Words of Power, the Power of Words

The Twentieth-Century Communist Discourse in International Perspective

Edited by

Giulia Bassi

EUT

Studi di Storia
6

EUT – Ricerca

Collana
"Studi di Storia"

COMITATO SCIENTIFICO

ISBN 978-88-5511-086-0 (print)
ISBN 978-88-5511-087-7 (online)

Opera sottoposta a peer review secondo il protocollo
UPI – University Press Italiane

Volume distribuito in *open access*
e disponibile nell'archivio digitale OpenstarTs
https://www.openstarts.units.it/handle/10077/9314

Impaginazione Gabriella Clabot

Words of Power,
the Power of Words
The Twentieth-Century Communist
Discourse in International Perspective

Edited by Giulia Bassi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART IV.
BEYOND EUROPE:
WOR(L)D COMMUNISM IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY

INTRODUCTION
WHY SHOULD THE LINGUISTIC TURN BE TAKEN?

Giulia Bassi

(Università del Piemonte Orientale 'Amedeo Avogadro')

La storia della semantica è un aspetto della storia della cultura.
Antonio Gramsci, Quaderno XVIII[1]

This volume presents a collection of nineteen essays on the history of international communism during the twentieth century. Specifically, communist political parties and movements are investigated here through an interdisciplinary methodological prism, which combines the analysis of political-cultural processes with the study of political discourse through qualitative and quantitative textual or iconographic analyses.

This book is a product of the development of a research project conducted primarily by a group of Italian historians on the language of the Italian Communist Party. In addition to myself, the research group consisted of Roberto Colozza, Enrico Mannari, Andrea Mariuzzo and, above all, Franco Andreucci, who was the first in Italy to look at communism from a cultural, linguistic, and discourse analysis perspective. The study began with the eighth national conference of historical workshops for the Società Italiana per lo Studio della Storia Contemporanea (SISSCO, Italian Society for the Study of Contemporary History), held in Viterbo between 14th and 16th September 2015. The proposed panel of studies, entitled *"Semantic history", "Cultural history". The ICP through images and words: a conceptual and methodological interdisciplinary proposal* was the first opportunity to develop a study of these issues and it was well received in the Italian historiographical field. Subsequently, thanks to the ideas, advice and suggestions resulting

---

[1]   "The history of semantics is a facet of the history of culture".

from presentations and debates in various seminar venues, the national and disciplinary perspective has expanded in an international and global sense to include the work of other authors, historians and linguists on communism in other European countries and across the world.

The starting point of the research was the shared recognition of a critical delay in adopting an analytical angle of a cultural nature and, to an even greater extent, in adopting linguistic-discursive approaches to the studies of Italian communism.[2] As the opportunities for comparison and experiences of research have all highlighted, this tendency derived from a more general repudiation of the interdisciplinarity that political and party historiography 'inherited' from the historicist vision that from Antonio Gramsci refers back to Benedetto Croce's philosophical approach, though naturally of a different political stamp. In fact, it is possible to note a similar distrust also within social history studies, dominated by a perspective that we could trace back to the idea of a general 'primacy of politics'. It is no coincidence that a part of Marxist historiography did not look favourably, at least until the 1960s, upon the studies of Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, or Fernand Braudel.[3]

In particular, as far as lexicon studies are concerned, it seemed almost as if this reluctance sometimes echoed the traditional distrust of the language issues revealed by Marxism in the first half of the twentieth century. In the mid 1920s, Nikolaj J. Marr advocated a theory of the super-structural and class character of language, which, according to the Georgian linguist, was determined by the economic basis of society.[4] Despite the fact that Valentin N. Vološinov had expressed his criticism and proposed a less mechanistic alternative vision in 1929,[5] in the 1930s Marr's views were promoted to being the official Soviet linguistic doctrine,[6] gaining great popularity. In 1948, in *Izvestija Akademii nauk sssr*, Lazar O. Rèznikov claimed that the idealistic theory of language was the prerogative of 'bourgeois' philosophers, psychologists and linguists,

---

[2]   With the exception of the most recent historiography, which includes the authors present in this volume. For a reconstruction of these gaps see Giulia Bassi, "Discipline and Organisation: Performativity and Revolutionary Semantics in Gramsci's and Togliatti's Texts (1916-1928)", 3-25.

[3]   See Eric J. Hobsbawm's essay, "From Social History to the History of Society", *Daedalus. Historical Studies Today*, 100, 1 (1971): pp. 20-45.

[4]   Only as an example, Nikolaj Jakovlevič Marr, *Grammatika drevneliteratunogo gruzinskogo jazyka* (Leningrad, 1925). See also Lawrence L. Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957).

[5]   Valentin Nikolaevič Vološinov, *Marksizm i Filosofija Jazyka* (Leningrad, 1929). See the Italian translation which, unlike the English one, also contains the author's introduction: *Marxismo e filosofia del linguaggio* (Bari: Dedalo, 1976).

[6]   Until, in 1950, it was contested by Stalin himself for "antimarxism", Iosif Vissarionovič Džugašvili (Stalin), "Marksìzm i vapròsy iasykosnànija", *Pravda* (1950).

such as Ernst Cassirer, Bertrand Russell, Henri Delacroix, and Ferdinand de Saussure, or Joseph Vendryes, Karl Bühler, and Edward Sapir. Precisely because of its 'bourgeois' character, according to the Russian semiologist, it could only be "anti-scientific" and "reactionary", serving to "smuggle into the field of linguistics the most noxious agnostic concepts".[7] If in Marxist orthodoxy the verbal expression, the word, was interpreted as a mere "reflection of reality in the form of sound",[8] it followed that the revelation of its performative relevance should be somehow reduced, if not completely denied, minimizing the importance of language in the hierarchical scale of matters worthy of analysis. Marr's theory, beyond Stalin's (political) refutation, survived transversely in later writings.

This attitude, by reflection, has probably also conditioned a part of historiography and studies on communism for a long time, given that many works seem to have been oriented – to use Marxist terminology – mainly towards the analysis of 'structures', that is the economic, political, even social factors, rather than the 'superstructure', that is the cultural, symbolic, identarian, or linguistic aspects.

As in the case of Italy, studies on international communism have tended to opt for investigations of a political or, more recently, social nature, avoiding analytical perspectives of a cultural or linguistic-discursive nature. In this sense, it is significant that in a magazine such as *Twentieth Century Communism*, published by Lawrence & Wishart since 2009, neither essays nor pamphlets on communist lexicons have been published.[9] Rare have been the works that look at Western communism from a purely linguistic perspective. With regard to French communism, for example, there is only one important exception, that of the studies of Jean Baptiste Marcellesi, who is, significantly, a linguist and not a historian.[10] In general, in fact, historians such as Philippe Buton have analysed the French Communist Party according to a traditional historiographic approach, focusing on issues of strategy and political organisation.[11] Even an authority

---

[7]   Lazar Osipovǐc Reznikov, "Izvestija Akademii nauk SSSR. Otdelenie literatury i jazyka", VII, 5, "Del linguaggio e della sua natura. Contributo ad una critica delle teorie idealistiche del linguaggio", in *Rassegna della stampa sovietica*, 1-2 (1949): 57. See also Lazar Osipovǐc Reznikov, *Semiotica e marxismo. I problemi gnoseologici della semiotica* (Milano: Bompiani, 1967).

[8]   Reznikov, "Izvestija Akademii nauk SSSR. Otdelenie literatury i jazyka".

[9]   Wirsching's essay, "Violence as discourse?", is an exception. Emblematically, Issue 9, published in August 2015 and dedicated to the *Cultural Turn* in the studies on communist parties and movements, does not contain essays with a linguistic theme or approach.

[10]   See for example Jean Baptiste Marcellesi: *Le congrès de Tours (décembre 1920): études sociolinguistiques* (Paris, Le Pavillon, [1971]; *Linguaggio e classi sociali. Marrismo e stalinismo* (Bari: Dedalo, 1978).

[11]   Compare for example Philippe Buton's titles: "L'organizzazione del PCF nella prima metà degli anni cinquanta", *Sinistra e il '56 in Italia e Francia*, ed. by Bruno Groppo and Gianni Riccamboni (Padova: Liviana, 1987); *Le parti communiste français à la libération, stratégie et implantation* ([Lille]: A.N.R.T.

in the studies of French communism such as Marc Lazar, the protagonist of an important historiographic renewal attentive to the cultural and symbolic aspects of politics, did not investigate the strictly linguistic and discursive field.[12] There are also no works on Spanish communism focusing on the lexicon. Studies on the subject have in fact dealt with Spanish[13] and Catalan[14] communism and socialism in the form of historical-factual reconstruction, especially with reference to the 1936-1939 civil war. This trend can also explain the longstanding cultural lacuna within works on other Spanish-speaking communist parties, such as the Cuban one.[15]

With the exception of the Cuban case, this lack of attention does not seem to extend to studies on national communism in countries where communism has been in power, a fact, however, which must be considered in the light of studies on the relationship between totalitarianism and language, developed especially since the 1970s in conjunction with the linguistic turn,[16] but with important precedents already in the late '40s

---

Université de Lille III, 1989); *Les lendemains qui déchantent: le Parti communiste français à la libération* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1993); *Communisme. Une utopie en sursis: les logiques d'un système* (Paris: Larousse, 2001).

[12] For Marc Lazar, see for example: *Maisons rouges. Les partis communistes français et italien de la Libération à nos jours* (Paris: Aubier, 1992); *Le communisme. Une passion française* (Paris: Perrin, 2005). See also Marie-Claire Lavabre, *Le fil rouge. Sociologie de la mémoire communiste* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1994).

[13] See for example: David Tredwell Cattell, *Communism and the Spanish Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955); *El Partido Comunista Español, Italiano y Francés, cara al poder*, ed. by Mariangela Bosi and Hugues Portelli (Madrid: Editorial Cambio 16, 1977); Gregorio Morán, *Miseria y grandeza del Partido Comunista de España 1939-1985* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1986); Rafael Cruz, *El Partido Comunista de España en la Segunda República* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1987).

[14] See Pere Ysàs: *La transició a Catalunya i Espanya* (Barcelona: Fundació Doctor Lluís Vila d'Abadal, 1997); "El movimiento obrero durante el franquismo. De la resistencia a la movilización (1940-1975)", *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 30 (2009): 165-184. And Carme Molinero: with Pere Ysàs, *Els Anys of the PSUC [Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya]. El partit de l'antifranquisme (1956-1981)* (Barcelona: L'Avenç, 2010); with Pere Ysàs, *Las izquierdas en tiempos de transición* (València Universitat de València [2016]).

[15] An exception is the essay by Lincoln Cushing, "Republic of Cuba, 1959", *Communist Posters*, ed. by Mary Ginsberg (London: Reaktion Books, 2017), 320-367, dedicated to the iconographic political propaganda of the Cuban revolution.

[16] With regards to this see: Jean-Pierre Faye, *Langages totalitaires. Critique de la raison narrative, l'économie* (Paris: Hermann et Cie., 1972) and the more recent *Introduction aux langages totalitaires. Théorie et transformations du récit* (Paris: Hermann, 2002); Ruth Wodak, *Language, Power, and Ideology: Studies in Political Discourse* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1988); *Translation under fascism*, ed. by Christopher Rundle and Kate Sturge (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Specifically on the lexicon of German national socialism see, for example: Iris Forster, *Euphemistische Sprache im Nationalsozialismus: Schichten, Funktionen, Intensität* (Bremen: Hempen, 2009); William J. Dodd, *National Socialism and German Discourse: Unquiet Voices* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan,

and '50s.[17] The analyses on the Soviet lexicon and on the languages of the satellite countries are, in fact, rich and copious, and almost exclusively the prerogative of linguists, more rarely of historians. In addition to some collective works that investigated various aspects of the communist lexicon of the former Soviet-influenced area, such as the one edited by Petre Petrov and Larissa Ryazanova-Clarke,[18] most of the studies of this type focused on the totalitarian character of the communist lexicon or on the Bolshevization of the lexicons of the working-class republics, thanks to the work of important authors,[19] including Mikhail Ėpshteĭn on the Soviet Union[20] and František Čermák on Czechoslovakia.[21] Others, on the other hand, in collected works such as those edited by Paul A. Chilton, Mikhail M. Il'inskiĭ and Jacob Mey,[22] or by John S. Dryzek and

---

2018). On the language of Italian fascism see: Giovanni Lazzari, *Le parole del fascismo* (Roma: Argileto, 1975); Augusto Simonini, *Il linguaggio di Mussolini* (Milano: Bompiani, 1978); Paola Desideri, *Teoria e prassi del discorso politico. Strategie persuasive e discorsi comunicativi* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1984); Enzo Golino, *Parola di duce. Il linguaggio totalitario del fascismo* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1994); *Credere, obbedire, combattere. Il regime linguistico nel Ventennio*, ed. by Fabio Foresti (Bologna: Pendragon, 2003).

[17] Victor Klemperer's work, *The Language of the Third Reich. Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist's Notebook*, is a landmark book (Berlin[-Ost]: Aufbau-Verlag, 1947). See also Harold Dwight Lasswell, *Language of Politics: Studies in Quantitative Semantics* (New York: G.W. Stewart, 1949).

[18] See *The Vernaculars of Communism: Language, Ideology and Power in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Petre Petrov and Larissa Ryazanova-Clarke (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

[19] See for example Beatrix Kress, *Totalitarian Political Discourse? Tolerance and Intolerance in Eastern and East Central European Countries: Diachronic and Synchronoc Aspects in Collaboration with Karsten Senkbeil* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012). On the influence of the Russian language on the GDR German language see: Kurt Buttke, "Zur Rolle und Bedeutung der russischen Sprache in der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung der DDR", *Der Große Oktober und die russische Sprache*, ed. by Valerij V. Ivanov (Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1977), 77-93; Heidi Lehmann, *Russisch-deutsche Lehnbeziehungen im Wortschatz offizieller Wirtschaftstexte der DDR* (Düsseldorf: Pädagogischer Verlag Schwann, 1972); Richard E. Wood, "Russian Influences in the German of East Germany", *Pacific Coast Philology*, 6 (1971): pp. 60-64. For the Italian language, see Vincenzo Orioles' entry "Russismi" in the Treccani *online encyclopaedia* (2011): http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/russismi_(Enciclopedia-dell'Italiano)/, last accessed on 3 June 2019.

[20] Mikhail Ėpshteĭn, *Relativistic Patterns in Totalitarian Thinking: An Inquiry into the Language of Soviet Ideology* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center, Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, 1991). See also *State and Political Discourse in Russia*, ed. by Nadežda Ažgihina, Giancarlo Bosetti, *et al.* (Roma: Reset DOC, 2017).

[21] František Čermák, *Slovník komunistické totality* (Praha: NLN, 2011); František Čermák, "Jazyk totality a dneška: jak odráží realitu a ovlivňuje lidské vědomí", *Jazyk v politických, ideologických a inter-kultúrnych vzťahoch, Sociolinguistica Slovaca 8,* ed. by Julia Wachtarczyková, Lucia Satinská and Slavomír Ondrejovič (Bratislava: Veda, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2015), 50-60. See also Věra Schmiedtová, *Malý slovník reálií komunistické totality* (Praha: Nakl. Lidové Noviny, 2012).

[22] *Political Discourse in Transition in Europe, 1989-1991*, ed. by Paul A. Chilton, Mikhail Mikhaĭlovich Il'inskiĭ, and Jacob Mey (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publisher, 1998).

Leslie Holmes,[23] have investigated the discursive transformation and the changes in languages during the difficult period of transition of the States of the former Soviet bloc,[24] including the countries of the Russian Federation.[25] Similar considerations can be made with regard to the studies on Chinese communism, thanks for example to the work of linguists such as Fengyuan Ji and Xing Lu.[26]

An analysis of communism from a cultural and, above all, linguistic point of view seems therefore to have suffered so far from time constraints and to have remained anchored to certain geographical areas. The reluctance to depart from the schematics of Marxism and Marxist historiography, in fact, seems paradoxically to have come more, and more extensively, from the studies on communism in those countries where there has never been a communist State. During the second half of the twentieth century, the gradual transformation of the communist parties of Western Europe into 'constituent' parties of democratic systems (weakening or profoundly transforming the original revolutionary framework) probably contributed to anchoring identity and sense of belonging to the Marxist ideology, compromised to a lesser extent by the logics of power and the coercive and repressive policies of authoritarian regimes. Today, with the transformations in the international scientific panorama that have been triggered since the end of the Soviet system, the progressive shift of interest from the parties towards more 'fluid' political realities, to use a Bauman term,[27] does not facilitate the return of analyses centred on the great political mediation agencies of the twentieth century, nor the development of attention to their language.

---

[23] *Post-communist Democratization: Political Discourses Across Thirteen Countries*, ed. by John S. Dryzek and Leslie Holmes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[24] In *Post-communist Democratization* see for example the cases of Yugoslavia, written with Siniša Nikolin (pp. 57-75); of Slovakia, with Stefan Auer and Antoaneta Dimitrova (173-189); of Romania, with Bogdan Chiritoiu (190-205); of Bulgaria, with Antoaneta Dimitrova (206-221); of Poland (225-239); and of the Czech Republic (240-252).

[25] In *Post-communist Democratization* see the cases of Belarus (pp. 79-91) of Russia, written with Tatiana Rogovskaia (92-113); of Ukraine, written with Victor Hohots and Kyrylo Loukerenko (114-130); of Armenia (133-146), of Georgia (147-157), and of Moldova (158-169). In *The Vernaculars of Communism*: Larissa Ryazanova-Clarke, "Linguistic Mnemonics: the Communist Language Variety in Contemporary Russian Public Discourse" (169-195); Ilya Kukulin, "'The Golden Age of Soviet Antiquity': Sovietisms in the Discourse of Left-wing Political Movements in post-Soviet Russia, 1991-2013" (196-220).

[26] For example, *Chinese Communication Studies Contexts and Comparisons*, ed. by Xing Lu *et al.* (Westport Greenwood Publishing Group Ann Arbor: Michigan ProQuest, 2002); Fengyuan Ji, *Linguistic Engineering: Language and Politics in Mao's China* (Honololulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004); Xing Lu, *The rhetoric of Mao Zedong: Transforming China and its People* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2017). See also: Yali Peng, "China", *Post-communist Democratization*, 33-56; *Words and Their Stories: Essays on the Language of the Chinese Revolution*, ed. by Ban Wang (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011).

[27] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

Yet, language studies, even from a diachronic perspective, have long been an important field of study that, since the 1970s, has been and still is able to illuminate important aspects of the past that cannot be detected if tackled through 'more classical' methodological approaches. In 1985, the linguist Teun A. van Dijk noted that the historical analysis of discourse – in this volume addressed from various methodological perspectives – was not recognized as a discipline until a few decades previously.[28] This statement presupposes the fact that, *already* in 1985, the historical analysis of discourse was a discipline that had been recognised and established for some time.

Starting from the last thirty years of the twentieth century, in fact, the process whereby the humanities opened their specific methods of analysis to suggestions from other disciplines has accelerated. Language, both as an object and as a perspective of analysis, has acquired a place of particular importance, if not of primary importance, in this process of methodological hybridization, and continues to retain it in the international panorama of the humanities and social sciences. Among these, studies on language, renewed from a multidisciplinary analytical perspective, have played a particularly important, if not prominent, role in the later success, longevity, and incisiveness of the humanities and social sciences within the international panorama. It was the Austrian philosopher Gustav Bergmann who was the first to use the useful expression "linguistic turn" in his 1960 review of a book by the English analytical philosopher Peter F. Strawson.[29] However, the expression became known above all through the publication, in 1967, of the anthology *The Linguistic Turn* by Richard M. Rorty.[30] In the introduction, before reviewing some essays by the most important philosophers of the period, including Bergmann himself, the American thinker noted that the convergence of interest in language studies even dates back to the period between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Even the historiographic sector has been able to benefit from this scientific renewal, developing a research very different from the traditional one, passing from new cultural history[31] to the radical narrativistic interpretation of history.[32] The greater communica-

---

[28]   Teun A. van Dijk, *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 4 vols. (London: Academic Press, 1985).

[29]   Peter Frederick Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen & Co., 1959). Gustav Bergmann's review, "Strawson's Ontology", *Journal of Philosophy*, 57, 19 (1960):601-622.

[30]   Richard M. Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn. Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), then republished as *The Linguistic Turn. Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[31]   See for example *The New Cultural History*, ed. by Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[32]   The reference is to Hayden White, *Metahistory. The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

tion between the different disciplinary sectors,[33] the diffusion of the postmodern paradigm that adopted the need for a reinterpretation of history free from any finalism,[34] the attention to traditionally little-investigated cognitive fields, such as linguistic,[35] cultural and symbolic phenomena,[36] or the logics of power,[37] are all factors that have laid the foundations for the gradual abandonment of a positivist historiographic analysis, which looked at 'reality' as an 'objective' datum in favour of a more 'secular' and 'disenchanted' cognitive approach.

In particular for the studies of history and linguistics, the 1980s saw the proliferation of a series of approaches specialized in the analysis of speech from either or both a synchronous and diachronic point of view. Here we need look no further than the most popular ones, such as historical discourse analysis, historical text linguistics, historical pragmatics and historical semantics. By establishing an interdisciplinary field, combining study of the past with the study of language, the historical analysis of discourse and semantic history can proceed through different approaches, following different directions and perspectives of analysis. Laurel J. Brinton in 2001 described in particular three basic approaches. First, the so-called historical discourse analysis, that is a historical analysis of language from a synchronic perspective. Secondly, the discourse-oriented historical linguistics, that is, an investigation of pragmatic-discursive factors from a diachronic perspective. Thirdly, the diachronic(ally oriented) discourse analysis, which is a synthesis of the previous two, which interweaves synchronic historical analysis and diachronic historical analysis of the text.[38]

---

[33] Between history, anthropology, sociology, linguistics and psychology.

[34] Postmodernism: "In Western philosophy, a late twentieth century movement characterized by broad scepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power", in https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy, last accessed on 3 June 2019.

[35] From the studies of Ludwig Wittgenstein, as in *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922), up to the 'linguistic acts' of John Langshaw Austin, *How to do Things with Words: the William James Lectures, Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

[36] It could be traced back to the analysis of the archetypes of Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 9 (London: Routledge & Paul, 1959), and up to Clifford Geertz's 'culture-as-text', *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[37] The reference is in particular to the studies of Michel Foucault, for example *L'Ordre du discours* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1971); and then to those of Pierre Bourdieu, as in *Ce que parler veut dire. L'économie des échanges linguistiques* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1982).

[38] Laurel J. Brinton, *Historical Discourse Analysis*, *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi Hamilton (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 138-160.

The development of information technology and consequently of digital humanities, especially in France and in the Anglo-Saxon countries, has subsequently enriched the historical-linguistic perspective in terms of automatic analysis of texts.[39] While quantitative IT approaches have given scholars the opportunity to investigate large amounts of data, computational analysis – or corpus linguistics – has attempted to explore the linguistic regularity of texts through the use of such tools.[40] In recent years, a type of investigation that attempts to combine the qualitative and quantitative analysis of texts into a single approach of methodological hybridization, called Corpora in Discourse Analysis, has also become more widespread. These studies are based on the linguistic research carried out by Norman Fairclough, Paul Baker, and Ruth Wodak at Lancaster University in the UK, and by Michael Stubbs at the Universität Trier in Germany.[41]

No less important are the studies on iconic and iconographic language, which are fundamental for understanding historical change since, as Pierre Bourdieu explained, "the 'eye' is a product of history reproduced by education".[42] Even studies on iconic language, or visual studies, have taken shape since the 1970s within cultural studies, in conjunction with the linguistic turn and the growing importance that the image has taken on in modern consumer society, to the point of Guy Debord referring to his 'spectacular domain'.[43] Born in the artistic field but then extended to other humanities and social disciplines,[44] visual studies have increasingly gained their own autonomy, diversi-

---

[39] On the advantages offered by corpus linguistics, a branch of computational linguistics, to a historiographic investigation of quantitative methods, see "Tra linguistica e storia: incroci metodologici e percorsi di ricerca", ed. by Francesca Socrate and Carlotta Sorba, *Contemporanea*, 2 (2013): 285-333.

[40] See, just as an example, *Using Corpora to Explore Linguistic Variation*, ed. by Randi Reppen, Susan M. Fitzmaurice, and Douglas Biber (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002); *Corpus Linguistics: Investigating Language Structure and Use*, ed. by Douglas Biber, Susan Conrad, and Randi Reppen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[41] See for example: Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London; New York: Longman, 1989); Paul Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (London: Continuum, 2006); Ruth Wodak, for example in *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, ed. by Ruth Wodak *et al.* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2016); Michael Stubbs, *Words and Phrases: Corpus Studies of Lexical Semantics* (London: Blackwell, 2002).

[42] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 3.

[43] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Canberra: Hobgoblin Press, 2002).

[44] As in *New Perspectives in Iconology: Visual Studies and Anthropology*, ed. by Barbara Baert *et al.* (Brussels: Academic and Scientific Publishers, 2011).

fying and specializing in types of approaches – rhizomatic, narrative, cognitive, semiotic, aesthetic, ethical –[45] leading even to studies on language and political propaganda.[46]

Beyond the specificities of all these interpretative models of studies on language and of the hybridizations between different approaches, what we want to underline once again is the *importance* that language has assumed, since the mid-1970s, in the scientific analysis of the humanistic and social disciplines, of history first and foremost, but also the *longevity* of these theoretical researches and their practical uses within the panorama of historical studies at an international level, at least since the mid-1980s.

In the face of all these considerations, then, the methodological lacuna and the lack of interest in cultural and linguistic issues highlighted here through the studies on national and international communism appear even more serious. "Why should the linguistic turn be taken?", Bergmann had already asked back in the late 1950s. For three fundamental reasons, the philosopher replied:

> *First*. Words are used either ordinarily (commonsensically) or philosophically. On this distinction, above all, the method rests. The prelinguistic philosophers did not make it. Yet they used words philosophically. Prima facie such uses are unintelligible. They require commonsensical explication. The method insists that we provide it. […] *Second*. Much of the paradox, absurdity, and opacity of prelinguistic philosophy stems from failure to distinguish between speaking and speaking about speaking. Such failure, or confusion, is harder to avoid than one may think. The method is the safest way of avoiding it. *Third*. Some things any conceivable language merely shows. Not that these things are literally 'ineffable'; rather, the proper (and safe) way of speaking about them is to speak about (the syntax and interpretation of a) language.[47]

This volume therefore intends to underline the importance of linguistic and discursive aspects as central elements in the symbolic construction of politics and as qualified indicators for the understanding of historical dynamics. In the essays, language, whether textual or iconic, is in fact intended as the object of the analysis, as a study of the use of the words of a particular party or communist movement, but also as an instrument

---

[45]   See Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999); *Handbook of Visual Communication. Theory, Methods, and Media*, ed. by Ken Smith *et al.* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005); James Elkins, *Theorizing Visual Studies: Writing through the Discipline* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[46]   For example Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1997); *The Art of Persuasion: Political Communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*, ed. by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

[47]   Gustav Bergmann, *Logic and Reality* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 177.

through which salient elements of the endeavours of individual parties and national communist movements are clarified.

Moreover, this volume intends to capture the turn that has also introduced an approach into the studies on communism and its ideology which has identified an essential key to understanding the historical and political transformations, including local ones, in the global dimension. In this scientific season, when it becomes increasingly clear that disciplinary boundaries cannot exhaust the descriptive and interpretative capacity, unless a fruitful methodological hybridization is used, the work brings together contributions by historians, linguists, and philosophers and historians of language. The purpose is in fact to make different disciplines and scholars of different academic backgrounds converse on the same subject (the language of communism), in a common methodological perspective (the historical-discursive one), even if along different analytical lines.

The interdisciplinary slant and the global analytical approach interact in the following way. The first two sections are dedicated to the Italian Communist Party and the movement that generated it; the third continues with an analysis of the parties operating in the European area under Soviet control; the last section ends with a focus on the Latin American continent and East Asia.[48]

Specifically, the first section of the volume, entitled *The Italian Communist Party: The Power of Words and Symbols in Communist Discourse from the Origins to the Seventies*, is dedicated to an historical-linguistic investigation of the Italian Communist Party and movement over an extended period of time. The years considered are those between the birth of the party in 1921, as the Communist Party of Italy, section of the Comintern, and the end of the 1970s, years in which the party managed to reach its historical peak of social consensus: 33.4% in the local elections of 1975 and 34.7% in the general election of 1976. Four of the five essays in this first part are aimed at illustrating the rhetorical paths and discursive styles of party communication, both in general (Franco Andreucci) and in the specific lexicon of its leadership (Giulia Bassi). The rhetorical and linguistic dynamics of the party in situations of internal political conflict, such as the one that opposed the ICP to the group of *il manifesto*, are also analysed (Roberto Colozza), as are the linguistic policies and the dynamics of communication within the broad programme of party schools (Anna Tonelli). The fifth essay, on the other hand, is aimed at reconstructing the complicated relations between the ICP and the Chinese Communist Party (Guido Samarani and Sofia Graziani).

---

[48] The lack of a section dedicated to the communist parties of the euro-western area is obvious, and is a reflection of the difficulty of finding, from within the albeit rich team of experts in the history of communism, authors who dealt with such a specific topic as language.

The second section, *The Italian Communist Party: The Power of Images During the Cold War*, is dedicated to the analysis of the symbols and images of the Italian Communist Party during what historians have interpreted as the 'hottest' years of the 'Cold War'. Specifically, the party leader Palmiro Togliatti and his portrayal (Luciano Cheles), anti-communist propaganda, in particular by the Christian Democrats (Andrea Mariuzzo), and the political dynamics between the ICP and social subversiveness that found expression through wall graffiti (Enrico Mannari), are all analysed. All the essays in this part of the volume are accompanied by an extensive iconographic display.

The third section, entitled *The Soviet Area: Words of Power between Sovietisation and Discourse Strategies in the 'Age of Extremes'*, is composed of five essays on the Soviet Communist Party and the communist parties under its sphere of influence. This part of the volume also presents works dealing with different themes and periods: the rhetorical form of tautology in Stalinist Soviet discourse (Petre Petrov); the gradual Sovietization of the lexicon in democratic Germany (Barbara Delli Castelli); the representations of the agrarian world in Romanian communist discourse (Călin Morar-Vulcu); the totalitarian aspects of language in Czechoslovakia (František Čermák); and linguistic policies in the former Yugoslavia (Maria Rita Leto).

The fourth and final section, entitled *Beyond Europe: Wor(l)d Communism in the Twentieth-Century*, takes the investigation to a global level, presenting the work of two authors on Latin American communism (Valeria Coronel, Joaquìn Fermandois) and four authors on Asian communism (Guo Wu, Fengyuan Ji, Xing Lu, Patricia Pelley). Specifically, the multiform languages of the Ecuadorian left (Coronel), the historical-linguistic evolution of the communist parties of Chile (Fermandois) and Vietnam (Pelley), and the great Chinese Communist Party from various perspectives, such as the conceptualization of national minorities (Guo) and the forms of linguistic and semantic control of the Maoist leadership (Ji, Lu), are analysed.

And if giving thanks is the highest form of thought, as Gilbert Keith Chesterton wrote, I am happy to close this introduction by expressing my deepest gratitude to all those who have participated in this undertaking. The book is the result of an intense collaboration and a stimulating comparison between different scholars of Italian and international communism. First of all, I would like to offer my most sincere thanks to the authors of *Words of Power, the Power of Words*, not only because, in showing great faith in me, they have made their very interesting essays available for this publishing project, but also for the patience and the precise advice with which they helped me in the complicated task of packaging such a rich and substantial volume. I would therefore like to thank Franco Andreucci, František Čermák, Luciano Cheles, Roberto Colozza, Valeria Coronel, Barbara Delli Castelli, Joaquìn Fermandois, Sofia Graziani, Guo Wu, Fengyuan Ji, Maria Rita Leto, Lu Xing, Enrico Mannari, Andrea Mariuzzo, Călin Morar-Vulcu,

Patricia Pelley, Petre Petrov, Guido Samarani, and Anna Tonelli. From among these, I must thank in particular Luciano Cheles, for his courtesy and many suggestions given while working on the project, and Franco Andreucci, for the points for consideration, the support, the willingness, the friendship shown to me from the earliest stages. I would also like to thank all those scholars who, at my request, made themselves immediately available, providing me with valuable suggestions. Specifically, I am in debt to the help given by Alfonso Botti, Ettore Cinnella, Gustavo Corni, Guido Franzinetti, Tommaso Nencioni, Barbara Onnis, Antonella Salomoni, and Valentina Sommella.

I must express my gratitude to the Trieste University Press (EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste) publishing house, for the courtesy and efficiency of its staff, and in particular to Mauro Rossi for the care he has taken in the production of the volume since the planning phase. I must also thank, and not only in my name, Vanessa Di Stefano, who has translated with precision and professionalism some of the essays contained in this volume.

Finally, I must also thank the people with whom I have the pleasure of working every day who, in addition to believing in me and giving me support, are a constant source of stimulation for my work. I would therefore like to express my sincerest gratitude to Edoardo Tortarolo and Claudio Rosso at the University of Eastern Piedmont, and along with them the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, which has been funding my research at the Department of Humanities for two years now. I must also thank Alessandro Duce at the University of Parma, for guiding me through the wonderful experience of teaching, and Daniela Saresella at the University of Milan, for her support and invaluable advice.

Giulia Bassi
Milan, August 2019

PART I.

THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY:
THE POWER OF WORDS AND SYMBOLS IN COMMUNIST
DISCOURSE FROM THE ORIGINS TO THE SEVENTIES

DISCIPLINE AND ORGANISATION:
PERFORMATIVITY AND REVOLUTIONARY SEMANTICS
IN GRAMSCI'S AND TOGLIATTI'S TEXTS (1916-1928)[1]

Giulia Bassi

(Università del Piemonte Orientale 'Amedeo Avogadro')

I. Introduction

For some time now in international historiography, marginalizing traditional Marxist interpretations has resulted in the study of language that is no longer seen simply as a supra-structural element, but rather as if it were a fundamental factor of the Marxist structure, that is of its socio-economic relationships and dynamics. In Italy, though, this trend has been slow to take off. In fact only recently have linguistic elements been introduced into Italian historiography, in the form of studies on the history of words and concepts,[2] qualitative semantic investigations of symbolic fields,[3] and quantitative

---

[1]   Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of quotations are by Vanessa Di Stefano.

[2]   For example: Andrea Baravelli, "Parole in azione. Percorsi di ricerca a proposito delle forme e dei linguaggi della violenza politica", *Memoria e Ricerca*, 13 (2003): 5-16; Francesco Benigno, *Parole nel tempo. Un lessico per pensare la storia* (Roma: Viella, 2013); Silvia Rosa, "Un'immagine che prende corpo: il 'popolo' democratico nel Risorgimento", *Annali della Storia d'Italia*: *Il Risorgimento*, ed. by Mario Banti and Paul Ginsborg (Torino: Einaudi, 2007), 379-400.

[3]   For example: Giacomo Todeschini, *Il prezzo della salvezza. Lessici medievali del pensiero economico* (Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1994); Giacomo Todeschini, "Ordini mendicanti e linguaggio etico-politico", *Etica e politica: le teorie dei frati mendicanti nel Due e nel Trecento*, ed. by Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1999), 5-27.

analysis of *corpora*.[4] However, apart from some justifiable exceptions,[5] any historiographical analysis of the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*) and its movement has generally been in the form of social or political science investigations. It is true that in the case of Gramsci there have been plenty of political-conceptual studies carried out on the words used by this leader[6] as well as on the linguistic theories to be found in his thinking;[7] however, at least in the historiographic field, historical-linguistic and semantic analyses are rare.

This essay, like the book itself, stems from the need to treat these topics from new and different perspectives (analyses of political discourse) and with new and different methodologies (in this case, through an historical linguistic and semantic investigation). In trying to introduce the Anglo-Saxon research methods of the (New) Cultural History into this historiographic area,[8] the intention is to contribute to the redefinition of the

---

[4]   Francesca Socrate, "Classici e romantici. Le generazioni del '68 nel racconto di sé: un'analisi linguistica", *Pensare la contemporaneità. Studi di storia per Mariuccia Salvati*, ed. by Paola Capuzzo *et al.* (Roma: Viella, 2011), 339-370; Francesca Socrate, "Maschile e femminile: memorie del '68", *Lo spazio della storia. Studi per Vittorio Vidotto*, ed. by Francesco Bartolini, Bruno Bonomo, and Francesca Socrate (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2013), 473-498; "Tra linguistica e storia: incroci metodologici e percorsi di ricerca", ed. by Francesca Socrate and Carlotta Sorba, *Contemporanea*, 2 (2013): 285-333; Cesare Vetter and Marco Marin, *La felicità è un'idea nuova in Europa. Contributo al lessico della rivoluzione francese*, 2 vol. (Trieste: EUT, 2005-2013).

[5]   Franco Andreucci, *Da Gramsci a Occhetto. Nobiltà e miseria del Partito comunista italiano 1921-1991* (Pisa: Della Porta, 2014); Franco Andreucci, *Falce e martello. Identità e linguaggi dei comunisti italiani fra stalinismo e guerra fredda* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2005); *Visioni del comunismo. Harold Lasswell, Nathan Leites e Bertram Wolfe fra politica e scienze sociali*, ed. by Franco Andreucci and Andrea Mariuzzo (Milano: l'Ornitorico, 2010); Giulia Bassi, "Compagni, cittadini, fratelli, partigiani… Appelli e categorie identitarie del Partito comunista italiano", *Quaderni di Farestoria*, 3 (2017): pp. 45-56; Giulia Bassi, *Non è solo questione di classe. Il 'popolo' nel discorso del Partito Comunista Italiano (1921-1991)* (Roma: Viella, 2019); Giulia Bassi, "'Tutto il popolo sotto la bandiera della democrazia'. Il Partito comunista italiano e la costruzione discorsiva del popolo (1943-1945)", *Storica*, 67-68 (2017): 31-81; Giulia Bassi, "Una 'guerra semantica'. La Resistenza tra partito comunista italiano e Lotta continua: un approccio storico-linguistico (1970-1975)", *Quaderni di Storia e Memoria*, 2 (2014): 31-41; Roberto Colozza, *Repubbliche rosse. I simboli nazionali del PCI e del PCF (1944-1953)* (Bologna: Clueb, 2009); Andrea Mariuzzo, *Divergenze parallele. Comunismo e anticomunismo alle origini del linguaggio politico dell'Italia repubblicana* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2010).

[6]   *Le parole di Gramsci*, ed. by Fabio Frosini and Guido Liguori (Roma: Carocci, 2004).

[7]   Alessandro Carlucci, "The political implications of Antonio Gramsci's journey through languages, language issues and linguistic disciplines", *Journal of Romance Studies*, 2 (2009): 27-46; Alessandro Carlucci, "'Viva sa comune!'. Il ruolo del sardo nella biografia linguistica di Antonio Gramsci", *Antologia Premio Gramsci* (Sassari: Editrice Democratica Sarda, 2011), 183-241; Alessandro Carlucci, *Gramsci and Languages. Unification, Diversity, Hegemony* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[8]   The most famous volumes: Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2013); *The New Cultural History*, ed. by Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Lynn

boundaries of a new political historiography that is epistemically and methodologically attentive to the symbolic, conceptual and linguistic dimension and not only to the historiographic study of political ideologies and public policies.

II. Gramsci and Togliatti: Search Coordinates

The objective of this essay is, firstly, to identify and interpret some of the historical semantics of the Italian Communist Party and its movement at the point of formation, with the purpose of investigating the utopian 'ratio' – its 'revolutionality', we could say. Secondly, it is to try to understand why this performative potential had the power to overwrite and orientate models of identity, from socialism to communism in this case, and thus to rally militants.

Historically, the use of key-words by social and political agencies – parties, movements, churches – served to define the conceptual universe of the militants, the believers, or even those who simply saw themselves within a given symbolic universe, and thus to channel them towards their cause. The description and definition of identity and ideal practices (individual and collective) have enabled all political movements to steer those identities and social practices (individual and collective) towards specific goals. The purpose of this paper is therefore to show how the Communist movement, too, made extensive use of such a discursive device to undermine socialist hegemony, laying the basis, in the 1920s, for the absolute predominance of the Communist model in the panorama of the Italian left during the second half of the century. Enticing the militant to comply with a must-be ideal – the 'good revolutionary', the 'good Marxist', the 'good Communist' – had a dual purpose. On the one hand, to immediately give them a designation, a sense of belonging, meaning, value and social emancipation. On the other hand, to fuel, over the long term, the revolutionary *pathos* with the promise of just reward for every sacrifice made – primarily that of renouncing a part of themselves in the name of a collective of equals – and the achievement of an ideal goal: 'future Communist civilization'.

For this reason, the present analysis focuses on a pivotal moment in the life of Italian communism, that of the birth of the Communist Party. The Communist Party of Italy (*Partito comunista d'Italia*) was formed from the split from the Italian Socialist Party (ISP) in January 1921, during the 17th Congress of the ISP held at the Goldoni theatre in Livorno, a port town in Tuscany. In the summer of the previous year the

---

Hunt, *La storia culturale nell'età globale* (Pisa: ETS, 2010); Alessandro Arcangeli, *Cultural History: a Concise Introduction* (London; New York: Routledge; Taylor & Francis, 2011).

2nd Congress of the Comintern (also known as the Third International) had asked its members to underwrite twenty-one conditions, among which was the integration of the words 'Communist Party' in their party name and the eradication and expulsion of all internal reformist tendencies.[9] Among the promoters of the Communist fraction and subsequently the split, was the young Antonio Gramsci, then 30 years old. Originally from Ales, in Sardinia, but educated at the University of Turin, a man of letters, journalist, socialist, Gramsci was the secretary of the party between 1924 and 1927 and was elected, *in absentia*, to be the legendary founder of Italian communism a few years later.[10] He was also one of the founders, together with Angelo Tasca, Umberto Terracini, and Palmiro Togliatti, of the weekly newspaper *L'Ordine nuovo* in 1919, which from 1921 became a daily newspaper.[11] The slightly younger Togliatti was born in Genoa in 1893 but he had studied law at the University of Turin where he met Gramsci, and together they joined the Socialist Party. Thanks to a skilled management of the handover, Togliatti, who was in Turin running the newspaper during the split, was recognized and elected the legitimate successor to Gramsci and leader of the party from the 1930s, after the fascist regime had imprisoned the Sardinian leader in Turi prison, in Puglia, in 1926.[12]

This essay, therefore, takes into consideration the texts of Gramsci and Togliatti produced between the end of the 1910s and the end of the 1920s. All the extracts selected come from anonymous articles or those signed with pseudonyms, but con-

---

[9]   See Renzo Martinelli, "Il gruppo dirigente nazionale: composizione, meccanismi di formazione e di evoluzione. 1921/1943", *Il Partito comunista italiano. Struttura e storia dell'organizzazione 1921/1979*, ed. by Aris Accornero and Massimo Ilardi (Milano: Annali Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1982): 363-386; Renzo Martinelli, *Il Partito comunista d'Italia 1921-1926. Politica e organizzazione* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1977).

[10]   See for example: Norberto Bobbio, *Saggi su Gramsci* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1990); Luciano Canfora, *Su Gramsci* (Roma: Datanews, 2007); *Bibliografia gramsciana ragionata*, ed. by Angelo D'Orsi (Roma: Viella, 2008-); *Gramsciana. Saggi su Antonio Gramsci*, ed. by Angelo D'Orsi (Modena: Mucchi, 2014); Angelo D'Orsi, *Gramsci. Una nuova biografia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2017); Giuseppe Fiori, *Vita di Antonio Gramsci* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2008 [1966]); James Joll, *Gramsci* (London: Fontana, 1977); Antonio Santucci, *Gramsci* (Roma: Newton Compton, 1996).

[11]   See Patrizia Salvetti: *La stampa comunista da Gramsci a Togliatti* (Parma: Guanda, 1975).

[12]   See for example: Aldo Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti* (Torino: UTET, 1996); Aldo Agosti, *Togliatti. Un uomo di frontiera* (Torino: UTET, 2006); Giorgio Bocca, *Palmiro Togliatti*, 2 vol. (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 1977); Roberto Gualtieri, Carlo Spagnolo, and Ermanno Taviani, *Togliatti nel suo tempo* (Roma: Carocci, 2007); *Palmiro Togliatti*, ed. by Ernesto Ragionieri (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1976); *Palmiro Togliatti, La politica nel pensiero e nell'azione. Scritti e discorsi 1917-1964*, ed. by Michele Ciliberto and Giuseppe Vacca (Milano: Bompiani, 2014). See also the special issue of *Nuova Storia Contemporanea*, 2 (2014); Giuseppe Vacca, *Palmiro Togliatti*, Treccani, online Encyclopedia, http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/palmiro-togliatti/, last accessed on 2 May 2019.

fidently attributed to the two leaders: for Gramsci from *Il Grido del Popolo* and *La Città Futura* between 1916 and 1918; for Togliatti from *l'Unità* and *Lo Stato Operaio* between 1925 and 1928. During the period under consideration, Gramsci collaborated with several Socialist-inspired periodicals and newspapers, including *Avanti!*, the PSI newspaper founded in 1896, *Il Grido del Popolo*, the socialist journal launched in Turin in 1892, and he wrote almost all of the single edition dated 11 February 1917 of *La Città Futura*, the magazine for the Socialist Youth Federation in Piemonte. He was also the founder, in 1924, of the leading Communist newspaper, *l'Unità*, which went underground in 1927 and was published irregularly until becoming a daily newspaper in 1945. It then remained the mouthpiece for the party until its dissolution in 1991. Togliatti, on the other hand, was one of the promoters of the theoretical journal *Lo Stato Operaio*, which was founded in Milan in the summer of 1923 and published on a weekly basis until 1925. It re-emerged in Paris, where it was published clandestinely between 1927 and 1939.[13]

I have chosen a disjointed chronological period in order to show, in addition to the diversity of personal rhetoric and register, the linguistic mutations related to the different contexts and the political – and 'moral', in a sense – criticality of the period. These texts proved to be very good sources from which to observe the problematic nature of the transition, metaphorically speaking, from before to after the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), the Livorno split (1921), the advent of the fascist regime (which symbolically began with the 1922 March on Rome), and the Lyon Congress (1924).[14] A transition that has, in the words of this political discourse, historiographically taken on the significance of a watershed – symbolic more than chronological – and which has been defined by the implications 'conferred' on it by the historical setting. However, I intend to show both how that contextual mutation cannot be taken as the only discriminating analytic, and how it cannot fully explain the lack of homogeneity in the lexicon, intents, strategies, words, inducements and meanings of the writings of the two young 'professional revolutionaries'.

---

[13]   ESMOI [ESSMOI], *Bibliografia del socialismo e del movimento operaio italiano* (Torino: ESMOI, 1956-).

[14]   The Communist Party of Italy's 3rd Congress was held clandestinely in Lyon in January 1926 and was an important political turning point for the party as it resulted in the approval of the so-called Lyon Theses, a document in which the leadership of Amedeo Bordiga (an influential member of the left wing of the party) and his faction was abandoned.

III. The 'Subjectifying Revolutionarity' of Gramscian Discourse

We now have all we need to begin a renewed analysis of the early revolutionary lexicon. I will start with an article, entitled "Socialismo e cultura" (Socialism and culture) published in *Il Grido del Popolo* on the 29 January 1916, which offers immediate evidence of the intrinsic representative force of Gramscian discourse:

> Culture […] is organization, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness, with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one's own historical value, one's own function in life, one's own rights and obligations. But none of this can come about through spontaneous evolution, through a series of actions and reactions which are independent of one's own will – as is the case in the animal and vegetable kingdoms where every unit is selected and specifies its own organs unconsciously, through a fatalistic law of things. Above all, man is mind, i.e. he is a product of history, not nature.[15]

Features of Gramscian normative and moral precepts such as the predicative signifier are emphasised through the construction of a decisive and strongly revolutionary discourse: 'revolutionality', in this sense, not because of or to the extent that it is based on a list of given orders, but because it is based on inducements and commands with the aim of an ultimate, utopian, goal.

Culture, that is society, understood as a network of relationships and influences that affect a given individual, is intended as the place where and through which the ego takes shape, is subjectified, 'speaks' – *ça parle!*, as Jacques Lacan would say.[16] And in this way, the individual can assume personal responsibility ("to live means to be partisan", cf. *infra*) as an individual necessarily immersed within a sociocultural plexus that identifies and transforms him or her, and thanks to which he or she can identify and be identified, transform and be transformed. Or perhaps I should say 'should' or 'must' take shape, following a utopian logic, inseparably intertwined with the concept of 'ideal necessity'. The validity of the prescribed moral norm, in this case, is justified not simply because it is a norm, but only insomuch as it is based on the rational dominion of a 'must-be-otherwise' that it calls to mind (that is "one's own historical value, one's own function in life, one's own rights and obligations"). Gramsci wrote:

---

[15] Alfa Gamma [Antonio Gramsci], "Socialismo e cultura", *Il Grido del Popolo* (29 January 1916). English translation, Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1910-1920*, ed. by Quintin Hoare (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), 11.

[16] Lacan, however, referred to the unconscious. See Jacques Lacan, *Ècrits* (Paris: Éditions du seuil, 1966).

> It was through a critique of capitalist civilization that the unified consciousness of the proletariat was or is still being formed, and a critique implies culture, not simply a spontaneous and naturalistic evolution. A critique implies precisely the self-consciousness that Novalis considered to be the end of culture. Consciousness of a self which is opposed to others, which is differentiated and, once having set itself a goal, can judge facts and events other than in themselves or for themselves but also in so far as they tend to drive history forward or backward. To know oneself means to be oneself, to be master of oneself, to distinguish oneself, to free oneself from a state of chaos, to exist as an element of order – but of one's own order and one's own discipline in striving for an ideal.[17]

What prevails, therefore, is the emphasis, an enlightened emphasis – an enlightenment which Gramsci intentionally calls "a magnificent revolution" but from which he diverges when he transfers his own concepts into forms of everyday life[18] – on the individual and his or her possibilities. What is emphasised, in fact, is "the consciousness of a self which is opposed to others, which is differentiated". Other expressions and syntagms follow this pivotal theme: "to be oneself", "to be master of oneself", "to distinguish oneself", "to free oneself from a state of chaos".

It is 1916 and the impact that the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik model will have on the international revolutionary movement is still a long way off. When a small group of delegates of the intransigent-revolutionary factions of the most important socialist sections – including Gramsci – met clandestinely in Florence on 18 November 1917, the reference to the Bolsheviks was still little more than a hint. Most specifically this was through the use of the adjective '*massimalista*' (maximalist), in the sense of '*maggioritaria*' (majority), which was also one of the descriptors used for Lenin's party in Italy. The delegates still understood "little about what happened in Saint Petersburg in those famous ten days that shook the world. It would be months before they had an accurate perception of what the October Bolshevik revolution meant". Not by chance is "the taking of the Winter Palace described in dispatches as a drunken riot".[19]

However, in Gramscian text the self builds and differentiates itself "once having set itself a goal" (the 'realm of historical necessity', one might say), only because the individual renders him or herself "an element of order" with a view to a higher "ideal" that concerns the whole of society (it is the realm of the will, which is embodied in deterministic thinking of Marxist philosophy). In Gramscian discourse, the individual seems to have an almost universal power thanks to awareness, action and will.

---

[17] Alfa Gamma, "Socialismo e cultura", *Il Grido del Popolo*. English translation, Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings*, 13.

[18] Quotation is from Guido Liguori, "Ideologia", *Le parole di Gramsci*, 131-149, here 147.

[19] Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista*, vol. 1 (Torino: Einaudi, 1967), 3.

However, that it is culture, society, that organises and disciplines "one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality" is an idea that is never abandoned: a culture that is never an abstract *Zeitgeist* but rather, always, a "product of history", through which, if one is organized and self-disciplined, it is possible to reach an "understanding [of] one's own historical value". As the Sardinian leader wrote in the article "Individualismo e collettivismo" (Individualism and collectivism), published on 9 March 1918 in *Il Grido del Popolo*:

> Logically, the principle of organization is superior to the one of pure and simple freedom. It is maturity compared to childhood. But historically, maturity needs childhood in order to develop, and collectivism necessarily presupposes the individualistic period, during which individuals acquire the skills necessary to produce independently of any external pressures.[20]

They are skills that, as seen above, do not stem from necessity or 'natural' mechanics, nor are they formed "unconsciously", "through a fatalistic law of things". They are generated thanks to the power of the "will", that in Gramscian discourse is associated with "organization" and "discipline", through education, knowledge and awareness ("To know oneself means to be oneself, to be master of oneself, to distinguish oneself"), forms of redemption and methods of construction of that self/us – the new man, the class itself – capable of transforming worlds, working towards a higher end, conquering hegemony ("to exist as an element of order – but of one's own order and one's own discipline in striving for an ideal"). Furthermore, there is a dynamic organizational-disciplinary turnabout in Gramscian discourse, largely in connection with the fervour surrounding the new Russian revolutionary context. From this moment it takes on the explicit qualities of inducement and pressure regarding the organization, method and specific task to be carried out by all those who wish to be 'good' Bolshevik revolutionaries.

In any case, the word – intended as thought, awareness, theory – and the act – and therefore action, will, practice – are inseparable parts of a binomial in Gramsci. In a wonderful passage from *La Città futura*, in the article "Disciplina e libertà" (Freedom and Discipline), Gramsci says:

> Joining a movement means taking your share of the responsibility for the events which are in the pipeline; becoming one of the people who are shaping these events. […] By subjecting oneself voluntarily to a discipline, one becomes inde-

---

[20]   [Antonio Gramsci], "Individualismo e collettivismo", *Il Grido del Popolo* (9 March 1918). English translation, Antonio Gramsci, *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, ed. by Pedro Cavalcanti and Paul Piccone (Saint Louis: Telos Press, 1975), 59.

pendent and free. Water is pure, free and itself when it is running between the two banks of a stream or a river, not when it is messily spread on the ground, or when it is released, rarefied, into the atmosphere. Anyone who does not follow a political discipline is, precisely, matter in a gaseous state, or contaminated by foreign bodies: that is, useless and harmful. The discipline of politics sloughs off the waste, and refines the pure metal of the spirit. It gives an aim to life; and, without an aim, life is not worth living.[21]

This is a crucial moment in the prescriptive discourse: "The discipline of politics […] gives an aim to life; and, without an aim, life is not worth living".

Such discourse is to be read in terms of the ideal and as a direct result of the passage taken from "Socialismo e cultura" – "To know oneself means to be oneself" – according to a dialectic that keeps discipline, self-awareness and achievement of a purpose very closely tied together. It seems that the autopoietic process that the individual matures through the relationship with the other-than-self creates an irreversible separation between *zoé*, that is 'natural' or 'bare life', and *bíos*, 'qualified', 'normalised', 'political' life. A fundamental difference between simply 'live' (*zên*) and (the desire, the tension to achieve) 'live well' (*eu zên*).[22] Think of the text that appeared in *La Città futura* entitled "Gli indifferenti" (Indifferents [*sic*]):

> I hate those who are indifferent: I believe with Hebbel that 'to live means to be partisan'. We can't only be *men*, foreigners to the city. Those who really live cannot but be citizens and partisans. Indifference is parasitism and cowardice: it is not living. This is why I hate those who are indifferent. Indifference is the dead weight of history. It is a lead ball to the innovator, it is the inert matter which drowns the most sparkling enthusiasms, it is the swamp which surrounds the old city and defends it better than the most solid walls, better than the bodies of its soldiers, because it swallows the assailants in its slimy mires, it decimates them, disheartens them and, at times, makes them desist from their heroic undertaking. Indifference has a powerful impact in history. It does this passively. It is fate; it is what one cannot count on; it is what upsets programs, what overthrows the best laid plans; it is brute matter which rebels against intelligence and strangles it. […] I hate those who are indifferent also because I am annoyed by their whimpering as if they were eternally innocent. I ask of each of them an account of how they have carried out the duty that life has placed and places daily in front of them, of what they have done and especially of what they have not done. […] I am a partisan, I live, I feel

---

[21]   [Antonio Gramsci], "Disciplina e libertà", *La Città futura* (11 February 1917). English translation, Antonio Gramsci, *Gramsci: Pre-prison Writings*, ed. by Virginia Cox and Richard Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 26.

[22]   Concepts in Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (Torino: Einaudi, 2005).

> pulsating already in the virile consciousness of those on my side the activity of the future city that my side is building. […] I live, I am a partisan. This is why I hate those who do not take sides, I hate those who are indifferent.[23]

'Live', 'really live' (that here has been identified as *eu zên*), means to be "partisans". It means, therefore, partaking, being empowered, being directed towards the "duty that life has placed and places daily". Beyond this semantic plexus, a life lived in indifference "is not living", but is death, despondency, heaviness. In the words of Gramsci, it equates to "parasitism", "cowardice", "dead weight", "lead ball", "swamp", "slimy mires", "fate", "brute matter" that decimates, demoralises, makes those who live it desist, making cowards of them, "whimpering as if they were eternally innocent". Against this, however, is the "heroic undertaking" of those who, instead, take sides, take responsibility and perform their historical task.

The departure of politics from the lofty corridors of power to home in on and address the individual, thus becoming biopolitics, is evident here: "modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question", explains Michel Foucault.[24] The rational individual does not live a separate, solipsistic life from himself, but rather, even if seemingly isolated from the context in which he originated and from which he was formed, he is always a *politikòn zôon*, socially acquiring responsibility, expecting to be held responsible and therefore seeking contextual approval.[25] An individual who in this way gains identity, role, position, rights and duties and who, ultimately, gets the chance to 'be' through 'being-in-society'. From this perspective a critique of Cartesian nativism and Bergson's intuitionism is implicit, while a "non-negotiable link between the person and the person's living body" is taken as a postulate.[26] Identity is always given, in this sense, by the sum of 'I' and 'body'.

If disciplinary control – not only in the form of surveillance and punishment but also in the provision of pleasure and cures – allows the hegemonic class to train, to regulate, the body of people, the individuals, then does self-control, self-determination to a higher ideal (understood as *télos*, political purpose) allow for self-production and the breaking away from that (bio)power?

---

[23]   [Antonio Gramsci], "Gli indifferenti", *La Città futura* (11 February 1917). English translation, Gramsci, *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, 64-66.

[24]   Michel Foucault, *La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 188, quoted in Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 5. English translation, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, transl. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3.

[25]   Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame. Essays in Cultural Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 132.

[26]   Douglas, *Risk and Blame*, 216.

The Gramscian text seems to suggest as much when it sustains that "subjecting one-self voluntarily to a discipline" means rendering oneself "independent and free". Therein lies the idea and the proposition of a structuring of consent through a self-disciplining of individual conscience. This argument is a kind of variation or echo of the practice of 'voluntary servitude'[27] which renders the individual a voluntary servant not yet of the tyrant (or of the hegemonic class in our case), as in the thought of Étienne de La Boétie, but rather of their 'own' ideal, with the aim of 'real' independence, 'real' freedom and 'real' life (to 'really live'). The result – the "fantasy", Foucault would say – of all utopian thinking is the idea of a social body constituted by the universality of the will, by consent, rather than by the materiality of the power over that body.[28]

In "Note sulla Rivoluzione russa" (Notes on the Russian Revolution) published on 29 April 1917, in *Il Grido del Popolo*, Gramsci asks:

> But does the fact that revolution is the work of proletarians make it a proletarian revolution? […] For that to be the case, other, spiritual, factors must come into play. The revolution is not simply a matter of power – it must be a revolution in people's behaviour, a moral revolution.[29]

In late 1917, when the revolution was no longer an abstract concept but had found concrete corroboration and an ideal-type model in the Russian October revolution, the call to revolution, temporarily postponed to the end of the world war, began to be a widely accepted foregone conclusion. At the previously mentioned clandestine meeting held in Florence, Gramsci and Amedeo Bordiga, insisting on the need to act, presented the 'extreme solution'. From that moment, citing the words of the then socialist Giovanni Germanetto, "the most resolute group gathered in that meeting organized themselves better and outlined their own platform of the *Italian left,* which was not the same as the old intransigent faction but rather much more than that".[30] In "La Rivoluzione contro il 'Capitale'" (The Revolution Against 'Capital'), published on January 5, 1918, in *Il Grido del Popolo* but originally published in *Avanti!*, the Milan edition dated 24 November 1917, Gramsci explains that:

---

[27]   Étienne de La Boétie, *Discours de la servitude volontaire* (1576).

