeting, Beijing dispatched to Europe a high level delegation including economic representatives. Otto Wolff von Amerongen, Chairman of the Otto Wolff group and later leader of the OADW, was in the Swiss city during the very same days in order to take part in a meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission when he was reached by the invitation to meet informally Hsu Hsue Han, the Director of CNIEC and a high ranking official of the Chinese economy.[6] Having obtained the authorisation of the West German Economic Ministry to speak as a 'private citizen', Wolff von Amerongen met Hsu on 6th May 1954 to discover the positive attitude reserved by the new rulers in Beijing to the past history of his family group in China, despite its cooperation with the "criminal Guomindang regime" (Wolff von Amerongen 1992, 243). The discussion tackled the problems left unsolved by the East Berlin negotiations, namely the need for an agreement on the procedures for shipping, payment and arbitration in case of conflicts. In the latter case, the Chinese suggestion to opt for East Berlin as the location for arbitration was immediately declined for obvious political reasons. More generally, the meeting did not produce any conclusion but left the impression, transmitted by Wolff von Amerongen to his German interlocutors, that the PRC

5 Proceedings of the Arbeitskreis China meeting, 13 March 1953, RWWA, Abt. 72, 459-1.

6 Memorandum from Otto Wolff von Amerongen on the meetings held in Geneva, 6 May 1954, RWWA, Abt. 72, 389-1.

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was interested in expanding its trade with the West because of the higher quality of its products and in order to avoid an exclusive dependence on the Soviet Union.[7]

The meeting impressed a new impetus to the negotiations in East Berlin. The presence of some high representatives Chinese in the East German capital on their way back from Geneva allowed a substantial progress and even a tentative drafted was circulated in August (Ching 2006, 205). The principle of the agreement was the exchange of the goods included in two exhaustive lists; barter transactions were admitted as preferential and more generally the imports should be equal to the exports in overall value for both sides. More important from the German point of view were the compromises reached on almost all the technical details which had burdened the bilateral exchanges so far.

Although the government in Bonn approved the text as it did not violate any political condition, a last request from the Chinese government was turned down after short evaluation: the invitation to the representatives of the OADW to visit Beijing for an official signing ceremony. This was interpreted by the German authorities as part of a diplomatic offensive launched by the PRC to force the Western governments to recognise the new regime; the evidence was the request of the CNIEC representatives to leave some aspects which involved the governmental level (such as the involvement of the Chinese and German central banks) for a last round of talks to be held in Beijing (Jüngerkes 2012, 142). Under government imperative, the OADW was forced to decline the invitation, causing a sharp reaction from the Chinese side which seemed to jeopardise all the results reached until then. During the previous months the bilateral trade had experienced a new upswing and Beijing expressed clear signals of willingness to increase its economic exchange with the West (Mitcham 2005, 15). However, the OADW was not willing to abandon the idea of a comprehensive trade agreement due to the lack of clear conditions that seemed to affect especially such sectors as iron and steel and the chemical industry; and to the condition of structural inequality of negotiations between German firms and the centralised Chinese authorities, which reduced dramatically the profit rate of the former (Ching 2006, 214). Moreover, the West German economic performance with China was worsening in comparative terms with most Western competitors. At least since 1953 the Chinese authorities seemed to favour clearly those foreign firms whose government were entertaining official relations with Beijing. This was the case of Great Britain and Switzerland, which had recognised the new Communist regime; but other Western countries seemed ready to dispatch political-economic delegations

7 Memorandum from Otto Wolff von Amerongen on the meetings held in Geneva, 6 May 1954, RWWA, Abt. 72, 389-1.

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to China in order to improve their chances (Ching 2006, 212).[8] Thus, as Western solidarity to the embargo started crumbling during the mid-'50s, the OADW grew disappointed with Bonn's adamant loyalty to the US that seemed to jeopardise the results achieved so far during the negotiations with the CNIEC.[9] While the German government promoted the formal revision of CHINCOM, a process that would take months or years to be accomplished, other countries such as Great Britain and France simply announced their will to remove China's differential unilaterally before 1957; at the same time, Japan requested and obtained by CHINCOM a long list of derogations to the common rules on the base of the relevance of trade with China for the recovery of the Japanese economy.[10] Apparently the OADW did not have any option but to keep the negotiations with the CNIEC alive: all details of the text were revised and agreed during 1955, so that a new invitation to Beijing was issued by the Chinese representatives. Once again the time seemed to work against the cause of the OADW: during all 1955 the West German government was absorbed by the hard negotiations for the mutual recognition between the FRG and the Soviet Union, which involved sensitive issues such as the repatriation of German war prisoners (Jüngerkes 2012, 144).

The following year the growing Chinese uneasiness with German dilatory tactics, coupled with a further worsening of West German economic performance with China in relative terms, led to widespread criticisms of the German government's attitude. While five new Western delegations (from Italy and France among others) reached Beijing to sign promising bilateral contracts, the OADW was still engaged in the controversy to gain the authorisation by the government in Bonn. A last baffling compromise was suggested by the West German Foreign Ministry during the first half of 1956: the OADW should invite the CNIEC to sign the agreement in a city of the Western hemisphere, with Beijing as a second-best option only in case of a Chinese refusal.[11] The OADW declined the suggestion since it would have further damaged the credibility of the German interlocutors. The Committee restated that its goal had always been to improve the technical conditions of German-Chinese business relations and not to replace the government in its prerogatives; rather, it was time for the political sphere to realise that

8 Letter from the President of the Arbeitskreis China Heinrick Köhler to the General Director of the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie Hans-Wilhelm Beutler, 3 May 1955, RWWA, Abt. 175, 4-1.

9 Letter from Otto Wolff to Heinrick Köhler, 18 September 1956, RWWA, Abt. 175, 4-1.

10 Letter from Drossel to Otto Wolff von Amerongen, 23 December 1955, RWWA, Abt. 72, 389-1.

11 Letter from Beutler to van Scherpenberg of Foreign Ministry, 24 May 1956, RWWA, Abt. 175, 4-1.

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its interference in business was producing a dramatic waste of opportunities to the advantage of the international competitors.[12] The controversy became public at the end of the year, when the opposition at the Bundestag raised two official questions to the government: the Liberal Party (FDP, traditionally close to business circles) provocatively proposed the opening of a German trade mission in China, while the SPD simply asked the government to give its final permission for the signing of the long-negotiated trade agreements with CNIEC (Ching 2006, 216). The details mentioned in both questions raised suspicion of an active role by the OADW. Although difficult to gauge, this would not be inconsistent with the more aggressive attitude displayed by the Committee after the election of the new President Otto Wolff von Amerongen in 1955. The result was the commitment taken by the government in front of the Bundestag to allow new significant steps towards the signing of the trade agreement, since a further postponement of the visit to Beijing "would lead to unpleasant public debates" shortly before the federal elections of September 1957.[13] Moreover, the German government was encouraged by the alleged softer attitude of the Eisenhower administration on the embargo issue: when France and Great Britain officially declared the end of China's differential in Summer 1957, they did not incur in any retaliatory measure from Washington.[14]

In late August 1957 the nine members of the OADW delegation were allowed to travel to mainland China via Hong Kong. Most of them came from the Workgroup China: together with Otto Wolff, representatives from Bayer AG, Mannesmann and Deutsche Bank among others reached Beijing on 8th September. Their new interlocutors were the leaders of the China Committee for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), a higher-ranking body than the CNIEC which symbolised the value attached by the Chinese hierarchy to the conclusion of the agreement. It took twenty days of "the hardest negotiations" (according to Otto Wolff) to iron out all the questions left open by the previous talks.[15] The delay was due to the last Chinese attempts to entail the two governments in the implementation of the agreement, so as to introduce a *de facto* recognition between the FRG and the PRC. The most heated point of discussion was the request of an

12 Speech by Otto Wolff von Amerongen to the Cologne Chamber of Commerce, 17 May 1956, RWWA, Abt 72, 381-2.

13 Memorandum of van Scherpenberg of the Foreign Ministry, *Ein- und Ausfuhrvereinbarung zwischen den Ostausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft und dem China-Committee for the Promotion of International Trade*, 26 July 1957, PA-AA, Bestand 63, Band 139.

14 Memorandum from Zahn-Stranik of the Foreign Office, *Die Wirtschaftsbeziehungen der BRD zur VR China nach Aufhebung des China-Differentials*, 4 July 1957, PA-AA, Bestand 63, Band 136.

15 Letter from Otto Wolff von Amerongen to the Director of the Ostasiatischer Verein Hans Stoltenberg-Lerche, 7 October 1957, RWWA, Abt. 72, 381-2.

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agreement between the two central banks as a guarantee of import-export transactions. The institutional framework of the Federal Republic offered the German delegation an escape route. Since the statute of the 'Bank Deutscher Länder' (later Bundesbank) made it an institution autonomous from the government, the financial responsibility for trade relied on the Ministry of Economics (which incidentally was constantly updated during the negotiations). The compromise came with an official letter committing the Ministry to acknowledge the agreement and to do its utmost for its fulfilment.[16] Concerning the problem of arbitration, soon after the Chinese side had abandoned its preference for East Berlin, an easier compromise was reached in favour of Zurich, since official relations existed between Switzerland and the PRC (Leutner 1995, 73). A success for the OADW was the quite unproblematic inclusion of West Berlin in the area subject to the agreement; on the contrary, no progress was made in the delicate field of trademark registrations, since the CCPIT delegates refused to discuss a matter that could only be dealt with by the governments.[17] More generally, the OADW claimed to have avoided all major risks and to have reached more than 80% of its goals especially in defining the technical terms for trade and financial transactions, whose uncertainty had dogged economic relations so far.[18] Also the government in Bonn expressed its satisfaction for the agreement signed on 27th September in Beijing, since the limits of the OADW mandate in terms of political disengagement had been respected.[19] However, a last symbolic dispute occurred to remind the limits imposed by the Cold War environment. The Committee requested the publication of the text of the agreement by the official bulletin of the German Ministry for Economics, since the CNIEC had posed this condition during the negotiations. The opening formula referring to "friendly negotiations" was politically unpalatable to the government in Bonn, and it took a further round of talks between the parts to approve an amended version of the text.[20] This last episode reveals once again how closely wedged had been the mediation of the OADW between Beijing's attempts to broaden the scope of the agreement, and Bonn's uncompromising stance about non-

16 Proceedings of the first negotiating session, 10 September 1957, RWWA, Abt. 175, 5-1.

17 Proceedings of the fifth plenary session, 18 September 1957, RWWA, Abt. 175, 5-1.

18 Letter from Otto Wolff to the President of the CCPIT Nan Han-Cheng, 27 September 1957, RWWA, Abt. 175, 5-1.

19 Memorandum from the German Consulate in Hong Kong to the Foreign Ministry, *Direktgeschäft mit der Volksrepublik China; Ergebnis der Verhandlungen der Delegation des Ostausschusses der Deutschen Wirtschaf in Peking*, 17 October 1957, PA-AA, Bestand 63, Band 139.

20 Record of the meeting between the German delegation to Beijing and Reinhard of the Foreign Ministry, 11 November 1957, RWWA, Abt. 175, 5-1.

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recognition policy. From the economic point of view, the agreement was an unconditional success. A global trade volume of 230 million Deutsche Mark was foreseen for both import and export: the result in 1958 was three times higher. Besides, as a result of the common definition of trade customs and rules, the share of direct trade between the FRG and the PRC increased from a mere 35% in 1957 to 86% one year later (Ching 2006, 218). At that time, however, the Chinese authorities refused to open the negotiations for an extension of the agreement due to lack of progress on the political scale. Beijing's goal to translate the new relations at the governmental level had been frustrated both by OADW's lack of interest and by Bonn's refusal to get involved. Despite the anxiety expressed by the Committee, the absence of a new binding agreement did not influence negatively the volume and the quality of the exchange. On the contrary, it seemed that the authorities of the PRC estimated that the bilateral economic relations had developed too favourably to be conditioned by political instability. Quite on the contrary, West German-Chinese trade benefited from other international tensions: the unofficial trade agreement between the PRC and Japan was abruptly suspended in 1958 when a Japanese nationalist group insulted the Chinese flag at a fair taking place in Nagasaki. Until then Japan was PRC's first economic partner: the freeze of bilateral trade imposed by the Chinese leadership opened new opportunities for FRG business to increase its share of the Chinese market (Hsiao 1977, 41-50). On the other hand, the declining performance of West-German-Chinese trade during the first half of the '60s was neither a consequence of the lack of a new bilateral agreement nor the result of the strict non-recognition policy carried by Bonn: according to a widespread interpretation, the more general reduction of PRC's exchanges with the Western world was due to the disastrous results of the Great Leap Forward.

The evaluation of the 1957 trade agreement and of its long-term consequences seems to suggest that the coordination and the pragmatic attitude displayed by the German economy, coupled with the low-profiled and discrete involvement of the governmental actors, has been a constant guarantee of success in improving German-Chinese economic relations. This was even more so in the framework of the unfavourable environment produced by the Cold War during the early '50s. Both the gyrations of East-West relations and the emerging Sino-Soviet split seem to have exerted a scant influence on bilateral exchange as long as it proved profitable for both sides, provided that most of the technical issues were resolved bilaterally and the basic rules of security were respected by the two geopolitical blocs. In this respect, the agreement signed in 1957 was not the mere stage-setting for the later official recognition between the FRG and the PRC, which occurred only in 1972; on the contrary, it deserves a careful consideration for its long-term influence over the course of German-Chinese relations to the present day.

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During the Cold War Period (1949-1971)

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The Hong Kong Riots and the Sterling Empire Last Stand

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Abstract The years 1966 and 1967 are crucial for British Crown's Colony of Hong Kong and for United Kingdom's economic relation with the People's Republic of China. Few studies on the subject addressed this reality only partially, whereas a thorough vision remains to be achieved. The 1967 left-wing riots marked a point of no return in UK's perception of the Hong Kong issue from a political standpoint as the events showed the British the exact measurement of their weakness in the area. But while agreeing that UK's decolonization strategy might have an earlier start, we have to point out that the years 1966 and 1967 need to be studied as crucial dates, which marks the acquisition of a new consciousness by the Hong Kong financial and industrial milieus: from then on, the economic future of the colony will look towards the Mainland and not anymore towards the United Kingdom, thus acknowledging the strong, though not problem-free, links built over the years by the Hong Kong capitalists with the People's Republic of China establishment.

Keywords Hong Kong. Riots. Sterling. Devaluation.

1 Introduction

The Hong Kong riots in 1966 and 1967 represented a crucial moment both for the history of the former British Colony and for the relations between People's Republic of China and United Kingdom.[1] From the half of the '50s to the eve of the Cultural Revolution, the growth of Chinese trade and financial relations through Hong Kong was in many ways astonishing. That is true especially taking into consideration the current mainstream historiography that consider Communist China as an isolated country and

1 This article is part of a wider research elaborated by Roberto Peruzzi (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and Valeria Zanier (LSE) to whom goes my greetings for her cooperation.

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economy until the reappraisal of her diplomatic relations with the United States. Recent researches showed clearly that this was not the case regarding the Chinese economic relations with almost all the Western European countries (Romano, Zanier 2017; Meneguzzi, Samarani 2014). The development of the China-United Kingdom economic relations used the British Colony as a pivotal centre and a sort of 'financial and logistic hub' for the Chinese economy. Mainly two facts were the very bases of this situation. Firstly, the symbiotic connection between Hong Kong and Mainland China: a special relationship which permitted the fast growth of the Colony's economy through the '50s and the '60s as well as the maintenance of an open door for Communist China's economy to bypass the United States' embargo. The other decisive fact was the fundamental role maintained by the British sterling for the People's Republic of China's international trade and financial relations until the second half of the '60s (Peruzzi 2017).[2]

While the biennium 1965/1966 represented the peak of Sino-British trade relations in the first two decades of existence of the People's Republic of China,[3] the Cultural Revolution on one hand and the Hong Kong's disturbances and riots of 1966/1967 on the other one, were the main reasons of the temporary crisis of their mutually beneficial relationship.

Until today Hong Kong protests of 1966 and 1967 were often considered as separated events. In the case of 1966 disturbances historiography considered them as a local, limited and not political issue, without any connection with 1967 riots, which were described as originated by economic and ideological instances of leftist protesters mainly backed by Communists, and for some historians even as a sort of plot led by the Chinese Government. As a matter of fact, until today the official reconstruction of the events and the mainstream interpretation left unsolved many obscure aspects of what really happened in those months of 1966 and 1967. Not to mention the official and unofficial documents we could study in the archives, which we have to consider at least as extremely contradictory and often conflicting with the usual historiographical interpretation.

The 'Emergency Act' introduced in July 1967 by the British administration legally permitted a harsh repression of any kind of social protest in Hong Kong, but also introduced a series of important regulatory acts not directly connected with the disturbances which reinforced the London Government control on the Colony. For the first time till 1941,[4] the Act

2 The decisive role of sterling for the People's Republic of China's economy in the '60s has been generally ignored by the historians, but it is well known by economists as Susan Strange, Chatherine Schenk and Leo Goodstadt.

3 The volume of trade achieved for this period was reached again only around 1970.

4 During the Summer of 1941 a first 'Emergency Regulatory Act' was introduced by the British colonial administration in view of a possible conflict with Japan, including measures

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permitted a direct control of the Bank of England on the local financial system, a necessary premise to the planned sterling devaluation.

This is not yet a reappraisal but an introduction to the enucleation of unsolved contradictions and doubts on the current reconstruction of what happened in the Crown Colony of Hong Kong in these crucial years.[5]

2 A Close Connection

British direct export to Mainland China doubled between 1962 and 1965. Trade missions intensified and important firms from Britain, as well as from Hong Kong, were always present at the semi-annual Canton fair. Only in 1964, the Sino-British Trade Council, created by the UK Government in 1954, promoted three specialized trade expositions in Beijing, participated by more than one hundred British companies. While between January and September 1965, not less than twenty-three Mainland China's trade missions visited the United Kingdom. Definitely, 1965 was the year in which we see the speeding up of economic relation's growth between Britain and the People's Republic of China (Laurens 1966, 75-6; Peruzzi 2014, 272-3). Nevertheless, if consistent British Government efforts to promote the growing of direct trade relations with China achieved a high qualitative level in industrial relations, they never reached the relevance and value of Hong Kong import-export and financial relations with Mainland China.

After the end of the Chinese civil war and the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, the British Crown's Colony[6] of Hong Kong became the main scenario of Sino-British economic relations. After 1949 'shock', the British attitude toward Communist China was clear: "trade should determine British policy", as stated by the British Minister in China, Sir Ralph Stevenson in Summer 1949.[7] With trade, and 'for' trade, the vital priority was the prospect to maintain the British control on the Hong Kong Colony as an 'open door' to Chinese economy, but also as a mean to preserve a

to guarantee the financial control of the Bank of England on the local banking institutions. Of course, after December 1941 and the Japanese invasion, the Act was no more effective.

5 A wider exposition by the author and Valeria Zanier (London School of Economics) was presented on May 7th 2015 in the LSE IDEAS Workshop: *Economic Encounters in the Age of Ideology. Exploring the Business Dimension of Political Confrontation in China, Russia, Europe (1945-1991)*.

6 Hong Kong was a 'Crown Colony' and this special status implied the fact that instead of the other members of the Commonwealth, in case of necessity the British Government could act without any consideration of local powers or needs, imposing the UK priorities and decisions to the Colony.

7 Stevenson to Bevin, 29 August 1949, F12884/1023/10, Stevenson to Bevin, 1 September I949, F13102/1023/10, F.O. 371/75814.

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British role in Asia (Ovendale 1983). Realistically excluding any prospect of a military stand to defend the Colony against the triumphant Chinese Communists (Fischer 1968, 323-4), the alternative was yet envisaged by the Far East experts of the Foreign Office in London before the end of the Civil War. Being traditionally linked with the Mainland in entrepôte trade, the British Colony of Hong Kong had played a crucial role at the end of 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century, as a necessary hub of services to China's trading and investing partners (US, Japan, and Western European countries). It was essential to show to the new Chinese Government the advantageous opportunity to use Hong Kong as a sort of 'hub' of financial and logistic services to support Mainland China's economic reconstruction (Shai 1984, 150-1; Peruzzi 2014, 249-53).[8]

As a matter of fact, this is what effectively happened between the second half of the '50s and the first half of the '60s. While Hong Kong played a very peculiar role in Cold War politics, being an outpost of a Western power just at the border of Communist China, the Colonial administration professed complete political neutrality in order to preserve Hong Kong's economic laissez-faire, which meant for everybody the possibility to prosper. During the '50s the bases for Hong Kong's 'economic miracle' as well as for a real symbiotic relation between the British Colony and the People's Republic of China's economies were created.

It has not yet been pointed out clearly how Hong Kong miracle was dependent on Mainland China. Continuing the tradition in entrepôte trade, in the early '50s China became the most important food provider to poorly endowed Hong Kong: rice, livestock, fresh vegetables and drinkable water[9] fed the increasingly populated and industrialised Colony's islands, while Hong Kong offered in return an easy access to free market, banking and logistic services (Peruzzi 2014, 265-7).[10] Not only were Hong Kong people fed with Chinese food and Chinese water, but Hong Kong factories lived on the frequent waves of migrants who provided low-wage workers who were essential to keep the local manufacturing sector competitive. Wages could be kept low because of the cheap food, textiles and other light products coming from the Mainland, thus creating a delicate economic dependence based on a tacit partnership across the two sides of the Hong Kong bay. This circumstance is crucial to understand what was at the core of the tense social situation that had formed in the Colony in the first half

8 PRO FO 371 46232 F 1331/409/10. PRO CAB 129/31, CP (48) 299, December 1948.

9 Its should be rememberedx that until 1969 Hong Kong was completely dependent on Mainland China for drinkable water supplies.

10 For example the shipment companies registered in Hong Kong, formally British but often under Mainland China's control which permitted to bypass the embargo under the British flag.

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of the ’60s. The number of inhabitants had far exceeded the capability of the city, and many lived in deplorable conditions, while both workers and businessmen had reason to fear for any inflationary movement that could push prices up.

The Colony was administered in a very conservative way, with very little contribution from the locals, no constitutional reforms were scheduled, and the least developed monetary system of all British colonies. While having a currency, the Hong Kong dollar, the Colony did not have any central bank. The control lied within an Exchange Fund in London, which was controlled by private commercial banks (Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation, or HSBC, Mercantile Bank, Chartered Bank). HSBC was responsible for issuing Hong Kong notes and holding the Colony’s balances. But HSBC was also the financial institute with the closest ties with Mainland China interests and with the ‘Communist’ Banks operating in Hong Kong (Schenk 2012, 47-8),[11] contributing to strengthen the economic link between local and Communist China’s interests (Peruzzi 2014, 253-65).

In 1966-1967, British sterling was still the main foreign currency employed by the People’s Republic for international trade and finance operations. In the same period, Hong Kong was the main international British sterling market outside Britain and the most important source of foreign currency for China (Schenk 2012, 58; Peruzzi 2014, 275).[12]

3 The 1966 Protests and Riots or ‘the Comedy of Ambiguities’

As reported in the vivid words of a witness, “in the mid-Sixties, Hong Kong was not exactly swinging if you were poor” (Mullone 1996, 161). During 1965 British trade and financial relations with the People’s Republic of China flourished and reached their maximum level since the end of Chinese Civil War. The symbiotic link between Hong Kong and the Mainland China economies was stronger than ever. But 1965 was not a good year for the British Colony. “A stock market crisis in 1965 had caused a run in the banks. Some of them had folded and many people saw their savings wiped out” (Mullone 1996, 161). Economic and social anxiety was growing also among the new Chinese middle class of the Colony. “Factory owners were looking for ways to cut costs, and soon tapped into the hordes of new immigrants from the mainland willing to work for a pittance. Layoffs were

11 Between 1961 and 1970, thirteen Mainland China controlled banks were operating in Hong Kong, with a total of fifty-five open branches in the Colony. If the Bank of China was without a doubt the most politically influential Chinese owned bank in Hong Kong, the Nanyang Commercial Bank was the largest for deposits and advances.

12 Flanked on a minor scale by Singapore and Kuwait City. Particularly the last one had a certain relevance as a foreign currency source for the People’s Republic of China.

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commonplace for longtime residents" (161). The feeling of an unrestrainable transformation was commonly shared by the people, but the faith in growing opportunities and richness knew a sudden stop that year.

> In the countryside, new towns and industrial estates were eating up the landscapes. Villages not swallowed by the sprawl were emptying of people, leaving the old to die in their cabbage patches and the livestock to wander aimless and ownerless. Buffaloes tumbled into the new catchwaters which were built to channel every drop of water to the cities, and their carcasses choked up the nullahs of Tsuen Wan and Choi Hung. (Mullone 1996, 161)

While often the reconstruction of the 1966's riots described them as unforeseeable events, the origins of which were groundless if searched in the Colony social and economic situations Liam Mullone's words well describe the growing uncertainties and tensions that characterised the common people of Hong Kong's feelings in the months before the disturbances.

Tensions and riots were not something new to the Colony. Early in 1956 serious and violent incidents and demonstrations were organized in Kowloon by Chinese nationalist militants, led by Guomindang controlled Trade Unions, while Communist trade unionists opposed them. Even in the early '60s many groups, associations or unions linked both to the Guomindang or to the Communists organized protests, strikes and demonstrations.[13]

On 4th April, a young man called So Sau Chung began a hunger strike in front of the Kowloon Star Ferry's entrance hall denouncing the rise of living costs and the announced rise of the Ferry fares. If the proposed fare rise involved only first class tickets, it was clear that this was just the first step to which also the second class will eventually follow as part of a program of general prices increase involving all the transports system of the Colony as denounced by the urban councillor Elsie Elliot. So's protest was intended to support Miss Elliot's action in the urban council, and she was present that day in front of the Star Ferry Hall trying to convince So to suspend the protest before the intervention of the police. In those days Elsie Elliot and Brook Bernacchi, both well-known activists of the Reform Club, presented a report denouncing colonial police wide corruption and its involvement in drugs smuggling. Particularly they denounced the chiefs of the Mongkok police station, the police officers Lui Lok, Peter Godber and Nam Kong, which covered in their jurisdiction the Kowloon Star Ferry offices. The next day, 5th April, another young man, Lo Kei, joined So in

13 Also other groups were socially and politically active in Hong Kong. For example, the Triad organisations took a certain role in the 1956 disturbances. But also democratics, labourists, Trozkysts, anarchists and pro-soviet Communists associations or groups were present in the Colony.

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the hunger strike, but in the afternoon the Mongkok's police arrived to disperse the crowd gathered around. They arrested So Sau Chung, while a small group of young people began to protest against police violence leading a demonstration in Nathan Road. The same day Elsie Elliot was denounced by the police and the colonial administration as the responsible for the organisation of the protests and as an anti-British troublemaker, and on 6th April morning So Sau Chung was sentenced to three months for obstruction of a passageway (Mullone 1996, 162).

Throughout that day and the following night, the protest grew and became an extended riot involving the territory of Kowloon. While most of the protest were located around the Mongkok Police station, pillages and devastations extended in many parts of the district and the initial protest against the police became a chaotic outbreak (Mullone 1996, 161).[14]

The British colonial administration, the police and the official media immediately denounced that the only reason of the riots was the protest against the ferry fare rise underlining their absurdity with the fact that fares rises would have involved only first class tickets, excluding any other possible reason as the origin of the riots. On the other side, when interviewed, quite all the people involved in the riots recognised police corruption and violence as the main reason of their involvement in the demonstrations. Police's repression of the protests was extremely violent involving not only looters and pillagers but also peaceful demonstrators: a young man was killed by the police, 1,800 persons were arrested, more than 450 were sentenced and hundreds were injured. If the riots of April 1966 were essentially located about this event, a strong and widespread "undercurrent of resentment surely remains" (Mullone 1996, 162).[15]

In February 1967, the British Parliament enquiry commission established and declared in a long official report that the riots of 1966 had no political, social or economic reasons pointing out the Kowloon Star Ferry's fares rises as the only reason of the disturbances. A paradoxical conclusion, considering the fact that the same report recognised the growing social anxiety of the lower and middle classes of the Colony caused by the increasing cost of living, the lowering conditions of life, diffuse wage level reductions, a widespread perception of general worsening in economic

14 It has to be pointed out that no protest was directed against the Kowloon Star Ferry offices, in front of which they began, nor any damage was registered to the Star Ferry buildings and properties. In the words of Liam Mullone: "This seemed to beg the question: did the 'Star Ferry Riots' really have anything to do with the pricing policy of the Star Ferry?" (Mullone 1996, 161). FCO 40/39/ Kowloon Riots 1966/ Report of Commission of Inquiry, 1-167.

15 CO 1030/1747/Confidential/Trench to Carter (C.O.)/26 May 1966, (included in), *Memorandum of Reference for Use by Counsel Representing the Government*/25.5.66/Confidential, 1030/1746/Secret/From the Governor of Hong Kong to the Secretary of State for the Colonies/Kowloon Riots/15 April 1966. FCO 40/39/ Kowloon Riots 1966/ Report of Commission of Inquiry, 1-167.

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conditions. Elsie Elliot, So Sau Chung and the democratic media, associations and militants denounced the report of the enquiry commission. But officially, the riots of 1966 had no reasons.[16]

4 Waiting for the Storm? 1967 Hong Kong's Riots

In 1967, China witnessed some of the most violent and disorderly deeds of the Cultural Revolution. In Hong Kong, the same year is notorious for the riots, maybe inspired[17] by the Mainland, surely largely caused by harsh living conditions of the working class. As to Britain, 1967 is the year when, eventually, the insufficient economic growth and the inherent risk of inflation spiral made prime Minister Harold Wilson devalue the pound.