[28]   *Michel Foucault. Microfisica del potere. Interventi politici*, ed. by Alessandro Fontana and Pascale Pasquino (Torino: Einaudi, 1977), 137.

[29]   A. G. [Antonio Gramsci], "Note sulla Rivoluzione russa", *Il Grido del Popolo* (29 April 1917). English translation, Gramsci, *Gramsci: Pre-prison Writings*, 31.

[30]   In Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista*, vol. 1, 4.

> It was socialist propaganda that forged the will of the Russian people. […] The revolutionaries themselves will create the conditions needed for the complete and full achievement of their goal. […] So even in absolute, human terms, socialism now can be justified in Russia. The hardships that await them after the peace will be bearable only if the proletarians feel they have things under their own control and know that by their efforts they can reduce these hardships in the shortest possible time.[31]

The reference to the Russian example, to 'do as in Russia', served, obviously, to justify the validity of a certain course of action and specifically the intimate connection between revolution, will, self-meaning, morality, self-determination, sacrifice, organization and the ideal, with the aim of a greater good, a forward thrust that necessarily leads, if "the conditions needed" are capitalised on, from the first to the last phase. Even the name *L'Ordine nuovo* (literally, 'the new order') underlines the importance of and origin in the Russian experience, and two antinomies are implied in the title: 'order' against 'chaos' and the 'new' against the 'old'.[32] Through individual then collective discipline and regimentation ("the close play of the class struggle"), thanks to the "intransigence" which is "living faith", "untameable", "clear will" and the fusion between being and action, man – that is to say, society – can move towards the ultimate goal, the 'paradise on Earth': the establishment of 'Communist civilization'.

But can everyone reach and lead others to this ideal? The answer seems to be no at this time. There is in fact a principle of election which is characteristic of every utopian-religious thought: not all people are worthy of election, but only those who, through self-awareness and human mechanisms (the social man, the historical man), have reached the inevitable truth and inescapable acceptance that the "force (both mechanical as well as moral) is alone the supreme arbiter of strife".

But are all those who have understood this invested with the responsibility of the prophetic task? Once again, the answer is no. Only "the socialists", obviously, and not even all of them: only those, like the Bolsheviks, "who have internalized socialism", the socialists for whom the "socialist ideas have penetrated all intellectual, moral, and aesthetic activity". Only those "with a clear and real vision of historical development" and "who constantly aim at the maximum goal to be reached". Only those who, one could say, have rendered their ego a 'total' ego, who have "seriously" sacrificed themselves to

---

[31]   A. G. [Antonio Gramsci], "La Rivoluzione contro il 'Capitale'", *Il Grido del Popolo* (5 January 1918). English translation, Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 35.

[32]   *L'ultima ricerca di Paolo Spriano. Dagli archivi dell'URSS i documenti segreti sui tentativi per salvare Antonio Gramsci*, ed. by Carlo Ricchini, Luisa Melograni, and Antonio A. Santucci (Roma: Edizioni l'Unità, 1988), 108.

the realization of a Communist civilization, who have stripped themselves of their robes, who have begun to self-determine starting with bare life: "they subordinate all of their actions, they teach themselves and they interweave relations with the world in which they are immersed in order to attain this goal", to this end they put aside "their feelings, sentiments and the unconscious echoes of instinct".

The revolutionary fervour reached its climax at about this time. The fact that at the 15th Congress of the ISP, held in Rome in September 1918, the 'massimalista' current was triumphant while the parliamentary group was accused of collaborating is not, in fact, to be underestimated. During 1918 the *Grido del Popolo* became an instrument of study, analysis and exaltation of the Russian experience.[33] Proof of this is in the article "Fiorisce l'illusione" (Illusions Flourish), published in the 15 June 1918, issue of *Il Grido del Popolo*:

> Intransigence is not simply an external method used by political parties in political struggle. It is the result of a realistic vision of history and political life: it corresponds to a specific culture, to a specific mental and moral direction. Through the close play of the class struggle […] the spirit is taught to recognize that force (both mechanical as well as moral) is alone the supreme arbiter of strife. Having become conscious of this original truth, the critical spirit accepts it as an ineluctable necessity. […] Those socialists (who have internalized socialism and for whom socialist ideas have penetrated all intellectual, moral, and aesthetic activity) seriously propose the goal of instituting communist civilization. They subordinate all of their actions, they teach themselves and they interweave relations with the world in which they are immersed in order to attain this goal. They continually subordinate their feelings, sentiments and the unconscious echoes of instinct to this goal. They are preoccupied with always finding and clarifying a tight link between every one of their actions and this end: with relating every act to this untameable will. […] For these socialists intransigence is the same thing as moral seriousness and courteous behaviour. […] Thus, intransigence is also a democratic necessity. Only clarity and straightforward action can be followed and evaluated by the great mass which constitutes the already organized class or that part still in the tumultuous process of formation. This is how socialists with a clear and real vision of historical development think – those genuine socialists who constantly aim at the maximum goal to be reached, who have a living faith and a clear will.[34]

"Living faith" and "clear will": utopia is located above all in this precept, in this specific principle of subjectification. One could say in this specific 'subjectifying rev-

---

[33]   Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista*, vol 1, 18-19.

[34]   [Antonio Gramsci], "Fiorisce l'illusione", *Il Grido del Popolo* (15 June 1918). English translation, Gramsci, *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, 62-63.

olutionality', which identifies, subjectifies, differentiates through subjective and utopian principles of vision and division.[35] A "consciousness of a self which is opposed to others, which is differentiated" and that "can judge facts and events other than in themselves or for themselves but also in so far as they tend to drive history forward or backward". It is only from this perspective that one must base the interpretation of the Gramscian precept I have highlighted: "To know oneself means to be oneself", "to be master of oneself", "to distinguish oneself", "to free oneself from a state of chaos, to exist as an element of order – but of one's own order and one's own discipline in striving for an ideal".

Gramsci's subjectivist and voluntarist position is evident here. In fact, "reaffirming the role of the revolutionary subject and freeing oneself of a concept of Marxism as a narrow-minded economic determinism" becomes a priority in his thinking.[36] This concept is present in Gramsci, but also more generally in the party – which, remember, is the Italian Socialist Party until 1921 –, at least until the establishment of the 'Party', that is, Togliatti's mass party (or 'party of the masses', *partito di massa*) from 1945, when the Communist Party of Italy changed its name to Italian Communist Party (ICP) and when the communist discourse became centred on the responsibilisation of the leaders and the removing of responsibility from the militants.

Here the emphasis is instead placed on individuals and on their potential: "Culture" is "organization, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness". This seems to be consistent with Gramsci's conceptualization of historical development as Marxist historicism and as a peculiar "subjective theory of reality",[37] and it appears especially consistent with the concept of hegemony as a sum of "direction" and "dominion" (Luciano Gruppi defined it, by extension, not just as politics, but also as a cultural, moral fact and as a concept of the world).[38] Gramsci in fact explains that "a class is dominant in two ways: it is both 'ruling' and 'dominant'. It is ruler of the classes that are naturally allied, and it is dominant of the classes that are naturally opposed".[39] The Gramscian text does not linger on the necessary and independent economic processes but on political activity, therefore giving an important role to judgement, will and determination (both individual and

---

[35]   The principles of 'vision and division' in Pierre Bourdieu, for example in *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979).

[36]   Luciano Gruppi, *Il concetto di egemonia in Gramsci* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1972), 67.

[37]   Christian Riechers, *Gramsci e le ideologie del suo tempo* (Genova: Graphos, 1993), 200.

[38]   Gruppi, *Il concetto di egemonia*, 92.

[39]   Giuseppe Cospito, "Egemonia", *Le parole di Gramsci*, 74-92, here 75.

of the group), and to what Giuseppe Cacciatore defines as the ineliminable "active and transformative role of subjectivity".[40]

This is true even if the concept of hegemony as an exclusively political expression and initiative seems to be repeatedly refuted by Gramsci himself when speaking of "expressions of will, action and political and intellectual initiative [which are] an organic offshoot of economic necessities", or when he says: "hegemony is political, but also and especially economic, it has its material base in the decisive function that the hegemonic group exerts on the decisive core of economic activity".[41] However, without the "practical decision" and the "conscious arrangement of the means to an end, an end which is not given" by anything external but which is subjectively and voluntarily predisposed, the economic structures are not able to predetermine the revolutionary process: the ground for revolutionary organization is not on the "level of economic structure" therefore, but on the "spiritual" one.[42]

The individual, his/her subjectivity and will have a predominant place in Gramsci. In the period before the *svolta di Salerno*,[43] before the transformation of the communist party into a mass party and before the processes that accompanied fascism (and of which fascism became a convinced advocate), we are a long way from that dominant idea of a de-responsabilised society, that Remo Bodei defined as made of "individualists of the masses"[44] inspired – quoting a passage from Tocqueville – by the conflicting desires of dependency or autonomy and the "need" for a leader or a "desire" to remain free.[45]

But let us now see if this interpretation can be extended to Togliatti's text or if, instead, in changing the agent, voice and prospective angle, we should also seek new paradigms and new categories of interpretation.

---

[40]   Giuseppe Cacciatore, "Storicismo speculativo e storicismo critico", *Tornare a Gramsci. Una cultura per l'Italia*, ed. by Gaspare Polizzi (Roma: Avverbi, 2010), 197-212, here 204.

[41]   The quotes are from Cospito, "Egemonia", *Le parole di Gramsci*, 85.

[42]   Massimo Salvadori, *Gramsci e il problema storico della democrazia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1970), 121-123. This is what the author defines as Gramsci's "living Marxism".

[43]   Literally, "Salerno Turn". This expression refers to the compromise agreed by the Communist Party in the spring of 1944 to put aside the question of the monarchy to form a firm political and military alliance between anti-fascist parties and institutional forces, in order to take part in the fight for the liberation of Italy.

[44]   Remo Bodei, *Destini personali. L'età della colonizzazione delle coscienze* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2009), 226.

[45]   Bodei, *Destini personali*, 376.

IV. The 'Objectifying Revolutionality' of Togliatti's Discourse

To what extent does the *logos* of this discourse change when looking at Togliatti's early texts? It does change, and not only because – as per Terence's maxim – *quot homines, tot sententiae.*

First of all, the period is completely different. We are now in the phase after the acceptance of the twenty-one conditions of the Third International, the frictions within the party, the split that occurred at the Livorno Congress in January 1921, after the six days of heated debate and the formation of the Communist Party of Italy as a section of the Communist International. We are after the beginning of the violence and fascist action squads, after the March on Rome in 1922, and at the beginning of the semi-legal status of the party. We are in the period after the murder of the socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti in 1924, the protest by some of the opposition parliamentarians (known as the 'Aventine secession') and the upsurge of the fascist punitive arm. After the early tensions with Amedeo Bordiga, after the ordered 'Bolshevization' of the Communist parties sanctioned at the 5th Congress of the Comintern in June-July 1924 and the escalation of the controversy against leftism.

The 5th Congress itself was a fundamental moment in the history of the International Communist movement. While the revolution seemed to have consolidated in Russia, its standstill in Europe was patently clear. It was from this consideration that the need was formalised to adopt a rigid and disciplined authoritarian apparatus that referred to what from that moment was called 'Marxism-Leninism'. It was decreed that organization, centralization and discipline based on the Soviet model should be at the top of the International member parties' agenda. Without getting into the debate about the differences between Gramsci and Togliatti regarding communism in the 1920s, I find the idea Giuseppe Vacca had about the attitude towards the newly established Stalinist leadership rather convincing, which is that Gramsci's attitude towards the hegemonic role of the Soviet party in the Comintern was less forgiving and more inclined to implicitly require a greater valorization of the Italian experience.[46] Internal conflicts and the leadership's disapproval of Bordiga was heightened during 1925 while the equation between Trotskyism – the struggle against Trotsky is now understood as being part and parcel of the Bolshevization – and Bordigism took shape.[47] The Lyon Theses (the name by which the fourth thesis of the 3rd Congress is known, discussing the Italian situation

---

[46]   Giuseppe Vacca, "Introduction", *Gramsci a Roma, Togliatti a Mosca. Il carteggio del 1926*, ed. by Chiara Daniele (Torino: Einaudi, 1999), 1-149. See also: Claudio Natoli, "Le campagne per la liberazione di Gramsci, il PCD'I, l'Internazionale", *Studi storici*, 1 (1999): 77-156; Paolo Spriano, *Gramsci in carcere e il partito* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1984).

[47]   Spriano, *Storia del partito comunista*, vol 1, 429-444.

and the Bolshevization of the party), drafted by Gramsci and Togliatti, reiterate the need for ideological unity in the Marxism-Leninism formula and pick up once more the arguments that had fuelled the pre-congressional debate, aggravating the dispute against the left, affirming the predominant and directive role of the Russian party in the International and declaring the incompatibility of the fractions.

Initially Togliatti also emphasised will and voluntarism. However, his appeal is formulated differently from the Gramscian discourse, which refers to an ego that is *causa sui*. Togliatti's is, indeed, a generic ego, but his is also an invitation to which everyone, taken individually and therefore strongly empowered, is called upon to respond in some way. In "La nostra ideologia" (Our ideology), published in 1925 in *L'Unità* and appearing during the debate preceding the 3rd Congress of the ICP which met clandestinely in Lyon in January 1926, he wrote:

> Are we here just waiting for the revolutionary movement, or is our preparation, our action, and the degree of awareness and ability we manage to give the working class through these efforts, factors determining the active development of the revolution? Put like that, every good Marxist revolutionary should not hesitate to profess themselves 'voluntarist'.[48]

Through the obsessive use of 'we' and 'our' as well as verbs in the first person plural, Togliatti's discourse screams of voluntarism and collective responsibility. It is the party that assumes the role of hypernym of every possible identification; it is the party centred on the work of "every good Marxist revolutionary" (again the principle of choice, Schiller's "beautiful soul") which is now called to lead the 'working class'.

For both leaders it is the spirit that governs the body, which at the same time renders them 'servants' of an ideal and 'free' through the process of the realization of that ideal, which is action in the present and projection in the future. However, for Togliatti we can no longer talk about an *ego dominus* which finds reason and identity through qualities with performative potential – Gramsci's "living faith" and "clear will" – able, through this potential, to change the world with revolutionary determination. The Togliatti ego is rather an ego that subjectifies itself by declaring itself a collective ego ("we") and objectifying itself in the hegemonic, collective, all-encompassing figure of the party. It is an ego which ultimately loses its status of autonomy to acquire a new one within a 'form-of-life' that is (only apparently) external, that is the party ('apparently' because it was founded by the collective of militants), which is ultimately given every possibility of change.[49]

---

[48]   P. T. [Palmiro Togliatti], "La nostra ideologia", *L'Unità* (1925).

[49]   For the concept of 'Forms-of-life', see: Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude. For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004); Giorgio Agamben, *Mezzi senza fine. Note*

This for Togliatti is a spirit, a 'being-in-the-world' which dialectically is expressed in a ceaseless antinomian double register: voluntarism and historicism, utopia and society, transcendence and immanence, present and future, will and action, intellect and sentiment, theory and praxis. The synthesis of opposites can only occur in a time and space 'other-than-here', in the ideal Communist civilization, where the State and inequalities disappear, and where necessity and freedom become the same thing. However in Togliatti, individuals, or rather, every person (that is everyone, *conditio sine qua non*) who is able to understand the inescapable truth of history, who has the dignity of self-control and is able to elevate (that is sacrifice), through discipline and organization, their spirit to the ideal of communist civilization: they are no longer summoned.

Here the roles seem to be already given: the party, the working class. In "La nostra ideologia" Togliatti clarifies:

> Class is the component that organizes, that acquires a conscience, that 'wants' and imposes its organization on the whole process of social transformation. It is the party that is formed in the womb of the class that gives the latter its conscience, organization and will. Now, for us the party must never think it is dealing with a reality that develops automatically and mechanically by itself, it is always dealing with a system of forces in movement, it should seek to change this movement and its results, but it cannot achieve this without actively inserting itself into it.[50]

Therefore, a class "that organizes, that acquires a conscience, that 'wants'", but which cannot and is not except through the guidance of the party that gives it its "conscience", "organisation" and will. The act of the good revolutionary is still heavily steeped in romanticism and heroism, and therefore strongly utopian. It cannot be assumed that reality "automatically and mechanically develops by itself", as it must be determined by the actions of those elected who propose to (and are capable of) "modifying this movement and its results". The insistence on 'mobility' versus 'immobility', 'voluntarism' versus 'fatalism', antinomian pairs that are analogous to those of 'utopia' and 'politics' or 'revolution' and 'compromise', is the main feature of all the early texts by the two top leaders and, in this format, especially Togliatti's.[51] He explains:

---

sulla politica (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008).

[50] P. T., "La nostra ideologia", *L'Unità*.

[51] That the concept of 'revolution' is discursively linked to that of 'movement' is clear by its use in astronomy and the natural sciences, and in particular in the work of Copernicus, *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium*, where the steady and unchanging motion of the constellations are mentioned. It is then used to identify disordered movements, the ups and downs of human destiny, and it is not until the seventeenth century that it acquires for the first time a socio-political meaning. See Hannah Arendt, *On revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 2016 [1963]).

If the party does not behave in this way, the chances for a victory of the proletariat are hopelessly compromised. In fact the proletarian forces [party and class], which have to be partly activated, partly made self-conscious, and gathered, ordered, led, are opposed by other forces, those of the bourgeoisie, which does not resist passively [...]. [...] It would be very convenient for the bourgeois if the voluntary element represented by the intervention of the class party and by the stance of its tactics failed. What the fate of the proletariat [party + class] would be in that case [...] was demonstrated very well by the Italian example in 1919-1920. And this example shows very well what was, in the face of the 'anti-voluntarism' of the Italian socialists of the time, the role of the 'voluntarism' of *L'Ordine nuovo.*[52]

At this juncture in history, the 'proletarian forces' continued (and for a long time) to be understood in two different ways depending on the slant given to the discourse. In fact, in some cases, they refer only to the working class, creating a distinction according to a driving/driven logic: party and class; in others, they are to be understood as a summation: party plus class. In the first instance, the removal of the working classes' responsibility (usually described as a heavy burden) is preferred, compensated by a sense of horizontal inclusion, of class, of moving towards a greater good. In the second instance, the empowerment of the class and the individual within the class, according to the logic of shared responsibilities and benefits, is redeemed by a sense of vertical inclusion. The passage is another utopian 'injection', that is constantly underlined by the assertive tone and a type of language that is strongly performative. But also by the use of the polarities 'fate' and 'action', 'anti-voluntarism' and 'voluntarism', which lead, as a direct result of each semantic pole, to the opposites 'stasis' and 'advent', (fatalistic) 'wait' and (inevitable) 'change'. And, by extension, 'evil' and 'good', 'dominated' and 'dominating', 'subjection' and 'freedom', 'bourgeois society' and 'communism', 'earthly suffering' and 'paradise'.

Once out of necessity, however, Togliatti referred directly to historicism:

This claim of voluntarism in the face of the fatalistic degeneration of revolutionary Marxism is not yet sufficient to put forward the problem of the value that the voluntary element has in the process of the revolution. [...] Two mistakes [are] to be avoided: 1) the error of separating the party from the working class, turning it into something different [...]; 2) the error of separating the action of the party from the objective situations within which it is constituted and operates [...]. [...] The result [of the errors] is to once more move away [compared to 1919-1920] from revolutionary Marxism, to get us away from the dialectic only to land us in metaphysics, and to therefore once more obscure the main points of the problem

---

[52] P. T., "La nostra ideologia", *L'Unità.*

> of the will. [...]. Therefore to isolate the party and its action [...], means to isolate precisely the will from the rest of reality, making it something 'separate', defined in itself.[53]

The leader's insistence on the value of "voluntarism" and the danger of "fatalistic degeneration" caused by its absence is still clear, and we are still in the heart of the utopian-revolutionary semantic arena and the insistence on the opposites of activity and inactivity. As he writes in the article "Il nostro partito" (Our Party), published in the January-February 1928 issue of *lo Stato Operaio*:

> If we had many dozens of comrades well prepared from a theoretical point of view in an 'inactive' party, the imbalance that we complain about could not be overcome, because our clever theoreticians would not have experience. Experience comes from movement.[54]

Togliatti echoes the vitality through the powerful pair of opposites discussed in the most famous Gramscian text, "Odio gli indifferenti". That is 'life' and 'death' in parallel to 'movement' and 'stasis': "a living, real Communist Party is a party that keeps its roots alive in the masses" (cf. *supra*). It is worth repeating it, though: Gramsci speaks of individuals, Togliatti of the party.

Recourse to the semantics of life and vitality is more pressing now that the death threat becomes real: "we must not simply 'be' in the factory, we must 'live there'".[55] The "revitalisation of the basic party organisms", he explains, "and the development of the initiative of the foundation of the party are two absolute conditions to 'move' the masses against fascism".[56] Semantic chains be/live and stasis/motion have as a premise the idea that vitality is given by the union of thought and action ("here the concepts of 'will' and 'organization'" are to be seen as "identical concepts"[57]). 'Being' and 'doing' should not, therefore, be understood as abstract and metaphysical realities but always as the encounter between "being conscious" and "doing consciously" (that is, the concept of life consists of 'being' plus 'doing'). In what way? Through – note the use of Messianic terms – "awareness of one's own vital mission".[58]

In fact, again in "Il nostro partito", the communist leader declares:

---

[53]   P. T., "La nostra ideologia", *L'Unità*.

[54]   Palmiro Togliatti, "Il nostro partito", *lo Stato Operaio* (January-February, 1928).

[55]   Togliatti, "Il nostro partito".

[56]   Togliatti, "Il nostro partito".

[57]   Togliatti, "Il nostro partito".

[58]   Togliatti, "Il nostro partito".

> It is certain that the elements of loyalty, honesty, passion and revolutionary impetus feed [note the biological metaphor] the activities of our comrades. Without them revolutionary work is impossible; without them there is no revolutionary work, there is no revolution. These elements in fact are developed and reinforced in the organisation, in the collective work; and they become the faith in revolutionary success, faith in the proletariat, faith in the party, faith in the Communist International.[59]

Life is movement, and "movement" is "organization", "work", and if "fidelity", "honesty", "passion" and "impetus" (the results of consciously doing and being aware) are added to it, then one reaches the top level of "trust", trust in "revolutionary success", in the "proletariat", in the "party", in the "Communist International". Trust ("faith") is what alone makes the discourse about the actual achievement of communist civilization possible.

V. Conclusion

Confirmation of how much has been gleaned through text analysis on the semantic and discursive front can be seen by briefly carrying out a more strictly linguistic analysis of the Italian language used in the revolutionary legacy of Gramsci's and Togliatti's texts taken together.

The discursive output in fact is evident. The peremptoriness and strongly utopian character, as well as the choice of words, is evidenced, first of all, by the predominant recourse to verbal tenses and moods that express certainty, reality, security (indicative, especially present, and future) or incitement, request, command (imperative). Secondly, by the frequent use of precise verbal phrases (for example, "it is necessary", "it is certain"). Thirdly, by the frequency of phrasal and auxiliary verbs, whether expressing command/ necessity (duty), capability (power) or volition (will). Fourthly, by the prevalence of separate, independent main clauses, mostly enunciative, and of subjective or objective subordinate clauses (see, for example, "class is the component that organizes, that acquires a conscience, that 'wants'"), with the obvious role of affirming, convincing, directing, prescribing, reassuring. Fifthly, the incisiveness is also rendered through the repetition of the words they want to emphasise: "revolution", "discipline", "movement", "will", "order", and conversely, but still in a demarcative role, except this time negative, "fatalism", "indifference", "waiting", often in lists within the same sentence. Furthermore, if in some texts there is a predominant tendency to look for objectivity, evident for example

---

59   Togliatti, "Il nostro partito".

by the position of the adjective in the nominal syntagma, in other texts, using the same gauge, there is a preference for an emotive rendering. The post-nominal positioning of the adjective in the nominal syntagma, where in Italian the adjective comes after the noun, such as for example in *peso morto* (dead weight), *gorghi limosi* (slimy mires), *materia bruta* (raw material) or *coscienze virili* (virile consciousness), tends to express objectivity and has a more restrictive role because it identifies and defines the referent of the substantive. The pre-nominal position (adjective + noun), on the other hand, such as for example in *serrato giuoco* (close play), *indomabile volontà* (untameable will), *viva fede* (living faith), tends to give a greater subjectivity to the utterance and usually indicates a more studied but also more emotional lexicon.[60]

From the above one can make various observations, both with regards to the specificity of the texts, authors, contexts and periods taken into consideration and, more generally, with regards to the possibility of using the same method to understand and question other texts, other authors, other contexts, and other periods. In particular, one can draw some clear benefits with regards to the interpretation of the political text of the two authors.

In the first instance, with the analysis of Gramsci's particular revolutionary lexicon, the advantage lay in grasping the disguised message and its particular legacy, thanks to the focus on his peculiar terminology,[61] the singular insistence on certain words,[62] on the specific ideal interlocutor,[63] the pragmatics, and the semantic links between the words.[64] Behind the opacity of what otherwise might appear merely a revolutionary, political, communist text, full of ideals and philosophically 'pre-packaged' models, one can see the exclusive and specific utopian result of Gramsci's text. And that is faith in and the invitation to a disciplined autopoiesis of the militant – awareness of the self and one's role – that, given the historical conditions, *can* and *must*, through it, evaluate, modify and reconstruct the world: "To know oneself means to be oneself, to be master of oneself, to distinguish oneself, to free oneself from a state of chaos, to exist as an element of order", explains Gramsci. This is what here has been defined the narrative category of Gramsci's 'subjectifying revolutionality': the ambition to modify the subject enabling him to modify himself in order to modify the environment.

---

[60]   For the role of adjective placement, see Maurizio Dardano and Pietro Trifone, *Grammatica italiana con nozioni di linguistica* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1999), 517.

[61]   For example, the use of terms such as "spirit" and "life" that are, instead, virtually absent from Togliatti's discourse.

[62]   Such as "life", "will", "spirit", "culture", "discipline", "morality", "intransigence".

[63]   To go back to Gramsci, the "ego that opposes the others, that differentiates itself".

[64]   For example "life" on the same semantic axis as "spirit "and "politics" and connected to the verbs "power" and "be", which are in turn linked to the words "morality", "will", "intransigence", and "socialists".

This is a type of analysis that above all has allowed us to see the peculiarities and profound differences of Togliatti's discourse. In the second instance, in fact, analysis of the terminology,[65] frequency,[66] interlocutor,[67] pragmatics and semantic bonds[68] has led to a different result. That is to say, an ineliminable mistrust in the capabilities of the individual, the highlighting of a necessary objectification insomuch as it is intrinsically inevitable, the resulting hegemonic role of the party since it was collectively created, given the historical conditions, to change the status quo: "[what] today guarantees the minimum organization of the masses [...] is the Communist Party", as Togliatti said. This is what I defined the discursive category of Togliatti's 'objectifying revolutionality': the ambition to change the autonomy of the subject, objectifying him or her in the collective to modify the environment.

---

[65] Which insistently invokes the idea of the march and work through terms such as "movement", "action", "active", "organization", "work".

[66] Very high frequency for "party", "class", "revolutionary", but also "organization", "movement", "action", "active", "proletarian", "faith".

[67] Specifically, "we", "class", "proletarian forces", the "party".

[68] For example, "revolution" next to "faith", "work", "organisation"; "party" here connoted mainly for its "revolutionary" character, its relation to "class" and as an expression of the "proletariat" and in turn linked to the word "voluntary"; further links between "will" and "action", "movement", "active" and "conscience" almost indicating the symbiosis between awareness and possibilities of action.

THE LANGUAGES OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS:
SOME DESCRIPTIVE REMARKS (1921-1964)

Franco Andreucci

(Università di Pisa)

I. Totalitarian Language?

The concept of 'political language' is extremely complex. Recently, the *Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics* explored the extraordinary richness of the problem, and updated us on the connection between the two fields.[1] Since political language is a set of forms of expression and communication typical of the political sphere, it is clear how many the variables of such a language might be. We must consider the diversity of the actors, the different places and circumstances of communication, as well as the means of communication itself: speeches, writings, images, gestures. The analysis of political language is particularly difficult, when dealing with the languages of communism.

The 'communism' referred to in this essay is a firmly structured political culture, with a massive presence in the twentieth century, divided into three different areas. First, it was a political ideology born from Marxism and forged by Lenin and Stalin in the processes of the formation of Bolshevism and Stalinism. Secondly, it was a long-standing social and economic model established in the Soviet Union and subsequently extended to countries with a communist regime. Lastly, it represented an international system

---

[1]   *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and Bernhard Forchtner (London; New York: Routledge, 2018).

of communist parties often endowed with national roots but uniformed in a common Leninist culture, at least until the late 1960s and in many cases even beyond. The combination of these three elements can vary in time and space but in substance the communism referred to here cannot be separated from any of them.

This study focuses specifically on the language of Italian communists from the foundation of their party in 1921 to the death of Palmiro Togliatti, the party's main leader, in 1964. But the chronology is purely indicative: the research also examines texts and references prior to 1921 and after 1964. The language of the Italian Communists is very rich; the party emerged and developed in an environment of extreme social conflicts in which communication played a decisive role. As a means of communication aimed at recruitment and activism, called Agitation and Propaganda (hence the term *AgitProp*), it expressed itself in the different time periods of the party through a wide range of media: newspapers, magazines, illegal leaflets, rallies, organizational meetings, posters, images, gestures, songs, and collective protest actions.

My analysis, however, relies mainly on texts. First the writings of Togliatti, from the period 1919-1964, as well as some speeches, transcribed lessons, and letters published in two recent anthologies.[2] The availability of other texts in digital format also made the creation of a *corpus* possible: to those of Togliatti were added the political writings of Antonio Gramsci (1910-1926), then the anthology of the periodical *Quaderno dell'attivista* (1946-1954), and finally the texts of greetings sent by the Italian Communist Party (ICP) to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversaries of the October Revolution.[3] The *corpus* reaches 8 million and 688 thousand characters, contains over a million words (also recurring: *tokens*) and just under forty thousand different words (*types*). I have analyzed the texts from different points of view: corpus statistics, cultural analysis of political discourse, political rhetoric, and some aspects of the lexical dimension.[4]

---

[2]   Palmiro Togliatti, *La politica nel pensiero e nell'azione. Scritti e discorsi 1917-1964*, ed. by Michele Ciliberto and Giuseppe Vacca (Milano: Bompiani, 2014); Palmiro Togliatti, *La guerra di posizione in Italia. Epistolario 1944-1964,* ed. by Gianluca Fiocco and Maria Luisa Righi, introduction by Giuseppe Vacca (Torino: Einaudi, 2014).

[3]   Antonio Gramsci, *Scritti politici I, Scritti politici II, Scritti politici III*, in https://www.liberliber.it/online/ autori/autori-g/antonio-gramsci/, last accessed on 2 May 2019; the anthology *Il Quaderno dell'attivista. Ideologia, organizzazione e propaganda del PCI degli anni Cinquanta*, ed. by Marcello Flores (Milano: Mazzotta, 1976), and the texts of the greetings to the CPSU have been digitalized by the author.

[4]   The texts have been reduced to TXT files. Statistical elaborations, concordances, word lists, tables, were made using the many features of the software *WordSmith Tools 7.0.0.126* by M. Scott; see here: http://www.lexically.net/ wordsmith/downloads/, last accessed on 2 May 2019. Seminal starting points, in this field, were Régine Robin, "Langage et ideologies", *Le Mouvement Social*, 85 (1973): 3-11, and Madeleine Réberioux, "Note de lecture de Régine Robin, Histoire et Linguistique", *Le Mouvement Social*, 85 (1973):

After the October Revolution, the language of international social democracy – which had been the dominant political language in public spaces during the preceding quarter century – faded. In its place, the language of communism became one of the world's most important political languages. At the same time, the language of fascism, with different rhythms and in different areas, experienced a strong growth. In the 'short century', words, communication techniques and propaganda were far more intertwined with political rites than in the previous century. These ideologies conquered large parts of the world not only to transform State machines and economies, but also to influence minds and create and consolidate consensus. Myths, symbols, public liturgies became part of everyday life. Clothing and gestures became elements of belonging: the color of the shirts and the movement of the hands and arms distinguished and often connected groups, associations and parties. These languages in their expressive complexity, were transformed into elements of identity.

At the same time, the expansion of mass communication techniques developed during World War I, created the foundations of modern propaganda. In the written and spoken languages many changes took place. In the climate of the 'European civil war', opposing but similar languages were created, jargons defined by political belonging and by contiguity with the propaganda: the Newspeak of Orwell or, according to a later expression, the *langue de bois*.[5] The totalitarian States attempted policies of linguistic engineering. In iconography and more generally in the visual arts both Nazism and Fascism, producers of grandiose artifacts, and Soviet socialist realism, sought to orientate the tastes of the public and to direct artistic production.[6]

A way to define all of these experiences is that of 'totalitarian language'. It is a language with a strong oratory vocation and an explicitly declamatory character, a triumphalistic and ideological language, repetitive and abstract. Moreover, a Manichean language typical of the parties in power and affirmed by the ministries is responsible for culture and propaganda both in Hitler's Germany and in the Communist countries.[7] The question of 'totalitarian languages' is very complex and therefore some clarifications and distinctions are necessary. First, we need to ask a question regarding the *history*

155-157. See also Francesca Santulli, *Le parole del potere, il potere delle parole. Retorica e discorso politico* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2005).

[5] See the special issue of *Hermès*, "Les langues de bois", ed. by Joanna Nowicki, Michaël Oustinoff, and Anne-Marie Chartier, supervised by Bernard Valade, 58 (2010).

[6] See Franco Andreucci, "Dream Factory Communism. Il destino dei simboli e l'iconografia del potere", *Contemporanea*, 3 (2004): 505-515.

[7] See *Legacies of Totalitarian Language in the Discourse Culture of the Post-totalitarian Era*, ed. by Ernest Andrews (Lanham: Lexington, 2011); and, especially, *Political Languages in the Age of Extremes*, ed. by Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

of totalitarian language: what relationship is there in their genesis, between the Nazi language (the *Lingua Tertii Imperii*)[8] and the Stalinist *langue de bois*, that is two similar languages experimented by two different totalitarian systems? In other words, does totalitarian language correspond to expressive and communicative modalities typical of totalitarian systems (characterized by a single party, a charismatic leader, an official doctrine, political police and mass media) which were 'invented' and implemented by *Minculpops*, or does it constitute the point of arrival of a pre-existing language, only adapted to the new conditions? I agree with the implicit thesis present in the diaries of Victor Klemperer and thus favor the second hypothesis. The harshness, the radicalisms, the ideological accentuations, the fanaticism, typical of totalitarian language, have their roots both in the long formation of Leninism, and in the genetic process of Fascism, between the First World War and the immediate post-war period. The totalitarian systems made popular and systematic the new words and expressions, but their humus is that of war and revolution.

At the same time, the formula of totalitarian language is only one aspect of the complexity of political languages in the 'age of extremes'. The language of the leaders, for example, is indicative of an extraordinary expressive universe; from Stalin's language, with its pedagogical simplifications and doctrinal axioms, to the almost academic language of a cultured leader such as Togliatti. According to Michał Głowiński, totalitarian language does not tend to convince, but to indicate a canon of thought to listeners considered as passive; it has no personal character, but has the "impersonal" character of "correctness"; it has a foundation in polarizations and opposing formulations, in the recognition of the difference between 'us' and the enemy; it expresses value judgments and builds a certain vision of the world.[9]

The concept of totalitarian language, however, although it is used here as a key analytical tool, does not always work for the problems we are dealing with. Aimed at the role of parties in power, and in the character of public language in totalitarian systems, it risks underevaluating, not only the genetic dimension, but also the 'party languages'. In fact, clear distinctions are needed between the language of the communists when they are opposition parties and the language of the communists in power. First of all, while the former have only their language, the latter also have – or may have – a linguistic policy, and an orientation that is reflected in administrative decisions, as in China and the Soviet Union. Ji Fengyuan outlined some points about "linguistic engineering" in Mao's China during the Cultural Revolution and Bernard Comrie on the Russian language

---

[8]   Victor Klemperer, *LTI: Notizbuch eines Philologen*, ed. by Elke Fröhlich (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2010).

[9]   Michał Głowiński, *Totalitarian Speech* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang Edition, 2014), 97-99.

after the October Revolution.[10] But similar considerations can also be made regarding Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.[11]

Moreover, the concept of totalitarian language risks underestimating the expressive and linguistic peculiarities of large mass communist parties. In fact, the Italian Communist Party, the French one, and the German one in the Weimar years, which never reached power, all had a very rich cultural history intertwined with the presence of many intellectuals, writers and artists. These intellectuals to a certain extent, participated in the linguistic destinies of their parties and shared party propaganda jargon, but at the same time, from Berthold Brecht in Germany to Louis Aragon in France, to Italo Calvino in Italy, they also cultivated precious literary experiences.

Within this larger framework of communist culture, we will principally study the words of Togliatti and his party. The insistence on the 'empirical' character of this essay derives mainly from an awareness of the complexity of language analysis. Accordingly, this research has a loose broad structure, with occasional contributions from other disciplines. It is a history of language and a political history.

II. The Language of the ICP: *Langue de bois* and the Lexicon of the Movement

The language of the ICP has a history, which includes both its genesis and its continuity. It was conceived in the fiery atmosphere of the Post-World War I period and followed the path indicated by Leninism during the years of the European civil war dominated by the dramatic opposition of fascism and communism. During the Cold War, the ICP developed the language of a party that aspired to power and proudly cultivated its own past. The party disappeared at the end of the 1980s although its rhetoric still survives in some political groups that identify with communism.

The language of the ICP retained the harshness and the evaluative intensity of its genetic moment for a long time: it came from an experience of splitting and breaking with a past where it was used to denounce 'betrayal' and 'opportunism'. The years of the Comintern were crucial in its history. The leadership of the party, as a result of its for-

---

[10] Ji Fengyuan, *Linguistic Engineering. Language and Politics in Mao's China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); Bernard Comrie, Gerald Stone, and Maria Polinsky, *The Russian Language in the Twentieth Century*, second ed. revised and expanded of *The Russian Language Since the Revolution,* ed. by Bernard Comrie and Gerald Stone (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[11] Cfr. Emilio Gentile, "Fascistese: The Religious dimensions of Political Language in Fascist Italy"*, Political Languages in the Age of Extremes*, ed. by Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 59-82; Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabulär des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1998).

mation and generational characteristics, acquired a language of absolute opposition to fascism with total adherence to the canons of Leninism and Stalinism. The influence of Lenin and Stalin developed along two different chronological and thematic axes: that of Lenin between 1915 and the early 1920s on the themes of the struggle against social democracy, revolutionary violence and the fight against the State; and that of Stalin which was based on the extraordinary amplifying structure of the Communist International and spread the message of the class struggle through incessant propaganda.

The language of the ICP was, at the same time, *langue de bois* and political language. The difference is significant. In the first case it is a jargon, a poor and schematized language typical of internal communication. Luciano Bianciardi described the *langue de bois* of the ICP, when he wrote of "a lexicon, a syntax, a mimicry" used constantly by all the party officials, becoming a shared jargon.[12] Political language, on the other hand, aims to persuade and create a harmonious community, one which wants to share values and judgments.

We first wish to examine communist texts in terms of *lexical density*. It's possible to measure both the total number of full words contained in a text (*tokens*), and the number of words in their uniqueness (*types*).[13] The relationship between the two entities (*types/ tokens*), suitably corrected in order to provide comparable data between texts of different lengths, is the Standardized Type/Token Ratio (STTR) and offers a first indication of lexical density [Fig. 1].

The measurement of the STTR reveals that Gramsci, for instance, had the richest vocabulary, while the greetings from the ICP to the CPSU on the anniversaries of the October Revolution contained the poorest lexicon. Togliatti and the *Quaderno dell'Attivista* are closer to the average. Although some scholars argue that the STTR should be accompanied by other calculations to measure the originality, complexity and lexical richness, the literature recognizes unanimously the STTR as a good criterion of verification. A higher STTR value usually corresponds to a richer and more varied vocabulary and greater lexical density, while a lower value can mean a more repetitive text, and therefore easier to read. From this point of view, Togliatti's language differs slightly from the texts average, while the greetings to the CPSU showed a predictably pronounced lexical poverty.

---

[12]   Luciano Bianciardi, *Il lavoro culturale* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1964), 81.

[13]   Linda Wetzel, *Types and Tokens: On Abstract Objects* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009). In this research, the calculation proposed by WordSmith Tools 7.0 was used: "The standardised type/token ratio (STTR) is computed every *n* words as Wordlist goes through each text file. By default, n = 1,000. In other words the ratio is calculated for the first 1,000 running words, then calculated afresh for the next 1,000, and so on to the end of your text or corpus. A running average is computed, which means that you get an average type/token ratio based on consecutive 1,000-word chunks of text". Cfr. http://www.lexically.net/downloads/version7/HTML/type_token_ratio_proc.html, last accessed on 2 May 2019.
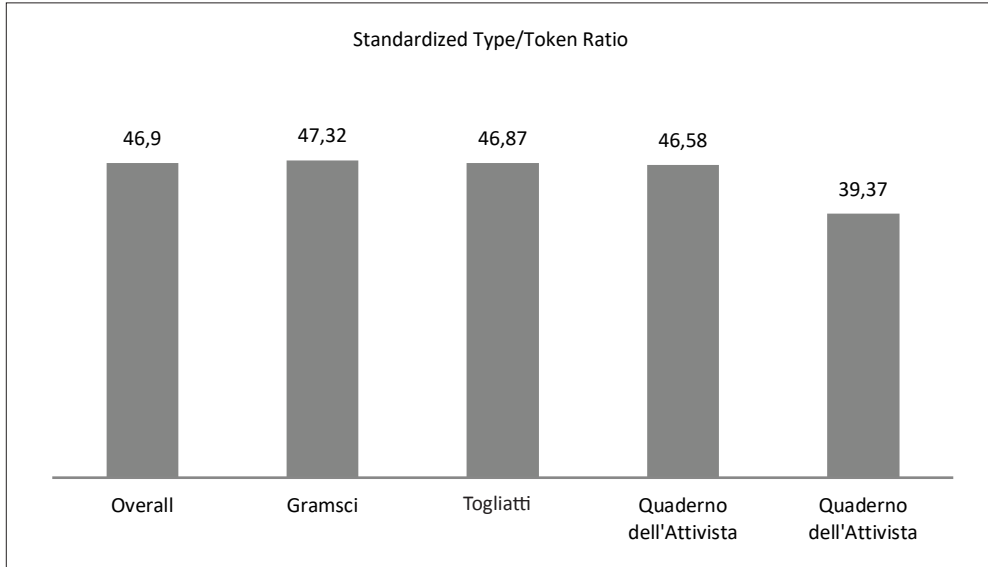
Fig. 1 – Gramsci, Togliatti and the ICP: Standardized Type/Token Ratio

An examination of the frequencies reveals a self-referential vocabulary of an exclusively political-organizational nature [Fig. 2].

The Italian communists inherited this language from Bolshevism, along with a strong vocation towards violence. The outcome of the Russian revolution convinced many revolutionaries in the rest of the world of the necessity of civil war for the realization of their goal. The old regime had to be swept away: the verbs used by Lenin in *State and Revolution* are very significant in this sense: "break", "demolish", "shatter", "make it disappear from the face of the earth", "blow up". Indeed, the strong expressions used by Marx in the *Civil War in France* were, if possible, heightened and made even more extreme. Such language went hand-in-hand with the idea that society should be freed from "parasites", which meant exploiters, and that this liberation had to take place with violence, even with terror. In addition to the bourgeoisie, Lenin identified a second enemy in the Socialist International which had not opposed the war. They were the "renegades", the "opportunists", the "traitors", the "servants" or even the "lackeys" of the bourgeoisie.

WORD	FREQ.	%
PARTY	4,468	0.41
POLITICS	2,928	0.27
CLASS	2,739	0.25
FASCISM	2,401	0.22
STRUGGLE	2,303	0.21
MOVEMENT	2,196	0.20
MASSES	1,875	0.17

Fig. 2 – Word frequencies in Italian Communist texts

The young Italian socialists – Gramsci, Togliatti and many others – shared this language and made it their own. Gramsci, in one of his writings in December of 1919, exalts the fierce struggle against the petty bourgeoisie, "barrier of rotting humanity" and the raids against the "putrid and voracious locusts", against an "abject, servile humanity of assassins and lackeys".[14] The register was the same one used by Lenin a year before, when he wrote that it was necessary to "clean up the soil of Russia of any harmful insects, of the fleas who were the rascals; of the bugs who were the rich".[15]

Such language emphasized a vocabulary of zoological abomination and dehumanization that would last for decades. Gustav Noske, a Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) leader was, in the words of Togliatti a "bloody dog", while Mussolini was a "rabid dog".[16] The model comes from Lenin, from the war and the revolution: sharks, spiders, leeches were among the most widespread metaphorical forms in that vocabulary.[17]

---

[14]   Antonio Gramsci, "Gli avvenimenti del 2-3 dicembre 1919", *L'Ordine Nuovo* (December 6-3, 1919, *Scritti politici*, vol. 2, 42.

[15]   Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], "How to Organise Competition?", *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 26, September 1917-February 1918 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 404-415.

[16]   The first expression is from 1933, see "Sulla situazione tedesca", *Lo Stato Operaio*, VII, 3 (March 1933), Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere*, ed. by Ernesto Ragionieri, III, vol. 2 (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1973), 178; the second from 1943, see "L'Italia e la guerra contro la Germania hitleriana", Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere*, ed. by Franco Andreucci and Paolo Spriano, IV, vol. 1 (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1979).

[17]   Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], "Comrade workers, forward to the last, decisive fight", August 1918, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 28, July 1918-March 1919 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 56-57.

WORD	FREQ.	%
REVOLUTION	492	0,31
PROLETARIAT	443	0,28
AGAINST	440	0,28
PARTY	423	0,26
BOURGEOISIE	417	0,26
WAR	414	0,26
BOURGEOIS	409	0,26
STRUGGLE	365	0,23
CLASS	364	0,23
WORKERS	311	0,19
MARX	306	0,19
CAPITAL	275	0,17
MASSES	265	0,17
DEMOCRACY	248	0,16
CAPITALISM	245	0,15
POLITICS	245	0,15

Fig. 3 – Lenin: Frequencies in 5 texts 1915-1920

Gramsci and Togliatti began to use the language of Lenin, translated into Italian, a poor and direct language that first proposed the two parameters of violence and organization. On the basis of the five most popular texts by Lenin in the formative years of Gramsci and Togliatti,[18] a series of frequencies confirms this type of language [Fig. 3].

_____

[18]   Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], "Socialism and War. The Attitude of the R.S.D.L.P. Towards the War", *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 21 August 1914-December 1915 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 295-338; "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. A Popular Outline", *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol 22, December 1916-July 1916 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 185-304; "The State and Revolution. The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution", *Collected*

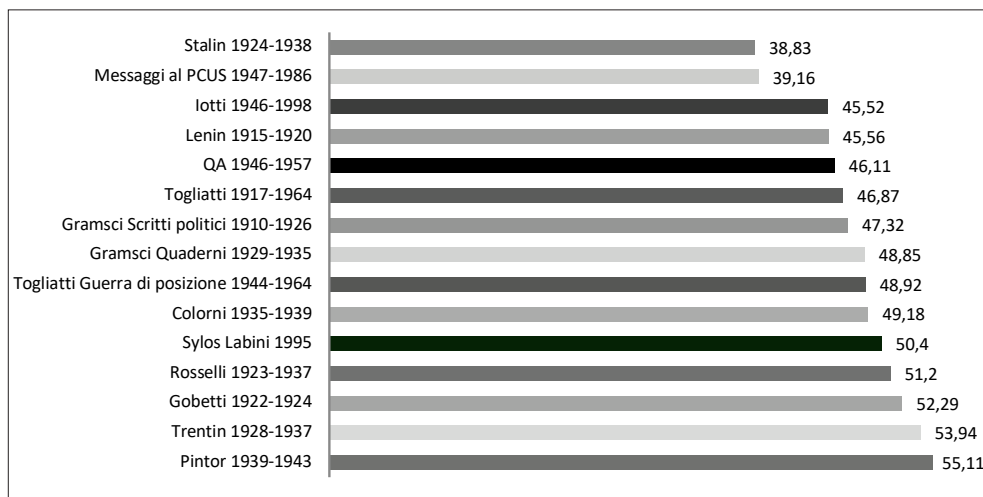|	
Stalin 1924-1938	38,83
Messaggi al PCUS 1947-1986	39,16
Iotti 1946-1998	45,52
Lenin 1915-1920	45,56
QA 1946-1957	46,11
Togliatti 1917-1964	46,87
Gramsci Scritti politici 1910-1926	47,32
Gramsci Quaderni 1929-1935	48,85
Togliatti Guerra di posizione 1944-1964	48,92
Colorni 1935-1939	49,18
Sylos Labini 1995	50,4
Rosselli 1923-1937	51,2
Gobetti 1922-1924	52,29
Trentin 1928-1937	53,94
Pintor 1939-1943	55,11

Fig. 4 – STTR in some Communist and Non-communist texts

It was a relatively poor language, much poorer than other contemporary political languages. For example, some Italian writers who were antifascist, but not communist, show a richer lexicon and a more complex approach to politics. In their texts, there is more interest in 'the history of men' and 'the reality of the world' than in the 'party' organization,[19] as the following comparison clarifies [Fig. 4].

As we have observed, the two models that contributed most to the formation of the language of the ICP, were those of Lenin and Stalin. Between 1915 and 1920, the lexical density in Lenin's texts (mean STTR 45.46) and those of Stalin (38.83) remained al-

Works, ed. by Lenin, vol. 25, June-September 1917 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 385-539; "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky", *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 28, July 1918-March 1919 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 227-325; "'Left Wing' Communism – an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 31 April-December 1920 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 17-117.

[19]   See the texts by Carlo Rosselli, *Socialismo liberale e altri scritti fra il 1923 e il 1937*, in *LIS, Lessico dell'Italiano scritto*, http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/link-utili/banche-dati-dellitaliano-scritto-parlato; by Piero Gobetti, *La rivoluzione liberale e altri scritti fra il 1922 e il 1924*, in *LIS, Lessico dell'Italiano scritto*, http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/link-utili/banche-dati-dellitaliano-scritto-parlato; Eugenio Colorni, *Scritti*, https://www.liberliber.it/mediateca/libri/c/colorni/scritti/pdf/colorni_scritti.pdf; Silvio Trentin, *Fascismo e democrazia*, https://www.liberliber.it/online/autori/autori-t/silvio-trentin/fascismo-e-democrazia/; Giaime Pintor, *Il sangue d'Europa: 1939-1943*, https://www.liberliber.it/online/autori/autori--p/giaime-pintor/il-sangue-deuropa/; Paolo Sylos Labini, *La crisi italiana*, https://www.liberliber.it/online/autori/autori-s/paolo-sylos-labini/la-crisi-italiana/ (last accessed all the websites on 2 May 2019).

most unchanged. The first fifteen occurrences in the texts confirm the specialization and the narrowness of the vocabulary. The seven most common lemmas are: "State", "party", "revolution", "proletariat", "against", "struggle", "class".

This language, largely modeled on that of the Communist International, became relatively standardized as a result of the international character of the organization and because of its communicative function between propaganda and party jargon. In the 1930s the language of communism took shape as an homologation of the key words, a universalization of the class lexicon, and an adherence to the discursive canons of Stalinism. Such a multi-functional language tended to produce consent and legitimation (thereby giving it a ritual value). It did so through complex rhetorical forms such as the metaphor but with simplifying argumentative methods together with a wide set of symbols (flags, songs, emblems, meetings).

We can try to penetrate the language of the Italian communists through some passages by examining the vocabulary, style and expressive typology. Let's start with the metaphor, a figure of speech that has strong evocative power and plays an important role in all totalitarian languages. In the communist language the most relevant metaphors come from the semantic fields of the war, disease, the human body, education and sea travel.[20] The organization of the party and its action corresponded to a real militarization of the expressive register: one is "militant" and one is active on a "front"; one "mobilizes" to conduct a "battle" in the context of a "class war"; one is "avant-garde", one is a "soldier" of the "proletarian army", etc. Gramsci himself, who criticized the military metaphors applied to the class struggle in 1917,[21] widely used them.

Although these metaphors are common in political language, Lenin's influence is decisive. Leninism, mediated by Stalinism, also provides the class of metaphors that tends to create a hierarchy, in particular that of the "teacher" (Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Gramsci, Togliatti) and of the "disciple" or even of the "school". According to the *Quaderno dell'attivista*, the ICP was "educated by Gramsci and Togliatti, in the school of Lenin and Stalin".

---

[20]   Andreas Musolff, "The Study of Metaphor as Part of Critical Discourse Analysis", *Critical Discourse Studies*, 9, 3 (2012): 301-310; Andreas Musolff, "Maritime Journey Metaphors in British and German Public Discourse: Transport Vessels of International Communication?", *German as a Foreign Language*, 3 (2000), http://www.gfl-journal.de/3-2000/musolff.pdf, last accessed on 2 May 2019. For a different class of metaphors, see also: Jonathan Charteris-Black, "Competition Metaphors and Ideology. Life as a Race", *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and Bernhard Forchtner (London; New York: Routledge, 2018), 202-217.

[21]   A. G. [Antonio Gramsci], "Analogie e metafore", *Il Grido del Popolo*, XXII, 686 (15 September 1917), in Antonio Gramsci, *La Città futura. 1917-1918*, ed. by Sergio Caprioglio (Torino: Einaudi, 1982), 464-466.

The class of seafaring metaphors also creates a hierarchy. Stalin (and after him Mao Zedong) is called the "great helmsman", the Soviet Union the "beacon" of humanity. In Togliatti the maritime metaphors have a certain role, but only partly in relation to the totalitarian language. "Navigate" is a verb that pertains to the "old politics", while at the same time "lighthouse" is often an attribute of the "new socialist world".

Another class of metaphors regards friendship. From Lenin on, the "friends" and the "enemies" populate the communist universe. It is a universe characterized by a Manichean polarization. In addition to the celebration of the "Italo-Soviet" friendship, the *Quaderno dell'attivista* claims that Stalin "was the greatest friend of our freedom". Togliatti speaks of the "friendship" of the Italian people with other countries, while "friendship" becomes "unshakable" when it is with the Soviet Union.

These ideological metaphors, express systems of values and conceptions of the world. Of these, the naturalistic metaphor of "decomposition" (especially in Gramsci and Togliatti) and "putrefaction" (especially in Lenin and Stalin) is accompanied by ideological judgments on the degree of "maturation" of capitalist society and a series of dehumanizing metaphors. In this case as well, we can introduce a comparative framework that underlines some potentialities of the concept of totalitarianism. Both the Communists and the Nazis largely used dehumanizing metaphors to define the enemy. In her excellent book, Julie Cassiday offers a list of symbolic epithets which the Bolsheviks used to define their enemies:[22] "rotten corpse", "insects", "germs". Anatoly Lunacharsky, for example, called the Revolutionary Socialists "stinking abscesses", while Lenin, Togliatti and Hitler shared the use of another series of metaphors, concerning infections, sores and parasites.[23]

In the expressive dimension typical of languages aimed at convincing and advocating, communist rhetoric abounds in texts with a strong anaphoric emphasis. From March 1953 onwards, the use of anaphora became more frequent in the public language of the ICP. Emotionally touched by the death of Stalin on 5 March 1953 and the birthday of Togliatti on 26 March, the party at every level expressed its closeness as much to the departed leaders as to the living. Commemorating Stalin during the 13th Congress of the Italian Communist Youth Federation, its secretary, Enrico Berlinguer, proclaimed "the solemn commitment" of the young Communists to embrace Stalin's teaching by repeating the following formula ten times:

---

[22]   Julie A. Cassiday, *The Enemy On Trial: Early Soviet Courts On Stage and Screen* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

[23]   Regarding "Parasit" and "parasitär" in the Nazi language, cfr. Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabulär des Nationalsozialismus*, *ad vocem*.

> We take the solemn commitment to be faithful forever to the teachings that the dear and great Stalin has left us.
> We take the solemn commitment to cultivate and educate in us those gifts of courage, […] that Stalin possessed so high.
> We take the solemn commitment to study without pause the works of the great masters of socialism, the immortal ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.[24]

While the language linked to the myth of Stalin is well known, the prose accompanying the creation of the myth of Togliatti is much less so. At the end of March 1953, on the occasion of the sixtieth birthday of the Communist leader, Antonello Trombadori wielded strong ceremonial praise in front of the Central Committee of the party together with an impressive anaphoric emphasis:

> If Gramsci, first Marxist-Leninist of Italy, historically had to be the man of the struggle […], Togliatti, disciple of Stalin and continuator of Gramsci is the man […].
> If Gramsci, first Marxist and Leninist of Italy was the avenger of the working class […] Togliatti, continuator of Gramsci and disciple of Stalin is the man […].
> If Gramsci, first Marxist and Leninist of Italy was the man of the consequent critique […], Togliatti, continuator of Gramsci and disciple of Stalin is the man […].[25]

In a similar vein, Trombadori went on:

> I have known your face from afar, in rallies, in assemblies, in large gatherings of people […].
> I have known your face during the restricted meeting in your office of Secretary-General […].
> I have known your face in the free spacious air of our mountains […].
> I have known your face attacked by evil […].
> I have known your face immediately after the serious surgery […].[26]

Communist rhetoric linked to the oral expression of the rally and to propaganda had a distinctive character in the anaphora. Togliatti, back in Italy after a long exile, addressed the Neapolitan people with an exemplary repetitive pattern:

---

[24]   Enrico Berlinguer, "Abbiamo perduto il nostro più grande amico", *Pattuglia*, VIII, 12 (22 March 1953), 5-6.

[25]   Antonello Trombadori, "Il volto di Togliatti", *l'Unità* (28 March 1953).

[26]   Trombadori, "Il volto di Togliatti".

> Look at our Mezzogiorno which needs so many things,
> which needs […]
> which needs […]
> which needs […]
> which needs […]
> which needs […].[27]

The complexity of the language of the ICP reflects the coexistence of various expressive tendencies, different narrative forms, and different communicative orientations. The language of the Party was not *Newspeek*, but it did share the canons of Stalinist language until the end of the 50s. It was not, like the *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, the language of a mass fanaticism. Nonetheless the propaganda tools of the ICP urged and encouraged radical stances, Manichean distinctions of good and evil, total activism and absolute loyalty. The language of the ICP remained within the Stalinist canon. In the first place, as an ideological language, it required the use of intense evaluative adjectives, dramatic contrasts, and 'merciless' struggles. Moreover, it conformed to the international communist movement, where the circulation of words and lemmas formed an integral part of this internationalism. In addition, it experienced, like the subjects of which it was an expression (the party, the movement) and the cultures it represented (Marxism, communism) both the Stalinist radicalization and bureaucratization. Finally, as a tool of agitation and propaganda, the language of the ICP developed following a predictable and uniform rhetoric.

The language of the party deals with a problem of vocabulary, as in the case of "progressive democracy" and the meanings of the adjective "democratic". At the same time, when the political language is used in closed and self-referential subjects, it becomes a problem of jargon. The "permanent revolution", the "relative stabilization", the "united front", the "popular front", the "democratic front", as well as "the Italian way to socialism" are, at most, expressions difficult to understand outside the communist party environment.[28]

The deepest connotations of the language of communism refer to what it had in common with the traditions of the labor movement and socialism, with the addition, not without consequences, of the Soviet and Stalinist experience. It was, first of all, a language which preferred timeless ideals, programs without precise spatial and temporal

---

[27]   Palmiro Togliatti, "Discorso su Gramsci nei giorni della Liberazione", speech given at the Teatro San Carlo di Napoli, 29 April 1945, *Scritti su Gramsci*, ed. by Guido Liguori (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2013), 115.

[28]   See Franco Andreucci, *Falce e martello. Identità e linguaggi dei comunisti italiani fra stalinismo e guerra fredda* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2005), 42-54, 190-207.

determinations, such as democracy, socialism and freedom. In this ideological language there was a strong presence of a religious type of vocabulary (Eternal Glory to Stalin, Eternal Glory to Lenin, etc.).[29]

As a language of propaganda, the communist language abounds with slogans and mottos, which added new elements to a pre-existing tradition that went from 'liberté, egalité, fraternité', to 'working men of all countries, unite'. These slogans, as Lasswell and Yakobson noted, were authoritative, rich in key political symbols, and widely disseminated. They were the links between the party theorists, decision-makers, party militants and members of society.[30] As a party language, it reflects the dualistic foundation of communist culture based on the alternative between integral association and integral antagonism. The political action was defined by 'fronts' which in turn assumed a 'global' dimension. As the language of an international organization (the Comintern) and, after its dissolution, of the Soviet 'system', it was also the internationalist Esperanto shared by the ICP.

By the end of World War II and the emergence of post-war society, the party language already appeared solidly established. Formulas, stylistic elements and adjectives had grown up with Stalinism, and the ICP frequently appealed to that expressive heritage. The masses were always *broad*; the party's struggle was *consequential*; its enemies had to be *unmasked*; the unity of the party was *full and unreserved*; the working class always taught *severe lessons* to its adversaries, while Leninism was, inevitably, the *flag of the struggle* of the working class.

An interesting and scarcely used source, the greetings sent by the ICP to the CPSU on the anniversary of the October Revolution, reveal similar patterns. These greetings constitute an incomplete corpus over a much longer period, between 1947 and 1986. Even though these messages were probably sent every year, the Communist newspaper published only 23 of them. After 1987, during the *perestroika*, greeting messages were no longer published by *l'Unità* and, probably, not even sent. The 23 messages always have the same sender and the same recipient (respectively the Central Committee of the ICP and the Central Committee of the CPSU), but have different characters and content. Their substance changes over time, and reflects the changes in the internal relations within the communist world. The greetings have, among their basic characteristics, a certain routine and predictability of form and content. In most cases, it is a communication between two subjects and, especially on the occasion of various

---

[29]   Hans H. Reich, *Sprache und Politik. Untersuchungen zu Wortschatz des offiziellen Sprachgebrauchs der DDR* (Munchen: Max Heueber Verlag, 1968), 253.

[30]   Cf. *Visioni del comunismo. Harold Lasswell, Nathan Leites e Bertram Wolfe fra politica e scienze sociali*, ed. by Franco Andreucci and Andrea Mariuzzo (Milano: L'ornitorinco, 2010).

celebrations, verifies and measures mutual relations.[31] Greetings are almost always expressions or texts that respect strict formal norms. This may suggest on the one hand a certain textual poverty but on the other hand it was precisely the repetitive and ceremonial character of these greetings which could illuminate some aspects of mentalities and ideologies.

Considering the texts in their entirety, in a synchronic dimension, the higher frequencies are those of "party" (103), "peoples" (99), and "peace" (80). Terms of conflict, however, such as "force" (72), "struggle" (62), "revolution" (48) follow closely behind. The communist language is articulated around the party, the working class, the masses. The language employed presupposes and postulates organization and has a strong vocation to forms of rejection and opposition, such as those expressed by the preposition "against". It defines a multiple enemy: imperialists, warmongers, bestial exploitation, tyranny, fascism, revisionism, but also "reactionary social democracy": it is an ideologic and predictable language.

As universal messages, the texts recall the "peoples" and the "world", but "Europe" is only mentioned in 1970. At the same time, within the lexical units, the context reveals a series of significant shifting of accent: the "peoples" of 1947, 1948, 1949 and later, until 1964, were "peoples" that the Soviet Union had saved from slavery and exploitation. These "peoples" were the object of a liberating action by the Soviet Union that had already happened. After 1965, the "peoples" became active and, even in the context of an era open from the October revolution that continued to dominate "the past, the present and the future", they were sovereign agents in their own right. Beginning in the '70s the "peoples" emerged as full actors of the political scene: "the *peoples* of Europe" bearers of special responsibilities, "Arab peoples", "peoples who fought against imperialism" protagonists of an array of forces always led by the Soviet Union. "Peaceful coexistence" appears thirteen times and, like "imperialism", is no longer used after 1975: two of the most relevant concepts of communist political culture leave without a word of farewell.

As in other cases, the party employs a self-referential vocabulary of a stable discourse characterized by "an evolution of the lexical universe in which the constant elements of the communist vocabulary move around".[32] The changes, even relevant, develop slowly and hesitantly. Before the Soviet Union became a simple reference of international politics in 1986, the shift of emphasis is almost imperceptible. As late

---

[31]   Alessandro Duranti, "Universal and Culture-Specific Properties of Greetings", *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 7, 1 (1997): 63-97. See also Paul Chilton, "Politeness, Politics and Diplomacy", *Discourse & Society*, 1, 2 (1990): 201-224.

[32]   Robert Benoît, "Le lexique communiste (1932-1946). Description d'une evolution", *Mots*, III, 3 (1981): pp. 65-78.

as 1980, the message to the Soviet party is 'warm' and acknowledges the October revolution as the 'fundamental stage' in the liberation of humanity. From 1981, however, we see a progressive detachment of the ICP from the ideology of proletarian internationalism.

Compared to the years of the Communist International, with its language of oppositions and justifying arguments, the communist lexicon is more balanced in Italy after 1945. By the beginning of the 1980s, this lexicon assumes the character of an autonomous language, although its core remains that of communist linguistic identity. Above all, there are pairs of stereotypical words, characteristic of a ritual rhetoric based on repetitions. Nouns and adjectives are organized in a standardized sequence in the ceremonial form of propaganda messages [Fig. 5].

George Orwell's observations on the ritual language of Communism, remain of extraordinary value here. He spoke of a "style of ceremony", full of stereotypical expressions:

> Napoleon was now never spoken of simply as "Napoleon". He was always referred to in formal style as "our Leader, Comrade Napoleon", and the pigs liked to invent for him such titles as Father of All Animals, Terror of Mankind, […] and the like.[33]

Even the formal language of the messages of the ICP has a notable ceremonial component. It is a language that mainly looks within the party, prefers evaluative formulations along the friend/foe axis, is strongly marked by the terminology of the movement, and defines a collective identity. The identification mechanisms in the party and the formalization of language increasingly become the standard expression of a community. If the use of the personal pronoun and the possessive are signs of the role of individuals in political movements,[34] consider that in the political writings of Gramsci, until 1926, the relationship between the use of "our" and "my" is to the advantage of "our" for 5.7 times while in the political writings of Togliatti, until 1964, "our" is more used than "my" for 24.6 times. The expression "our party" replaces the personal pronoun in many writings of Togliatti and the Communist leaders. The party had become over time a strong and compact community and its linguistic identity shared the contradictions between the "negative integration" and the rich cultural exchanges with the society which surround-

---

[33]   George Orwell, *Animal farm*, illustrated by Joy Batchelor and John Halas (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1954), 102.

[34]   The theme was frequently emphasized by Paola Desideri, *Teoria e prassi del discorso politico. Strategie persuasive e percorsi comunicativi* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1984). See also Anna de Fina, "Pronominal choice. Identity and Solidarity in Political Discourse", *Text. Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, 15, 3 (1995): 379-410.

ed it.[35] The sophistication of the cultural journals of the party co-existed with the poverty of the language of propaganda, and the vocabulary of the leadership followed this same double track of poverty and richness.

1947	*commosso saluto* (emotional greeting), *baluardo invincibile* (invincible bulwark), *guida sapiente* (wise leadership), *forza imbattibile* (unbeatable strength), *grande capo* (great leader)
1948	*lotta instancabile* (tireless struggle), *grande amicizia* (great friendship), *lotta comune* (common struggle), *guida eroica* (heroic leadership), *grande rivoluzione* (great revolution)
1949	*saluto entusiastico* (enthusiastic greeting), *gloriosa rivoluzione* (glorious revolution), *sfruttamento bestiale* (bestial exploitation)
1954	*gloriosa rivoluzione* (glorious revolution), *contraddizioni profonde* (profound contradictions), *esempio luminoso* (luminous example), *bandiera invincibile* (invincible flag)
1957	*profonda commozione* (deep emotion), *conquiste storiche* (historical conquests), *potente movimento* (powerful movement), *guida rivoluzionaria* (revolutionary leadership)
1959	*fraterno saluto* (fraternal greeting), *grandiosi successi* (grandiose successes), *ardite iniziative* (daring initiatives), *glorioso anniversario* (glorious anniversary)
1962	*serena fermezza* (serene determination), *tempestiva azione* (timely action), *società nuova* (new society), *vittoriosi progressi* (victorious progress)
1963	*battaglia coerente* (coherent battle), *impetuoso movimento* (impetuous movement), *forza liberatrice* (liberating force), *valore universale* (universal value)
1964	*decisiva svolta* (decisive turning point), *grande simpatia* (great sympathy), *contributo irreversibile* (irreversible contribution), *valore universale* (universal value)
1965	*opera immane* (immense endeavor), *spinta aggressiva* (aggressive push), *coesistenza pacifica* (peaceful coexistence), *concezione rivoluzionaria* (revolutionary conception)
1968	*grande vittoria* (great victory), *eroica resistenza* (heroic resistance), *tappa nuova* (new stage), *nuovi successi* (new successes), *interesse comune* (common interest)
1970	saluto fraterno (fraternal greeting), valore storico (historical value), rinnovato impegno (renewed commitment), reciproca autonomia (reciprocal autonomy)

Fig. 5 – Stereotypical pairs of words in the greetings from the ICP to the CPSU 1947-1970

---

[35]   See Günther Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: a Study in Working-class Isolation and National Integration,* preface by Reinhard Bendix (Totowa: Bedminster Press, 1963).

III. Some Observations on the Language of Togliatti

There are few studies on Togliatti's language, as Benedetta Baldi, co-author with Lodovico Franco acknowledges in their most recent work.[36] Baldi underlines the Manichean character of Togliatti's communist discourse in her description of the complex rhetoric of his speech in Modena commemorating the massacre of January 1950. Riccardo Gualdo, in an essay on political language in 2009, speaks about Togliatti's rhetoric as,

> Calm but solemn in the repertoire of classical, literary and even religious quotations [with] argumentative techniques of forensic matrix [...] The architecture of its texts is firmly structured, attentive to the *dispositio* rather than to the *exornatio*; the style is lucid and sharp, didactic even in the scientific use of the lexicon.[37]

Giuseppe Antonelli instead, emphasizes the parataxis as the price paid by Togliatti to spoken Italian.[38] Ivano Paccagnella, in an interesting study on Togliatti's speeches at the Comintern's executive in 1926, points out the "legalistic" character of Togliatti's language and at the same time identifies some aspects of his rhetoric: a coherent logical reasoning, "anaphoric series of rhetorical questions with a forced response and an accentuation of the climax", "assuming antithetical positions in order to demonstrate their groundlessness" and a "calibrated use of the invective".[39] Finally, Enrico Paradisi underlines the large presence of adversatives to highlight the dialectical discursive modality (thesis, antithesis and synthesis) typical of Togliatti but also of other members of the communist leadership.[40]

---

[36]   Benedetta Baldi and Ludovico Franco, "Pratiche di (de)legittimazione a confronto nei discorsi di Benito Mussolini e Palmiro Togliatti", *La delegittimazione politica nell'età contemporanea*, vol. 2, *Parole nemiche: teorie, pratiche e linguaggi*, ed. by Benedetta Baldi (Roma: Viella, 2017), 171-208. Similar remarks in Michele A. Cortelazzo, *Palmiro Togliatti: l'architetto dello schema logico*, http://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/speciali/PCI/Cortelazzo.html, last accessed on 2 May 2019.

[37]   Riccardo Gualdo, "Il linguaggio politico", *Lingua e identità. Una storia sociale dell'italiano*, ed. by Pietro Trifone (Roma: Carocci, 2009), 235-262.

[38]   Cfr. Giuseppe Antonelli, "Italiano degli umili, italiano dei potenti, *La lingua nella storia d'Italia*, ed. by Luca Serianni (Roma: Società Dante Alighieri, 2002), 547-564.

[39]   Ivano Paccagnella, "Retorica politica: gli interventi di Togliatti all'Internazionale nel 1926", *Attualità della retorica. Atti del I Convegno italo-tedesco (Bressanone, 1973)*, ed. by Rudolph Baehr *et al.* (Padova: Liviana, 1975), 169-186.

[40]   Enrico Paradisi, "Il discorso comunista del secondo dopoguerra", *La Lingua italiana in movimento. Incontri del Centro di studi di grammatica italiana: Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, 26 febbraio-4 giugno 1982* (Firenze: Accademia della Crusca, 1982), 195-216.

All of these studies reflect the influence of Concetto Marchesi, author of an article of fervent praise of Togliatti in September 1948:

> His oratory is classical, having a non-rhetorical but dialectical structure: in his eloquence the elements of ethos prevail over those of pathos; one can say of his rhetoric what has been said of the eloquence of Gaius Gracchus, who has the pallor, not the blush of indignation. […] Togliatti is the master of that political eloquence that represents the perfect antithesis of the old comitial oratory which tends to make listeners a mass of reasoners rather than acclaimers.[41]

As a friend and great admirer of Togliatti and a leader himself of the ICP Marchesi is not necessarily an independent or trustworthy source. However, he captures at least a part of the truth. In fact, during the years of the affirmation of the ICP in post-1945 Italy, a widespread and shared esteem of the culture and language of Togliatti developed. He was capable of erudite quotations and scholarly discussions on the same level as the great intellectuals of his time – such as Benedetto Croce. The communist leader was a serious reader of the classics (Greek and Latin Literature, Italian and European literature, and the classics of philosophy, economics and political thought), and one of post-war Italy's most educated politicians. Even when his opinions were imbued with political poison – as in the controversies with Elio Vittorini, Massimo Mila, André Gide or Ignazio Silone – they reflected the learned language of twentieth century intellectuals. His speeches to the Constituent Assembly (1947) were among the most vivid examples of parliamentary rhetoric, while their logic and form were lucid and elegant. Togliatti employed a sophisticated language of university origin and journalistic intonation, influenced by literature. It was, and remains, a written language.

In the anthology *La politica nel pensiero e nell'azione* by Togliatti, which constitutes the documentary base of this research,[42] the texts are arranged in six thematic sections: 1) Fascism, 2) Italy after 1945, 3) Gramsci, 4) The history of Italy, 5) The ICP and the Communist International, and 6) Polemical notes and reviews. The analysis of the texts in this order has a relevant limitation: the thematic sections include writings of different periods and of various genre, making the comparison impossible on a diachronic level [Fig. 6].

The writings on fascism have the poorest STTR, while those on the history of Italy, the polemic notes and the letters have the richest one. The first group includes texts between 1922 and 1941 with an exclusive party content, while the others have different characters and audiences. In fact, a chronological arrangement of the same texts would

---

[41]   Concetto Marchesi, "Togliatti uomo di cultura e oratore", *l'Unità* (19 September 1948).

[42]   Palmiro Togliatti, *La politica nel pensiero e nell'azione. Scritti e discorsi 1917-1964.*
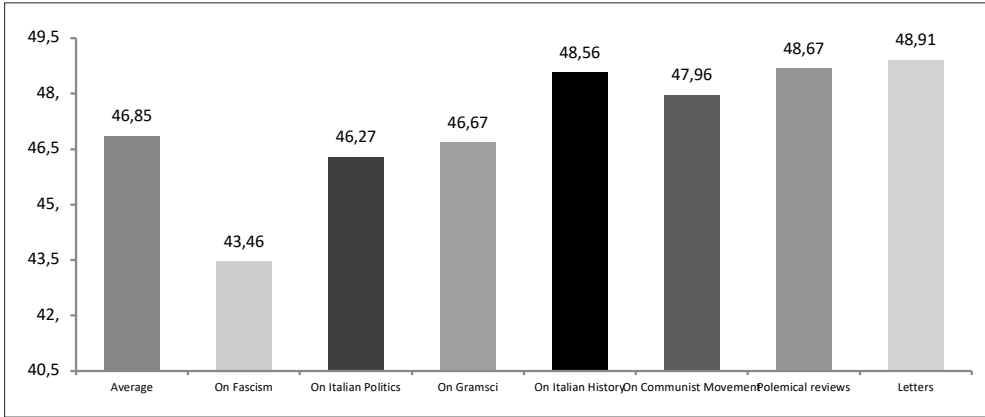
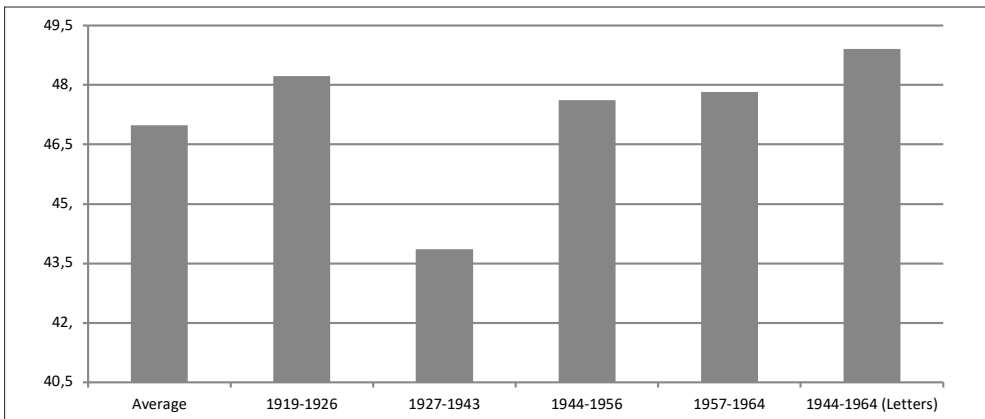**Fig. 6 – STTR in Togliatti's texts according to the thematic order**

Fig. 7 – STTR in Togliatti's texts according to the chronological order

offer a much wider field of analysis showing the differences between one biographical period and another. The chronological partition I'm proposing here corresponds to relatively homogeneus periods in the life of Togliatti: 1) 1916-1926, when he was a journalist and experienced the first phases of his political career, 2) 1927-1943, when he was at the head of the party and in the Executive Committee of the Communist International, 3) 1943-1956, when he contributed to the construction of the ICP in postwar Italy and finally 4) 1956-1964 when his political activity as the leader of the ICP was dedicated to create a less Stalinist party after the 20th Congress of the CPSU [Fig. 7].

Togliatti's language has a certain initial richness, when he was a journalist with *Il Grido del Popolo* and *L'Ordine Nuovo*, and his readings and the skills acquired during the years of his university studies translate into lively, rich, documented writings. The academic archaisms typical of his style in those years remain a part of Togliatti's prose. After 1927, during the period of Stalinist repressions and of the *langue de bois* of the Communist International, his vocabulary became severely contracted. Indeed, Togliatti paid a high price because of the simplification and the barbarization of the lexicon in the years between 1927 and 1943, and it became impossible for him to resume the richness of the previous years.

In the field of frequencies, Togliatti's language overlaps with the language of the ICP, and is articulated around the words of the party and of the movement [Fig. 8].

Fig. 8 – Frequencies in Togliatti's texts

	1919-1926	1927-1943	1944-1956	1957-1964	1944-1964 (Letters)
1	STATO (STATE)	FASCISMO (FASCISM)	LORO (THEY/THEIR)	PARTITO (PARTY)	PARTITO (PARTY)
2	ESSERE (TO BE)	PARTITO (PARTY)	PARTITO (PARTY)	POLITICA (POLITICS/POLITICAL)	NOSTRO (OUR)
3	LORO (THEY/THEIR)	FASCISTA (FASCIST)	ESSERE (TO BE)	MOVIMENTO (MOVEMENT)	PERCHÉ (BECAUSE)
4	CLASSE (CLASS)	MASSE (MASSES)	POLITICA (POLITICS/POLITICAL)	STATO (STATE)	MODO (MODE)
5	MOVIMENTO (MOVEMENT)	STATO (STATE)	TUTTO (ALL)	ESSERE (TO BE)	FATTO (FACT/DONE)
6	SUA (HER/HIS)	POLITICA (POLITICS/POLITICAL)	TUTTI (ALL)	LORO (THEY/THEIR)	NOSTRA (OUR)
7	MODO (WAY)	LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	STATO (STATE)	MODO (WAY)	ESSERE (TO BE)
8	GUERRA (WAR)	BORGHESIA (BOURGEOISIE)	ITALIA (ITALY)	TUTTO (ALL)	POLITICA (POLITICS/POLITICAL)

	1919-1926	1927-1943	1944-1956	1957-1964	1944-1964 (Letters)
9	FASCISMO (FASCISM)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	PERCHÉ (BECAUSE/WHY)	SUA (HIS/HER)	COSA (THING)
10	PARTE (SIDE/PART)	CLASSE (CLASS)	MODO (MODE/WAY)	QUALE (WHICH)	LORO (THEY/THEIR)
11	QUALE (WHICH)	QUALE (WHICH)	QUALE (WHICH)	PARTE (SIDE/PART)	PARTE (PART/SIDE)
12	POLITICA (POLITICS/POLITICAL)	ITALIA (ITALY)	PARTE (SIDE/PART)	AZIONE (ACTION)	TUTTI (ALL)
13	TUTTO (ALL)	SUA (HER/HIS)	PAESE (COUNTRY)	CLASSE (CLASS)	STATO (STATE)
14	PUÒ (CAN)	ESSERE (TO BE)	MOVIMENTO (MOVEMENT	LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	TUTTO (ALL)
15	TUTTI (ALL)	LORO (THEY/THEIR)	NOSTRO (OUR)	TUTTI (ALL)	SEMPRE (ALWAYS)
16	CONTRO (AGAINST)	MOVIMENTO (MOVEMENT)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	SOLO (ONLY/ALONE)
17	ITALIA (ITALY)	ORGANIZZAZIONE (ORGANIZATION)	SUA (HIS/HER)	SVILUPPO (DEVELOPMENT)	COSÍ (SO)
18	LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	MASSA (MASS)	POPOLO (PEOPLE)	PERCHÉ (WHY/BECAUSE)	PAESE (COUNTRY)
19	PARTITO (PARTY)	PARTE (SIDE/PART)	OGGI (TODAY)	PUÒ (CAN)	TU (YOU)
20	FATTO (FACT/DONE)	TUTTI (ALL)	PRIMA (FIRST, BEFORE)	GRAMSCI	QUALE (WHICH)
21	OGGI (TODAY)	SITUAZIONE (SITUATION)	FASCISMO (FASCISM)	ERANO (WERE)	SUA (HIS/HER)
22	PERCHÉ (BECAUSE/WHY)	ITALIANO (ITALIAN)	LIBERTÀ (FREEDOM)	MASSE (MASSES)	GOVERNO (GOVERNMENT)
23	HANNO (THEY HAVE)	GRANDE (GREAT/BIG)	GRANDE (BIG, GREAT)	QUINDI (THEN/THEREFORE)	COMPAGNI (COMRADES)
24	OPERAI (WORKERS)	PROBLEMA (PROBLEM)	LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	NOSTRO (OUR)	COSE (THINGS)
25	BORGHESIA (BOURGEOISIE)	FATTO (FACT/DONE)	QUANDO (WHEN)	GRANDE (GREAT/BIG)	MIA (MY)

Fig. 9 – Concordance pattern list in Togliatti's texts

WORD	1919-1926	1927-1943	1944-1956	1957-1964
LOTTA (STRUGGLE)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	CONTRO (AGAINST)	CONTRO (AGAINST)
	POLITICA (POLITICAL)	RIVOLUZIONARIA (REVOLUTIONARY)	POLITICA (POLITICAL)	POLITICA (POLITICAL)
	SOCIALE (SOCIAL)	ANTIFASCISTA (ANTIFASCIST)	LIBERATRICE (LIBARATOR)	IMMEDIATA (IMMEDIATE)
	ARMATA (ARMED)	POLITICA (POLITICAL)	ANTIFASCISTA (ANTIFASCIST)	ARMATA (ARMED)
	ECONOMICA (ECONOMIC)	APERTA (OPEN)	REALE (REAL)	RIVOLUZIONARIA (REVOLUTIONARY)
		ARMATA (ARMED)	APERTA (OPEN)	ANTIFASCISTA (ANTIFASCIST)
		SPIETATA (RUTHLESS)	CONSEGUENTE (CONSEQUENT)	APERTA (OPEN)
		ACCANITA (TENACIOUS)	CONCRETA (CONCRETE)	STESSA (SAME)
		CONSEGUENTE (CONSEQUENT)	SENZA (WITHOUT)	EFFICACE (EFFECTIVE)
		EROICA (HEROIC)	POPOLARE (POPULAR)	VITTORIOSA (VICTORIOUS)
			PARTIGIANA (PARTISAN)	REALE (REAL)
			DEMOCRATICA (DEMOCRATIC)	SINDACALE (UNION)
			ARMATA (ARMED)	CONSEGUENTE (CONSEQUENT)
			TUTTI (ALL)	ANTICOMUNISTA (ANTICOMMUNIST)
			TUTTO (ALL)	ELETTORALE (ELECTORAL)
			SPIETATA (RUTHLESS)	INTRANSIGENTE (UNCOMPROMISING)
			SOCIALE (SOCIAL)	IDEOLOGICA (IDEOLOGICAL)

WORD	1919-1926	1927-1943	1944-1956	1957-1964
			SACRA (SACRED)	
			RIVOLUZIONARIA (REVOLUTIONARY)	
			CONSAPEVOLE (AWARE)	
			COMUNE (COMMON)	
			CLANDESTINA (CLANDESTINE)	
			ELETTORALE (ELECTORAL)	
			NAZIONALE (NATIONAL)	
			INCESSANTE (INCESSANT)	
			IMMEDIATA (IMMEDIATE)	

In the first period, from 1919 to 1926, the word "party" is only in the 19th place, while it becomes the word most used in the following periods together with "politics", "fascism" and "movement". The word "freedom" appears only after 1944. Togliatti's language is inextricably linked to organized political action. "Revolution" appears to be a significantly marginalized word. "Struggle" is a decisive word in the universe of Togliatti and the ICP. It is invariably a struggle "against" something and not "for" or to achieve something. The concept of "armed struggle", has a certain continuity in Togliatti's language: however the "armed struggle" is never an "anti-fascist armed struggle". The "anti-fascist" struggle has in Togliatti the meaning of a complex political struggle, "mass struggle", "unitary struggle", "decisive struggle", "consequent struggle". The occurrences in which the "struggle" is "for" are often accompanied by the "Leninist" verbs, "to liquidate", "destroy", "overthrow" [Fig. 9].

The role of the word "class" is also very interesting: between 1919 and 1926 it is in 4th place in the vocabulary of Togliatti (with a frequency 0.26%), and reaches 0.27% during

the years of the Communist International. Its importance is substantially reduced over time and its meaning changes in the political discourse of the communist leader. In the first phase of postwar Italy the word reaches the bottom of a 0.14% frequency and in the last period it does not even reach 0.20%. In the first period, the constituent phase of the party, the expression "class" "struggle" is frequently accompanied by the dimension of "class" "consciousness", which instead disappears in the lists of successive words. In the fascist period the words which most frequently accompany "class" are "struggle" and "against" showing a position characterized by isolation and by the conflictual politics of the party. Between 1943 and 1956, "class struggle", "class party", "class vanguard" are followed for the first time by "class unity". Needless to say, the "class" is always the "working class", while the "bourgeois class" is a term that falls into disuse being substituted by the term "bourgeoisie". In the last period the lemma is accompanied by formulas that designate the change to which the "working class" would be subject: in the table of *patterns*, the most frequent formula is that of the "working class becoming a ruling class".

The language of Togliatti is a refined language which has its own internal continuity. The speech on the death of Stalin in March 1953 shows two of the main qualities of Togliatti's oral communication: the self-complacent, erudite and archaic character of the language, the literary references, the metaphors, the hyperboles and the repetitions.[43] But there are other coherences in the language of Togliatti that permit a wider reasoning regarding the characters and the genesis of the communist language. At the end of February 1951, returning from Moscow where he had been cared for after the automobile accident of the previous summer, Togliatti was welcomed by his comrades and interviewed by the journalists of the party newspaper *l'Unità*. We are in the acute phase of the fight against Tito and the ICP had expelled two leading figures, Aldo Cucchi and Valdo Magnani.

> "Regarding the expulsion of the two renegades Magnani and Cucchi – *l'Unità* asked Togliatti –, do you have anything to say?". "Nothing in particular", replies Togliatti; and adds "Moreover, even in the mane of a noble racehorse you can always find two or three lice".[44]

The issue of "lice" allows us to make some additional observations on the language of Togliatti in relation to the languages of totalitarianism. The metaphor of

---

[43] Palmiro Togliatti, *Un gigante del pensiero e dell'azione*, Speech at the Italian Parliament, 6 March 1953, *Opere*, vol. V (1944-1955), ed. by Luciano Gruppi (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1984).

[44] "Dichiarazioni di Togliatti all'Unità sul soggiorno in URSS e sulla situazione italiana", *L'Unità* (28 February 1951).

lice and, more generally, of parasites is shared by all the totalitarian languages of the twentieth century. In the language of Togliatti, as in that of Gramsci, the lemma is used prevalently in the definition of *parasitic* classes, *parasitic* economic entities (*parasitic* capitalism, *parasitic* rural bourgeoisie, etc.) and it is distributed relatively homogeneously in their lexicon. Andreas Musolff underlined how the metaphors linked to the semantic field of "parasites", used in the political language dating from antiquity in a derogatory sense, increased dramatically after the French and American Revolution. In the twentieth century, they became part of the metaphorical armory of totalitarianisms defining enemy social entities.[45] Hitler's anti-Semitism of *Mein Kampf* (1925) and the Leninist formulas of "social parasites" and "enemies of the people" are a clear example of this.[46]

In the summer of 1919, Togliatti shared the verbal radicalization of the post-war lexicon when he strongly criticized Piero Gobetti as a "cultural parasite" and explained in detail the meaning of that epithet:

> [Gobetti] superficially clung to certain movements of ideas and serious men and is all bloated with what he had sucked here and there: I do not know and I can not qualify him in other words than as a parasite of culture.[47]

The "parasite" clings, sucks, swells. The expression has a considerable frequency also in Lenin between 1918 and 1919 (the "parasites", the "weeds", and the "parasites that suck blood")[48], and in Stalin in the *Principles of Leninism* (1924), when he denounces the "brutally parasitic" character of capitalism. In the case of Togliatti, however, the lemma "lice" shows very clearly how such a specific metaphor was born not in the years in which the totalitarian language of Stalinism was propagated, in the 1930s, but much earlier, in the post-war period. Togliatti, in fact, had used the same metaphor, with some slight differences in 1919 discussing the "degeneration" of Sorelism. "It is destiny

---

[45]   Andreas Musolff, "Metaphorical Parasites and "Parasitic" Metaphors. Semantic Exchanges between Political and Scientific Vocabularies", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 13, 2 (2014): 218-233.

[46]   Andreas Musolff, "What can Critical Metaphor Analysis Add to the Understanding of Racist Ideology? Recent Studies of Hitler's Anti-Semitic Metaphors", *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 2, 2 (2008): 1-10.

[47]   p.t. [Palmiro Togliatti], "Parassiti della cultura", *L'Ordine Nuovo*, I, 2 (15 May 1919), *Opere*, vol. I (1917-1926), ed. by Ernesto Ragionieri (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1967), 27-29.

[48]   Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], "On the famine. A letter to the Workers of Petrograd", 22 May 1918, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 27, February-July 1918 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 391-398; Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov [Lenin], "Speech at the meeting at the former Michelson works", 31 August 1918, *Collected Works*, ed. by Lenin, vol. 28 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 91.

– wrote Togliatti in *L'Ordine Nuovo* of November 1919 – that lice secretly lurk on the body of every giant".[49]

In the context of the formation of totalitarian language, the Italian communist leader maintains a position partly influenced by his cultural formation, and in part distanced from the Stalinist canon. The 59 occurrences of the root "degener*", for example, never display the past participle ("degenerated"), but rather refer to a process, a transformation. The "degeneration" is predominantly *political*, it can be *reactionary* or *parliamentary* but there are no immediate echoes of the Zdanovist and Nazi canon of "degenerate art".[50] Another family of metaphors concerns internal party struggles. "Deviation", for example, is a widely diffused word in the texts by Lenin, by Stalin, and subsequently by Togliatti, meaning to stray far from the main road of Marxism. The word is at the origin of the ideology of "deviationism". Also linked to internal struggles was the metaphor of the "mask" and the "unmasking" of spies and other enemies.

The term and the concept that best show the close relationship between Togliatti's language and the language of the Communist International is that of the "turning point". The theme is complex and many acute and conflicting judgments have been made about it. According to Ernesto Ragionieri, the concept of "turning point" is a key concept in the cultural world of Italian communists.[51] It corresponds to the voluntaristic components of the culture of Gramsci and Togliatti, and to the role of verbalization of the will to implement profound convictions and fulfill stringent commitments. The term also relates to an "activism" associated with the philosophical cultures that influenced young Communist intellectuals around the time of the Great War. The concept, and the term, would not simply define a "change of direction", but, if anything, a change of direction correct and intensely desired. The hypothesis defines well an aspect of the cultural formation of Gramsci and Togliatti, but clashes with a significant fact. The word never occurs in the political writings of Gramsci or Togliatti before 1929. Out of the 13 occurrences in Gramsci's political writings, 12 are the past participle of the verb "*svolgere*" (meaning carry out, not turn) and only the elections of 1919 are considered "a decisive turning point in the life of the Italian people". Out of the 32 occurrences in Gramsci's *Notebooks*, only one has the meaning of

---

[49]   "La dittatura del proletariato di Agostino Lanzillo", *L'Ordine nuovo*, I, 29 (6-13 December 1919).

[50]   Regarding the Italian abstract avantgarde, however, Togliatti did not hesitate to use the Stalinist vocabulary ("scemenze", "orrori", "scarabocchi" – nonsense, horror, doodles); see "Segnalazioni. Prima mostra nazionale d'arte contemporanea. Alleanza della cultura. Bologna, 17 ottobre-5 novembre 1948", *Rinascita*, V, 11 (November 1948).

[51]   Ernesto Ragionieri, *La Terza Internazionale e il Partito comunista italiano. Saggi e discussioni*, preface by Franz Marek (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 270.

"change".[52] In the writings of Togliatti, until 1926, the word "turning point" never appears. Afterwards, there are 79 occurrences and 23 of them are the past participle (of the verb "*svolgere*", meaning carry out), while 56 are "radical turning", "abrupt turning", "great turning point", "daring turn", "Democratic turning point", "turning point for renewal", etc. For this reason, it is clear that the genesis or the underlining meaning of the word derives from the Stalinist formula of 1929. The word was used by many parties of the Communist International all over the world: for example in French "*Tournant*", and in German "*Wendung*". However, only in the ICP, which was a small party radicalized and characterized by furious internal struggles, did the word reach such lexical intensity. Until 1929 the term most used by Stalin was "*povorot*" (turn, curve, change), while the Soviet dictator defined 1929 as the "year of the great turning point" ("*god velikogo pereloma*", where "*velikij perelom*" means "big turning point" and is a very strong term, indicating "breakthrough").[53] Moreover Togliatti himself emphasized at the beginning of the 1930's the exact meaning of the word "turning point". For the Italian party, it was not simply a "*tournant*" towards the theory of social fascism, nor a "national-populist" political change as in Germany; but rather a strong and violent change of policy, in a climate of controversy, that led to the expulsion of five of the party's main leaders (Angelo Tasca, Alfonso Leonetti, Pietro Tresso, Paolo Ravazzoli, and Ignazio Silone). Simply put, the "turning point" had been the symbol of the Stalinization of the ICP.[54] In an essay from 1942, Nathan Leites addressed the problem of the metalanguage of the Communist International in the face of its frequent changes in politics. According to Leites, the study of the language of the "turning points" found a relevant explanation in the fact that the doctrine of the Communist International was a particularly elaborate and dogmatic doctrine which had undergone numerous and profound variations. These changes in policy were accepted by affiliated parties with a very high degree of obedience.[55]

---

[52] "Il deperimento del 'fatalismo' e del 'meccanicismo' indica una grande svolta storica" (The decay of 'fatalism' and 'mechanicism' indicates a great historical turning point), Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, vol. 2, Q. 6(VIII)-11(XVIII), ed. by Istituto Gramsci and Valentino Gerratana (Torino: Einaudi, 1975), 1395. See also Raul Mordenti, "'Quaderni dal carcere' di Antonio Gramsci", *Letteratura Italiana Einaudi. Le Opere*, ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa, vol. IV/2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1996), 72-80.

[53] See, regarding the 1929 "turning point" in USSR, Ettore Cinnella, *Ucraina. Il genocidio dimenticato 1932-1933* (Pisa: Della Porta Editori, 2015), 66-71.

[54] Palmiro Togliatti, *Necessità di una svolta* (8 January 1930), *Opere*, ed. by Ernesto Ragionieri, vol. III/1 (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1973), 129-143.

[55] Nathan Leites, "Interaction: the Third International on Its Changes of Policy", *Language of Politics. Studies in Quantitative Semantics*, ed. by Harold D. Lasswell, Nathan Leites, and associates (New York: George W. Stewart Publisher, 1949), 298-333.

IV. Concluding Remarks

In this essay I have discussed, documented, and demonstrated four points. Firstly, that the language of the ICP, although it must be distinguished from totalitarian languages, maintains a strong dependence on the language of the Comintern and the Soviet Union; secondly, that the radical characteristics of the communist language have their origin in the years following World War I and were amplified by the Comintern and the Soviet union; thirdly, that the language of Togliatti, despite its particular characteristics, can be identified with the language of the ICP; lastly, that the language of the ICP has the ceremonial character of the language of a closed community.

As it is sometimes said, when historians move on the terrain of other disciplines they risk breaking through entire corridors of already open doors; the same happens regarding the opposite path, from other disciplines to historiography. Precisely for this reason, the words of Régine Robin remain valid: "It is better to show what may seem evident, than simply to affirm it".[56]

---

[56] Robin, "Langage et ideologies", 11.

GRAMMAR AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM: LINGUISTIC EDUCATION IN ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY SCHOOLS (1947-1977)

Anna Tonelli

(Università di Urbino Carlo Bo)

I. Introduction

The Italian Communist Party created the most articulated and effective political school – and the only one in Italy – aimed at creating cadre leaders, in which the use of words plus the ability to reason and argue were indispensable qualities for those geared towards a political career, at either local or national level.

To this end, a system of party schools came into full effect after World War II, with the purpose of training militants in politics through a very elaborate process that bound the basis and direction of the party together in a relationship of mutual recognition. At a time when there was a return to democracy after the censorship and violence of the Fascist period, the Italian Communist Party had to convert the revolutionary aspirations that it had covertly developed into a new system of ideal values and references suited to the new political reality and slot it into every aspect of society in order to help reconstruct a country buckled by dictatorship and war.[1] In this context, the party school represented one of the most important sowing grounds, where the ICP (Italian Communist Party) carried out "its fundamental role as a 'pedagogical'

---

[1] Giuseppe Carlo Marino, *Autoritratto del PCI staliniano 1945-1953* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1991), 40-45.

party"[2] and tried to gain the credibility of a mass political education that dealt with the quality of its members as well as the quantity.

In rendering the political school model operational, the ICP concentrated all the features of communist practice: organization, planning, discipline, collective life and methods of study. The school served as a laboratory where the 'good comrade' could be moulded, to be directed into the party bodies that were organised like a pyramid: central, local, sectional and cellular. To achieve such an ambitious goal, each detail was studied and rigorously arranged in a mosaic that had to restore the image of a party ready to provide the country with the best individuals for employment, particularly for the prestige of the party but also as lifeblood for a democratic Italy. For this reason, the organisational machinery also operated at full capacity in terms of training in and teaching of the basics of politics. The choice of students, the role of the principal and teachers, the lectures, the collective repetitions and the development of the programme were just as important as group life, the cohesion between students and respect for the regulations during the long period of attendance of the courses.

The aim of the schools was to create men (there were few women) who, through training and preparation based on strict rules, were able to speak in public, conduct a debate, solve tactical and political issues and attack or respond to political opponents. A course of action that in practice put into effect an operation that was appropriately defined as "mass discipline".[3] The schools, which from 1947 spread throughout the country, were to pursue the political and ideological advancement of the mostly uneducated militants, who had to attend courses lasting from six months to one year while staying in the residential institutions that offered free board, lodging and teaching materials.

II. Study Method

In the first decade of activity, the majority of students selected were from the working classes and illiterate. Clearly, therefore, schools tasked with educating workers and peasants in politics, or in any case people with a low level of education, had to face the first and unavoidable problem of teaching a basic study method to those who to all intents and purposes did not yet have one. An ordinary and elementary method was not enough, rather it was necessary to introduce a series of teachings that aimed to get

---

[2]   Renzo Martinelli, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano. Il "Partito nuovo" dalla Liberazione al 18 aprile* (Torino: Einaudi, 1995), 188.

[3]   Guido Crainz, *Storia della Repubblica. L'Italia dalla Liberazione a oggi* (Roma: Donzelli, 2016), 29.

the students to study in order to understand, discuss, improve and elaborate convincing arguments even when faced with an external audience. A basic level of knowledge, acquired through the reading and studying of texts and handouts provided by the school, had to form part of a strategy that spanned from individual and collective study to the overall training of the student with a view to his subsequent political use. For this reason, the basics were indispensable in order to fill the theoretical deficit, but it was even more important how such knowledge was absorbed and processed so that it could become effective in terms of political action, that is, as part of the revolutionary prospect of change.

The initial concern of all school principals was the need to accustom students to studying, with an average of eight hours to be spent on books, especially in the form of repetition and discussion among the students. It was an undertaking that required a considerable effort on the part of those who only had an elementary school diploma, with obvious difficulties in understanding and using grammar and syntax correctly. Attendees had to learn to study and discuss collectively to overcome fears of not being up to the task and to find help and stimuli within the group, avoiding differences and inequalities that would be harmful to overall cohesion. For this reason, the so-called 'study brigades' were formed, which already in the choice of name identified the meaning inferred from the Bolshevik-style military organization, later borrowed by the Resistance: groups that recognised within themselves the common intent to help each other in the comprehension and discussion of the texts and themes addressed in class. The brigades opposed the bourgeois individualism that led to differentiations and competitions typical of the elitist schools and defined the communist solidarity and progressive method that led to the achievement of the same result for all students. In reality, the brigades had a hierarchical structure that served to maintain strict control, with the appointment of a leader who had the task of keeping the collective coherent, to act on problems that might arise during the courses and to direct discussion and debate with a care to avoid too many imbalances in the class.

III. Political Grammar and Italian Grammar

To understand how much the school system represented an advanced model of political education, it is necessary to consider the type of courses offered to the students, while also taking into account the fact that the number of enrolled students grew over time, going from the 200 selected in 1945-1946 to 2,500 shortly thereafter. The school taught study and work methods through theoretical lectures that took place initially over one or more months. These latter were based on a series of themes chosen by the

leaders and the school's principal, and examined collectively before finally being transformed into written tasks that were rigorously evaluated by the teachers both in terms of form and content.

In this way, the analysis of Marxist texts formed the basis of all the course programmes, both those for workers and farmers, and those for the heads of the federations and sections.[4] To be good communists and above all capable leaders, it was essential to understand Marxist-Leninist theory in terms of a theoretical basis to be developed in the field of concrete politics and revolutionary action.

Marxism, which Palmiro Togliatti believed opened the door to change,[5] provided the grounding for the political literacy of the communist masses.[6] To this end, summaries and handouts were prepared that introduced the lectures aimed at transforming "Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy" into "the daily glue of all public and private behaviour".[7] However, both leaders and teachers were aware that making the sacred texts of communism known to and learned by the students from the working classes was not something that could happen quickly, and they recommended very simple explanations with the use of parables and words understandable to anyone who had never held a book in their hand.

Historical materialism was not supposed to be a cold and mechanical doctrine but rather an organic subject that was to be used as a still-valid political manual. Marxist texts thus became waxen material that could be moulded to different situations in order to provide as homogeneous an education as possible to those who would be designated as the leaders of the future.

It is no coincidence that the most substantial lectures, often with contributions from representatives from the party leadership, which included Togliatti and Luigi Longo (just to mention the two most well-known names), concerned two issues: the history of the Communist Party of the USSR and the history of Italy. To get an idea of proportions, the first course included 45 lectures on the history of the Bolshevik party, 30 on the history of Italy and between four and nine on everything else. Studying the history of the Russian All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), as it was then called, was so

---

[4]   An interesting reflection on the reasons for the introduction and subsequent cancellation of the study of Marxism is given by Guglielmo Forges Davanzati in "La scomparsa del marxismo nella didattica e nella ricerca scientifica in economia politica in Italia", *Materialismo storico*, 1-2 (2016): 92-114.

[5]   Palmiro Togliatti, "Programma", *Rinascita*, 1 (1944): 8.

[6]   Domenico Losurdo, *La lotta di classe. Una storia politica e filosofica* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2013), 130-135, trans. by G. Elliot, *Class Struggle: A Political and Philosophical History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[7]   Giuseppe Carlo Marino, *Eclissi del principe e crisi della storia. Apogeo e tramonto della democrazia rivoluzionaria nel XX secolo* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2000), 227.

central that detailed circulars were sent with an analytical study plan listing how the subject would be divided, the programme itself with a bibliography and the method of study to be used. After all, it was the teachers' task to unveil the reasons for the USSR's success, which was traced in its having gained power over both internal protest and the foreign imperialist coalition, as well as in the complete fulfilment of all the objectives of a socialist state. Hence the eagerness to study a reality that was considered a unique model and the driving force for the transition to communism.[8]

The USSR was the model of reference to study and imitate, but the history of the ICP and its development also deserved further study. Thus an important part of the programme was reserved for the role of the ICP, including all aspects of the fight against fascism and the problems of the organization, with an increase in lectures dedicated to the history of the labour movement and current politics in order to unite the past and present on a plotted course that would take into account the organizational structure, the cadres, the running of the different branches and the women's and youth organizations. It was a programme that was to strengthen the link between history and politics and transmit the basic theoretical principles needed to create class consciousness.

On this level, too, they came up against the obstacle of the poor acculturation of the majority of students who, without any studies behind them, struggled to follow the lectures and understand the texts. Which was why they decided to include the Italian language as a permanent subject on the courses, in order to also obtain better results in written tests. Italian grammar was integrated with the "grammar of the revolution"[9] in an osmosis useful to a political culture in line with the needs of the time.

There was an interesting debate among the leaders on how to approach this education. They did not want to create barriers between the more and the less able students, but neither did they want to allow for a type of preparation that was lacking in the fundamentals from the start. Opinions were divided between language purists and political extremists, in a conflict that failed to converge in a single direction. Umberto Massola, one of the first teachers, proposed groups being formed "according to their degree of culture" in order to address elements of grammar and logical analysis:

---

[8]   Historiography is full of these themes, and only some of the main studies are mentioned here: Viktor Zaslawsky, *Lo stalinismo e la sinistra italiana* (Milano: Mondadori, 2004); Marcello Flores, *L'immagine dell'URSS. L'occidente e la Russia di Stalin* (Milano: il Saggiatore, 1990).

[9]   Sandro Bellassai, "La grammatica della rivoluzione. Note sulle scuole del PCI negli anni Quaranta e Cinquanta", *Annali Istituto Gramsci Emilia Romagna*, 6-7 (2002-2003), 117-148.

> I think that in addition to introducing the study of grammar, it would be a good idea to devote from the beginning lectures to logical analysis, then naturally redress the deficiency of the students from the grammatical point of view, forcing them to study methodically, and then maybe we can push them further with a literary reading plan but without making it too intense.[10]

It was a way to make people understand why the grammatical rudiments were essential and needed to be achieved through a gradual and differentiated path. Felice Platone, a former collaborator of Gramsci's at the newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo*, was even more convinced of this line of approach and felt that the Italian language course should form the basis for learning about and studying in depth general culture as well as the history of Italian culture:

> It is clear that we need to divide the students into groups, however, I think that in all groups we need to introduce the history of Italian culture so that the students know the development of our culture and the function that intellectuals have played in history, as well as what Dante, Machiavelli etc. represent. This course should be accompanied by readings. A comrade leaving the course must have read some fundamental texts in order to be able to navigate a little in the field of literature. This can of course be done in different ways depending on the preparation of the students, but in my opinion it could also be done for those who have a lower cultural level, because this forces them to get used to studying using that particular method.[11]

Discordant opinions were expressed by Sergio Gigli and Nino Gaeta, who were convinced that a goal that was too ambitious should not be set: the former warned against "studying Italian on too high a basis"; the latter feared that Italian lessons would end up taking time away from practical work. Likewise Paolo Robotti, who spent most of his life in Moscow, criticised the Italian language teacher at the central school in Rome for being "too busy with literature while the most important thing is to correct the grammar and style of the students' oral and written work".[12]

The attempt to reconcile the study of historical materialism with the rules of grammar reflected the aspirations, but also the difficulties, of a party that wanted to make language the vector for understanding and emancipation, in order to have the prospect

---

[10] Fondazione Istituto Gramsci (from now on known as FIG), Archivio Partito Comunista (from now on known as APC), Fondo Mosca, Sezione quadri e Scuole di partito (from now on known as SqSp), "Verbale della riunione per la Scuola centrale", 18 February 1947, mf. 292/26.

[11] FIG, APC, Fondo Mosca, SqSp, "Verbale della riunione per la Scuola centrale, mf. 292/26.

[12] FIG, APC, Fondo Mosca, SqSp, "Relazione sulla chiusura dei corsi alla Scuola centrale quadri di Roma e alla Scuola centrale femminile di Milano", 26 April 1948, mf. 292/145.

of radical change in society. This hypothesis was also accepted by the students, as attested by the testimony of a worker from Ducati in Bologna who attended the Marabini Central School and who was ready to prove that Lenin's revolutionary theory "has to be bound even to the smallest things":

> In fact, a comrade that has not yet understood the theory is forced to issue directives in a mechanical, parrot-like fashion and therefore not in a political way. I remember a few times I had addressed cells and committees like that, using words that I did not properly understand myself, and so as a result I did not know how to choose the means and comrades to complete the work that the Party had asked me to do.[13]

An eloquent example of how crucial its assimilation was considered even by students. In this regard, the final essays that were proposed to the students are particularly significant in order to understand the level of effectiveness achieved by the school. Here are a few explicative cases, with the Italian grammatical errors explained in square brackets:

> B. [riportato solo cognome] afferma che "quì [qui] abbiamo imparato ad essere uomini. Per mé [me] il Partito voleva dire vagamente Giustizia e Libertà, ora invece so che il Partito deve essere qualcosa di più"; G. riconosce di essere "molto migliorato" per aver superato l'insofferenza alla disciplina; B. dimostra "di essere migliorato per aver capito che la modestia deve essere una regola per noi"; O. ammette che "abbiamo imparato cosa deve essere un comunista" sperimentando "l'affiatamento tra di noi raggiunto anche con le canzoni in coro"; S. scrive che "all'inizio del corso non sapevo esporre ed ora sono diventato un chiaccherone [chiacchierone]".[14]

> (B. [surname only given] states that "here [accent left off] we have learned to be men. For me [accent added] the Party meant vaguely Justice and Freedom, now I know that the Party must be something more"; G. recognizes that he is "much improved" for having overcome his aversion to discipline; B. shows he "is improved for having understood that modesty must be a rule for us"; O. admits that "we have learned what a communist must be" by experiencing "the harmony between us which is also achieved through songs sung together"; S. writes that "at the beginning of the course I didn't know how to express myself and now I've become a chatterbox [wrong spelling]").

---

[13] Fondazione Gramsci Emilia Romagna, the A. Marabini Istituto di Formazione Politica archive, end of course reports, "Importanza della Teoria", 1950, b. 2, issue. 3.

[14] FIG, APC, Fondo Mosca, SqSp, Central School of Milan, "Verbale della riunione di cellula 'Eugenio Curiel'", 16 December 1945, mf. 350.

The correlation between the opinions of the teachers and the memories of the students shows how clear the objective to be achieved was, that is to have people able to politically direct a section, municipality or an organization. However, the path to reach that goal was much less linear and linguistic education that overlapped with the political one was an example of this. The attempt to reconcile the study of historical materialism with the rules of syntax reflected the approach of a party that devoted itself through every means to change while trying to keep the political and logical basics together.

IV. The New Course After 1956

The first phase of the political education of the cadres after the war gave way to a change of approach that can be identified with the second half of the 1950s, that is, a period of profound transformation within Italian society spurred by international events, with prospects of change on the political stage as well. It was during this period that the new Frattocchie school, called the Institute of Communist Studies and inaugurated on 9 January 1955, was opened in order to respond to the request for a new type of intermediate cadre, that is, a ground-level leader who worked in the sections that were far from the national leadership centres but who held key roles in the area. This shift could be explained by the ICP's sense of urgency to extend the activity and presence throughout Italy of people that were better equipped to respond to the tasks of organization and political mobilization, at a time when combativeness and preparation were required to counter political opponents and, especially, the communists' risk of isolation after the agreement between the Christian Democrats and the Socialist Party, who had become allies in order to create a centre-left government.

From these conditions came the desire to accelerate the process of political education in order to have cadres ready and qualified to respond to attacks and play active roles in local realities. Thus a new season for the schools began, with changes in teaching methods, programmes and teachers' activities. And, as a result, the words of politics also changed.

The temporal collocation that in little less than a decade offered a different national and international political scenario serves to explain the reasons for the adjustments to the communist education system. The critical period from the death of Stalin to the 20th Congress of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), with the resultant blurring of the leading role of the USSR, met with inevitable repercussions not only within the ICP, but also within the party schools. The so-called "Italian way to socialism" that began in March 1956 to find a balance between the need to not repudiate the Soviet

model (relegated to the maintenance of international relations) and the greater autonomy,[15] found a solid test bed in the schools' change of direction. The leaders felt that the time for imitating the Soviet schools was over and instead it was time to embark on a new course that was more focused on the formation of the individual cadre and less on collective study, which had inevitably resulted in the best people being eclipsed within the group. This need also arose from the recruitment of students who were no longer shaped by the experience of the Resistance and confinement, but who instead had a different profile, a higher level of education and in any case an identity that had to deal with the changed economic and social conditions, butting up against and then plunging into the climate of economic boom.

While in the first phase an extended education was essential to provide all students with the rudiments of Marxist-Leninist theory, the second phase was aimed at creating militants who were aware, ready and able to act in the field thanks to the preparation acquired in the schools, which focused on practice rather than theory. Mario Spinella, an authoritative figure in the communist leadership and director of the Institute of Communist Studies, warned the students "that the route is elaborated and implemented in a positive way only through a continuous and passionate effort to know the multifaceted reality of the economic, social and political environment in which we move", inviting them to draw from the classics of Marxism "the direction for research and the example of a changing and never schematic use of principles".[16] Just from these reflections, a change of pace in the type of teaching was obvious. The 'sacred' Marxist-Leninist texts were no longer to be learned by heart for ideological elevation, but rather used as tools for understanding and applying the theories to practical political activity. A policy that allowed all forms of schematism to be overcome in order to have leaders capable of transforming the principles studied into action: the vanguard in political battles and, above all, in the various bodies scattered throughout the territories.

All the schools were to endorse the teaching of a general culture, particularly a scientific and secular one to facilitate the assimilation of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, in order to create open minds in which, as the leading intellectual Antonio Banfi said, "the thirst for research is both strength of character and willingness to act".[17] For this reason, the individual student had to demonstrate readiness, autonomy and determination, and "find primarily within himself the energy to overcome the difficulties of study, develop

---

[15]   Donald Sassoon, *Togliatti e la via italiana al socialismo. Il PCI dal 1944 al 1964* (Torino: Einaudi, 1980), 190-200; Giuseppe Vacca, *Gramsci e Togliatti* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1991), 200-210.

[16]   Mario Spinella, "Progressi e limiti delle nostre scuole centrali", *Rinascita*, 7 (1956): 391.

[17]   *La funzione dell'Istituto di Studi Comunisti nell'attività educativa del PCI* (Roma: La Stampa moderna, 1955), 20.

his own working method and make continuous choices in the topics he deals with".[18] The collective dimension remained in the specificity of a shared life, but individual study and care for the work of the individual became more and more important in a perspective focused on the selection of men (the number of women were still limited) useful to the communist cause.

It is evident that in this change, the so-called "Gramsci operation"[19] returned to the forefront with the publication of Gramsci's *Notebooks* and the mass diffusion of his writings,[20] which led to the inclusion of the Sardinian thinker among the 'masters' to be followed in the much invoked work of mass political education.[21] Even in the schools, Gramsci's thought "had to coexist with a wider confrontation between Marxist intellectuals and democratic forces that had different policies"[22] in order to connote a cultural choice that was open to external stimuli and where the utilization of Gramscian teachings coincided with the profile of a combative activist prepared for the most difficult political battles.

Such a strategy also involved a different approach on the part of the teachers, who had to abandon their paternalistic and condescending attitude in favour of adopting a stimulating role for the students. Long and schematic lectures with the attendant repetitions to ensure no stragglers were left behind, were no longer wanted, instead what was required was a closer collation between the new programme and the work of the individual.

To this end, on every course the students had to produce a written essay on a subject agreed upon after having carried out an *ad hoc* seminar, which in fact replaced the final exam. These exercises, examined for both form and content, put the student to the test on a topical issue discussed in class and revised through periodic testing, with the aim of "better mastering the Marxist method of investigation"[23] and developing the student's own processing capacity.

---

[18]   Gastone Gensini, "Problemi ed esperienze della scuola di partito", *Rinascita*, 6 (1959): 417.

[19]   This definition comes from Giovanni Gozzini and Renzo Martinelli's *Storia del partito comunista. Dall'attentato a Togliatti all'VIII Congresso* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), 501.

[20]   For a reconstruction, see the section entitled "Togliatti e Gramsci" by Albertina Vittoria in *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. La politica culturale dei comunisti italiani (1944-1964)* (Roma: Carocci, 2014).

[21]   Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI 1944-1958* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 1997), 85-90; Guido Liguori, *Gramsci conteso. Interpretazioni, dibattiti e polemiche 1922-2012* (Roma: Editori Riuniti University Press, 2012).

[22]   Fabio Pruneri, *La politica scolastica del Partito comunista italiano dalle origini al 1955* (Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 1999), 418.

[23]   "Una forma avanzata di studio: i seminari", *Scuola comunista*, 3 (1955): 4.

The teachers' evaluations were interesting as they pointed out that the students' essays were still permeated by "serious defects of descriptivism", by a "poor fusion" between theory and operational political work, and by "abstractness", so much so as to provoke discussions in the classroom and in study groups.[24] Students were reminded that the essays represented "a particularly favourable opportunity to conduct in-depth analyses of real and existing situations and problems", a premise for seeking strategies useful to "the Party's action".[25]

Much more analytical was the activity that involved creative work, that is, the drafting of an individual research project with a local or national theme and chosen on the basis of personal interest. These were not just simple and banal summaries, but proper essays that demonstrated the students' preparation as well as their capacity to assimilate the books studied and to produce original work. The mastery of the subject and the language used, which demonstrated the deep commitment to the writing of the essays, could be seen and the best were then published by the party and circulated to other schools.