On February 1967, in Macao students' protest against Portuguese colonialism were harshly repressed by the Salazar regime police killing and injuring many of them. The Chinese population of the Portuguese colony reacted with a fierce mobilisation for a general boycott of the colonial administration and economy. The protest was directly supported by the People's Republic of China, which organised an embargo and a sort of naval blockade of the Portuguese controlled territory. In March 1967, a month later, the Lisbon Government had to surrender to the protesters accepting all theirs claims and paying compensations to the family of the killed and injured by the colonial police. The Macao facts became immediately a stunning example for nationalists and communist militants in Hong Kong.

The chance to follow the Macao's example soon arrived at the end of April 1967 and in the early days of May. An artificial flowers factory, property of an American company, in San Po Kong was acting a massive dismissal initiative without any respect of the Colony's labour regulatory laws and refusing any dialogue with the local trade unions. After some days of peaceful protests and pickets, on 10th May violent disturbances spread out with the police, which arrested twenty-one workers and trade unions' activists. From 11th May, protesters began to run the Kowloon streets with leftist, and often Maoist, slogans and banners against the colonial police and administration. on 12th May, for the first time Beijing's official papers directly incited the people of Hong Kong to support the demonstrations against British imperialism and colonial regime following the example of

16 It could appear absurd in many way, but until today this interpretation of 1966's riots has been commonly repeated. For example see: URL http://hongwrong.com/1967-hk-riots/ (2018-02-27). FCO 40/39/ Kowloon Riots 1966/ Report of Commission of Inquiry/ Conclusion, 150-67.

17 Or even directed by the Chinese Government as happened in Macao in February 1967. As a matter of fact, still today there is not a definitive proof of Beijing's involvement, while many documents could give way to unsolved questions and doubts on this prospect.

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Macao's people. Responding to what seemed a call to arms from the Chinese Communist Government, Mainland China controlled companies, institutions and newspapers began to directly support the demonstrations and the claims of the protesters. Strikes, demonstrations, barricades, violent clashes, assaults to the police stations and to the colonial administration's offices characterised Hong Kong scenario until August 1967. On 8th July a clash at the border with the Mainland, causing the death of five Hong Kong policemen, spread a fear that a Chinese invasion might take place. London provided military assistance by sending land reinforcements and, later on, a detachment of R.A.F. helicopters.[18]

In the Summer of 1967, London supported the decision of the Hong Kong Governor to enact the Defence Regulation Acts (also, Emergency Act), a series of temporary control measures, which allowed some extraordinary powers to local authorities, including the restraint of some basic personal freedoms. The emergency measures enforced in Hong Kong in 1967 includes: opening and closing of premises; obligation to provide a name and address when approached by disciplinary forces; regulation of assemblies; sanctions against the dissemination of inflammatory materials and speeches; trial without public proceedings; right to deport and detain (Ray Yep 2012, 1007-32; Sinclair 2009, 89-104). In the correspondence between the Foreign Office and the Hong Kong Colonial Government, this decision is linked to the consideration that Beijing was to be held highly responsible for the Hong Kong riots of Spring-Summer 1967. There is no direct evidence that this was the case.

As a matter of fact, the authors who have highlighted Beijing's strong involvement have based their arguments on the evidence provided by Hong Kong and Beijing newspapers, mostly by quoting slogans and political jargon supportive of the highly ideological turn that had been inaugurated by 1966's Red Guards movement. On the other hand, those scholars who have studied the correspondence among the three subjects involved (the Hong Kong Colonial Government, the Foreign Office, the British embassy in Beijing) have highlighted that the British diplomats in China denied Beijing directly supporting the riots, as this would have meant acting

18 In late August the Colonial Government asked additional help from Defense to build a new border fence. An obstacle of about 30 feet wide, consisting of coils and barbed wire "to stop land incursions of all kinds" The Colonial administration proposed to use civilian labour force for the erection of such obstacle under the direction of military personnel, expressly asking London to provide financial help: "Our present view is that they are defensive arrangements designed to meet an external threat and that therefore the charge should be one which this Government should not have to meet". As there was no military invasion, in Autumn, when the situation resumed to normal, the Colonial Government was asked to pay for all the interventions of the military. FCO 40/99/ Hong Kong Telegram no. 1320 to Commonwealth Office, 29 August 1967. FCO 40/99/ Report of the Ministry of Defence to Commonwealth Office, 17 October 1967.

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against their own interests. Donald Hopson, British Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing, advised London Government not to use harsh measures in Hong Kong in order not to provoke a real Chinese reaction (Ray Yep 2012; Ray Yep 2008, 122-39). Actually, it is a fact that the most violent actions by the Chinese, as the burning of the British embassy in August 1967, or the killing of policemen on the border of the Colony, did not provoke any harsh reaction nor by the colonial authorities in Hong Kong nor by the British Government in London. Nor did the emergency measures in Hong Kong provoke other reactions in Beijing.

The reports by the Hong Kong police clearly state that the riots in May and in the Summer of 1967 were motivated by social unrest due to the fear of food price rising and the general worsening of living conditions in the island. The correspondence between the Governor and London in the first month after the strikes in April at the Kowloon's flower factory also shows this interpretation of the origins of '67's disturbances. Only afterwards a strong Beijing role was reported and without any clear evidence on the existence of the linkage, except for the slogans and articles published on Beijing's newspapers.[19]

As a matter of fact, the London Government and the Hong Kong colonial governor David Trench firmly stated that Beijing was directing the riots, even before there were any certainty of it. The evidences in the British archives show that such statements did not have any basis, as no research was ever conducted on the facts, while the reports underwritten by the Colonial governor, the Foreign Office, the press, the military and the different intelligence agencies, confirmed the local origins of the disturbances of 1967. The prompt 'communist' explanation of strikes and riots was homogeneous, both in London and in Hong Kong long time in advance. In order to sustain the Communist hypothesis, the authorities founded their views on two 'scientific' elements: one was the report by the Davis Foundation (an institution based in London, dealing with the pacific resolution of conflicts), which confirmed the involvement of the People's Republic of China and the influence of the Cultural Revolution, but did not provide any examination 'on field' nor involved any China/Hong Kong expert. The main sources used by the Davis Foundation were, as a matter of fact, articles from the British press and from a selection of Hong Kong and Mainland China press (only from newspapers in English). The second 'scientific' element was a report written by a research group within the London School of Economy, composed of experts on international crises. This report makes use of the same sources as the Davis Foundation, without any 'on-site' examination. Moreover, the London School's report did

19 FCO 40/54, HK Police Report, July 1967. Similar views were shared by the Intelligence. FCO 40/101, Ref. TS 2/57 III-L.I.C. Monthly internal intelligence report: March (doc. no. 15-14), April (doc. no. 18-17), May (doc. no. 21-20), June (doc. no. 25-24), July (doc. no. 27-26).

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not take into account any internal/local variable, but only considered international relations.[20] Both reports will be used time and again in London by the Foreign Office, the military, Treasury, and Bank of England, and in Hong Kong by the Colonial Governor, the Administrative Council, and the press in order to prove and confirm the role of the Communists, of the Chinese Communist Party and the Cultural Revolution in influencing the Hong Kong protests.[21]

'Interpreting' the 1967 riots is quite tricky because the monthly reports by the Hong Kong local Intelligence, as well as the police reports written in Summer and in Autumn, show a quite divergent view. Many examples based on official document could be carried out. An official report of the beginning of July 1967 concluded that there was no evidence of the existence of 'terrorist' organisations or organised violent groups, and the eventual choice of the Communist Party and organisations for the use of violence was a hypothetical possibility for the future as a consequence of the successful police repression of the disturbances, but in July 1967 is not a fact.[22] Another official communication of the Hong Kong Police Department to the governor Trench reported on the arrest of fifteen people reputed among the main ring leaders of the riots concluding there were no evidence of connections between them and the Communist Party.[23] The official papers, especially the Police and Intelligence ones, definitely show a much slighter role of Hong Kong Communist organisations and permit to doubt about a strong involvement of China's leadership.[24]

This 'reading' of the riots finds support in the analysis carried out by Ray Yep, where he demonstrates that Governor David Trench was himself convinced of the local origin of the riots as an outburst of rage for the worsening social situation. In May he wrote: "there is every indication that this [original industrial dispute] was a spontaneous incident", although

20 FCO 40/39/The David Davies Memorial Institute of International Studies. *Case study of Disturbances in Hong Kong 1967*.

21 As a matter of fact, among dozens of intelligence and military reports, there is but one 'on-site' report written by the Military Commander and responsible for Hong Kong security on the China border (he was new to Hong Kong, and he had been awarded with this role for very little time). He systematically denounced the Communist manoeuvres, their plots and infiltrations by Red Guards.

22 FCO 40/54/Tel. no. 1013/From Hong Kong (O.A.G.) to the Commonwealth Office/12 July 1967.

23 FCO 40/54/Tel. no. 1425/From Hong Kong (O.A.G.) to the Commonwealth Office/18 July 1967.

24 From the Autumn 1967 and with more intensity in the beginning of 1968 Hong Kong local communists and their trade unions organised a campaign called 'Return to work' aimed at cooling down the protests and contrasting new waves of strikes. FCO 40/101, Ref. GEN/14/368/56, April 18, 1968. *The Communist Campaign 'Return to Work' Policy*.

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publicly he was already denouncing a strong involvement of the Communists.[25] In his articles, Yep points out that Trench was eagerly pushing for a firm action and he succeeded in convincing the British Government to enact emergency measures by exploiting London's uncertainty over the future of China and its lack of viable options in defending British interests (Bickers, Ray Yep 2009, 4-5, 21-36).

As far as the disorders towards Hong Kong and the British are concerned, the Colony's Intelligence and Police's reports show that in the beginning of the Summer '67 the Chinese People's Liberation Army was in control and pushed back the most violent groups from the frontier. In June, the Guangdong authorities prohibited the posting of dazibao attacking British administration in Hong Kong, inviting Guangdong residents to disregard such state-to-state relations, which undergo Beijing's responsibility. The only violent fact, so far, remains the clash which happened on 8th July. Whereas the situation was still chaotic in many parts of Guangdong province, especially in rural areas, from July 1967 the central leadership and the PLA devoted a special attention to the frontier and actively intervened to avoid new Red Guards' demonstrations as confirmed by British border Intelligence reports.[26]

Finally, an important document of the British Treasury in August 1967 maintained that Hong Kong was 'the' problem for British Government in 1967. The document contains a further study on the potential consequences that a Chinese invasion of Hong Kong would bring about. The situation in Hong Kong was entirely dependent on the state of United Kingdom-China relations: if they were reciprocally advantageous, there cannot be any real threat for Hong Kong. Considering that China obtained enormous benefits from exporting to Hong Kong and on the financial/monetary side, it would be highly unlikely that she would consciously ruin her interests by provoking a crisis/invasion. Of course, those observations were related to the official position, not to the actions carried out by 'extremists'. The document negated that the riots could happen independently from Beijing's will. However, exactly for this reason, it concluded that there was no real threat, as any such action would heavily damage the Mainland economic interests.[27]

25 FO 40/45, Hong Kong to the Commonwealth Office, 7/5/1967, telegram no. 947.

26 FCO 40/101, Ref. TS 2/57 III-L.I.C. Monthly internal intelligence report: March (doc. no. 15-14), April (doc. no. 18-17), May (doc. no. 21-20), June (doc. no. 25-24), July (doc. no. 26-27).

27 TNA, 317-902/Confidential/n°26/'Relations with China'/Annex2/F(E)Department/August 1967.

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5 The Sterling Devaluation

When on 19 November 1967 at 1:30 a.m., London announced the decision to devaluate[28] the sterling without any previous consultation or consideration for the interests involved in Hong Kong, and the main worries in the Colony were related to the evident consequences on prices for the export, and for imports from Mainland China. The risk of inflation involved political considerations: after 1966 and Spring '67's riots and strikes, Hong Kong government placed a great importance to the control of basic goods' prices, the increasing of which was considered the main reason of the disturbances (Ray Yep 2008, 122-39).[29]

Following the announcement, an Executive Council meeting was convened to decide on the Colony's response. During the afternoon of 19 November, Singapore and Malaysia announced that they were not going to follow the sterling. Their announcement opened the door to the protest of the HSBC representative in the Council meeting, supported by the Chinese members. The HSBC expressed for the first time a clear position in favor of the autonomy of Hong Kong's economy and currency from British Government decisions, manifesting its role as main actor and warrantor of China's new economy in the international financial system (Peruzzi 2014, 279-81).

We can easily understand this lack of transparency. During 1966 and 1967 officials of the Bank of England had frequently expressed their concern for massive capital flight through Hong Kong. In late October 1967 when D.F. Hubback of the Treasury met Chief Financial Officer John James Cowperthwaite in London, the latter reassures him: "Now that the Chinese had relaxed their pressure, funds were returning to Hong Kong from Singapore and elsewhere".[30]

Therefore, it is understandable that the attention focused on Hong Kong: being a Crown Colony, there was a way for the Bank of England to exert control, though only as an observer. The Bank could require information from financial institutions and other actors that performed exchange operations. The Bank could also request information on bank deposits. Never-

28 On sterling crisis and devaluation: Cairncross, Eichengreen 1983; Strange 1971a, 302-15; 1971b.

29 The absolute relevance of the Hong Kong's disorders from Autumn '66 to Summer of '67 in determining extreme political and economic decisions of the Colony administration is well shown in Ray Yep's research.

30 Sarcastically he underlined that he reputed much more realistic the eventuality of a 'sudden' devaluation of the sterling than a Chinese threat to Hong Kong. T 295/240/Top Secret/ 'Note on a Meeting in Mr Hubback's Room, 2nd Floor, Treasury Chambers, Great George Street, SW1, on Friday 15th September 1967, at 10.15 a.m.' At the meeting were presents: D.F. Hubback, J. Cowperthwaite (Financial Secretary of Hong Kong), H.P. Hall (Commonwealth Office), E.P. Haslam (Bank of England), A.K. Rawlinson, S.H. Wright, A.R. H. Glover (the last three for the Treasury).

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theless, there was no legal obligation for the institutions to respond. They could release information on a voluntary basis. The Bank, therefore, had no means to independently verify whether such information was or not complete, neither could she sanction those who refused to share or those who gave partial or false information. It is interesting to note that the Bank of England would only activate her observer status in early 1967. She had not felt any need to do it before that date. But this was not enough and a limited power could not allow the Bank of England to act with rapidity avoiding the possible threats and consequences for the sterling devaluation that she was secretly preparing till the end of 1966.

In February 1967, the Bank of England and the Treasury Department started a discussion on the opportunity to enact a strategy to exert a strict control over those financial operations performed in Hong Kong that involved exchange of sterling into other currencies and capital export.[31] An episode happened in 1941, when, due to the existence of the external menace of a Japanese invasion of the Colony, a series of Emergency Regulatory Acts had been approved. Those regulations conferred the Colonial Government special powers, including the possibility to exert direct control over all exchange operations involving sterling and foreign currency fluxes. In 1941 the Colonial Government allowed the power to control the activities of all financial institutions including all British and foreign banks registered in the Colony. From these discussions, we can infer that in 1967, if the existence of a similar 'external menace' would be acknowledged and proved, the British authorities could have invoked the precedent, to declare the Emergency status, and confer special powers to the Bank of England. With such special powers, the Bank of England could have exerted direct control over exchange operations and preventing any possible threat in light of the impending devaluation.

In the years 1966-1967 Hong Kong detained the most relevant liquidity reserves in sterling outside the United Kingdom and part of such reserves was held at the Bank of England. The Colony regulations, and its financial structure, could potentially enable a real-time conversion of capitals in the event of sterling devaluation, because of the possibility to convert sterling into Hong Kong dollars and the latter into other currencies, without any control. Of course, the Bank of England and the Treasury observers felt this situation as a relevant potential threat for any successful devaluation initiative.

It is possible to advance a hypothesis on the fact that the Bank of England and the Treasury in early 1967 found a way to adopt the emergency measures that were independently proposed by governor David Trench. It is very likely that to be fully accepted in London, such harsh measures had to be presented with a very good justification, for example a marked

31 Bank of England, OV44/258.

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involvement of Beijing in the local disturbances. In case there appeared a clear evidence that the riots were orchestrated by Beijing, then this would have made an excellent motivation for the British Government to heavily intervene in Hong Kong, enacting emergency measures and strict controls over the movement of capitals. Having proved the existence of an 'external menace', in July 1967 the Colony was able to enact the Emergency Regulatory Acts, which included special powers in financial matters and the possibility for the Bank of England to control exchange and other financial operations by invoking the 1941 episode (Bickers, Ray Yep 2009; Ray Yep 2008).[32]

6 Conclusions

When London devalued sterling in 1967, the way this operation was conducted as far as Hong Kong is regarded, shows that British Government and the United Kingdom's main banking institution, harboured many doubts on Hong Kong's trustworthiness. The decision to devaluate sterling without allowing Hong Kong to prepare for this eventuality derived from a clear aim: blocking the main channel whereby the money exited from the British economic empire. The conclusion is that the financial world was already projected towards a new era and new protagonists, they could foresee already in 1967 that the times were ripe for a new balance ruled by the United States and for the ascent of China as a world player. Hong Kong was already part of this new balance, whereas the United Kingdom had met the obstacles of new players and was just undergoing a difficult economic reshuffle, which would lead the country to largely abandon the manufacturing sector for services. Whereas the British business and financial community had a clear idea on how to address such issues, the London Government and the Bank of England were not prepared to change, nor to rephrase their relationship with the Crown Colony of Hong Kong.

The year 1967 marks the acquisition of a new consciousness by the Hong Kong financial and industrial milieus: from then on, the Colony will turn her back to United Kingdom and direct her gaze right towards the Mainland.

On 1967 turmoil and riots there was no official inquiry. Both London Government and British Colonial administration in Hong Kong decided which was the nature and origins of the disturbances. They gave an official and political *vulgata*, which established there was no need to know more about the protests. About 1966 events a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission investigated every little aspect of the riots with quite limited results for ten months, but for a much larger and relevant episode as the May-August

32 FO 40/45, Hong Kong to the Commonwealth Office, 7/5/1967, telegram no. 947.

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disturbances of 1967 no enquiry at all was done. The official interpretation became the mainstream representation and narrative of the facts of that year, and still today it is. Even a superficial reading of the archives materials gives way to a doubtfully view of this consolidated interpretation. The bulk of memorials and interviews with witnesses or journalistic reconstructions[33] often show their agreements with the official interpretations but nevertheless contradictions with the archives documents remain in evidence (Ka-wai Cheung 2009).

If the riots were the expression of a Beijing will to subvert the British power in Hong Kong, as a prelude to a Communist invasion of the Colony, as the British authorities said, so the Emergency Act of July 1967 was justified. The financial control measures and the powers given to the Bank of England with the new regulatory act were assumed in a context of security measures intended to defend the Colony from an invasion. Was it by chance that these were exactly the powers the Bank of England needed to guarantee the success of the programmed devaluation? In 1967, were the Hong Kong riots a precious opportunity for British interests? It is not yet possible to give a certain answer to this question but certainly we could underline the evidence of the connection between the riots and the financial measures adopted. If in 1967 sterling devaluation was the central strategic issue for the United Kingdom Government, in the long run the success in achieving this aim represented also the beginning of the end of British power in Hong Kong. The crucial year of 1967 created a definitive fracture between the colonial power and the workers of the Colony. Their protest was successfully repressed but resentments against the British rule rose up and survived. On the other side, in the same year the local financial and industrial interests were heavily damaged by the sterling devaluation. Local economic lobbies were humiliated by the means used to achieve the aim and by the arrogance of British Government in assuming such important decisions without any considerations for the local priorities. The 1967's Hong Kong emergency was successfully managed by the British colonial authorities, but maybe their success was the first step of the loss of their power.

33 Among them Cheung's book is one of the more interesting.

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Roads to Reconciliation
People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy
During the Cold War Period (1949-1971)

edited by Guido Samarani, Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Sofia Graziani

France Facing the People's Republic of China (1949-1964)
A Policy of Economic Relations Under Control

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Abstract This contribution brings to light a French policy widely subjected to the Indo-Chinese interests, to the multilateral system of control of the exchanges and, more globally, to the American politics. The attitude of the French government is marked with the seal of the opportunism, and by the will to create *de facto* economic relations with the Chinese, in the biggest possible discretion. The Gaullist decision of January 1964 to create diplomatic relations with the PRC takes place in a phase of intensification of the economic, technical and commercial relations.

Keywords International economic relations. French foreign policy. PRC. Twentieth century.

Even before the end of World War II, the French government had set itself ambitious targets regarding its policy in Asia: to regain its presence and role in Indochina followed by China. Though France emerged from the War greatly weakened and with a shattered morale, it still retained significant economic and financial interests in China. Franco-Chinese relations continued to be strained till 1949, when Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists lost power, and the passage from the pre-War 'dominant/dominated' relations

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(the concession and unequal rights)[1] to a more egalitarian one proved difficult. The transition, which continued all through 1949, required much haggling between Chinese and French authorities, especially regarding the transfer of rights and properties in the former concessions of Canton, Shanghai, Tientsin[2] and Hankow – all within the context of an ongoing civil war between nationalists and communists, widespread corruption, soaring inflation and currency depreciation.

In 1949, some 110 French enterprises and 1300 nationals,[3] mostly in Shanghai and Tientsin, still remained. To this were added investments amounting to 248 million US dollars,[4] which nevertheless represented less than 6% of total French foreign investments. They were often direct, for the creation of branch offices or independent enterprises – the majority being trading companies or other closely linked enterprises such as financial establishments (35%, 87 million dollars) and transport companies (34%, 85 million). A significant number of French tradesmen and corporate bosses working in China did not see the communists coming to power as a catastrophe and believed that they would be able to work with the new Chinese leaders who they hoped would be less corrupt than the nationalists and more likely to tame the inflation and instability that was vitiating the business climate. The growing Chinese economy was expected to provide lucrative business opportunities to Western enterprises.[5]

1 China had been subjected to the so-called 'unequal treaties' imposed by Western powers in the aftermath of the Opium Wars of 1840-1860. French territorial and economic privileges took the form of concessions, enclaves within Chinese territory that, for the Chinese, symbolised their subjection to foreign rule. France had four concessions, at Canton, Shanghai, Tientsin and Hankow, and had administrative rights in the international concessions of Shanghai and Amoy and in the Peking Legation Quarter as well. Territorially, it administered the leased Bay of Canton area and had annexed the islands of Hainan and Spratly in the South China Sea. Moreover, France had acquired the concession of the Yunnan railroad and the attached privileges in 1898. From 1910, the railway line linked Haiphong, in Tonkin, to Yunnanfu (later Kunming), capital of the Yunnan province, allowing the diverting, via the port of Haiphong, of a portion of South-West China's trade to the coastal cities in French Indochina. Thus, France wielded some influence in the Yunnan, the gateway to French Indochina. France also controlled, in partnership, some major public services such as tax collection, customs and the postal service, whose director was a Frenchman. This in theory allowed it to guarantee the repayment of many Chinese loans underwritten by French investors.

2 In keeping with the traditional system, the more common proper names have been retained the way they were written in those days: Tientsin, Canton, etc.

3 The reports generated from the Consular surveys undertaken in China in 1946 and in 1947 allow us to draw a rather precise map of French interests in China.

4 This amount is for the year 1931 (the last year for which we have data).

5 *Note of 11 January 1949 a/s. Repercussions of Communist China's victory on our interests in the Far East*; *Aide-mémoire of 2 February 1949 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Asia-*

During the final months of the nationalist regime in continental China, the French government began planning, not without misgivings, its stance towards a future Communist China. When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in October 1949, French policy consisted in recognising the Republic of China (Formosa), as governed by the exiled nationalist party and not having any official political relations with the PRC. It is in this light that there arises the question of France's manoeuvring room for developing contacts and business relations with Communist China (Qu 2005; Robin 2013a).

From 1949 to 1955, these bilateral economic relations were marked by the French government's continued stance regarding the PRC and its refusal to establish political and diplomatic relations in the context of strong international tensions and restrictive economic embargoes. All through this period, the French government retained a policy of discrete but systematic control in its relations with the PRC.

The year 1956 finally saw the first inflexion point in these relations, though without any actual break. With the tacit consent of the French government, a mission was sent to China, which had to set up a commercial framework between the two countries for the medium term. Gradually, from 1956 to 1964, trade grew and collaborations diversified. More or less unofficial means permitted the exploitation of this development and a growing number of private players began to forge business links with Peking till the French finally decided to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1964.

1 From 1949 to 1955, Franco-Chinese Economic Relations Were Frozen in a Tight Embargo which Nothing Seemed Likely to Loosen

1.1 The Gradual Implementation of an Economic Embargo (1949 to End 1951)

The Communist regime that came to power in continental China in October 1949 broke away from the existing network of alliances, especially with the United States. Moreover, it seemed quite capable of threatening the foreign economic interests on Chinese soil. Thus, the question of what attitude to adopt regarding the new power took on some urgency.

Oceania Division) to the British Embassy in Paris; Report of 1 February 1949 on Tientsin by M. Aiby, Banque de l'Indochine.

Great Britain's stance was that of *keeping a foot in the door*[6] so as to keep Communist China outside the ambit of USSR and retain its economic and financial interests there. The United States, France and Great Britain wanted to take a common stand regarding their future relations with the Communist regime in China. Still, the United States recalled some of its diplomatic agents from China and evacuated its nationals from the summer of 1949. Great Britain on the other hand sought to preserve its economic interests and Hong Kong. Furthermore, the wishes of some Commonwealth States, especially India, had to be taken into account. The latter therefore reconciled itself to accepting the authorities in Peking and ultimately officially recognising the PRC in January 1950 (Porter 1967, 34).[7]

As for the French government, it had begun to define, from the beginning of 1949, the strategy it wanted to employ: to liaise with its Western allies, be opportunistic and retain its presence.[8] Towards the end of summer 1949, France strove to maintain a balance between nationalists and communists (Robin 2013b). Though the French government was unhappy with the United States' hostility towards the PRC, it was even more worried about the recognition accorded by the British to 'Red China'. Not having recognised the new regime, France ran the risk of appearing hostile to a PRC that could constitute a serious threat to Indochina with which it shared 1,200 kilometres of common boundary on its south: what if these new masters of China decided to launch military incursions into their neighbour? (Qu 2005, 92). The French government's primary motivation was to preserve Indochina and its frontiers with China. French policy began as 'Indochinese' before becoming 'Chinese'.

While Indochina was the determining factor, there was also the French government's consideration for, and agreement with, the representatives of several enterprises with interests in China[9] who wanted to remain. To leave would be never to return or, at the least, with great difficulty. On 7 February 1949, Hubert Rosier, Director of Olivier, one of the largest import-export companies dealing with China, wrote that, despite the increased bureaucracy compared to that of the nationalist regime, the communists could "nevertheless offer better opportunities. […] Everything points to the fact that all these efforts are about to bear fruit. […] Far from withdrawing,

6 *British Aide-mémoire Submitted on 4 January 1949 Far Eastern Situation*.

7 *Memorandum by Mr. Bevin on Recognition of the Chinese Communist Government,* 1949; *Aide-mémoire Submitted on 31 October 1949 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regarding Great Britain's Recognition of the Government in Peking*.

8 *Aide-mémoire of 2 February 1949 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Asia-Oceania Division) to the British Embassy in Paris*.

9 *Note of 11 January 1949 a/s. Repercussions of Communist China's victory on our interests in the Far East*; *Report of 1 February 1949 on Tientsin by M. Aiby, Banque de l'Indochine*.

private French companies in China are determined to stay and continue in the certitude that conditions are bound to improve in the coming years".[10] William Wecter, the Franco-Chinese Bank's agent in China, was also optimistic in his report of 6 October 1949 to his Parisian headquarters: "As regards future prospects, it would seem that France is well placed to do business with the new regime [...]. All the official declarations point to the fact that China has an immense and urgent need for industrial equipment and the Russians are not able to meet all their needs – if indeed they want to!".[11] Good days were seemingly around the corner.

Yet another issue was the PRC's ambition to be appointed to the UNO's Security Council, something that the United States was adamantly opposed to. In this matter, France maintained an identical stand. With the outbreak of the Korean War in autumn 1950 and the intervention of Chinese 'volunteers', Communist China's efforts at being accepted into the Security Council seemed doomed to failure with France voting consistently to thwart any such eventuality (Qu 2005, 199-201).[12] As with the other Western countries, France had little room to manoeuvre – the Cold War, begun in 1947, had divided the world into two major camps, the West, led by the United States against the Socialists (the USSR and PRC mainly). The Korean War greatly heightened tensions, especially with China leaping so belligerently into the fray. It was difficult not to be loyal to one's alliances, to Formosa, to the United States and to the West in general.

Moreover, the War also imposed strict constraints to exports to China in 1950. The unilateral measures taken by the United States against China were gradually and reluctantly adopted by the other countries, including Great Britain and France. After America decided, in December 1950, to place China under an economic blockade, France found it impossible to have any future political relations with Peking and trade was made very difficult. The strategic capital goods contracts could no longer be honoured. The year 1951 saw this blockade against the PRC becoming complete with the initiative taken by the United States, under the aegis of UNO, to add a China-specific clause to the COCOM[13] (a system of trade restrictions against the Eastern Bloc set up in 1949) (Yasuhara 1991).

10 *Letter of 7 February 1949 from Hubert Rosier Director of Olivier China.*

11 *Letter of 6 October 1949 from William Wecter, Representative of the Banque franco-chinoise in China, to the Headquarters of the Bank.*

12 *Dispatch No. 93 of 21 February 1950 from Jean Chauvel, Ambassador of France, Chief of the French Delegation to the United Nations to Robert Schuman a.s. Representing China to the Various Organs of the United Nations*; *Telegram no. 57-61 of 9 January 1950 from Paris to RP at UN (Paris)*; *Telegram no. 545-548 of 30 March 1950 from Diplomatie Paris to Chauve.*

13 COordinating COmmittee for Multilateral expert control.

1.2 The Economic Conference of Moscow and the USSR's Attempt at Opening the Embargo (1952)

The restriction to international trade proved very painful to the Eastern Bloc. The USSR tried to loosen the restraints by launching a propaganda offensive, a sort of economic equivalent of the Stockholm Appeal,[14] in the form of the Economic Conference of Moscow in April 1952.[15] Its aim was to resume trade between the East and the West and to widen the rift between the United States and its allies regarding international trade and the embargo.

The PRC saw its trade relations with Western countries decline drastically after 1949 to the benefit of COMECON[16] member states. While some roundabout trade and smuggling poked holes in the embargo, the PRC found itself increasingly dependent on the USSR, especially after 1951, and mainly for consumer and capital goods. Meanwhile, the Korean conflict was proving very expensive for the Chinese and the USSR found itself increasingly limited in its role as a supplier to the Chinese not only because of the trade restrictions, but also due to its own developmental needs. The lifting of the embargo was thus a major objective of the Economic Conference of Moscow where contacts were indeed made between Chinese officials and French enterprises.

Two-thirds of the French delegation (36 members) were businessmen like Jean-Baptiste Doumeng, President of agricultural cooperatives and boss of Interagra, Jean-Baptiste Chatain, Director of Potasses d'Alsace and Campenon-Bernard, Michel Goldschmidt, importer and exporter of cereals and Charles Hilsum, Director of the Banque commerciale des pays de l'Europe du Nord (BCEN).

Of these, special mention must be made of Jean-Baptiste Doumeng and Charles Hilsum. Hilsum largely built his career at BCEN, where he became CEO after the War. Under Hilsum the BCEN came to be nicknamed 'Bank of Moscow' because of its close ties with the Soviet State and the PCF (Parti Communiste français) and its quasi-monopoly over the capital flows

14 The Stockholm Appeal of March 1950, presented as apolitical, wanted to turn the public opinion in Europe against the American nuclear arms policy. It was launched by the World Peace Council, an arm of the Supporters of Peace or the Peace Movement that, from the beginning of 1948, had brought together celebrities and intellectuals, often Communist, but not only. French physicist Frédéric Joliot-Curie was the first signatory of the Stockholm Appeal as President of the World Peace Council.

15 *Economists for Peace Conference at Moscow October 1951-April 1952*; *Economists for Peace Congress April 1952-July 1952*.

16 COMECON or CAEM, acronym for Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, created by Stalin in 1949 as an organisation for mutual economic assistance between the Communist bloc countries.

between France and the USSR (Gomart 2003, 80-4). As for Doumeng, he was the most important French businessman in Moscow. Called the 'Red billionaire', he formed a Union of over 200 agricultural cooperatives of the South-West (cereals, meat, wines, fruits and vegetables). He was also CEO of Interagra, an export company for the agricultural cooperatives of the South-West. He was helped initially by Charles Hilsum and began doing business with the East in 1945-1946.

On its side, the Chinese delegation included some prominent figures such as Nan Hanchen, President of the People's Bank and of the National Import and Export Company of China (CNIEC), a State body with a monopoly on Chinese foreign trade. There was also Lei Renmin, Vice-Minister of Commerce, Lu Suchang, Director of CNIEC, as well as other important banking, industrial and trade representatives.

The meeting between the two delegations resulted in tentative contracts valued at 4 million pounds sterling each way (Lipkin 2011). Doumeng signed on behalf of all the French enterprises present in Moscow while Lu Suchang represented his side. The following goods were to be exported by France to the PRC: metals, chemical products, textiles, industrial equipment and raw material. In return, China was to provide France with tea, vegetable oils, silk, manganese and handicraft. Moreover, the Chinese delegates extended an invitation to their French counterparts to come to China and to resume their bilateral trade relations. The Economic Conference of Moscow would thus seem to have been a success for the USSR and the Communist bloc.

1.3 America's Reaction: Creation of CHINCOM (September 1952)

Wary of the danger to the cohesion of the Western Alliance, the United States quickly set up CHINCOM (China Committee) to further constrain trade with the PRC. Up till then, the COCOM lists were applied against all Communist countries except Yugoslavia and Cuba (Cohen, Dernberger, Garson 1971). As for the PRC, the member States of the COCOM had agreed, in the summer of 1950, to impose the same restrictions to it as to the Communist countries in Europe. Nevertheless, in the wake of the Moscow Conference, the United States pressured its allies for more stringent action against China. Two factors were in play:

– first, the Chinese intervention in the Korean conflict had raised the issue of treating Communist China differently as it now concerned a country that was in direct military conflict with the United States. COCOM members adopted special provisions against the PRC by drawing up longer and more stringent banned product lists as compared to the rest of the socialist camp. When the Korean conflict escalated, there

arose the question of creating an *ad hoc* committee specialised in matters of trade with China and North Korea, different from COCOM.
- Second was the impending change in Japan's statutes coupled with its geographic and strategic position in the context of the Korean conflict. Under American occupation since 1945, it was to regain its independence on 22 April 1952.[17] From January 1951, all Japanese exports to the PRC that came under the restricted list had to have the approval of the occupying authorities.[18] When this responsibility reverted to Japan, it had to be integrated into the Western bloc, the embargo and COCOM.

Under pressure from the United States, a special list regarding China was drawn up in July 1952 and imposed on Great Britain, France, Canada and Japan. In September, a committee within the framework of the COCOM was especially created to oversee, define and supervise trade restrictions with China and North Korea: the China Committee (CHINCOM). In the spring of 1953, this new organisation drew up a list of some 400 categories of articles whose export to China would be banned or restricted – double that of the COCOM (Cain 1994, 1995, 2007; Brada, Wipf 1974; Cohen, Dernberger, Garson 1971; Mastanduno 1992; Shu 2001). Washington had thus succeeded in its economic war against China, an offensive that now consisted of four layers: the restrictions set by the Americans, the COCOM, the CHINCOM and the UNO.

1.4 The Determined Stance Taken by the French Government from 1952 to 1955

While the American government remained intransigently hostile to the PRC, the French seemed, at first, to be swayed by the results obtained in the Moscow Conference.

At the Ministerial Council of 26 April 1952, Robert Schuman, Minister of Foreign Affairs, noted that "The French who had been to Moscow had come back rather impressed. […] There will certainly be some excitement regarding the revival of business, especially those afflicted by unemployment. […] The question is whether we would accept the embargo of certain products. We will need to come to an understanding with the English and

17 The date of the entry into force of the Treaty of San Francisco signed by the United States and its allies (8 September 1951).

18 The SCAP (Supreme Command for the Allied Powers). This clause was reinforced by the necessity of obtaining an authorisation from SCAP for the export of any strategic product, whatever be the destination country, in order to eliminate the risk of a re-export resulting in the circumvention of the embargo.

then approach the Americans for lifting certain restrictions" (Auriol 1978, 284). Obviously, the French government thought that there were economic advantages to be gained by meeting the Chinese representatives. But Schuman was soon to realise that Communist-led enterprises wanted to have a monopoly over the trade with China.

The procedure envisaged in Moscow was that negotiations would be conducted in East Berlin so that definitive commercial contracts could be signed. After the conclusion of the Conference, Jean-Baptiste Doumeng made several trips to finalise contracts. Meanwhile, in the background, a fierce rivalry was underway between Interagra and those companies that had been dealing for long with China such as Olivier-Chine, Rondon, Denis Frères and Optorg. These latter enjoyed a privileged position in Franco-Chinese trade and were loath to see the arrival of competitors, especially those led by Communists – all being very aware of the close ties that Doumeng had with the USSR. No wonder then that these traditional companies refused to have to go via Interagra to trade with the PRC. Realising that the CNIEC would grant import-export licences only to Interagra sponsored companies that would give it a *de facto* monopoly on all trade with the PRC, the French government vetoed all import-export licenses. Ultimately, most of the agreements concluded in Moscow did not pan out, but the failure of this attempt at a monopoly finally led the authorities of both China and France to initiate the process of forging direct commercial links between the two countries.

The first Conference of Geneva (June-July 1954) could very well have facilitated these relations, especially in view of China's and especially Zhou Enlai's moderating stance vis-à-vis the Vietminh for putting an end to the Indochina War. Sanctioned by the French Foreign Office, French business leaders and Chinese officials had numerous meetings.[19] Lei Renmin, Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade, who was present in Geneva along with many experts, was the mainstay and part initiator. He met with Robert Tabouis, Director of the Compagnie française de télégraphie sans fil (TSF) (Qu 2005, 312), M. Vicaire, Deputy General Manager of the Aciéries du Creusot,[20] de Pavloksky, Director of Le Matériel technique and Rondon representatives Chassier and Muller.[21] These contacts though had few concrete results.

19 *Note of 22 June 1954 – The Development of Franco-Chinese Economic Relations after 1949*.

20 Schneider's presence in Geneva was requested by Zhou Enlai and the Chinese Commerce Minister. *Telegram no. 329 of 6 May 1954 from the Delegation to the Conference of Geneva to President Bidault.*

21 The presence of Lei Renmin, along with numerous experts in Geneva, led to a multitude of contracts with private enterprises of all nationalities, sending a shiver of excitement through the European business community. Many were the missions and delegations which wanted to meet the Chinese officials, especially those in charge of foreign trade. The Chi-

Nevertheless, we can point to a Chinese participation in the Lyon Fair of April 1955 as well as a visit by Chinese technicians to France in March of the same year. The latter was led by Zhang Xinchen, Vice-President of the CNIEC and was comprised of experts in electronics, telecommunication and mechanical equipment. Its composition was the result of the meetings held in Geneva between Lei Renmin and the Director of TSF of France and the Deputy General Manager of the Aciéries du Creusot.[22] It was at the instance of the Franco-Asiatic Chamber of Commerce[23] that the CNIEC delegation was invited by two of its members, the Compagnie française de TSF and Schneider. This visit of Chinese technicians initiated, for France, a movement that the PRC would replicate often in the coming years: technical information-gathering missions to hi-tech, exceptional installations.

In the political domain, relations remained conventional and prudent. In the weeks following the Geneva Conference, various organisations were invited to China, but they were mainly either Communist or Communist-inspired associations and movements. Though some visa applications were granted by the French government in response to the demands of private actors who were impatient to forge or renew their ties with China, others were refused, like those for the delegates of the Pan-Chinese Athletics Federation who had been invited by the Sports and Gymnastics Works Federation for its 20th anniversary (from 17 to 26 December 1954) because of the exclusively political nature of the event (the FSGT was Communist).[24] Visas were only granted on a case-by-case basis.

nese trade delegation thus had discussions with delegations and businessmen from Italy (13 June 1954), Belgium (especially representatives of the railways, the steel industry and import-export houses), Netherlands (three meetings in three weeks: 9, 10 and 29 June). In the beginning of September 1954, China also invited a West German trade mission to visit the PRC. In the case of the Netherlands, these contacts were also an occasion to begin the process for establishing diplomatic relations: the arrival in Peking of a Dutch delegation to negotiate the establishment of diplomatic relations (26 May) preceded the first trade negotiations (from 9 June).

22 After its arrival on 24 March 1955, the team made many visits, especially to factories and industrial enterprises such as the Génissiat power plant, Europe's first major hydroelectric station. The importance of such an installation for China cannot be overstated.

23 The Franco-Asian Chamber of Commerce was established in April 1925 as an association under law of 1901 with the aim of aiding in the creation, development and improvement of the economic, trade, maritime and intellectual relations between France and Asian countries. It lent its support to enterprises, facilitated transactions and other related processes between importers and exporters, provided relevant documentation and information, organised conferences and study trips, gave its views on questions of trade legislation. In 1955, Hubert Rosier, Director of the Olivier company, was its President.

24 *File of 17 December 1954 for the Secretary of State Regarding Chinese Nationals or Organizations Who Had Asked for or Received French Visas*.

Pressure on the government mounted in the wake of a mission to China undertaken by the Conseil de la République[25] led by Edmond Michelet (20 to 25 September 1955). Though from different political parties, the parliamentarians all agreed that there was a need to "strengthen economic ties while at the same time knowing that they cannot progress far […] in the absence of diplomatic relations […]. Should we always be the last? […] Also this must not be some off-hand relationship. China, dare we say, would like to be a spouse and not a concubine. Let us not forget that our 'recognition' would have no value if we are the last."[26] On their return, the parliamentarians went on a veritable publicity campaign, exhorting the Conseil de la République and the public via the press to recognise the PRC.

A second parliamentary mission, this time from the National Assembly, quickly followed (19 October). The deputies were received for two hours by Zhou Enlai, who told them of his desire to resume diplomatic relations, adding: "we believe that we could always begin, as a preparatory phase, by developing commercial and cultural relations. There is a proverb which says that when the water arrives, the trench gets made."[27] Concerning the economic issue, Zhou Enlai hoped "that France would embark on the road to full diplomatic relations with China as well sing a 'semi-official' trade agreement between the two countries" (Qu 2005, 337). This would be the role of the French trade mission of 1956. Meanwhile, on the political front, the French government, under pressure from the Americans, retained its stern stance and refused to recognise the PRC.

2 From 1956 to 1964, Franco-Chinese Trade and Collaborations Grew and Diversified. Unofficial Means Began to be Set Up, Involving a Growing Number of Players

2.1 The 'Henri Rochereau' Trade Mission to China (1956)

A French economic mission, led by Henri Rochereau, member of the Conseil de la République, was sent to China from 23 January to 20 February 1956. Officially non-public and private in nature, its preparation and pro-

25 Name of the Upper House under the 4th Republic.

26 *Report File in the Name of the Coordinating Committee for Studying the Problems Regarding Business in Indochina and on the Mission Sent to Indochina and China from 5 to 27 September 1955, Presented to the Conseil de la République on 28 February 1956 by M. Michelet*, 200)

27 *Conclusions of the Mission Extracts of the Minutes of the Audience Granted by Zhou Enlai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC to the Members of the Mayer Delegation on 1st November 1955*.

gress were followed closely by the government. In fact, it was the first time that the government had given its official approval for a business visit to China. Though this mission had been envisaged towards the end of the Geneva Conference, it was only now that it could be realised. It is no coincidence that the first diplomatic documents that talk of it are dated end July 1955, the same time that the United States agreed to hold Ambassador-level discussions with China.[28]

The mission marked the first direct contact with the Chinese administration and technology ministers since the founding of the PRC (Robin 2013c)[29] such as the Ministry of Foreign Trade (including its Export Division), the National Planning Commission, the Committee for the Development of Foreign Trade, the National Import Export Company of China (CNIEC), Bank of China, etc.

The second gain was the signing of several firm contracts,[30] the initiation of others and the creation of business leads.[31] The Rochereau mission brought an end to the contractual agreement system that had been in place since 1949. In fact, the government did not impose any limit on the trade amount, nor even that it had to be balanced. On the Chinese side, though "the oft-repeated official stand was that the trade be balanced, in practice, Chinese authorities did not seem to give any thought to this in their dealing with the members of the mission. In fact, the total volume of French exports concluded during the stay of the mission, was double that of Chinese imports."[32] It would seem the delegation made full use of this freedom from having to balance the trade.

28 *Note of 28 July 1955 for the Minister a.s. Development of contacts with the PRC*. On 25 July 1955, two bulletins, published simultaneously in Washington and Peking, announced that the two governments, American and Chinese, had decided to raise the level of the discussions taking place in Geneva from the consular to the Ambassadorial level (between Alexis Johnson and Wang Bingnan). The object of these discussions was the repatriation of certain categories of civilians who had been detained or retained in China and the United States. As the establishment of diplomatic relations did not figure in these discussions, French policy remained unchanged.

29 *Annexe I of the Agreement, List of Names of the Chinese who had Participated in the Negotiations with the French Mission*, 1956; *Note of 22 February 1956 of Beaulieux (DEFA of the MAE, Hong Kong) to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, from Rochereau*.

30 Firm import contract amounting to 350 million francs were concluded, including 20 million for oil seeds and 220 for tea. Firm export contracts amounting to about two billion francs were signed, which included mainly chemicals, pharmaceuticals and dyes (900 million), textiles such as combed wool, rayon thread (400 million), small mechanical equipment and tires for light motor vehicles (300 million).

31 500 million more in import were expected, including 300 in silk and 25 in oil seeds. As regards export, the delegation bagged specific orders worth a billion francs more which could be met in the short term. They included 500 million in watches, 350 million in combed wool, 100 million in embroidery thread and 50,000 tonnes of sugar.

32 *Information Report no. 570 of the Conseil de la République, Annexe to the Minutes of the Meeting of 27 June 1956*, 14.

A financial arrangement between the two central banks and the payment modalities for the commercial transactions eliminated some of the hurdles encountered hitherto in trade with Communist China. This financial protocol included using the Franc for Franco-Chinese trade and the transferable Franc regime. As a matter of fact, up till then, Chinese authorities had held back business considerably and "imposed unequal risks, with only the Western traders having to bear all consequences."[33]

Finally, the Chinese authorities were also to host a group of engineers who would study, over the long term, the French participation in the construction of major industrial installations.

In his report presented on 27 June 1956 to the Conseil de la République, Henri Rochereau prophesied: "A day will come when, after normal diplomatic relations are re-established and China joins the UNO, these kinds of negotiations would no longer be unusual. We will then have to sit across the table on equal terms with men of the first rank, experts in business affairs, combining the natural finesse of the Chinese with a Marxist dialectic. We must from now begin to look for capable negotiators if we want to come out ahead in the discussions which will no doubt prove to be extremely difficult".[34]

Meanwhile, the year 1956 saw, for the first time since the War, a trade balance tipped in favour of France[35] as well as a significant quantitative growth.

In billion Francs	1,949	1,955	1,956
Imports	1.495	4.414	5.292
Exports	0.721	2.635	7.976

2.2 A Growing Number of Official Meetings with Representatives of Communist China

The PRC tried to gain, gradually, greater commercial autonomy. It tried to circumvent the international embargo by forging *de facto* trade relations with French officials and business leaders, especially those who had been present in Geneva in 1954. Both countries sought, as discretely as possible – so as not to displease either the USSR on one side, or the USA on the other – to find new ways of conducting business.

In summer 1955, France decided to activate the contacts established in Geneva a year previously. Considering the sensitive nature of the rela-

33 *Note of 25 January 1956 from R. Grimaud, Commercial Advisor in Hong Kong, to DREE Subject: Hong Kong Visit of the Private Economic Mission to China.*

34 *Information Report no. 570 of the Conseil de la République*, ordinary session of 1955-1956, *Annexe to the Minutes of the Meeting of 27 June 1956*, 8-9)

35 *French Customs Statistical Yearbooks*, 1949-1956.

tions with China, the contacts needed to remain discrete and unofficial. The understanding between China and France was that Berne would be the meeting place for cultural, visa and specific issues. London, Berne and Berlin were 'dedicated' to commercial relations. In practice, Berlin was rarely used while Berne attracted the lion's share because both the PRC and France had embassies there.[36] It must be noted that this mode of communication was in no way exclusive to Franco-Chinese relations and that the Swiss capital hosted many such meetings between Chinese officials and their counterparts and businessmen from many other West European countries.

The establishment of official relations between France and China marked the beginning of a period of increasing contacts and bilateral relations between the two countries, with the Rochereau mission being the most important example. At the same time, numerous economic actors, enterprises, federations and professional syndicates were eager to gain access to the Chinese market which was thought to be very promising.

2.3 The Disappearance of CHINCOM in 1957

Meanwhile, the last few French enterprises and assets in China were being liquidated, such as the Banque de l'Indochine (whose remaining branch offices closed in 1957), as part of the general drive towards the nationalisation of industrial assets. The end of business within China marked, no doubt, the real beginning of business with China.

As for the COCOM, though the Americans had succeeded in imposing its views regarding the embargo on its allies from 1950 to 1953 (Mastanduno 1992), the tables were completely turned from 1954 onwards, when it was the allies who gradually began to assert themselves.[37] Thus, in keeping with the improving international situation, European nations initiated a series of meetings to revise the COCOM embargo lists and to rescind many non-military items (Brada, Wipf 1974).

The same question arose for CHINCOM, which the United States had managed to enforce upon its allies in 1954 and 1955.[38] Starting from January 1956, a series of summit-level meetings between American President Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Eden showed how diametrically opposed the two camps were (Shu 2001, 178). The United Kingdom's politi-

36 The Swiss Confederation officially recognised the PRC in January 1950 and established diplomatic relations on 14 September of the same year.

37 The armistice agreement of Panmunjom that ended the Korean War was signed on 27 July 1953.

38 Even though a country like Great Britain enjoyed an increasing number of exemptions.

cal and economic interests no longer allowed it to support the China differential in that difficult economic context which, moreover, also penalised Malaysia and Hong Kong. No amount of British pressure had any impact on the American administration, especially as the latter was dealing with a Congress that was firmly opposed to any relaxation of the embargo. In the summer of 1956, the British decided to change tack and to try and convince the other allies into abolishing CHINCOM. The Suez Crisis put paid to all such thoughts and compelled the United Kingdom to avoid any further friction with the United States. The year 1956, which had begun so ominously for the CHINCOM, ended with neither France nor the United Kingdom being able to bring about its disintegration. The Congress' intransigence and the threat of the coming Presidential elections forced the President to adopt a hard and inflexible stand in the matter.

But once Eisenhower was re-elected, the year 1957 saw renewed allied pressure to end the China differential. He too on his side turned more flexible, admitting that there were good reasons to reduce, if not eliminate, the China differential. Two factors helped bring about this change: the belief that continuing the embargo would throw the USSR and China together as the latter's economic need would be met by the former and second, the damage caused by the embargo to the Japanese economy and the subsequent effect on US-Japanese relations. In February and March 1957, the administration decided to trim the special list that would now contain only truly strategic goods and managed to convince the Congress in April after a particularly effective campaign.

But it was too late: in a report dated 1 May 1957, Harold Caccia, the British Ambassador to Washington, declared: "we should regard it as final that the U.S. Government will not (repeat not) be a willing party at this stage to any agreement which virtually abolished the differential" (Shu 2001, 189). The United Kingdom now wanted the differential to be abolished completely, especially as it was inexplicable why, after the events in Hungary at the end of 1956, the USSR should be treated less strictly than China. At the CHINCOM summit of 7 May 1957, the American proposal for reducing the multilateral regulations was met by the French counterproposal of eliminating the special list immediately. On 22 May, the United Kingdom let it be known that it would not be happy with any compromise and announced on the 27th that it had already decided to eliminate the differential unilaterally. Almost four years after the Korean armistice, the United States could no longer hold back the flood gates.

2.4 The Growth in Franco-chinese Trade Relations Between 1958 and 1963

Franco-Chinese trade relations grew significantly, albeit in fits and starts, between 1958 and 1963. Two examples stand out: railways and cereals.

Thanks to the Banque de l'Union des Mines's contacts with the Chinese Embassy at Berne since 1956, a group of Chinese engineers visited France from 7 February to 3 April 1958[39] to study the French technology. Led by the Chinese Vice-Minister of Railways (Yu Kuang Sheng), it included 26 individuals divided into three groups dealing with three different sectors,[40] one of which was the railways.[41] The trip included numerous technology meetings as well as visits to the SNCF's plants and factories in the North and East,[42] providing an in-depth view of French railway technology.[43] A memorandum signed on 27 March 1958 provided the base for a technological collaboration between the two countries in the domain of railroad equipment.[44] Most importantly, a series of meetings concluded on 5 July 1958 with the signing of a contract for the purchase of 25 single-phase 50 Hertz locomotives to be delivered in 1960,[45] for an FOB amount of close to 3.5 million Pounds Sterling.[46]

Bilateral trade increased through the years 1962-63, marked especially by the sale of massive quantities of French cereals. This was due to the coincidental occurrence of catastrophic harvests in China and bumper crops in France. After eight months of negotiations, a deal was finalised between Louis-Dreyfus[47] and *China Resources*[48] on 19 December 1961 for the delivery of one million tons of cereals for between 50 and 60 million

39 While originally, the mission was to have lasted only six weeks.

40 Group I: Railways, mines, automobiles; group II: electricity; group III: chemicals, food.

41 "Première mission officielle de techniciens envoyés en France par le Gouvernement de Chine Populaire du 13 février au 6 mars 1958, *Note of 31 January 1958 from Jean Hugues, Trade Advisor at Berne to M. Mauris, the SNCF's Chief Representative in Switzerland*.

42 SNCF: Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer français.

43 *Internal note no. 208 of 13 March 1958 – Presentation of the Pescara Locomotive to a Delegation from the PRC, Programme Sent by the SNCF's Director of General Studies to C. Martin, Manager of equipment and traction.*

44 Regarding electrification, telecommunication, signalling, the tracks and rolling equipment.

45 It was signed between the *China National Transport Machinery Import Corporation* and some French companies: the Matériel électrique, which was comprised of the SFAC (Schneider factories), the Forges et Ateliers de constructions électriques de Jeumont and the Matériel électrique S.W. (Schneider-Westinghouse); the Société générale de Constructions électriques et mécaniques Alsthom. The locomotives were to be delivered according to a fixed timetable between April and October 1960.

46 *Contract no. 8 GKC 36201F*, 1958. The unit price of an electric locomotive was fixed at 138,215 pounds; the total amounting to 3,455,375 pounds.

47 The merchant bank Louis-Dreyfus.

48 The role of the *China Resources Company* was to import into Hong Kong goods originating from the PRC. In October 1955, this office, which was based in Hong Kong, became not only an office of the CNIEC but also of all of the PRC's technology corporations specializing in commerce and industry.

dollars spread over the years 1962 to 1964.[49]

The following table details the Franco-Chinese bilateral trade over the years 1957 to 1964. It shows not only the extent of the variation in volume but also that France enjoyed a massive surplus throughout.

In billion francs	1,957	1,958	1,959	1,960	1,961	1,962	1,963	1,964
Imports	2.93	4.85	8.01	11.22	7.85	8.35	10.41	15.22
Exports	4.64	18.65	19.66	26.06	17.95	21.38	28.82	24.49

Still, as for its overall trade balance with China, France trailed far behind many other countries – for imports as well as exports (between 7th and 12th places in this period). The competition intensified after the break in Sino-Soviet relations in 1960-1962. Henceforth, it was not enough to just offer good products at competitive prices, the financial and commercial modalities assumed a growing importance and cornering a market required more generous payment conditions, e.g. credit.

These commercial developments were made possible by the removal of several hurdles to trade internationally. The Sino-Soviet break in 1959-1960 forced China to review its trade flows and look for other suppliers. As a result, the share of the PRC's imports from non-Communist countries rose from 43.2% in 1958 to 55.3% in 1962 (Eckstein 1971, 276-7), providing new opportunities. The end of the Algerian conflict removed yet another barrier as the PRC had recognised and supported the FLN, a fact that had been a big thorn in Franco-Chinese relations.

The autumn of 1963 saw Guillaume Georges-Picot lead an important French business delegation to China. He forged contacts at the highest echelons of the Chinese government,[50] which was interested mainly in the development of mechanical industries, ship building and the construction of an oil refinery. The visit also confirmed the Chinese government's keen interest in the exchange of economic and technological missions.[51] In the case of the business delegation, it was necessary to have direct contacts with the people at the highest levels of the Chinese Foreign Trade Department.[52] The CNPF delegation of 1963 highlighted the fact that the eco-

49 *Telegram no. 328/330 of 20 December 1961 from the commercial advisor.*

50 He was received not only by Lu Suchang, but also by Chen Yi, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister Zhou Enlai.

51 *Rapport Général de la Mission du Conseil National du Patronat Français en République Populaire de Chine (September-October 1963).*

52 Apart from Lu Suchang and his department, the French delegation met not only engineers from public enterprises who were also advisors for the purchase and sale of products, but also competent officials from various technological ministries.

nomic and commercial relations inherited from the ’50s (indirect contacts) was no longer sufficient and that Franco-Chinese economic relations now required to be much more ‘private’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ than what they had been.[53]

It was in this context of growing economic, technological and commercial relations that Charles de Gaulle declared, in January 1964, the decision to establish full diplomatic relations with the PRC (Krouck 2001; La Gorce 2004; Mengin 2001). This decision was first and foremost political, the recognition of a simple fact, the reality of a Communist China.

But from another point of view, de Gaulle’s decision could also be considered as the culmination of the process of increasing economic contacts. In this sense, it would be no exaggeration to say that this political result could have been, *a posteriori*, why diplomats had begun thinking as early as 1949-1950 that a political rapprochement could well result, *in fine*, of the actual contacts and the accumulation of small steps and micro-advances which were of little significance in themselves. Obviously, there is no question of minimising the decisive role played by the President in the decision of 1964, but of simply stating that it had been in preparation and had ripened over a succession of contacts.

The ’50s model ran its course and gave way to that of the ‘openly’ official. Henceforth, political and economic interests converged, with the consequence that both these spheres could now enjoy a relative autonomy.