Something else that was new during this period was the introduction of the so-called "political hour", where students were called upon to read and discuss articles from the Party's daily paper, *l'Unità*, and the communist press in general, and compare them with government newspapers in order to understand and interpret current affairs through a collective discussion aimed at suggesting political orientations and work directives, together with strategies for the refutation of the theses of political opponents. Watchwords that expressed the party line were learned during these sessions and, at the same time, the main methods used by anti-communist propaganda were unmasked.

In order to prepare cadres for political activity that responded to real problems and untangled the complexity of the tasks required, specific courses of both a financial-political nature and with a political economy specialization were increased,[26] whose theoretical study was considered "the foundation of any solid Marxist preparation".[27] The rudiments of economics, which were also essential for the training of workers who had obvious shortcomings in this field, served to provide the most solid foundations for political engagement, even at the cost of having to learn formulas and definitions that were almost incomprehensible to an unqualified student. But awareness of the important theoretical

---

[24] "Per un più alto livello dei saggi di studio", *Scuola comunista*, 1 (1955):19-20.

[25] "Considerazioni sui saggi di studio degli allievi del 2° corso presso l'ISC", *Scuola comunista*, 2 (1955): 4-5.

[26] Istituto di Studi Comunisti, *Il marxismo e la metodologia dell'economia politica* (Roma: La Tipografia Moderna, 1956), 32.

[27] "Un corso di specializzazione sull'economia politica", *Scuola comunista*, 1 (1956): 1.

background that had to be gained spurred even the less prepared participants to study with zeal in order to show that they were able to complete the required tasks, a learning curve that also revealed their attachment to the party. Those who went to the school recognized the extent of the investment and felt proud to repay the trust placed in them.[28]

Alongside Marxism-Leninism and economics, another subject that was considered essential education was introduced: logic. It was an education that was to strengthen the reasoning and argumentation skills of the students and their ability to control the political and social reality. In 1955, an elementary course in logic included six lectures aimed at "providing students with a contribution to the acquisition of the method of study and, at the same time, some essential concepts of dialectical and historical materialism"[29]: a course borrowed from the Soviet schools, with the adoption of the Kondakov manual that focused on the three fundamental laws of logic (identity, contradiction and excluded middle). Promoted with the aim of making "concepts accessible even to those who have never studied philosophy",[30] the lectures in logic often failed to achieve the desired result, instead they put the potential leaders to the test because they had to know how to reason and develop a critical awareness in order to master with authority the role assigned to them.

Grammar, economics and logic became a corollary to traditional studies, but in a short time they occupied the same position as a new and constantly growing sector: science. In a period of great scientific development, including the space race between the USA and the USSR, the subjects that were valued were those that, by assimilating the ongoing debate on the autonomy of science and the controversial relationships with politics, were in bed with the new proletarian science, as was happening in a Soviet Union faced with great strides in technological developments.[31] The natural sciences – biology, geography and mathematics – were to help students abandon prejudices and to acquire knowledge useful to both themselves and the reality that surrounded them. In this vein, the lectures on the history and critique of science with the best teachers, who discussed the inevitable interweaving of the history of nature and the history of man in an open debate on the sources of knowledge and the relationship between spirit and nature, were of great importance. In adopting cultural developments with a desire not to lose contact with instances of modernization, the political schools showed a disposition to be attuned to a reality that was changing and needed new codes of interpretation.

---

[28]   For a memoir on economics courses at Frattocchie, see Silvano Bozzo, *Cooperare per vivere. Appunti di economia sociale* (Genova: Ames, 2014).

[29]   "Dalle nostre scuole e dai nostri corsi", *Scuola comunista,* 1 (1955): 29.

[30]   "Un manuale di logica", *Scuola comunista*, 3 (1955): 26.

[31]   Francesco Cassata, *Le due scienze. Il "caso Lysenko" in Italia* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008).

V. The Lexicon of the New Party Official in the 1970s

Another 'break' in the way of conceiving and managing the party schools occurred in the 1970s, during a period in which the political geography of the country changed radically, with profound repercussions also on the communist-oriented educational system with regards to courses and programmes, and therefore also on linguistic education. There were many reasons for this change, but the central administrative role gained by the ICP was a defining influence, with the two-year '75-'76 period of growth constituting a driving force for the entire activity of the party. The results of the 1975 local elections, which saw the ICP win 33.4% of the votes thus enabling it to gain control of six regions and 29 provinces, together with those of the 1976 general election, which saw them peak at 34.4% despite a comeback from the Christian Democrats, reversed the position of a party that until then had been in opposition but could now transition to having government responsibilities. This prospect coincided with the need to equip the cadres for managerial duties, especially in the peripheral organisations, thereby boosting the project dedicated to the schools. In the seven years from 1972 to 1978, the school system was completed with the opening of seven communist studies institutes located throughout the country, including in the 'Mezzogiorno' (southern Italy), which had always suffered delays in this sector. The national school of Frattocchie maintained its role as a higher institute for the specialization of up-and-coming cadres, while the other institutes devoted themselves to the training of intermediate cadres. The leaders were aware that they had to train people capable of deciphering reality, understanding politics and responding to problems. In a word, governing: in the municipalities, in the local authorities, in the trade unions, in the sanitary and municipal establishments. Luciano Gruppi, who directed Frattocchie during the years of the enrolment boom, described the need to have a cadre that "knows what the State is, what the State budget is, what the laws are",[32] echoing the urgency to establish schools equipped to fulfil this need.

The intense work of mobilization produced the desired results in just a few years. As the number of party members increased, so did the number of courses and students, reaching 20,000 attendants across the different schools in five years. The type of militant, who was no longer the peasant or illiterate worker of the previous periods, but instead a young professional – and often also a graduate – from the middle classes, and for whom the party found itself rethinking its educational approaches, changed considerably. A general education was no longer necessary, instead what was required was an

---

[32]   Paper by Luciano Gruppi, member of the Central Committee and director of the Istituto di Studi Comunisti Palmiro Togliatti, *Formazione dei quadri e sviluppo del partito*, minutes of the Fifth National Conference of the Party Schools Central Section, 1-2-3 December 1977 (Roma: La Tipografia Moderna, 1977), 29.

in-depth study of subjects and topics that would enable them to manage ongoing and concrete problems. The priority had changed: cadres were needed to prepare for a new kind of political commitment that coincided with the occupation of positions of power in local administrations.

Faced with such a massive number of leaders to recruit and train, new strategies for basic educational action and teaching were needed. The first fruitful result was the research and study texts framework needed to provide all schools with the administrative and organizational cognitive tools for militants – mostly young people – with little experience. For this reason, new texts and new handouts were required to teach how to manage, what means to use, how to decipher reality and which techniques were best to apply. In the five-year period from 1971 to 1976, tens of thousands of pamphlets were printed with a collection of the lectures, research books, seminars and guidance and study materials. To these were added the volumes in the various series edited in collaboration with Editori Riuniti with a total print run of 809,000 copies and a circulation of 765,000 volumes: an important testimony to the search for cultural hegemony that also permeated the educational system.[33] This copious publication contained condensed studies, theories, essays and words that represented the most direct and explicit proof of how in the politics of the ICP education was seen as a cultural mobilization that invested all the resources of the party, both financial and human, in a huge collective effort that flowed from the top down to the bottom.

Such a complex political plan corresponded to an equally complex scholastic structure in terms of the study programmes. The need to train activists who would then take on leadership roles in local administrations or organisations led the directors of the schools to refine their subjects of study, even adding seminars with specialists, monographic meetings and debates with attending experts, which included non-members who were invited in order to give even greater depth to the type of teaching. Gastone Gensini, who had been the director of Frattocchie from the end of the 1960s, maintained that it was essential to provide students with "tools that allow them to better understand reality, to read balance sheets, to interpret laws, to know their way around economic data".[34] In essence, basic education on how to govern.

For this reason, the triad of philosophy/economics/history remained unchanged, but the number of courses dedicated to political economy increased, becoming the central axis of individual and collective study. The international economic crisis trig-

---

[33] Andrea Possieri, *Il peso della storia. Memoria, identità, rimozione dal PCI al PDS (1970-1991)* (Bologna: il Mulino, Bologna 2007), 155-170.

[34] Gastone Gensini, *Problema della formazione dei quadri nella attuale fase di sviluppo del partito*, *Formazione dei quadri e sviluppo del partito*, minutes of the Fifth National Conference of the Party Schools Central Section, 1-2-3 December 1977 (Roma: La Tipografia Moderna, 1977), 22.

gered by the oil shock that also hit Italy severely, together with the ICP's commitment to denouncing the failures of the capitalist system and to defending the great grass-roots classes, fostered a "very strong demand to know the economic issues" which for the schools translated into "the need to implement specific courses that deal with economics, as well as define and expand the coverage of economic aspects in all the courses".[35] Economics, which until then had been considered a specialist sector, became a central part of the courses in its own right, approved by the students who considered the effort required to be proportionate to the prospects of employment in political activities that required an economic preparation as well as the ability to transform numbers and tables into political action.

VI. Linguistic Order: "Understand and Make Oneself Understood"

Although in a completely different historical and cultural context from the previous ones, linguistics once more occupied an important position, becoming an essential tool to achieve that articulateness which could be exhibited as the trump card of a good speaker. All the leaders insisted on the importance of using clear and precise language that could achieve "a degree of comprehensibility and therefore of political effectiveness".[36] To underline the central value attributed to linguistic education, experts in the field were invited to conferences and public debates in order to provide useful information for the schools. This was the case with the distinguished linguistic scholar Tullio De Mauro, who was called to speak at the National Conference of the Party Schools Section in 1977, in front of a large audience of directors, teachers and leaders. The scholar, who had already inspired his readers a decade earlier with his prophetic and never outdated *La storia linguistica dell'Italia unita*,[37] urged the communist audience to use language "as part of our conscience, as a tool to order and discipline our relationships with others and with the things we work on, with the society that we help to transform".[38] Teaching about language and the use of words became critical for a party that now had new po-

---

[35]   Sergio Zangirolami, *Note sull'insegnamento dell'economia nelle scuole di partito, I problemi del partito e il ruolo dell'attività di formazione dei quadri,* minutes of the National Conference of the Party Schools Central Section, 9-10 April 1976 (Roma: Tipografia La Moderna, 1976), 34.

[36]   Romano Viola, "Linguaggio chiaro e preciso", *La scuola di partito*, 1 (1976): 6.

[37]   Vanessa Roghi, *La lettera sovversiva. Da don Milani a De Mauro, il potere delle parole* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2017), 123-150.

[38]   Paper by Tullio De Mauro, University of Roma, *Formazione dei quadri e sviluppo del partito*, minutes of the Fifth National Conference of the Party Schools Central Section, 1-2-3 December 1977 (Roma: La Tipografia Moderna, 1977), 26.

litical and administrative responsibilities, responding to the need to "understand and make oneself understood":

> It is about reinforcing where there is – and promoting where there is not – care and sensitivity towards these issues, of knowing how to understand and make oneself understood. These things cannot be learned through theory. Only the experience of the struggle and of administration for and with the people, give and strengthen this care and sensitivity […] In all courses there should be a careful and continuously revised exploration of the Italian social reality with regards to mass information, collective capacity for criticism and understanding, and ability with language.[39]

The suggestion that De Mauro gave the course organizers and teachers was to respect "the awareness that the right to not understand is sacred and inviolable, because it is the first and indispensable step in the right-duty to understand and the right-duty to make oneself understood and to be understood". From this point of view, the ability to critically evaluate words and above all information also became fundamental, indispensable to decoding society and how it was narrated, especially by the rival press, at a time when the role of political communication was becoming increasingly important.

From these premises emerged an experiment that offered the resources of the methodological regeneration to an actual programme of "linguistic education". The Emilia Romagna Region, the 'red' territory par excellence and considered a laboratory of avant-garde politics, initiated a course in linguistics as part of the 150 hours dedicated to studying for the workers, the results of which were then discussed and imitated in other party schools.[40] From the answers to the questionnaires filled in by the workers who continued to attend the schools, there emerged a 'hunger' for linguistics understood not so much in terms of correct spelling and syntax, but as the development of argumentative abilities that would then prove useful in the work place or during political confrontation. From here began the new experiments conducted by Paola Zotti Notarantonio at the central school of Frattocchie, with sections of the lectures dedicated to language, both in its heuristic and cognitive uses ("the ability to order and analyse the experience"), and in its argumentative and emotional dimension ("the ability to intervene and transform the experience itself").[41] It was the students themselves who

---

[39]   Tullio De Mauro, *Formazione dei quadri e sviluppo del partito*, 26.

[40]   Raffaele Simone, *L'educazione linguistica per gli adulti. Un'esperienza della Regione Emilia Romagna per i corsi 150 ore* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1976).

[41]   Paper by Paola Zotti Notarantonio, member of the Istituto di Studi Comunisti Palmiro Togliatti, *Formazione dei quadri e sviluppo del partito*, minutes of the Fifth National Conference of the Party Schools Central Section, 1-2-3 December 1977 (Roma: La Tipografia Moderna, 1977), 161.

asked for the linguistic tools to learn the ideal vocabulary and subject matter for dealing with – and resolving – the various problems, demonstrating how the appropriate use of language and the ability to express the meaning behind the issues with skill and mastery were essential requirements for a political career.

Using the right words and knowing how to organize ideas were the basic elements of a language that could contribute to the scientific vision of politics. "The objective to aim for," the party school teacher explained, "is not so much simplicity or expressive poverty, a sort of linguistic Franciscanism, but rather a greater expository rigour".[42] Linguistic education therefore paved the way to integrating knowledge and mastery of the sectoral languages, to establishing a fruitful relationship between language and culture, and to guaranteeing adequate access to the various forms of knowledge. Even the students were aware that linguistic concepts should not only serve to overcome the difficulties of learning but should also be transformed into a "cognitive and operational tool to act in the extra-linguistic reality, a means of controlling social reality".[43] Drawing a sort of line of continuity between Gramsci and Don Lorenzo Milani, the great Catholic educator, it was assumed that party schools could undo the existing tangle between social disadvantage and linguistic disadvantage, to render concrete the democratic and participatory project that aimed to "guarantee everyone the ability to speak and understand the common language of the governed and the governors".[44]

The mastery of words and reasoning proved to be an essential achievement for those who were called upon to direct the different administrative realities, whose education had to be based on a type of teaching able to "benefit from a very lively and concrete relationship between politics and theory that was never mechanically superimposed".[45]

In this way, the ring around a political education that replaced the primordial need for knowledge (in order to fill the literacy gap) with the provision of the means necessary to respond to the contingency of political activity, was completed. A journey in which the use of appropriate words and language was a legitimate part of a type of education that created a political culture. It is clear that on this journey, in terms of historical analysis, it is necessary to consider the different contexts and phases of discontinuity triggered by the dynamics of the political struggle that dictated impelling rhythms and deadlines, with inevitable reverberations even in the school system. But it is equally important to

---

[42] Paper by Paola Zotti Notarantonio, 161.

[43] Paper by Paola Zotti Notarantonio, 161.

[44] Paper by Paola Zotti Notarantonio, 164.

[45] Gastone Gensini, *Problema della formazione dei quadri nella attuale fase di sviluppo del partito*, *Formazione dei quadri e sviluppo del partito*, minutes of the Fifth National Conference of the Party Schools Central Section, 1-2-3 December 1977 (Roma: La Tipografia Moderna, 1977), 8.

observe how political language has always represented an instrument of mobilization and recognition, capable of spanning different generations at different times. For this reason, the words that reverberated and resounded in the classrooms of the communist schools are a measure of the capacity of a party to take root and build an ideal political and human community.

SOCIALISM AND REVISIONISM: THE POWER OF WORDS IN THE IDEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (LATE 1950S-EARLY 1960S)

Guido Samarani
(Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia)

Sofia Graziani
(Università di Trento)

I. Introduction

In the 1950s and early 1960s the Italian Communist Party (ICP) played a key role in Sino-Italian unofficial exchanges. Being the strongest communist party in Western Europe and, more generally, in the capitalist world it developed direct and intense exchanges with the Chinese communists. Yet, contacts between Italian and Chinese communists passed through Moscow and were inevitably shaped by the developments taking place at the international level within the world communist movement. The first exchange of delegations among Italian and Chinese communists took place in 1956 when both the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the ICP convened their respective National Congresses. This first bilateral exchange of delegations laid the ground for further contacts in the following years. In 1959 a high-level official ICP delegation was sent to China to meet the leaders of the CCP. This visit took place at a time when China's domestic and external policies were radicalizing and distrust and tension between Beijing and Moscow were further deepening. Minor delegations of the ICP would follow later the same year and, again, in August 1961, while the last direct contact occurred in December 1962, with Zhao Yimin's visit in Italy to attend the 10th National Congress of the ICP. By then, party-to-party relations had cooled down significantly as a consequence of the Sino-Soviet split and the hardening of the CCP's ideological positions.[1]

---

[1]   Guido Samarani and Sofia Graziani, "Yidali Gongchandang yu Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo:

Political relations between the Italian and the Chinese communist parties had developed positively up until 1957, being largely based on solidarity. In particular, Italian communists appreciated the peculiarities of the Chinese revolution and the way the CCP leaders defended their autonomy and sought distinctive features in their revolutionary action.[2] The Italian communists' attention to and appreciation for the distinctive features of the Chinese revolution at that time was a positive judgement on the merits as well as the method, considering Palmiro Togliatti (1893-1964)'s commitment[3] to set the so-called *via italiana al socialismo* (Italian road to socialism), which was at the core of the ICP renewal in the mid 1950s, within the framework of a broader search for 'national roads to socialism'.

Yet, the year 1957 marked a turning point in the relations between Italian and Chinese communists. Since then, as Pajetta states, both parties began to develop differentiated positions, and their relationship, which had been based upon solidarity and identity of judgement eventually fell apart, resulting in the interruption of bilateral relations.[4] At the 1957 Moscow conference 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.[5] His 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,[6] bringing to the fore crucial disagreements not just with the Soviet leadership, but also with important protagonists of the communist parties in Western capitalist Europe, including Togliatti, for whom peaceful coexistence

---

zhengzhi lianxi yu jiaoliu (1949-1965)" [The Communist Party of Italy and People's China. Political Ties and Exchanges (1949-1965)], *Lengzhan guoji shi yanjiu* (*Cold War International History Studies*), 19/20 (2015): 5-29. On the general context of China-Italy relations in this period, see, among the others, *Roads to Reconciliation: People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy during the Cold War Period (1949-1971)*, ed. by Guido Samarani, Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni, and Sofia Graziani (Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2018).

[2]   See, for instance, Gian Carlo Pajetta, "Come il PCI ha guardato alla rivoluzione cinese" (How the ICP has looked at the Chinese revolution), *Rinascita*, 37 (1976), 7-9.

[3]   Togliatti had been the National Secretary of the ICP from 1927, holding this position until his death in 1964.

[4]   Pajetta, "Come il PCI ha guardato alla rivoluzione cinese", quotation at page 7.

[5]   Shen Zhihua and Xia Yafeng, "Hidden Currents during the Honeymoon: Mao, Khrushchev, and the 1957 Moscow Conference", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 11, 4 (2009): 74-117. For an annotated translation of the complete texts of Mao Zedong's speeches at the Moscow Conference see Michael Schoenhals, "Mao Zedong: Speeches at the 1957 'Moscow Conference'", *Journal of Communist Studies*, 2, 2 (1986): 109-126 in particular Mao's remarks on the theme of a nuclear war during his speech on November 18, 118-119.

[6]   Shen and Xia, "Hidden Currents during the Honeymoon", 111.

was extremely important. The question of peace would indeed become a key aspect of the ICP-CCP dispute in the early 1960s.

Thus, beginning in 1957, ideological divergences gradually emerged between Italian and Chinese communists. The situation worsened in 1960 when at various international meetings (including, for instance, a meeting of the World Peace Council in Stockolm and the Beijing meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions), Italians clearly understood the seriousness of the Sino-Soviet dispute and the hardening of the CCP positions on the theme of peace and peaceful coexistence.[7]

The years 1962-1963 mark the lowest point in ICP-CCP relations as divergences eventually resulted in an open ideological dispute: the 10th National Congress of the ICP held in December 1962 provided the platform for a direct attack to the ICP's position regarding international politics, and especially, of Togliatti's idea of a transition to socialism through democratic and peaceful means (the *via italiana* to socialism) as "revisionist".[8] Despite Italian Communists willingness to resolve the crisis and maintain contacts, from then on until 1980, even though the Italian and Chinese communist parties never reached the point of formal breakdown, bilateral contacts were practically non-existent.

This essay focuses on the analysis of political language and terminology within the context of the ideological dispute erupted between the Italian Communist Party and the CCP, considering as main sources several official texts through which the debate was articulated at that time. The aim is to provide an analysis of the role of language and lexicon in a controversy, which involved two political parties (the ICP and the CCP) searching for their own autonomous road to socialism. The research has first identified relevant documents in the ideological controversy between the ICP and the CCP, looking at the main themes and terminologies used. The first document examined is the joint communiqué (*Comunicato sui colloqui tra il Partito Comunista Italiano e il Partito Comunista Cinese)* signed during the 1959s' visit of the ICP in China. The second relevant document in the ideological controversy between the ICP and the CCP is provided by Zhao Yimin's speech at the 10th National Congress of the ICP (December 31, 1962). It was here that the Italian policy (the road to socialism through structural reforms) was attacked through a critique that would soon turn into a public condemnation of the ICP, and especially of its leader Togliatti. Lastly, we analysed the two long articles appeared between December 1962 and March 1963 in China's official party press (*Renmin*

---

[7]   Novella Archives, mf. 0153, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome; APCI, Verbali Direzione, 1969, mf.024, 24 giugno 1960, 725-751.

[8]   Alexander Höbel, "Il PCI nella crisi del movimento comunista internazionale tra PCUS e PCC (1960-1964)" [The ICP in the crisis of the international communist movement between the CPSU and the CCP, 1960-1964], *Studi Storici*, 46, 2 (2005): 542-555.

ribao and *Hongqi*), being entitled respectively "The divergences between the comrade Togliatti and us" and "Again on the divergences between the comrade Togliatti and us", that condemned the Italian Communist Party for its alignment with Moscow and for the *via italiana* to socialism.

The chapter is divided into three parts. After introducing the nexus between language, politics and ideology in Mao's China and highlighting the importance Communist leaders attached to prescribed words as having enormous power, reflecting categories and ideas that the people were expected to interiorize, the essay moves on to examine the 1959's 'joint communiqué' between the ICP and the CCP putting in its historical context. It highlights the important role that language and words played in the process of negotiating the text of the joint communiqué showing how the Chinese emphasis on the correctness of language and on the choice of word reflected early divergences based on principles and idealistic purposes. Then, the article delves into the analysis of the dispute erupted in the early 1960s highlighting the divergent evaluation and interpretation about fundamental concepts and words related to the Marxist-Leninist tradition and their significance for and impact on contemporary international issues and the world communist movement.

II. Language, Politics and Ideology in Mao's China

> *A single word may rejuvenate a country, a single word may bring disaster to country. This is the mental changing the material.*[9]

Since its accession to power in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party has made a lot of efforts in controlling the language of political discourse. In his seminal study, *Doing things with words in Chinese politics*, Michael Schoenhals points out the crucial importance Communist leaders, first of all Mao Zedong, assigned to the role of language in Chinese politics of the Communist era, especially *tifa*, or "correct" formulations or "ways of putting things". As a special kind of formalized or ritualized political language, *tifa* were understood as very serious matters, having enormous power: "Where the formulation is off the mark by one millimiter, the theory will be wrong by a thousand kilometres".[10]

---

[9]   Mao Zedong, "Speech at the Hangchou Conference" (1963); cf. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_03.htm, last accessed on 2 May 2019. Quoted in Maurizio Marinelli, "La voce del potere: linguaggio e discorso politico in Cina", *L'invenzione della Cina*, ed. by Giusi Tamburello (Galatina: Congedo, 2004), 406-407.

[10]   Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics: Five Studies* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1992), 7.

What concerned Chinese leaders was that people say certain things in certain ways under the assumption that, over time, thought and attitudes will also be affected. As Schoenhals put it,

> There are few questions over which the CCP leadership has not at one time or other been divided. […] there has on the whole been a remarkable consensus about the pivotal role played by what J. L. Austin called 'perlocutionary acts' in the attainment, consolidation, and preservation of state power. Perlocution, in its purest form, is the intentional use of language to produce consequential effects upon feelings, thoughts, and actions of people.[11]

The attempt to control the language and turn it into a powerful tool to forge new ways of thinking among the population represented a crucial aspect of the CCP broader project of maintaining control of society and politicizing China's everyday life, or what Ji Fengyuan has defined the biggest experiment of centrally controlled and rigidly enforced 'linguistic engineering' in world history.[12] The CCP's policies of linguistic engineering originated during the early 1940s in Yan'an where new semantic categories and discursive formulations that embodied new ways of thinking ('correct thought') were propagated among cadres and learned through lectures, personal study and discussions based on key prescribed texts.[13] The CCP's acknowledgement of the power of words in Chinese politics was partially rooted in Chinese historical tradition, especially Confucian doctrine that considered "the correctness of language/names" (*zhengming*) as strictly related to the art of governing the state, and, more precisely, to the ideal of a political and social order based on the correlation between names (*ming*) and things (*shi*). Yet, Mao's linguistic engineering had even stronger roots in modern authoritarianism, especially in the example of the Soviet Union where language had been considered as a key tool in thought-engineering.[14] As Perry Link puts it, "this Soviet approach to language arrived in China primarily in the 1950s, when it merged with assumptions that were deep in Chinese tradition about speech as moral performance. The result, for China's rulers, was an enduring confidence that government-prescribed words could indeed produce 'correct' behavior in citizens".[15]

---

[11]   Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics*, 5.

[12]   Ji Fengyuan, *Linguistic Engineering: Language and Politics in Mao's China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 2-3.

[13]   David E. Apter and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[14]   Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 42-51.

[15]   Perry Link, *An Anatomy of Chinese: Rhythm, Metaphor, Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 300.

A key aspect of linguistic engineering in Mao-era China was the reform of the lexicon and semantics, which involved, among other things, the introduction of new terms required for the 'correct' expression of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and the revival of traditional terms to be applied to a new revolutionary context.[16] A rich vocabulary was thus developed by Chinese communists, reflecting categories and ideas which never existed before such as, for instance, the lexicon of class analysis. The introduction and preservation of the language of Marxism-Leninism was also an important aspect in the broader international Communist movement, whereby ideological disputes were carried on largely in terms of 'principles' and idealistic purposes.[17] For Chinese leaders, 'inappropriate' formulations could reflect attempts by revisionists to distort and tamper with Marxism[18].

III. The 1959's 'Joint Communiqué' between the ICP and the CCP

As explained above, up until 1957 positive relations developed between the Italian and the Chinese communist parties, being largely based on solidarity and similarity of judgements. However, beginning in 1957, ideological differences gradually emerged between Italian and Chinese communists. Both parties began to develop differentiated positions and by 1960, in the wake of the Sino-Soviet dispute, ideological divergences beset relations among communist parties. The Sino-Soviet split and the hardening of the CCP's ideological positions put a great strain on party-to-party relations, which cooled down significantly after 1963 as a result of the CCP's condemnation of the ICP's position regarding international politics, and more broadly, of its political line (*via italiana* to socialism) as 'revisionist'.

If the 1956 saw the first direct exchanges of delegations between the ICP and the CCP, in 1959 a major initiative marked the highest point in political relations among parties. In April the first high-level official ICP delegation travelled to China invited by the CCP Central Committee (CC) to consolidate relationship and formally sign the first joint document. It was guided by Gian Carlo Pajetta, and composed of key party figures such as Antonio Roasio (1902-1986), Celso Ghini (1907-1981), Luciano Barca (1920-2012), Maria Michetti (1922-2007), the regional leader Gerardo Chiaromonte (1924-1993) and Giuseppe Boffa (1923-1998) who was in

---

[16]   Fengyuan, *Linguistic Engineering,* 4.

[17]   Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) 61-62.

[18]   Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics*, 8.

charge of *l'Unità* foreign news services and had been a correspondent of the newspaper in Moscow (1953-1958). The visit took place at a time when China's domestic policies were radicalizing, with the launch the year before of the Great Leap Forward, and fell in the context of growing tensions between Beijing and Moscow resulting from the policies adopted by the new Soviet leadership at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The journey consolidated the political relationship among parties, leading to the solemn signing of a joint communiqué (*Comunicato sui colloqui tra il Partito Comunista Italiano e il Partito Comunista Cinese)*, covered by Chinese national media, which formalized the establishment of direct bilateral relations. In an article written for the ICP's monthly *Rinascita* in 1976, Gian Carlo Pajetta, the head of the delegation, revealed his impression that the Chinese political line was diverging itself 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. According to him, during the visit the Italians clearly perceived that there was an on-going concealed polemic and that the Chinese might want to sound out the Italians' real positions.[19] Not by chance, long negotiations between the Italians and Chinese delegates took place mainly on the contents of the joint communiqué before a consensus could be reached.[20]

As mentioned above, this visit to China by the delegation of the Italian Communist Party envisaged the solemn signing of a protocol as previously agreed. Pajetta accepted, but only on the condition that nothing contradicted the 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 a 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 disclosed the Chinese dissent towards the Italian positions (peaceful coexistence and *via italiana* to socialism). According to Barca, the Chinese considered the 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 URSS) and binded this point to their own acceptance of mentioning Togliatti's structural reforms, considered by the Chinese "an unusual term in the Marxist and Communist literature".[21] Misunderstandings and divergences were finally resolved with a compromise and on April 19th, Pajetta and Deng Xiaoping signed the joint communiqué in

---

[19]   Pajetta, "Come il PCI ha guardato alla rivoluzione cinese", 7-9.

[20]   APCI, Estero, mf. 0464: CINA, *delegazione del PCI in visita in Cina. Aprile 1959*, pages 2910-2943.

[21]   Luciano Barca, *Memorie dall'interno del vertice del PCI* (Memories from within the ICP leading group), 3 vol. (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2005), vol. I, 218.

a solemn atmosphere with the presence of Mao Zedong. Yet, the final text acknowledged the role of the ICP in advancing Italy toward socialism according to its national characteristics, but did not eventually include the expression "structural reforms" (*jiegou gaige*), that referred to the idea of a democratic transition toward socialism that could not be accepted by the Chinese. Thus, by insisting on the correctness of language, the Chinese delegates also cut off alternative ways of thinking, leaving the document with a largely shared vision of the problems related to the international situation and the world communist movement.[22]

It first introduces the Italians' vision and appreciation of the Chinese people's struggle in the construction of socialism and of the people's communes' movement; then it states that the CCP has sympathy and admiration for the Italian workers movement and for the role the ICP plays in the struggle for peace, democracy and social progress within Italy. Here the Chinese side recognized the crucial role ICP in the struggle for "advancing Italy towards socialism, according to its own national characteristics".

As mentioned above the term "national characteristics" (*minzu tedian*) used in relation to the ICP mission in advancing Italy toward socialism was an important term in the debate and discussion unfolded since 1956 within the world communist movement, reminding to the broader idea of "national roads to socialism" (or the principles of the multiplicity of the roads to socialism) sanctioned at the 20th Congress of the CPSU when the thesis of the plurality and diversity of the roads to socialism opened up new opportunities for communist parties' autonomy. Not by chance, it was in this context that the ICP's leadership began to search for a more autonomous role internationally, elaborating a new original conception based on 'polycentrism' that also implied a re-assessment of the traditional leadership role of the Soviet Union and also led to the ICP's interest and action towards the extra-European world.[23] The need, strongly upheld by Togliatti, for every country to find its own road to socialism would become a point of disagreements between the Chinese and Italian positions in the years to come; by avoiding explicit reference to the ICP's "structural reforms" and to the term "national roads to socialism", the 1959's document suggests that this theme had already emerged as a problematic one. Indeed, the concept of the "national roads to socialism" encapsulated the idea of a peaceful and democratic transition from capitalism to socialism; a possibility that was indeed downplayed in the document presented by the Chinese delegation at the Moscow conference, two years

---

[22]   APCI, Esteri, mf. 0464, pages 2910-2913 (Italian version) and pages 2914-2918 (Chinese version).

[23]   Marco Galeazzi, *Il PCI e il movimento dei paesi non allineati, 1955*-1975 [The ICP and the movement of the non aligned countries, 1955-1975] (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2011).

earlier.[24] In 1957 divergences also started to emerge regarding the leadership of the USSR within the international communist movement, which Togliatti was reluctant to accept as proved by the fact that he opposed the proposal to reorganize a centralized communist movement for the struggle against imperialism guided by the USSR put forward by the Chinese at the Moscow conference.[25] Indeed, despite being critical of the new Soviet leadership's initiatives (including de-stalinization), Mao endorsed the Soviet Union's leading role in the international communist movement at that time.[26] As Pajetta would later recall, in 1957 the Chinese unlike the Italian communist leaders were not willing to "renounce a liturgical formula behind which there was a political meaning: 'the socialist countries, the communist parties guided by the Soviet Union'".[27] This might also explain the fact that no reference to national characteristics in the Chinese road to socialism was included in the joint document, despite this issue was a central one in the Italian communists' analysis and view of the CCP. As a matter of fact, in autumn 1956, after returning to Italy, Scoccimarro reported the results of CCP's 8th Congress during a meeting of the CC of the ICP, and afterwards the ICP CC approved a resolution entitled "How the new China builds socialism" in which the construction of socialism in China was mainly seen through the prism of its originality on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. Indeed, the resolution stated that,

> the edification of socialism in China […] makes an invaluable, and in a way decisive contribution to the historic victory of socialism. Socialism triumphs in China, under the leadership of the Communist party and the flag of Marxism-Leninism, and following its original path, adequate to the country's situation […].[28]

Two months later, in December 1956, a CCP delegation was invited in Italy to participate in the 8th Congress of the ICP held in Rome. During the congress, Togliatti took up the theme of the "*via italiana* [Italian road] to socialism", making it clear that socialism should be realized according to specific national conditions. The Chinese

---

[24]   Höbel, *Il PCI nella crisi del movimento comunista internazionale*, 521.

[25]   Bruno Bernini's Archival Fund, Istituto Storico della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea, Livorno (ISTORECO; Livorno Historical Institute of Resistance and Contemporary Society), autobiographical manuscript, 116.

[26]   Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong, "Chinese Politics and the Collapse of the Sino-Soviet Alliance"*, Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963*, ed. by Odd Arne Westad (Washington; Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 1998), 266.

[27]   Pajetta, "Come il PCI ha guardato alla rivoluzione cinese", 7.

[28]   "Come la nuova Cina costruisce il socialismo", *Istruzioni e direttive di lavoro della Direzione del PCI a tutte le Federazioni* [Instructions and directives of the ICP Direzione to lower level committees], 10 (1956), 157-158.

delegation was guided by Peng Zhen, then member of the CCP Politburo and Mayor of Beijing.

Upon arrival in Beijing, the 1959 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".[29]

The same conversation with Peng Zhen also turned to the current nature of imperialism, with Peng Zhen outlining its strategic weakness and stating that, "in the case of a war today, there is no doubt on which side the victory would be". Pajetta emphasized instead that the policy and struggle for international détente and peace was the most suitable means to weaken American imperialism.[30] This theme was covered by the formal joint communiqué which presented a moderate and shared view, where the need to guarantee peace appears to be a recurring theme throughout the communiqué. It states:

> the forces of the socialist camp, the forces of the national liberation movement, the forces sided with peace and progress have proved their superiority on the forces of imperialism: their victory appears historically inevitable […] one of the most fundamental tasks of the communist parties and the proletariat is to unite all peaceful, democratic and progressive forces in the struggle for the defence of peace in the world and for weakening international tension. In the present time it is urgent to demand the prohibition of atomic and thermonuclear weapons […] and to struggle for a peaceful solution of international disputes and for peaceful coexistence among countries with different social systems.[31]

This attention to peaceful coexistence was probably pushed on by the ICP, considering that Togliatti was a strong supporter of the need for peace. For him this theme was extremely important as he was 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. Not by chance, Togliatti had adopted the thesis that a thermonuclear war would lead to global destruction and mark the end of civilization as early as April 1954, one month after it had first been discussed by Malenkov.[32]

---

[29] APCI, Esteri, mf. 0464, page 2792.

[30] APCI, Esteri, mf. 0464, pages 2791-2799 (Peng Zhen's quotation at page 2797).

[31] APCI, Esteri, mf. 0464, pages 2910-2913.

[32] Aldo Agosti, *Togliatti. Un uomo di frontiera* [*Togliatti. A man of the frontier*] (Torino: UTET, 2003), 416-417; Silvio Pons, *La rivoluzione globale. Storia del comunismo internazionale (1917-1991)* [*The global revolution. The history of international communism (1917-1991)*] (Torino: Einaudi, 2012), 285-286.

Moreover, the joint document also recognized the key function played by the USSR in terms of world peace and international détente. Both parties agreed on the crucial importance of unity of the socialist camp for guaranteeing world peace (*shijie heping shiye*) and international détente (*nuanhe guoji jinzhang*). As such, both parties ended up to formally recognize the leadership of the USSR despite concrete attempts were carried out by both parties to pursue a more autonomous path at that time.

IV. The Dispute between the CCP and the ICP (1962-1963): Ideology and Lexicon

The 1962-1963 years were very important for the development of the political and ideological dispute between Chinese and Italian communists, a dispute which basically focused on divergent evaluation and interpretation about fundamental concepts and words related to the Marxist-Leninist tradition and their significance for and impact on contemporary international issues and overall relations within the world communist movement. Such a dispute, however, must be considered within the broader context of the period, in particular in relation to two main questions which historiography has focused on.[33] The first question: Mao Zedong's return to the 'first line' which he had to leave by retreating himself to the 'second line'[34] in 1960-1961 after the disaster of the Great Leap Forward, which clearly weakened his position as the great leader of the CCP and at the same time his political ambitions within the international communist movement; the second question: the development and worsening of the polemics between the Chinese and Soviet communists as seen in particular through some important events: the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (October 1961); Mao's talk at the CCP's 8th Central Committee's 10th Plenum (September 1962) in which he "called upon the whole party and the whole country 'never to forget class struggle'. Along with continuing championing of anti-US imperialism, he placed 'struggles against revisionism' at home and abroad as the party's top priority mission";[35] the

---

[33] See for instance, Yang Kuisong and Stephen A. Smith, "Communism in China, 1900-2010", and Timothy Cheek, "Mao and Maoism", *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, ed. by Stephen A. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 220-235 and 90-106 respectively.

[34] The reference is here to the division of responsability within the CCP leadership which had been basically agreed since 1959, when Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were put in charge of the daily political work (first line) and Mao took up a senior role of supervision (second line).

[35] Original text in *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* (Mao Zedong's Manuscripts Since the founding of the State); for the English translation and comments see Chen Jian, "The Chinese Communist Revolution and the World", *The Cambridge History of Communism. Volume II: The Socialist Camp and World*

June 14th 1963 letter by the Central Committee of the CCP about proposals regarding the general line of the international communist movement; and finally the July 1963 meeting between delegations of the two parties during which Deng Xiaoping, head of the CCP delegation, indicated that:

> It can be said with all candor that a whole series of disagreements of a fundamental character which exist today in the international communist movement, started at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. In the past we never spoke about this openly, because we were taking into account the situation you were in. We only mentioned that the disagreements which have arisen in the past few years in the international Communist movement were provoked by the violation of the Declaration of 1957 by comrades from several fraternal parties […]. We have always considered and still consider that the 20th Congress of the CPSU put forward positions on the issues of war and peace, peaceful coexistence and peaceful transition which went against Marxism-Leninism. Especially serious are two issues: the issue of the so called "peaceful transition" and the issue of the full, groundless denunciation of Stalin under the pretext of the so called "struggle with the cult of personality" […]. Here I want just briefly to say the following: a criticism of some errors by Stalin is necessary; taking off the lid, so to speak, and ending superstition is a good thing. However this criticism must be correct both from the point of view of principles and from the point of view of methods. Since the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the facts demonstrate that the full, groundless denunciation of Stalin is a serious step undertaken by the leading comrades from the CPSU with the aim of laying out the path to the revision of Marxism-Leninism on a whole series of issues […]. After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, as a consequence of the so-called struggle against the cult of personality and the full, groundless denunciation of Stalin, the wave of an anti-Soviet and anti-Communist campaign was provoked around the whole world […]. The most prominent events which took place in this period were the events in Poland and Hungary. We have always considered and still consider that in resolving the issues connected with the events in Poland, the CPSU took a position of great-power chauvinism, trying to exert pressure on Polish comrades and to subordinate them to itself by means of coercion and even tried to resort to military force. We consider that such a method is not only evidence of great-power chauvinism in relation to fraternal countries and to fraternal parties, but also evidence of adventurism.[36]

Power 1941-1960s, ed. by Norman Naimark, Silvio Pons, and Sophie Quin Judge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 87-112, quotation at page 103.

[36] "Meeting of the Delegations of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party", Moscow, July 8, *Wilson Center Digital Archive*, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/1112, last accessed on 2 May 2019.

Few days later, on July 14th 1963, the Central Committee of the CPSU released an "Open Letter to the Various Level Party Organizations and all Communist Party Members in the Soviet Union" in which all the accumulated grievances between the two parties were publicized. From September 6th 1963 to July 14th 1964 China replied with the publication of 9 commentaries (in Chinese *Jiuping*) by the *Renmin ribao/People's Daily* in which the origins of the rift between Beijing and Moscow were explained together with very critical assessment of the Soviet position about war and peace, peaceful coexistence, and in regard to Khrushchev's revisionism and phoney communism.[37]

As Sergey Radchenko stresses in his studies about the China-USSR alliance,

> Moscow and Beijing soon developed a range of ostensibly ideological disagreements, including different views on whether it was possible to avoid war (Khrushchev) or that was inevitable (Mao); whether communism could be achieved by parliamentary means (Khrushchev) or only by violent struggle (Mao); and whether class struggle was no longer necessary under socialism (Khrushchev) or still essential, even in communist states (Mao).

And again, about the issue of war and peace:

> Mao and Khrushchev had very different assessments on the risks of war. Both leaders were quite keen to avoid war but Mao was certain that in the final analysis the 'imperialists' were more afraid of war than the socialist camp. Therefore, it was not only permissible but even necessary to take a tough line in foreign policy.[38]

Thus, it was within such a general historical and political context that the ideological dispute between the CCP and ICP took place, within a broader attack – carried on with the publication of 7 articles on "contemporary revisionism" between the end of 1962 and Spring 1963 – against Palmiro Togliatti, the leader of French Communist Party Maurice Thorez, and the American Communist Party.[39]

The two articles attacking Togliatti and the ICP were published by the *Renmin ribao* in December 31st 1962, with the title "The Differences between Comrade Togliatti

---

[37]   See "Zhong Su da lunzhan/The Great Debate between China and the Soviet Union", *A Glossary of Political Terms of the People's Republic of China*, compiled by Kwok-sing Li (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1995), 579-582. See here also "Jiuping/Nine comments", 208-209.

[38]   Sergey Radchenko, "The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1949-1989", *The Cambridge History of Communism. Volume II,* 243-268, quotations at page 253 and page 260.

[39]   On this see Qiang Zhai, who quotes CCP leader Bo Yibo memoirs, in "The Cold War in Asia", *Cold War International History Project Bullettin*, Woodrow Wilson International Center, Washington DC, 6-7, (1995/1996): 228-231.

and Us" and in March 1963 by *Hongqi* (nos 3-4) with the title "More on the Differences between Comrade Togliatti and Us".[40] We will here analyze some aspects and questions regarding the lexicon of these two articles, focusing on those ideological concepts and words which represented the bulk of the divergences between the two parties. Before this, we will provide an analysis of the speech by the CCP delegate Zhao Yimin at the ICP 10th National Congress in early December 1962,[41] that is a few weeks before the *Renmin ribao*'s article.

Zhao Yimin (1904-?) was at that time one of the vice chairman of the CCP International Liaison Department, in charge of the relations with communist states and parties worldwide.[42] In a collective volume published in China in 2004 on the occasion of his anniversary, few words are specifically dedicated to Zhao's role in the International Liaison Department and no mention is made about his role during the ICP Congress.[43]

In his speech, Zhao after remembering the historical contribution of the ICP to the anti-fascist and democratic struggle and to that of workers and peasants in Italy, focused first of all his critique on Tito and his clique as the representative of "modern revisionism" (in Chinese *xiandai xiuzhengzhuyi*), which – Zhao claimed – has led Yugoslavia to depart from socialism, restore capitalism and favour imperialism policies worldwide. In the second part, then, he stressed how this ICP Congress was characterized by a series of harsh attacks against the Party of Labour of Albania and especially against the CCP which continue to rely on Marxism-Leninism and fight against revisionism; in particular, Zhao clearly explicitated that there exist striking differences and contrasting visions between the CCP and the ICP on problems related to the evaluation of Togliatti's so-called "theory of structural reforms" (*teoria delle riforme di struttura*), on Tito's revisionism and some important problems related to the international situation. The ICP positions and

---

[40]   See "Taoliyadi tongzhi tong women de fenqi", *Renmin ribao* (31 December 1962), 1-3 and the article appeared in *Hongqi*, 3-4 (1963). The English official version of the two articles were published respectively in *Peking Review*, 7 January 1963 and by Foreign Languages Press (Peking), March 1963. For the Italian version, see "Le divergenze tra il compagno Togliatti e noi", *Dossier dei comunisti cinesi,* ed. by Roberto Gabriele, Nicola Gallerano, and Giulio Savelli (Roma: Edizioni Avanti, 1963), 321-364 and "Ancora sulle divergenze tra il compagno Togliatti e noi", *Il revisionismo. Dossier dei comunisti cinesi: Sulle divergenze con Kruscev, Togliatti, Breznev*, ed. by Walter Peruzzi (Verona: Bertani, 1972), 123-364.

[41]   For the Italian version of the talk by Zhao Yimin, see "Testo integrale dell'intervento del rappresentante del PCC al X Congresso del PCI", *Dossier dei comunisti cinesi,* 291-301.

[42]   See "Zhao Yimin", in Wolfgang Bartke, *Biographical Dictionary and Analysis of China's Party Leadership 1922-1988* (Munchen; London; New York; Paris: K.G. Saur, 1990), 315.

[43]   See *Zhao Yimin jinian wenji* (Collected writings in commemoration of Zhao Yimin) (Beijing: 2004).

views – concludes Zhao Yimin – are actually against the two Moscow Declarations,[44] the general interests of the international communist movement and are not helpful to the fight against imperialism and for the defence of the world peace.[45]

According to the available text, Zhao did not mention during his speech in Rome the word 'modern revisionism' in relation to the ICP and its leader Togliatti. This concept was however in various passages included, in a direct and indirect way, in the two articles published in late 1962 and early 1963, insisting that the positions by Togliatti and the ICP leadership clearly represented an evident break from the Marxist-Leninist theses and thus tended to "revise" Marxism-Leninism. In Mao's view, historically "revisionism" (*xiuzhengzhuyi*) was one of the two main danger, together with "dogmatism" (*jiaotiaozhuyi*), for Marxism: he stressed that while Marxism must advance along with the development of practice and cannot stand still, because in that case it will become lifeless, stagnant and stereotyped ("dogmatism"), a serious danger was also represented by "revisionism", that is the negation of the basic principles of Marxism and at the same time a form of bourgeois ideology. It is possible to maintain that while in the past "dogmatism" was Mao's main target, after 1956-1957 "revisionism" became his main concern.

The two Chinese articles, following Mao's analysis, indicated that 'modern revisionism' was a new kind of manifestation of a serious problem experienced by the international communist movement in its historical development, that is "old revisionism" as expressed by Eduard Bernstein and later accepted by Karl Kautsky. One of the main features of revisionism in its old and new forms was the idea of *heping zhangru shehuizhuyi* (growing peacefully into socialism), a concept which in the 1960s was further elaborated by the Chinese communists in their polemics against Khrushchev, Tito and Togliatti as the *sanhe liangguan* (the three peaceful and the two entires). While the "two entires" were specifically related to the Soviet Union (the USSR had become a "state of the entire people" and the CPSU a "party of the entire people", thus putting to an end the dictatorship of proletariat), the "three peaceful" expressed more generally the idea of *heping gongchu* (peaceful coexistence), *heping jingsai* (peaceful competition) and *heping guodu* (peaceful transition). According to the CCP, the "theory of peaceful coexistence" was wrong because it failed to point out that the socialist countries and other countries with different social systems could not coexist in peace until the revolutionary forces will be able to wage a resolute struggle against imperialism; moreover, peaceful coexistence

---

[44]   The reference here is to the Declarations approved respectively at the 1957 and 1960 Moscow Meetings of Communist and Workers' Parties.

[45]   For ICP reaction during the congress to Zhao's speech see Gian Carlo Pajetta, "Risposta ai compagni cinesi" [A reply to Chinese comrades], *l'Unità* (6 December 1962), 3.

does not mean – as revisionists and traitors of Marxism-Leninism believe – that socialist countries should give up their support for class struggle in capitalist countries and revolutionary struggles by oppressed nations against imperialist forces.

The critique of the concept of 'peaceful competition' points basically to Khrushchev's slogan raised at the 20th CPSU National Congress in 1956, which assumed that peaceful competition between the socialist camp and the capitalist camp would favor the revolutionary forces in the world and that in the end socialism would defeat capitalism in the competition.

Finally, the CCP firmly rejected the idea of a 'peaceful transition' from capitalism to socialism, a point which was central in the polemics against Togliatti and the ICP. They maintained that 'peaceful transition' was a new term for Bernstein's concept of "growing peacefully into socialism" and that such transition must be achieved through proletarian revolution and not the so-called "parliamentary road" (in Chinese *yihui daolu*) as Khrushchev and old and new revisionists claim.[46]

A special concern which emerges from the two Chinese articles is related to the critique, expressed by Togliatti and other delegates at the ICP National Congress of 1962, towards Mao's theory that "imperialism and all reactionaries are paper tigers" (in Chinese *diguozhuyi he yiqie fandongpai dou shi zhi laohu*). This was a concept which most probably Mao Zedong raised first in August 1946 in Yan'an in an interview with American correspondent Anna Louise Strong: Mao pointed out that in appearance all reactionaries are terrifying but in reality they are not so powerful, and that from a long-term point of view it is not reactionaries but the people who are really powerful.[47] Later, he discussed his thesis on various occasions: for instance, his talk in July 1956 with some Latin-American public figures and his famous and controversial speech in November 18th 1957 at the above mentioned Moscow meeting, in which he indicated that

> I said all allegedly powerful reactionaries are merely paper tigers. The reason is that they are divorced from the people. Look! Wasn't Hitler a paper tiger? Wasn't he overthrown? I also said that the tsar of Russia was a paper tiger, as were the emperor of China and Japanese imperialism, and see, they were all overthrown. U.S.

---

[46] On these aspects see *Dictionary of the Political Thought of the People's Republic of China*, ed. by Henry Yuhuai He (Armonk, NY; London: Sharpe, 2001) and in particular the Chinese words *xiuzhengzhuy* (revisionism) and *xiuzhengzhuyi bi jiatiaozhuyi gen weixian* (revisionism is even more dangerous than dogmatism), 573-578.

[47] Original version in *Mao Zedong xuanji* (*Selected works of Mao Tse-tung*), vol. IV (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1968), 1087-1092; Italian translation in *Mao Tse-tung. Opere scelte*, vol. IV (Milano: Edizioni Oriente, 1970), 103-108.

imperialism has not yet been overthrown and it has the atom bomb, but I believe is too a paper tiger and will be overthrown.[48]

Another critique on Togliatti and the ICP's thesis concerned the question of the 'theory of structural reforms', conceived as objectives of democratic transformation on the road to socialism. This was a topic specifically discussed in the second article, in which in Chapter 5 on "State and Revolution" the Chinese ironically asked: "What is the 'positive contribution' of Comrade Togliatti's 'theory of structural reforms?'".[49] The text stressed that Togliatti in different occasions and in his concluding speech at the ICP 10th National Congress spoke of his thesis as a fundamental line and as common to the whole international movement, considering this Italian road to be

> the road of advance to socialism for the whole capitalist world today, and apparently the one and only such road […] Togliatti and other comrades consider their ideas to be a positive contribution to the deepening and development of Marxism-Leninism, the revolutionary doctrine of the working class. Unfortunately there is nothing new in their ideas: they are very old and very stale; they are the bourgeois socialism which Marx and Engels so relentlessly refuted long ago […] If Togliatti and the other comrades have made any 'positive contribution', it is to the development, not of Marxism, but of bourgeois socialism. They have developed pre-monopoly bourgeois socialism into monopoly bourgeois socialism. But this is the very development which the Tito clique proposed long ago, and Togliatti and the other comrades have taken it over after their 'study and profound understanding' of what the Tito clique has done and is doing.[50]

In the following pages of the chapter, a special critical attention is devoted to the so-called "parliamentary cretinism" (*cretinismo parlamentare*), stressing that:

> Comrade Togliatti and certain other CPI comrades admit that to realize socialism involves struggle, that socialism must be realized through struggle. But they confine the people's struggle to the scope permitted by the bourgeois constitution and assign the primary role to parliament […]. We have always held that taking part in parliamentary struggle is one of the methods of legal struggle which the working class should utilize in certain conditions […]. First, we hold that all bourgeois

---

[48] Original version in *Mao Zedong xuanji* (*Selected works of Mao Tse-tung*), vol. V (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1977), 499-500; English translation in Schoenhals, "Mao Zedong: Speeches at the 1957 'Moscow Conference'", 120; Italian translation in *Mao Zedong. Rivoluzione e costruzione. Scritti e discorsi 1949-1957*, ed. by Maria Arena Regis and Filippo Coccia (Torino: Einaudi, 1979), 731-732.

[49] See the English official version published in Peking by Foreign Languages Press, 1963, page 89 and following.

[50] English official version published in Peking by Foreign Languages Press, page 89 and 93.

parliament, including the present Italian parliament, have a class nature and serve as ornaments for bourgeois dictatorship […]. Secondly, we are for utilizing parliamentary struggles, but against spreading illusions, against 'parliamentary cretinism' […]. Thirdly, we are for utilizing the platform of the bourgeois parliament to expose the festering sores in bourgeois society […]. On the three points just mentioned, Togliatti and the other comrades have completely cast away the Leninist stand […]. Togliatti and other comrades have become thoroughly obsessed with the Italian parliament […]. The basic tactical principle of Marxism-Leninism is as follows: in all mass movements, and likewise in parliamentary struggle, it is necessary to maintain the political independence of the proletariat […]. To forget or violate this principle is to fall into the quagmire of Bersteinism […]. We should like to ask: What difference is there between Comrade Togliatti's formula concerning the mass movement and Bernstein's formula?[51]

V. Conclusions

This paper has traced the development of the relations between the Chinese and Italian communist parties in the late 1950s and early 1960s, examining the dispute unfolded between the two parties within the broader context of the period, especially against the backdrop of the Sino-Soviet dispute and the radicalization of China's internal and external politics. The issues that began to be addressed and debated since 1956 (that is de-Stalinization, peaceful coexistence and the thesis of the plurality of the national roads to socialism) soon revealed the existence of differentiated positions between Italian and Chinese communist leaders. The relations between the ICP and the CCP eventually deteriorated in the early 1960s, ending up with the abrupt Chinese condemnation of the ICP's policy and, especially, Togliatti's idea of a transition to socialism through democratic and peaceful means as 'revisionist'. The 1962-1963 years were thus very important for the development of the political and ideological dispute between Chinese and Italian communists. The chapter has tried to show that the ideological dispute between Chinese and Italian communists was carried out largely in terms of 'principles' and idealistic purposes and was basically focused on divergent evaluation and interpretation about fundamental concepts and words related to the Marxist-Leninist tradition and their significance for and impact on contemporary international issues and overall relations within the world communist movement.

---

[51]   English official version published in Peking by Foreign Languages Press, pages 109-112 and 116-117.

THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY
AND THE BIRTH OF *IL MANIFESTO*:
LANGUAGES AND CULTURES OF A CONFLICT (1966-1970)

Roberto Colozza

(Università di Firenze)

The present chapter is all about a major event in the history of the Italian Communist Party (ICP), that is the exit of its leftist wing in 1969 and the birth of a group which was named *il manifesto* after the monthly journal giving voice to the related minority network. The foundation of *il manifesto*, in June 1969, was not authorized by the ICP's leading entities and was the *casus belli* of a conflict that burst out after a long-lasting creeping antagonism between the party establishment and the minority. This contrast revolved around some relevant issues concerning geopolitics, ideology and, most of all, the party's internal democracy, and was subsequent to the death of the general secretary Palmiro Togliatti in 1964, who had assured a solid and unifying leadership until then.

The birth of *il manifesto*, which will become one of the most influential actors of the European Left in the 1970s, is a good representation of the clash between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the post-1968 ICP, thus marking a watershed in the handling of communist dissidences. With respect to traditional procedural solutions that were mostly based on the punishment of the dissent, the *manifesto affaire* shows an evolution towards a negotiating model, in which the administrative disciplinary treatment of the minority group coexists with informal interactions between the two factions. Actually the final expulsion of the undisciplined militants was the endpoint of a complex and intense debate involving the party as a whole. This dynamic is studied by seeking to decrypt communicational, cultural and ritual aspects of a conflict that stimulated reflections on the very sense of the ICP and its related customs and traditions.

ROBERTO COLOZZA

Broadly speaking, dissidences and their handling represent a crucial standpoint to catch the evolving nature of communist political culture, including discourse. Issues related to deviance have been continuously playing a central role in it, for one of the pillars of the communist identity was 'revolutionary vigilance'. Through this expression introduced in the Bolshevik milieu and then exported worldwide, one indicates the permanent vigilance and self-defense from political enemies that made communist militants a sort of soldiers defending their fortress – their party and, more largely, their ideal and physical spaces of political sociability. In this conflictive vision, the revolutionary vigilance – which also consisted of language control – was designed to address both external enemies and internal alleged friends identified as enemies. All this, even when the seizure of power was accomplished, explains the watchful disciplinary systems implemented by the communist regimes since the Soviet revolution.[1]

Under Fascism the Italian Communist Party was largely infiltrated by spies controlled by the regime, whilst the process of bolshevization accomplished by the early 1930s made it an organization strictly modeled on standard rules inspired by Stalin. Those two trends emphasized the party innate culture of suspicion by triggering a series of expulsions that involved prominent personalities such as Angelo Tasca, Amadeo Bordiga, Pietro Tresso, Alfonso Leonetti, and Paolo Ravazzoli. Even Antonio Gramsci, who spent his last years (1926-1937) in Fascist prisons, was criticized because of his heterodox attitude towards the dominant trend of international communism. This is why he experienced troubles with comrades during his detention.[2]

In the post-WWII period, the fight against dissidence and heterodoxy continued to be a crucial concern for the ICP. The cases of Pietro Secchia, number two of the hierarchy between 1946 and 1954, and of the so-called "magnacucchi", meaning the local functionaries of the province of Reggio Emilia Aldo Cucchi and Valdo Magnani, are

---

[1]   An analysis of the normative acts related to those aspects in Soviet history is in Giovanni Codevilla, *Dalla rivoluzione bolscevica alla Federazione Russa. Traduzione e commento dei primi atti normativi e dei testi costituzionali* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1996). A sort of guide to revolutionary vigilance against the Tsarist repressive system is Victor Serge, *Les coulisses d'une sûreté générale. Ce que tout révolutionnaire devrait savoir sur la répression* (Paris: Librairie du Travail, 1925).

[2]   See the memories of a communist militant co-detained with Gramsci: Athos Lisa, *Memorie. In carcere con Gramsci. Dall'ergastolo di Santo Stefano alla casa penale di Turi di Bari* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1973), 75. Athos Lisa was also author of a report on Gramsci's condition in prison, which was submitted to the party: Paolo Spriano, *Gramsci in carcere e il partito* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1977), 152. More broadly, on the controversial relation between the ICP and Gramsci during his detention: Silvio Pons, "L'affare Gramsci-Togliatti' a Mosca (1938-1941)", *Studi storici*, 45, 1 (2004): 83-117; *Lettere 1926-1935 tra Gramsci e Tatiana Schucht*, ed. by Aldo Natoli and Chiara Daniele (Torino: Einaudi, 1997); *Gramsci a Roma, Togliatti a Mosca. Il carteggio del 1926*, ed. by Chiara Daniele (Torino: Einaudi, 1999); Angelo Rossi and Giuseppe Vacca, *Gramsci tra Mussolini e Stalin* (Roma: Fazi, 2007); Mauro Canali, *Il tradimento. Gramsci, Togliatti e la verità negata* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2013).

typical products of the Cold War claustrophobic atmospheres before de-Stalinization. Once the armed Soviet intervention in Hungary in October 1956 showed what Moscow was able to do in order to maintain its leadership over the communist world, the ICP substantially approved the repression. This provoked a wave of protest that mostly featured intellectuals, many of them leaving the party in the following months.[3]

In comparison, the case of *il manifesto* is peculiar as both the set-up of the heterodox front and its political-administrative treatment by the party establishment. On the one hand, the *il manifesto*'s was a collective dissidence including some major militants who had built up longstanding and solid careers in the party's apparatus. This aspect, together with structural factors that will be analyzed further, pushed the ICP's leading authorities to adopt an overall unusual procedure to handle this potentially disruptive dynamics. Rather than the political contents,[4] it is the formal profile of this phenomenon, including its communicational implications, that is at the core of the present essay.

By transposing Julien Freund's definition of the conflict as a life-or-death combat into the relevant organizational context,[5] we will examine the clash between the ICP and *il manifesto* as a debate on the ultimate sense of the party itself. There were two competing interpretations of the same norm, which consisted of the party's whole immaterial patrimony: its ideal and ideological mindset, its tradition, its costumes, its collective memory, its statute. Despite the unequal resources of the contenders, this duel recalls less a political trial or a merely repressive action than an elaborated confrontation with unpredictable consequences. Therefore, the analysis of this process will finally consist of anatomizing the balance of power in the ICP through its subjective (actors, their strategies and languages) and organizational (bureaucracy and its working mechanisms) components.

I. Wrong Words in the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time

Our history begins in Rome in January 1966 at Pietro Ingrao's home, in a small and quiet street, via Ugo Balzani, in a neighborhood designed in the interwar period to host

---

[3]   Nello Ajello, *Il lungo addio. Intellettuali e PCI dal 1958 al 1991* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 1997).

[4]   As to those aspects, see Antonio Lenzi, *Il Manifesto, tra dissenso e disciplina di partito. Origine e sviluppo di un gruppo politico nel PCI* (Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole, 2011).

[5]   See the definition of conflict proposed by Julien Freund, *Sociologie du conflit* (Paris: PUF, 1983), 65: "un affrontement ou heurt intentionnel entre deux êtres ou groupes de même espèce qui manifestent les uns à l'égard des autres une intention hostile, en général à propos d'un droit […]" (a clash or intentional collision between two subjects or groups of the same typology, which express a hostile intention against each other typically as a matter of right).

middle-class public servants of the Fascist regime.[6] Aged of 50, ICP activist since more than 25 years, former partisan and longtime director of the daily newspaper *l'Unità*, Ingrao was the youngest member of the party's Secretariat as well as member of the Direction and chief of the communist group at the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republican Parliament. It was nighttime, and Ingrao was redacting the intervention he would pronounce the following day at the 11th ICP's Congress. With him, was 33-year old Lucio Magri. Once a Christian Democrat, he got into the ICP in the late 1950s and started his quick rise to the party top, which made him leaving native Lombardy to move to Rome. Word by word, Ingrao and Magri accurately worked on their text which was completed around 2 a.m.[7] It was a capital document, which explicitly proposed an unprecedented reform to be introduced in the ICP: the right to dissention. What did that mean actually?

The decisional process in the ICP had obeyed the rules of 'democratic centralism' until then.[8] This formally allowed a fully open debate in the party but obliged members to strictly fulfill final assumptions acquired on the grounds of the prevailing will. Over time democratic centralism had eventually become the official cover for the communist authoritarian decisional style to be legitimized. In Stalin era, the theoretical bottom-up approach of democratic centralism was replaced by a strongly rigid system in which minority was cancelled, whilst final decisions and their implementation were the only relevant aspect. This trend was still substantially ongoing when Ingrao put his doubts at the forefront of the congress agenda. What he looked for was not to transform the ICP into a post-communist party featuring currents and related aspects of a liberal-democratic organization, but rather to retrieve the dialoguing ideal spirit of democratic centralism by giving visibility to minority positions. In other terms, Ingrao suggested that publicity of debates should show the whole genesis of party deliberations including marginal voices. These are the scandalous words that he pronounced during his congress speech, which shocked the party's leaders and were enthusiastically applauded by many delegates:

> Comrade Longo has clearly expressed his criticisms and concerns as regards the publicity of the debate. I would not be honest if I said to you that I was persuaded.[9]

---

[6]   Eva Masini, *Piazza Bologna. Alle origini di un quartiere "borghese"* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2009). According to Ingrao, his father gave him that apartment in the mid-1950s in order to allow him to live independently with his wife and four sons: Antonio Galdo, *Pietro Ingrao. Il compagno disarmato* (Milano: Sperling&Kupfer, 2004), 2.

[7]   This episode is evoked by Ingrao in several autobiographical accounts and interviews. Among them: Pietro Ingrao, *Volevo la luna* (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), 313.

[8]   Michael Waller, *Democratic Centralism. An Historical Commentary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981).

[9]   Original text: "Il compagno Longo ha espresso in modo molto netto le sue critiche e le sue preoccupazioni sulla questione della pubblicità del dibattito. Non sarei sincero se dicessi a voi che sono rimasto

Ingrao claimed for minorities to be acknowledged in the party's life because he recognized their existence as a matter of facts since several years. He himself was part of what one could label the ICP's leftist wing, yet bearing in mind that currents or wings were not admitted under the rules of democratic centralism. Ingrao and his supporters were careful observers of the ever-evolving socioeconomic Italian scene, which had experienced the economic boom a few years earlier and was going to live one of the longest cycles of protests of the global 1968. The leftist wing faced the traditional mentality of an establishment whose front-man was Giorgio Amendola, embodying the instinct for *Realpolitik* and the search for institutional national power so typical of a communist party. That rivalry had been accentuated by general secretary Palmiro Togliatti's death in 1964. His successor Luigi Longo was unable to inverse the negative trends the ICP was suffering in terms of number of members, newcomers, votes, since the mid-1950s.[10] Moreover, the governmental alliance between the Christian Democracy and the Italian Socialist Party isolated the ICP and made urgent a strategic relaunch.

Due to its innovative charge, Ingrao's position unsurprisingly was appreciated by a restricted but influent network of young permanent functionaries with a strong intellectual background: Massimo Caprara, Luciana Castellina, Aldo Natoli, Luigi Pintor, Valentino Parlato, Rossana Rossanda, Ninetta Zandegiacomi, and the aforementioned Lucio Magri. They were all born between the twenties and the early thirties, except for Aldo Natoli (b. 1913). Besides this generational link and despite their heterogeneous individual trajectories as well as unequal hierarchical roles, they shared some ideological points: the rejection of Soviet hegemony on global communism; sympathy for Maoist China; a strong sensibility for civil society evolution; criticisms on the ICP's organizational setting.

Apart from that small group, 15% to 20% of the party permanent staff may be considered as close to Ingrao's views at that time.[11] This was a significant amount that so far had represented a well-known but silent presence in the rituals of a party in which unity was a priority goal as to self-representation. Ingrao's initiative made this tolerated coexistence unacceptable insofar words of dissent got out from the circumscribed leading bodies (Direction, Secretariat, and the Political bureau), thus becoming public. Moreover, they gained a tangible consensus among the congress audience, which was

---

persuaso", *XI Congresso del partito comunista italiano. Atti e risoluzioni* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1966), 254-266, quotation at 265.

[10]   *Il Partito comunista italiano. Struttura e storia dell'organizzazione, 1921-1979*, "Annali della Fondazione Gian Giacomo Feltrinelli", XXI (1981), ed. by Massimo Ilardi and Aris Accornero (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1982).

[11]   Grant Amyot, *The Italian Communist Party. The Crisis of the Popular Front Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 157.

proof of their actual danger. In the same day of his talk, January 27th, Ingrao was judged by his comrades and was about to lose his post in the party's direction. It was mostly thanks to general secretary Luigi Longo, who aimed at prudently handling the contrast, that he could be rescued from being punished through the worst disciplinary measure for an exponent of the ICP's leading group. Nevertheless, his closest allies were hit by a soft reappraisal tending to put them aside from the party's main core: they were either moved to peripheral destinations or deprived of their major responsibilities.[12]

While the marginalization of Ingrao and his friends was accomplished, an organizational reform of party bureaucracy was carried out in order to slightly decentralize the decisional process. This formal achievement was balanced by the substantial improvement of the establishment, in which an alliance between Longo and Amendola was made in order to discourage further possible threats to the party's unity. The antagonistic relationship between Ingrao and Amendola was temporarily under control, but major issues were about to create a suitable field outside the party for new antagonisms to upset the apparently still climate within it. Among them, three were particularly pressing: the juvenile insurgency of 1968 in Italy and abroad; the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in the same year; the geopolitical and ideological competition opposing USSR and China.[13]

With regard to all those topics, the ICP's approach was all but blindly assertive. The party was relatively open towards protesting students' reasons, explicitly disapproved Moscow military intervention, and took a balanced stance as to the rising rivalry between the two communist superpowers. Far less cautiously, Rossanda and her friends were immersed in the exciting spirit of 1968,[14] supported its main actors on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and looked at China as the new sanctuary of proletarian revolution. This interpretative distance will soon turn into an unbridgeable fracture. What will make this possible?

II. Words of War…

Late 1968, Longo's precarious health pushed him to designate his successor to lead the party. The chosen one was Enrico Berlinguer, who had coherently maintained a

---

[12]   Galdo, *Pietro Ingrao*, 64-75.

[13]   Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of 1968. Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[14]   Lucio Magri, *Considerazioni sui fatti di maggio* (Bari: De Donato, 1968); Rossana Rossanda, *L'anno degli studenti* (Bari: De Donato, 1968).

neutral position in the longstanding antagonism between Ingrao and Amendola, and therefore was the ideal personality to guide the ICP out from that risky confrontation. A further consideration contributed to his good fortune. Berlinguer was born in 1922 and joined the party in 1943, thus representing a younger generation compared to that of the founding fathers and their direct heirs – for example Palmiro Togliatti (b. 1893), Longo (b. 1900) or Amendola (b. 1907). This aspect was meant to play a crucial role in the ICP challenging adaptation process to the Italian post-economic boom society and its related sociopolitical features.

The wind of change embodied by Berlinguer was mirrored by the conciliatory mood introducing and marking the 12th ICP's Congress in February 1969.[15] Rossanda, Natoli and Pintor were even admitted into the Central committee (CC):[16] this stressed the appeasing interaction between the establishment and Pietro Ingrao, who had renounced in his turn to any polemical attitude. But when peace seemed definitely restored, a new challenge came to transform latent antagonism into a wide conflict.[17]

The mobilization of the ICP's leftist wing dates back to the weeks immediately following the congress. It was then that Rossanda and Magri started to implement an old and never actualized project: creating their own periodical. After envisaging a somewhat Machiavellian title – the Prince[18] – they finally opted for an homage to the communist manifesto of 1848. Perception of the inconvenience that this initiative could cause to the ICP pushed several major publishing houses – Einaudi, Feltrinelli, and Laterza – to reject Rossanda and Magri's request for taking care of their upcoming creature. That is why they finally (and successfully) addressed a minor publisher in Bari, Raimondo Coga, whose company, Dedalo, was known for its unconventionally leftist catalogue.

It was only after having signed a contract with Coga in early April 1969 that Rossanda started an informal tour to let the party know about her and her friends' project. What kind of reactions did she expect? Certainly she was aware that the statute did not explicitly forbid the creation of newspapers or reviews. On the other hand, she could not ignore that in the communist tradition such unauthorized voices were utterly outside the party customs. Or better said: against. When preparing her meeting with Berlinguer

---

[15]   Fulco Lanchester, "I delegati ai congressi nazionali", *Il Partito comunista italiano*, 619-672.

[16]   The composition of the ICP's leading bodies elected at the 12th congress is in PCI, *XIII congresso del PCI. Documenti politici dal XII al XIII congresso* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1972), 15-21. See also Chiara Sebastiani, "Organi dirigenti nazionali. Composizione, meccanismi di formazione e di evoluzione. 1945/1979", *Il Partito comunista italiano*, 387-444.

[17]   On conflictive dynamics from a sociological standpoint, see Jacques Beauchard, *La dynamique conflictuelle. Comprendre et conduire les conflits* (Paris: Éditions Réseaux, 1981).

[18]   Magri's idea was to label the periodical *Il Principe*. See Aldo Garzia, *Da Natta a Natta. Storia del Manifesto e del PdUP* (Bari: Dedalo, 1985), 30.

she was therefore very likely to predict what feedback she was going to receive. Do not do that, was the sense of the chief's words the day of their encounter. "They will kick you out of the party" (*Vi cacceranno*),[19] predicted Ingrao some time later on the grounds of his long-time militant career and his short but intense experience as a political deviant.

When Ingrao had dared to defy the party habits in 1966, his challenging words had been limited both in space and time, and his provoking behavior had soon turned into a trustworthy collaborative attitude. His rebellion had been forgivable, after all: an understandable temporary weakness in the precarious balance of a party searching for a new stable *status quo*. In the case of *il manifesto* things were deeply different. Press is by definition a vehicle for opinions to become public, and control of militant press and propaganda had been a crucial point in the ICP. From this standpoint, nothing could be more unfair than creating an unauthorized new periodical, despite its ostensibly cultural goals. All the more so that the proposal involved three CC permanent functionaries, namely Rossanda, Natoli, and Pintor.

The ICP Direction met in early May 1969 to take a position on the topic. The taboo words "fraction" (*frazione*) and "fractionist" (*frazionista*), Leninist evil of democratic centralism, were introduced into the debate by several speakers, especially Luigi Longo. According to Armando Cossutta, an "absolute indiscipline" (*è l'indisciplina in assoluto*) was at stake, and therefore a lack of proper and immediate stigmatization was going to damage the very communist identity: "we will not be the ICP anymore" (*allora non siamo più il PCI*). During the meeting, the only effective dilemma in question seemed to be whether the party's blame would precede or follow the first issue of *il manifesto*, which had been scheduled by the end of June.[20]

For the moment, further encounters with dissidents were envisaged as well as a press release, in which the chosen adjective defining their unwelcomed initiative was not yet "fractionist" but "personal" (*personale*): a slightly less heavy condemnation that intended to stress an inappropriate but forgivable offense to the party unity.[21] Two days later, Rossanda wrote an open letter to the board. Far from threatening the party, she and her friends felt themselves, she wrote, as the most genuine expression of communist history, culture, and militancy, on which ground they were going to carry on their plan.[22]

Together with her open letter, Rossanda wrote some private lines to Berlinguer, in which she thanked him for "his simplicity, his clarity and even his kindness in listening"

---

[19]   Rossana Rossanda, *La ragazza del secolo scorso* (Torino: Einaudi, 2005), 374.

[20]   Archive of the ICP (hereinafter AICP), Direction, MF 006, file 20, meeting of 7-8 May 1969.

[21]   "Comunicato dell'Ufficio stampa della Direzione del PCI", *l'Unità* (15 May 1969), 3.

[22]   AICP, CC's permanent commissions, 1969, 5th commission and Dossier Manifesto, MF 0305, letter of Rossanda to Berlinguer and Natta, 17 May 1969.

to her (*la semplicità, la chiarezza e anche la cortesia con la quale hai voluto ascoltarmi*). This was an apparently minor but actually meaningful symptom of future general secretary emotional sensibility, which was unusual for the ICP communicational standards and was able to introduce an innovative approach to its culture and rituals. The personal interactions between contenders, particularly Rossanda and Berlinguer, went on providing an empathic counterpoint to the colder political-administrative procedure. As to this, the growing antagonism was assuming the bipolarized set-up that issued into a conflict, in which two less and less reconcilable visions of the same rules were confronting with each other. Words of war had led contenders to this. A war of words was going to make their paths irredeemably divergent.

III …War of Words

The reputation of *il manifesto* preceded its appearance as many subscriptions were made even before its first issue was sold in newsstands – 40,000 to 50,000 copies, which represented a largely unexpected success. The problem was how to handle all this, on both sides of the barricade. Moreover, a further threat to unity and stability was worsening an already difficult transition. In the same weeks a book had been published by Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, a communist activist since the Resistance and former director of some major ICP periodicals such as *Vie Nuove* and the female weekly magazine *Noi Donne*. She had been successfully candidate in Naples constituency at the general election of May 1968, and had carried out a sort of sociological-narrative account on her campaign consisting of a long correspondence with French philosopher Louis Althusser.[23] Her criticisms of the ICP conduct in the socio-economically underdeveloped Neapolitan area, her ideologically unconventional sympathies – namely for Maoist China – as well as her irreverent tone were all reasons for her book not to pass unnoticed. Once again, words that should have kept private became public, thus attracting the ICP's concern.[24]

The "fractionist" character of *il manifesto* was by now unanimously acknowledged by the Direction.[25] This was also due to the fact that the war of words declared by the dissidents was accompanied by several initiatives such as press conferences and meet-

---

[23]   Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, *Lettere dall'interno del PCI a Louis Althusser* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1969).

[24]   "Lo stato del Partito a quattro mesi dal XII Congresso. Un'analisi della Commissione di organizzazione del CC", *l'Unità* (16 June 1969), 3.

[25]   AICP, Direction, MF 006, file 23, meeting of 2 July 1969.

ings to publicize the journal. An immediate punishment was considered as suitable by some leaders, such as Cossutta, Gerardo Chiaromonte, Arturo Colombi, and Agostino Novella. In their interventions, the conviction emerged that a prompt and ruthless reaction was necessary to reassure the party as to its own strength.

On the other hand, most of the Direction members stressed the opposite risk. *il manifesto* had a large audience both inside and outside the party. Punishment would have martyrized their initiators, with a predictable advantage for them in terms of followers. Not to mention the consequences this would have caused on the national and international relationships of the ICP, which was trying to rejuvenate its own old fashioned image by self-representing as less traditionalist and less Moscow-addicted – as the international conference of communist parties held in June 1969 had actually shown. Once more, Ingrao caught the deeper sense of what was at stake. "New generations", he said, "are not persuaded by our notion of unity, of discipline" (*generazioni nuove che non sono conquistate alla nostra concezione dell'unità, della disciplina*). Trying to conquer them was a major goal, and repression of the dissidents was certainly not going to help. Were the dissidents "failing comrades" (*compagni che sbagliano*) or "enemies to fight" (*nemici da combattere*)?[26]

Following the meeting, an article signed by Paolo Bufalini in the ICP's weekly *Rinascita* mirrored the overall hesitating strategy of the establishment.[27] At least one thing was clear either. Talks with Rossanda and his friends had to be pursued. On their side of the battlefield, diversified attitudes were emerging. Aldo Natoli seemed to be the most available for a possible compromise; Lucio Magri and Luigi Pintor, on the contrary, were rigid defenders, so they appeared, of their own camp. Ideological reference of her group, Rossanda played a leading role in it. Through personal separate contacts with each of them, the establishment counted on the beneficial effects of the ancient maxim *divide et impera* in order to weaken the adverse front and to beat it without facing it as a whole in the open field.

In July 1969, the second issue of *il manifesto* triggered an extension of the debate to the ICP's regional executive bodies, especially where dissidents were gaining consensus – for example in Latium, namely in Rome, and in Campania, particularly in Naples. Letters of grassroots militants in those weeks and a collective appeal of many intellectuals – including actors, directors, architects, political thinkers[28] – to meet Berlinguer and get clarifications testify of the widespread concerns on the capacity of the party to solve

---

[26]   AICP, Direction, MF 006, file 23, meeting of 2 July 1969.

[27]   Paolo Bufalini, "Su una nuova rivista", *Rinascita*, 27 (4 July 1969), 8-9.

[28]   AICP, CC's permanent commissions, 1969, 5th commission and Dossier Manifesto, MF 0305.

its internal crises. The administrative handling of the *affaire* became a priority subject, on which depended most of its possible disciplinary outcome.

An unprecedented set-up was chosen aiming at excluding two bodies that for different reasons did not fulfill current requested features: the CC, which was pretty large (171 members) and not sufficiently confidential; and the Central Committee for Control (CCC), which was responsible for disciplinary issues. Their involvement, which was sanctioned by the statute in such circumstances, was claimed by the most orthodox, strongly keen not to depart from the party's formal norms. Despite this minority opposition, a third body was therefore addressed, that is the CC's fifth permanent commission (CC5).[29] It guaranteed what the majority of the Direction had been looking for: a small and politically reliable audience not institutionally charged of disciplinary duties.

Created in 1966 to deal with organizational matters, the CC5 included 36 members among whom Luigi Pintor. In order to stress the Direction's good intentions towards him and his friends, Rossanda and Natoli as well were allowed to attend the CC5 upcoming meetings. In the meanwhile, Berlinguer's negotiating words went on marking the informal encounters between the generals of the two fronts. Rossanda's attitude, in Berlinguer's view, could be still acceptable as to the party uses. But at the same time, occasional skirmishes between the respective troops through press articles and reciprocal minor attacks made clear that the overall mood of the conflict was certainly not bound to distension.

Nevertheless, minor but evident signs of evolution were emerging. In mid-July, Aldo Tortorella let the Political bureau know about his personal concern regarding his wife's, Lia Cigarini, contribution to *il manifesto*: an article on female emancipation in the journal's second issue. Tortorella's long letter features stylistic elements of the autobiographical accounts that communist militants were meant to provide the party in order to make themselves controllable, according to a Soviet usage imported in the interwar ICP by those who came back from long stays in the USSR.[30] The letter also includes some self-criticisms together with words aiming at stressing how reliable actually was the comrade concerned, Lia Cigarini, despite the recent fall into the wrong side of the ongoing conflict. What would have probably implied some sort of disciplinary measure just a few years earlier was quickly solved by the reassuring formula: "it is considered

---

[29]   AICP, Direction, MF 006, file 27, meeting of 28 July 1969.

[30]   Mauro Boarelli, *La fabbrica del passato. Autobiografie di militanti comunisti (1945-1956)* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2007); Claude Pennetier and Bernard Pudal, *Autobiographies, autocritiques, aveux dans le monde communiste* (Paris: Belin, 2002).

that the question raised by Tortorella does not exist" (*si ritiene che il problema posto da Tortorella non esista*).[31]

In mid-September, *il manifesto* published an article on the Czechoslovak crisis that brought Soviet tanks invading the undisciplined "popular democracy". "Prague is alone" (*Praga è sola*) was its title, which deliberately seemed to undermine the courageous disapproval the ICP dared to express toward Moscow repression. A response from via delle Botteghe Oscure – where the ICP's HQ in Rome were located – was unavoidable. Predictably, the anti-*manifesto* counterattack was entrusted to Aldo Tortorella.[32] By doing this, the managing group sought to stress its unity through the signature of a personality whose position was weakened because of political-personal reasons. Closing a long article on the "Czechoslovak events" (*questione cecoslovacca*), a post-scriptum blamed the "irresponsible superficiality" (*irresponsabile leggerezza*) of *il manifesto* regarding the "right conception of internationalist relations" (*corretta concezione dei rapporti internazionalisti*). Its advocacy for breaking links with the socialist world was "objectively" (*oggettivamente*) contributing to reinforce the position of "moderate and conservative forces" (*forze moderate e conservatrici*) on the Italian political scene.[33]

This time, the ICP's was not the only reply attracted by its iconoclastic leftist wing. Words of war arrived from the USSR as well, which informed the Italian comrades about its bad intentions. Should *il manifesto* went on threatening the ICP, Moscow would create an ultra-orthodox journal and cut down funding for Botteghe Oscure.[34] Interestingly, *il manifesto* was supposed to let its highest representative, namely Rossanda, to share classified information concerning the international relations of the ICP with the 'bourgeois' press.[35] The geographical enlargement of the *affaire* might have influenced its development in terms of lexical battles between the party establishment and its opponents. A further recrudescence was logical, with consequences that were going to trespass the fine line between regaining and reproving dissidents.

---

[31] AICP, political bureau (PB), MF 006, file 37, meeting of 22 July 1969.

[32] AICP, PB, MF 006, file 37, meeting of 30 September 1969.

[33] Aldo Tortorella, "Democrazia socialista e questione nazionale. Il dibattito sui problemi del movimento operaio internazionale", *Rinascita*, 39 (3 October 1969), 8-9.

[34] Massimo Caprara, *Quando le Botteghe erano Oscure, 1944-1969* (Milano: Saggiatore, 1997), 222. Actually, the ICP attitude with respect to the Soviet invasion of Tchekoslovakia had already implied a funding cut by Moscow in 1969: Valerio Riva and Francesco Bigazzi (Milano: Mondadori, 1999), 47, 56, 371.

[35] AICP, Enrico Berlinguer fund, inner political affairs, box 4, MF 94, 2519, report by Mauro Galleni for the secretariat, 16 June 1969; letter from Renato Sandri to Mauro Galleni and Salvatore Cacciapuoti, Rome, 25 June 1969; letter from Arturo Colombi to Luigi Longo, Rome, 21 July 1969.

IV. Forbidden Words, Forgotten Friends

In the view of some perceptive observers, the frightening ghost of the "langue de bois" – meaning the bureaucratic conformist unexpressive idiom of average communist nomenklatura[36] – seemed to persist in the party ranks as symptom of their incapacity to catch the very sense of *il manifesto* protest. So wrote a militant in a letter to both contenders in which he compared the "personal, clear, and spontaneous language" (*linguaggio personale, chiaro e spontaneo*) of the minority press, coming from a "genuine and non-superficial thought" (*un travaglio di pensiero autentico e non epidermico*) and a "real search for truth" (*una ricerca sincera della verità*), and, on the other hand, "a sort of preformed language" (*certo linguaggio performato*) – a language that reminded "Counter-Reformation" or maybe "rhetoric schools of Imperial Rome, when people had nothing new to say anymore…".[37]

Actually, a detectable linguistic divide between the two fronts, if any, seems to be less in their respective official communicational platforms than in their informal exchanges, including frequent encounters and private letters. In fact, those of *il manifesto* were fully products of the ICP's political culture, and their language, although carrying unorthodox contents, was not altering structure and forms of the party language. Metaphorically speaking, if their weapons did not feature the same caliber of those of the party establishment's and their troops were far less numerous, certainly both the weapon factory and the military training camp had been the same for the two contenders. The thing is that friendly fire was becoming unacceptable by the major target, whose reaction was simply a matter of time.

Early October, Rossanda, Pintor, and Natoli attended the CC5 three-day meeting in which their and their allies' party membership was bitterly discussed.[38] The debate

---

[36]   The label "langue de bois" is currently used to define a number of standardized communicational styles within and outside the world of politics, in which it has been traditionally employed by analysts as a sort of surrogate for Orwellian newspeak (novlangue). For some reflection on the historical development of the "langue de bois" concept, see: "Les langues de bois", *Hermès. La revue*, 58, III – "Pratiques et limites du décodage" (2010); Christian Delporte, *Une histoire de la langue de bois* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009); Françoise Thom, *La langue de bois* (Paris: Julliard, 1987). A comparative study on newspeak and languages of totalitarian regimes is John Wesley Young, *Orwell's Newspeak and Totalitarian Language. Its Nazi and Communist Antecedents* (Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia, 1991).

[37]   Original text: "quel linguaggio che fa tanto pensare alla Controriforma o nel migliore dei casi alle scuole di retorica, fiorite a Roma nel periodo imperiale, quando cioè certa gente non aveva più nulla di nuovo da dire…". AICP, CC's permanent commissions, 1969, 5th commission and Dossier Manifesto, MF 0305, letter from Gianni Bonotto to "Rinascita" and to *il manifesto*, Sacile (Pordenone), 28 July 1969.

[38]   AICP, CC's permanent commissions, 1969, 5th commission and Dossier Manifesto, MF 0305, 5CC meeting of 2 and 9-10 October 1969.

was introduced by Alessandro Natta who accused the dissidents to be a "political group" (*raggruppamento politico*) working against the ICP's "fundaments" and "legitimacy" as well as its international alliances.[39] Hence, the "compatibility" (*compatibilità*) of the minority leading representatives with their militant status was to be assessed. A barrage fire of interventions followed in which the three exponents of *Il manifesto* had to face a series of accusations: to embody a "fraction", to be "against the party" or keen to "destroy it" (*sfasciare*), or even to give a bad example with possible dangerous repercussions on the communist movement as a whole.

Except for some isolated voices, as for instance 28-year old Claudio Petruccioli, the speakers were overall convinced of the "incompatibility" between the party and *il manifesto*, whose only suitable exit strategy was renouncing to its own battle. As to the tone of the debate, this reached unusually dramatic peaks with strongly different counter-attack strategies in the established front going from impeccable old-fashioned orthodoxy to pathetic paternalism. On the one hand, Cossutta retrieved some vintage labels drawn from a long-standing anti-reformist tradition. According to him, *il manifesto* had a "pre-Leninist" vision, a definitely rightist approach reminding Giuseppe Saragat, longtime chief of the temporarily dissolved Italian Democratic Socialist Party and current President of the Republic. On the other hand, Salvatore Cacciapuoti condensed in a few words the very epitome of communist ethics by saying:

> How could a militant exclusively listen to his own conscience. Who of us has been always agreeing or does not deem he has been suffering some injustices? Yet nobody has ever lifted a finger against the party. This is not an outdated conception but rather the way a communist militant should behave.[40]

Openly acknowledging that disagreement or even a sense of unfairness was common experience of any militant, Cacciapuoti highlighted one crucial point: the challenge of being communist did not consist of adhering to the party mindset blindly, but rather of systematically backing the party *despite* and *beyond* discrepancies between one's own individuality and the party itself. Natoli's reply implicitly agreed on Cacciapuoti's point and relaunched:

---

[39]   Original text: "Siamo dinanzi ad una contestazione della linea del partito, nei suoi fondamenti politici, e della sua legittimità".

[40]   Original text: "Ma come può un militante ascoltare solo la propria coscienza? Chi di noi è stato sempre d'accordo, o non pensa di aver ricevuto dei torti? Ma nessuno mai ha mosso un dito contro il Partito. Questa non è una concezione arretrata, è il modo di comportarsi di un militante comunista".

> We are aware that *il manifesto* is something abnormal, incompatible as you put it, with certain rules of the game. The question is, therefore, to check the setting and rules of the game that make this initiative abnormal. It is mystifying that setting and rules should be untouchable[41]

namely an 'idol' to obey to. Such a radical contrast was still not sufficient to imply the disciplinary reaction that would have been predictable in the first place. A further debate was engaged on what kind of "incompatibility" was at stake:[42] did it involve the party strategy or the party *tout court*? In the first case, it was a political incompatibility which did not request, according to Paolo Bufalini and others, an administrative punishment. The distinction was so subtle, and somewhat captious, that even Natoli felt perplexed: if there was "fractionism", like most of the attendants thought, *il manifesto* had to be punished; if not, like he and his friends deemed, so why talking about "incompatibility"? Moving the debate into a kind of philosophical stage, Giuliano Pajetta managed to save both the (private) right to dissent and the (verbal) blame for it by distinguishing: "incompatible are not the ideas, but rather the deeds that come from" (*Incompatibili non sono le idee, ma gli atti che ne seguono*).

Having attained its conceptual climax, the meeting was concluded by a vote that approved unanimously, except Pintor, the introductory paper by Alessandro Natta. Together with Bufalini, he was designated as responsible for editing the text, which was then submitted to the Direction. An armistice was still possible, said the resolution, but those of *il manifesto* were operating against the party, hence an "objective incompatibility" between them and their status of communist militants and, *a fortiori*, leaders had to be handled. Further discussions were therefore envisaged between the party and the minority.

The Direction, in its turn,[43] sent the dossier to the CC and the CCC, which had a joint meeting. In compliance with their disciplinary tasks, especially as to the CCC, a decision was taken about the "fractionist" character of the dissidence. Rossanda, Natoli, and Pintor voted against, whereas three others abstained.[44] This formal condemnation was balanced by an unusual proposal: publishing entirely the meeting proceedings and opening the debate to the party as a whole, including local sections. The related book

---

[41]   Original text: "Ci rendiamo conto che la iniziativa del Manifesto è cosa abnorme, se volete incompatibile, con certe regole del gioco. Il problema, allora, è di verificare il modello, le regole del gioco di fronte al quale (!) questa iniziativa è abnorme. È cosa mistificante ammettere che modello e regole siano intoccabili".

[42]   AICP, CC's permanent commissions, 1969, 5th commission and Dossier Manifesto, MF 0305, 5CC meeting, 14 October 1969.

[43]   AICP, Direction, MF 006, file 31, meeting of 13 October.

[44]   The three abstained were Giuseppe Chiarante, Lucio Lombardo Radice and Sergio Garavini. Cesare Luporini, who did not take part into the poll, sent a letter to the party saying he would have abstained if present. The three opponents were obviously Natoli, Pintor et Rossanda.

was edited by a publishing house controlled by the ICP and had strong circulation in the party milieus.[45]

Ingrao's dream – making visible the internal decisional process with all its zigzagged paths – was coming true? Apparently. But would this be sufficient to prevent *il manifesto* from going on with its aggressive attitude? Definitely not. A detailed suggestion made by Rossanda to reform circulation of ideas within the party was far from being appreciated by the establishment,[46] while news from federations made Botteghe Oscure aware of how extended the dissidence was.[47] The fifth issue of *il manifesto* can be seen as a point of no return.[48] In the following Direction meeting, the word "enemies" (*nemici*) was randomly employed to label those who went on using forbidden words and therefore had condemned themselves to become forgotten friends.[49]

V. How to Say 'Peace'

The day when the CC convened to define the disciplinary measures admittedly considered as unavoidable, the formal treatment of the case interwove with its inter-personal dimension just in front of the meeting room. It was there that Berlinguer met Rossanda for a couple of minutes. Making a last attempt to avoid her traumatic exit, Berlinguer asked her a sign of "fidelity" (*fedeltà*); she answered this would be rather a sign of "obedience" (*obbedienza*).[50] The three dissidents in the CC were expelled through an administrative measure (*radiazione*) that did not feature any moral reprobation, like standard expulsions normally did. Six voted against, including those directly concerned, and three abstained. Ingrao approved the expulsion, but deeply regretted his choice years after.[51]

The cases of those – Magri, Caprara, Castellina, Parlato – who were not members of the CC were dealt with in the following months according to their status, while the small parliamentary contingent of *il manifesto* was admitted into the mixed group at

---

[45]   AICP, miscellaneous institutes and organisms, 1969, MF 0307, 2519, letter from the commercial direction of the Editori Riuniti to the ICP direction, Rome, 26 November 1969. At that time, the amount of edited copies was around 1,200.

[46]   AICP, Enrico Berlinguer fund, MF 94, letter from Rossanda to Berlinguer, 28 October 1969.

[47]   AICP, Direction, MF 006, file 32, meeting of 5 November 1969.

[48]   "Sul Manifesto", *il manifesto*, 5-6 (October-November, 1969), 3-5.

[49]   AICP, Direction, MF 006, fasc. 33, meeting of 11 November. "Comunicato della Direzione del PCI sul 'manifesto'", *l'Unità* (12 November 1969), 1.

[50]   Rossanda, *La ragazza del secolo scorso*, 384.

[51]   Ingrao, *Volevo la luna*, 316-317.

the Chamber of Deputies. In the meanwhile, local meetings showed that the minority had gained most of its audience in large cities and in the center and northern regions. The related debates attracted 10% to 15% of the overall militants, which amounted to 1,500,000 at the time. Considering that *il manifesto* featured in total some hundreds of active supporters and some thousands of sympathizers, it is easy to catch the disproportion between its numerical weight and the influence it played into the ICP's sociability as well as in the national political scene.

il manifesto did not conquer the very traditionalist core of the party, which could not appreciate its theoretical approach, its irreverence towards hierarchies and most of all its challenging attitude towards the ICP's international alliances. Pure working class representatives felt a huge distance with the dissident leaders, and a wave of anti-intellectualism arose against people who were maybe experts on writing and complaining, but certainly not on hard-working and preparing the proletarian revolution:

> Instead of blathering they should go to hardly work twelve hours a day as I do, so that their strange ideas would be washed away unless they received a good tip from some liberals for betraying the Italian proletariat. Workers like me, who are directly exploited by capitalism, are still patient, so why they want to change the Party given that they don't actually slog at either the assembly line or in the fields?[52]

The main areas of consent of *il manifesto* included the territories where its leaders came from – especially Bergamo, Rome, and Naples – plus some major provinces such as Genoa, Cagliari, and later Salerno, as well as isolated support all over the country.[53] In the city capital, the Montesacro section was the one where dissidents had the largest audience. Paolo Spriano, the well-known party intellectual who had published two years before the first volume of his monumental history of the ICP, was invited there for a talk on an apparent inoffensive topic: Palmiro Togliatti and Leninism. Right before he began some attendants started reading a protest document rudely stigmatizing the disciplinary measures adopted against *il manifesto*. This caused a lively discussion that was about to degenerate into a physical clash. Only after one hour an improvised poll was carried out

---

[52]   Original text: "Se invece di blaterare andassero a sgobbare dodici ore al giorno come faccio io gli passerebbero i grilli per la testa, a meno che non abbiano intascato una buona mancia da qualche liberale per tradire il proletariato italiano. Ma se abbiamo pazienza noi scarpa grossa che siamo gli sfruttati diretti del capitale, quelli lì che non sgobbano materialmente alle macchine o ai campi perché vogliono cambiare il Partito?", in AICP, 1969, Lombardia Region, Mantova, MF 0306, letter from Massimo Gozzi, secretary of the Cicognara section, to the ICP direction, Cicognara, 24 November 1969.

[53]   AICP, CC's permanent commissions, 1969, 5th commission and Dossier Manifesto, MF 0305, meeting of 24 November, "La 'questione' del Manifesto (nota sul dibattito che si è svolto sui lavori del CC e della CCC)".

allowing Spriano to finally make his talk, which was followed by further tough verbal confrontations until the night.[54]

Apart from this borderline case, the abundant documentation referring to regional and provincial bodies proves that the debate was large and vibrant. Yet from a practical point of view, distribution and availability of *il manifesto* were sensibly dishomogeneous. Hence, the quality and quantity of local debates strongly varied according to the circulation of the journal issues in every single province. Furthermore, certain tiredness and evasiveness are perceivable in some local reports. This is maybe symptom of some reluctance to stimulate debate on issues that were not always rooted in the territory concerned. After all, Botteghe Oscure got a general positive feedback for its overall strategy but not unanimous approval.

The disciplinary conclusion of the *affaire* gave rise to criticisms even among those who did not explicitly back the dissidence.[55] On the other hand, an ultra-orthodox minority would have liked a more rapid and severe solution. Even occasional collaboration with *il manifesto* could appear a heavy mistake to be blamed, the targeted activist being obliged to justify his initiative and to beg the party's pardon for that – as occurred in Siena to Enrico Berlinguer's cousin, Luigi. Broadly speaking, *il manifesto* put strain on the very self-perception of the ICP, pushing it into a sort of collective conflict in which its entire political culture was actually at stake. As usual after any war peace followed, but contenders and the battlefield could not stand unchanged.

VI. Conclusion

Despite the lack of resources and its organizational weakness, *il manifesto* managed to survive representing a highly authoritative voice of the European Left in the seventies. It was transformed into a daily newspaper in 1971 and into a political movement which merged over time with other numerically small but intellectually influent actors of the Italian Left. Some of the protagonists of the 1969 conflict, such as Magri and Castellina, worked their coming back to the ICP in the eighties, while others went on working at *il manifesto*, such as Pintor, Rossanda, and Parlato. Those last two quit in 2012 because of political clashes with the majority, in a kind of historic recurrence of their exit more than forty years before.

---

[54] AICP, 1969, Lazio Region, Rome, MF 0307, 1056-1420, January-December 1969, letter from Paolo Spriano to Armando Cossutta, Rome, 29 November 1969.

[55] AICP, 1969 and 1970, Regions and Provinces, MF 0306-0307 and MF 069.

The conflicting dynamics involving *il manifesto* and the ICP is relevant because of several original aspects regarding the treatment of dissidence. First of all the communicational strategy based on interpersonal exchanges, which was not brand new in the communist tradition, but in 1969 continuously accompanied the political-administrative handling as a sort of counterpoint of the formal side of the *affaire*. Trying to persuade the dissidents not to persist in making mistakes was a statutory norm and a priority goal for recovering opposition, but this time the formal rule was actualized with unprecedented effectiveness. This negotiating mood is also present in the bureaucratic process, in which it is detectable an evolution from a punitive repressive model into a more rational dialoguing interaction with the dissidents.

The publication of the mid-October CC meeting proceedings in a book and the launch of a large debate all through the party are both signs of an innovative exit strategy from such kind of conflict. Albeit the debate was meant to be controlled by trustworthy functionaries, it was nevertheless a risky way to open the internal decisional mechanisms to public assessment within and outside the party. At the same time, it was also a useful tool to measure the extent of the dissidence in the periphery of the party itself. Not by chance, further disciplinary deliberations were taken against the supporters of *il manifesto* over the following months.

Various factors explain what occurred. Generally speaking, trends of the Italian and international political life pushed the ICP to weaken its link with Moscow in order to make itself compatible with governmental responsibilities at the national level. Furthermore, "the spirit of '68" that had pervaded to some extent the ICP, as well as the hierarchical and biographical background of the dissidents forced the establishment to adopt a cautious behavior. In the meanwhile, the so-called 'Hot Autumn' in 1969 and the upcoming terrorist massacre of piazza Fontana in Milan, in December 12th the same year, provided a troubling framework that emphasizes by contrast the importance that *il manifesto* played in the party life in those same months.

The final outcome of the conflict, including its punishing epilogue, made all the evolving process described above less visible and valuable. The expulsion of the dissidents confirmed the suspects of those who thought the ICP was still an illiberal and fundamentally antidemocratic party, while reassuring Moscow, where the case was attentively monitored. As a matter of fact the international ties between the Italian communists and the USSR will continue representing an unavoidable pillar of the ICP's political culture, marking its organizational and ideological profile. Yet this was not an insurmountable obstacle for the party to adapt itself to the new challenges of the seventies, when it got its electoral best outcomes and became a credible example of communism well-suited for the affluent Western society.

PART II.

THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY:
THE POWER OF IMAGES DURING THE COLD WAR

THE FACES OF MILITANCY:
PALMIRO TOGLIATTI'S PROPAGANDA PORTRAITS (1948-1964)

Luciano Cheles

(Université de Grenoble-Alpes)

The portraits of leaders feature prominently in political campaigning in Italy today, yet this has not always been the case. Just after the war this personality-based approach to propaganda was shunned by all parties out of fear that it evoked the ghost of Mussolini, whose effigy was notably ubiquitous during the *Ventennio*.[1] The portraits of politicians were conspicuously absent from the election campaigns of 1946 and 1948[2] and did not become a current form of propaganda until the early 1980s.[3]

ILLUSTRATIONS: If not indicated, the names of the photographers and graphic artists are unknown.

[1]   On Mussolini's portraits, see for instance Giorgio Di Genova, *'L'uomo della provvidenza': iconografia del Duce 1923-1945* (Bologna: Bora, 1997).

[2]   As Sergio Luzzatto has remarked, after the Liberation, the public wanted "a body-less politics: a disincarnate representation of power". See "Il corpo politico", *Storia d'Italia. Annali 20. L'immagine fotografica, 1945-2000*, ed. by Uliano Lucas (Torino: Einaudi, 2004), 523-524. For the visual propaganda of the early post-war years, see: *1948 e dintorni. Manifesti politici. Immagini e simboli dell'Italia repubblicana*, ed. by Filadelfo Ferri (Varese: Insubria University Press, 2008).

[3]   On the long-lasting effects which the so-called *complesso del dittatore* had on Italian propaganda approaches, see Luciano Cheles, "Prima di Berlusconi. Il ritratto politico nell'Italia repubblicana (1946-

The Italian Communist Party (ICP) had an additional reason for rejecting any form of publicity centred on its leader, Palmiro Togliatti (1893-1964): it believed in collective values, rather than in the cult of a charismatic individual. The communist approach, however, changed radically after Togliatti's attempted assassination at the hand of the neo-fascist fanatic Antonio Pallante on 14 July 1948.[4] The seriousness of the attack – the leader was wounded by three gun shots and his life seemed in peril – and the outrage it sparked among party members and sympathisers quite spontaneously gave momentum to a cult.[5] The ICP was only too happy to encourage it: after its crushing defeat at the parliamentary election of that year, it needed to show that it was ready to run with a strong leadership.[6]

To limit the field of this investigation, this essay will mostly focus on the printed portraits of Togliatti, rather than on his cinematic representations, and more precisely on the portraits that feature on posters and post-cards. Because, as we shall see, these were produced on special events, particular care was taken to design them; as a result they are potentially more pregnant with meaning.

The poster that was produced to advertise Togliatti's mass rally at the Foro Italico stadium (formerly Foro Mussolini) on 26 September 1948 [Fig. 1], his first public appearance since the attack, is the visual expression of the new approach. It features a photographic portrait of the leader at his desk with a copy of *l'Unità* and carries the slogan "Togliatti è tornato. Tutti a salutarlo alla grande Festa de l'Unità" (Togliatti is back. Let's all greet him at the great Festa de l'Unità).[7] This image is deceptively ordinary since, as it will be argued, it contains multiple political references. On its most immediate level of meaning, it attests that Togliatti has recovered fully: the communist daily under his eyes indicates that he is ready to resume his political battles. The clearly legible headline acts almost as an attribute of his combative stance: "I comunisti chiedono al Parlamento una inchiesta sui fatti di Sicilia" (The communists demand a parliamentary enquiry into the events in Sicily). The events referred to in the front page of *l'Unità* – the issue is that

1994)", *Il ritratto e il potere. Immagini della politica in Francia e in Italia nel Novecento*, ed. by Luciano Cheles and Alessandro Giacone (Pisa: Pacini, 2017), 99-122.

4   Giovanni Gozzini, *Hanno sparato a Togliatti* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1998); Mario Avagliano and Marco Palmieri, *1948. Gli italiani nell'anno della svolta* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2018), 299-347.

5   Giovanni Gozzini and Renzo Martinelli, "Dall'attentato a Togliatti all'8° congresso", *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, ed. by Paolo Spriano, vol. 7 (Torino: Einaudi, 1998), 70.

6   On the cult of Togliatti, see Sante Cruciani, "L'immagine di Palmiro Togliatti e Maurice Thorez nel movimento comunista internazionale", *Il ritratto e il potere*, 123-142.

7   The *Festa dell'Unità* (the form "de l'Unità" is now considered obsolete) was the ICP's annual popular event providing cultural, musical, gastronomic and folkloric attractions, which also had fund-raising functions.

Fig. 1 – Poster announcing Togliatti's mass rally at the Foro Italico, Rome, after recovering from the attempted assassination, September 1948

Fig. 2 – Front page of *l'Unità* of 14 September 1948 featured in Togliatti's poster in [Fig. 1]
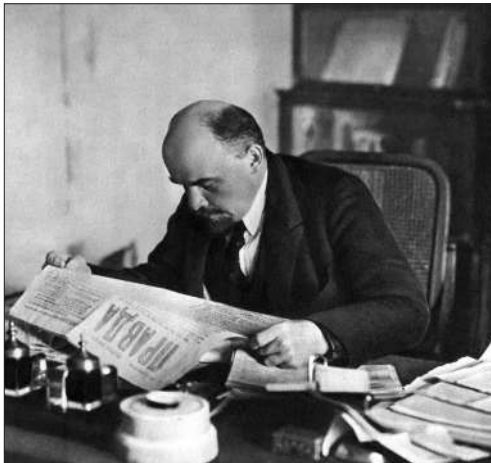
Fig. 3 – Pytor Otsup, Lenin reading the *Pravda*. Photograph, 1918

Fig. 4 – Henri Manuel, Jean Jaurès reading *l'Humanité*. Post-card, c. 1910

of 14 September 1948 – are the killing of three policemen by members of Salvatore Giuliano's gang at Partinico, in Sicily, on 3 September [Fig. 2]. The newspaper occupies a substantial portion of the image:[8] the poster is also an advertisement for the *Festa dell'Unità*, whose inauguration in 1948 was made to coincide with the leader's official return to active political life. As well as on the poster, the photograph of Togliatti with *l'Unità* featured on the last page of a special supplement of the communist daily, entitled "Togliatti è tornato", which appeared on 26 September.

The photograph's latent meanings, which emerge when its iconographic sources are investigated, add considerable political interest to it.

The representation of Togliatti bending over the party's official organ with both arms resting on his desk is closely based on a portrait of Lenin reading the communist daily *Pravda*. This was originally a photograph taken by Pyotr Otsup (1883-1963) [Fig. 3], who had covered the storming of the Winter Palace and other revolutionary events in 1917, and was from 1918 to 1935 the Kremlin's photographer.[9] As the Soviet leader's personal image-maker, Otsup produced and distributed numerous portraits, but the photograph with the *Pravda* – a paper Lenin was instrumental in founding in 1912 – was especially significant: it was taken on 16 October 1918, that is to say, on the eve of the first anniversary of the October revolution, and the issue is that of the same day.[10]

Otsup's photograph circulated widely in postcard form especially during the Stalin era.[11] More or less faithful copies of it were realised on various media?[12] A good rendering of the subject is, for instance, the painting produced by V. Ivlin in 1928 [Fig. 5], which

---

[8]   This prominence becomes more evident when one compares this picture with other representations of leaders reading their respective party organs (see [Figs 3, 4, 11, 12] below).

[9]   On Otsup, see especially Evgeny Berezner *et al.*, *Piotr Otsup. The Space of Revolution: Russia, 1917-1941* (Moscow: Golden Bee, 2007).

[10]   See Vladimir Chachina, "History of the photograph 'Lenin reads the Pravda'", *Newsland*, 25 April 2011, https://newsland.com/user/4297700750/content/istoriia-fotografii-lenin-chitaet-pravdu/4166622. Otsup's photograph may in turn have been inspired by a portrait of the French Socialist leader Jean Jaurès reading *l'Humanité*, the newspaper he launched in 1904. The picture, taken around 1910 by the celebrated photographer Henri Manuel, was well-known in socialist circles: it was reproduced on post-cards [Fig. 4] and other media, and became iconic after Jaurès was assassinated in 1914 by a nationalist. (I am grateful to Jean-Baptiste Alba, director of the Centre National et Musée Jean Jaurès, Castres, for this information). Otsup may have known the picture of the Socialist leader taken by a fellow photographer of standing in France. The idea of imitating Jaurès's portrait may even have been instigated by the Soviet leader himself: having spent the period 1909-1912 in Paris, Lenin was likely to have been acquainted with the photograph.

[11]   Postcard reproductions of this photograph dating especially from the 1930s are frequently found for sale on the postcard collectors' website Delcampe, as well as on E-bay.

[12]   Copying photographs to turn them into paintings and indeed copying paintings were a common practice in the Soviet Union. Originality was not valued much: what mattered most was the works' political contents. See András Zwickl, "'Copyright'. The Problem of Originals and Copies in the Painting of

Fig. 5 – V. Ivlin, Lenin reading the *Pravda*, 1928. Copy after Otsup's photograph [Fig. 3]

Fig. 6 – Front page of the *Pravda*, 27 June 1945. The illustration, signed by Boris Karpov, depicts Stalin in his study with a framed reproduction of Otsup's photograph of Lenin hanging above his desk

has recently emerged on the art market.[13] The symbolic importance that was attributed to Ostup's image is attested by its presence in the most official spaces of the Kremlin. A number of paintings, drawings and photographs depicting Stalin alone or at work with members of the *apparatchik* show the Lenin portrait prominently displayed. Examples include the pictures of the dictator in his study reproduced on the front pages of the *Pravda* on 1st May and 27 June 1945 [Fig. 6], 7 November 1948 and 21 December 1949,[14] a painting by Dmitry Nalbandyan (1906-1993) entitled *For the Joy of the People. Stalin and the Soviet leadership plot the future of the world,* executed in 1949, which represents

the Fifties", *Art and Society in the Age of Stalin*, ed. by Péter György and Hedvig Turai (Budapest: Corvina, 1992), 65-92, 131. The author's arguments also apply to the earlier decades of Stalinism.

[13]   This picture was sold at an auction in New York on 12 March 2016. I have been unable to find any information on the artist.

[14]   The pictures on 1st May and 27 June 1945 issues reproduce the same portrait, which is signed by the leading painter and graphic artist Boris Karpov (1896-1968). (On this artist see: https://artchive.ru/artists/73910~Boris_Nikolaevich_Karpov). The image on the issue of the 7 November 1948 bears the signature of M. Kalashnikova (I have found no information on her); the fourth portrait is unsigned.

Fig. 7 – Dmitry Nalbandyan, *For the Joy of the People. Stalin and the Soviet leadership plot the future of the world,* **1949. Painting. Location unknown**

the members of the Politburo (the highest policy-making authority of the Communist Party) gathered around a large map [Fig. 7],[15] and a photograph taken in the 1940s that documents a meeting of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent body which acted on behalf of the parliament when this was not in session) [Fig. 8].[16] The Lenin picture also features conspicuously in a portrait of Stalin sitting on an elaborately carved chair, in an unidentifiable setting, which hangs in the Stalin museum at Gori, in Georgia, the dictator's home town [Fig. 9]. It bears the date of 1933 and the signature appears to be that of the modernist artist Valerian Vladimirovich Sidamon-Eristavi.[17]

---

15   On this master of ceremonial portrait, see esp. Anatolii Vasilevich Paramonov, *Dmitry Nalbandyan* (Moscow: Izobrazitelnoe Iskusstvo, 1986).

16   I draw this picture from Richard Overy, *The Dictators. Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2004). The name of the photographer is not given.

17   I owe the identification of the signature to the kindness of Anita Pitsch. On this artist, see: https://arthive.com/artists/26385~Valerian_Vladimirovich_SidamonEristavi.

**Fig. 8 – Stalin at a meeting of the
Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet, 1940**

**Fig. 9 – Valerian Vladimirovica Sidamon-Eristavi,
Stalin, 1933. Painting. Stalin Museum, Gori, Georgia**

Fig. 10 – Soviet stamp commemorating the 75th anniversary of Lenin's birth, 1945

The recurrent presence of the Otsup photograph in images representing Stalin was part of the dictator's general propaganda strategy of associating himself with Lenin in order to appear as his peer and direct heir, and thus legitimate his own policies.[18] Ostup's picture also featured on a stamp issued in 1945 to mark the 75th anniversary of Lenin's birth [Fig. 10].

So famous was the photograph of Lenin reading the *Pravda* that it was adopted as a model by another supporter of the Revolution, Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), the skilful organiser of the Red Army who became Lenin's right-hand man. One of his best known photographs represents him at his desk reading *The Militant*, the newspaper of the Communist League of America, in a pose that closely echoes that of the Soviet leader [Fig. 11]. The picture was taken in 1931, by an unknown photographer, at the house on the island of Büyükada, in Turkey, which he inhabited for four years after Stalin expelled him from the Soviet Union in 1929.[19] As well as expressing Trotsky's admiration for Lenin, the imitation probably also implied that he considered himself his natural successor.[20] Trotsky was notably liquidated by Stalin who considered him a dangerous rival.

---

[18]   For numerous other examples of such portraits, see espec. Jonathon R. Dreeze, *On the Creation of Gods. Lenin's Image in Stalin's Cult of Personality* (Ohio State University, Master thesis, 2013); Anita Elizabeth Pisch, *The Personality Cult of Stalin in Soviet posters, 1929-1953. Archetypes, Inventions and Fabrications* (Camberra: Australian National University Press, 2016).

[19]   See Norman Stone, "Trotsky on Prinkipo", *Cornucopia. The Magazine for Connoisseurs of Turkey*, 28 (2003), http://www.cornucopia.net/magazine/articles/trotsky-on-prinkipo/.

[20]   It is worth mentioning as an aside that a portrait of Mussolini that shows him absorbed in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, the fascist daily he founded in 1914 [Fig. 12], also appears to be modelled on Otsup's picture, although Henri Manuel's photograph of Jean Jaurès is an equally plausible source. The fascist leader – a former high-ranking Socialist (he had been editor of the party's organ *Avanti!*) – could have been familiar with either. Like the portraits of Lenin and Jaurès, Mussolini's was disseminated as a post-card. This must have been produced shortly after 1922, when the fascist leader installed himself as Prime Minister.

Fig. 11 – Leon Trotsky reading *The Militant*, 1931

As the examples cited amply attest, by the 1940s Otsup's photograph of Lenin reading the *Pravda* had become iconic.[21] The ICP propaganda department must have decided to model Togliatti's portrait on it in order to suggest allegiance to the ideals of communism and also celebrate him as Lenin's Italian heir.[22] The poster's allusion to Lenin

[21]   This is also confirmed by the picture's afterlife, which extended well beyond Stalin's reign and geographical boundaries. It featured on Russian stamps in 1957 and 1962 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Revolution and the 50th anniversary of the founding of the *Pravda* respectively, and on a Polish stamp of 1970 to celebrate the centenary of Lenin's birth. A giant enlargement of the photograph hangs in the office of the current editor-in-chief of the *Pravda*, Boris Komotsky (https://themoscowtimes.com/news/pravda-hits-100-still-urging-workers-to-unite-14640). The photograph was also reprinted in Italy, as a post-card (undated); see Marco Gervasoni, *La cartolina politica* (Milan: M&B Publishing, 2004), 194.

[22]   Curiously, the Togliatti poster seems to have inspired, years later, a portrait of Giorgio Almirante, the leader of the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) [Fig. 13]. The posed photograph depicts him at his desk holding an issue of the party organ, *Il Secolo d'Italia*, that triumphantly announces the results of the Sicilian election of 13 June 1971 (the MSI scored 16,3 % of the vote). The picture is reproduced in Almirante's Wikipedia biography (https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giorgio_Almirante); the entry is likely to have been provided by an official of a neo-fascist organization, as the hagiographic nature of the account

Fig. 12 – Mussolini reading
***Il Popolo d'Italia*, c. 1924.**
Postcard

Fig. 13 – Giorgio
Almirante reading
Il Secolo d'Italia
of 13 June 1971.
From the
Wikipedia entry
on Almirante

may also have intended to evoke a parallelism with Lenin's attempted assassination, which was carried out by the member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party Fanya Kaplan thirty years earlier, on 30 August 1918. As was to happen to Togliatti, this incident gave rise to a cult.[23]

Unlike Lenin, Togliatti is portrayed lighting his pipe. The motif is unusual for, though the communist leader did smoke a pipe,[24] this was not a characterizing element of his public persona (there seems to be no other photographs of him smoking). Moreover, Togliatti was most unlikely to have smoked after the attempted assassination: two of the bullets had reached his chest, as a result of which his respiratory system was seriously affected (one lung had to be removed and after the operation he contracted bronco-pneumonia).[25] We must therefore treat the pipe as a symbolic motif rather than a realistic detail. This finds confirmation in two photographs reproduced on p. 4 of the supplement to *l'Unità* "Togliatti è tornato": the first depicts Togliatti's desk in full with a pipe resting on an ashtray; the second provides a detail of the desk focusing on three pipes. Since the pipe was one of Stalin's hallmarks (the other was the moustache), one can reasonably argue that the pipe motif features in the Italian poster as a nod to "l'uomo che più di tutti ha fatto per la liberazione e per il progresso dell"umanità" (the man who has done more than anybody else for human freedom and progress), as *l'Unità* was to describe the Soviet leader on the front page of the issue of 6 March 1953, which announced his death. This suggestion is substantiated by an official photograph of Stalin lighting a pipe, taken in the 1930s by the renowned portrait photographer Max Alpert (1899-1980) [Fig. 14],[26] which was reproduced on post-cards, and can be found in Communist literature published outside the USSR, such as the French *Almanach ouvrier et paysan* of 1948.[27] Togliatti's attitude bears such a close resemblance to that of Stalin that we can reasonably consider it as a deliberate imitation.