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China and Italy

Roads to Reconciliation
People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy
During the Cold War Period (1949-1971)

edited by Guido Samarani, Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Sofia Graziani

Italy's Attention Turns to China Between the '50s and the '60s

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Abstract It is surprising that the very existence and recognition of China had significant repercussions on domestic policy in Italy, which was the country with the strongest Communist party in the West. In the '50s the Italian official policy was compelled by membership in Atlantic alliance and relations with United States, to refuse economic exchanges with China. According to documents found in "Ministero degli Affari Esteri" and in "Aldo Moro" archives, even in the same years political characters such as the Socialist Pietro Nenni, the Christian Democrats Giovanni Gronchi and Amintore Fanfani worked to favour China-Italy exchanges and economic actors like Dino Gentili and Enrico Mattei organised economic Italian missions to China. Since 1960, thanks to trade relations set up in the '50s, and to political events (December 1963 the first centre-left government with Aldo Moro president, Pietro Nenni vicepresident and Giuseppe Saragat to foreign affairs, and at the beginning of 1964 the French political recognition of China), the process was accelerated. Thus, in December 1964 the first commercial agreement between Italy and China was concluded and commercial offices were opened in Rome and Beijing. After 1964 the Chinese question entered Italian foreign policy and was included in parliamentary debates and government programmes. The American diplomacy, dominated by the Vietnam war, opposed any initiative to Chinese recognition but Italy anticipated the better reported, more celebrated US recognition.

Keywords China. Italy. United States. Cold War. Recognition.

1 Introduction

The success of the Chinese Revolution of 1949 has been viewed in literature as a central event in the Cold War, which would influence it and shift its centre of gravity from Europe to East Asia (Westad 2005; Chen 2001).

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the very existence and recognition of the new state would have significant repercussions on domestic politics in Italy, i.e. the country with the strongest Communist party in the West; nor that relations between the small European country and the populous Asian giant should follow the ups and downs of the Cold War.

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As the first stirrings of the new Chinese state were taking place, Italy was emerging from the first phase of the process that would return it to the international stage after emerging from World War II as a destroyed and impoverished nation. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi and Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza, in the immediate post-war years Italy concentrated on rebuilding its economy and its international identity. The country's economic, social and political fragility, together with the hang-overs from Fascism and defeat, would relegate the country to the side-lines of the evolving Western system.

Italy had paid a high price to get back onto the international scene: firstly, forced to accept the unfavourable conditions of the peace treaty that evicted it from its African colonies and conceded nothing on its Eastern borders; and later taking up a clear position with De Gasperi's visit to the United States, the request for a loan and the agreement to the Marshall Plan. The internal repercussions resulting from this taking this side created a bitter climate of conflict which characterised the 1948 election and, later, would shut the Communists out of the government after the clear victory of the Christian Democrats (CD). Italy had chosen to depend economically and politically on the US and by joining NATO in 1949 had plunged into the Cold War logic (Giovagnoli 2016; Di Nolfo 2008; Craveri 2006).

On the national front, the ongoing clash of ideologies arising from the strong presence of the left was evident in parliamentary debates and in party newspapers. The birth, between September and October 1949, of the new Chinese state aroused different reactions in Italian politics. Public debate in *Il Popolo*, the DC's official party paper, concentrated on Italian interests, on the consequences of the loss of the colonies, the economic situation of the country and on the policies implemented to overcome the crisis. As regards international politics, space was given over above all to European and Western issues: Yugoslavia detaching itself from the Eastern front, the German question, atomic control and the meetings of Atlantic committees. *Il Popolo* completely ignored Chinese events, restricting itself in the first few months of 1950 to a consideration of the effects on the workings of the UN of the USSR's boycott of Security Council meetings that were paralysing the most important body of the entire organisation. China was expected to turn to the West if it was looking to grow. It was hoped there would be a shift similar to Tito's Yugoslavia whilst the reference country was still Formosa (*Il Popolo*, 1949-12-07, 1950-01-08).

After all, historically, Italy's interests were chiefly in Europe and Africa, particularly after giving up its colonial claims, and in the Mediterranean; whereas there was no really significant history as far as Asia was concerned, nor were any moves being made towards one as yet.

Left-wing papers treated the events in Asia rather differently. From mid-September *L'Unità* published reports on the front page from their correspondent in Beijing, Velio Spano, a leader of the Italian Communist

Party (ICP), who had been sent to cover developments in the new China and Mao Zedong's latest victories over the nationalists (*L'Unità*, 1949-10-01, 1949-10-06).

The Italian Socialist Party (ISP) too had their paper, *Avanti!,* covering Chinese affairs and, like the *Unità*, it applauded Mao's victory, considered a national victory but also as a victory over Imperialism. On 22nd October, the leader of the PSI, Pietro Nenni, urged that Italy recognise the new country (*Avanti!*, 1949-11-10, 1950-01-22). However, recognition would soon prove to be a far from trivial political issue.

In the months following the proclamation of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the West had approached the question of recognition warily but not too ideologically. In Europe, following in the wake of Great Britain who defended its interests in Hong Kong, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Switzerland recognised the People's Republic.

In Rome, Foreign Affairs Minister, Carlo Sforza, who had served a diplomatic tour of office in the final days of Imperial China and also in the Republic, was keeping a very close eye on developments in the country and did not rule out the possibility of recognition, notwithstanding the fact that in April 1949 Italy had signed a treaty with Nationalist China (Pini 2011).

Very soon the entire scenario would change with the treaty drawn up in February 1950 between the People's Republic and the Soviet Union and, in June of the same year, the outbreak of the Korean War. The East-West conflict intensified with the developments of the crisis, the Western coalition against North Korea, the Chinese attack on American forces and the sanctions imposed by the UN on the PRC prohibiting the sale of some types of strategic materials and goods to China. US allied countries were expected to apply the embargo in their dealings with Communist China (Cain 1995; Chen 1992).

A shaky Italian government found itself caught up in events in a gloomy international climate. Tightly linked to the Western front, Italy in the early '50s was involved in the early phases of European development: a plan for a European political community developing out of the European defence group; moreover, it was dealing with the question of Trieste, which would see a settlement only in 1954 with the London Memorandum. On the domestic front, the DC lost votes compared to the results in 1948. The electoral reform law passed by De Gasperi introducing a majority bonus, later dubbed the 'swindle law', was a failure and led to De Gasperi's resignation in 1953 and his departure from the political stage (Craveri 2006; Varsori 1998; Giovagnoli 1996).

The following governments were no less conditioned by events and viewed recognition of the new state as a Cold War issue that called for strict adherence to the decisions taken by the US. In addition, in the early '50s, although Rome government had managed to carve out a role for itself in the most important organisations of the Western system and

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to play a part in the economic reconstruction of Europe, from abroad the country still appeared plagued by political instability and economic and social backwardness.

There was no lack of forward-looking companies, such as FIAT, Edison, Pirelli and Montecatini who, with the support of a handful of politicians, technocrats in the public sector and diplomats, were leading the way towards a modernisation of the country (Petri 2002). The man responsible for encouraging some of these companies to look East to China was the business genius, Dino Gentili, who had worked as a member of the PdA (Action Party) and after the war had returned to business, where a network of influential acquaintances, his support for socialism and friendship with Nenni, were melded together by the attraction China held for him (Capisani 2013; Luti 1994).

Although Italy was officially excluded from the Geneva Conference in 1954, Gentili did meet Zhou Enlai in Geneva and laid the foundations for a long-lasting relationship. In 1955 Pietro Nenni was delegated to Beijing as partisan of peace, but also because he was an influential politician in Italy. Also in 1955, men of industry and finance, led by Dino Gentili, met in Beijing to negotiate the first import-export agreements (Luti 1994; Nenni 1981).

Gentili's initiative was backed above all by Pietro Nenni, but found support also in discussions taking place in the Left on the question of opening up economic and cultural relations with China. Questions in Parliament, articles in party newspapers and solid initiatives, such as the opening in 1953 of the 'China Centre', pressed for an alternative to the two blocs, and also for a reduction of economic dependence on the US (Samarani 2014).

The ideological position of the left-wing parties was backed up by more practical requests from the economic and business sectors that trade between Italy and China be made easier. The government parties, although preoccupied with pressing issues in the country, steered clear of an ideological clash, aware that trade opportunities were opening up in China, particularly interesting considering Italy's trade deficit. Most remarkable was the position of Liberal Foreign Minister, Gaetano Martino, a leading figure promoting European recovery and an assiduous defender of Italian industry, who worked to ensure that the China 'initiative' was not left solely in the hands of the Socialists and Nenni. Responding to pressure from businesses that were unable to satisfy the demands of the Chinese market, for instance the mechanical firm RIV, Martino pressed the US to ease sanctions and started talks with Chinese delegates in Geneva (Saija, Villani 2011;Villani 2008). Nothing came of this because of US vetoes and because China hoped to negotiate beyond strictly trade matters.

What did prevail was the logic of global Cold War: trade and the supply of items considered of strategic importance between Italy and China

were reduced and subjected to US-supervised restrictions, the result of the embargo imposed on Chinese goods during the Korean War.[1]

The situation changed during the second half of the '50s. The settlement of the question of Trieste, the admission to the United Nations, the first *détente* between the superpowers, represented for Italy conditions favouring the revival of national issues. The leading actors in Italian foreign policy cultivated the same desire to play a more dynamic and assertive role. The Italian president Giovanni Gronchi wanted Italy to act as a mediator between East and West. The pacifist mayor of Florence Giorgio La Pira favoured dialogue between Christian, Jewish and Muslim. On the domestic front, considering the deep transformation of the Italian society, the left-wing Christian Democrats led by Amintore Fanfani, party secretary at the time, joined the Socialist party in projecting the move from a coalition dominated by the Christian Democrats toward a centre-left coalition.

Events of 1956 showed that new scenarios were opening up in Italy for international relations: the Suez crisis made clear the growing dependence on Middle Eastern oil, whilst Soviet repression of the Hungarian revolt brought about the final break-away of the Italian Socialists (PSI) from the ICP. Those events, coupled with decolonization, favoured the presence of Neo-Atlanticism: foreign policy built around a firm alliance with the US, and a special interest in the Mediterranean area. Furthermore, there was strong commitment for relations with newly independent African and Asian countries that had become or were in the process of becoming independent and above all with Arab countries towards which, it was argued, Italy should adopt a particularly open policy. Such a policy and such stronger ties would serve to bind those countries to the West thereby removing them from Soviet influence. Representatives of this new strategy were, for example, Giovanni Gronchi, Giorgio La Pira and ENI president Enrico Mattei who was very active in North Africa and Middle East (Mammarella, Cacace 2010; Giovagnoli 2010; Bagnato 2004; Ferraris 1996).

In July 1958 a DC-PSDI (Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano) government was formed, led by Amintore Fanfani, who also acted as Foreign Minister. For several years, Italian foreign policy would be marked by his decisions, and his attempts to create a centre-left group would influence Italy's performance on the international stage (Formigoni 2010).

With the support of Fanfani and Gronchi, both of them Neo-Atlanticists, the role of Enrico Mattei in domestic and international politics became more significant. Mattei, the business genius and realist who had turned a failing business (Agip) right around, and transformed it into the solid pub-

1 Archivio storico del ministero degli Affari esteri (ASMAE), Affari politici (1950-1957), b.33, Washington Embassy, telegrams from Martino from Roma on 5th and 6th April 1956, Cattani from Rome on 17th March, 16th April, Brosio from Washington, on 17th, 18th March, 8th, 12th, 15th, 17th April 1956

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lic sector company and oil holding, ENI, was a firm believer that political independence went hand in hand with economic independence and that this was reached through strategic control of energy resources. Mattei negotiated trade agreements with several Mediterranean countries as well as with Iran, the USSR and, finally, with China. As a public official, in actual fact, he had personal contacts and high level meetings with countries with whom ENI was negotiating, going beyond his remit and practically implementing his own foreign policy.

He realised China's enormous potential, the opportunities arising out of the frictions between China and Russia and the revolutionary impact of economic and geopolitical changes taking place following the process of decolonisation (Rocca 2014; Tremolada 2010; Samarani 2007; Bagnato 2004; Perrone 1989; Pietra 1987). Towards the end of 1958, he went to China and set up profitable bilateral agreements that remained in place even after his death in 1962.

2 Trade Relations Offices

Alongside Mattei's work, during the transition years from centrism to centre-left, trade relations set up in the '50s with the Far East grew rapidly enough for the Hong Kong representative office for trade and commerce to become more important. Rome agreed that contacts with Chinese delegates be kept up and subsequently meetings were arranged to lay the foundations for an increase in trade between the two countries.[2]

The process was accelerated by the announcement in January 1964 that France officially recognised the PRC. France had realised back in the '50s that recognising the PRC would be of great advantage to France – an opportunity to recover the influence it had had in earlier centuries. Having rid himself of the Algerian question in 1962, De Gaulle audaciously established diplomatic relations with China, thereby signalling France's independence from the Western bloc (Krouck 2012; Suri 2003; Cesari, Varaschin 2003; Vaisse 1998).

The first centre-left government made up of DC, the Socialist Party, the Social Democrats (PSDI) and the Republican Party (PRI) had just formed in Italy. Leading figures held important posts: Aldo Moro Prime Minister, Pietro Nenni deputy prime minister and Giuseppe Saragat at the Foreign Office. Although Italy could not follow in France's steps, it was in a position to recognise trade interests and relations, which had been in place with China for many years. In February 1964, between Chinese supporter Nenni and the Western-looking Saragat, with Moro at the head of gov-

2 ASMAE, telegrammi ordinari, Gran Bretagna e colonie, arrivi e partenze, 1962, from Hong Kong to Rome, 12th July 1962; ASMAE, Gran Bretagna consolati, telegrammi ordinari, 1963, Cattani from Rome, 7th May 1963.

ernment, an understanding was reached which managed to hold things together internally and at the same time guarantee loyalty to the Atlantic pact achieved through Saragat's declaration. The declaration recalled that the Chinese question had existed for a long time and stated that it was not important to "know whether our government means to proceed to an agreement with the Peking government, but rather […] when it will be in the best interests of Italy and her allies, and of the democratic free world, to reach such recognition" (Atti parlamentari). This statement by the Foreign Minister proved both that Italy was postponing diplomatic recognition, which would not have been accepted by Washington, but that it wanted to negotiate towards a normalisation of trade relations.

These remarks were followed up: an Italian trade-diplomatic mission met leading Chinese businessmen in Beijing in June to lay the groundwork.[3] This was followed by diplomatic exchanges at the Chinese Embassy in Egypt to deal with technical issues in the run-up to actual talks. The opening of trade offices, moreover, would have to be agreed with the Americans. Once the inevitable difficulties had been overcome, the official statement regarding the new Chinese policy was issued in December, above all in answer to Washington's request that the November presidential elections should not be influenced by any such announcement. The decision taken by Saragat and his government, coming as a result of national economic and political pressure as well as in the light of overseas events, was an independent act of foreign policy in an already rather boisterous year. The new centre-left government had had to manage a negative economic situation, which was partly responsible for a cabinet crisis in June, solved at the end of July with the appointment of a second Moro-led government. In addition, Antonio Segni, President of the Republic, had fallen ill, while the Communist Party had lost its leader, Palmiro Togliatti, who died at Yalta on 21st August (Varsori 1998; Ferraris 1996).

At an international level, the moves for a creation of a united Europe had stalled through French hostility for admission of Great Britain, whilst on the Atlantic front, plans for a multi-lateral defence force, a strategic move to govern US-Europe relations, and negotiations for an agreement on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, were challenging European governments.

On the world stage, US' involvement in Vietnam, the first Chinese nuclear weapons test in October and the resignation of Communist Party First Secretary, Nikita Krushchev, were creating problems for the future of Asia, bringing the Cold War back to front-stage (Di Nolfo 2008).

World events, above all the clash with the Vietcong, had some bearing on US reaction which was not overly negative for they had in any case

3 Archivio centrale dello stato (ACS), Carte Moro (CM) (1953-1978) series 3, b.61,f.117, telegramma segretissimo by Saverio Santaniello, Hong Kong, 23rd June 1964; news on meeting of Vittorelli, Santaniello with Mao Zedong also in ASMAE, 1964, telegrammi ordinari Gran Bretagna e consolati.

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accepted French recognition. On 14th December, Saragat, meeting US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, stated once more that "we recognise that the greater responsibility in this area lies with the United States, and we have not yet decided to recognise China, nor will we do so without first having opportune, friendly talks with the United States".[4] In February 1965, Prime Minister Moro put an end to the matter before the Italian Senate stating once again that diplomatic recognition of China must occur in an atmosphere of *détente* and peace and that at that time circumstances were not favourable. But, as Saragat had clarified in his speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 4th December, the Chinese question involved four issues: as well as trade matters and the question of diplomatic recognition, on the table were also UN membership for the PRC and Formosa.[5]

From contacts with diplomats at the US embassy in Rome, it appeared that the United States, caught up in the war in Vietnam and the domino theory, had returned to a Cold War logic and feared that they would soon have to take the war in North Vietnam to China. For this reason, they concentrated on the hypothesis that Italy at the United Nations, by abstaining from voting on the 'important question', would open the way for future recognition of China. By following the French method of going it alone, in isolation, the chance for a real united Western front would be compromised.[6] In actual fact, in 1961, in an attempt to frustrate the annual requests by the Asian countries for China to be admitted to the UN, Italy had proposed a resolution, jointly with Australia, Columbia, Japan and the United States, which would recognise that the decision that China be given a seat was 'an important question' and therefore was to be taken by a supermajority of two thirds of members present and voting.[7] The Johnson administration kept up a firm opposition to allowing China into the organisation and granting it a permanent seat on the Security Council, even though they were fully aware that with the entry of decolonised countries, the majority opposing the proposal had been reduced over the years to a mere handful of votes. The State Department put great pressure on allied and friendly countries to prevent Communist

4 Telegramma segretissimo by Saragat from Ottawa, 14th December 1964, ACS, CM, series 3,b. 61.

5 Intervention of the Foreign Minister in the discussion of the budget of the Foreign Ministry, to the Chamber of Deputies to the Commission of 75, 3rd December 1964 in ACS, CM, series 3, b.61

6 Memorandum Cottafavi, 21st November 1964, ACS, CM, series 3, b. 61.

7 In the attempt to render useless the annual demands from the Asian states, on the admission of China, the United States, together with Australia, Colombia, Japan and Italy, had proposed a procedural motion that declared a decision on making the Chinese seat an 'important question' and so to be made by a qualified majority of two-thirds of members present and voting. Vinci to Moro on the Chinese 'seat', 2nd November 1965, ACS, CM, series 3, b.61.

China's succeeding in its bid, which would constitute a serious political defeat for Washington.[8]

3 Italy, China and the UN

The man who would create a breach in the agreement which had held firm till then, and provoke a confrontation with the US and with the other leading figure of Italian politics, Aldo Moro, a character completely different to his own, was Amintore Fanfani, Foreign Minister from March 1965 to 1968, and appointed president of the 20th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September. As seen above, Fanfani had already proved he was interested in, and in favour of relations with, Communist China, however fragmentary his view, he was then convinced that the solution to the conflict in Vietnam was China. Like his friend, Giorgio La Pira, whose concurrent mission to Hanoi he had encouraged, Fanfani believed that world peace depended upon peace in Vietnam (Giunipero 2010; Sica 2011). For this reason, in Autumn 1965, in view of the 20th General Assembly, he charged, or at least encouraged, the leader of the Italian delegation to the UN, friend and sympathiser, Senator Giacinto Bosco, to present a resolution concerning the admission of China to the United Nations.

What sparked this proposal were recent developments on the international scene: the increased importance of Communist China after the atomic explosion, the idea that the fall of Khrushchev might bring about a Sino-Soviet *rapprochement*, thereby increasing the weight of the Communist world and making East-West relations more difficult. Furthermore, French recognition of Beijing, together with recognition from several Francophone African countries, had raised a new a consideration of the possibility of reopening the discussion and voting at the UN on the admission of Communist China. The question had, moreover, been tabled for discussion at the 20th Assembly upon the request of Cambodia.

The proposal produced intense diplomatic activity between Italy and the United States, involving the Italian ambassador to the US, Sergio Fenoaltea, Foreign Minister Fanfani, Giacinto Bosco himself and US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk. In Italy, there were stormy clashes between government and opposition. Although in favour of the initiative, Moro had to mediate both at home and abroad, and put up with US hostility.

The Bosco resolution has been discussed in literature, exhaustively by Elisa Giunipero. Some passages only need be referred to here which confirm that the Chinese question was not a minor issue for Italy considering

8 Notes by Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning ' Questione della rappresentanza cinese alle Nazioni Unite',23rd September 1965 in ACS, CM, series 3,b.61

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its national and international implications, and that it was closely tied with its Atlantic choice.

The first draft of the resolution, which made reference above all to the universality of the UN, asked China to show willing to bring itself in line with the principles of the Charter, thereby contributing to the solution of the conflict. It asked the US to step down from its polemic and sterile opposition on the Chinese question. UN members were further asked to undertake an objective analysis of the issues, of the difficulties and conditions, means and timelines for a solution to the question, in the event adopting new procedures and measures.[9]

The draft was sent on 25th September to Moro who, while approving the proposal, pointed out that it was not possible to set the People's Republic on the same footing as the US, nor to submit concrete, coordinated proposals. Moro reminded members of the position taken up the previous year and which was still valid: recognition was a question of time, it was unwise to leave the Americans isolated, nor was it prudent to encourage giving up Western solidarity which represented the best guarantee that the politics of *détente* would continue.[10]

As confirmation of what Moro was hinting at, that the question of admitting China to the UN was for the United States an extremely sensitive issue, was the outcome of the meeting promoted by Fanfani with Dean Rusk on 26th September during which the Italian minister hoped to convince the US Secretary of State of the soundness of the proposal.

During the meeting, Dean Rusk illustrated how US national interests were focused on the conflict taking place in South-East Asia, which, in his view, depended very much on the Chinese attitude. For this reason he had little hope there would be any negotiation with Vietnam because of Chinese opposition, and war with China could not be ruled out. In addition, he held a negative view of the Italian proposal, for China's entry to the UN "would be to reward Communist China's combative stance, a further step toward war". Furthermore, European lack of interest in Vietnam preoccupied him as did also De Gaulle's policy, which strengthened the conviction on the part of Chinese Communists that they were on the right road. Finally, he asked that hasty decisions be avoided at least until year's end and, rather – but this fell on deaf ears – that Fanfani, President of the Assembly, should help persuade smaller countries of the consequences of the People's Republic of China's entry to the UN.[11]

Dean Rusk would be consulted on several occasions and would never change his position. In a meeting with ambassador Fenoaltea on 13th Octo-

9 Vinci to Moro, 25th September 1965, ACS,CM, series 3,b.61

10 Moro to Fanfani, 26th September 1965, ACS, CM, series 3, b. 61

11 Fanfani Rusk discussion, 26th September 1965, ACS,CM, series 3,b.61

ber, the Secretary of State once again expressed his opposition to the Italian initiative. In his analysis, China had become weaker after the setback in Indonesia with the failed *coup d'état* by left-wing officers linked with the Chinese. China had lost not only its strongest support in Asia, but also the favour of some African states. It was time, therefore, to persuade the leaders in Beijing that they were set on the wrong road, whereas encouragement to continue their aggressive policy would push them into war.[12]

To complete the Italian proposal came the setting up of an *ad hoc* commission to investigate and report at the next assembly on the issues concerning UN membership. This addition to the proposal was supported also by Moro for it could represent a fall-back in the event of an uncertain outcome in the vote at General Assembly, an alternative to the 'important question'.[13] It was Bosco above all who defended the commission claiming it would produce objective data as a basis for later votes; would ward off the entry of China counter to US wishes; safeguard the integrity and prestige of the UN; and give the two super-powers time to consolidate cooperation, which was indispensable for the smooth running of the organisation.

In a final talk on 4th November between Rusk and Fenoaltea, it was confirmed that US objections were being influenced by the war in Vietnam. According to Rusk, the call for universality might pose the question of divided states but the certainty of having still a small margin of votes in favour of the success of the 'important question' argued in favour of rejecting the creation of a commission. As confirmation of Washington's wish to hold to its position, on 16th November, the day before Italy was to declare its vote, planned for 17th, Aide to US Secretary of State, Joseph Sisco, deemed it wise to deposit the text of a resolution that aimed to confirm the validity of the 1961 decision, thereby preceding the presentation of a procedural motion by supporters of Beijing and warding off for that year the danger of a pro-Chinese motion.[14]

To this end he called a meeting in which the signatories of the 1961 motion as well as another four states – Brazil, the Philippines, Thailand and Madagascar – took part.

On the other side, China had toughened its position: isolated in the stirrings of the Cultural Revolution, it had reacted to consideration of its entry by setting what diplomacy felt were unacceptable conditions, which were in line with the ideological propaganda being carried on at that time. China required that condemnation for the aggression on Korea

12 From Washington Fenoaltea, 10th October 1965 and 15th October 1965, ACS, CM, series 3, b. 61

13 Vinci to Moro,2nd November 1965,ACS,CM,series 3,b.61

14 On talks with Rusk, Fenoaltea to Moro,4th November 1965; on Joseph Sisco's initiative, Vinci to Moro,16 November 1965, inACS,CM,series 3,b.61

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be withdrawn, that the charter be modified so that all independent states should in any case be admitted to the UN, whilst, together with Formosa, other states considered imperialist puppets should be expelled. Above all, China refused the idea of the 'two Chinas', which inspired the Bosco and Fanfani motion (Chen 2001).

That the Chinese conditions were found to be unacceptable made it easier for Moro to reject Communist demands to give up the Atlantic pact and to resist pressure from the Socialist groups which, while rejecting the Communist motion, insisted on an undertaking to create favourable conditions for China to join the UN. Nenni, lastly, showed that he appreciated the Prime Minister's position and pushed for abstaining only in the Council of Ministers, with the option of making this public, if necessary, only after the vote.[15]

China's position, argued Moro, was in contrast with the norms of world cooperation; nationalist China, a permanent member, could not be expelled; the military balance of the Pacific would shift and, finally, the issue could not be dealt with separately from the issue of Vietnam.

On 7th November, summing up for Fanfani the reservations which had been expressed in the Council of Ministers, Moro pointed out that it had been argued that China's admission brought no advantage either to *détente* or to the USSR, nor did it favour the functioning of the UN, of whom China was highly critical. Far from it, for the existence of Formosa was still important from a military point of view and also as a haven for Chinese refugees, and Christians. Italy would have to study conditions which would encourage a solution to international problems as well as Italy-US relations.[16]

Support for the ally was confirmed and the problems with Fanfani were resolved by Moro's resignation in January 1966 and the formation in February of the third Moro-led government, which included supporters of the Scelba and Fanfani line.

The motion was presented again in following years, the US position remaining the same, because of the ongoing war in Vietnam. The proposal of an *ad hoc* committee, particularly unpopular with Beijing, was also put forward again but was voted down by the General Assembly.

Fanfani's diplomatic moves have met with varying criticism: on the one hand, some commentators see it as an opening up to the left, on the other, as just another episode illustrating a foreign policy which several times earned Fanfani and Italy the charge of amateurism and unreliability on the Atlantic front, perfectly in line with American complaints that the country represented NATO's weak link. What did become apparent, as shown also by La Pira's mission to Hanoi at that time, was Fanfani's tendency to attrib-

15 Nenni to Moro, 29th October 1965, ACS,CM,series 3,b.61

16 Moro to Fanfani, 7th November 1965, ACS,CM,series 3,b. 61

ute to Italy a role as mediator in international affairs, which did not always mirror Italy's real political influence (Gentiloni Silveri 2010; Varsori 1998).

4 Recognition

In the following years, with the opening of trade offices, the volume of trade between Italy and China increased but conditions remained unfavourable both internally and internationally for recognition of the People's Republic of China to be granted. The opportunity would not arise until 1969. At the end of 1968 the Rumor-led government appointed Pietro Nenni as Foreign Affairs Minister. On 24th January 1969, Nenni, without US consultation, announced that he wished to resolve the question of recognition of the People's Republic, showing that he was determined to bring about a change in Italian foreign policy. But Nenni was not unaware of the effects this would have on the two sides of his party, nor of the consensus the initiative might garner among PCI dissidents and moderate public opinion, hostile to the United States after their intervention in Vietnam (Di Nolfo 2010; Olla Brundu 2006). In addition, Nenni gave due consideration also to the many new scenarios on the international front.

Internationally, the climate was one of *détente*, with a round of talks announced by the new US president, Richard Nixon, and a further move towards European integration proposed by French president, Georges Pompidou; the Federal Republic was opening up to the USSR and Eastern Europe, and the trend would be confirmed in the course of 1969 with Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*.

From Washington, Italian Ambassador Egidio Ortona informed his government that President Nixon wanted to distinguish himself from his predecessors by forging a new US policy for China (Ortona 1989; Nenni 1983). China itself was also ready for change. With the excesses of the revolution behind him, Mao had undertaken to set both party and society, both on the verge of collapse, in order. The People's Republic felt isolated internationally and surrounded by enemy countries: India, Japan, South Korea, and also, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the announcement of Soviet policy with the Brezhnev doctrine, the Soviet Union. The ideological disputes between the two Communist countries, which had appeared at the end of the 1950, were spreading to affect inter-state relations. The Chinese worried that Moscow might extend its interventions to Asia. Sino-Soviet tension was bound to increase and in March 1969 fears became reality with the border conflict along the Ussuri river (Luthi 2008; Chen 2001).

Nenni's initiative, therefore, came at a most appropriate time. China welcomed the Italian proposal: in February, talks between the Chinese *chargé d'affaires* and Minister Walter Gardini of the Italian Embassy in France started in Paris. It was clear from the very start that China lay down

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the condition that the PRC be acknowledged as the only lawful government to represent the Chinese people. This brought with it a break in diplomatic relations with Taiwan and, at the UN, the withdrawal of the unpopular *ad hoc* committee along with the vote in favour of admission of the People's Republic as permanent member.

Although France also had been asked in 1964 to recognise a single China, in Italy's case, the request was prejudicial. In previous years, Italy had always upheld the 'two Chinas' theory and there was still within the DC and the other governing parties, leading members favouring that line. Furthermore, as other countries, Belgium and Canada were considering the issue of recognition. It was vital that Italian talks should not leave any space for misunderstanding (Di Nolfo 2010).

The negotiation process started with difficulty. Aware of the Italian initiative, American diplomats recommended to be cautious, fearing negative consequences on the Vietnam peace negotiations under way in Paris. They opposed the Italian consent to the third point, which meant Taiwan's expulsion from the United Nations. These exceptions stopped the initial rush of Nenni who had not yet replied to the Chinese claims, when, in July 1969, a new split within the PSI brought down the Rumor government that was reformed in August as a single party with Aldo Moro as Foreign Minister. It was Moro, therefore, who overcame the internal resistance. Again, it was Moro who had to deal with two cabinet crises in February-March and July 1970 and who led the talks in Paris, bringing to a close the long process.

Moro introduced a more gradual approach: he understood time was necessary to solve the problem of recognising China and not breaking up with United States.

Italy was disposed to recognise the PRC as the only Chinese government. But as Moro considered the subsequent conditions unacceptable, he gained time. In October 1969 the talk with president Nixon, the speech in the General Assembly of UN, and the conversation with the Canadian Foreign Minister were in agenda. Canada was also engaged in recognising Communist China. Consequently, Rome's attitude did not change, as in the previous years, Italian delegation in New York voted 'the important question' and abstained on the Albanian resolution. In the meantime Moro's advisors were looking for a solution, a compromise not to dislike Americans. Recognise China and not to expel Taiwan.

In December Chinese diplomats refused the proposal submitted by Rome and negotiations interrupted again. In Italy, on 12th December 1969 a bomb exploded in the Banca nazionale dell'agricoltura in Milan, provoking a cabinet crisis (Di Nolfo 2012).

On the Chinese side, negotiations were carried out with great care and caution, often interrupted because of ideological tensions accompanying the end of the Cultural Revolution and by international events such as US intervention in Cambodia.

In summer 1970, Moro understood that China had toughened its position and during the long negotiation process Italian diplomacy come to accept the Chinese claims. Then the problem to be solved was American reactions. It is understandable that Nenni wanted Italy to break from the Washington line. As a matter of fact, Moro, who in the previous years had supervised the Atlantic loyalty and expressed 'understanding' for the US involvement in Vietnam, had finally come to believe that it was time for "a more flexible attitude on the part of the United States towards the Chinese issue".[17]

Moro's choice resulted from the awareness of the need to be realistic and attentive and to adopt a responsible vision of the world balance of power, which was shifting towards China. Moro realised that China was emerging as a world power from the 'carcass of colonised China'. There were a huge, organised population (then over 800 million), a nuclear arms store and a revolutionary ideology, which made China influential both among libertarian movements of the Third World and among subversive movements in the West. Although the PRC did not implement a policy of aggression and did not aspire to being a third world power, Moro believed it was very likely that China would become a world superpower, and this would be a determining factor both regionally and globally. This confirmed his view that the time was ripe for a united Western Europe to establish close, workable links in the different areas of the world, to work together to ensure that the meeting of great powers would not give rise to a conflict.[18] Recognition of China, then, fell into Italy's plans and prospects for the future and was not motivated by an anti-American or an anti-Soviet feeling.

Moro's attention to global policy did not neglect attention to Europe's future. He was worried by a clear tension in transatlantic relations. EEC's choices, CSCE (Conference on security and cooperation in Europe)'s initiative and German *Ostpolitik* were not approved by Nixon; on the contrary Europe did not like bilateral dialogue between US and USSR and intervention in Vietnam. So American attitude toward Europe represented another reason for Moro's choice.

At the end of October, after almost two years of talks, a joint *communiqué* was issued with similar wording to the Franco-Chinese of 1964, accompanied by a unilateral Italian declaration which satisfied China. In 1971, the Italian delegation to the UN voted in favour of the motion proposed by Albania which called for Formosa to be substituted by Mao's China as member of the UN and of the Security Council, thereby forgoing application of the US-backed 'important question' (Di Nolfo 2012).

17 Conversation Minister with secretary of state US, 10th October 1969, ACS,CM,b.138

18 Telegramma riservatissimo Moro, 6th December 1970, Meeting in Djakarta. Italian ambassadors in South east Asia and Far East. Conclusions and instructions, 1970, ACS,CM,b.150

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The Italian diplomatic initiative was a national success and showed that the historic moment could be grasped. With Canada and Belgium, Italy anticipated the better reported, more celebrated US recognition. The time of isolation for the PRC was over.

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Roads to Reconciliation
People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy
During the Cold War Period (1949-1971)

edited by Guido Samarani, Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Sofia Graziani

Italy's Communist Party and People's China ('50s-early '60s)

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Abstract In the '50s and early '60s the Italian Communist Party (ICP) was one of the main actors involved in informal and unconventional diplomacy between Italy and the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the presence in Italy of the largest Communist party in Western Europe undoubtedly acted as an important channel for unofficial Sino-Italian exchanges. This paper tries to trace the development of ICP-CCP relations focusing in particular on the Italian Communists' views and analysis of the CCP's historical experience. It also would like to show that ICP leaders generally viewed the CCP's revolutionary in a positive way, an evaluation which largely stemmed from the ICP's own national experience and its search for a more autonomous international role.

Keywords ICP. CCP. China. Cold War years.

1 Introduction

In the '50s and early '60s the Italian Communist Party (ICP) was one of the main actors (together with the Italian Socialist Party) involved in informal and unconventional diplomacy between Italy and the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the presence in Italy of the largest Communist party in Western Europe undoubtedly acted as an important channel for unofficial Sino-Italian exchanges. Besides conducting pro-China action through official party media and in parliament, the ICP was particularly active in making its members, as well as the public/man in the street, aware of what was going on in East Asia. This was accomplished and maintained by various means such as organising cultural and scientific missions to Red China. Members of these missions included individuals and institutions closely connected with the ICP, the most prominent example being the Centro Cina (Samarani 2014).

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During the ’50s, especially after the end of the Korean War, a few Italian Communists had the opportunity to reside and work in the PRC.[1] In 1959, the ICP was able to send its own high-level delegation to China for the first time to meet leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officially, and sign a joint document formalising the establishment of direct bilateral relations. However, the Sino-Soviet split and the hardening of the CCP’s ideological positions put a great strain on party-to-party relations, which cooled significantly after 1963. By then, the ‘China question’ was no longer just a matter for the ICP, and more generally, for Italian left-wing parties. Since 1964, some members of the government had been stepping up efforts to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC. At the same time, emerging radicals and groups defending the pureness of Marxism-Leninism, who viewed the Chinese concept with interest from the point of view of the ICP’s ‘revisionism’, provided new channels for disseminating China’s ideological propaganda in Italian society (Pini 2011, 99-112; Meneguzzi Rostagni 2014).

Political relations between the Italian and the Chinese Communist parties were inevitably influenced by developments taking place within the world Communist movement. Indeed, up until 1957, close ties continued to develop, largely based on solidarity and common viewpoints. Italian Communists’ appreciation of the Chinese revolution mainly stemmed from its peculiarities, from the way the CCP leaders defended their autonomy and pursued distinctive features in their revolutionary action (see for instance Bordone 1979). For them, as Gian Carlo Pajetta (1911-1990) – one of the leading members of the ICP at that time – would later state, “the peculiarities of the Chinese revolution, its weight within the world proletarian and revolutionary movement, and the problem of the autonomy of the party that guided that revolution were questions beyond dispute” (Pajetta 1976, 7).

As a matter of fact, the Italian Communists’ attention to and appreciation of the distinctive features of the Chinese revolution at that time was a positive judgement on merits as well as method. Actually Palmiro Togliatti (1893-1964), who was National Secretary of the ICP from 1927 until his death in 1964, was strongly committed to the search for and definition of an Italian road to socialism (the “via italiana al socialismo”), seeking a more autonomous role within the international Communist movement. It was in the wake of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) – which sanctioned the thesis of the plurality and diversity of the roads to socialism and opened up new opportunities for autonomy for Communist parties – that the ICP leaders started to feel, as Alexander

1 On this aspect, and more generally on the question of the visits made by Italian intellectuals to the PRC and their impressions during the ’50s, see in particular De Giorgi 2017 and her paper in this volume

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Höbel put it, that "'the strongest communist party in the capitalist world' could itself become an international political subject" (Höbel 2005, 516).

With a view to overcoming military blocs, and firmly anchored in the strategy of peaceful coexistence, Togliatti tried to fulfil his desire to carve out greater space for autonomous action where the USSR was concerned, by elaborating an original idea based on 'polycentrism'. Such a perspective implied a re-assessment of the traditional leading role of the Soviet Union within the Communist movement and also sparked off the ICP's interest in the non-European world, with initiatives such as the 'non-aligned movement', whose origins date back to the 1955 Bandung Conference (Galeazzi 2011; Pons 2012).

In any case, it can be said that 1957 marked a turning point in the relations between Italian and Chinese Communists. From that year, as Pajetta clearly suggests, both parties began to develop along different lines, and their relationship – which had been based upon solidarity and identity of judgement – eventually fell apart, resulting in the breaking off of bilateral relations (Pajetta 1976).

In 1962 the Sino-Soviet split and the radicalization of Chinese politics and ideology led to the CCP's condemnation of the ICP position on international politics, and especially of Togliatti's idea of a transition to socialism through democratic and peaceful means (the "via italiana al socialismo") branding it 'revisionist'. However, Togliatti, despite being critical, refused to condemn the Chinese theses, and firmly rejected the idea of convening an international conference to condemn China, as proved by his 1964 memorandum written before his death in Yalta (Spagnolo 2007). Moreover, even in the years during which the political and ideological dispute between the two parties was vitriolic, the ICP leadership continued to support diplomatic recognition of the PRC as one of the main objectives of Italy's foreign policy.[2]

2 Party to Party Relations: Meetings and Exchanges

In 1951 the CCP Central Committee (CC) set up a department, the External Liaison Department (*Duiwai lianluobu* or *Zhonglianbu*) to be specifically responsible for the CCP's external affairs, under the direction of Wang Jiaxiang (1906-1974), the first Ambassador to the Soviet Union after 1949 and who during the '50s had attended the 1954 Geneva Conference and the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The department's main task was to establish contacts with the Communist parties in socialist countries, thereby to strengthen the unity of the socialist bloc; it

2 Within this article, translations from the original Italian text into English are mine.

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also developed relations with other Communist parties who were part of the international Communist movement, and even established contacts with socialist parties in Western capitalist countries (Zhu 2012; Zhao 2010).

The exchange of delegations soon became one of the most important forms of interaction that allowed direct contact between party leaders.

It was the 1956 national congresses of both the CCP and the ICP that provided the occasion for the first exchange of delegations between the two parties. More than fifty foreign delegations were invited to participate in the 8th CCP National Congress, which was held in Beijing in the second half of September. It was the first National Congress to be held after the founding of the PRC. Members of the Italian delegation were Giuliano Pajetta (1915-1988, Gian Carlo Pajetta's brother), and Davide Lajolo (1912-1984): the delegation was led by Mauro Scoccimarro (1895-1972), who delivered a speech at the Congress in which he praised the particular features and achievements of the Chinese Communist revolution, and emphasized that the CCP's invaluable experience could also serve as a lesson for the Italian proletariat. Scoccimarro took a similar approach during a long conversation between the Italian delegation and Mao Zedong during a side meeting. According to Franco Calamandrei (1917-1982), special correspondent of the ICP's party organ *L'Unità* in China from 1953 to 1956 (on his experience, see Calamandrei S. 2014), the conversation covered common history, the problems of the workers' movement and new issues raised by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) (Calamandrei F. 1956).

After returning to Italy, Scoccimarro reported the results of the CCP's 8th Congress at a meeting of the ICP CC, and argued that, thanks to the Congress, the world had come to know, for the first time, the principles and criteria upon which the Chinese revolution was based and the peaceful transition from the completed bourgeois democratic revolution to the socialist proletarian revolution. "The new fact – he stated – is the maintenance of the alliance with the national bourgeoisie: such an alliance was justified and logical during the period of the fight against imperialism and for national independence […]; however, in the period of the building of socialism it seemed to many people impossible […]. Here we can find the most original contribution of the Chinese Communist Party" (Scoccimarro 1956, 10; see also the review "L'VIII Congresso del Partito comunista cinese", published in *Le vie del socialismo*, 3 and 10-13).

Two months later, in December 1956, a CCP delegation was invited to, Italy to attend the 8th Congress of the ICP in Rome. During the congress, as will be further explained below, Togliatti took up the theme of the "via italiana al socialismo", making it clear that socialism should be realised according to specific national conditions. The Chinese delegation was headed by Peng Zhen, then member of the CCP Politburo and Mayor of Beijing.

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This first bilateral exchange of delegations prepared the groundwork for further contacts in the years following. In April 1959, a high-level official ICP delegation travelled to China to develop bilateral relations at a time when China's domestic and external policies were radicalising, distrust and tension between Beijing and Moscow were growing, and the implementation of the Great Leap Forward across China was causing tensions among CCP leaders. It was an important political event that allowed Italian Communist leaders to observe first-hand some aspects of Chinese life. Invited by the CCP CC, the ICP delegation was headed by Gian Carlo Pajetta (1911-1990) and included party leaders like Antonio Roasio (1902-1986), Celso Ghini (1907-1981), Luciano Barca (1920-2012), Maria Michetti (1922-2007), Gerardo Chiaromonte (1924-1993) and Giuseppe Boffa (1923-1998) who was in charge of the *L'Unità* foreign news services and had been Moscow correspondent for the newspaper.

The delegation arrived in Beijing on 6th April and stayed in China for nearly a month, travelling to Beijing, Shanghai, Shenyang, Anshan, and other cities and agricultural areas for scheduled visits to factories, large iron and steel plants, people's communes, schools, and cultural and social institutions. According to Italian archival sources, the delegation had meetings with CCP leaders at the highest level, including Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, Wang Jiaxiang, Yang Shangkun, Chen Yi, and Liu Ningyi. During these meetings information was exchanged about the party's work and discussions focused mainly on the newly-established people's communes, industrialization, CCP policy regarding the national bourgeoisie, as well as the international situation and Italian domestic politics (see ICP Archives, quoted in Samarani, Graziani 2015, 17). Upon arrival in Beijing, the delegation was welcomed by Liu Ningyi and then met with Peng Zhen to whom Pajetta said that Italians and Chinese Communists could understand each other well because "we, as much as you, have always wanted to be a national party, closely linked to the national situation and at the same time to socialist internationalism" (see ICP Archives, quoted in Samarani, Graziani 2015, 17). The conversation with Peng Zhen soon turned to the current nature of imperialism: Peng Zhen outlined imperialism's strategic weakness stating that "in the case of a war today, there is no doubt on which side the victory would be". Pajetta emphasised instead that the political struggle for international *détente* and peace was the most suitable means with which to weaken American imperialism (see ICP Archives, quoted in Samarani, Graziani 2015, 17).

The journey consolidated the political relationship among parties, leading to the formal signing of a joint document, a ceremony covered by the national media. In July, the ICP's journal *Rinascita* dedicated an entire issue to the visit, with articles written by members of the delegation full of positive descriptions of the Chinese economy and society under the Great Leap Forward. Based on this response, it would seem that the delegation

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members did not pick up any signs of hardship in China's countryside, or at least chose to keep it to themselves if they did. They also did not perceive the problems related to the implementation of Mao's policies and the emerging tensions within the CCP leadership group. For example, Giuseppe Boffa wrote that the visit to China left him with a clear understanding of the "decisive weight of China in the relations of power among the great social systems in which the world is divided. […] What matters is not just the presence of 600 million people, but rather the powerful energies that these immense masses have in themselves, [masses] that today are being set in motion" (Boffa 1959, 557-8).

Later in the same year, a delegation headed by Girolamo Li Causi (1896-1977), with four others including Pietro Secchia (1903-1973) and Salvatore Cacciapuoti (1910-1992), travelled to China to attend the celebrations for the 10th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. Upon arrival in Beijing, the delegation attended the official ceremony held at the Great Hall of the People, where a warm welcome message from Togliatti was read. In the message, Togliatti praised the CCP's achievements in the struggle for the national and social emancipation of the Chinese people and in socialist construction. He also described the successes of the CCP's 8th National Congress, the Great Leap Forward, and the people's communes as, "the guarantee that your [CCP] march forward will be increasingly rapid and victorious" and stated that, "the growing weight of your country is now felt in every aspect of world life" (see ICP Archives, quoted in Samarani, Graziani 2015, 18).

After the 1st October celebrations, the delegation was asked to attend a confidential meeting during which all foreign Communist party representatives were informed of current domestic political developments, and especially the recent purge and removal of Minister of Defence Peng Dehuai, for having criticised the party's general line and the economic conditions that resulted from the implementation of the Great Leap Forward. Afterwards, the Italian delegation visited Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai, and other, minor urban centres, and had meetings and conversations with factory and local labour and political leaders, which gave them the impression that the CCP had complete control over the country's situation and a close and profound relationship with the masses. The members of the delegation were also struck by the enthusiasm they noticed in big factories and heavy industry plants as well as the patient, tenacious effort the overwhelming majority of the population was dedicating with great conviction to the construction of roads, dams and so on, with but primitive methods and tools.

On 13th October, upon their return to Beijing, the delegation had a meeting with Liu Shaoqi, then President of the PRC: Liu, according to the delegation's report, expressed the belief that the general tendency in international relations was toward *détente*, and also showed a 'warm interest' in Togliatti. From the visits and talks, the delegation had the impression

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that the work done by the delegation headed by Gian Carlo Pajetta a few months earlier had been appreciated by Chinese leaders (Secchia 1959, folder 11.4).

The last contact at delegation level occurred in August, 1961, when a politically lower-level delegation of the ICP composed of Umberto Scalia, Otello Nannuzzi, Giorgio Milani, Enzo Roggi, and Vasco Jacoponi was sent to the PRC on a study journey. The delegation travelled throughout China (Beijing, Qingdao, Zhengzhou, Luoyang, Sanmenxia, Shanghai), visiting a few people's communes and modern industrial complexes. During this visit they were able to observe, and later to report to the ICP centre, the difficult socio-economic conditions of the country, and the extreme poverty in the countryside. Moreover, during meetings and talks, which avoided discussions on general policy, the Chinese posed weighted questions, with veiled allusion to ICP policy (see ICP Archives, quoted in Samarani, Graziani 2015, 19).

By then, ideological divergences had indeed started to beset relations among Communist parties, as was evident at various international meetings held in 1960 (including the Beijing meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions and the Moscow meeting of 81 Communist parties), which clearly revealed the seriousness of the Sino-Soviet dispute and its impact on relations within the international Communist movement.

The occasion for a direct and open attack by the Chinese Communists was provided by the 10th National Congress of the ICP held in December 1962. It was here that the Chinese delegation, headed by Zhao Yimin, branded the Italian policy (the 'via al socialismo attraverso le riforme di struttura', road to socialism through structural reforms) as 'revisionist', presenting a critique that would soon turn into a public condemnation of the ICP, and especially of its leader Togliatti. Between December 1962 and March 1963, two articles appeared in China's official party press condemning the Italian party for its alignment with Moscow and for the 'via italiana al socialismo' (Höbel 2005, 542-55).

Togliatti immediately requested that the ICP be given the opportunity to reply to the critiques, without producing a break in the relations between the two parties. In fact, Italian Communists were insistent in inviting the CCP to send a delegation to Italy to exchange views and explain respective positions (see ICP Archives, quoted in Samarani, Graziani 2015, 19). Togliatti would also firmly reject the Soviet idea of a collective condemnation of China, an action the Chinese leaders regarded with respect, seeing it as a sign that the ICP was not completely dependent on the Soviet Union.

However, from then on until 1980, even though the Italian and Chinese Communist parties never reached the point of a formal break, bilateral contacts were practically non-existent.

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3 Looking at the CCP and People's China: Italian Communists' Analysis and Memories

As stated above, it was in 1956 that the first bilateral exchange of delegations between the ICP and the CCP took place. As has been pointed out, the 20th Congress of the CPSU and Nikita Khrushchev's report and secret speech had a tremendous impact on Communist parties worldwide, greatly influencing their views on the question of war and peace and the different paths the transition from capitalism to socialism could take within each country (Benvenuti 1983, XXI-XXII). The 20th Congress was followed by protests and revolts in Poland, and especially Hungary during the second half of the year: the revolts led to Soviet military intervention in Hungary in the last part of the year, which resulted in János Kádár's rise to power. At the same time, the crisis in the Middle East in October-November 1956 seemed to confirm the existence of new, and growing tensions in the context of the Cold War, after the emergence in previous years – marked by the end of the war in Korea, the Geneva Conference and the Bandung Conference – of more optimistic views about the future of the world.

It was in this period, during which the ICP leadership was torn between its search for autonomy and alignment with Moscow, that the 8th National ICP Congress took place (8-14 December 1956).

Before the 8th Congress however, the Secretary of the ICP, Palmiro Togliatti, had clearly expressed, on different occasions, his views on the results and the historical meaning of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, with particular reference to the problem of the 'national roads to socialism'. In his speech to the ICP CC on 13th March 1956, Togliatti stressed the importance of acknowledging that there were different roads to socialism and quoted the Chinese experience, together with that of Nehru's Indian National Congress, as examples of other possible paths. He indicated that any mechanical application of the 'Soviet model' to other experiences would provoke potentially serious problems and imbalances, and conceded that the ICP had made an obvious mistake in joining Moscow in its total condemnation of the Yugoslavian experience in 1948 (Togliatti 1968a, 15-17). On 24th June 1956, in his speech at the ICP CC in preparation for the 8th National Congress, Togliatti emphasised that it would be a big mistake to expect that People's China would follow the same path as the Soviet Union, because great differences existed between them in political tradition, economic structure and methods of organization (Togliatti 1968b, 66-7).

The main slogan of the ICP 8th National Congress clearly indicated that the party was determined to confirm and develop its political strategy regarding the 'Italian road to socialism'. In his political report, the party secretary stressed that in most socialist countries the building of a new economy and society had largely progressed with success, while in both Poland and Hungary serious problems had arisen. Spontaneous, popular protests broke out

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in both cases, due mainly to the process of adjusting to the system, and to the actions of counter-revolutionary forces. He then maintained that in order to achieve real consolidation of international relations, the existence of a socialist world should be recognised and accepted by the imperialist powers, in the first place by ending the ban against People's China (Togliatti 1983a, 23-25).

In Togliatti's view, the political conclusions of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, with its emphasis on the possibility that different roads could lead to a socialist society, would be well received in China, since the CCP had a long tradition of autonomy, and had built its success on wide popular support.

At the 8th Congress of the ICP, Peng Zhen (the head of the CCP delegation) was welcomed with warmth and exceptional enthusiasm by all Congress delegates. His attitude and style impressed everybody and the ICP's official newspaper, *L'Unità*, defined his approach as eloquent, penetrating, and persuasive, and described him as a participant who never stopped listening with extreme attention to the speakers, showing absolutely impartial interest in every topic, with an 'attentive and grave' expression, which was 'always serious and impassive'. In his welcome address to the Congress, Peng Zhen reminded his audience of the great strength of the ICP, as well as its prominent position within the international Communist movement. He praised the revolutionary tradition of the Italian people who – he said – thanks to their strength and unity with other democratic forces, had struggled against fascism and later achieved great things (the creation of a Republic, the drawing-up of the Constitution and the development of democracy). Then he touched upon the issue of world peace at a time of increasing international tension, and stressed the importance of the international unity of the workers' class. At the end of his speech, he also praised efforts made thus far to establish and expand contacts between Italy and China, and to contribute to mutual understanding and confidence, which in turn would certainly lead to the establishment of diplomatic relations (*L'Unità*, 11 December 1956, 8-9).

In his memoirs, Emilio Rosini (1922-2010), in charge of accompanying the Chinese delegation to Vienna after the end of the Congress, remembers how, during the trip to Vienna, he formed the clear impression that Peng Zhen was quite dissatisfied with his talks with ICP leaders, especially since the CCP did not at all welcome the way in which Chruščev had denounced Stalinism. According to Rosini, the delegation was made up of 3 people: Peng Zhen, an interpreter and a third, unidentified person. The main reason for the delegation's trip to Vienna was to meet some Chinese who were active within the Partisans of Peace (later, the World Peace Council), a movement fighting for world peace and strongly backed by the Soviet Union (in 1956 the offices of the movement were in Vienna) (Rosini 2003).

A somewhat different view about Peng Zhen was expressed by Luciano Barca, elected at the 8th Congress onto the ICP Central Committee. In charge of taking care of Peng Zhen, Barca remembers him as a man of

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great culture, who was fascinated by Roman civilisation and never tired of visiting Roman ruins (Barca 2005, 1: 166-9)

The outbreak of the Sino-Soviet dispute in the late ’50s further restricted ICP interaction with China, narrowing its breadth of manoeuvre. However, it was in this complex situation, when the Sino-Soviet alliance was already deteriorating, that the Italian Communists sent a high-level delegation to China with the aim of exchanging views with CCP leaders, and signing a joint document that would formalise the establishment of direct bilateral relations. It was the first and last ICP delegation to travel to China to officially meet CCP leaders, apart from conventional exchanges of delegations at national party congresses and minor delegations.

Luciano Barca was a member of the ICP delegation to China in 1959 led by Giancarlo Pajetta, a member of the Direzione (a kind of Politburo) and the Secretariat of the ICP. In his memoirs, Barca stressed that deciding to make the journey to China while a secret dispute was going on between Moscow and Beijing, “was in itself a relevant political act”, and nothing less than a “calculated act of autonomy by Togliatti”. This is how the Soviet leaders actually read the initiative, as demonstrated by the fact that upon arrival in Moscow, the Italian delegation found that no leaders or officials from the foreign section were there to meet them (Barca 2005, 1: 202; Barca 1959, First series, envelope 2 and Travel notebook, 1).

According to Barca, the CCP leaders warmly welcomed the delegation, and reserved special treatment for Pajetta, as if he were a head of state. During a meeting with Liu Ningyi (then President of China’s Federation of Trade Unions), which took place upon their arrival in Beijing, Pajetta presented the delegation’s requests and expectations from the visit: to exchange information with the CCP on the party’s work, the issues related to the people’s communes and industrialization, and on the international situation. Pajetta also stated that Chinese policy regarding Catholics was one of the problems the delegation wished to discuss with Chinese leaders. The delegations had meetings and long conversations with the highest-ranking leaders of the CCP: the Mayor of Beijing Peng Zhen, the Foreign Minister Chen Yi, Liu Shaoqi, and finally, Mao Zedong. The conversations were initially formal, but gradually became more frank and focused. As soon as the issue of peaceful coexistence was introduced, divergences surfaced, with Pajetta defending the result of the 20th Congress and Togliatti’s (and the ICP’s) position on the offensive nature of the struggle for world peace. The conversation with Chen Yi (7th April) mainly covered the international situation, with particular attention for East and Southeast Asia, and touched upon recent events in Tibet, and relations with India. Chen Yi defined US imperialism as the most ferocious in the world and pointed to the differences between the strategy and tactics of US imperialism, stating that, while strong from a tactical point of view, it was strategically weak, and for this reason was to be considered both a paper and an

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iron tiger. Afterwards, the delegation had a meeting with Peng Zhen (8th April), to discuss several issues related to China's domestic politics, such as the development of class relations and class struggle, the policy regarding counter-revolutionaries, the nationalization of industry, the Hundred Flowers movement, and finally, the creation of the people's communes, one of the most controversial issues in China's relations with the USSR. Given that the communes were the emblem and symbol of a different road to socialism from the one taken by the USSR, the Italian delegation seemed particularly interested in understanding what the people's communes really were (Barca 2005, 1: 202-25).

Scheduled visits took place in Beijing University, two people's communes in Manchuria, and the metallurgic kombinat in Anshan and Shanghai. Upon returning to Beijing, the delegation met with Liu Shaoqi (17th April) and discussed topics related to war and peace, international *détente* and the relations between Communist parties. Stimulated by Pajetta's statement that the ICP did not expect the solution of national problems to come from outside, Liu Shaoqi – while defending the unity of the Socialist bloc – argued that every party should solve its problems according to the experience acquired in its own country and not according to any other parties' will. During talks with Mao Zedong, polemic allusions emerged from Chairman Mao when he, probably alluding to Togliatti's 'via italiana al socialismo', stated that a peaceful transition to a new system of relations was difficult and in all class fights it is not possible to seize power without a struggle (Barca 2005, 1: 221).

As for Giancarlo Pajetta, in an article written for the ICP's monthly, *Rinascita*, in 1976 he reiterated his impression that the Chinese political line was diverging from the positions of the 20th Congress, and more generally from the policy of the other Communist parties on the themes of *détente* and peace, as well as on the possibility of a democratic road to socialism. The Italians clearly perceived that there was a concealed polemic and that the Chinese might want to sound out the Italians' real positions. According to Pajetta, talks were dominated by diplomacy and allusion, so much so that upon their return to Italy, while reporting and confirming a strong appreciation for, and positive judgement of, the CCP leaders and the Chinese road to socialism, the members of the ICP delegation did not hide their serious worries about the future (Pajetta 1976, 7-9).