Through the reference to both Lenin and Stalin, the ICP poster celebrates Togliatti's leadership by placing him in their excellent ideological lineage. The idea derives from the already mentioned iconographic genre that presents Stalin's portrait alongside that

---

suggests. Though it cannot be excluded that the MSI photograph was derived directly from that of Lenin, a visual source close to home seems to me more likely.

[23] Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power. Soviet Political Posters Under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 141, 146.

[24] Giorgio Bocca, *Palmiro Togliatti* (Milano: Mondadori 1991), 334.

[25] For a detailed account of his medical condition see the biography written by his doctor: Mario Spallone, *Vent'anni con Togliatti* (Milano: Teti, 1976), 38-39, 45, 158.

[26] *Soviet Photography 1917-1940: the New Photojournalism*, ed. by Sergei Morozov and Valerie Lloyd (London: Orbis, 1984), 124-135.

[27] *Almanach ouvrier et paysan: almanach de l'Humanité* (Paris: Bureau d'éditions, 1948), 98.
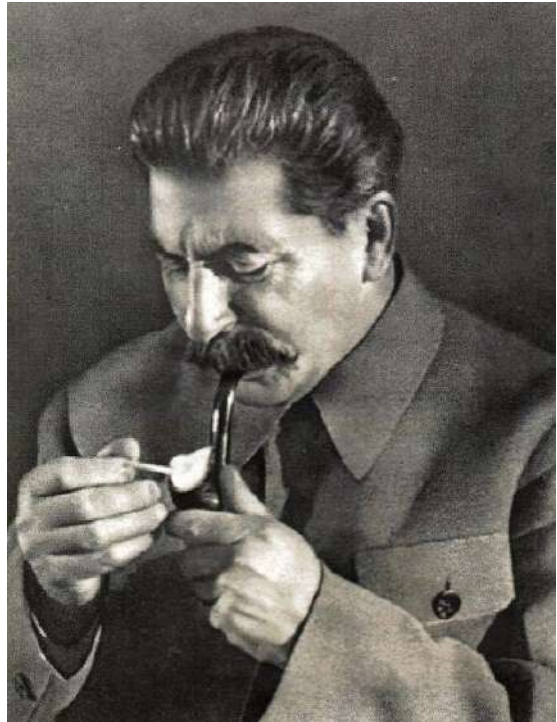
Fig. 14 – Max Alpert, *Stalin*, 1930s. This photograph was reproduced on a Soviet postcard and on Communist publications in Western Europe

of Lenin, but also with that depicting the great Communist thinkers and leaders in a sequence, of which Gustav Klutsis's 1933 poster *Raise higher the banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin!* [Fig. 15] is one of its most famous examples. In the Italian poster, however, the great revolutionaries who provide inspiration to Togliatti are evoked surreptitiously. Two reasons explain their discreet presence. The first is that the explicit association of Togliatti with the Soviet luminaries would have laid the ICP open to its opponents' oft-repeated accusation that it was subordinated to Moscow and hence unpatriotic.[28] The second, and probably more important, reason is 'internal': so great was the awe Lenin and Stalin inspired in the Italian communists that the juxtaposition of Togliatti's portrait with theirs would have been deemed irreverent, even bordering on the sacrilegious.[29]

---

[28] The only picture known to me that features Togliatti together with Stalin is on the cover of Victor Schalashmiza's *Togliatti fedelissimo di Stalin* (Milano; Roma: Oltrecortina, 1964) [Fig. 16]. However, the volume was intended to disparage the communist leader.

[29] Equally, Maurice Thorez (1900-1964), who led the French Communist Party (FCP) from 1930 to 1964, was virtually never represented with Stalin and/or Lenin. I thank Olivier Forlin for confirming this to me.

Fig. 15 – Gustav Klucis, *Raise higher the banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin!,* **poster, 1933**

Fig. 16 – Cover of Victor Schalashmiza's book
Togliatti fedelissimo di Stalin, **Oltrecortina,**
Milan-Rome, 1964

Fig. 17 – Christian-Democrat poster,
parliamentary election, 1953

It clearly follows from the above arguments on the poster's sources that Togliatti's apparently ordinary photograph capturing a private moment in his office (the leader lights his pipe before beginning to read *l'Unità*) is in fact carefully posed. We do not know who took the photograph and whose idea it was to refer to Lenin and Stalin cryptically. Togliatti, who had spent eighteen years in Russia (he lived in exile there from 1926 to 1944), must have been familiar with both pictures. We can assume that he was fully cognizant of the elaborate and astute expedient being devised to hide the heroes of his pantheon in plain sight. Given the importance of the event being announced and the fact that Togliatti's effigy was being reproduced on a poster for the first time, the creation of this image must have been the result of collaborative efforts involving extensive discussions. Pietro Secchia (1903-1973), who was at the time in charge of the propaganda department and became acting Secretary General during Togliatti's illness (he was one of his co-deputies), must have played a prominent role in them. It is worth noting that Secchia was a party official with particularly strong ties with the Soviet leadership.[30]

The question of the extent to which the concealed references were picked up by the public also needs to be addressed. Lenin's and Stalin's presence in the poster was not disclosed to readers of *l'Unità* and the periodicals *Rinascita* and *Vie nuove*, and was not noticed by the so-called independent press. It has also escaped the attention of scholars who have studied the visual propaganda of the ICP. The vast majority of the people must have been unaware of the poster's occult messages. However, some activists may have perceived the Soviet leaders incorporated Matrioshka fashion in Togliatti's effigy, for post-cards, posters and illustrated magazines depicting them circulated widely in communist circles: they could be seen at party sections, the bookstores at the *Festa dell'Unità*, and so on.[31] The Togliatti poster therefore features two levels of meaning: an immediately intelligible one addressed to the masses, as well as an opaque one aimed at an internal audience, whose purpose is the proud affirmation of the party's identity.[32]

---

[30]   Miriam Mafai, *L'uomo che sognava la lotta armata. La storia di Pietro Secchia* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1984).

[31]   The image of Stalin lighting his pipe was sufficiently well known in Italy to have been appropriated for parodic reasons by the Christian-Democrat Party. An election poster of 1953, produced to campaign in Communist-run Bologna, features a cartoon portrait of Stalin focusing on his moustache and the pipe that corresponds to that of the Soviet photograph [Fig. 17]. The hand the dictator uses to hold the pipe finds its equivalent in that of a supporter of the MSI, shown providing the light with the tri-coloured flame of the neo-fascist party's symbol. The point being made in the poster is that far left and far right are fundamentally the same. The Christian-Democrat Party's equidistance from both extremes as a guarantee of democracy in Italy was a recurrent theme of the party's propaganda.

[32]   On covert communication, also referred to as steganography, see Eric Cole, *Hiding in Plain Sight* (Indianapolis: Wily, 2003). This practice has been pursued by the Italian far right too; see below.

Fig. 18 – ICP poster celebrating Togliatti's 60th birthday 1953

Fig. 19 – ICP post-card celebrating Togliatti's 60th birthday, 1953

The importance the ICP attached to the 1948 portrait is attested by its re-use, five years later, on the poster it issued to celebrate Togliatti's 60th birthday [Fig. 18].[33] The original photograph underwent some editing. The somewhat nondescript background gave way to an abstracted Italian tricolour that neatly fitted the poster's horizontal format. As a result Togliatti's bust is emphasized because his left shoulder and arm have become more visible. The accompanying text – "L'Unità saluta il difensore della democrazia e dell'indipendenza nazionale" (*L'Unità* greets the guardian of democracy and national independence) – en-

---

[33]   This recycling would surprise us in normal circumstances since a birthday celebration implies the acknowledgement that the body ages with the passing of time.

Fig. 20-22. Folding postcard produced by *Rinascita* in 1953 inviting subscription to the magazine as a birthday present to Togliatti. The image depicts the leader giving a speech at the party's national commission for cultural affairs in Rome, 1952
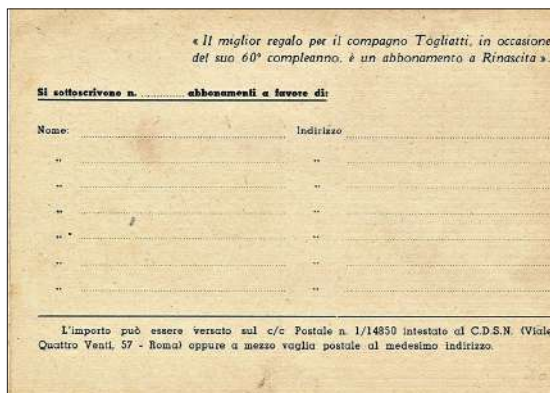
dorses the patriotic message expressed by the flag. The explicit glorification of national independence complements the cryptic reference to the Soviet leaders to evoke the *leit-motif* that the ICP is both Italian and internationalist. A post-card produced for the same occasion expresses this idea more manifestly: it depicts Togliatti smiling, as befits someone who is enjoying his birthday festivities, while a crowd of activists wave the Communist, Italian and peace flags to cheer him [Fig. 19]. Ingeniously, the Communist and Italian flag shown parallel to Togliatti's face have been made to overlap partly so that the red flag and the red band of the tricolour merge into one. Special prominence has been given to the theme of peace through an extensive use of blue: both the background to the picture and the strip on which the text "Una vita per l'Italia, la Pace, il Socialismo" (A life devoted to Italy, to Peace, to Socialism) have been reproduced are so coloured.[34]

---

[34] On the theme of peace, namely the banning of all nuclear weapons, in the communist discourse of the period, see Gozzini and Martinelli, "Dall'attentato a Togliatti all'8° congresso", 174-183.

A post-card was also produced by *Rinascita* in connection with Togliatti's 60th birthday [Figs 20-22]. It has a 21x15cm format which, when folded in the middle, turns into a four-side document. Its celebrative function is not immediately evident because the picture on the front shows the general secretary delivering a speech. The second side reproduces a long quotation from his address, preceded by the title "Per una cultura libera, avanzata e progressiva" (For a culture that is free, advanced and progressive), together with the explanation that it was given at the meeting of the party's national commission for cultural affairs held in Rome in April 1952. The third side looks like the back of an ordinary post-card. Togliatti's name and his address at the ICP's national headquarters in Via delle Botteghe Oscure in Rome, printed on its right-hand side, are an invitation to send him the document. Only the text at the top of the fourth side makes explicit the connection with the leader's birthday: "Il miglior regalo per il compagno Togliatti, in occasione del suo 60° compleanno, è un abbonamento a Rinascita" (The best gift for comrade Togliatti, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, is a subscription to *Rinascita*).

Togliatti's 60th birthday celebrations[35] hint at Stalin: they would not have taken place had the Soviet leader's 70th birthday not been marked, four years earlier, with spectacular and long-lasting festivities.[36] Stalin's example legitimized a practice that the ICP would normally have condemned as a form of personality cult. It should however be noted that the text on the post-card is not a conventional message of good wishes: it links Togliatti's mature age to his long period of political activism.

The photograph of Togliatti reproduced on the *Rinascita* post-card invites some comments. Aesthetically-speaking it is weak: the protagonist's right hand gesture is awkwardly frozen, the background is nondescript, the bulky wooden lectern occupies an unnecessarily conspicuous part of the image and a half-hidden unidentifiable figure lurks strangely at the back. The ICP must have opted for a far from perfect photograph to suggest authenticity. This aesthetic approach may be treated as a conscious reaction against the fascist regime's practice of editing all photographs of the Duce in order to present him as a visually unblemished charismatic figure. The iconography of the leader addressing a visible or implicit audience had such strong mussolinian overtones,[37] that the party must have felt it especially necessary to distance itself from the polished and formal style favoured by the regime.

---

[35] The communist weekly *Vie nuove* devoted a special issue to Togliatti's birthday on 29 March 1953.

[36] Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*.

[37] On the Duce's ritual of speaking to a crowd, from his balcony at Piazza Venezia in Rome, see George L. Mosse, *Nationalization of the Masses* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), 109-110.

LUCIANO CHELES

Fig. 23 – ICP post-card depicting Togliatti at the *Festa dell'Unità*, Caracalla Baths, Rome, 29 September 1946

Another post-card showing Togliatti speaking confirms that the ICP shunned a solemn approach. It depicts the leader at the *Festa dell'Unità* at the Caracalla Baths in Rome on 29 September 1946,[38] and was probably issued shortly after the event) [Fig. 23]. The post-card features such 'imperfections' as two unidentifiable, partly screened figures and a communist flag that flutters waywardly forming an irregular and partly blurred shape. Though 'rough', this picture has not been chosen randomly: the hammer and sickle motif on the flag 'touches' Togliatti's head thus drawing our attention to his function as leader (or head) of the Communist Party. The reliance on 'truthful' images was in keeping with the warts-and-all aesthetics of neorealism, which the ICP ardently supported.

[38] The postcard bears no caption other than Togliatti's full name and the nom de plume "Ercoli" with which he signed his articles during fascism. However, some details – the white badge the leader wears on the left lapel of the jacket, the lectern covered with cloth, the shape of the microphone and the ancient walls in the background – have enabled me to identify the event because they correspond to those in a well documented photograph of the communist rally at the Caracalla Baths, preserved at the Fondo Armando Bruni/Archivio RCS Periodici of the Fondazione Corriere della Sera [Fig. 31].

Fig. 24 – ICP poster and postcard celebrating the 30ᵗʰ anniversary of the ICP, 1951

Fig. 25 – "Long live the great party of Lenin-Stalin – leader and organiser of the victorious building of socialism!" Soviet poster designed by L. Stenberg, 1951

Moreover, the spontaneous, snapshot-like style reflected a practice that was current in the Soviet Union: Stalin rarely posed for photographers or artists because he liked to be represented as a man of action, a true Bolshevik, rather than as a 'sitter'; moreover, socialist realist aesthetics required that portraits be based on existing photographic and cinematographic depictions.[39]

On the model of the numerous posters that showed Stalin and Lenin in the same picture frame, arranged in a variety of compositional schemes, the ICP realised some

---

[39]   Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 144.

printed propaganda featuring the effigies of Togliatti and Gramsci to present the post-war leader as the continuator of the endeavours of the party's founder.[40]

A photomontage showing Togliatti and Antonio Gramsci side by side with a prominent display of red flags in the background that allows glimpses of the tricolours [Fig. 24] follows the typology of the two Soviet personalities placed horizontally in an echoing posture [Fig. 25]. The image was reproduced on a poster and a post-card, as well as on the cover of the 15 January 1951 issue of the communist periodical *Quaderno dell'attivista* to mark the 30th anniversary of the party's foundation. The imitation of the Soviet typology is evident even though Gramsci and Togliatti are depicted almost frontally (they are very slightly turned towards our left), rather than in profile. Showing the two leaders in profile would have been considered inappropriate because of the strong imperial connotations this mode of representation has in Italian visual culture (Roman emperors were so represented on coins). Moreover, the only profile picture of Gramsci available, that taken by the police when he was imprisoned,[41] exuded such an aura because it epitomised his martyrdom, that it could not have been paired with the profile photograph of a leader who had survived fascism by seeking refuge in the Soviet Union.

Another illustration, reproduced on the cover of the *Vie nuove* issue of 21 January 1951 to celebrate the same anniversary [Fig. 26], relies on the iconography of Stalin standing solemnly before a drawn, painted or sculpted portrait of his mentor. Togliatti is here depicted wearing a double-breasted suit, arranged frontally close to the picture plane and set against a red banner featuring Gramsci's effigy.[42] The composition seems to have been based more specifically on that of a 1950 poster designed by Alexander Mythnikov that shows a stiff Stalin in full uniform before a red flag incorporating Lenin's portrait [Fig. 27]. The theme of commemoration shared by the magazine's issue and the

---

[40]   The association of Gramsci with Togliatti skims over the fact that, though they worked together for a number of years, they often disagreed on questions of revolutionary strategy and tactics. For a concise account of these differences and of the criticisms that have been levelled at the ICP for constructing a bogus continuity narrative, see David Forgacs, "Gramsci Undisabled", *Modern Italy*, 21, 4 (2016), special issue on *Iconic Images in Modern Italy: Politics, Culture and Society*, ed. by Martina Caruso and Alessandra Antola Swan): 347-350.

[41]   The mug shot may have been taken in 1928, just after his incarceration in Turi, near Bari. See Forgacs, "Gramsci Disabled", 351, fig. 9.

[42]   The portrait of Togliatti featured in the photomontage derives from a photograph depicting him against a nondescript background. *Vie nuove* reproduced it in colour on a post-card that was probably sold to coincide with the party's 30th anniversary celebrations. The ICP rarely represented Togliatti in colour in its official literature; it must have relaxed its customary sober approach in view of the festive nature of the occasion. Togliatti is depicted in black and white on the cover of the 21 January 1951 issue of *Vie nuove* to make him stand out against the red flag; however his tie has been coloured red.

Fig. 26 – Cover of *Vie nuove*, 21 January 1951, devoted to the 30th anniversary of the ICP

Fig. 27 – "26 years without Lenin, but still on Lenin's path". Soviet poster designed by Alexander Mythnikov, 1950
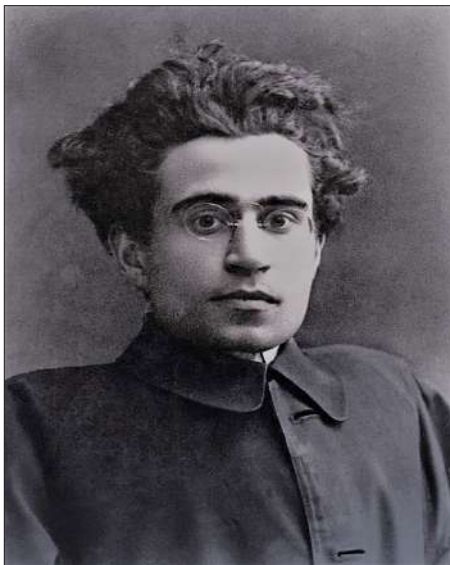
Fig. 28 – Studio photograph of Antonio Gramsci, c. 1922

"LA SOCIETÀ MALEDETTA . . . .

« Una società che non sa dare lavoro a tutti coloro che la compongono è una società maledetta; maledetti sono gli uomini che, fieri di avere nelle mani il potere, si assidono al vertice di questa società maledetta e con la violenza delle armi, con l'assassinio e l'eccidio respingono la richiesta più umile che l'uomo possa avanzare: la richiesta di lavoro ».

dal discorso del compagno PALMIRO TOGLIATTI dinanzi alle bare dei sei caduti di Modena.

Fig. 29 – ICP postcard reproducing a photograph which purports to document Togliatti's speech made on 12 January 1950 at the funeral of six workers killed by the police during a demonstration in Modena on 9 January 1950

poster (the latter's slogan runs: "26 years without Lenin, but still on Lenin's path") supports such a suggestion.

Not only their postures, but the facial expressions and the direction of the looks of Gramsci and Togliatti have also been made to match [Figs 24, 26], as indeed is the case with the portraits of Lenin and Stalin [Figs 25, 27], to stress the point that the contemporary leaders share the same vision of the world of their respective mentors and pursue the same objectives. Some graphic features of the Gramsci-Togliatti images, however, partly undermine the supremacy of the founder of ICP. On the poster celebrating the party's 30th anniversary Gramsci's iconic photographic portrait – the full-face one we see featured on the cover of innumerable publications by and about him[43] – has been reproduced in reverse (he appears turning very slightly to the viewer's left, rather than to

[43] On this iconic photograph, see Forgacs, "Gramsci Undisabled", 345-347, who suggests it may have been taken in 1922, when Gramsci was in Moscow as a delegate to the Communist International.

the right) to make it correspond with Togliatti's effigy [Figs 24, 28]. On the front page of *Vie nuove* Gramsci's portrait has been depicted the correct way, but his pupils have been retouched to make him glance sideways as Togliatti does [Figs 26, 28]. It should also be noted that in the latter image, unlike what happens in its probable Soviet source and in most portraits representing Lenin and Stalin in the same frame, Togliatti features on the left side – a side usually ascribed to the elder figure, since we read from left to right – and Gramsci on the other.[44] By making Gramsci's portraits adapt to Togliatti's rather than vice-versa,[45] the (ideological) model has been turned (pictorially) into his successor's emulator.

Post-cards featuring Togliatti's effigy were also issued to respond to tragic events.

A post-card was produced in 1950 to document Togliatti's indignation at the killing of six workers by the police during a demonstration against their dismissals by the Modena foundry that employed them, on 9 January that same year. The photograph depicts him addressing an invisible crowd in a blank setting. It is accompanied by the following text, which, as is explained immediately after, is a quote from the speech he made "before the coffins of the six Modena martyrs" [Fig. 29]:

> LA SOCIETÀ MALEDETTA…
> Una società che non sa dare lavoro a tutti coloro che la compongono è una società maledetta; maledetti sono gli uomini che, fieri di avere nelle mani il potere, si assiedono al vertice di questa società maledetta, e con la violenza delle armi, con l'assassinio e l'eccidio respingono la richiesta più umile che l'uomo possa avanzare: la richiesta di lavoro.

> (THE CURSED SOCIETY…
> A society that cannot provide jobs to everyone is a cursed society; cursed are the men who, hardened by the power in their hands, occupy the top echelons of this cursed society and, through armed violence, through murder and through massacre, reject the most humble plea a man can make: the plea for work.)

We are given to understand that the picture refers to the funeral ceremony of 12 January. However, when one compares it with the photograph that appeared on the front page of the special supplement to *l'Unità* of 13 January, with a similar shot that is reproduced in Eva Paola Amendola's *Storia fotografica del Partito Comunista Italiano* [Fig. 30],[46]

---

[44] On Lenin's position in relation to Stalin, see Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, 41. For several examples, see Pisch, *The Personality Cult of Stalin*.

[45] Clearly, it would have been more appropriate if Togliatti's ordinary photograph were made to conform to Gramsci's iconic one.

[46] *Storia fotografica del Partito Comunista Italiano* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2006), vol. 2, fig. 201. The source of the photograph is not given.

Fig. 30 – Authentic photograph of Togliatti addressing a crowd at the funeral of the Modena workers on 12 January 1950

Fig. 31 – Togliatti speaking at the *Festa dell'Unità*, Caracalla Baths, Rome, 29 September 1946

or with the relevant excerpts from the documentary *I fatti di Modena*, which was realized by Carlo Lizzani,[47] we note that in these Togliatti does not wear a jacket, but a heavy coat, as one might expect him to do in wintry Emilia-Romagna. The image of Togliatti reproduced on the post-card is the edited version of a snapshot of him speaking at the already mentioned *Festa dell'Unità* at the Caracalla Baths on 29 September 1946 [Fig. 31]. This photograph shows Togliatti, one arm outstretched, and a small group of people standing behind him, against the backdrop of the walls of the ancient baths complex. The architectural setting and the figures by the leader have been excluded from the image on the post-card to conceal the fact that the picture is unrelated to the Modena event. The point was made above that the ICP believed in the necessity to use 'authentic' photographs. However, to illustrate Togliatti's outrage at the Modena tragedy a powerful image was needed, one that could match the leader's strongly-worded quote from his

---

[47]   This documentary, which Lizzani produced for the ICP in 1950, can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIs03vsBvQo.

Fig. 32 – Lenin speaking in Red
Square, Moscow, 1ᵗ May 1919
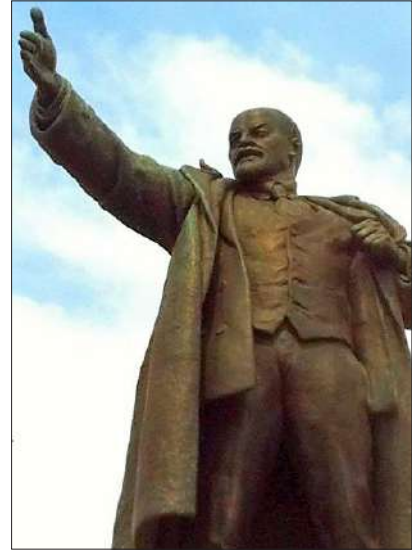
Fig. 33 – Monumental sculpture of Lenin
(1926) in front of the Finland Railway
Station in ex-Petrograd

Fig. 34 – ICP membership card, 1967, commemorating the 50ᵗʰ anniversary of the October Revolution

speech and corresponding heading "LA SOCIETÀ MALEDETTA…":[48] the 1946 portrait showing him frontally with his arm fully extended fitted the bill considerably better than the genuine snapshot of the leader wrapped in his coat, seen from behind. The use of a manipulated photograph of Togliatti gesturing dramatically, shot from below, may also have been deemed legitimate because it evoked one of Lenin's most iconic portraits: that which depicts him standing on a podium, speaking with his right arm outstretched in Moscow's Red Square on 1st May 1919 at the unveiling ceremony of the monument to Stepan Razin [Fig. 32].[49] This photograph, on which the equally famous monumental sculpture of Lenin erected in 1926 in front of the Finland Railway Station in ex-Petrograd was modelled [Fig. 33], has become an emblem of communism. The ICP reproduced it on its membership card in 1967 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution [Fig. 34]. It should be noted that Stalin was also frequently represented on posters with his right hand raised, probably in emulation of Lenin.[50]

Another post-card worth focusing upon is that featuring the general secretary at bust length, together with the slogan "VIVA PALMIRO TOGLIATTI!" and a quotation from the parliamentary address he had given shortly before the attempt on his life: "Il nostro dovere è oggi di chiamare tutto il popolo italiano a combattere per la pace d'Italia, d'Europa, del mondo intiero" (Our duty today is to urge all Italians to fight for peace in Italy, in Europe and in the whole world) [Fig. 35].[51] It must have been produced in the early 1950s because on its back a text explains that the proceeds from the sale of the post-card, which costs 20 Lire, will go to the victims of "Scelba's and De Gasperi's police state" and their families. The reference is to the casualties of the hardline attitude towards strikes and demonstrators adopted by De Gasperi's minister of the interior Mario Scelba, who was in office from 1947 to 1953.

All the portraits discussed so far featured on printed material that was mostly aimed at party supporters. Togliatti's effigy on a poster made its first truly 'public' appearance during the campaign for the parliamentary election of 7 June 1953. The ICP may have felt compelled to relinquish its misgivings about presenting its leader to the 'outside world' on a medium that fascism had extensively exploited to exalt the Duce because its main competitor, the Christian-Democrat Party, had plastered the walls of Italian cities

---

[48] Togliatti's eloquence was usually calm and rational. See Enrico Paradisi, "Il discorso comunista del secondo dopoguerra", *La lingua italiana in movimento*, ed. by Various Authors (Firenze: Accademia della Crusca, 1982), 199-204. The leader must have adopted a dramatic register in view of the grievous nature of the event.

[49] Razin was a Cossack leader who led an uprising against the nobility and the tsarist bureaucracy in Southern Russia in 1670-1671.

[50] On the iconography of Lenin and Stalin standing on podiums with outstretched arms, see Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 144-146, 165-166.

[51] The source of the quotation is provided by Pietro Secchia in *Lo sciopero del 14 luglio* (Roma: CDS, 1948).

Fig. 35 – ICP post-card issued to raise funds in support of the victims of the police repression, early 1950s

Fig. 36 – ICP poster, parliamentary election, 1953

and towns with portraits of its head, Alcide De Gasperi. It is interesting to compare the ways in which the two politicians have been represented. The photograph that was reproduced on the Togliatti poster [Fig. 36] (only one portrait was used for that campaign) is devoid of aesthetic concessions: the nondescript lighting and the ill-defined shadows in the background are meant to present it as an ordinary photograph, rather than a studio one. It should also be pointed out that the picture occupies only a portion of the poster: the figure of the leader has been played down to the benefit of the long text (the poster's political contents). Togliatti's gaze is directed towards the viewer.[52] His head is tilted slightly to his left and he smiles affably – an attitude betraying the intention to be endearing.[53] This relaxed approach must have been adopted to soften the uncom-

---

[52]   Togliatti is often represented addressing the onlooker directly [Figs 23, 24, 35, 36, 44], though not usually in the images that show him engaging in various political activities (giving a speech, reading *l'Unità*, etc.) because these are snapshots, or meant to appear as such.

[53]   See Joseph Messinger, *Ces gestes qui vous séduisent* (Paris: First Editions, 2004), 101: "[The head tilted towards the left], often coming with a serene expression, and even a faint smile, [can] be considered

Fig. 37 – Cover of *Vie nuove*, 29 March 1953, special issue devoted to Togliatti's 60th birthday

promisingly combative message that urges Italians to put an end to the Cold War and the rule of the 'clerical party'. Interestingly, the photograph was originally used on the cover of the 29 March 1953 issue of *Vie nuove*, the special issue celebrating Togliatti's 60th birthday [Fig. 37]. De Gasperi's propaganda portraits [Figs 38, 39] are, in contrast, polished, formal and hagiographic: they depict him with an austere and meditative expression, and their slogans – "Lavora per l'Italia" (He is working for Italy) and "Senza forche, senza dittatura, quest'uomo semplice e grande ha salvato l'Italia" (Without gallows, without tyranny, this man both great and unassuming has saved Italy) – praise his alleged efforts and ability to rescue Italy from the economic devastation caused by the war.[54] In both posters, the leader's gaze is directed outward with a vanishing point outside the picture. The upward glance De Gasperi casts in the portrait in [Fig. 38] presents him as a spiritual and visionary leader.

---

as a sign of seduction".

[54]   The mention that De Gasperi was "unassuming" and that his successes were achieved without resorting to extreme measures and undemocratic methods attests that the Christian-Democrat Party too was conscious of the danger that the portrait of a leader on public display could trigger fascist associations.

Fig. 38 – Christian-Democrat Party poster, De Gasperi, parliamentary election, 1953

Fig. 39 – Christian-Democrat Party poster, De Gasperi, parliamerntary election, 1953

The portraits of Togliatti that the ICP produced on the occasion of his death, which occurred on 21 August 1964, deserve particular attention, in view of the momentous nature of the event.

We will begin by considering the black and white framed picture that was placed in the room of the ICP headquarters in Via delle Botteghe Oscure where Togliatti lay in state from 23 to 25 August. It is a studio portrait depicting the leader with flaccid traits, a furrowed forehead and a sombre expression. A post-card with this image was also produced [Fig. 40]. On its back ran the following text:

> PALMIRO TOGLIATTI È MORTO. Con lui scompare il grande protagonista di quarant'anni di storia del nostro Paese, del movimento operaio e internazionale. I compagni, i lavoratori, i democratici tutti si stringano commossi nell'estremo saluto all'uomo che ha legato indissolubilmente il suo nome alla lotta contro il fascismo, alla rinascita democratica dell'Italia, alla causa della pace, della democrazia e del socialismo. Nel Partito Comunista Italiano vive oggi e vivrà per sempre l'insegnamento di Palmiro Togliatti. Il Comitato Centrale del Partito Comunista Italiano

(PALMIRO TOGLIATTI IS DEAD. The leading figure of forty years of our Country's history and of the international workers movement has left us. We exhort the comrades, the workers and all democrats to come together to pay their last heart-felt respects to the man whose name is inextricably tied to the struggle against fascism, the rebirth of democratic Italy, and the causes of peace, democracy and socialism. Palmiro Togliatti's teachings are alive and will live on forever in the Italian Communist Party. The Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party)

The Soviet Union issued a commemorative stamp that reproduced this very portrait [Fig. 41] in September of that year.

Three posters were also produced by the ICP on the occasion of the funeral.[55]

The first is made up of a black and white photograph representing Togliatti smiling and greeting us with a gesture that is meant to be interpreted as a farewell, and a text that is identical to that featured in the post-card that has just been described [Fig. 42]. Copies of the poster were pasted up along via delle Botteghe Oscure, where they were seen by the huge numbers of people who streamed in to pay their last homage to Togliatti.

The second poster features a snapshot of the leader speaking with the communist flag in the background [Fig. 43]. The text here reads:

21 AGOSTO. TOGLIATTI "Guardiamo al nostro Paese, che noi amiamo, per il bene del quale abbiamo lavorato e combattuto e al quale vogliamo dare e daremo, con la vittoria della democrazia e del socialismo, laicità, benessere e progresso, sicurezza, indipendenza, libertà e pace". Palmiro Togliatti

(21st AUGUST. TOGLIATTI "Let's take care of our country, a country we love. We have worked and fought for her good, we want to give her, and will give her secularism, prosperity and progress, security, independence, freedom and peace when democracy and socialism will triumph". Palmiro Togliatti)

However the image of Togliatti that was given the greatest prominence during the bereavement period and, as we shall see, in later years too, is that which shows him delivering a speech with a large portrait bust of Gramsci behind him. This photograph featured full page in *l'Unità* on 22 August, the issue that announced Togliatti's death. Appropriately it was reproduced on the last page of the daily. It became iconic when, on the day of his mass funeral (25 August), a giant reproduction of it was used as a

---

[55] From the "Promemoria cose da fare e relative responsabilità" (Memorandum of things to do and those in charge of them) detailing the organization of Togliatti's funeral ceremony we learn that Giancarlo Paietta, the party's official responsible for foreign affairs, was to deal with "the poster", but are not told which poster and who actually devised it. Fondazione Gramsci. Archivi del Partito Comunista, Partito. Segreteria 1964, microfilm 028, 1622-1623.

Fig. 40 – ICP post-card issued on the occasion of Togliatti's death, 1964

Fig. 41 – Soviet stamp commemorating Togliatti's death, 1964

Figs 42, 43 – ICP posters issued on the occasion of Togliatti's funeral, August 1964

**Fig. 44 – Togliatti's funeral in Piazza San Giovanni, Rome, 25 August 1964
(Photographic Archive of the Istituto Gramsci, Bologna)**

backdrop to the stage in Piazza San Giovanni in Rome from which Italian and foreign personalities spoke [Fig. 44].[56] It then featured, albeit deprived of Gramsci's effigy, on the poster advertising *L'Italia con Togliatti*, the documentary on the funeral directed by Carlo Lizzani, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, and other left-wing film-makers, which was released at the end of 1964 [Fig. 45]. The image was reproduced in full the following year on the party's recruitment poster [Fig. 46] and membership card. It was used

---

[56]   This photograph is here reproduced with kind permission from the Archivio del Partito Comunista Italiano, Federazione di Bologna – Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna. For a detailed account of the funeral, Livio Karrer, "Una difficile traslazione. I funerali di Palmiro Togliatti e di Enrico Berlinguer", *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, 2 (2011): 109-143.

Fig. 45 – Poster advertising the documentary on Togliatti's funeral directed by various left-wing directors in 1964

Fig. 46 – ICP recruitment poster, 1965

again without Gramsci's portrait in 1966 on the poster advertising the 11th national congress of the ICP [Fig. 47], as well as on the cover of Togliatti's volume *Comunisti e cattolici* (published by Editori Riuniti, the party's publishing house) [Fig. 48], and in complete form in 1971 on the poster commemorating the ICP's 50th anniversary [Fig. 49].

Considered together, the portraits that were disseminated to mourn him, that depicting Togliatti as an ageing person and the portraits that showed him in his official capacity, enshrine the concept of the leader's two bodies: his physical one, which is mortal, and his political one, which is perennial because his achievements will be espoused and carried forward by others. In fact, even when taken individually, the two non-political portraits (the sombre portrait reproduced on a postcard and that with the farewell ges-

Fig. 47 – Poster announcing the 11th national congress of the ICP, 1966

Fig. 48 – Cover of Togliatti's *Comunisti e cattolici*, Editori Riuniti, 1966

ture that featured on posters [Figs. 40, 42]) incorporate the same twin concept: they are both complemented by texts praising his political contribution and stressing that his deeds will live on. The text-less portrait placed close to Togliatti's coffin merely follows a customary mourning practice.[57]

All the images that were released immediately after Togliatti's death were rigorously in black and white – a sobriety indicative of mourning. The only touch of colour could be found on the poster that depicted him with the communist flag: the word "TOGLIATTI" was printed in red [Fig. 43]. Chromatic lustre was ascribed only to the artefacts with the portrait of Togliatti speaking that were produced after the funeral ceremonies were over: red dominates the posters advertising the documentary *L'Italia con Togliatti*, the party's 11th national congress and, as already noted, the commemorations of the ICP's 50th anniversary.

---

57 See Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 148-152 for the concept of the leader's two bodies formulated in relation to Lenin.

Fig. 49 – Poster commemorating the 50th **anniversary of the ICP, 1971**

Fig. 50 – Programme of the conference *Togliatti e la democrazia italiana*, organised by the Associazione culturale 'il Migliore' and the Casa delle culture, Rome in 2014

The picture representing Togliatti with the Gramsci portrait in the background needs to be dwelt upon. Research into the LUCE archives reveals that it originates from one of a series of photographs that were taken on 14 November 1959 in the *salone* of the Central Committee at the Botteghe Oscure headquarters to document the press conference Togliatti gave to illustrate the preparatory documents for the party's 9th congress that was to take place from 30 January to 4 February 1960. The full photographs show the general secretary on his feet delivering his speech, with party officials Enrico Bonazzi, Giorgio Amendola, Franco Calamandrei, Giancarlo Pajetta and Enrico Berlinguer sitting beside him.[58] Though the precise shot from which the detail has been extracted cannot be traced, the event it refers to can be identified with near-certainty because of the distinctive features of the Gramsci portrait hanging on the wall, namely the laurel branch and swirling scroll that exalt it. This temporary stage setting appears not to have been used for other communist events held at the Botteghe Oscure or elsewhere.[59]

It is legitimate to wonder why the party's directorate chose this particular photograph of Togliatti out of the many that were available to honour him on the occasion of his death and in later years too. Gramsci's presence in the background no doubt partly accounts for this choice: it enables the ICP to link Togliatti's stature with that of his predecessor, and pre-empt possible accusations that it was using the funeral ceremony to build a Stalin-like personality cult.[60] To this explanation one may add another: the picture could have been adopted because it resembles (totally accidentally) the painting *Stalin at the 18th Party Congress, 1939,* realised by the leading socialist realist artist Aleksandr Gerasimov (1881-1963) in 1939 [Fig. 51]:[61] the figure of Togliatti gesturing with his right hand – a hand extended towards the audience in heavily foreshortened form – and holding a sheet of paper with his left one corresponds in fact to the way Stalin is represented there. Gerasimov's portrait seems to have been well known: it appeared on a Bulgarian stamp released in 1949 celebrating Stalin's 70th birthday [Fig. 52],[62] and was

---

[58]   See *l'Unità*, 15 November 1959, 1, 10-11. For the series of photos, see: http://senato.archivio-luce.it/senato-luce/scheda/foto/IL0000009326/11/Conferenza-stampa-di-Palmiro-Togliatti-a-Botteghe-Oscure-in-piedi-tra-Pajetta-e-Franco-Calamandrei-piano-americano.html?indexPhoto=12. Strangely, none of these photos was used to illustrate the articles in *l'Unità*.

[59]   This is confirmed to me by Anna Tonelli.

[60]   For this concern, see Karrer, "Una difficile traslazione", 115-116.

[61]   The painting hangs in the Rosizo State Museum and Exhibition Centre in Moscow. On Gerasimov, a socialist realist artist greatly appreciated by Stalin, see Boris Groys and Max Hollein, *Dream Factory Communism. The Visual Culture of the Stalin Era* (Ostfildern-Ruit [Germany]: Hatje Cantz, 2003), 375-376.

[62]   Alexander Kolchinsky, "Stalin on Stamps and Other Philatelic Materials: Design, Propaganda, Politics", *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, 2301 (2013): 5-76, 13.
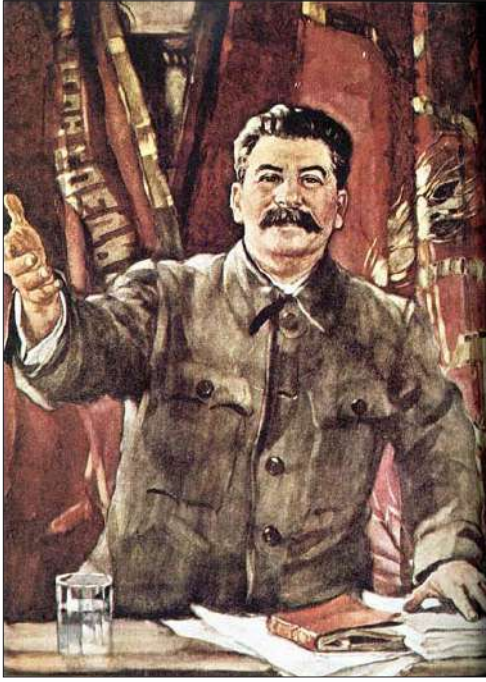
Fig. 51 – Alexandr Gerasimov, *Stalin at the 18th party congress, 1939.* **Painting, Rosizo State Museum and Exhibition Centre, Moscow**

Fig. 52 – Bulgarian stamp celebrating Stalin's 70th birthday, 1949

reproduced *en abyme* in a painting by Mikhail Soloviev (1905-1991), dated 1950, that exalted women's emancipation (a young woman is represented addressing an audience before the portrait of Stalin whose rhetorical skills she is striving to emulate) [Fig. 53].[63] The suggestion that Togliatti's portrait was chosen because it recalled Gerasimov's portrait of Stalin can be substantiated: a giant replica of this painting was used as a backdrop to the speech Togliatti gave at the Teatro Adriano in Rome on 18 December 1949 to celebrate the Soviet leader's 70th birthday.[64] A photograph of him speaking before the

---

[63]   For an analysis of this painting, see Pisch, *The Personality Cult of Stalin,* 259. The image continues to exercise some fascination in some political quarters. It was recently reproduced on the cover of the Hindi edition of Stalin's *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* (New Delhi: Kamgar Prakashan, 2017).

[64]   The use of Gerasimov's 1939 portrait of Stalin by both the Bulgarian philatelic authorities and the ICP in 1949 to commemorate the Soviet leader's 70th birthday is probably coincidental.

Fig. 53 – "'Such women didn't and couldn't exist in the old days' I. V. Stalin".
Poster designed by Mikhail Soloviev, 1950

Fig. 54 – Togliatti speaking at the Teatro Adriano, Rome, to celebrate Stalin's 70ᵗʰ birthday, 18 December 1949

Stalin picture, one of several that were taken on that occasion [Fig. 54], can be seen on the front page of *l'Unità* of 20 December.[65] The *mise-en-scène* of the event, as well as the photograph that reproduced it, were meant to evoke the canonical theme of Stalin as a source of inspiration. Fifteen years after it was used as a backdrop at the Botteghe Oscure headquarters, Stalin's portrait appears not to have been forgotten by some members of the *apparatchik* of the ICP: they used it as an iconographic model when choosing an emblematic picture of Togliatti. The Italian communist leader had become one of Stalin's main critics after 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev denounced the Soviet leader for the cult of personality he had fostered and the crimes he had perpetrated; but the de-Stalinization process did not occur overnight and was not shared by the entire

---

[65] *l'Unità*'s photograph being of poor quality, I am reproducing here another picture from the same series, which I draw from Aldo Agosti's seminal biography, *Palmiro Togliatti* (Torino: UTET, 1996), facing p. 417 (the source of the photograph is not given).

leadership of the ICP. Arguably, the 1959 photograph of Togliatti speaking, which was given pride of place at the funeral ceremony and used repeatedly in the few years that followed, was intended as a nod to a hypothetical public of Stalinist diehards – a nod that was in all probability perceived only by an exclusive group of party stalwarts. The ambiguity is flagrant in the 1966 and 1971 posters, for while they show Togliatti impersonating Stalin, the slogans proclaim the party's independence from Moscow: the texts speak in fact of the "via italiana al socialismo" (Italian way to socialism) and "nostra via verso il socialismo" (our way to socialism) [Figs. 47, 49].[66] The use of the tricolour in the 1971 poster, albeit one where the red band is preponderant because of the nature of the commemoration, reiterates the theme of the party's autonomy.

It should be pointed out that the practice of modelling a political figure on the canonical representations of one's guiding lights in a discreet way, for the benefit of a restricted group of party activists, was not unique to the ICP. The parliamentary far right (the MSI and its 'post-fascist' heir Alleanza Nazionale, AN) pursued the same approach: the visual publicity of Giorgio Almirante, Gianfranco Fini and other figures recurrently depicted them in the Duce's characteristic postures in order to hint at their allegiance to him.[67] However, while the MSI and AN never ceased to incorporate veiled references to Mussolini (and fascism in general) in their propaganda, the communist habit of covertly celebrating their leader by representing him under the guises of Lenin and Stalin only concerned the figure of Togliatti.

---

[66]   The portrait of Togliatti speaking has had an extended afterlife. We find it, for instance, on the cover of a collection of his early post-war speeches, *Per una repubblica democratica e antifascista*, ed. by Gino Pallotta (Milano: Newton Compton, 1976). It featured as recently as 2014 on the programme of a conference entitled *Togliatti e la democrazia italiana*, which was organised in Rome by the Associazione culturale 'Il Migliore' and the Casa delle culture to mark the 50th anniversary of his death [Fig. 50]. In these cases, the image must have been chosen purely because of its iconic status: it has become synonymous with Togliatti.

[67]   For a few examples, see Luciano Cheles, "'Nostalgia dell'Avvenire'. The Propaganda of the Italian Far Right between Tradition and Innovation", *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Luciano Cheles, Ronnie Ferguson, and Michalina Vaughan (London; New York: Longman, 1991), 41-90, at 58-59; Luciano Cheles, "Back to the Future. The Visual Propaganda of Alleanza Nazionale (1994-2009)", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 15, 2 (2010): 232-311, at 242-247, 255, 286-288, 290, 297. By imitating Mussolini, neo- and post-fascist personalities were following a habit that was current in the Duce's own time. As Guido De Ruggiero, one of the founders of the anti-fascist Partito d'Azione, has remarked: "In terms of physical appearance, one could once note that all those who were active in politics strangely resembled the Duce physically: not only their clothes, gestures and style of talking, but even their facial features were modelled on his, this mimicry being at times deliberate, at times unconscious". See "Questo popolo. Gli intellettuali", *La nostra Europa*, 1 April 1945, at 13. Cited from Mariuccia Salvati, "Mutamenti del linguaggio politico tra fascismo e repubblica", *1945-1946. Le origini della Repubblica*, ed. by Giancarlo Monina (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2007), 190.

Conclusion

Following the attempted assassination of Togliatti in 1948, the ICP abandoned its strong hostility to the personalization of leadership, a hostility that was motivated ideologically as well as a reaction to Mussolini's cult of personality. Portraiture was one of the means by which the figure of the leader came to be promoted. His exaltation occurred mostly within the confines of the large community of party members and sympathisers: Togliatti's effigy continued to have only a limited presence in electoral propaganda, which was mostly focused on policies and issues and on the recrimination of the party's opponents.

The desire to encourage devotion to the leader among communist supporters naturally led the ICP's high-ranking officials to turn for inspiration to the Soviet Union, whose propaganda was largely centred on the figures of Stalin and Lenin. Stalin's propaganda offered justification for the promotion of Togliatti's personality and provided a rich repertoire of images from which to draw. Though the representations of the Italian leader were at times modelled on those of Lenin and Stalin, such impersonations were concealed in order to avoid the opponents' attacks that the ICP was *servo di Mosca* (Moscow's lackey), and also because Togliatti's explicit association with the Soviet leaders would have been viewed as ill-appropriate on account of the god-like aura they radiated in the eyes of Italian communists. Some party activists may well have noticed them, if they were familiar with Soviet imagery.

Though Togliatti's portraits were frequently posed, care was taken to give them an ordinary and spontaneous feel; a formal style of portraiture was used almost exclusively in connection with grievous events. This contrasted with the stately way De Gasperi was always depicted on his party's publicity. The printed material featuring Togliatti's effigy was usually complemented by texts that were more than simple slogans: they were statements commenting on events or outlining political aims and achievements. Their presence implied that the pictorial celebration of Togliatti was not the vacuous expression of a personality cult, but the just praise of a combative and effective leader. The post-cards also fulfilled a utilitarian function: that of fund-raising.

As the present essay has attempted to show, communist propaganda of the first two decades of the post-war period was conceived with great thoughtfulness. It managed to be strikingly subtle because, as was customary at the time, it was produced internally, rather than entrusted to advertising agencies. The graphic artists were also party activists and worked hand in hand with the leadership. They were familiar with, and revered the visual culture of the Soviet Union, a country they treated as a guiding star. The subtlety and originality of the ICP's approach have no equivalent in the visual propaganda of the

communist parties of other Western democracies. Maurice Thorez, who was secretary general of the French Communist Party from 1939 to 1964, and Dolores Ibárruri, who led the Spanish Communist Party from 1942 to 1960, were not depicted on their publicity in poses that appeared spontaneous, but cryptically alluded with great precision to some of Lenin and Stalin's most iconic portraits, though they too must have been familiar with such iconography, having lived in exile in Russia for a number of years.

Because images have a much greater impact than words, Togliatti's portraits must have contributed to his image as a charismatic and much loved party secretary. However, it would be rash to interpret the cult he enjoyed as the mere outcome of a shrewdly constructed propaganda, for the supporters of the ICP were favourably predisposed to it. Togliatti was undoubtedly the most popular communist leader of the post-war period. None of his successors enjoyed such a following, not even Enrico Berlinguer, whose veneration was largely posthumous because his style of leadership was so sedate and sober that he was even accused of encouraging an "impersonality cult".[68]

---

[68] Giovanni Statera, *La politica spettacolo. Politici e mass media nell'era dell'immagine* (Milano: Mondadori, 1986), 21; Maria Pia Pozzato, "Fashion and Politics in the 1980s and 1990s", *The Art of Persuasion. Political Communication in Italy from 1945 to 1990s*, ed. by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza (Manchester: Manchester University Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 297, n. 2.

COLD-WAR ICONOGRAPHIC BATTLES:
THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY
AND ITALIAN ANTI-COMMUNISM (1945-1956)

Andrea Mariuzzo

(Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia)

I. Introduction: Two Posters with Mutual Accusations

These two very similar posters [Figs. 1, 2] were circulated by the Press and Propaganda Section of the Italian Communist Party (ICP) and by the Propaganda and Press Service (SPES) of the Christian Democracy Party (DC) for the elections of 7 June 1953. It was truly a decisive moment. In the first general elections after the proclamation of the Italian Republic on 18 April 1948, the DC had obtained more than 48% of the vote. This placed it ahead of the two left-wing Marxist parties, the Communists and the Socialists, with their shared list of candidates, and made it a central political power in the government. Italy had thus been decisively placed in the western and pro-American camp in the Cold War. At the beginning of 1953, just before the new Parliamentary elections, the government led by the DC approved an electoral reform that overturned the previous proportional configuration by awarding bonus seats of up to 65% to the coalition that had obtained more than 50% of the vote. If the bonus had been awarded, it would have meant the definitive marginalization of the left-wing parliamentary opposition and it might also have depleted the socialist and communist presence in society to near disappearance. For these reasons, the 1953 election campaign was as lively as the one five years before and the main parties exploited all possible communicative resources.

Fig. 1 – Poster of the Italian Communist Party, 1953 (Fondazione Gramsci Emilia Romagna, Bologna)
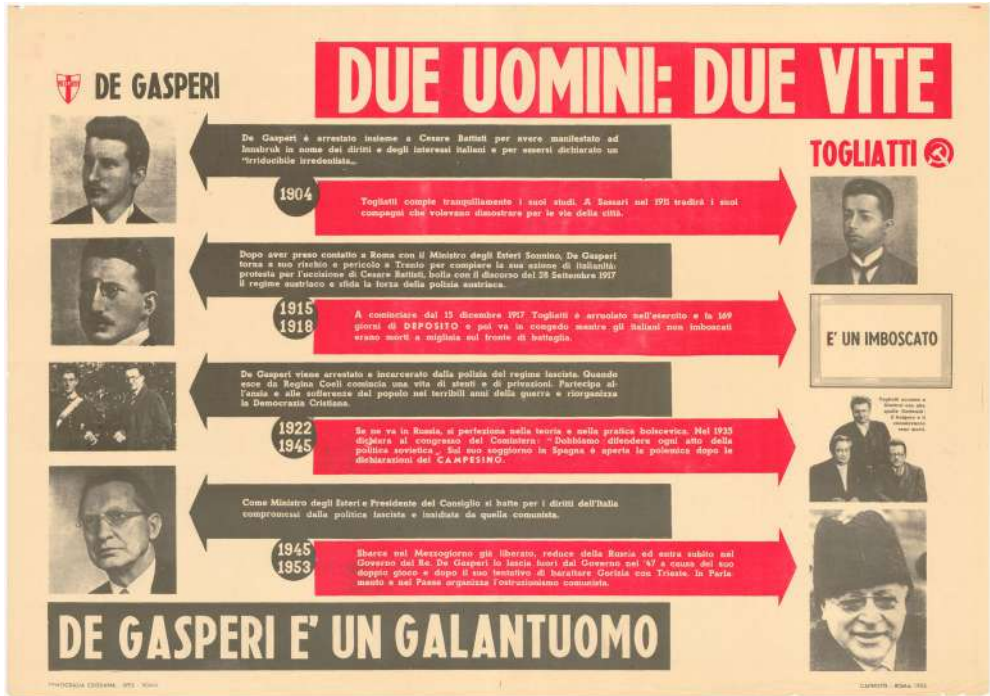
Fig. 2 – Poster of the SPES, 1953 (Fondazione Gramsci Emilia Romagna, Bologna)

Today we know that in the Italian political communication campaigns where there was greater ideological polarization, it was rather common to exchange images, figurative language and even content that had particular impact and success with the public. This made sense given a public that remained culturally compact and therefore sensitive to graphic messages that closely resembled each other.[1] As regards this specific set of mu-

---

[1] Here the studies carried out by Luciano Cheles combining political history, art history and visual culture are fundamental, in particular his contribution to *The Art of Persuasion. Political Communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*, ed. by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza (Manchester: University Press, 2001), in particular his "Political Battle in the *Piazza*. The Political Poster" (124-179), and his more recent "Le immagini vaganti. Migrazioni iconografiche tra destra e sinistra", *Memoria e Ricerca*, 41 (2012): 121-146, and "Iconic Images of Propaganda", *Modern Italy*, 21, 4 (2016), 453-478. Cheles' work is the most advanced and critically refined result of an interest for political graphics that has long characterized Italian studies of the history of parties and social movements. Reception of iconography from previous years had begun as early as the1970s. Still under the influence of the profound ideological divisions of the country, it included publications such as *Via il regime della forchetta. Autobiografia del PCI nei primi anni '50 attraverso*

tual accusations running parallel and in such close succession, the analysis can be even richer and deeper. In the case of these two posters, in fact, the analogous images of the two battling parties were clearly trying to demonstrate the same thing: in the important moments of Italian history, one side was focused on serving the country, while the other served the foreigner or refrained from fighting in order to focus on selfish interests. And this while faced with the enemies of the State and of freedom that each party's members had learned to recognize as such at school and while fighting first of all in World War II and then during the Cold War.

The articulation of the events under consideration and even the graphic grid style of the images make it easy to understand that the two were produced one in response to the other. Certainly both have condensed a wealth of symbolic and rhetorical material from the biographic parabola of the two leaders of the principal majority and opposition Italian parties under the title of "Two men, two lives". All the same, due to their nearly contemporaneous appearance, it is not possible to identify which of the two agencies had the original idea that was then copied by the adversary. We can however imagine that the proposal was first born in the communist sphere.

The poster of the Press and Propaganda Section in fact expresses information repeatedly referred to by the ICP's communication staff in the weeks before the vote on 7 June 1953, in a campaign that aimed to delegitimize the Prime Minister and Christian Democratic leader Alcide De Gasperi through the insinuation of his scarce patriotism due to his past as a subject of Austria during World War I. A similar approach had already been attempted by the editorial staff of the *Unità* five years before. During the period just before the elections of 18 April 1948, the newspaper of the ICP had attempted to gain ground by seeming to be "of the people", using images from the Risorgimento. This attempt took advantage of the anniversary of the Revolutions of 1848 and in particular of the so-called "Five Days of Milan", which were considered an uprising genuinely "of the people".[2] The Popular Democratic Front, a Communist-Socialist alliance, chose to use the symbol of Garibaldi for the elections and in anticipation of the pages dealing with the Risorgimento from Antonio Gramsci's *Quaderni*

_____

i manifesti elettorali, ed. by Dino G. Audino and Giuliano Vittori (Roma: Savelli, 1976) and *C'era una volta la DC. Breve storia del periodo degasperiano attraverso i manifesti elettorali della Democrazia Cristiana*, ed. by Luca Roman and Paolo Scabello (Roma: Savelli, 1980). Similar ideas were later developed with a more solid critical approach in works such as *La politica sui muri. 1946-1992*, ed. by Chiara Ottaviano and Paolo Soddu (Torino: Rosemberg & Sellier, 2001), and *Propaganda politica e mezzi di comunicazione di massa tra fascismo e democrazia*, ed. by Adolfo Mignemi (Torino: Gruppo Abele, 1995), as well as by the Internet site www.manifestipolitici.it, a data base of images promoted and managed by the Istituto Gramsci per l'Emilia Romagna containing more than 10,000 images of posters and flyers.

2   Cf. for example the article "Un operaio milanese racconta le Cinque giornate", *l'Unità* (21 March 1948), 3.

dal carcere, which was soon to be published by Einaudi.[3] The Marxist left explicitly tried to use the power of the most direct images to advocate the national and patriotic values from the Risorgimento that Italians had learned at school and through institutional rhetoric, by representing the leader of the DC as the personification of the Austrian emperor, the historic enemy of Italian national unity. In this way, he could be clearly identified as a 'traitor' of the interests of Italy, always at the service of aggressive powers poised to obstruct national development, from Austria-Hungary to the Vatican to the United States in the period after World War II.[4] In the 1953 elections, the insistence on these stereotypes was even more intense, and led to lengthy inquests, which were evidently steered if not openly exploited. These enquiries reconstructed the polemics in which were entangled the two major exponents of the local Italian community of the Hapsburg Trentino in the early twentieth century, the future Italian Prime Minister De Gasperi and the future Tridentine irredentist and socialist martyr Cesare Battisti.[5]

These polemical actions pushed the DC to react, initially with the poster discussed above. Most importantly, however, the party republished a booklet first published in 1925 by the journalist and DC member of Parliament Igino Giordani, a personal friend and decided supporter of the Prime Minister. It was called *La verità storica ed una campagna di diffamazione* (Historical Truth and Defamation Campaign). It was an accurate reconstruction of the activity of De Gasperi in Trentino in response to the accusations

---

[3]   Antonio Gramsci, *Il Risorgimento*, ed. by Felice Platone (Torino: Einaudi, 1949). See the documents collected in *Togliatti editore di Gramsci*, ed. by Chiara Daniele (Roma: Carocci, 2005) for information about the complex publishing events of the first edition of the *Quaderni*, and especially about the pressure from the leadership of the communist party. For more general information about the role of the Risorgimento in creating a communist culture beginning with the reuse of the figure of Garibaldi as a name for its own combatants during the anti-Nazi resistance and into the period of the new Italian Republic, see the interesting ideas in Claudio Pavone's "Le idee della Resistenza. Antifascisti e fascisti di fronte alla tradizione del Risorgimento" (1959), now in *Alle origini della Repubblica. Scritti su fascismo, antifascismo e continuità dello Stato* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1995), 3-69, Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, "Alle origini dell'idea di secondo Risorgimento", *Il Risorgimento*, 47, 1-2 (1995) (special number of *Il Risorgimento nell'Italia unita*, conference proceedings, Milan, 9-12 November 1993), 348-358, and Angelo Varni, "Il secondo Risorgimento", *Il Risorgimento*, 1-2 (1995): 535-543. These ideas have been gathered and further developed in a general way by Philip Cooke, *The Legacy of Italian Resistance* (Basingstoke; New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[4]   See the series of editorials in the *Unità*, such as "Battisti lo chiamò von Gasperi" (11 April 1948); "Von Gasperi è italiano?", *l'Unità* (13 April 1948); "Il 24 maggio 1915, a Vienna il partito di De Gasperi maledì l'Italia", *l'Unità* (9 April 1948), 1; *l'Unità* (15 April 1948) and Pietro Ingrao, "L'ombra di Battisti", *l'Unità* (14 April 1948).