And in 1978, in a long interview with Ottavio Cecchi about his experiences in the field of ICP foreign policy, Pajetta recalls (Pajetta 1978, 135-6):

> In 1959, I was in China with a party delegation. I soon got the impression that China's political line was clearly diverging from that of the Soviet Union. […] During that visit we met with Peng Chen [Peng Zhen], Teng Hsiao-ping [Deng Xiaoping] […], we met with Liu Shao-chi [Liu Shaoqi], Chen Yi and finally we were received by Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong]

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> himself, with whom we had a long conversation. During these talks we defended the positions of Togliatti, which, after all, were also the Soviet position about foreign policy and international prospects: *détente*, non-inevitability of war, the search for a national and peaceful road to socialism in our country. On these themes we encountered coolness, we were asked insidious questions, and more than once we had to reply firmly to polemical allusions towards us. We discussed for entire days, even the nights, on every sentence of the final communiqué. To the extent that I left Comrade Barca and others with the task of going on, begging them to let me sleep and to call me only if they encountered problems for which the Chinese would request my intervention.

As mentioned above, this visit to China by the delegation of the Italian Communist Party contemplated the solemn signing of a protocol as previously agreed. Pajetta accepted, but only on condition that nothing contradicted ICP positions, and that an explicit mention was made of the "via italiana delle riforme di struttura" (the Italian road of structural reforms). The Chinese demanded that mention be made of the people's communes. Barca was in charge of negotiating the text, a long process that forced Italians to work day and night and that revealed Chinese dissent regarding the Italian positions (peaceful coexistence and "via italiana" to socialism). The Italian delegation made every effort to reach a consensus without breaking up the talks. According to Barca, the Chinese considered Italian recognition of the original experience of the people's communes to be a point that could not be given up (for the Italians it was a delicate point, as it had led to a change in China's relations with the USRR) and bound this point to their own acceptance of a mention of Togliatti's structural reforms, "an unusual term in Marxist and Communist literature" (Barca 2005, 1: 218).

Misunderstandings and divergences were finally resolved, albeit only formally, with a compromise, and on 19th April, Pajetta and Deng Xiaoping signed the joint document in a solemn atmosphere, in the presence of Mao Zedong. The picture appeared in the CCP official newspaper, *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), the following day. Pajetta then left China to return to Rome, while the other members of the delegation continued the trip around China. While in Xi'an they were informed that Liu Shaoqi had been elected President of the People's Republic, but were reassured that it would in no way change Mao's role (Barca 2005, 1: 217-24).

Within the ICP delegation, which went to China in 1959, and more generally within the Italian Communist Party itself, while everybody else was supporting the PRC's international cause there was disagreement, with some members holding a rather flexible view of Chinese internal politics and ICP-CCP relations while others took a narrower view.

One such member was Giuseppe Boffa, who had been working in Mos-

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cow from 1953 to 1958 as correspondent of *L'Unità.* In his memoirs he writes about the 1957 Moscow Conference, stating that the meeting between Togliatti and Mao Zedong was very disappointing: "I don't really know what Togliatti was actually expecting from this meeting. But I do know that around the Communist world many considered the Chinese with a favourable eye: the prestige of their revolutionary victory was still intact [….] The taste of the "Hundred Flowers" and the "Hundred Schools" was everywhere at that time [….] But in Autumn 1957 Mao changed his mind: "Flowers" and "Schools" were cut when they had just started to grow" (Boffa 1998, 50-1).

Despite the growing divergence between Italian and Chinese Communists, one important point should be considered: during the 1960s, the Italian Communist Party continued its political battle for Italian recognition of the People's Republic of China. The ICP leader, Palmiro Togliatti, in a talk given at the 9th National Congress of the ICP (January-February 1960), argued (Togliatti 1983a, 205) that:

> The great People's Republic of China can no longer be kept out of the debate on the main international issues just to give satisfaction to the American militarist cliques […] The Italian people, in large part, cannot understand why the People's Republic of China is still not recognized by Italy and why Italy does not support China's admission to the United Nations.

Two years later, at the 10th ICP Congress, which marked an important step forward in the political debate between the two parties, the final political report approved by the Congress affirmed that, "it is indispensable that China is given its place within the United Nations" (Decimo Congresso PCI 1962, "Risoluzione politica"). At the same time, Togliatti was determined to defend the party's political positions against criticism from the 'Chinese comrades' (the reference was to the speech at the Congress given by the CCP representative, Zhao Yiming), indicating that the Italian Communists had great consideration and respect for Chinese Communists, but they did not agree with the CCP's vision of the problem of war and peace, and their critique of the 'peaceful coexistence' (Togliatti 1983b, pp. 386-389).

Togliatti also expressed deep concern regarding the recent military clashes between China and India, and their potential to produce a serious weakening in the anti-imperialistic struggle, and asked that the two sides find a peaceful solution to the conflict as soon as possible (Togliatti 1983d, 329-30).

In the debate that followed Togliatti's opening report, Giancarlo Pajetta gave a speech in which he was highly critical of certain CCP positions as expressed by Zhao Yiming. Pajetta maintained that the 'structural reforms' that were part of the ICP strategy were not at all contrary to the struggle for socialism, but rather a part of it. He then strongly criticised

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the positions of Albania's Party of Labour headed by Enver Hoxha, asking why "such positions are encouraged by some". Finally, Pajetta found fault with the CCP's radical critique of, and 'anathemas' against, the views of the Yugoslav comrades, while at the same time he recogniaed that the ICP, too, had reservations about some of their positions (Pajetta 1968, 159-67).

A few weeks after the conclusion of the ICP's 10th National Congress, between late 1962 and the early months of 1963, two long editorials from the *Renmin ribao* and *Hongqi* (Red Flag) harshly criticised the positions that had emerged from the Congress, paving the way for an intense and fierce debate ("Sulle divergenze tra il compagno Togliatti e noi" 1962; "Ancora sulle divergenze tra il compagno Togliatti e noi" 1963).

As Luciano Barca would later remember,

> the seriousness of the CCP attack against Togliatti lies not so much in its motivations [the CCP accusing Togliatti of revisionism], but rather in the fact that the joint agreement stipulated in 1959 is totally undermined […] and because the attempts carried out by the ICP in such a very difficult situation in order to keep a line of communication open with a great communist party considered by Moscow to be an enemy, are misconceived. (Barca 2005, 1: 306)

In October 1963, a long resolution approved by the ICP CC denounced the "mistaken views of the Chinese comrades", and criticised the CCP's vision of Asia, Africa and Latin America as the "stormy center of world revolution" ("Per una nuova avanzata e per l'unità del movimento comunista internazionale" 1968).

In his *Memorandum on Issues Relating to the International Working Class Movement and Its Unity* (the so-called 'Yalta memorandum', written as a reminder for a scheduled meeting with Chruscev), on the one hand Togliatti denounces the 'divisive actions' of the CCP, while on the other he stresses that quite a few Communist parties around the world had replied to such actions with ideological polemics and propaganda and not in a political and constructive way (Togliatti 1968c; see also Hobel 2005 and Spagnolo 2007).

Again, in the late '60s, Luigi Longo, then secretary of the ICP, expressed in a series of articles a strongly critical opinion of CCP positions but stressed at the same time the need to be very careful and cautious, given the divisions among the various Communist parties, about the possibility of convening an international conference of communist and workers parties (Longo 1968).

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4 Conclusions

In addressing the political ties and exchanges between Italy's Communist Party and People's China in the '50s and early '60s, this paper has tried to trace the development of ICP-CCP relations focusing in particular on the Italian Communists' views and analysis of the CCP's historical experience. The paper shows that ICP leaders generally viewed the CCP's revolutionary experience and politics in a flexible way, attributing a positive judgment to its nationally-rooted peculiarities. This evaluation largely stemmed from the ICP's own national experience and its search for a more autonomous international role.

At the same time, light is shed on the complexity of party-to-party relations as they fell within the broader framework of the international Communist movement that, from the second half of the '50s, began to show its limits and lose its cohesion. In this respect, the events unfolding in 1956 marked a crucial historical moment. The issues that began to be addressed and debated at that time (i.e. de-Stalinization, peaceful coexistence and the thesis of the plurality of the national roads to socialism) soon revealed the existence of profound divergence of opinion among Communist leaders worldwide.

Differences in the viewpoints of Italian and Chinese Communist leaders could be felt as early as the 8th National Congress of the ICP held in Rome in December 1956. Then, at the 1957 Moscow conference, Italian leaders realised that distinctly different positions were becoming apparent between the two parties. Influenced by the escalating Sino-Soviet dispute and the radicalization of China's internal and external politics, relations between the ICP and the CCP eventually deteriorated, ending with the abrupt condemnation by the CCP of Togliatti's policy in late 1962/early 1963.

Yet awareness of emerging divergent positions on crucial issues such as 'peaceful coexistence' did not prevent the ICP leadership agreeing on the important decision to send a high-level delegation to China in 1959. This initiative proved the ICP leaders were attentive to the PRC and its international influence as well as that they were committed to reaching a consensus on issues on which the Chinese and Italians had already taken up clearly different positions.

As Qiang Zhai emphasised based on CCP senior leader Bo Yibo (1908-2007)'s memoirs (Qiang Zhai 1996), the 1958-59 period was particularly important in the shaping of Mao Zedong's views on the question of 'peaceful evolution', especially after the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles', statements about encouraging a peaceful change of the Communist system. In Qiang's opinion, Mao's apprehension about the future development of China was closely related to his analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet system: he basically believed that Dulles' idea that peaceful evolution within the Communist world could be brought about, was already taking effect in the Soviet Union with Khrushchev.

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Above all, as the paper shows, even after the CCP's condemnation of the Italian Communists' positions in 1963, Togliatti opposed the idea of a collective condemnation of China, and at the same time the ICP continued to support the PRC's international cause, carrying on the political battle for diplomatic recognition within Italy. This on the one side will pave the way, thanks also to the efforts by Pietro Nenni, leader of the Italian Socialist Party, to the recognition of the PRC by Italy on November 1970; on the other side, it will maintain a thread, however thin, between the two parties, creating the conditions that led to the reprise of bilateral relations before with Enrico Berlinguer's visit to China in 1980 (see for instance Bordone 1983).

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Roads to Reconciliation
People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy
During the Cold War Period (1949-1971)

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A Welcome Guest?
A Preliminary Assessment of Velio Spano's Journey to Mao's China 1949-1950

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Abstract Velio Spano was an important member of the Italian Communist Party, who visited Communist China in the crucial period of Autumn 1949 and wrote the first book in Italian about the Chinese revolution. Often mentioned in works dedicated to the history of Sino-Italian relations, this event has never been thoroughly studied. The recent availability of Spano's personal archives offer the possibility to better investigate his visit to China and to place it in the complex political environment of that period. This paper is a first attempt to use Spano's personal records about his stay to explore the actual reality of his experience and the implications of his presence in 1949 China.

Keywords Velio Spano. Sino-Italian Relations. Chinese Communist Party. 1949 China. Mao Zedong.

1 Introduction

After 1949, relations between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Italian Communist Party (ICP) played a significant role in the evolution of relations between Italy and China, contributing to those contacts that in the '50s fostered the emergence of Sino-Italian bilateral trade and cultural ties in spite of the lack of political recognition (Samarani, De Giorgi 2011).

Indeed, these inter-Party relations occurred against a very complex backdrop. On the one side, they were articulated within the ideological and political framework of the Socialist camp dominated by the Soviet Union and later by the rivalry between the USSR and the People's Republic of China (Samarani, Graziani 2015, 7-29). On the other, they developed in a complicated interplay of cooperation and competition with other Italian and West European political forces and individuals (Samarani, Meneguzzi Rostagni 2014). Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that intellectuals and

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political figures of the Italian Communist Party played a pivotal role on several occasions in the history of Western Europe's long process of rapprochement to the People's Republic of China since 1949.

Actually, before the establishment of the People's Republic, as far as it is known, no Italian Communist, or Italian agent of the Comintern or sympathiser for Communism was in China. The contacts between the CCP and ICP originated in Moscow, where Palmiro Togliatti stayed during the World War II. In the Soviet capital city Italian and Chinese Communists lived or sent their families to flee from political persecution, and so had the opportunity to meet and get to know one other (Pini 2011, 46-52).

The turning point, as yet unexplored, in the relations between the two parties came in Autumn 1949 with the visit of a prominent Italian Communist, Velio Spano (1905-1964), who was in China from the beginning of September 1949 until early January 1950. Velio Spano was there as the correspondent of the ICP party newspaper, *L'Unità.* He published his reports describing the events and context of the establishment of the People's Republic of China in the newspaper (De Giorgi 2010), and later in a book, the first dedicated to Mao's China (Spano 1950).

This essay is a preliminary attempt to investigate the experience of Velio Spano in 1949 China as emerges from his unpublished personal travel notes and records.[1] These documents offer interesting research prospects. Giving an account of the activities of Spano in China, his personal diaries offer a rich portrait of the complicated environment of the Liberation. As an important member of a Communist Party, Spano was given the opportunity to meet the top Chinese leaders and to follow the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in South China. But, though he was a foreign comrade, his role was also a sensitive one for his Chinese hosts (Brady 2003). An analysis of his experience offers some insights into the political context of that period, both in the domestic field and from the perspective of Chinese relations with the outer world, and especially Sino-Soviet and Sino-Italian relations.

As a first exploration of these sources, the essay will first give an outline of Spano's journey as described in his personal travel journal,[2] and then present some issues relating to Spano's presence, with details of Spano's meeting with Mao Zedong in the light of the Italian visitor's perception and experience

1 The author wishes to thank Chiara and Paola Spano, Velio's daughters, and the Archives of the Gramsci Foundation (Archivi Fondazione Gramsci) in Rome for the kind support given to this research.

2 Velio Spano, *Taccuino blu.* Archivi Fondazione Gramsci, Fondo Velio Spano e Nadia Gallico, Serie 6: Esteri e Movimento per la Pace, FF 90, busta 13, *Taccuini.* Hereinafter referred to as *Taccuino blu.*

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of Liberation in China.[3] Finally, it will conclude with details of the role that Spano played in relations between CCP and ICP after his return in the '50s.

2 Velio Spano's Travels in Liberated China: a General Overview from His Personal Notes

At the time of his trip to China, Velio Spano was not just the correspondent of the ICP's paper. He was one of the most important Party figures, and very close to Secretary Palmiro Togliatti. Spano had a long career in the ICP. He had joined the Party just after its foundation, as a young student (he was born in the same province, Sardinia, as Antonio Gramsci). Due to the fascist repression, he began his activities as an underground member. Denounced and arrested in 1928, he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. After his release, Spano continued his political activities abroad, as an underground Communist in France, Egypt, Spain and Tunisia, working mainly as a journalist and a propagandist (El Houssi 2014). In October 1943, Spano and his wife Nadia Gallico returned to South Italy, at that time under Allied occupation. He became the director of the South Italy edition of *L'Unità* and a member of the Political Bureau of the ICP. From 1946 to 1948 Spano was a member of the Constituent Assembly as representative for Sardinia, and in 1948 a member of the Italian Senate (Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia).

His stay in China can be quite precisely reconstructed through his travel journal. He remained in China from 6th September 1949 to 10th January 1950, spending most of his time in Beijing, but also visiting several places in Central and South China, and in North China and Manchuria. Almost every day, he reported in a small blue notebook the main activities of that day, the people he met and, not rarely, his first-hand impressions, allowing the reader to have quite a precise idea of his experience in China, though the lack of detail often hinders a full understanding of the actual events and of Spano's ideas. Besides his short travel notes, at any rate, Spano reported much more detailed accounts of his visits and interviews on some other notebooks, to be used as the basis for his newspapers articles and later his book. While the travel journal gives us some hints on Spano's feeling and opinions, the unpublished reports are less personal and in most cases in them he just recorded the information received by his hosts at meetings and visits.[4]

3 Velio Spano, *Appunti presi in Cina, I-IX*. Archivi Fondazione Gramsci, Fondo Velio Spano e Nadia Gallico, Serie 6: Esteri e Movimento per la Pace, FF 90, busta 13, *Taccuini*. Hereinafter referred to as *Appunti presi in Cina*.

4 During his trip, Velio Spano took almost 400 photographs. The author is currently working on this interesting visual source in order to analyse Spano's gaze at China and to better

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It is hard to say how much of Spano's trip was planned before his arrival in China. Apparently not much. His tour was organised taking the opportunities offered by the socialist internationalist network that, under the Soviet aegis, developed across the two blocks during the Cold War and that, in 1949, had began to include also China (Geoffreys 2014). Spano was one of the foreign speakers at the foundation meeting of the Chinese Congress for World Peace, held in Beijing on 2nd October 1949. Nevertheless, his visit was obviously linked to the wish of the ICP to develop contacts with the Chinese Communists, as the Italian draft of a letter of introduction written by Palmiro Togliatti and dated 29th July 1949 testifies. In this letter the Italian leader mentioned that Spano was going to China to better understand the Chinese revolution and collect the correct information for the Italian public opinion.[5] Not by chance, in the few original Chinese documents – mostly official invitations – preserved in the Archives at Fondazione Gramsci, Spano is more often indicated as a member of the Italian Communist Party's Central Committee that as a journalist of the Communist newspaper *L'Unità*.

According to his own notes, Spano left Rome on 19th August 1949 and two days later, in Prague, he was joined by the Communist Emilio Sereni, the secretary of the Italian Socialist Party Pietro Nenni, with his wife, the painter Renato Guttuso and the architect Pio Montesi.[6] The four were on their way to Moscow as members of the Italian delegation at the meeting of the Soviet Partisans for Peace, the Soviet branch of the World Committee of the Partisans for Peace, whose vice-Chairman was Pietro Nenni (Giacomini 1984; Geoffreys 2014).

Once in the Soviet capital city, on 23rd August (Spano wrote "they were not expecting us"),[7] he met Carolina Misiano. She was Francesco Misiano's daughter, a Socialist politician and film director who had fled to the USSR and died in 1936 (*Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*). Carolina Misiano, at that time professor of modern history at Moscow University, provided Spano with a contact for a certain Dyakov, probably the Soviet expert on Asian affairs, Aleksei Mikhalovic Dyakov. This man was somehow in charge of Spano's trip, though there are no traces of him in Spano's notes on his stay in China. On Sunday 28th August, Spano left Moscow at 10 p.m. to go to China by train, apparently together with Dyakov.

reconstruct the human and social context of his experience.

5 "Minuta di lettera di Togliatti di presentazione di Velio Spano ai dirigenti del Pc cinese, in occasione del suo viaggio in Cina 29 luglio 1949", Archivi Fondazione Gramsci, Fondo Palmiro Togliatti, Serie 5, *Corrispondenza politica*, 1949, 08/01/1949-25/11/1949, UA 6, Busta 1 (URL `http://www.archivionline.senato.it/default.htm`).

6 *Taccuino blu*, 22nd August 1949.

7 *Taccuino blu*, 23rd August 1949.

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On that occasion he met or was introduced to Wang Jiaxiang. In Spring and Summer 1949, together with Liu Shaoqi, Wang had stayed in Moscow in order to negotiate the future alliance between the two countries. While Liu had gone back to Beijing in July, Wang was returning to China in late August in order to participate in the Central Political Consultative Conference in September (Heinzing 2015, 221). Spano spent some time with Wang and his wife, travelling together with some Chinese students and was left with a very positive impression. Later, in Beijing, Wang was put in charge of the organisation of Spano's work by Mao Zedong himself, and so became a pivotal figure in managing the presence of the Italian visitor in China, something that could suggests that the Chinese leader was especially sensitive to the role of Spano as it concerned the relations with the Soviets.

Spano arrived in China on 5th September at Manzhouli, and one day later he was in Harbin. His first official meeting occurred when he was welcomed by Gao Gang in Shenyang. After a short visit of the city, just one day later, on Wednesday 10th Spano arrived in Beijing. He was hosted at the former Germania Hotel. The same evening, Zhou Enlai visited him at the hotel, bringing Mao's greetings, and two days later, he was invited by Liu Shaoqi and his wife for dinner.

Spano spent more than one month in Beijing, leaving for the South on October 20th. During this period he attended two main events, namely the meeting of the new Central Political Consultative Conference, held from 21st September to 30th September and the establishment of the People's Republic on 1st October. Besides meeting with several leading figures of the CCP, including Mao, he also participated in several social events, especially banquets and theatre shows, and visited factories, universities, offices and villages. Moreover, as noted above, he addressed the meeting for the foundation of the Chinese Congress for World Peace, which was held on 2nd October, but also gave several lectures to cadres and students and released interviews. For a couple of days, he went also to visit Tianjin and gave talks there.

Hu Qiaomu and Wang Jiaxiang were the two most important CCP members in charge of supervising Spano's work in Beijing. Hu was actually the secretary of Mao Zedong. During the first week in Beijing, Spano discussed with Hu several aspects of his work as a journalist. He was eager to send news and dispatches home, and he was allowed to use the French telegraph.[8] This was very expensive and he was obliged to stop. Authorised then to use the Chinese telegraph at Press fees, he realised that the costs were still too high to send full articles to Italy. Effectively, Spano used the telegraph to communicate briefly with Togliatti (T. or To. in his notes),

8 *Taccuino blu*, 13th September 1949.

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while the articles about China were sent by ordinary mail, and published in Italy some weeks after the events described.[9]

Wang, who was made responsible for Spano by Mao himself, was actually in charge of organising and approving his travel and work activities. As Spano noticed, at any rate, Mao had the last word regarding his work-plan.[10]

The first social event Spano participated in was the banquet for Sino-Soviet friendship, held on 15th September in Beijing. On that occasion he had the opportunity to meet the mayor of Shanghai, Chen Yi, and also Li Lisan and Zhu De. Zhu De invited him for dinner, but it was with Chen Yi that Spano apparently developed a more substantial relationship, since they met several times also in Shanghai. He also had the opportunity to meet and interview Guo Moruo, and Song Qingling. Moreover, in Beijing he also had long conversations with Peng Zhen, and other members of the local Party and government. He often spent time with some Soviet colleagues, sharing several visits and coordinating his writings with them.

In the second half of October 1949, Spano was allowed to make a long trip to the South, provided with an official authorisation signed by Zhu De himself. He left from Beijing with a group of interpreters and aides on 20th October. The first stop was Xuzhou, where the group (Spano often speaks of 'us' but it is not clear if he refers to his interpreters) waited all day long "the Soviets from the South and Liu Bocheng from the North".[11] Then they decided to leave together with the staff of the Second Army, and were joined by Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping.

The journey to the South with the People's Liberation Army was neither comfortable nor easy. After Xuzhou, Spano together with Liu Bocheng and the other military commanders moved to Zhengzhou and then to Hankou. Here they were welcomed by Lin Biao, whom he interviewed. From Hankou, the group continued by boat to Jiujiang where they arrived on 26th October. Spano fell ill. Travelling in a truck, he arrived in Ji'an in Jiangxi. From that moment, due to his precarious health, it seems that relations with his hosts became slightly more complicated, since his poor health made him less patient and co-operative before the Chinese' eyes. By truck, 'on impossible roads' that followed the course of the Ganjiang River, the group reached Ganzhou, and then Shaoguan in Guangdong Province. On 1st November, at last, he was able to leave for Canton, just two weeks after the city had been conquered by the PLA.

His journey in the South revealed to Spano a different situation from that in the North. There was still war, as he emphasised in his book (Spano 1950, 96-103). From his annotations in the travel journal, it would seem

9 *Taccuino blu*, 14th September 1949.

10 *Taccuino blu*, 17th October 1949.

11 *Taccuino blu*, 21st October 1949.

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he had the impression that, whereas in Manchuria and North China the Party was actually in full control of the situation, in the Southern regions this was not the case at all. Commanders complained that subordinates ignored orders, local cadres were quite reticent, disorganisation reigned everywhere and comrades seemed to take many things too lightly.[12] As he wrote in the published book, this was another China, and Northern comrades were simply not able to speak the local language (Spano 1950, 97). But the problem was more complex than just a question of communication. In Shaoguan he noticed that the Party's authority was really weak and often challenged at local level.

> We must leave at 5 a.m. Yeh Kien-Yin [Ye Jianying author's note] has telegraphed twice ordering that we leave immediately. But the local cadre, Huan, does not want to understand and simply goes on sleeping. At the station, there is an indescribable confusion. At last, at 7 a.m. an armored car arrives to be used as a locomotive. We know that Huan has lied: the telephone line to Canton is working and the only interruption of the line is the bridge.[13]

Several similar episodes of disorganisation and insubordination were reported briefly by Spano during his trip to the South.

The Italian journalist spent ten days in Canton, meeting Ye Jianying several times, and having conversations with several local military cadres. He got the impression that the political and social situation there was really complicated. His entry for 8th November reports he had had a conversation with Fang Fang, who was in charge of rural reform in Guangdong. "I have the impression that they finally begin to think seriously of the problem of the agrarian class".[14] Later he had conversations also with Chen Geng, military commander of the Fourth Army. He had the feeling that in South China the Communists had a lot of work to do, and that there was not enough awareness of the challenges the Party had to face.

On 12th November, Spano left Canton. Through Shaoguan, Ganzhou, Nanchang, he reached Hangzhou, where he met Tan Zhenli. In Shanghai, where he arrived on 20th November, he had talks with Rao Sushi and Chen Yi and several other important CCP cadres, such as Zhang Hanfu, who later became vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Liu Xiao, who in 1955 became Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Talks in Shanghai mainly concerned the economy. On 4th December, after two weeks in Shanghai, Spano left for Nanjing, and on 8th December he was again in Beijing, where after some

12 *Taccuino blu*, 27th October, 30th October 1949.

13 *Taccuino blu*, 2nd November 1949.

14 *Taccuino blu*, 8th November 1949.

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days he was informed by Hu Qiaomu that Mao had left for Moscow ("This thing can evidently be of enormous relevance", he wrote in his travel journal).[15] In Beijing, Spano had now the opportunity to talk to Bo Yibo and Li Lisan, and made some visits around the outskirts of the capital. A few days later, he went to visit Baoding. During his last days in Beijing he mainly worked at home, feeling quite lonely, despite official banquets and meetings. On 2nd January, Spano left Beijing, making his way back to Moscow through Manchuria, where he stopped for several days, and met Gao Gang. On 10th January, he finally crossed the border. His visit to China had come to an end after four whole months.

During his trip, Spano had the opportunity to have talks at the highest level of power in China. These conversations furnished him with information about the old China and the revolution that were reported in his articles and books, but evidently they also touched upon sensitive issues, such as rural reform and party organisation at local level. Besides work meetings, Spano's contacts with his hosts were developed not only at official events, like banquets, dinners and the theatre, but also through informal occasions such as strolls and private visits to family homes, which are often not reported in detail.

But the Chinese were not the only figures in the picture. Spano was also in close contact with the Soviets and other foreigners present in China at that time. As can be seen in Spano's travel journal, the Soviets played a great role in his stay in Beijing. He often, apparently, coordinated his informative work with his Soviet colleagues, and especially with Vladimir Rogov, the Tass correspondent who had long experience in China. Rogov features prominently in Spano's diary referred to on several occasions as a friendly colleague. Spano also met Alexander Fedeev, the Soviet writer, at that time Chairman of the Writers' Association of the Soviet Union, who was there for the establishment of the People's Republic and the birth of the Chinese Congress for World Peace. Besides Rogov, Spano reports meetings with General Ivan Kovalev, at the time Stalin's middleman in Beijing. After a dinner with him, in 17th October, he wrote that he absolutely had to meet him again after his return to Beijing after the trip to South, though the diary does not report when, if at all, this new meeting took place. With Rogov and Kovalev, Spano exchanged views and impressions about China and their hosts. He also had a long conversation, which he defined a 'courtesy visit' with Pyotr Shabaev, *chargè d'affaires* at the Soviet Embassy in Canton.[16] According to Soviet sources, the visit was requested secretly by Spano himself (Meliksetov 1996; Hou 2010).

Moreover, Spano met several Westerners who were there for the Peace

15 *Taccuino blu*, 11th December 1949.

16 *Taccuino blu*, 9th December 1949.

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Conference, part of the network of international solidarity that, in the name of peace, the Soviet Union was creating, offering new channels of exchange and contacts between the West and China. Among these, he met the famous Russian violinist, Galina Barinova, and the French Communist Party feminist activist, Simone Bertrand.

He did also meet some Italians. In his book on China, Spano mentioned only Father Paludetti, who was in charge of an Italian school in Hankou that he was invited to visit[17] (Spano 1950, 90). But he also met an unnamed Italian priest in Tianjin, a well-known Italian resident in Beijing, Dr. Ugo Capuzzo, a physician one-time owner of one of the most famous nightclubs in the city, and in Shanghai, Giuseppe Altomare, trade *attachè* at the Italian Embassy there.[18] Spano spent several days with Altomare and was considerably impressed by him, as he recorded in his notes. He also introduced Altomare to Zhang Hanfu, suggesting that Spano was also exploring the business opportunities for Italian firms in view of the huge sums that the Chinese told him were earmarked for investment in industrial development.[19] Incidentally the relationship between Spano and Altomare is quite intriguing, as it apparently continued in the following years. A letter of Altomare to Spano, dated 20th July 1952, when Altomare was already moved to Hong Kong, suggests that not only the two were good friends and shared common views and ideological positions regarding Communist China, but also that Altomare was eager to support the Chinese propaganda in the West.[20]

All these elements compose a complex picture of Spano's experience during these four months in China. Actually, his presence was a noteworthy, but also apparently a problematic, event where political, cultural and contingent factors were intertwined, influencing the attitude of the Chinese leadership towards him and his perception of the Chinese revolution.

3 Behind the Public Narrative: Spano and Mao's 'Cold Bench'

Considering Spano's background, his close relation with Togliatti and the support he evidently received from the Soviet Union, his visit to China raises

17 Informed of Spano's arrival, Father Paludetti in person invited him to visit the school he directed. See "Lettera di padre Paludetti", 25th October 1949, Archivi Fondazione Gramsci, Fondo Velio Spano e Nadia Gallico, Serie 6, "Esteri e Movimento Pace", FF 91, *Viaggio in Cina: Lettere e Foto.* Busta 14.

18 *Taccuino blu*, 21st, 22nd November 1949.

19 *Taccuino blu*, 29th November 1949.

20 See "Lettera di Giuseppe Altomare a Velio Spano", 20 luglio 1952, Archivio Fondazione Gramsci, Fondo Velio Spano e Nadia Gallico, Serie 6: Esteri e Movimento per la Pace, FF. 91, *Viaggio in Cina: Lettere e foto*, busta 14.

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important questions. Though the specific historical circumstances that determined Spano's visit are still to be explored, it occurred in a period when China was reflecting about and preparing itself for a possible integration in the Socialist world. Nevertheless, though he met international activists and spoke to the assembly of the Chinese Congress for World Peace, Spano was not actually in China just as a representative of Communist internationalism. His presence had also a more specific political impact, since it also had something to do with inter-Party relationships. As we have seen, Togliatti himself wrote a letter of introduction for Spano to the Chinese leaders. The Italian Communist leader's interest in developing contacts with the Chinese Communists and understanding better the Chinese situation is confirmed by the fact that, during his stay in China, Spano frequently made references to dispatches addressed directly by him to the ICP leader.

Moreover, Spano's visit came during a crucial moment for China for important decisions on economic strategy and international politics were being taken by the Chinese Communists in those months. More precisely, it was at this time that the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists were discussing a future alliance (Heinzig 2015; Shen, Xia 2015). Spano arrived in China from the Soviet Union. The Soviets supported his trip, and in China he was in close contact with Soviet journalists and representatives. And, as already noticed, during Spano's stay in China, Mao himself made Wang Jiaxiang responsible for Spano's work.

All this reveals a complicated scenario. Certainly the relationship that Spano had with the Soviets was an important factor for it affected the Chinese attitude towards him, as well as his view of the Chinese revolution. Spano's experience in China may well reveal much concerning relations between the Soviet Union and China at that time: annotations in his travel diary, for instance, would suggest that talks with Rogov, Cavalev and Shabaev were important for Spano's views of China. In spite of the revolutionary enthusiasm and strength that he clearly acknowledged his Chinese hosts possessed, he was aware of the huge challenges that the Chinese Communist Party had to face and recognised that, in many cases, the leaders undervalued the risks and the challenges ahead, relying almost blindly, on their military capacity and Mao's ideology of rural revolution.

An evaluation of his relations with the Chinese, and of how his presence was considered by the Chinese leaders at that time is also rather complicated. Certainly, he received material support and appreciated the friendly attitude of Chinese leaders and cadres shown him on many occasions. He had the opportunity to visit several places, even recently-liberated Canton, and, with the help of some interpreters, was able also to have long conversations with several Chinese national and local leaders, in the North as in the South. These visits and conversations, duly recorded, represent the bulk of his articles, travelogue and a book on the Chinese revolution that

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he wrote but never published.[21] Nevertheless, such unpublished sources as his travel journal reveal that Spano's experience of China was not all plain sailing. His journal entries seem to suggest that Spano was aware of some ambivalence in his regard especially during and after his trip to the South. He made frequent reference to a Chinese proverb, mentioning that he had found 'a cold bench' (*leng bandeng*) as a way to indicate the difficulties and obstacles of various kinds that he had encountered. Interestingly enough, it was Mao himself who suggested this expression to Spano during their conversation. The President warned him that he might well come upon 'a cold bench' hinting likely cold or unfriendly attitudes.[22]

Indeed, the conversation between Mao and Spano is quite revealing of how the Chinese considered and what they expected from their Italian comrade. Spano reported their meeting in a notebook,[23] and these annotations were the basis for a chapter of his book (Spano 1950, 49-57). Actually, his personal notes give some information about the talks with Mao that were not included in the published report, and help to understand how Spano's role was considered by the Chinese Communists.

The meeting between Mao and Spano took place on 23rd September, ten days after his arrival in Beijing. Spano had already met Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi and Zhu De. He had seen Mao at the Assembly of the Political Consultative Conference on 21st September. The day after, Hu Qiaomu came to his hotel to tell him that Mao was waiting for him. Mao was with Wang Jiaxiang and immediately told Spano that maybe not all the comrades had understood the relevance of his presence, and that he would explain it to everyone, making Spano understand that he had his personal approval. The President explained that the Chinese Communists' victory had been made possible by the Chinese people's struggle as well as the support of others, first of the Soviet Union, and then of the new democratic countries (i.e. Socialist brother countries) and the workers in capitalist countries. This aid had to be material as well as political.[24] Once the importance of international support for the Chinese revolution was acknowledged, however, Mao reminded Spano immediately that the main goal of his trip was not to inform the outer world as a journalist but to study and understand China. "To send reports and articles is now secondary. You can do it, but it is not essential" he said. In actual fact, Mao emphasised, "a useful aspect of your trip is your participation in our activities, and we invite you to

21 The manuscript of this book is preserved in the Archives of the Fondazione Gramsci. Fondo Velio Spano e Nadia Gallico. Serie 6: Esteri e Movimento per la Pace. FF. 92 "Originale libro sulla Cina. Inedito", 1950, busta 14.

22 *Taccuino blu*, 22nd September 1949.

23 *Appunti presi in Cina*, II, 23rd September 1949.

24 *Appunti presi in Cina*, II, 23rd September 1949.

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speak out and share your experience with us". Replying to this invitation, Spano courteously affirmed that he had nothing to teach. But Mao insisted, replying that "you must not think that in China everything is going well".[25]

During the conversation, Mao insisted that Spano study China, its modern history, and the history of the Party, in order to understand their past experience, their mistakes and the way they had been able to overcome them. Moreover, Spano was "not here only to eat from the others, but also to give them to eat. You cannot only take, you should also give. Do tell us what Italy is like".[26] So he presented the Italian situation to Mao, even drawing a small map of the country in the notebook to show where places were. Mao ordered that a great map of Italy should be ready for Spano's lectures to the cadres.

But again the President felt that it was important that the guest not focus too much on his role as a journalist.

> Do not hurry to publish. You can send your impressions to Italy, but what is essential is that you study the situation. You now have just some information for a couple of articles, but not to write an organic study. I will provide you with the material. Tonight you will have dinner at my place: you will find all the comrades of the Central Committee whom I told to help you in everything, here in Beijing and outside Beijing. Now, since every task needs someone who is in charge, Comrade Wang will be the responsible for your work.[27]

A second concern of Mao's was to inform or rather, warn, Spano that he might come upon a number of difficulties in his work, in spite of Mao's support and approval. Mao apparently apologised for the fact that Spano had not been received in a proper manner. But he reminded his guest that, as a Communist, he had to be ready for anything.

> Communists must prepare themselves to meet any event. And you who have come to China must be ready to find 'a cold bench', as we say. Maybe also when you go to the provinces, I believe it will be easy for you because we will help you, but at any rate you must be ready to sit on a 'cold bench'. The Chinese people do not like foreigners. And it is easy to understand. Italian missionaries in China do not treat the Chinese well. The worst are the American, then the British and the French, but also the Italians.[28]

25 *Appunti presi in Cina*, II, 23rd September 1949.

26 *Appunti presi in Cina*, II, 23rd September 1949.

27 *Appunti presi in Cina*, II, 23rd September 1949.

28 *Appunti presi in Cina*, II, 23rd September 1949.

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When Spano replied that even in Italy the priests are bad to Italians, Mao reminded him that at any rate,

> missionaries had been very able at overcoming any difficulty: when the Chinese people had refused their 'mercenary-religion', they looked for ill people and they began to distribute presents for the New Year's Festival. You should do as they did, overcome the difficulties. For everything, it is necessary to fight, without struggle you obtain nothing.[29]

What did Mao actually mean by 'cold bench'? Was he referring to the weak Party control and disorganisation in the provinces, and especially in the South, a reality that could influence Spano's opinion of Chinese revolution and certainly hinder his work? Or was he hinting at the fact that Spano should be aware that his presence could in some cases be unwelcome, and he had to downsize his expectations in order to do his work, to win over their friendship and trust and offer something in exchange?

Indeed, Spano was quite impressed by Mao's words, and often referred to the 'cold bench' in his travel diary. He discovered that they were sitting on a cold bench during his long trip to Canton, when he became aware of the local disorganisation and maybe hostility of the local cadres. In Shaoguan, in his entry for 31st October he wrote: "At Shaoguan there is the cold bench of Mao. Comrades are like fish out of water. The last stop to Canton is clearly difficult".[30] Back in Shaoguan after two weeks, upon his return to North China, he mentioned again the difficult situation writing "once again, the usual cold bench".[31] It is evident that disorganisation and insubordination delayed the travel and almost made work impossible, not only for Spano, but for all the comrades who had come with him to the recently-liberated South. According to Spano, more than himself, it was these revolutionary comrades who were sitting on a cold bench, unable to control the affairs on the field, actually without power and often not really aware of the challenges they have to face.

But back in Beijing, in early December 1949, Spano experimented a different kind of 'cold bench', an unexpected sense of marginalization if not distrust from his hosts. It was not disorganisation. It looked more like political isolation from the CCP comrades. The entries for these days in his travel journal suggest that he began to perceive that the climate around him was not positive, though it is not easy to catch the full meaning of his notes.

> December, Friday 9th. Arrival in Beijing. Again the 'cold bench'. C. [Kovalev?] and R. [Rogov?] are travelling to Moscow, who knows why? The im-

29 *Appunti presi in Cina*, II, 23rd September 1949.

30 *Taccuino blu*, 31st October 1949.

31 *Taccuino blu*, 14th November 1949.

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> pressions of C. have been confirmed to me by P. [not identified]. "They do not like our help", he/she said talking of the non c. [?] of the government.[32]

In spite of the lack of detail, the overall impression is that he felt that his own relations with the Chinese comrades had became colder than he had expected. He spent the last days in Beijing mainly working alone in the hotel. He had meetings with Bo Yibo and Li Lisan. Spano's records of these conversations hint at an increasing skepticism towards the Chinese revolutionary strategy at this stage, for example regarding the CCP leaders' trust in the capacity of the Army and Mao's political leadership in addressing the menace of insurgent capitalism in rural areas;[33] their 'too schematic' understanding of class struggle[34] and their ability to build up the Party in the countryside, as demonstrated by their confusing information about the actual numbers of Party members.[35] His initial enthusiasm for the Chinese revolution seems, according to these short comments, dampened by the feeling that too many questions were not fully addressed or understood. With Liu Shaoqi, he had the opportunity to discuss a possible Italian support to new China, as the dispatch of technicians. Liu was skeptikal about this, though he agreed to develop an exchange of 'comrades' between the two parties.[36] It is hard to say if the Chinese political establishment was aware of his skepticism and doubts and but they did have some doubts about their Italian comrade. Spano's travel journal testifies, at any rate, that his feeling of being marginalized in Beijing persisted for several days. In the Chinese capital he found himself isolated and kept at a distance. He recorded*:*

> December, 20th. I leave for Tangshan and then Baoding where all, even the president of the government, Yan, who is ill, will receive us. In the evening, at Beijing, 'cold bench'. Mao's visit has not had the effect that I expected.
>
> December, 21st. There is an atmosphere of celebration, it is the anniversary of Stalin. Parade and speech of Zhou. They forgot to invite me to the meeting. Later they apologized a lot.
>
> December 22nd. I worked at home. Hu [Qiaomu] sent someone to inform me that he will answer the day after tomorrow about the last meetings. He requires a letter. I do not understand this bureaucratic attitude.[37]

32 *Taccuino blu*, 9th December 1949.

33 *Taccuino blu*, 12th December 1949.

34 *Taccuino blu*, 13th December 1949.

35 *Taccuino blu*, 24th December 1949.

36 *Appunti presi in Cina*, IX, December 26th, 1949.

37 *Taccuino blu*, 21st, 22nd, 23rd December 1949.

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Spano recorded in his travel journal that he just worked at home, receiving some visits from his collaborators, but attracting no sign of interest from the Chinese authorities. He felt to all intents and purposes, practically ignored. The reasons for this cold attitude were not clear to him. Were maybe Spano's close relations to the Soviets in China a problematic issue for his hosts? As we have seen in 20th December record, Spano seemed disappointed that Mao's visit to Moscow was not facilitating the cooperation between him, the Chinese and the Soviets, suggesting that he was aware that his own position was closely linked to the development of Sino-Soviet relations. But he did not explicit his views about this in his notes.

He just decided to go back to Italy: "December 23rd. Still at home. I begin to prepare my baggage. We need to telegraph in order to guarantee the connection".[38] Apparently, his decision to leave China made his relationship with his hosts smoother. The Chinese comrades in the Central Committee again seemed eager to show their friendship in the last days of his stay in Beijing. On 26th December he was invited to a last official banquet at Zhongnanhai. There he met Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Li Lisan, Bo Yibo and several other leaders. According to Spano's notes, they all were very eager in giving him advice about the Italian situation and the risks of an imperialist attack to both Italy and France.[39] Liu insisted that the Italian Communists had to be ready for a clandestine struggle and military operations. On his side, Zhu De emphasised the need of a the party's political work within the army. Lastly Zhou told Spano that according to his own view, Togliatti had to refuse the parliament and flee to an area where he could be protected by the support of the masses in the fight for revolution. Spano commented "they all mention Mao, the Chinese example, the Chinese experience, the Chinese victory".[40] Apparently propaganda had taken the place of discussion and confrontation with the foreign comrade.

Later Spano laconically noticed that with the Chinese now "everything seems fine".[41] On 2nd January, he left Beijing. In his published reports he never mentioned the 'cold bench' as he had experienced it in China.

38 *Taccuino blu*, 23rd December 1949.

39 *Appunti presi in Cina*, IX, 26th December 1949.

40 *Appunti presi in Cina,* IX, 26th December 1949.

41 *Taccuino blu*, 28th December 1949.

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4 Conclusions: Velio Spano in the Relations Between CCP and ICP

The legacy of Spano's long sojourn in China during those crucial months for the relations between Italy and China is still unexplored. On the public side, back in Italy Spano had several conferences introducing the Chinese Revolution to the Italian public, and wrote several articles and a book that was actually the first about the topic in Italy. Nevertheless, he did not publish another book he later worked on about the ideological and political problem of the Chinese revolution, and class struggle in China. His political interests and activities, moreover, were mainly focused on other issues, and especially on the struggles of the miners in his province, Sardinia.

Nevertheless, in 1956 he was put in charge of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the ICP, and two years later he became the Secretary of the Italian Congress for Peace (Cerrai 2011). This double role projected Spano again at the forefront of relations between Italy (especially the ICP) and the Socialist world, China included. Even a partial overview of Spano's personal archives for that period, actually, shows that the network of contacts he had had the opportunity to create in China during those weeks in 1949 were considered, at least in Italy, an important asset for the development of informal relations between the two countries. One example of this can be seen in his relationship with the Centro per le Relazioni Economiche e Culturali con la Cina (Centre for Economic and Cultural Relations with China) that since 1954 was in charge of organizing several exchanges and missions with People's China (Samarani, Meneguzzi 2014, 93-118).

Spano and Sergio Segre, the ICP member who was the secretary of the Centre, often exchanged opinions on the topic of Italian relations with China. Spano was consulted about all important issues, as the choice of Italian students to send to China,[42] the Italian proposal of opening a branch of the Chinese News Agency Xinhua in Italy[43] and the economic mission to China to be led by the Christian Democrat, Teresio Guglielmone,[44] in view of a meeting that Spano was expected to have (and actually had) with

42 "Lettera di Sergio Segre a Spano", July 31st 1957, Archivio Fondazione Gramsci, Fondo Velio Spano e Nadia Gallico, Serie 6: Esteri e Movimento per la Pace, FF.108 *Centro Cina*, busta 17.

43 "Lettera di Velio Spano a Sergio Segre", April 1st 1958, Archivio Fondazione Gramsci, Fondo Velio Spano e Nadia Gallico, Serie 6: Esteri e Movimento per la Pace, FF.108 *Centro Cina*, busta 17

44 "Lettera di Sergio Segre a Velio Spano", June 12, 1958, Archivio Fondazione Gramsci, Fondo Velio Spano e Nadia Gallico, Serie 6: Esteri e Movimento per la Pace, FF.108 *Centro Cina*, busta 17.

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Chen Yi in Berne, in Summer 1958.[45] This event, still unstudied, raised several expectations on the ICP side that they would again play a pivotal role in Sino-Italian relations, a role apparently weakened by the activism of other economic and political players, which may well have been more appreciated by the Chinese government looking for political recognition and economic aid beyond the Soviet umbrella.

Spano's role in the relations with China in the '50s is also proven by a letter that Deng Xiaoping himself sent to Spano in 1957, as a reply to a previous letter that the Italian politician had addressed to Deng thanks to the help of the Communist economic expert Giuseppe Regis and the Chinese Embassy in Berne.[46]

In the history of relations between the People's Republic and Italy, Velio Spano's journey to China is often just mentioned as a significant, but not so determining episode. Conversely, a closer look at his experience in China and at its subsequent legacy reveals a much richer and more complex significance of that experience, both in terms of the Italian Communist Party's understanding of the Chinese revolution and the development of relations with the Chinese Communists within the Socialist camp and in terms of prospects for Sino-Italian relations. Apparently, after this visit, Spano himself did not claim a specific public role in the ICP in relations with the Chinese side. But this role was a fact. Considered from a historical perspective, nobody, in Italy, shared the privilege that Spano had enjoyed: to be a witness – if not an actor – of those crucial months when much of the new China and of its relations to the outer world were effectively being shaped.

45 The trip to Berne has been mentioned by Spano's daughters who were with their father on that occasion. Personal communication to the Author.

46 "Lettera di Deng Xiaoping", January 30th, 1957. Archivio Fondazione Gramsci, Fondo Velio Spano e Nadia Gallico, Serie 6: Esteri e Movimento per la Pace, FF.110 *Lettera di Deng Xiaoping*, busta 17.

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Roads to Reconciliation
People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy
During the Cold War Period (1949-1971)

edited by Guido Samarani, Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni and Sofia Graziani

International Political Activism in the '50s
The World Federation of Democratic Youth and Bruno Bernini's Encounter with Mao's China

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Abstract This paper examines the role played by adult-led youth groups in providing avenues for early encounters between Italian and Chinese Communists in the '50s. In particular, it focuses on the links built up within international organisations linked to the Soviet-sponsored peace movement at a time when direct exchange between the Italian and Chinese Communist parties had yet to start. Relying on a large variety of primary and secondary sources, some of which have never been used before, I provide evidence of how participation in Soviet-led international organisations made early political contacts and interactions possible. The focus is on Bruno Bernini, whose personal experience in China is examined within the context of the World Federation of Democratic Youth's policies and initiatives in the early and mid-'50s.

Keywords Chinese Communist Party. China's Communist Youth League. China-Italy relations. Word Federation of Democratic Youth. Cold War. Bruno Bernini.

1 Introduction

In the '50s the Italian Communist Party (ICP) played a crucial role in the unconventional party-to-party diplomacy between Italy and the People's Republic of China (PRC). As the largest Communist party in Western Europe, the ICP had considerable influence in Italian society and thus could play an important role in forging public opinion, building up awareness in

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civil society actors of the importance of the 'New China'. As a matter of fact, it provided a privileged channel for unofficial Sino-Italian exchanges in the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries (Samarani, De Giorgi 2011).

Relations between the Italian and the Chinese Communist parties passed via Moscow and were inevitably shaped by the developments taking place within the world Communist movement. Indeed, positive relations developed up until 1957, largely based on solidarity and similarity of judgements. Beginning in the late '50s, however, ideological differences between Italian and Chinese Communists slowly started to emerge: both parties began to develop clearly distinct positions, and – in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split – their relationship eventually fell apart (Samarani, Graziani 2015; see also Höbel 2005).

Exchange of delegations was one of the most important forms of direct interaction among party leaders. Yet, only in 1956 did the first bilateral exchange of delegations take place on the occasion of national party congresses, thereby laying the foundations for subsequent contacts, the most prominent taking place in 1959 when the ICP sent its first high-level delegation to China to meet the leaders of the CCP (see Samarani's chapter in this volume).

Until 1956, links had been created through other channels: mainly at an individual level, or through national organisations affiliated with, or somehow gravitating around the Communist parties. Contact among Communist leaders arose also within international left-wing coordination bodies, such as the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the International Union of Students, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the Women's International Democratic Federation, and the World Peace Council.

In point of fact, since the early years of the PRC up to the early '60s, at a time when China's contacts with the outside world were limited by the logic of the Cold War and the PRC found itself isolated, these organisations provided a crucial window for China's international exposure both within and beyond the Soviet bloc, representing privileged avenues of dialogue and exchange between the newly established PRC and various foreign political groups and individual representatives.

This article examines the role played by adult-led youth groups in providing avenues for early encounters between Italian and Chinese Communists, focusing on the links built up within international political organisations linked to the Soviet-sponsored peace movement at a time when direct exchange of delegations between the Italian and Chinese Communist parties had yet to start. Elsewhere I have investigated 'people-to-people' diplomacy between the early PRC and different youth groups in Italy from both perspectives, providing a detailed narrative of the extent and type of contacts undertaken in this period (Graziani 2017). In this article, I provide evidence of how participation in Soviet-led international youth organisa-

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tions made early political contacts and interactions possible, by relying on a large variety of primary and secondary sources, some of which have never been used before. The focus is on Bruno Bernini, whose personal experience in China is examined within the context of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY)'s policies and initiatives in the early and mid-'50s.

2 Communist Youth Groups and Early Opportunities for Sino-Italian Exchange

As far as it is known, the first time an Italian Communist representative visited China was in 1949 shortly before the proclamation of the PRC. The prominent Italian Communist Velio Spano (1905-1964), then a member of the ICP's highest ruling body, travelled to China (from September 1949 to January 1950) as a correspondent of the official party newspaper *L'Unità* and witnessed the Communists' seizure of power (Spano 1950; on Spano's experience in China see De Giorgi's chapter in this volume). Although this first visit was paid by a delegate in an individual capacity, it laid the foundation for subsequent contact, and would be remembered by Chinese leaders as the first contact the victorious Chinese revolution had with a European Communist representative.[1] In the following years, it was through the Centre for the Development of Economic and Cultural Relations with China (or 'Centro Cina') especially that contacts between Italian and Chinese Communists were developed. Created in 1953 as an autonomous institution aimed at promoting cultural and economic exchange and at pushing for Italy's recognition of the PRC, it was nonetheless an organisation close to the Italian left and its members included a large number of ICP members (Samarani 2014). Early indirect contact was also made possible through a network of mass organisations that, despite being formally autonomous, were somehow 'collateral' to the ICP, and more generally to the political parties of the Italian left. Some of these organisations were able to send delegations to China at that time, especially on the occasion of annual celebrations. One such instance was the 1954 visit to China made by an Italian labour union delegation guided by Bruno Trentin, and composed of members of both the ICP and the Italian Socialist Party, which was invited to participate in the 1st May labour celebration.[2]

1 "Brevi note per la Segreteria del PCI della delegazione inviata a Pechino per assistere alla celebrazione del X anniversario della fondazione della RPC", Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivi del Partito comunista italiano, Estero, mf. 0464, Cina, 1959, 2973-81 (2981).

2 "Comunicazione di Bruno Trentin alla Segreteria del PCI" 1/7/1954, Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivi del Partito comunista italiano, Partiti esteri, mf. 0424, Cina, 1954, pagina 0429.

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The ICP's junior partner, the Italian Communist Youth Federation (ICYF) provided a direct channel for contacts since it was part and parcel of the Communist party's organisational structure. In the early '50s its political initiatives concerned, among other things, the struggle for peace and national independence (cf. Bruno Bernini and Renzo Trivelli's contributions in Berlinguer et al. 1976, 51-68). A 1955 national document entitled *The Youth Initiative for a Foreign Policy of Independence and Peace* and issued by the ICYF's highest leading organ, stated that when it came to Italy's relations with the socialist world, the national interest required a new basis of cooperation and friendship and that ties of friendship among the peoples should be strengthened and diplomatic relations with the PRC established (Federazione giovanile comunista italiana 1957, 49-52). By then, contacts between the ICYF and its Chinese counterpart, the Communist Youth League (CYL), had already been established. In 1953 the 28-year-old, antifascist partisan, Ugo Pecchioli, then member of the National Secretariat of the ICYF, was sent to Beijing to attend the 2nd National Congress of the New Democratic Youth League (the forerunner of the CYL), and spent almost a month in China (20th June-18th July) (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2000, 9). Pecchioli travelled across the country, visiting important cities (i.e. Mukden [Shenyang], Fushun, Hangzhou, Nanjing and Shanghai), and having talks with Hu Yaobang who, by Pecchioli's account, spoke frankly about the variety and complexity of the problems China was facing in the countryside in its march toward socialism. Pecchioli returned to Italy armed with a positive image of the New China. He praised both the land reform, which he called "a document of political wisdom and humanity", and the extraordinary qualities of the Chinese people. "I think – he wrote in the Italian Communist Party's official newspaper *L'Unità* – that one of the greatest [qualities] is their capacity to be forward-looking, to be patient, to carefully avoid rushed decisions that can lead to serious mistakes" (Pecchioli 1953, 3). In the same period, the All-China Youth Federation also held its 2nd National Congress, which was attended by Piero Pieralli, a young Italian Communist who was invited as a representative of the WFDY (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2000, 8).

In the very early days of the PRC, youth organisations played an important role in the realm of China's foreign relations, being responsible for "building good relations with foreign youth and students' organizations and developing people's diplomacy so as to break the imperialist blockade against China and let the whole world understand the New China, and sympathize with and support the righteous cause of the Chinese people" (Liu 2011, 2). The Communist Youth League through its International Liaison Department built up contacts with various national youth groups and individual representatives, including those from Western capitalist countries who had not recognised the PRC, thus becoming involved in China's people diplomacy and political outreach in different parts of the

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world. At that time, the main avenues for early exchanges between China and Western countries were offered through international 'front organisations', such as the WFDY and the International Union of Students (IUS) (Cao 1999, 1). International activities thus provided the framework upon which early links between Italian and Chinese Communist youth groups were established and developed.

3 Participation in the WFDY

Both the WFDY and the IUS were born out of the desire for peace soon after the end of World War II. The WFDY was founded in 1945 in London with the aim of establishing international youth cooperation for the cause of freedom, democracy and equality. However, with the outbreak of the Cold War, non-Communist groups withdrew from the WFDY, which soon developed into a Soviet-dependent 'front organisation' with a partisan character. The IUS, founded in 1946 in Prague, suffered a similar fate (Cornell 1965, 73-95; Kotek 1996, 62-167). Both organisations ended up being dominated by Communists even though references to Communism – as Pia Koivunen (2011, 177) noted – were generally avoided in favour of new slogans calling for democracy, peace and friendship that could appeal to many people who after the upheavals of World War II desired a peaceful world. Crucial in this respect was the organisation of the biannual World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship, a key event in the Soviet-sponsored transnational campaign for peace (Koivunen 2011; Kotek 1996, 189-99). By the early '50s the WFDY had become a large organisation with a transnational character: its membership grew from 30 million young people representing 65 countries in 1945 to 83 million young people from 90 countries in 1953 (World Federation of Democratic Youth 1953, 291). Thus, despite being highly dependent on the Soviet Union, it did represent a place where young people from countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain could get together and also meet representatives of the Third World.

Chinese youth were represented within both organizations up to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. While in 1945 groups as diverse as the Guomindang-affiliated Three Principles of the People Youth Corps, the youth association of the liberated areas, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association and the Federation of Young Writers joined the WFDY (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 281), following the Communist victory and the establishment of the PRC, the All-China Youth Federation was the sole Chinese organisation officially represented within the WFDY (302). The All-China Youth Federation was a national umbrella organisation whose membership included, among the others, the CYL, which had a key role in the Chinese political system as an 'assistant' and 'reserve force' of the CCP (Graziani 2013). As a matter

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of fact, its national leaders often overlapped with those of the CYL.[3] With the unfolding of the crisis of the world Communist movement, both the WFDY and the IUS developed into two of the main outposts of the political struggle between the Chinese and Soviet Communist Parties. In 1966 the PRC eventually withdrew its delegates (cf. Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2008, 2009). In those years, Italian Communists ended up taking on a prominent role within the organisation. In point of fact, with the outbreak of the Cold War, Italian non-Communist groups withdrew from the WFDY, leaving the FGCI and other extreme left-wing groups in the organisation.[4] Italian Communists would soon assume a prominent position, holding the presidency for almost a decade: Enrico Berlinguer (1950-1953)[5] was indeed followed by Bruno Bernini as president of the organization from 1953 up to 1959.[6] Then, in August 1959 the Italian Communist Piero Pieralli replaced him (*Pieralli eletto Presidente della FMGD* 1959).