[5]   The new cycle of publications became more numerous with A. Pancaldi's, "De Gasperi e il XXIV Maggio", *l'Unità* (24 May 1953), and were picked up by other journals close to the left, from *Avanti!* to *Paese*.

of treason from the Fascist establishment aimed at the last leader of the Italian People's Party, with the idea of exploiting the "value of the victory" against past "defeatism".[6] Giordani's main argument was that the polemics and conflicts among the various political actors in the Hapsburg Trentino had to be adequately contextualized historically. He argued against the tendency to backdate the atmosphere of total war against a historic enemy of the Italians revived by the collective memory of World War I in order to understand how the autonomy and independence of the Trentino region from Austria could be promoted even with different positions and methods.

Leaders of the DC also made polemical comments in their public speeches, which were particularly incisive in those years. Already the use of a communicative instrument from the 1920s – the years of the struggle of the Italian People's Party against the rising Fascist regime – used in response to the ICP, signaled the familiar association of the authoritarian threats on the left and on the right. Among other things, in the early 1950s the assimilation between the danger of Communism and the past dictatorship under Mussolini began to find its full expression in the growing use of the semantics of totalitarianism. Such concepts were important instruments for defending the party from the concentric attacks of parties on the Marxist left and the lively, extreme right neo-fascist and pro-monarchy movements,[7] and it served the purpose of associating the symbols of the two regimes graphically on posters and flyers.

In the same way the accusations against the Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti, reorganized in chronological manner in the poster published by the SPES, repeated a repertoire of comments about the worrying nature of the "iron bond" with the USSR, which indicated the "antinationalist" nature of Italian communism. This was already one of the classic themes of anticommunism between the two world wars in an Italy watching the October Revolution and the civil war and then administered by a government that made the battle against internal "Bolshevism" a priority.[8] This

---

[6]   Giordani's booklet was published in 1925 with the title *La verità storica e una campagna di diffamazione*, as a publication of the Press Office of the Italian People's Party. It was reprinted by the SPES in 1953 with a slightly different title: *La verità storica e una campagna di denigrazione*. In the appendix of the new edition (78), the author explained to the readers why the text was reprinted: "One would think that once Fascism ended, so would all of the calumny. But the truth is that even if Fascism has ended, the fascists are still with us, disguised perhaps as antifascists".

[7]   For an initial overview of the context, cf. Stefano Cavazza, "La transizione difficile. L'immagine della guerra e della resistenza nell'opinione pubblica dell'immediato dopoguerra", *La grande cesura. La memoria della guerra e della resistenza nella vita europea del dopoguerra*, ed. by Giovanni Miccoli, Guido Neppi Modona, and Paolo Pombeni (Bologna: il Mulino, 2001), 417-477.

[8]   On this subject, I refer the reader to my recent essay "L'emergere dell'antibolscevismo nell'opinione pubblica italiana", *Annali della Fondazione Ugo La Malfa*, 31 (2016): 109-125.

while relationships with the Soviet regime were nearly cordial,[9] and it was the same in other European countries where there was a large communist presence.[10] Following the World War II, the matter gathered force after the foundation of the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) at the end of 1947. The offensive must have been very convincing, given the engagement of the communist Press and Propaganda Section to respond blow for blow in the crossfire about the DC-led government's subservience to the USA.

The resumption in 1953 of the offensive against the "Austrian collaborator" De Gasperi derived from a similar necessity to respond to the adversaries' suggestions, as the directives given at the beginning of the year by Gian Carlo Pajetta, then at the head of the Press and Propaganda Section of the party, indicate. These instructions explained the necessity of counterpoising the gallows on which Cesare Battisti was hung (indicated in various words and images, and can be seen in figures 3 and 4) with the gallows on which the communist leaders had met their end, victims of the "purges" at the hand of popular democracies:

> Lively reaction is necessary against any who with these gallows wish to […] make people forget that the Christian Democrats and Fascist Republicans cannot dare use these images without raising the indignation of all Italians. Cesare Battisti was hung in Austrian gallows when De Gasperi was wishing victory to the Emperor of Austria […]. An effective form of propaganda would be putting photographs of Cesare Battisti next to the lugubrious instruments of the DC's Civic Committees […].[11]

In fact, the verbal and visual reference to the "communist gallows" had become increasingly insistent in Italian political communications in the early 1950s, in particular since the central propaganda offices of the government parties and Catholic associations had transferred that image from the pages of the satirical magazine *Candido*. Since its foundation in 1946, Giovanni Guareschi's popular satirical weekly had been an irreplaceable source of anticommunist slogans and of graphic propaganda material with its illustrations

---

[9]   Cf. especially Loreto Di Nucci, "Lo stato fascista e gli italiani «antinazionali»", *Due nazioni. Legittimazione e delegittimazione nella storia dell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. by Ernesto Galli della Loggia and Loreto Di Nucci (Bologna: il Mulino, 2003), 127-185, and Giorgio Petracchi, "Roma e/o Mosca? Il fascismo di fronte allo specchio", *Nuova Storia Contemporanea*, 1 (2002): 69-92.

[10]   For further information and references, cf. Jean-Jaques Becker and Serge Berstein, *Histoire de l'anticommunisme en France*, tome I, *1917-1940* (Paris: Orlan, 1987).

[11]   A copy of the circular, written and distributed in February 1953, is in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Roma, Archivio storico del Partito Comunista Italiano, 0401 1277. Long passages of the document were subsequently published as an appendix in Gaetano Quagliariello, *La legge elettorale del 1953* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2003).
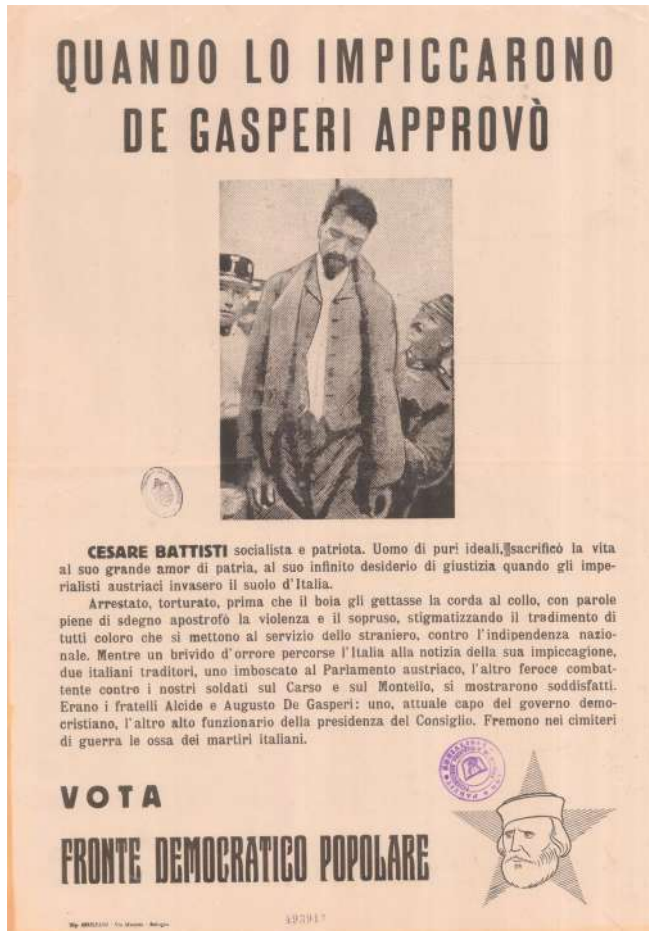
Fig. 3 – Poster of the Popular Democratic Front, 1948 (Biblioteca dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna)

and cartoons.[12] The stylized image of the gallows was by now entering the collective consciousness of Italians due to its tragic and gloomy evocative force, and it was necessary to disarm its potential with the similarly frequent use of an equal and contrary force.

Already this rapid presentation of a precise and specific episode of the iconographic battle between the ICP and its adversaries in the political arena of the newly forming

---

[12]   About this process, besides the general considerations presented in Adolfo Chiesa, *La satira politica in Italia* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 1990), I refer the reader to my *Divergenze parallele. Comunismo e anticomunismo alle origini del linguaggio politico dell'Italia repubblicana (1945-1953)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2010): 142-150. More generally, the referral to that study serves as further information about the fundamental criteria used in the linguistic analysis of Italian anticommunism in this essay.

Fig. 4 – Poster of the Italian Communist Party, 1953 (Fondazione Gramsci Emilia Romagna, Bologna)

Italian Republican democracy reveals some mechanisms that must be kept in mind for the methodological underpinning of a more general analysis. In the first place, the images produced for mass circulation represent the "condensation" of concepts,[13] judgements and images expressed in fuller and deeper forms in public speeches elsewhere (meetings, rallies, editorials, inquests). Therefore, the gallery of the images that has settled in the collective imagination with the still-vivid memory of the juxtapositions of the Cold War cannot be considered separately from other elements present

---

[13] For a complete conceptualization of the "symbols of condensation" and for an explanation of their importance in the ideological cornerstones of reference in a political culture, refer to the classic by Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana-Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1964).

in public discourse or worse yet as a colorful phenomenon limited to the habits and mentality of another epoch.

In the second place, although the expressive choices of both parties were often dictated by reactions to contingent polemical topics, they referred to an archive of long-sedimented suggestions, judgements and ideas.[14] The contours of these mechanisms are clear as regards the culture of Italian communism, its social presence and the pedagogic and educative effort of its activists, its ability to revitalize cultural dynamics already activated with the socialist implantation.[15] The ICP played a pivotal role, compact and with its own clear ideological proposal, linked to the specific experience of the Soviet revolution.[16] The discourse becomes more complex when considering the other element in the confrontation, which is the pervasive and elusive anticommunist discourse.

II. Communism and Anticommunism at the Origins of the Italian Republic: the Framework of Reference

The DC certainly played a pre-eminent role in the aggregation of consent in favor of the whole government as hostile to the ICP. In the same way, the Catholic communication agencies played a major role in the diffusion of an orientation hostile to Marxism in Italian public opinion. It is known that these elements first of all conditioned the first attempts to define analytically the Italian political system and the social presence of the principal political cultures, given their tendency to focus on the dichotomy between communism and the Catholic party and to pretend as if it were without nuances.[17] Moreover, the force

---

[14]   For further suggestions about these methodological considerations, a fundamental overall reference is Robert Philippe, *Il linguaggio della grafica politica* (Milano: Mondadori, 1981).

[15]   For a comparison in this sense refer to the classic by Maurizio Ridolfi, *Il PSI e la nascita del partito di massa* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 1992).

[16]   Critical literature about Italian communism and about its cultural production has developed rapidly, in particular since the publication of the Einaudi volumes dedicated to the history of the party. As regards the Republican period, I refer in particular to two volumes which followed those of Paolo Spriano, that is Renzo Martinelli, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, vol. 6, *Il 'partito nuovo' dalla liberazione al 18 aprile* (Torino: Einaudi, 1995), and Renzo Martinelli and Giovanni Gozzini, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, vol. 7, *Dall'attentato a Togliatti all'VII Congresso* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998). The reader can find a particularly insightful overall review in Franco Andreucci, *Falce e martello. Identità e linguaggi dei comunisti italiani fra stalinismo e guerra fredda* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2005).

[17]   The following contributed to consolidate the essentially bipolar and – even if peculiar – "bipartisan" image of the Italian Republican system: the classic by Giorgio Galli, *Il bipartitismo imperfetto* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1966), and the research anthology *Ricerche sulla partecipazione politica in Italia* conducted by the Carlo Cattaneo Istitute in Pavia, published in the collective volumes *L'attivista di partito. Un'indagine sui militanti di base del PCI e della DC* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1967); *Il comportamento elettorale in Italia.*

of opposition between communism and organized Catholicism led the leaders of the ICP in the 1940s and 1950s to interpret the conflict as a battle against "clerical obscurantism". They explained to their public and to themselves how a large part of informational journalism diffidence and rejection for the communist propositions based on social class. In an extreme synthesis, on one hand there was the powerful press, controlled by its financers, a privileged and retrograde class that had sustained fascism, interpreted according to the Third Internationalist mottos as a "dictatorship open to the most reactionary, chauvinist and imperialist elements of financial capital".[18] On the other hand, the choice of the ecclesiastic leaders to confirm their support of the fight against communism, taking with them the masses subjugated to them, was due to the "reactionary function of the clergy, the same as in the most critical social moments of every epoch".[19]

This formulation of their message during the parliamentary elections of 18 April 1948 led to not very flattering results for the ICP and its socialist allies of the Popular Democratic Front. However, here it is especially important to show that the attitude mentioned at the beginning of this section was only a part of the composite front that gathered around a set of images, judgements and slogans that condemned the communist experience. These were often compatible and even interchangeable, even if managed by "political families" distant among themselves. The Catholic world in the years immediately after 1945 was already experiencing significant cultural friction. In particular, what historians have defined as the "Roman party"[20] brought together decidedly conservative ecclesiastics and leaders, who with the support of the Curia of Pope Pius XII were actively trying to bring the entire Italian society back to strict obedience to the Italian Catholic hierarchy. This included supporting projects such as the Civic Committees

---

Un'indagine ecologica sulle elezioni in Italia tra 1946 e 1963 (Bologna: il Mulino, 1968); *L'organizzazione partitica del PCI e della DC* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1968); *La presenza sociale del PCI e della DC* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1968).

[18]   The most coherent expression of this interpretation is *Inchiesta sull'anticomunismo*, a special issue of *Rinascita* published in August-September 1954 in response to the "inquest about communism" published by a number of Italian journals and periodicals following the good results (for the most part unexpected) of the ICP in the parliamentary elections of June 1953 – among these, the most relevant for its success and place of publication was *Inchiesta sul comunismo in Italia* by Luigi Barzini jr., published in *Corriere della Sera* in the first weeks of May 1954 and then republished in the anthology *I comunisti non hanno vinto* (Milano: Mondadori, 1955).

[19]   This is from the introduction for the material gathered in the special number of *Propaganda*, press organ for the preparation of the activists in the political communication of the ICP, published 30 November 1949 in response to the excommunication in July.

[20]   Cf. Andrea Riccardi, *Il "partito romano" nel secondo dopoguerra. 1945-1954* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1983).

of Luigi Gedda[21] and the "Movement for a better world" by the jesuit Father Riccardo Lombardi.[22] On the other side, associations such as ACLI, for Italian Catholic workers and the intellectual and university movements of the Italian Azione Cattolica were culturally more open and willing to consider stimuli from the secularization of popular culture and moral directions.[23] This contrast was completed by the more evident difference in worldview and in interpretation of politics that could be found between Catholics and that large group of generically liberal, democratic or liberal-conservative. These latter were among other things often not even politically active but could be found in the editorial staff of the most important journals or popular weeklies.[24]

It was however the encounter of these realities and their ability to influence the shared orientation outside of direct electoral participation in political parties, that constituted the information counterpart of the ICP's Press and Propaganda Section. This was the result of the necessity to legitimize a government majority that responded to the ideological needs of the western "side" and of the challenge by the larger and more efficient ICP outside of the area of Soviet influence.

III. Political Communication and Visual Languages in the Cold War: Encounters, Clashes and Evolutions

As mentioned above, the criticism of communism and the consequent production of images that gave tangible expression to the rejection of this political experience were a significant common base on which realities that were culturally and traditionally diverse could find an indispensable point of contact in the Cold War. In the years immediately after the World War II, this critical common base formulated a few iconic elements to express that rejection, immediately recognizable as characterizing the common enemy.

---

[21]   About him, cf. *Luigi Gedda e il movimento cattolico in Italia* ed. Marco Invernizzi (Milano: Sugarco, 2012).

[22]   About him and his role in postwar Italy, cf. G. Zizola, *Il "microfono di Dio". Pio XII, padre Lombardi e i cattolici italiani* (Milano: Mondadori, 1990).

[23]   For a general framework with a number of original documents, cf. Mario Casella, *L'Azione cattolica nell'Italia contemporanea (1919-1969)* (Roma: AVE, 1992).

[24]   The best general overview about the situation of the Italian press remains Paolo Murialdi, *La stampa italiana dalla Liberazione alla crisi di fine secolo* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2003). About the permanence of liberal intellectuals in the principal centers where public opinion was formed, even in the face of the electoral collapse of the parties referring to that area (Action Party, Liberal Party, Republican Party) due to the affirmation of the larger parties of mass integration in the passage from monarchy to a democratic republic, see esp. Frédéric Attal, *Histoire des intellectuels italiens au XXe siècle. Prophètes, philosophes et experts* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013).

Fig. 5 – Poster of the National Bloc – Italian Liberal Party, 1948 (Fondazione Gramsci Emilia Romagna, Bologna)

In general, all of these images strove to contrast the Italian communist leadership's efforts to present the party as a genuinely national force, and instead presented the ICP as intrinsically connected to the experience of the Soviet Union and the entire Eastern bloc. The anticommunist iconography of the electoral campaigns of the centrist parties was essentially founded on the denial of any real participation on the part of the ICP in the national symbols that they made use of, from the Italian flag to the effigy of Garibaldi used as a symbol of the unified list of the Popular Democratic Front in 1948 [Fig. 5]. They linked the politics of the communists to that of the Soviet leaders, symbolized initially by the strong, recognizable image of Stalin, and after his death just

Fig. 6 – Poster of the Central Civic Committee, 1953 (Biblioteca dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna)

three months before the second parliamentary elections, by the weak and faded image of Georgij Malenkov [Fig. 6]. These choices meant the construction of various and complex images that recalled specific elements in the critique of communism.

For force and pervasiveness, the image that imposed itself above all others in the collective imagination is that of atheist communism, responsible for the violent and oppressive de-Christianization of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.[25] The accusation was elaborated by Catholic doctrine with a careful reflection on moral and theological sources, and its best expression was in the Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*,

---

[25]   As a general reference on the topic, see William B. Husband, *'Godless Communists'. Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

published 19 March 1937. In the years prior to this, researchers close to the Roman Curia had conducted ample research about the intimately materialistic nature of Marxism and the political and social effects of its faithful application by the Bolshevik government. In a country like Italy, where the Church had special social prestige and a capillary and vital presence in popular culture, this definition of communism spread apprehension, given the political victories of the Marxist parties after the fall of fascism. The initial ambition of the Catholic world to use the fear of communism as a spur to drive Italian society back to Catholic values, only antidote to the "red" menace, did not last through the incipient signs of secularization in social behaviors and collective identity.[26] All the same, the impression of the communists' absolute extraneousness to humankind due to their rejection of God became a powerful negative image that aroused fear even beyond the world of practicing Catholics due to the scenes of violence and terror that it evoked.[27]

Communism was also presented by all its opponents as an intrinsically dictatorial regime, lying and bloodthirsty. The contours of this description were gathered from the memories of Stalin's purges in the 1930s, the atrocity of which were little known to the general Italian public until 1945 when they were brought to the center of attention by testimonies such as that of Viktor Kravchenko,[28] and by the more recent testimonies of the political refugees from the countries of Center-Eastern Europe occupied by the Red Army. Similar materials were repeatedly relaunched in journals and brochures, and, as has already been indicated, on a metaphorical plane they represented both the fascist

---

[26]   On this complex theme see the classic volume by Daniele Menozzi, *La chiesa cattolica e la secolarizzazione* (Torino: Einaudi, 1993).

[27]   For further information, see my essay "Il cattolicesimo organizzato in Italia 1945-1953: Successo dell'anticomunismo, fallimento dell'egemonia", *Italia Contemporanea*, 258 (2010): 7-25.

[28]   Engineer and industrial manager of Ukrainian origin, Kravchenko was part of a Soviet diplomatic mission sent to Washington in 1943. He asked for and obtained political asylum, managing to remain there despite the close alliance between the USA and the USSR in the Second World War. In 1946 he published his memoirs about forced collectivism, the trials and death sentences for treason given to the main leaders of the Soviet Communist Party in the 1930s, about the prison camps and forced labor. The book was called *I Chose Freedom. The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official* (Garden City: Garden City Publishing). The book was translated into Italian and published by Longanesi in Milan with the title *Ho scelto la libertà*, and was distributed widely in the weeks before the elections of 18 April. It was a best seller in Italy as in most western countries. The resonance of the book on public opinion continued in subsequent years, when the cultural journal of the French communist party, *Les Lettres Françaises*, accused Kravchenko of not being the real author of the book and of having made unfounded charges against the Soviet regime. The process for defamation by the author in Paris in 1949 included among its witnesses many of the most important dissidents of the communist regime. For further information about this case and its echo in Italian political journalism, see my "'La Russia com'è'. L'immagine critica dell'Unione sovietica e del blocco orientale nella pubblicistica italiana", *Ricerche di Storia Politica*, 10, 2 (2007): 157-176, at 161-163.

oppression that Italy had just overcome as well as and especially the Nazi occupation of Italy during World War II.

The transposition of the relationship between Italian Fascism and the invading National Socialism in the communist arena included the idea that the ICP was the fifth column of an aggressive foreign power like the Soviet Union, in full expansion in Central and Eastern Europe and striving to grab the Italian peninsula as well. Even before the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty and the consequent entry of Italy in a military alliance explicitly aimed at limiting any Soviet expansion, the fears of this expansionism were expressed in the less ideological fears about the power and aggressively of the "Russian bear" pushing towards the Mediterranean sea, that was already common among several Italian journalists of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, such as Luigi Barzini, who looked towards Czarist Russia with a certain worry.[29]

Lastly, the news that came through the Iron Curtain about the scarcity of consumer goods and the difficult conditions of life for the populations subject to the regimes of the Eastern bloc favored the spread of an image according to which communist economics created chronic productive backwardness in the regimes. This was blamed on forced collectivism, bureaucratic control of production and the foolish drain of resources in favor of the Party's ruling class. This was often compared with Italy, successfully reconstructing after the war with the help of the Marshal Plan of the United States and not accidentally often presented in government press releases with illustrations referring to American modernity and skylines [Fig. 7]. This rendered much less successful the affirmations of the ICP that neo-capitalism was a function of American exploitation.[30]

This was the iconographic and symbolic anticommunist front that was apparently shared and compact. And it showed itself to be just that, at least in its possibility to aggregate electoral consensus in the elections of 18 April 1948. There the combination of anti-Soviet fears led to a consensus in favor of the DC, the only political force effectively able to oppose the Marxist left. After the electoral victory of the Catholic party, which with its broad dimensions seemed to have definitively beaten the "red"

---

[29]   About the continuity of the use of these images in the Italian anticommunist polemics, see the still-valid and interesting information in the essays by Severino Galante, "I comunisti italiani e il mito sovietico nel secondo dopoguerra. Tra 'emotional russophilia' e organizzazione", *Annali della Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini e della Fondazione di Studi Storici Filippo Turati*, special issue of *L'URSS il mito le masse* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1991): 307-371, and by Giorgio Petracchi, "Russofilia e russofobia. Mito e antimito dell'URSS in Italia", *Storia Contemporanea*, 19, 2 (1988): 225-247.

[30]   About the propaganda campaigns linked to American economic intervention in western Europe after World War II, the best research remains that of David W. Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe. Western Europe, America and Postwar Reconstruction* (London: Routledge, 1992).

Fig. 7 – Poster of the SPES, 1953 (Fondazione Gramsci Emilia Romagna, Bologna)

threat, the differences among the different players became clear in the "varied Italian anticommunism".[31]

After all, already in the 1948 campaign, a poster of the Civic Committee connected to Catholic Action that showed the sword of the Christian vote defending the family from the dangers of materialist "free love" also had a version in which the Catholic worker confronted serpents marked as "capitalism" and "communism". This demonstrated

---

[31]   That was the meaningful title of one of the first attempts to recount the history of Italian anticommunism in the twentieth century: Roberto Pertici, "Il vario anticomunismo italiano (1936-1960): Lineamenti di una storia", *Due nazioni. Legittimazione e delegittimazione nella storia dell'Italia contemporanea*, 263-334.

the difficulty that organized Catholicism had in abandoning the desire for the corporative-Christian "third way" expounded in the 1930s. This is the best example of how anticommunist public opinion shared a criticism of authoritarianism and the economic inefficiency of Soviet and related dictatorships. It also shows how it was unable to agree on how to express its own model of wellbeing and development. Traditional and conservative Catholic spheres were in particular reluctant to accept the increasingly frequent identification between economic progress and the Americanization of productive models and consumer habits, even if this image was very strong in the collective imagination and inescapable in the iconography of the large political movements such as the DC.[32]

As the government led by De Gasperi chose to proceed with the majority bonus reform before the parliamentary elections of 1953 more lively protest exploded, even from government supporters. It brought with it a number of consequences for the value of each vote and the balance among powers.[33] On one hand there were those who considered the majority bonus as an attack on pluralism, such as Giovanni Guareschi, editor of *Candido*. Considered in previous years as a unique source for anticommunist images and slogans with a large readership, in 1953 it began openly supporting the pro-monarchy party and opposing the DC-majority government. On the other hand, the more conservative sectors of public opinion, including Gedda – who became General President of Catholic Action in 1952 – and his supporters, found the provision too bland and pushed instead to make the ICP illegal, using the same openly violent and delegitimizing expressions of 1948.

However, there were even more evident difficulties regarding foreign policy, in particular the division between a full adhesion to the military alliance with the USA in the North Atlantic Treaty and the Christian tendency to work towards peace. In his memoirs, the Christian-democrat leader Paolo Emilio Taviani[34] recalled how it was impossible to agree on a truly univocal and effective message in the peace and defense policy of the government in the difficult early 1950s. The Atlantic choice was a controversial reality given the Catholic fringes dedicated to the absolute rejection of violence,[35] a hier-

---

[32] About this see the thematization in the essays in *Nemici per la pelle. Sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. by Pier Paolo D'Attorre (Milano: Franco Angeli 1991), esp. Angelo Ventrone, "L'avventura americana della classe dirigente cattolica", 141-160, and Bruno P. F. Wanrooij, "*Pro aris et focis*. Morale cattolica e identità nazionale in Italia, 1945-1960", 199-216.

[33] For a reconstruction of the debates about electoral reform and about their importance in public opinion, see in particular Gaetano Quagliariello, *La legge elettorale del 1953. Dibattiti storici in Parlamento* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2003), and Maria Serena Piretti, *La legge truffa. Il fallimento dell'ingegneria politica* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2003).

[34] Cf. his memoir *Politica a memoria d'uomo* (Bologna, il Mulino, 2002), 258.

[35] Cf. for example my "Mondo cattolico e pacifismo comunista nella guerra fredda. Igino Giordani e il *Colloquio sulla pace* con Davide Lajolo", *Storia e Problemi Contemporanei*, 42 (2006): 93-113.

Fig. 8 – Poster of the Italian Communist Party, 1953 (Fondazione Gramsci Emilia Romagna, Bologna)

archy unwilling to take clear positions in the confrontation among the various blocs in order to guard the superiority of its own teaching in contingent disputes,[36] and given the solicitations of those who would have preferred a more massive rearmament and with greater media coverage. The latter included the leadership of the Civic Committees and the authors of press organs flirting with the right, such as *Il Tempo*.[37]

In front of these divisions, during the 1950s the communist leadership began to experiment with language that was more penetrating than the inflexible expressions of the 1940s, whose scarce results has been seen on 18 April. This happened without changing in

[36]   On this point I refer the reader to my "Il cattolicesimo organizzato in Italia 1945-1953. Successo dell'anticomunismo, fallimento dell'egemonia", *Italia Contemporanea*, 258 (2010): 7-25.

[37]   For a reconstruction of the debate about this theme, see my "La memoria della Seconda guerra mondiale nel pacifismo di sinistra degli anni della guerra fredda (1949-1953)", *Paradigma lager. Vecchi e nuovi conflitti nel mondo contemporaneo*, ed. by Silvia Casilio, Annalisa Cegna, and Loredana Guerrieri (Bologna: CLUEB, 2010), 95-105.

Fig. 9 – Poster of the Italian Communist Party, 1953 (Fondazione Gramsci Emilia Romagna, Bologna)

Fig. 10 – Poster of the Italian Communist Party, 1953 (Fondazione Gramsci Emilia Romagna, Bologna)

any profound way the interpretive paradigms entrenched in the international communist experience.[38] This updated propaganda and communication led to the greater consensus in the elections of 1953 and to the electoral growth that would continue without interruption until the end of the 1970s. The turn to opposition of the communist front certainly played a role here, and the government remained in power despite the social unrest and only partial success of the agrarian reform. With a backdrop of a "positive" political proposal inspired by a "progressive democracy" compressed into "popular democracy",[39] the ICP proceeded with greater freedom and fewer ideological ties to use a language appreciated by a less immediately steerable public. The two themes on which the recuperation of the 1950s were based were first of all constitutional guarantees, which had migrated from being frills for "formal democracy" to being instruments for a defense against the electoral reform of 1953, usually called the "scam law" [Fig. 9]. The second theme was peace, a universal value – and, for an openly revolutionary political culture, even "conservative"[40] – which rapidly replaced pro-Soviet sentiments after the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty with the American superpower [Fig. 9].[41] And it is in the end in this atmosphere that the severe pictorial language of the first postwar experiments inherited from the Soviet experience softens in fresher attempts, with the ironic resumption of commercial billboards as in the case of the reference to the famous liqueur Cynar used in the attacks on the "scam law" of 1953 [Fig. 10]. All this was expressed with a register the ICP seldom used until recently. In the message, the "appetite" for parliamentary seats was accompanied by the desire to perpetuate the DC's control of government in order to make it easier to accumulate remunerative economic and political positions and therefore participate in the "trough" of the "gluttons" (who are rendered with the image of a big serving fork) intent on "eating" Italian richness. Such concepts were based on an image that appeared more appropriate for a populist revolt than for an ideological interpretation of society according to the canons of dialectic materialism.

---

[38]   For further information about this interpretation, cf. Edoardo Novelli, *C'era una volta il PCI. Autobiografia di un partito attraverso le immagini della sua propaganda* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2000).

[39]   About the nature of the communist political proposal immediately after World War II and about its ties with the international communist movement, see the careful reconstruction by Aldo Agosti, "'Partito nuovo' e 'democrazia progressiva' nell'elaborazione dei comunisti", *Le idee costituzionali della Resistenza*, ed. by Claudia Franceschini, Sandro Guerrieri, and Giancarlo Monina (Roma: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1997), 235-248, and "Il Partito comunista italiano e la svolta del 1947", *Studi Storici*, 31, 1 (1990): 53-88.

[40]   This is the famous opinion given by Norberto Bobbio following the interview on peace given to the *Pravda* by Stalin at the end of 1952, now in *Politica e cultura* (Torino: Einaudi, 1952), 72-79.

[41]   For the evolution of the public discourse of the leftist forces on the theme of peace, see especially my "Stalin and the Dove: Left Pacifist Language and Choices of Expression between the Popular Front and the Korean War (1948-1953)", *Modern Italy*, 16, 1 (2010): 21-35.

IV. Conclusions

From this rapid and necessarily incomplete examination of the "iconographic battles" that characterized the political communication of the first decade of the Italian Republic a few conclusions can be drawn.

In the first place, the contest to gain and consolidate consensus caused two opposing networks of mobilization to emerge, one around the ICP and related powers and the other that cannot be identified in a specific agent but rather in opposition to the ICP and its power. Even when in the late 1950s the international distension opened different spaces for debate in Italy from those of the Cold War, the success of the polarization between communism and anticommunism in occupying public communication rendered the attempts by the secular liberalism and socialists to give voice in areas different from this contraposition difficult. The use of anticommunist ideas over the long term to restructure the identity of conspicuous portions of the electorate is after all still perfectly present in the parliamentary campaigns of the center-right throughout at the 1990s.[42]

Moreover, even if the creators of the communication of the ICP were scarcely aware of it, the plurality and ideologically various anticommunist networks in any event influenced their choices of references and discourse construction. In particular, the comparison with the anticommunist option led the ICP's propaganda agencies to gradually reorganize the affirmation of the identitarian appeals to the international communist movement, both aesthetically and in terms of content. On the one hand, the lessening of the sharp tones and of the reference to the political and economic model of the USSR and Eastern Europe typical of the period up to 1948 was a way to dialogue with a society such as Italy, which was experiencing a steady reconstruction and acceleration and was by now irremediably insensitive to the idea of Soviet rigor. On the other hand, the greater variety of the references and symbols crept into the cracks and divisions of an opposition hostile to communism but struggling to find a common, positive platform. Lastly, as was evident from the beginning of this essay, the unrelenting battle with anticommunist communication led to the absorption and exchange of some ways of expression. In this context the reference is not only to the political counterparts, such as the parties of the centrist coalition in power, but also and especially to the linguistic production from areas outside politics, usually considered extraneous to the Marxist left but of sure impact and social penetration, such as that of commercial advertising.

---

[42]   About these evolutions, cf. my "Continuità e discontinuità del discorso anticomunista nella Seconda Repubblica", *L'Italia contemporanea dagli anni Ottanta a oggi*, vol. 3, *Istituzioni e politica*, ed. by Simona Colarizi, Agostino Giovagnoli, and Paolo Pombeni (Roma: Carocci, 2014), 457-470.

In short, it was the opposition to an anticommunism that went beyond the confines of political parties and associations, present in the current discourses of the media and satire that led the ICP to assimilate new languages and to present them to the public to support their own cause.

In general, the confrontation of the propaganda of Italian communism with political, journalistic and cultural anticommunism led to a sharing of symbolic vocabulary between the two sides that was perhaps not only external. In fact, it seems to be an indication of the presence of cultural references and of shared common values destined to have a role in the possibility of a fragile dialogue in the 1960s and 1970s.

REBELLIOUS WALLS:
GRAFFITI IN ITALY DURING THE COLD WAR (1948-1955)[*]

Enrico Mannari

(Luiss School of Government)

I. Introduction

"Walls, as we know, cry out to be written on", wrote Roland Barthes in his *Variations of Writing*. He continued:

> There is no wall in town without graffiti. It is somehow the support itself that possesses an energy of words, it is that which writes, and these words look at me: [...] nothing is looked at or read with greater intensity.[1]

Walls have always been written on: from ancient times, to medieval times, to modern times, and up to the present day, walls "have played the role of a lectern, on which the edicts of the powerful alternated with the incitements of the conspirators to revolt, the historical slogans of the leaders and the jeering of the subjects".[2] Undoubtedly, in the present day, with the development of processes of modernization, literacy and social-

---

[1] Roland Barthes, *Variations on writing* (Genoa: Graphos, 1996).

[2] Renato Sigurtà, introduction to Emilio Tiberi, *La Contestazione Murale* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1972), 8.

ization of politics, there has been an expansion of the boundaries, tools and roles for propaganda and communication, and wall graffiti has followed in the footsteps of this transformation. After World War I, they constituted a part of Fascist propaganda.[3]

Paola Desideri wrote:

> [Wall graffiti is the] first example of political mass communication, the most visible and used semiotic container for the transmission of its values and propagandistic principles, which the conciseness, emotional strength and peremptoriness of Mussolini's maxims will support and spread to every corner of the country. Less precarious and contingent than similar oral messages such as slogans, wall graffiti, precisely because of its particular status of immanence and its constitutive seriality, will be an important link in that powerful choreographic machine organizing consensus, designed to create myths and keep the masses in a state of permanent mobilization.[4]

However, the mural landscape also became a 'medium' for 'subversive', anti-Fascist and Communist propaganda. The more the repressive machine of the regime extended control over the entire expressive output of civil society, the more graffiti became an evident form of political expression. It could be found in the most diverse and unlikely places, as can be deduced from the careful records made by the police authorities: public toilets, walls in working-class districts, factory perimeter walls, stairs to private and public buildings, work environments and brothels. Of course, the frequency and intensity of it reflected the different social and political circumstances of the regime and the varying potency of the anti-Fascist opposition. Working-class irony was often very scathing about the sententious and emphatic Fascist language and gave life to mottos and phrases such as: "Win, but will we win?" instead of "Win, and we will win", or "Long live the Duce who leads us to ruin" instead of "Long live the Duce who leads us to victory".[5]

---

[3]   On "mutation" related to the World War I, see the chapter *"La (tragica) alba di un nuovo mondo: la prima Guerra mondiale come questione comunicazionale"*, in Massimiliano Panarari's *Poteri e Informazione. Teorie della comunicazione e storia della manipolazione politica in Italia (1850-1930)*, (Milano: Le Monnier, 2017), 81-122. On the "consent factory" see Philip V. Cannistraro, *La Fabbrica del consenso. Fascismo e mass media* (Bari: Laterza, 1974).

[4]   Paola Desideri, "L'imperio del segno, ovvero la scritta murale fascista", *Il segno in scena. Scritte murali e graffiti come pratiche semio-linguistiche,* ed. by Paola Desideri (Ancona: Mediateche delle Marche, 1998), pp. 175-223, 176.

[5]   Enrico Mannari, "Tradizione sovversiva e comunismo durante il regime fascista. 1926-1943. Il caso di Livorno", *La classe operaia durante il fascismo*, ed. by Giulio Sapelli (Milano: Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli, 1979-1980), 837-874, 852. See also Bruno Maida, "Le forme 'povere' della protesta. Scritte murali a Torino 1940-43", *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 3 (1991): 400-422.

After the fall of Fascism and in particular after 1948, in the climate of the Cold War with its harsh contrasts, a new mural battle gathered momentum, which, through different phases and protagonists, gained impetus until '68 when we witness a real rebirth of posters and graffiti.[6] Sidney Tarrow wrote that "the movements of the late 1960s [...] drew most of their themes from the debates of the first half of the decade and from traditional parties and groups",[7] but it is perhaps equally true that, in the renewal of the forms of protest, wall graffiti retained its remarkable continuity.

In a fascinating and important media document it is possible to find evidence of that continuity. In a fragment – which is very significant for the focus of our essay – from a 1970 film, *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto* (which translates as *Investigation into a citizen above suspicion*) by Elio Petri, a police officer from Police HQ in Rome, played by the extraordinary Gian Maria Volonté, observes:

> In 1948, 2000 instances of graffiti praising Stalin were scrubbed off, 50 praising Lenin, and 1000 praising Togliatti. In 1956 those hailing Stalin reduced down to 100, and those for Togliatti remained the same, in 1958 there were a hundred "long Live Khrushchev"... In the current year [1968], 10,000 Long Live Mao, 500 Long Live Trotsky, 10 Long Live Amendola, and perhaps 500 Long Live Stalin are expected.[8]

We will analyse the central Cold War years of this prolonged mural battle. It should be noted that these – the graffiti on the walls or on the asphalt of the streets – are 'sources' which have remained largely in the shadows of Italian historiography.[9] Perhaps often

---

[6]   William Gambetta, *I muri del lungo '68. Manifesti e comunicazione politica in Italia* (Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2014); Alberto Negrin, *Niente resterà pulito. Il racconto della nostra storia in quarant'anni di scritte e manifesti politici*, ed. by Edoardo Novelli and Giorgio G. Vasta (Milano: Bur, 2007); regarding May 1968 in France, see Julien Besancon, *Les Murs Ont la parole: Journal mural Mai 68* (France: Tchou, 2007); Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[7]   Sidney Tarrow, *Democrazia e disordine. Movimenti di protesta e politica in Italia (1965-1975)* (Roma: Laterza, 1990), 36. See also his recent essay "1968 as a 'critical Juncture': between synoptic and incremental change", *Memory in Movements. 1968 in 2018*, published by Donatella Della Porta (Milano: Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli, 2018), 3-17.

[8]   See also the review of *The New York Times* dated 21 December 1970, "Vincent Canby, Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion: Suspense Melodrama Opens at Baronet". The film won two David di Donatello awards, two Globo d'Oro awards and three Nastri d'Argento in 1971, for best subject, leading actor and director's award.

[9]   The concept of a source has changed and been extended. As Peter Burke wrote, "it might be useful to replace the idea of sources with that of 'traces' of the past in the present. The term 'traces' refers to manuscripts, printed books, buildings, furniture, the landscape (as modified by human exploitation), as well as to many different kinds of image: paintings, statues, engravings, photographs", Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The use of images as historical evidence* (London, Reaction Books, 2001), 13.

used, as Edoardo Novelli observed, "for appendices and as accessory iconographic devices",[10] to illustrate conclusions reached in other ways, but rarely studied analytically. The 'linguistic turning point' in historiography placed the study of language at the centre of reflection, encouraging research in analysing social and political dynamics and investigating their symbolic and communicative structure.[11] This also meant a new impetus for the history of propaganda which, as Giampietro Mazzoleni observed, represents "a genre of political communication".[12]

The wall graffiti that we are going to analyse constitutes a particular form of political propaganda and can be placed in what Pippa Norris defined as the "pre-modern era" of political communication[13], which of course does not exclude that it could have interwoven with postmodern forms of communication.

My essay is intended to be a contribution to this resumption of historical studies that have made use of different methodological ideas, taken from the social and political sciences, on political propaganda, in particular on languages, on the symbolic and value universe of the different political cultures that have their roots in the workers' and socialist movement and in particular in the ICP.[14]

---

[10]   Preface by Edoardo Novelli in Gambetta, *I muri del lungo '68*, 5.

[11]   See Lynn Hunt's reflections, *Politics, culture and class in the French revolution* (London: Methven, 1986). There are also relevant notes in *Symbols of Politics*, ed. by Francesco Benigno and Luca Scuccimarra (Roma: Viella, 2010). For a general reflection on cultural history in Italy: Carlotta Sorba, "A chi giova la storia culturale? Diverse definizioni di un campo di studi in Francia e in Italia", *Il mestiere di storico*, 1 (2018): 5-25; Catherine Brice, "La storia culturale del politico: stato dell'arte, risultati e proposte", *Memoria e Ricerca*, 40 (2012): 55-74. Filippo Triola, "Le campagne elettorali dell'Italia contemporanea. Percorsi di ricerca di storia della comunicazione politica", *Ricerche di storia politica*, 3 (2018): 305-322.

[12]   Giampietro Mazzoleni, "L'incerto confine tra propaganda e comunicazione politica. Per una definizione contemporanea", *Propaganda contro. Modelli di comunicazione politica nel XX secolo*, ed. by Andrea Baravelli (Roma: Carocci, 2005), 43-50.

[13]   Pippa Norris, *A Virtuous Circle. Political Communication in Postindustrial Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[14]   Regarding this: *La politica sui muri. I manifesti politici dell'Italia repubblicana. 1946-1992*, ed. by Chiara Ottaviano and Paolo Soddu (Torino: Rosemberg & Sellier, 2000); *Propaganda contro. Modelli di comunicazione politica nel XX secolo*, 14-22; *Propaganda e comunicazione politica. Storia e trasformazioni nell'età contemporanea*, ed. by Maurizio Ridolfi (Milano: Mondadori, 2004); Angelo Ventrone, Edoardo Novelli, and Andrea Ragusa, *Profilo di storia della comunicazione politica in Italia* (Manduria: Lacaita, 2008); Maurizio Ridolfi, "Emozioni colorate. Rappresentazioni cromatiche nella parabola delle tradizioni politiche dell'Italia repubblicana", *Comunicazione politica*, 1 (2018): 31-50; *The art of persuasion. Political communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*, ed. by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza (Manchester: Manchester University press, 2001); Norris, *A virtuos circle*; David Michael Ryfe, "History and political communication: an introduction", *Political Communication*, 4 (2001): 407-420. On the ICP, see Franco Andreucci, *Falce e martello. Identità e linguaggi dei comunisti italiani tra stalinismo e guerra fredda* (Bologna: Bonomia University Press, 2005); Anna Tonelli, *Falce e tortello. Storia politica e sociale delle Feste dell'Unità (1945-2011)* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2012); Maurizio Ridolfi, "La falce e il martello", *Simboli della politica*, 99-122.

The language, the geography of these 'poor' forms of protest and social and political communication, can give us fragments of that local account representing the uncertain boundary between working-class rebellion and the propaganda of the ICP.

II. Walls Speak

"The people have written on the walls," a 1945 ICP manifesto quoted, reporting a series of graffiti, including "Long Live Communism", "Long Live Freedom" and "We don't want the monarchy" (Fig. 1).[15]

The walls are a "great newspaper of the people", wrote Guido Piovene in his *Viaggio in Italia*, referring in particular to the many phrases found on the walls of Livorno,[16] a historically subversive city, where the walls have represented an important setting both for the graffiti and for the wall newspapers that originate from this city.[17]

A scenario that did not escape the notice of "a citizen who loves order" who, in an anonymous letter, wrote to the Livorno Police Commissioner in March 1950:

> Not a day goes by that posters are not put up everywhere, many of which are handwritten and therefore not previously authorized by the authorities. Of course, by the left-wing parties. Nothing is respected, freshly plastered walls, doors, shop shutters, etc. But it is not enough, they also cover the walls with indelible graffiti that, moreover, offends common sense, religion and the dignity of the city. And what about the street plan? All this happens mostly in the working-class districts and of course the stunts are pulled at night.[18]

On a more general level, what can be read in a report by the Minister of the Interior in 1955 is more indicative than ever:

---

[15]   The poster belongs to Maurizio Cavalloni's private collection; also in Paolo Soddu, "Via il regime della forchetta. La sinistra storica nella guerra fredda"*, La politica sui muri*, 44-63, see 45. On the semantization of the expression 'the people' in the ICP see Giulia Bassi, "Tutto il popolo sotto la bandiera della democrazia. Il Partito comunista italiano e la costruzione discorsiva del popolo (1943-1945)", *Storica*, 67-68 (2017): 31-81; Giulia Bassi, *Non è solo questione di classe. Il 'popolo' nel discorso del Partito comunista italiano (1921-1991)* (Roma: Viella, 2019).

[16]   In 1950, it was calculated that more than 1000 square metres of walls and road asphalt was covered with graffiti, in A.S.Li. Questura di Livorno. Serie A4.910.1950.

[17]   Guido Piovene, *Viaggio in Italia* (Milano: Baldini e Castoldi, 2001), 411. Andrea Piotto, "I giornali murali livornesi (1950-1955)", *Quaderni della Labronica*, 45 (1986): 3-9. In particular, see Nelusco Giachini's testimony, who was responsible for the press and propaganda for the Livorno ICP Federation. But see also Tonelli, *Falce e tortello*, 44.

[18]   A.S.Li. Questura di Livorno, 1950, serie A4b. b. 910. fasc. 46-47.

Fig. 1 – From Maurizio Cavalloni's private collection

In tackling the bad habit of defacing the walls lining public streets and squares, as well as the road surface with political inscriptions, the police have for some time been following this deplorable system in particular [...] and have been intensifying the ordinary services with extra truck patrols, in order to prevent the implementation of such intentions by left-wing activists.[19]

A memo to Minister Mario Scelba states:

The communists need well-organised lessons. They need to know that the boundaries cannot be pushed further, forcing them to respect the social order; the people, superficial and fearful in the face of the violence of a party, need to see control and rule by the authorities, against abuses.[20]

We are dealing with a concept of public order that made it possible to "prevent the organisation of collective mobilisations or public events".[21]

On the other hand, it should be remembered that until June 1956 a Public Safety text from 1931, promulgated by Fascism, remained in force, which stated that authors of graffiti were to be arrested and fined. It is no coincidence that the re-establishment of the political police was entrusted to Leone Santoro, a Commissioner trained at the time of Fascism. Like during that twenty-year period, control over political opponents took place by means such as the Central Political Records, which contained personal information sheets on the "subversives".[22]

We are faced with features of a conservative political culture that has its roots in the long run of Italian history and is widely shared in the post-war period by many police officers and prefects. This is an enlightening confirmation of the continuity of the State apparatus in the transition from Fascism to a Republican Italy, which, as Guido Crainz pointed out:

With the cultural climate that permeates it, further bonds as well as new expressions and moods are also found in the 'cold war' climate, in a broader and more general polarization.[23]

---

[19]   A.C.S. Min. int. Gabinetto. 1953-56, b.406.

[20]   A.C.S. Min. Int. Gabinetto. 1953-56, b.406.

[21]   Lorenzo Bertuccelli, *I conflitti di lavoro nel dopoguerra* (Roma: Viella, 2017), 173.

[22]   Giovanna Tosatti, *Storia del Ministero dell'Interno, Uomini e strutture (1861-1961)* (Rome: Effegierre, 2004), 271-276. See also Giuseppe Carlo Marino, *La repubblica della forza. Mario Scelba e le passioni del suo tempo* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1995).

[23]   Guido Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano* (Roma: Donzelli, 2005), 3.

III. Wall Graffiti

The time frame that we will take into consideration is that of the years following the elections of 18 April 1948, a watershed in the history of Italy, when the Christian Democrats, having beaten the social-communist Popular Front, created a coalition government of Liberals, Republicans and Social Democrats. It is the birth of 'centrism' in a context deeply marked by the Cold War, whose dynamics were intertwined with Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi's hypothesis to establish a "protected democracy" justified by the need to counter the "communist danger".[24] It is in this context that graffiti appears, a phenomenon that is hard to measure and with comparative difficulties, in many respects non-homogeneous and even random, also due to the scarce availability of archival material; evaluating the real impact in relation to the places and the reactions they provoked is highly complex.[25]

The research will proceed through a classification of the graffiti according to the expressive symbols that can be inferred, trying to make good use of methodological suggestions from Harold D. Laswell's pioneering works, who was one of the founding fathers of *communication research*.[26] So thematic aspects and their characterization intertwine in terms of invectives, threats, indignation, irony, information, persuasion, incitement to fight and finally references to communist identity. Its analysis can offer us a particular interpretation of that 'micro propaganda' that helps us to better understand even "the essence of the communist political commitment of those years".[27]

[24] Ilenia Rossini, "Democrazia protetta e leggi eccezionali", *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, 2 (2011): 76-107; see also Mario G. Rossi, "Una democrazia a rischio. Politica e conflitto sociale negli anni della guerra fredda", *Storia dell'Italia Repubblicana*, vol. 1, *La Costruzione della democrazia*, ed. by Francesco Barbagallo (Torino: Einaudi, 1994-1997), 913-992.

[25] Many thanks to the director of the study room of the Central State Archives, Daniela Loyola, for the help she kindly offered me. All the documentation relating to the graffiti can be found in the many prefects' reports in ACS, MI, Gab, 1948, b.18, b. 28, b. 30 fasc.11323/11355 ACS, MI, GAB, 1949, b. 12, b. 14, b16, b37, ACS, MI, GAB, 1953-56, b. 405, 406, 408. ACS, MI, GAB, 1957-60, b 367. For the graffiti from 1949 and 1950 in Livorno see A.S.Li. Serie A4b.1949-1950.

[26] Harold D. Lasswell, "Gli slogan del primo maggio in Unione Sovietica, 1918-1943", *Il linguaggio della politica. Studi di semantica quantitativa*, ed. by Harold D. Lasswell and Nathan Leites (Roma: Eri, 1979), 243-300; *Media, politica e società: le tecniche di ricerca*, ed. by Emiliana De Blasio, Mario Quaranta, Mauro Santaniello, and Michele Sorice (Roma: Carocci, 2017); Harold Lasswell, Nathan Leites, and Bertrand Wolfe, *Visioni del comunismo,* introduction by Franco Andreucci, essays edited by Andrea Mariuzzo (Milano: Ornitorinco, 2010).

[27] Mirco Dondi, "La propaganda politica dal '46 alla legge truffa", *L'Italia s'è desta. Propaganda politica e mezzi di comunicazione di massa tra fascismo e democrazia*, ed. by Adolfo Mignemi (Torino: Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 1995), 185-197.

The graffiti analysed is a significant sample of a 'left-wing' political culture in the early years of the Cold War in Italy. Its expressive content lies in a field that is difficult to define between communist activism and spontaneous protest: the entries are spread out, in chronological terms, between 1948 and 1955, and in geographical terms throughout the country. However, the selection is mainly based on police records and cannot be systematic in nature.

Following Lasswell's idea of "inventing ways to describe the symbols" of Communist propaganda to make them comparable in time and space, we must start from the question of who were the authors of the wall graffiti, to whom was it addressed and what was its content.[28] The first question cannot always be answered because of the predominantly anonymous character of the graffiti. Its illegal, or almost illegal nature, make anonymity a prerequisite for the graffiti. Even in a non-totalitarian political system, political communication is guided by laws and regulations that the graffiti tends to break or actually breaks. In general terms, considering the content of the graffiti in relation to general ICP slogans, the entries could have been written either by communist militants or by sympathizers. For the second question, the context of the political system and the chronology of the graffiti must be considered. In the Italy that we have analysed, the graffiti was aimed at potential voters and ordinary citizens. As we shall see, however, their internal characteristics refer more to symbols shared by the communist political community than to a propaganda project directed from above. Finally, the content is based around simple polarizations. The entries correspond to a communicative register in which there is a clear distinction between the positive and negative dimensions in line with the Manichaean characteristics of the communist culture. In the graffiti analysed, however, the negative component is stronger than the call of identity. Indeed, the oppositional element often has a radical character. Lasswell wrote that communist parties tend to stigmatize actions contrary to discipline and the law.[29] This does not seem true regarding the ICP. In fact, in the climate of the Cold War, the ICP promoted types of activities that were at the limits of legality.

---

[28] Harold D. Lasswell, *The Technique of slogans, World revolutionary propaganda. A Chicago study*, ed. by Harold D. Lasswell (New York; London: Knopf, 1939), 101-142. See also Franco Andreucci's reflections in *Lasswell and the study of communist propaganda, Visions of Communism*, 9-17.

[29] Lasswell, *The Technique of slogans.*

III.1. Graffiti dedicated to indignation and invective

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Morte ai fascisti	*Death to the Fascists*	July 1948	Florence
Il governo nero ci fa vedere solo il pane bianco sulla carta	*The black government only shows us white bread on paper*	August 1948	Rome
Abbasso il governo della fame	*Down with the government of hunger*	September 1948	Rome
Dal 18 aprile sono passati 4 mesi ed il paradiso promesso dove si trova?	*Four months have passed since April 18th and where is the promised paradise?*	September 1948	Terlizzi (Bari)
Smaschera coloro che ti dissero vota per Gesù Cristo e ti hanno fatto votare i padroni	*Expose those who told you to vote for Jesus Christ and made you vote for the masters*	September 1948	Terlizzi (Bari)
Quelli della celere e i carabinieri sono figli del popolo e vengono dal popolo, però sparano contro i figli del popolo per servire gli ordini del governo nero	*The riot police and carabinieri are children of the people and come from the people, but they shoot at the children of the people to serve the orders of the black government*	October 1948	Carrara
Vendete i manganelli e fate le case	*You sell truncheons and make houses*	October 1948	Siena
Abbasso Scelba	*Down with Scelba*	November 1948	Milan
Per morire di fame sostieni ancora il governo nero!	*To starve yourself, carry on supporting the black government!*	November 1948	Siena
A morte Scelba	*Death to Scelba*	June 1949	Livorno
Spettacoli del giorno.. Al Verdi Totò Al comunale: Pacciardi	*Shows of the day… At the Verdi: Totò. At the town hall: Pacciardi.*	June 1949	Cesena
Abbasso De Gasperi	*Down with De Gasperi*	September 1949	Rome
Abbasso il governo dei questurini. Il pane costa troppo	*Down with the police government Bread costs too much*	September 1949	Rome
Abbasso Scelba	*Down with Scelba*	September 1949	Rome
Via il governo del piombo	*Away with the government of lead*	September 1949	Rome
A morte il governo	*Death to the government*	November 1949	Civitavecchia
Morte a Scelba	*Death to Scelba*	November 1949	Civitavecchia

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Morte a Scelba	*Death to Scelba*	November 1949	Livorno
Scelba vile	*Despicable Scelba*	November 1949	Prato
Scelba sei un assassino	*You are a murderer Scelba*	December 1949	Rome
Basta con il governo fascista	*No more Fascist government*	Early 1950s	Milan
No ai ladri del Governo Scelba	*No to the thieves of Scelba's government*	Early 1950s	Milan
Abbasso Scelba	*Down with Scelba*	1950	Caltanissetta
Attento Scelba. I disoccupati chiedono lavoro e non manganellate	*Attention Scelba. The unemployed ask for work and not beatings*	1950	Livorno
Attento Scelba. I morti di Modena anno santo	*Attention Scelba. The Dead of Modena in the Holy Year*	1950	Modena
Il sangue versato ricadrà sui colpevoli	*The blood spilled will fall on the culprits*	1950	Livorno
La C.G.I.L propone un piano costruttivo e il governo democristiano risponde con i mitra della celere	*The C.G.I.L.* [Italian General Confederation of Labour] *proposes a constructive plan and the Christian Democrat government responds with riot police sub-machine guns*	1950	Livorno
Modena Anno Santo 1950	*Modena Holy Year 1950*	1950	Livorno
Morte al governo assassino	*Death to the assassin government*	1950	Livorno
Orsi e Sinigaglia sono dei provocatori	*Orsi and Sinigaglia are troublemakers*	1950	Modena
Scusi porco se lo chiamo Scelba	*Sorry, pig, if I call you Scelba*	1950	Livorno
Sinigaglia + Orsi= Scelba	*Sinigaglia + Orsi = Scelba*	1950	Modena
Via i reazionari	*Away with the reactionaries*	1950	Livorno
A morte il governo	*Death to the government*	May 1950	Livorno
Basta con Scelba	*Enough with Scelba*	May 1950	Livorno
De Gasperi vattene	*De Gasperi, get out of here*	May 1950	Livorno
Abbasso De Gasperi	*Down with De Gasperi*	June 1950	Livorno
Abbasso Pacciardi	*Down with Pacciardi*	June 1950	Livorno
Abbasso il governo nero sporco di sangue	*Down with the black government dirtied with blood*	August 1950	Portoferraio

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Abolire il governo della fame	*Abolish the government of hunger*	August 1950	Portoferraio
Abbasso De Gasperi l'austriaco	*Down with De Gasperi the Austrian*	December 1950	Livorno
I morti saranno rivendicati	*The dead will be claimed*	December 1950	Livorno
Scelba De Gasperi, il popolo vuole il lavoro, non i morti a colpi di mitra	*Scelba De Gasperi, the people want work, not people killed by sub-machine guns*	December 1950	Livorno
Scelba nemico del popolo	*Scelba, the people's enemy*	1954	Agnone (Isernia)
Abbasso il criminale ed assassino Scelba	*Down with the criminal and murderer Scelba*	February 1954	S. Salvo (Chieti)
Abbasso il criminale ed assassino Scelba	*Down with the criminal and murderer Scelba*	March 1954	S. Salvo (Chieti)
Basta col sangue, Scelba cosa vuoi ancora criminale?	*Enough blood, what more do you want Scelba, you criminal?*	March 1954	Spello (Perugia)
Torna Scelba. Tornano i morti.	*Scelba comes back. The dead come back.*	March 1954	Agnone (Campobasso)
Chi odia De Gasperi odia sua madre	*Whoever hates De Gasperi hates his mother*	October 1954	Torremaggiore (Foggia)
Morte a chi odia gli operai italiani	*Death to those who hate Italian workers*	October 1954	Torremaggiore (Foggia)
Abbasso Scelba	*Down with Scelba*	February 1955	Livorno
Abbasso Scelba	*Down with Scelba*	February 1955	Teramo
Via il governo dei padroni	*Away with the government of bosses*	April 1955	Jesi
Abbasso il governo Scelba	*Down with Scelba's government*	June 1955	Ancona

The first category of graffiti is dedicated to indignation and invective. Although both correspond to the oppositional attitude of the communist culture, the two registers are characterized by different types of expression. Indignation, in fact, mainly expresses resentment at an offence that is considered to have been made against a sense of justice and moral conscience, while invective expresses the feeling of controversy, accusation and outrage. In some graffiti, the two components of indignation and invective interweave and give rise to an intense set of complaints.