By the early ’50s, the Italian Communist strategy had highlighted the struggle for peace and national independence as one of the main tasks assigned to young people post-World War II. Recognising that the wish for peace allowed the young to transcend class as well as religious and ideological differences and, moreover, as they saw the young as uncorrupted as yet by adult logic, Italian Communists searched for a strategy that could appeal to as many young people as possible in their political struggle for freedom and independence. As such, the Italian Communist Youth Federation soon took on a pivotal role in the partisans of peace movement, organising and mobilising the young against the Atlantic treaty to which De Gasperi’s Italy adhered, against American weapons arriving in Italy, in favour of Korea in the early ’50s, and in the struggle for a foreign policy of peace, against Italy’s subordination to US policy. Yet, the propaganda of peace was by no means neutral in the sense that it emphasised anti-Americanism and linked it with the defence of the USSR, celebrated

3 For instance, in the second half of the ’50s, Liu Xiyuan was both a member of the Central Secretariat of the CYL and the President of the All-China Youth Federation. Liao Chengzhi, a well-known figure in the realm of Sino-Japanese relations, overseas Chinese affairs and peace movements, was also heavily engaged in the youth movement in the early and mid-’50s, occupying a high position in the executive bodies of both the Youth League and the All-China Youth Federation (see Zhonggong zhongyang zuzhibu, Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi and zhongyang dang’anguan 2000 and the following official website at `http://www.cnpeople.com.cn/ql/sj/1167_20160303100015.html`).

4 Such as for instance, the Italian Young Pioneers Association, the Italian Union for Popular Sport, Youth Commission of the CGIIL (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 320).

5 On Berlinguer’s role in the youth movement see Barbagallo (2014, pp. 21-30).

6 “Relazione sulla partecipazione italiana al IV Festival e al III Congresso Mondiale della Gioventù”. Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivi del Partito comunista italiano, mf. 233, Commissione centrale giovanile e FGCI, Fondo Mosca 1948-1953.

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as a peaceful country by definition (Cerrai 2011, 135-52 and Bernini and Trivelli's contributions in Berlinguer et al. 1976).

In January 1950 the Italian experience in, and contribution to, the international front of the partisans for peace was tabled for the WFDY executive committee meeting in Bucharest. It was the first time that the situation and experience of a national youth movement would be examined in detail by the executive committee. The young Enrico Berlinguer, then president of the Italian Youth Alliance of the Popular Democratic Front delivered a report entitled *La lotta della gioventù democratica per la pace e per i suoi diritti politici ed economici*, summarising the experience of the Italian youth in the struggle for peace and for their economic and political rights. In his report, Berlinguer celebrated the Soviet Union as the flagship of world peace and democracy and emphasised the importance of popularising the achievements of the Soviet youth and of other people's democracies as well as the victory of the Chinese people among the young masses (*La gioventù italiana nel fronte mondiale della pace* 1950, 24). The representative of the newly established PRC, Wu Xueqian,[7] praised the Italian experience and initiatives as a model for other Communist parties in capitalist Europe but also stated that the task of Chinese youth at that time was 'peaceful edification', thus mainly underlying that their focus was inward, as young builders of the New China (*La gioventù italiana nel fronte mondiale della pace* 1950, 39-40). This statement brought the attention on the differences in the struggle of youth between Socialist China and the capitalist countries. In China the attention was on domestic reconstruction, given the dramatic socio-economic conditions and the emergencies facing the leaders of the newly founded PRC.

The importance of China was recognised by the WFDY as early as 1950 when a youth delegation – the largest ever organised since the establishment of the Federation – was sent to the newly proclaimed PRC to honour the success of the Chinese revolution but also to show – as reported at that time – the solidarity of world youth not just in their work of constructing a New China but also in their struggle against American aggression and imperialism in East Asia (Boccara 1951). The Cold War had already turned hot on the Korean peninsula and the PRC would soon decide to intervene to aid Korea. CCP leaders attached extreme importance to this visit, in view of the situation, and warmly received the foreign guests, "believing that this initiative might be significant in strengthening the links and unity

7 Wu Xueqian was the Chinese representative within the WFDY during 1949-1950 and would hold the position of deputy-director and then director of the CYL Central Committee International Liaison Department until 1958 when he entered the External Liaison Department of the CCP Central Committee and was made responsible for the activities directed towards Southwest Asia and Africa (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 94; Zhu 2012, 123-5).

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of China's youth with the young from every country of the world and in broadening the influence of the victory of the Chinese revolution, inspiring the young in their struggle and strengthening internationalist spirit among Chinese youth" (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 29).

The WFDY delegation was in the PRC for 40 days (10th September-20th October), with 42 delegates from 32 countries (Soviet Union, People's Democracies, capitalist countries and the colonial and semi-colonial countries) and led by Enrico Boccara, an Italian anti-fascist partisan who was secretary-general for the WFDY (Boccara 1951). It included leading members of the organisations as well as young journalists: among them the Italians Tutino Saverio, a journalist of the ICP newspaper *L'Unità*, and the young women's representative Lidia Maiorelli (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 29; Young Buiders of New China 1951, 60).[8] In the words of He Zhenliang, a former cadre of the Youth League, "the political weight of this large-scale delegation was very great" (Liang 2007, 22). The delegation travelled across the country (embarking on a 40-day tour), visiting 18 cities, addressing 13 mass meetings and 30 welcoming meetings, coming into contact with young workers, students, and young peasants (Boccara 1951). They were also received by Mao Zedong on 30th September and were invited to the ceremony for the first anniversary of the PRC (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 31). At the end of the journey, they addressed a message to the United Nations asking it to recognise the PRC as the only genuine representative of the Chinese people (Boccara 1951). At the same time, the delegation further promoted the peace movement that followed the launching of the Stockholm Appeal by the World Peace Council. The campaign for collecting signatures and popularising the Stockholm Appeal in China was launched on 1st May and the delegation would witness how the campaign for peace was gaining momentum in China against the backdrop of the Korean War and American raids on Chinese territory (Young Builders of New China 1951, 59-61). A year later, in summer 1951, the Youth League Central Committee sent a youth delegation to participate in the Third World Youth and Student Festival in Berlin: it was the largest delegation sent out since the founding of the People's Republic and was headed by the first secretary of the Youth League Central Committee Feng Wenbin (Liang 2007, 24).

Yet, it was only after the end of the Korean war and following the creation of permanent state institutions at the domestic level that the PRC could assume a more prominent role within the WFDY, increasing its international activism and presenting to the world the image of China as a peaceful country (Qian 2009). At the Third World Youth Congress held

8 Tutino Saverio left a diary of his personal experience in China (ARCHIVIO Diaristico Nazionale, Pieve Santo Stefano, Arezzo).

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in Bucharest in July 1953, Hu Yaobang, the newly elected First Secretary of the Youth League, delivered a speech on the same day the Korean War ended and the armistice agreement was signed (27th July), arguing that China was committed to peace, friendship and solidarity among the young of the whole world.

> We hold that all countries of different social systems can coexist peacefully. The spirit of negotiation should and certainly will triumph over aggression and intervention. […] We are convinced that the mutual understanding, friendship and solidarity between the peoples of all countries are the best means to realise the young people's desire for peace. Thus, the development of cultural exchanges between the people and youth of all countries and the strengthening of friendship among world youth will break through all artificial barriers and help to further the cause of peace. […] it is indeed the most important problem in our work today to strengthen the solidarity of the peace-loving youth of the whole world and to win the thousands upon thousands youth of good-will who are still staying outside the peace movement to participate in the ranks for the defence of peace. We are convinced that it is completely possible for all young people, irrespective of nationality, social strata, religious belief, political opinion and affiliation, to find common language and common ideas in the common cause of defending peace. (World Federation of Democratic Youth 1953, 137-8)

The PRC's weight within the WFDY increased after joining the Secretariat at the Bucharest meeting that voted in new leaders, with Hu Yaobang as vice-President and Qian Liren as Secretary (Qian 2009). Qian Liren's responsibility as Secretary in the following three years (until August 1956) coincided with new developments in both China's international attitude and the WFDY policies. Firstly, a new turn took place in both the internal politics and foreign policy of the Chinese government, which, with the end of the Korean war, began to move away from the antagonistically anti-imperialist approach to international relations, favouring a more conciliatory and peaceful line that allowed the expansion of the PRC's relations beyond the Soviet bloc (that is, participation in the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung) and the opening of a limited dialogue with Western Europe. Secondly, in the post-1953 period, following the death of Stalin, efforts were undertaken to make the WFDY more pluralistic and less isolated (Cornell 1965, 97-135). The formulation of a more moderate policy aimed at broadening its membership among non-Communist groups and expanding its influence globally (especially among youth from non-bloc countries, that is from newly independent states in Asia, Africa and Latin America) coincided with profound international changes (decolonisation and emergence of newly independent third world countries) and far-reaching events

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that shook the Communist world (1956 repression of the Hungarian revolt, 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union).

Moreover, it should be noted that in the mid-'50s, especially after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – which sanctioned the thesis of the plurality and diversity of the roads to socialism and opened up new opportunities for Communist party autonomy – the ICP's leaders started to feel that "'the strongest communist party in the capitalist world' could become itself an *international political subject*" (Höbel 2005, 516). With a perspective aimed at overcoming military blocs, and firmly anchored in the strategy of peaceful coexistence, Italian Communists tried to formulate their own political agenda. In particular, Palmiro Togliatti elaborated a new original conception based on 'polycentrism', which implied a re-assessment of the traditional leadership role of the Soviet Union within the Communist movement and also led to the ICP's interest and action towards the extra-European world and what came to be known as the 'non-aligned' movement (Galeazzi 2011). Thus, in the mid-'50s the PRC's search for a more autonomous role internationally intertwined with Italian Communists' desire to carve out their own space of action vis-à-vis the USSR.

It is in this context that Hu Yaobang and especially Qian Liren (who was based in Budapest) worked side by side with the President Bruno Bernini. Since his appointment as President of the WFDY in 1953, under the instruction of Togliatti himself, Bruno Bernini strove to make the WFDY representative of different political groups in the world (not necessarily Communist) with the ultimate aim of overcoming international tension and military blocs through the promotion of a dialogue with different forces (such as the non-aligned social democratic youth in Western Europe).[9] Bernini was well aware that such a dialogue and collaboration in the struggle for peace against colonialism, aggression and violence, required the WFDY to overcome any 'partisan' political notion. As it will be further discussed below, these ideas were supported by the leaders of the PRC, whose international status was greatly enhanced at this time.

9 For instance Bernini talked with Olof Palme, the future prime minister of Sweden, who at that time was the leader of the Swedish social democratic youth and favoured cooperation among different youth organisations for the benefit of overcoming military divisions that threatened world peace. Bernini tried for an agreement on cooperation but Palme clearly stated to Bernini that there were still reservations that could be overcome only if the WFDY assumed a more autonomous position internationally and left behind its partisan character [Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, Istituto Storico della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea, Livorno (ISTORECO), Fondo Bernini, 81/1].

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4 The WFDY Initiatives in China

In 1954 the PRC hosted an important international meeting. In August 263 people from 68 countries, including representatives of affiliated youth organisations as well as observers and guests of different political convictions, gathered in Beijing to take part in the work of the WFDY Council.[10] This meeting called for peace and the easing of international tension, the strengthening of the world youth struggle and unity against colonialism, as well as improvement of the living conditions of the young people of newly independent countries in the Third World (World Federation of Democratic Youth 1954).

It was the first time that a WFDY Council was held in Asia and it focused on the problems of the youth movement in colonial and dependent countries. That the choice fell on Beijing was mainly due to recent developments in national liberation movements in colonial countries and, especially, of the Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina, which had brought Asian countries to the centre of world attention and, at the same time, greatly enhanced the international prestige of the 'new China' (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 36-7). Moreover, the place and agenda of the meeting reflected a shift in WFDY work with greater attention reserved for extra-European countries (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 6).

During the WFDY Council, Bernini stressed in his official speech that the establishment of the PRC had been a fact of historical importance – a 'shock for the colonialist world' (World Federation of Democratic Youth 1954, 8) –, and that the victory and constructive endeavours of the Chinese people provided an example and inspiration for colonial countries (Calamandrei 1954, 6). Bernini's analysis fell within the context of renewed attention for the struggle for national liberation in Third World Countries and reflected the views then shared by ICP leaders, who were looking at the victory of the Chinese revolution "not just as an 'extension' of the socialist experience […] but also for the diversity of the process and results", and thus for the intrinsic peculiarity of being "a colonial revolution, a great peasants' rebellion […] which suggested new experiments, new roads to be followed" and, in their opinion, "also seemed to offer new models for a Third World that was experiencing the moment of decolonization" (Pajetta 1976, 7).[11]

Bernini also addressed the question of the specific characteristics of youth in colonial and semi-colonial countries, a point then elaborated upon

10 Among the Italian participants, there was Claudio Vecchi, the delegate of the Youth Commission of the CGIL (Word Federation of Democratic Youth 1954, 46).

11 This appreciation for the distinctive features of the Chinese revolution clearly reflected Italian communists' (especially Palmiro Togliatti's) attention for the plurality of the roads to socialism.

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by the Chinese delegate Liu Daosheng who talked extensively about the national question in these countries, with reference also to the Chinese experience (World Federation of Democratic Youth 1954, 18-20). Liu Daosheng spoke of the need for the youth movement in these countries to be subordinated to the people's struggle for national independence:

> The essential question confronting the broad masses of youth in colonial and semi-colonial countries is a question of oppression by foreign imperialism, a question of national existence. […] the cause of their miserable life lies, first of all, in the lack of national independence and the cruel oppression and exploitation by imperialism. In our country, there were in the past also a number of patriotic youth who held that as long as they developed industry and promoted education, their wishes to make their country strong and prosperous and their people happy could be realized. But the living facts made them gradually realize that only by linking up their individual lot with the lot of the nation as a whole, and by actively participating in the movement for national independence could the nation be saved from perishment and the bright and happy future of youth ensured. (World Federation of Democratic Youth 1954, 18)

Liu went on to stress that "in colonial and semi-colonial countries the struggle against imperialism is inseparable from the struggle for democracy and against feudalism" which is based "on the feudal ownership of land and the oppression of peasants by landlords" (World Federation of Democratic Youth 1954, 18). As such he also touched upon the question of the peasants with whom "all patriotic forces should sympathise" as well as upon the specific role of students within the youth movement:

> Without the peasants' active participation and persistence in the struggle, it would be impossible to win complete victory for the national liberation and democratic liberties of these countries.… The central theme of the youth movement in colonial and semicolonial countries is to organize the broad masses of youth into the struggle against imperialism and feudalism. At the same time, however, it is necessary to pay attention and attach importance to the young people's everyday political, economic and cultural demands… in colonial countries, the young people's most fundamental demands are related to the question of national existence, the question of the right to live, and the question of fundamental democratic rights. […]. It is necessary to pay attention to the position and the role of the student movement […] and to understand the characteristics of the young students of these countries. […] They are comparatively more sensitive politically and are full of patriotic ardour, so they are an important force in the movement for national independence. The experiences of China show that the upsurge of the

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> broad patriotic student movement is combined with the workers' and peasants' movement, as the general aim of both is one and the same. (World Federation of Democratic Youth 1954, 18-19)

These issues were also addressed in an internal document drafted by the CYL Central Committee, entitled *Suggestions and Opinions on Some Questions Related to the WFDY Work in Asian Colonial and Semi-colonial Countries*, which for the first time presented in a systematic way China's opinions regarding the WFDY's work, underlying the importance of adopting methods and approaches that suited the specific conditions and features of Asian countries (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 7, 38-9). The question of the WFDY's work among the peasants became a central theme. Not by chance, soon afterwards (December 1954), young representatives of forty countries (Italy, France, Soviet Union, India, Japan, China, among them) came together at an international gathering on rural youth in Vienna (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 40-2).

Another major initiative was launched by the WFDY two years later. In autumn 1956, an international youth delegation arrived in China following an invitation from Chinese youth organisations. It was not the first time that the WFDY undertook such an initiative. Yet, compared to the 1950 one, the 1956 initiative occurred in a very different context and consisted not only of young activists driven by political ideals but also involved non-affiliated youth and members of youth groups external to the WFDY.

Invited to visit China in November, the delegation – led by Bruno Bernini – was composed of 33 young delegates from different parts of the world (including African and Western European countries), the majority of whom were external to the WFDY. Among them there were representatives of youth organisations of Socialist parties in Belgium and Italy as well as members of Western and Japanese centre or right-wing organisations such as national and international Christian youth associations who despite being sceptical about WFDY intentions – tending to see it as "the tool of the Soviet group to infiltrate the West" – were curious to see the PRC. These invitations were made thanks to the collaboration of the WFDY, which as mentioned above - was striving to come out of isolationism and broaden its membership and influence at that time (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 42-3). As Qian Liren put it in his memories, "without the mutual cooperation between China and the WFDY, it might have been very difficult to form such a largely representative delegation at that time" (Qian 2005, 65-6). The British youth delegate Michael Croft, founder of the National Youth Theatre, soon after his visit wrote that for the leaders of the WFDY, the initiative represented "a major prestige effort, […] to gather under one roof 'all shades of religious and political opinion'" (Croft 1958, 14).

For China, the initiative was undoubtedly a great opportunity in its efforts to impress Western delegates with its achievements in the construc-

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tion of socialism, to make them appreciate its weight and importance as a world power and to show – especially to those delegates who tended to equate communism with limited freedom – the human side of the Communist regime. Visitors were thus allowed a certain degree of freedom in the travel plan (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 43). Not by chance, this initiative took place at a time of unfolding intellectual liberalization in China and in coincidence with the Hungarian crisis that shocked the world, projecting a negative image of the Soviet Union worldwide. At the same time, it was part of China's renewed openness to the outside world. In point of fact, the mid-'50s saw a spectacular increase in exchanges of delegations between Communist China and Western countries (including Italy) involving different sectors of society (on exchanges between China and Western Europe see De Giorgi 2014).

During his stay in China, the young Michael Croft clearly got the impression that the delegation business was a major development in the Chinese campaign to win friends and influence public opinion in foreign countries. He defined it a 'national advertising' effort driven by China's desire to be seen in the world as a respectable country:

> Respectability is the precursor to expanding trade, to a place in the United Nations, to the evacuation of American troops from Taiwan… […] So the delegate is a vital import, whether he comes to talk business, to examine churches, to investigate intellectual freedom or, like myself, merely to look around. He may be one of many, but he is one who matters. (Croft 1958, 38-9)

As such, in the '50s the WFDY offered the newly established PRC a crucial avenue for contacts with the external world, not limited to the People's Democracies and Communist groups in the West. At the same time, it offered foreign youth the opportunity to develop links with Chinese youth and its leaders as well as to visit China at a time when travelling to the PRC was generally not possible, unless it occurred within the framework of formally organised delegations. It is within this framework and thanks to the WFDY initiatives in the PRC that Bruno Bernini had the chance to meet and talk to Chinese leaders such as Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, and to visit the PRC. It is to his experience and memoirs that we now turn our attention.

5 Encountering Maoist China: Bruno Bernini's Experience and Memories

As mentioned above, Italian Communists held a prominent position within the WFDY, holding the presidency for almost a decade: Bruno Bernini

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followed Enrico Berlinguer as president of the organisation from 1953 to 1959. As an antifascist partisan from Livorno, Bernini joined the ICP in 1943. With World War II at an end, he became a member of the National Secretariat of the Youth Front, and in 1950, a leading member of the reorganised FGCI. In 1953, after the death of Stalin, he was appointed president of the WFDY and from that point until 1959, he lived in Budapest where the organisation's headquarters is located. Holding such a position, he developed a passion for international issues and worked side by side with the leaders of the youth of different countries, including the Chinese Qian Liren, who in the early 1950s served as director of China's CYL International Liaison Department, as well as the national secretary of China's Youth League, Hu Yaobang, who became vice-president of the WFDY in 1953 at the time when – as mentioned above – China joined the Secretariat. In addition, Bruno Bernini was to visit Mao's China twice during his mandate in the early and mid-1950s, first on the occasion of the WFDY Council in Beijing and then as part of the 1956 international youth delegation to the PRC.

Bernini could thus personally witness China's assuming a more active role within the WFDY but also see disagreement emerging between Chinese and Soviet representatives as early as 1954 over issues such as the priorities of the youth of the Third World. In his efforts towards making the WFDY more open and pluralistic, while encountering resistance from Soviet leaders, he got instead full support by CCP leaders with whom he was able to talk during his sojourns in China. In 1954, during a meeting he had with Zhou Enlai (then Minister of Foreign Affairs and Premier of the PRC) – a man he described as "extraordinarily affable" – Bernini was first reassured that China's CYL fully supported the WFDY's policy of openness.[12] Later, in the autumn of 1956, when Bernini returned to China as part of the joint international youth delegation, he met Mao Zedong, who also expressed his support for the renewal of the WFDY, stating that a federation that was a rough copy of the Cominform had no reason to exist. Instead – as Bernini recalls – Mao expressed himself in favour of transforming the WFDY into an organisation that could unite Communist youth with all those youth forces in the capitalist world that, despite not aspiring to socialism, did not tolerate American domination and wanted to affirm the autonomy of their people and safeguard world peace.[13]

Conversations with Chinese leaders also covered the theme of the Italian Communists' policy, albeit marginally. During the meeting with Zhou Enlai in 1954, Bernini discovered a profound interest in the ICP's historical experience of the united front among the youth in Italy, as well as an ap-

12 Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, ISTORECO, Fondo Bernini, 87.

13 Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, ISTORECO, Fondo Bernini, 97.

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preciation for Togliatti's contribution to overcoming Communist isolationism or sectarianism at the 7th Congress of the Communist International (summer 1935).[14]

The conversation also touched upon issues relating to the current political debate at that time, including the theme of nuclear war and the end of civilisation, about which Togliatti had spoken only a few months earlier when addressing the ICP Central Committee. As it is known, this question would become a crucial point of divergence between Moscow and Beijing later in 1957 when, at the Moscow conference, which Shen Zhihua and Xia Yafeng defined as a turning point in Sino-Soviet relations, Mao expressed his reservations about the policy of 'peaceful coexistence' being promoted by the new Soviet leadership, pointing instead to the possibility of war and stating that in case of a nuclear war the whole world would become socialist (Shen, Xia 2009).[15] Mao's attitude reflected a radical turn in Chinese politics. By the time of the Moscow conference, Mao's awareness of the PRC's newfound confidence and influence in the international Communist movement, and his determination to raise his 'continuous revolution' to a higher level within the country had, to a large extent been enhanced by Beijing's experience of both the Polish and Hungarian crises, which had a profound impact on the orientation of China's domestic and international politics (Chen Jian 2001, 68-71, 145-62). Mao's famous speech of 18 November 1957 in Moscow, especially his speculation about a nuclear war and its consequence, stirred confusion and caused strong reactions after the meeting (Shen, Xia 2009, 111). Disagreements on this theme would intensify over the next decade not just with the Soviet leadership, but also with important protagonists of other Communist parties in Europe. Of all the party leaders, Togliatti was certainly a strong supporter of the need for peace. In fact, having been persuaded of the need to appeal to Catholic masses, and to find a common ground that could unite the Communist and Catholic groups within Italy, Togliatti had adopted the thesis that a thermonuclear war would lead to global destruction and mark the end of civilisation as early as April 1954, one month after it had first been discussed by Malenkov (Agosti 2003, 416-17; Pons 2012, 285-6).

Interestingly, according to Bernini's memoirs, Zhou Enlai told him that the "safeguarding of peace assumed a new importance in the atomic era", but also pointed out that such a war would not necessarily and inevitably

14 Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, ISTORECO, Fondo Bernini, 87. Indeed, Togliatti had played an important role in reorienting the communist movement in the mid-'30s, pushing forward a new strategy based on 'popular fronts' against fascism and linking communism with anti-fascism (Agosti 2003, 191-7).

15 For an annotated translation of the complete texts of Mao Zedong's speeches at the Moscow Conference see Schoenhals (1986), in particular Mao's remarks on the theme of a nuclear war (speech of 18 November) at the pages 118-19.

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mark the end of humanity and of socialism, thus leaving the question open for further discussion.[16] Bernini's memoirs therefore suggest that the theme of war and peace was an issue over which divergences might have existed, albeit still hidden, well before 1957.

Working side by side with Chinese representatives also gave Bernini the opportunity to gain more knowledge of China's approach to and conception of international relations at a time when – as he wrote in his memoirs – during meetings with different leaders of the Socialist countries he could perceive emerging drives towards national autonomy, despite the Soviet leaders' continued rally-call for the USSR to take the leading role.[17] It was during a visit to Korea where he went in 1954 as head of a youth delegation that he would learn from the Chinese Liu Xiyuan,[18] who accompanied him, what he would define as "a conception of friendship and internationalism, heavily anchored to the respect for the principles of autonomy and national sovereignty", a notion that Bernini appreciated and with which he could fully identify. [19] On 17th November 1956, at a time of both unfolding intellectual liberalization at the domestic level and renewed openness towards the outside world, Bernini was present when Deng Xiaoping, then Secretary General of the CCP, met and talked to the delegation members (Gongqingtuan zhongyang guoji lianluobu 2009, 43). According to the available Chinese transcript, the first topic covered by Deng concerned the meaning of being a Communist party member and the nexus between Marxist universal principles and the specific Chinese context (Deng 1956). The British delegate Michael Croft then asked two main questions that brought up disputable topics. Aside from the Chinese government policy towards Hungary and Egypt (both the Hungarian crisis and the Suez crisis broke out during the delegation's visit), he enquired about the Chinese leaders' conception of the freedom of the press (Croft 1958, 251-6). Years later, Bernini would remember that Deng Xiaoping replied to the question by the British delegate on the lack of freedom of the press in China, stating that

> 'every country has its particular internal rule, related to current difficulties' and 'today the essential thing – internationally – was not the concern over internal limits of other countries but rather the cooperation based on mutual respect and interest, so as to overcome the backwardness and facilitate the progress of every people': and 'this is

16 Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, ISTORECO, Fondo Bernini, 87.

17 Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, ISTORECO, Fondo Bernini, 84/3.

18 Liu Xiyuan in 1952 had been deputy head of the youth department of the political office of the People's Liberation Army.

19 Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, ISTORECO, Fondo Bernini, 85-6.

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> the meaning of our government's international commitment, aimed at developing relations of collaboration and exchange with every country, that, besides being of mutual interest – is also decisive to overcome prejudices and build world peace'.[20]

At the same time, Bernini's travels to China also allowed him to appreciate the enormity of the task Chinese leaders had undertaken for the development of the country, as well as their willingness to show foreigners not just the achievements in the construction of socialism but also the conditions of extreme poverty in which the population lived:

> For me, it was the first World Council in which I participated as President and it was the first time that an important meeting of the WFDY was held in the People's Republic of China. I remember that we were received with large youth demonstrations; then, the unforgettable visits to Monuments and historical sites in Beijing – in particular, the Imperial Palace and the Great Wall; and at last, the tours in the most decayed areas of the city, with so many people, women and children, who lived in shanties in conditions of backwardness beyond words: this in order that we understood – Hu Yao Ban [Hu Yaobang] told me – the enormous endeavour of reconstruction and development 'the New China was striving for'.[21]

From his travels to China, Bernini clearly was left with a profoundly positive impression of the country and the potential of the PRC's contribution to peaceful international change. As he put it,

> From those travels in China, from the unforgettable experiences I had – of an immense people, exhausted by backwardness and poverty from which it was determined to free itself – and from the relations I had with the leaders of the youth and the Party – Hu Yao Ban [Hu Yaobang], Ciu En Lay [Zhou Enlai] and Die Xiao Pin [Deng Xiaoping] – I became convinced not only of the importance of the contribution that would come for the WFDY renewal, but also of the important contribution that the New China would make to the development of new relations of international collaboration and, especially, between the industrialised North and the Countries of the Third World, crucial for both the progress of the peoples and of world peace.[22]

20 Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, ISTORECO, Fondo Bernini, 88.

21 Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, ISTORECO, Fondo Bernini, 86.

22 Bruno Bernini autobiographical manuscript, ISTORECO, Fondo Bernini, 88.

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6 Conclusion

In the ’50s Chinese and Italian Communists could rely on a wide network of national and international organisations that allowed the establishment and development of early contacts and exchanges. This article has shown that international political activism played an important role in this respect: the WFDY provided a few Italian Communists with the opportunity to visit Mao’s China and gain direct insight into the approach and policies of Chinese leaders. These early experiences contributed to laying the groundwork for party-to-party bilateral exchanges in the mid and late-’50s. At the same time, left-wing international activities allowed China to create personal links with foreign leaders at the very early stage of their career that could eventually prove useful years later. This can be seen for example in the fact that at the beginning of 1979, when the CCP laid the basis for resuming its relations with the ICP after sixteen years, Wu Xueqian, then deputy-director of the CCP External Liaison Department, was chosen as the most suitable person to be sent to Rome for a secret meeting with ICP representatives because of his youthful experiences at the international level, which had allowed him to become acquainted with Enrico Berlinguer, who had since become the national secretary of the ICP (Wang, Zhu 1992, 376-7). Early contacts among young representatives also turned into long-lasting bonds of friendship. According to Antonio Rubbi’s memoirs, in the ’80s – when relations among Communist parties had been resumed – Hu Yaobang never missed the opportunity to invite both Ugo Pecchioli and Bruno Bernini to China. At the end of every meeting of party representatives, he would ask the Italians to tell Pecchioli and Bernini he wished to see them (Rubbi 1992, 299).

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