**Figs. 2 and 3 – Orsi and Sinigallia are respectively the owner and director of Fonderie Riunite, the most important industrial group in Modena.
The ICP photographic archive, kept in b. 18, fasc. 1.9.II/2 "Scritte murali"**

Indignation that can also become a resource for mobilization,[30] is expressed in all the graffiti that highlights the harsh working and living conditions of the working classes. Graffiti that is emblematic includes: "The unemployed ask for work and not beatings."

The invective reaches its maximum intensity with the call to 'death', when referring to Fascism and to the Minister Scelba, defined alternatively as a "pig", "criminal", and "murderer". This was a widespread popular sentiment and was a ruthless radicalism that can be traced back to working-class rebellion more than to communist propaganda. This feeling became stronger after dramatic events such as the workers' massacre in Modena on 9 January 1950 (Figs. 2, 3, 4, and 5).[31]

[30] Christophe Prochasson, "Le socialisme des indignes. Contribution a l'histoire des émotions politique", *L'indignation: histoire d'un émotion, XIX-XX sec.*, ed. by Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu and Christian Del Porte (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2008), 173-190; Pierre Rosanvallon, *Counter-democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[31] Cf. Lorenzo Bertuccelli, *All'alba della Repubblica. Modena 9 Gennaio 1950. L'eccidio delle Fonderie Riunite* (Milano: Unicopli, 2012).

Fig. 4 – The reference is to the killing of six workers

Fig. 5 – A.S. Li. Questura di Livorno. 1950. Serie A4. b.910.b. fasc.46-47

Scelba was the Minister of the Interior under Alcide De Gasperi,[32] creator of the riot police known as the *Celere*, and saw every movement or street demonstration for social claims as "a disturbance to public order to be repressed with the utmost rigor".[33]

The intense repressive activity that characterizes the period 1948-1953, was frequently compared to the repression put in place by Fascism. This makes it easier to understand how the expressions "black government" and "Fascist" also became part of Communist propaganda.

---

[32]   Augusto D'Angelo, "Scelba e la DC", *Mario Scelba. Contributi per una biografia*, ed. by Pier Luigi Ballini (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2006), 39.

[33]   Marino, *La Repubblica della forza*, 34.

The graffiti "Down with De Gasperi the Austrian" takes us back to the category of "internal enemy" in the service of foreign powers, in this case the United States and the Vatican, as he was an Italian deputy in the Austro-Hungarian parliament before the annexation of Trentino. The "internal enemy" was a category that after 1948 forcefully entered the logic of political communication, characterizing both sides.[34]

Finally, indignation can also be coloured with a certain ironic vein. On the night between 28 and 29 June 1949, the Carabinieri surprised two young communists, a student and a worker, who, on the occasion of the arrival in Cesena of the Minister of Defence Pacciardi, wrote: "Shows of the day. At the Verdi: Totò. At the town hall: Pacciardi". They were being ironic about Adolfo Pacciardi, who was Minister of Defence for all the years of 'centrism' (1947-1963), comparing him to a comic image such as that of the actor Totò. Pacciardi is characterized by using armed forces for public order.[35]

Finally, there are puns that refer to the chromatic vision of politics and society, such as the one on the walls of Naples and Rome in 1949: "The black government only shows us white bread on paper". Finally, among the metaphors used the one that refers to paradise and broken promises is significant: "where is the promised paradise?" The metaphor of deception makes it possible to highlight the imbalance between promises and facts and addresses wider social sectors. In other graffiti, the controversial reference to the political role played by the Catholic Church is explicit.

III.2. Anti-war graffiti

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Abbasso i guerrafondai	*Down with warmongers*	November 1948	Rome
Abbasso la guerra	*Down with war*	November 1948	Naples
De Gasperi si impegna a fare la guerra	*De Gasperi pledges to wage war*	November 1948	Naples

---

[34] Angelo Ventrone, *Il nemico interno: immagini, parole e simboli della lotta politica nell'Italia del novecento* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005); Angelo Ventrone, *Propaganda e comunicazione politica*, 226. Think also of the use that police forces made of confidential information to construct the enemy. Paolo Spriano, *Le passioni di un decennio. 1946-1956* (Milano: Garzanti, 1989); Luciano Canfora, "Fonti sommerse", *Studi storici*, 27, 4 (1985), 967-972.

[35] Ilenia Rossini, "'Democrazia protetta' e 'leggi eccezionali': un dibattito politico italiano (1950-1953)", *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, 2 (2011): 75-107.

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Mamme si vuole ancora la guerra?	*Mothers, do you still want war?*	November 1948	Naples
Pace, non la guerra	*Peace, not war*	November 1948	Naples
Viva la pace	*Long live peace*	November 1948	Rome
Abbasso l'imperialismo	*Down with imperialism*	January 1949	Livorno
Il popolo italiano non vuole la guerra ma pace, indipendenza, libertà	*The Italian people don't want war but peace, independence, freedom*	January 1949	Livorno
Viva la pace	*Long live peace*	January 1949	Livorno
Vogliamo la pace	*We want peace*	March 1949	Livorno
Firmate la petizione per la pace	*Sign the petition for peace*	May 1949	Livorno
W il Primo maggio e la pace	*Long Live the 1ˢᵗ May and peace*	May 1949	Livorno
De Gasperi vuole guerra fame miseria, vogliamo Togliatti	*De Gasperi wants war hunger misery, we want Togliatti*	September 1949	Lecce
Il pane costa troppo, meno armi più pane	*Bread costs too much, fewer weapons more bread*	September 1949	Rome
No ai missili	*No to missiles*	September 1949	Bari
Pace e lavoro	*Peace and work*	September 1949	Lecce
Pace per la rinascita	*Peace for rebirth*	September 1949	Bari
Ragazze unitevi sotto la bandiera della pace	*Girls unite under the banner of peace*	November 1949	Livorno
Trecento miliardi per la guerra. Per il lavoro?	*Three hundred billion for the war. For work?*	December 1949	Rome
Basta con le guerre e la miseria	*Enough of wars and misery*	Early 1950s	Milan
Viva i portuali, e niente armi	*Long live the dockers, and no weapons*	February 1950	Livorno
Abbasso la guerra	*Down with war*	June 1950	Livorno
Vogliamo salvare l'Italia dalla guerra	*We want to save Italy from the war*	August 1950	Portoferraio
Giovani, ragazze, contro la distruzione e lo sterminio uniamoci per chiedere l'interdizione della bomba atomica	*Young people, girls, against destruction and extermination, let's join together to ask for a ban on the atomic bomb*	December 1950	Livorno

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Abbasso la guerra Abbasso Eisenhower W la Pace	*Down with the war Down with Eisenhower Long Live Peace*	1951	Modena
Cittadini attenti! Esigete che il governo non stanzi miliardi per il riarmo, ma costruisca case popolari	*Attention citizens! Demand that the government does not allocate billions to rearmament, but builds council houses*	1954	Piombino
No alla guerra	*No to war*	June 1954	Vigevano
Viva la pace	*Long live peace*	June 1954	Vigevano
Abbasso la guerra	*Down with war*	December 1954	Ancona
No alla guerra	*No to war*	February 1955	Catania
No alle bombe atomiche	*No to atomic bombs*	February 1955	Catania
Viva la pace	*Long live peace*	February 1955	Teramo
Abbasso l'atomica	*Down with the atomic bomb*	March 1955	Caltanissetta
No alla guerra	*No to war*	March 1955	Ventimiglia
Viva la pace	*Long live peace*	March 1955	Bari
Viva la pace	*Long live peace*	March 1955	Ventimiglia
Via il governo della guerra	*Away with the government of war*	June 1955	Piacenza
Viva la pace con tutti i popoli	*Long live peace with all peoples*	June 1955	Piacenza
Viva la pace	*Long live peace*	August 1955	Carbonia

The theme of peace becomes central to Communist propaganda after the electoral defeat of 18 April 1948 because it is a value that goes beyond ideological belonging and therefore speaks to a wider public (Fig. 6). The appeal to mothers, young people and girls is a strong emotional reference, increased by the appeal to the fear that the Cold War could become a world war, all the more so in the light of the Korean conflict of June 1950. It is a rhetoric that also refers to the tradition of the working-class fronts of the 1930s. In this context, where the Christian Democrats are portrayed as the party of war, the anti-atomic mobilization of the 'Partisans of Peace' breaks out with all its symbolic force. Their first world congress took place in Paris in April 1949 and culminated in 1950 with the Stockholm Appeal. A mobilization that in Italy also breached parts of the Catholic and liberal-democratic worlds, confirming how widespread the pacifist sen-

Fig. 6 – Modena. The ICP photographic archive kept at the Historical Institute of Modena; b. 26, fasc. 1.13.III/9 "Scritte su strade e muri 1951"

timent was, and constituted one of those working-class pretexts[36] that the Communist propaganda fed on.

In Livorno, as in other cities, the dockers refused the unloading of American weapons. There is no doubt that graffiti such as "Long live the dockers, and no weapons" referred to the massive propaganda effort deployed by the ICP; the fight for peace and anti-Americanism were intertwined.[37]

---

[36]   On the use of the term "pretext" see Alfio Mastropaolo, "Come fu inventato il Partito comunista in Sicilia tra il 1945 e il 1948", *Meridiana*, 90 (2017): 143-169, see 147-150.

[37]   Andrea Guiso, *La Colomba e la Spada. Lotta per la pace e antiamericanismo nella politica del partito comunista italiano (1949-1954)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2006); for different interpretations, see: Silvio Pons, "L'URSS e il PCI nel sistema internazionale della guerra fredda", *Il PCI nell'Italia repubblicana 1943-1991*, ed. by Roberto Gualtieri (Rome: Carocci, 2001); "Eravamo stalinisti. Colloquio con Giorgio Amendola", *L'Espresso*, 23 March 1970, cited in Giovanni Gozzini and Renzo Martinelli, *Storia del partito comunista italiano*, vol. 7, *Dall'attentato a Togliatti all'VIII congresso* (Torino: Einaudi, 1988), 193; Federico Romero, *Storia della guerra fredda. L'ultimo conflitto per l'Europa* (Torino: Einaudi, 2009); Mario Del Pero, *L'alleato scomodo. Gli USA e la DC negli anni del centrismo (1948-1955)* (Roma: Carocci, 2001). See Figure 5 in the Appendix.

At a time when international tension was greatly eased after the replacement of Truman with Eisenhower (January 1953), the death of Stalin (March 1953) and the signing of the armistice between the two Koreas (July 1953), it was the force evoking "Long Live peace" that seemed to prevail.

III.3. Graffiti against "Atlanticism"

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Gli aiuti americani si vedono solo sui manifesti elettorali	*American aid is only seen on election posters*	November 1948	Rome
Tutti uniti contro i servi di Truman	*All united against the servants of Truman*	November 1948	Rome
Abbasso Truman	*Down with Truman*	June 1949	Livorno
No al patto atlantico	*No to the North Atlantic Treaty*	July 1949	Livorno
Eisenhower torna a casa tua	*Go back home Eisenhower*	1951	Modena
Vogliamo che l'Italia esca dal patto atlantico	*We want Italy to leave the North Atlantic Treaty*	1951	Modena
Fuori il boia Ridgway dall'Italia	*Get the bastard Ridgway out of Italy*	1953	Milan
Va fuori straniero	*Go away foreigner*	1953	Milan
I popoli dicono no alla CED	*The people say no to the EDC*	1954	Agnone (Isernia)
Basta con la politica di asservimento agli USA	*Enough with the policy of subjugation to the United States*	March 1954	Savona and Vado Ligure
La CED non è umana ma divide l'Europa	*The EDC is not human but divides Europe*	March 1954	Agnone (Isernia)
La CED riarma il tedesco	*The EDC rearms the German*	March 1954	Agnone (Isernia)
No alla CED	*No to the EDC*	April 1954	Cremona
No alla CED	*No to the EDC*	June 1954	Vigevano
L'Italia non vuole essere una colonia americana	*Italy doesn't want to be an American colony*	1955	Piacenza
No al riarmo tedesco	*No to German rearmament*	February 1955	Monterosso Almo (Ragusa)

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
No al riarmo tedesco	*No to German rearmament*	February 1955	Montevarchi (Arezzo)
No al riarmo tedesco	*No to German rearmament*	March 1955	Montepulciano
Via le truppe straniere	*Away with the foreign troops*	April 1955	Jesi
Fuori gli americani dall'Italia	*Americans out of Italy*	May 1955	Belluno
L'Italia deve essere libera. La CED divide l'Europa	*Italy must be free. The EDC divides Europe*	May 1955	Pistoia
Via le truppe straniere	*Away with the foreign troops*	May 1955	Ancona
Fuori gli americani dall'Italia	*Americans out of Italy*	June 1955	Piacenza
Torna a casa tua americano	*Go back home, American*	June 1955	Piacenza
Via le truppe straniere	*Away with the foreign troops*	June 1955	Piacenza
Vogliamo essere un popolo libero	*We want to be a free people*	June 1955	Piacenza
Fuori le truppe straniere via gli americani e viva la pace	*Foreign troops out, away with the Americans and long live peace*	July 1955	S. M. Capua Vetere (Caserta)
Non vogliamo truppe straniere	*We don't want foreign troops*	August 1955	Matera
Via le truppe straniere	*Away with the foreign troops*	August 1955	Matera
Fuori gli americani dall'Italia	*Americans out of Italy*	November 1955	Belluno
Via le truppe straniere	*Away with the foreign troops*	November 1955	Belluno

Graffiti such as "Italy doesn't want to be an American colony" and "Go away foreigner" are aspects of that national-working-class communicative rhetoric through which the ICP represented itself as the subject of national independence that makes clear its firm opposition to the United States and its symbolic value reinforced by President Truman's doctrine, a doctrine that was translated into the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty.

The no to the EDC – the European Defence Community that was never created in the end – and more generally towards the construction of a Western Europe dominated by the United States, was of no different tenor.[38] The graffiti against General

---

[38]   Soddu, "Via il regime della forchetta", 44-63; Gozzini and Martinelli, *Storia del partito comunista italiano*, vol. 7 (Torino: Einaudi, 1988), 322.

Fig. 7 – A street in Milan. Fondazione ISEC, Sesto San Giovanni – Fondo Odoardo Fontanella, Archivio Fotografico; B91_5546 Milan 16/6 [1950s] – Graffiti against the arrival of Ridgway in Italy – Publifoto

Matthew Ridgway, the supreme commander of the American forces in Europe nick-named "General Plague" because he was accused of having used biological weapons in the Korean War, was also part of the vast propaganda campaign promoted by the ICP (Figs. 7, 8, and 9).

As Guido Piovene tells us, there was also explicit graffiti, as was the case in Livorno which was an important American base in Italy: "Away with the dollar."[39]

It is also worth noting the reappearance of the demonization of "the German", which became a long-term constant linked to the theme of rearmament.

---

[39]   Piovene, *Viaggio in Italia*, 411.

Figs. 8 and 9 – Streets of Modena. The ICP photographic archive kept at the Historical Institute of Modena; b. 26, fasc. 1.13.III/9 "Scritte su strade e muri 1951"

III.4. Graffiti dedicated to the 'Scam Law' and the Constitution

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Contro la legge truffa	*Against the Scam Law*	1953	Caltanissetta, Forli
Legge truffa, costituzione	*Scam Law, constitution*	1953	Milan
Difendiamo la Costituzione. Voto valido per tutti	*Let's defend the Constitution. Valid vote for all*	1953	Milan
Abbasso la truffa elettorale DC	*Down with the CDP electoral scam*	1953	Milan
Difendiamo la democrazia elezioni oneste pace e lavoro	*We defend democracy honest elections peace and work*	1953	Livorno
Elezioni oneste	*Honest elections*	1953	Livorno
Elezioni oneste non truffa all'americana	*Honest elections not American-style scamming*	1953	Milan
Elezioni oneste. W la Costituzione	*Honest elections. Long Live the Constitution*	1953	Milan
Forza Deputati contro la truffa tutti i lavoratori sono con voi.	*Come on Deputies against the scam all the workers are behind you*	1953	Milan
La legge elettorale non votata perché i lavoratori non vogliono	*The electoral law was not voted for because the workers do not want to*	1953	Milan
No alla legge truffa	*No to the scam law*	1953	Milan, Livorno
Voto uguale	*Equal vote*	1953	Livorno
W i deputati del P.C e P.S per la lotta tenace che conducono in Parlamento	*Long Live the ICP and ISP deputies for the tenacious struggle they lead in Parliament*	1953	Milan
Democrazia cristiana vero fascismo	*Christian democracy true Fascism*	April 1953	Pontassieve
W P.C.I W P.S.I 28 giugno 1953 Enzo Pelagatti	*Long Live the ICP Long Live the ISP 28 June 1953 Enzo Pelagatti*	June 1953	Livorno
Abbasso il fascismo	*Down with Fascism*	April 1955	Riglione (Pisa)
Viva la costituzione	*Long live the constitution*	April 1955	Riglione (Pisa)

Fig. 10 – *Quaderno dell'Attivista*, n. 4, February 16, 1953. p.103. Gramsci Emilia Romagna Foundation

"The walls speak," wrote the *Quaderno dell'Attivista*, part of the propaganda commission of the ICP administration, on February 16, 1953, when reporting on graffiti against the Scam Law (law n. 148/1953) appearing on the walls of Livorno (Fig. 10).[40] It was an electoral law with a majority prize that allocated 65% of the seats to the House, party or group of allied parties that obtained 50.01% of the valid votes.

The campaign, in the towns and in Parliament, against what was defined – effectively from the communicative point of view – as the "Scam Law", was very tough (Figs. 11, 12, 13).

---

[40] *Quaderno dell'Attivista*, 16 February 1953, is listed as figure 10 in the appendix.

Figs. 11 and 12 – Walls of Milan. Fondazione ISEC, Sesto San Giovanni – Fondo Odoardo Fontanella, Archivio Fotografico; B25_0642 Propagandistic initiatives [Milan, 1950s] – Publifoto; B70_3372 Propagandistic initiatives [Milan, 1950s]

The slogans "Honest elections" and "Valid vote for all" recall the fact that the "scam" law resulted in an unequal weight of voters. For the ICP, the proportional system adopted until then was an integral part of that Constitution which was too often ignored. The battle for the application of the Constitution, some articles of which were only applied in the 1970s, was a milestone in the ICP battle.[41] The graffiti on the electoral law had a smaller reach than that of the propaganda distributed by the ICP by other means. In this set of graffiti, the one from Livorno dated June 1953 and signed by Enzo

---

[41] Augusto Barbera, Marco Cammelli, and Paolo Pombeni, *L'apprendimento della Costituzione (1947-1957)* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1999).

Fig. 13 – Piazza del Luogo Pio, Livorno

Fig. 14 – Wall of the ICP section of Antignano (Livorno)

Pelagatti, is worth noting (Fig.14). Knowledge of the details of the graffiti is, as we have observed, fundamental but difficult to document. In this case, it is interesting to note that Pelagatti was a communist militant and that the graffiti was on the wall of an old section of the ICP.

Therefore, even in the light of the graffiti in this section, Marc Lazar's statement that the ICP was "the only Communist party in the West to closely combine social struggles, political battles and permanent references to a legal text" is not unfounded.[42]

---

[42]   Speech by Marc Lazar, *Il PCI nell'Italia repubblicana 1943-1991*, ed. by Roberto Gualtieri (Roma: Carocci, 2001), 363-374, see 371. On the use of constitutional themes: Stefano Cavazza, "La Costituzione in piazza. Il tema costituzionale nelle campagne elettorali del dopoguerra (1948-1958)", *L'apprendimento della Costituzione (1947-1957)*, 155-197.

III.5. Graffiti dedicated to work

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Ai mezzadri spetta una migliore ripartizione dei prodotti del suolo	*Sharecroppers should have a better share of agricultural products*	September 1948	Terlizzi (Bari)
Il collocamento deve essere esercitato dai nostri sindacati	*Employment must be managed by our unions*	September 1948	Terlizzi (Bari)
Aumento della disoccupazione grazie al vostro piano Marshall	*Increased unemployment thanks to your Marshall Plan*	November 1948	Naples
Miserie per il popolo	*Misery for the people*	November 1948	Naples
Blocco dei fitti	*Blocking of rents*	December 1948	Perugia
Contro gli orrori della fame e del freddo lottiamo uniti per la sospensione dei licenziamenti	*Against the horrors of hunger and cold we fight together for the end of dismissals*	December 1948	Perugia
I giovani chiedono trattori e non guerra	*Young people demand tractors not war*	December 1948	Genzano (Rome)
Il governo chiude le fabbriche. Provoca le disdette. Aumenta gli affitti	*The government closes the factories. Causes dismissals. Increases rents*	December 1948	Perugia
La sospensione delle disdette	*End to dismissals*	December 1948	Perugia
Stanziamento per lavori pubblici straordinari	*Allocation of extraordinary public works*	December 1948	Perugia
Tredicesima mensilità a tutti i pensionati	*Year-end bonus to all pensioners*	December 1948	Perugia
Basta promesse vogliamo lavoro	*No more promises we want work*	January 1949	Livorno
Vogliamo lavoro e libertà	*We want work and freedom*	May 1949	Livorno
Abbasso i latifondisti	*Down with big landowners*	September 1949	Lecce
Anche i disoccupati vogliono il lavoro	*The unemployed also want jobs*	October 1949	Rome
I giovani vogliono lavoro	*Young people want work*	October 1949	Rome
300 miliardi per la guerra. Per il lavoro?	*300 billion for the war. For work?*	October 1949	Rome
Terra ai contadini e non piombo	*Land for farmers not lead*	December 1949	Rome

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Viva il piano della C.G.I.L che risolve la crisi del paese	*Long live the C.G.I.L.* [Italian General Confederation of Labour] *plan that solves the country's crisis*	December 1949	Rome
Lo sciopero è un diritto. La serrata è un reato. Rifletti! Noi siamo uniti! Tu sei solo!	*Striking is a right. Lock-out is a felony. Think about it! We are united! You are alone!*	Early 1950s	Milan
No allo sfratto. Lavoratori scioperate. Giù le mani dalle sedi	*No to eviction. Workers go on strike. Hands off our premises*	Early 1950s	Milan
Scioperate contro il fascismo nelle fabbriche. Lavoratori scioperate	*Strike against Fascism in the factories. Workers go on strike*	Early 1950s	Milan
Lavoro non morti	*Work not corpses*	March 1954	Savona and Vado Ligure
Vogliamo i patti agrari	*We want agrarian pacts*	March 1955	Bibbona (Livorno)
Non vogliamo il fascismo nelle fabbriche	*We don't want Fascism in the factories*	April 1955	Riglione (Pisa)
Vogliamo i patti agrari	*We want agrarian pacts*	May 1955	Ancona
Sia dato il sussidio ai disoccupati	*Give aid to the unemployed*	June 1955	Cassano Murge (Bari)
Vogliamo i patti colonici	*We want farmer's pacts*	June 1955	Ancona
Vogliamo la pensione di vecchiaia	*We want an old-age pension*	June 1955	Ancona
Vogliamo la riforma agraria	*We want agrarian reform*	June 1955	Ancona
Vogliamo il sussidio di disoccupazione	*We want unemployment benefits*	June 1955	Bari
Lavoro ai disoccupati e non cannoni	*Jobs for the unemployed and not cannons*	August 1955	Matera
Lavoro per i disoccupati e non per i cannoni	*Jobs for the unemployed and not for the cannons*	August 1955	Matera
Soldi per i disoccupati e non cannoni	*Money for the unemployed and not cannons*	August 1955	Matera
Sia dato il sussidio ai disoccupati. Non vogliamo il collocamento familiare	*Give aid to the unemployed. We don't want family employment*	November 1955	Taranto
Viva il congresso dei braccianti	*Long live the labourers' congress*	November 1955	Taranto

The graffiti dedicated to work recalls the complex relationship between the ICP and the trade union movement. While it is reasonable to assume that wall graffiti about other categories is connected to the party's general slogans, in this case it is difficult to distinguish between party graffiti and graffiti related to CGIL propaganda. In this category of graffiti, three aspects are particularly striking: the first is the broad reference to farmers and the rural world; the second is the explicit recognition of class adversaries in the "landowners"; the third is given by the detailed reference (rents, agrarian pacts, farmer's pacts) to trade union-type claims.

This is in the context of reconstruction in which unemployment, lack of housing and poverty are combined with low consumption, low wages and authoritarian industrial relations, so much so that they write "strike against Fascism in the factories".[43] American historian Geoff Eley writes:

> The US policy entailed reviving conservative authority, including the Church's societal power, and breaking the labour movement's unity. […] With the ascendancy of anti-communism over reform, Italian industry was able to pursue untroubled an economic policy based on low internal consumption, low wages, and authoritarian industrial relations.[44]

What presented itself as "managerial absolutism" was opposed by the slogan "Constitution in the factories", launched at the CGIL Congress in Naples in 1952 by Giuseppe Di Vittorio, trade unionist and communist leader.[45]

So the most common graffiti recalls a world of work that, permeated by the hopes for change fuelled by the climate of the Resistance, is ready to defend its trade unions, as evidenced by the graffiti on the walls of the factories in Milan, and to claim the right to work; the term "we want" is the most recurrent (images of the writings in Figs. 15, 16, and 17).

Much of the graffiti from 1949-1950 refers to the "communist winter" plan: the compulsory labour quota, just cause for dismissals, the increase in family allowances, and union management of employment. The extensive graffiti relating to the country-

---

[43]   Aspects highlighted by both the Parliamentary Inquiry into unemployment and the Parliamentary Inquiry into poverty.

[44]   Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy. The history of the left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: University Press, 2002), 303.

[45]   Giuseppe Di Vittorio, "Lo Statuto dei diritti dei cittadini lavoratori", *Lavoro*, 43 (25 October 1952), now in Giuseppe Di Vittorio, "In difesa della Repubblica e della democrazia", *Antologia di scritti (1951-1957)*, ed. by Francesco Giasi (Roma: Ediesse, 2007), 164-167. See also Bruno Settis, "La costituzione nelle fabbriche. Appunti su contratto sociale fordista e compromesso costituente"*, Scienza politica*, 57 (2017): 69-83.

Figs. 15, 16 and 17 – Walls of factories in Milan. Fondazione ISEC, Sesto San Giovanni – Fondo Odoardo Fontanella, Archivio Fotografico; B70_3371 Propagandistic initiatives [Milan, 1950s] – Publifoto; B73_3664 Propagandistic initiatives [Milan or Sesto San Giovanni, 1950s]; B73_3665 Propagandistic initiatives [Milan or Sesto San Giovanni, 1950s] – Publifoto

side highlighted the bitter social conflict that saw in the postwar period the occupation of land in the South, struggles for contracts in Tuscany and Emilia and strikes in the Po Valley, which resulted in the questioning of "the relationships of production and traditional systems of management".[46]

Particularly in the South, where the agricultural revolt was one of the most dramatic aspects of the immediate post-war period, the words constituting the graffiti embodied long-term aspirations and resentments: "atavistic distrust, fatalism and individualism" were replaced by possible actions of solidarity and struggle.[47]

---

[46] Guido Fabiani, *L'agricoltura in Italia tra sviluppo e crisi (1945-1977)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1979), 101.

[47] Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra a oggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 2014), 92-175, English trans: *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (London: Penguin, 1990). On the ICP relationship and the farmer movement in the South, see Sidney Tarrow, *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

III.6. Graffiti dedicated to the communist identity

Italian text	Translation	Date	Place
Evviva il comunismo italiano e russo	*Long live Italian and Russian Communism*	July 1948	Prato
Stalin salverà l'Italia	*Stalin will save Italy*	July 1948	Prato
Chi è contro il comunismo è contro il popolo	*Whoever is against Communism is against the people*	September 1948	Rome
W il PCI	*Long Live the ICP*	September 1948	Rome
W Togliatti	*Long Live Togliatti*	September 1948	Rome
L'URSS non si tocca	*The USSR is not to be touched*	November 1948	Naples
Disegno di Falce e martello	*Drawing of the hammer and sickle*	1949	Livorno
Viva L'Unione sovietica	*Long live The Soviet Union*	January 1949	Foligno
Viva Stalin	*Long live Stalin*	January 1949	Foligno
Viva i giovani comunisti	*Long live the young Communists*	September 1949	Lecce
Viva il partito comunista italiano	*Long live the Italian Communist Party*	September 1949	Lecce
W la F.G.C.I	*Long Live the F.G.C.I* [Italian Communist Youth Federation]	December 1949	Rome
W Togliatti capo della classe operaia	*Long Live Togliatti head of the working class*	December 1949	Rome
Per la pace vota P.C.I	*For peace vote the ICP*	April 1953	Pontassieve
Falce e martello. In questo segno vincerai. Pace. Benessere. Libertà	*Hammer and sickle. With this sign you will win. Peace. Wellbeing. Freedom*	August 1955	Novara
Piccola Casa Umana Rustica Sincera Serena	*Small House Human Rustic Sincere Serene*	August 1955	Novara
W Lenin e la rivoluzione comunista	*Long Live Lenin and the Communist revolution*	November 1955	Turin
Viva Marx	*Long live Marx*	November 1955	Turin

Fig. 18 – Via Del Tempio, Livorno

The graffiti found proudly recalled the ideological affiliation with Communism, the call to the charismatic fathers, fidelity to international ties and also aimed to be the signs of a working-class identity to be rebuilt in torn times.

The reference to Stalin was like "the incarnation of an idea, transfigured in the Communist mind into pure idea, and thereby into something infallible and sinless. Stalin was the victorious battle of today and the brotherhood of man tomorrow".[48] In a still backward social and cultural situation, one needed to resort to faiths and myths.

Think also of the meaning of drawing a hammer and sickle, "the most famous and long-lived symbol of the left in the twentieth century", in a city that needed to be rebuilt from the rubble of war.[49]

---

[48]   Jan-Werner Muller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-century Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 88.

[49]   Ridolfi, "La falce e il martello", 103 and for a general reflection see Andreucci, *Falce e martello*.
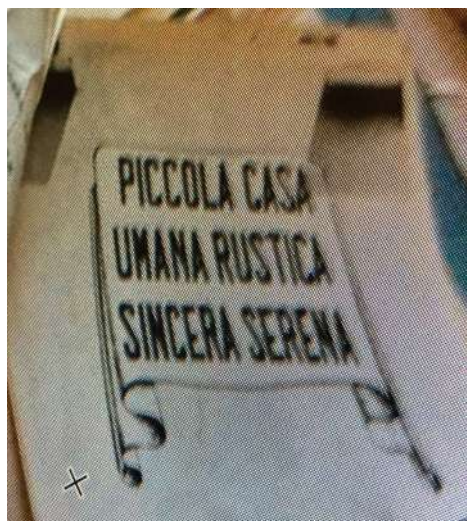
Figs. 19 and 20 – House in Borgo Ticino, Novara. A.C.S, Min. Gab. 1953-1956, b. 405.

The same Soviet myth, as Pier Paolo D'Attorre claimed, "crosses deep strands of Italian socialist sensibility: from the egalitarian solidarity of the Po Valley labourer to the productive pride of the Turin worker".[50] In other words:

> The communist belief, with its fundamental oppositions and with its promise of an overturned and pure society, presents itself as the confirmation of a utopia present in the worldview of the working-class masses [...] and is expressed in the strength and enthusiasm with which people fight and believe in the total reversal of the existing order.[51]

The words "fervent communist" that Antonio Zanotti wrote, as recorded by the police, on the external wall of his house in Borgo Ticino, in the province of Novara, is really surprising from a communicative point of view: "Small House Human Rustic Sincere Serene". The first letters of each word written in red in the slogan's original Italian, "Piccola Casa Umana Rustica Sincera Serena", highlighted the acronym "PC-URSS" (meaning the ICP-USSR).

In addition, on the adjacent wall, the police recorded a drawing consisting of a circle, inside of which there was the emblem of the hammer and sickle surmounted by a red star and surrounded by the words: "With this sign you will win. Peace. Wellbeing. Freedom" (Figs. 19 and 20).

The search for a 'new world' anticipated the Soviet mythology and often declined into a territorial and community dimension, whose fundamental aspects we find in that 'red subculture' analysed by so much sociological and political literature.

IV. Concluding Remarks

As we have seen, the contents of the wall graffiti corresponded to expressions that were close to political organisations and at the same time far from them. Their content largely corresponded to the propaganda campaigns promoted by the ICP. Slogans such as "Long live peace", "Down with war", "Long live Stalin" and "Down with Fascism", made up the graffiti whose content could be found in the official publications of the

---

50   *Sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. by Pier Paolo D'Attorre (Milano: Angeli, 1991), 45; Marco Fincardi, *C'era una volta il mondo nuovo. La metafora sovietica nello sviluppo emiliano* (Roma: Carocci, 2007).

51   Gabriella Gribaudi, *A Eboli. Il mondo meridionale in cent'anni di trasformazioni* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1990), 20.

ICP: the daily newspaper *l'Unità*, the periodical *Quaderno dell'attivista* and numerous pamphlets and leaflets.

What distinguishes the graffiti on the walls, beyond the technical aspects of the writings themselves – or precisely because of them – is the combination of voluntary elements contained within the messages. The daily newspaper or propaganda press was essentially aimed at activists and militants; the leaflets and posters had a broader profile, linked to particular campaigns (elections and specific themes). The wall graffiti was intended to go beyond all that. It was located in a terrain which not only aimed for a wider audience (represented by passers-by) but where it was also felt the communication could not be refused, having as it did characteristics of advertising that were radically further reaching than all the others.

The wall graffiti desecrated, and the aggressive use of vocabulary reflected the working-class rebelliousness. At the same time, it was also a way, on the part of the ICP, of 'physically' marking the territory, of making its presence visible through the many activists, and in this way also realising the instruction to turn "every comrade into a propagandist".[52]

Illuminating in this regard is what can be read in a memorandum sent to Scelba by the Police HQ in Turin in 1953:

> Communists daub walls and streets, especially in the suburbs [...] The psychological factor is very important in public life; in fact, people do not know how to investigate things further, they mentally orient themselves according to their impressions, especially the lower-class people of the suburbs. That permanent and undisturbed graffiti generates the impression that the Communists do what they want, impose themselves undisturbed, are feared [...] are respected, predominate.[53]

As has often happened in the history of Italy, we are faced with a reading that frames the working-class masses (the 'populace', in derogatory terms) as weak and manipulable subjects, instigated by a few professional agitators who artificially build a social conflict to be used for subversive political ends. But that was just the opinion of the police authorities.

There is no doubt that the words of the graffiti that appeared on the walls and streets of cities and towns offer us a glimpse into the behaviour and passions of a rich humanity, mainly composed of young workers, the unemployed and farmers, aged between 19 and 35, some of whom were identified as Communist activists by the police authorities.

---

[52] *Il Quaderno dell'attivista. Ideologia, organizzazione e propaganda nel PCI degli anni cinquanta*, ed. by Marcello Flores (Milano: Mazzotta, 1976).

[53] A.C.S. Mi. Gab. 1953-56, b. 408.

With their cans of paint, they challenged the authorities, almost always at night: in times of preventive censorship it was also a way of making their presence visible, of 'marking the territory', of making themselves protagonists in a sort of struggle for 'visual domination'.

The graffiti in its essentiality was often adapted to the codes of communication of working-class language:[54] the moods, the working-class feelings, the caricatural aspects of parody, of satire, were accompanied by phrases of intimidation and indignation, and sometimes even real comments on political events.

Most of the graffiti referred, as we have observed, to a something close to the 'micro propaganda' promoted and organized by the ICP.[55]

In the years marked by the dynamics of the Cold War and of the 'centrist' governments, the graffiti on the walls constituted an important representation of an attitude epitomised by the phrase written by a militant and reported by Marcello Flores and Nicola Gallerano: "we fought more to say that we were in the world than for what we conquered";[56] but it was about a "we were" that resulted in the entrenchment of the ICP in Italian society.

Aldo Agosti wrote:

> Capitalizing on the symbolic resources linked to the Soviet myth and the unresolved tension between fidelity to that myth and the tenacious defence of the spaces of freedom guaranteed by the Republican Constitution, the ICP has been an important agent of the process of nationalisation as one of the constituent factors of the dynamics of citizenship.

In short, even the graffiti tells of a twofold plan of action that leads us to the logic of 'double loyalty'.[57]

---

[54]   Sandro Bellassai, *La morale comunista. Pubblico e privato nella rappresentazione del PCI (1947-1956)* (Roma: Carocci, 2000), 55.

[55]   Dondi, "La propaganda politica dal '46 alla legge truffa", 194; Edoardo Novelli, *C'era una volta il PCI. Autobiografia di un partito attraverso le immagini della sua propaganda* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2000), 24.

[56]   Marcello Flores and Nicola Gallerano, *Sul PCI. Un'interpretazione storica* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1992), 159. See also Aldo Agosti, "I militanti. L'album fotografico dei comunisti italiani", *L'Italia del novecento. Le fotografie e la storia. Il potere da De Gasperi a Berlusconi (1945-200*), ed. by Giovanni De Luna (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), 235-309; Claudio Natoli, "Il PCI tra modello sovietico e radicamento nella società italiana", *Il 1948 in Italia. La storia e i film*, ed. by Nicola Tranfaglia (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1991), 105-114, in particular 108-109.

[57]   Speech by Aldo Agosti, *Il PCI nell'Italia repubblicana 1943-1991*, 382. Franco De Felice, "Doppia lealtà e doppio stato", *Studi Storici*, 3 (1989): 493-563. See also: Silvio Pons, *Comunismo antifascismo e doppia lealtà, Novecento Italiano. Studi in ricordo di Franco De Felice* (Roma: Carocci, 2000*).

Further investigations and further documentation will certainly be necessary to develop the research into how the graffiti declined languages, relationships and values belonging to many places and complex communities: the town, the district, the suburbs. All this could further contribute to illuminate, from a particular point of view, the hidden history of the features of a specific political culture of which the many anonymous writers on the walls of post-war Italy were bearers.

PART III.

THE SOVIET AREA: WORDS OF POWER BETWEEN SOVIETISATION AND DISCOURSE STRATEGIES IN THE 'AGE OF EXTREMES'

TAUTOLOGY AS THE HIGHEST FORM OF IDEOLOGY: REFLECTIONS ON STALINIST DISCOURSE (1930-1953)

Petre Petrov

(University of Texas, Austin)

I. "Wooden" Tautology

Tautology and ideology share a suffix, but not much else. If we go by basic definitions only, it is more fitting to regard them as opposites, the former referring to aberrant expression of thought, the latter designating thought's systematic elaboration. Of course, actually existing ideologies are not simply systems of meaning. They are discursive productions, too, and as such are exposed to all the vagaries of language. Still, if someone were to commit a tautology while making an ideological pronouncement, we would regard this as a contingent *lapsus*, and would be in no way inclined to think that tautology is a constitutive feature of the worldview that is being expounded. For us to suspect a more integral connection between the two, a *lapsus* of this kind would need to occur with some regularity. Such appears to have been the case in the Soviet Union, and more specifically in the sphere of its official ideological discourse.

By now there exists a sizeable body of scholarship that treats tautology as one of the identifying features of Soviet ideology or, rather, of its language. I am referring, in particular, to the work of social linguists that, from the early 1980s, established the paradigm of the so-called *langue de bois* ("wooden language", *dubovyi/dereviannyi iazyk*).[1]

---

[1]   See: Alain Besançon, *Présent soviétique et passé russe* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1980); M. Głowiński, *Nowamowa po polsku* (Warsaw: PEN, 1991); Louis Martinez, "Le langue de bois soviétique", *Commentaire*

Within this paradigm, itself a late offspring of the "totalitarian" approach to Soviet politics and society,[2] the language of official ideology was habitually characterized as impersonal, repetitive, devoid of informational value, and very often tautological. Its instrumentality allegedly consisted in numbing the mind, suppressing individuality and independent thinking, so as to better enforce robotic submission to authoritarian power.[3] Tautology, an extreme case of repetition, was one of the main devices through which the numbing effect was achieved. A section in François Thom's *Newspeak: The Language of Soviet Communism* bears the revealing title, "How *Langue de bois* Paralyses Reason".[4] Another section of the book is devoted to tautology,[5] which, Thom maintains, "can create a hypnotic state in which human beings lose all sense of reality".[6]

---

16 (1981): 506-515; Francoise Thom, *Newspeak: The Language of Soviet Communism*, trans. Ken Connelly (London: Claridge Press, 1989); Daniel Weiss, "Was ist neu am Newspeak? Reflexionen zur Sprache der Politik in der Sowjetunion", *Slavistische Linguistik 1985. Referate des 11. Konstanzer Slavistischen Arbeitstreffens*, ed. by Renate Rathmayr (München: Sagner, 1986), 343-391. For discussion of the term *langue de bois*, see: Patrick Sériot, *Analyse du discours politique soviétique* (Paris: IMSECO, 1985), 21-29.

    [2]   For a wide-ranging historical account of this approach, see Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Among the seminal texts that made totalitarianism the dominant framework for the study of the Soviet Union are: Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973); Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); *Totalitarianism*, ed. by Carl J. Friedrich (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Praeger, 1966); Jacob L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1952). The fall of the Soviet Union stimulated a revival of the totalitarian approach during the 1990s, as evidenced by such historical studies as François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: Free Press, 1993); Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). For a groundbreaking engagement with the Cold-War ideologization of Soviet studies, see Stephen F. Cohen, "Scholarly Missions: Sovietology as a Vocation", *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917*, ed. by Stephen F. Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3-37.

    [3]   See, for instance, the influential characterization of Nazi language in Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich. LTI-Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist Notebook*, trans. Martin Brady (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 21. Together with George Orwell's *1984*, Klemperer's book was the main inspiration for the study of "totalitarian" languages.

    [4]   Thom, *Newspeak*, 88.

    [5]   Thom, *Neswpeak*, 85-87.

    [6]   Thom, *Newspeak*, 85. Similarly, Mikhail Vaiskopf claims that Stalin's use of tautologies was "meant to guarantee a certain hypnotic effect […]". See: Mikhail Vaiskopf, *Pisatel' Stalin* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001), 35. All translations from non-English sources are mine (PP).

If critics thus found tautology to be at the very heart of ideology, it was only because they saw the latter as not being genuinely *ideo*-logical. It was not the ideas of Marxism-Leninism that mattered, but the deployment of discourse and its effects on the public.[7] Emptied of all meaning, Soviet ideology had become purely speech,[8] a medium through which totalitarian power directly molded (that is to say, falsified) reality and the subjects inhabiting it.[9] With this "latin monstrueux d'une Eglise monstrueuse",[10] ritual triumphed over substance, incantation took the place of argumentation.[11] Totalitarian discourse, so the argument went, addressed itself not so much to mind as to feeling and instinct.[12] For the aim was not to convince, but rather to incite and mobilize.[13] Tautology, which might have been a defect in the proper exposition of ideas, was an effective tool where subliminal impact was sought, that is, where reason needed to be bypassed or sedated. It ensured that "thought is imprisoned in a cyclical movement which leads nowhere".[14]

Scholars who adopted the *langue du bois* perspective delighted in stringing quotations from official Soviet texts in order to show the redundancy, illogicality, circularity, or sheer non-sense of the state-socialist "newspeak". A notable, book-length example of this exercise is Mikhail Vaiskopf's study of Stalin's language.[15] In the long first chapter, which documents in great textual detail Stalin's linguistic inadequacies and logical deviances, considerable space is devoted to his penchant for tautology and repetition.[16] The chapter concludes by asserting that Stalin's rhetoric channeled a lethal logic of power, which precisely in its intellectual primitiveness was able to captivate the primitive mind

---

[7]   Thus Marietta Chudakova contrasts the semantic vacuity of Soviet language with its "executive" prowess (*deistvennost*). See: Marietta Chudakova, *Novye raboty: 2003-2006* (Moscow: Vremia, 2007), 237-238.

[8]   "[A]fter all, it is not a matter of knowing the world but of speaking about it properly, of constantly tailoring or adapting it to the requirements of doctrine", Głowiński, *Nowamowa*, 39-40.

[9]   "The element of magic plays a great role in newspeak. Words are not so much signs of reality, do not so much describe it, as create it. What is authoritatively spoken becomes real", Głowiński, *Nowamowa*, 8. In a similar vein, Louis Martinez proposes that the objective of *langue du bois* is not to describe the real but to "decree […] the surreal", "Le langue de bois", 508.

[10]   Martinez, "Le langue de bois", 514.

[11]   Thus Martinez finds that "the conceptual content of words [in *langue de bois*] is more or less completely effaced behind their poetic function", "Le langue de bois", 509; while historian Richard Pipes observes that the function of Soviet ideology was similar to that of ritualistic mass spectacles, *Russia*, 271.

[12]   Klemperer, *Language*, 47.

[13]   Martinez, "Le langue de bois", 514.

[14]   Thom, *Newspeak*, 102.

[15]   Vaiskopf, *Pisatel'*.

[16]   Vaiskopf, *Pisatel'*, 35-44.

of the Soviet mass man.[17] All of this is fully in accord with the totalitarian approach (a virtually unquestioned truth for the post-Soviet intelligentsia), which framed ideology as the opposite of sober rationality, an agent of manipulation, a bewitcher of uprooted multitudes, most effective where modernization and enlightenment had been slow to take hold.[18]

Whether tautology is seen as a strategic device of manipulation or, simply, as evidencing the "semantic primitivism" of Soviet political discourse,[19] it stands as a feature external to the content of ideology. This is hardly surprising, for, in the common understanding, tautology is a discursive motion that fails to add anything new to the content that has already been brought forth. My intention in the present chapter is to test this truism and, in doing so, to move beyond the *langue de bois* paradigm. My argument will be that tautology has a meaning in Soviet ideological discourse, and should not be regarded merely as an enactment of nonsense or a premeditated assault on the Soviet citizen's rational self. I will contend that tautology has ideological content of its own, which is to say that the tautological form of statements is itself part of the ideological 'message' and should be interrogated as such. Obviously, I am not out to prove that every instance of tautology one could find in the Soviet press hides some deeper significance. All I wish to demonstrate is that there is intelligible reason why the articulation of Soviet ideology sometimes proceeds by means of tautology.

If we think of tautology as something formal, characterizing the expression of thought, rather than thought as such, then the only way in which it could belong to the content of ideology is if form and content intersected somehow, somewhere. More specifically, the ideological content would have to be such that it would condition its own tautological enunciation. In such case, the form would not be external to the meaning but would be part of its unfolding. This, in most general terms, is the case that I will be arguing here. To support it, I will use official texts from the Stalinist period, most of which come from the highest places in the system of discursive production. But before I take up the discussion of specific textual material, I would like to establish the theoretical framework within which this material will be evaluated.

---

[17]   Vaiskopf, *Pisatel'*, 123. Apparently this deleterious effect was not confined to the early decades of Soviet power: "The seeds of idiotism diligently sown by [Stalin] in the minds of the Soviet people, yielded an opulent crop, and the fantastic abundance of fools at today's communist assemblies wonderfully confirms the active power of his teaching", Vaiskopf, *Pisatel'*, 44.

[18]   For the seminal account of the masses' role in the rise of totalitarianism, see Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, 305-364.

[19]   N. A. Kupina, *Totalitarnyi iazyk: Slovar' i rechevye reaktskii* (Ekaterinburg: Ural'skii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1995), 10.

II. The "Quilting Point" of Ideology

This section offers a brief exposition of one influential approach ideology, most relevant for the present discussion in that tautology has a major part in it. I have in mind theoretical work inspired, more generally, by semiotics and, more specifically, by Jacques Lacan's linguistically-driven meta-psychology. To remember, Lacan's psychoanalysis treats the human subject as an entity constituted through language; the unconscious is viewed as a web of signification that comes together around a privileged point, called the master signifier, which has the function of totalizing, or stitching together, the various meanings that make up the web (for that reason, Lacan also refers to it as *point de caption*, "quilting" or "anchoring" point).[20] Extending this model to the political field, Slavoj Žižek thinks of social discourse as a web of potentially dispersive, or certainly partial, meanings that become "fixed" by the intervention of a certain master-signifier, an ideological quilting point.[21] In agreement with Lacan, while also drawing on the work of political philosophers Ernesto Laclau and Claude Lefort, Žižek insist that at the quilting point of ideological discourse we find not some extraordinarily meaningful word, richer than all the other words that make up the discursive fabric. Quite on the contrary: the master signifier is characterized by vacuity; it is the mark of an empty place.[22] It is a signifier without a signified or, more simply put, it has no (discursive) meaning; its only meaning is its equivalence with itself. And here is where tautology comes in. This quilting point – the master signifier – is a also a point of tautology.[23] Žižek gives as examples locutions such as "Law is law"; the implication being that we owe obedience to the law not because it is rational or just, but because it is the law.[24] To understand why the master signifier operates under the sign of tautology we have to appreciate what

---

[20]   See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection* (London: Norton, 1977), 303 and Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses, 1955-1956. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III,* trans. Russell Grigg (London: Norton, 1993), 268-269. On the structural-ideological function of master signifiers, see Ernesto Laclau, "Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?", *Emancipations*, ed. by Ernesto Laclau (London: Verso, 1996), 36-45; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001), 113; Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 95-96, 105, 114-15; Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom* (London: Verso, 2007), 119. Of course, Lacan's theory builds on Freud's legacy, with its rich inventory of meta-psychological concepts, such as the Oedipus complex, the threat of castration, transference, and so on. While this background is indispensable for a full appreciation of Lacan's contributions, to discuss it here would mean to drift too far away from this chapter's principal concerns.

[21]   Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 112-15.

[22]   Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 108-10; Laclau, "Empty Signifiers", 108-110.

[23]   Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), 537.

[24]   Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 33-37, 87-88; Žižek, *Less than Nothing*, 370.

might be called the 'curse of discursivity'. As anyone who has answered endless children's questions knows, every thing can be defined by another thing, and that other thing by still another, without end, without an absolute ground ever being reached. In the face of this predicament, the master-signifier provides the *illusion* of absolute ground. Its special status is due to its seeming exclusion from the merry-go-round in which every thing means something else (what, in the tradition of French post-structuralist thought after Lacan, has been called the *glissement*, "sliding", of meaning).[25]

I mentioned that the master signifier is bereft of sense, and this simply highlights the fact that it has been set aside as an item that does not participate in equivalences with other, ordinary signifiers. They cannot define it; it can only define itself by itself, which is to say, through tautology. In Žižek's example, the authority of the law is not grounded in some notion of justice or right; this would be tantamount to referring one signifier to another; rather, the authority of the law comes from the fact that it doesn't have to justify itself before the subject;[26] it is always right, because it is the very framework in which the question of right or wrong is decided. Differently put, it is the law that defines what constitutes justice; therefore, it cannot itself be grounded in some prior notion of justice. And Žižek goes on to suggest that the same logic can be extended to such ideological keywords as "communism", "class struggle", "ecology", "liberalism", and so forth.[27] They cannot be defined by means of other terms because their structural role in ideological discourse is none other than to set the framework in which all other terms first acquire a stable meaning. And to say that these privileged signifiers are prone to tautology is the same as to say that, when push comes to shove, they refuse to be treated as discursive items and present themselves instead as the Real itself (in opposition to "mere words"). When we say, tautologically, "Family is family", what we are gesturing toward is a vital and indestructible essence of the familial bond that no words can properly convey (you cannot know it discursively; you only know it when you are part of it).

This is very close to the phenomenon Roland Barthes calls "naturalization" and which he identifies as the main function of ideological myth. Ideology works by "turning culture into nature", Barthes maintains.[28] And it does this by making it appear as if cultural constructs, or institutions, or customs, are not historical *arte*facts but quasi-natural facts. It makes historically contingent phenomena appear as timeless, universal essences that

---

25 "[T]he 'anchoring point' (*point de caption*) […] stops the otherwise endless movement (*glissement*) of the signification", Lacan, *Écrits*, 303.

26 Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 87-88.

27 Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 112-113.

28 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1974), 206. See also Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 2007), 58-61.

are self-evidently *there*. Which is the same as saying that ideological meanings pretend not to be meanings at all, but pre-discursive realities. Barthes's own examples of tautology are pronouncements such as "Racine is Racine" and "Business is business",[29] which are obviously of a kind with a statement such as "Family is family". In all of these, tautology serves to stop the unfolding of discourse by suggesting that the item in question warrants no explication.

To illustrate both what I called the 'curse of discursivity' and the temptation to evade it via a tautological short circuit, let us imagine the following exchange. Someone begins by stating that family is the thing we should value most. We respond by asking why this should be so. Our interlocutor buttresses his initial declaration by arguing that our family members are the persons closest to us. To this we reply by asking why our parents or siblings should be considered the people closest to us. Here the ideologue of family values is tempted to retort bluntly, "Because they *are*!" but instead opts for a more reasoned approach and explains to us that these are our blood relations, we share the same genes, physical traits, temperament, and so on. After this, we might inquire, with a most innocent air, why we should place the highest value in our lives on factors such as genetic kinship or physical resemblances. Visibly discombobulated by now, our interlocutor tells us that DNA is, of course, not the only thing that unites us with the persons in our family; there is also the time we have spent together, the character traits and habits that have been passed from one generation to the next, the experiences we have shared, and the memories that we now have in common. Having heard him out, we might put an end to the conversation by pointing out the glaring flaw in his chain of reasoning. At the beginning, the question to be answered was why we should value family relations above all else. For this question to have real significance, that is to say, for it to be a truly open question, it must be assumed that we do not have any prior grounds to prefer our family members to other persons or beings, and that any such grounds would have to be supplied in the process of argumentation. Our ideologist violated this condition when he referred us to all the things that we *already* have in common with our kin. Instead of telling us why we *should* be tied to our family, he told us that we *are* tied to them anyway. Instead of telling us why we should place value on family, he assured us that the value has been there all along, crystallized in shared traits, experiences, and memories. But if such were indeed the case, then the question did not need to be posed in the first place (clearly, a person who would seriously confront such a question would be someone for whom familial bonds are non-existent or highly problematic; their value is what would need to be established).

One lesson to learn from this little skit is that ideology works by de-problematizing reality; it presents as givens the very things whose substance or import needs to be adju-

---

29   Barthes, *Mythologies*, 96-98.

dicated. Another aspect we might reflect upon is how the chain of explanations in this hypothetical scenario runs, at every turn, on the very edge of tautology. This is because the signifiers that are supposed to explicate the significance of family – "proximity", "unity", "kinship", "bond", "togetherness", "commonality", "sharing", "being part of" – are already implied in the notion of family. In lieu of explaining why family should matter, our interlocutor offers near-synonyms that masquerade as facts. When he announces that family matters because it rests on kinship of blood, what he is implicitly saying is, "Family is family", or "Kinship is kinship". The way this is verbalized may not be tautological from a strictly linguistic point of view, but the meaning conveyed is clearly circular. The crucial point to take from this line of argument is that when someone actually comes out and says things like, "Family is family", this only explicates a (tauto-)logic that is implicit in ideological discourse as such.

As another example, let us ask, "Why is democracy a good thing?" It is reasonable to expect an answer along the lines of, "Because everyone should be able to decide the affairs of the society to which s/he belongs". Even at this initial step of argumentation, it is obvious that tautology lurks just beneath the surface of what is being said. For "democracy" here is being referred to something that is no more than its analytical digestion (people's participation in the affairs of society). If we wished to continue the conversation, the next question would come as a matter of course: "But why is it a good thing for every person to have a say in how the state is governed?" Let us imagine that the answer we get is, "Because all people are equal". We could notice, again, that the notion of equality is already implied in that of democracy, which makes this into yet another analytical move. If all the speaker wished to express is that the citizens of a country *should* be equal, then the game would go back to the beginning, and the question would become, "Why is equality a good thing?" However, if what he meant was that people are "created equal", then we would have a clear case of the aforementioned sleight of hand: a concept masquerading as an existent. "Equality" is a concept, just like "democracy", which makes it liable to the potentially interminable *glissement* mentioned earlier. But in the present situation, it has been presented as a quasi-natural fact: if "people are created equal", then equality has being wherever there are human beings; it is itself something existing.

We are now in the position to fix more precisely the source of tautology from the perspective Žižek has elaborated. Tautology happens because the same item appears in two different guises – concept and fact, or potentiality and reality – which are then (surreptitiously) brought into equivalence. A thing's 'what' is equated with its 'is'. This violates Kant's famous interdiction to not treat existence as a predicate.[30] Being does not add anything to the concept of a thing; but in ideology this operation proves to be

---

30 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 566-567.

very useful. Through it, the failure to arrive at an ultimate explanation, to reach some absolute ground that would support the whole structure of ideological notions, is turned into a triumph. The tautological gesture amounts to a refusal of symbolic substitution. One cannot lose a game if one refuses to play. And this is essentially what happens when one equates an ideological master-signifier with itself: the item in question is thereby taken out of the losing game of cascading definitions and explanations. This produces the effect of a mystical surplus in the thing, as if there were something more in it than words can convey. The ideological fantasy, as Žižek understands it, is the belief in this indefinable 'more'. The specific nature of the surplus and the affective investments it attracts vary from one ideology to the next; but its symbolic-structural basis is the same: treating being as if it were an actual quality of the thing, its ultimate, truly defining quality. In lieu of justifying the importance of family through logical argumentation, one could simply state, "Family is family". As I suggested earlier, this implies that all it would take for us to be convinced is to *experience* family (instead of thinking and talking about it); which further implies that the essence of family exists "out there", and we could have access to it.

III. Possibility and Reality

Now that we have identified a logic that brings together ideo*logy* and tauto*logy*, we could proceed to ask whether the same logic is operative in official Soviet discourse. Does this discourse conform to the same dynamic of "quilting"? Does it resort to reiteration from the same structural necessity to arrest the sliding of signification? Does it end up positing essences that are supposed to be prior to ratiocination? My answer to these questions will be largely in the negative, as I will argue that the examples from official Stalinist texts exhibit an intriguingly different logic from the one discussed thus far. Having Žižek's model in the background will allow me to outline what makes the Soviet case special, and to do so in terms that have acquired broad intellectual currency by now.

The textual snippets I offer below have the form of analytical judgments; something is predicated on the subject that is already encompassed by the semantics of the latter and, therefore, should 'go without saying'. Therefore, these pronouncements all boil down to the tautological formula 'X is X'. The challenge is to discern the meaning behind this redundancy of meaning or, as I put it earlier, to decipher the 'message' of Stalinist tautology. Assuming that these are not cases of logical confusion, illiteracy, or carelessness, the question becomes: why something that 'goes without saying' needs to be said?

My first exhibit is a 1930 pronouncement by Stalin himself:

> *(1)* *Существо уклона к местному национализму состоит в стремлении обособиться и замкнуться в рамках своей <u>национальной</u> скорлупы [...].* [31]

> *(1)* *The essence of the deviation toward local <u>nationalism</u> consists in the striving to stand apart and enclose oneself within the limits of one's <u>national</u> shell [...].*

Before taking power, Stalin was regarded as the specialist on the nationality question within the Bolshevik Central Committee. But it certainly does not take deep expertise to reach the conclusion just quoted. Tautology here is right on the lexical surface: "national" is called upon to explain "nationalism".

The second example is from an article by the leading Party philosopher, Pavel Iudin:

> *(2)* <u>*Социалистическое*</u> *соревнование и ударничество являются <u>социалистическими</u> формами труда.* [32]

> *(2)* *<u>Socialist</u> competition and shock work are <u>socialist</u> forms of labor.*

Here the redundancy is even more glaring, since the same adjectival form is simply repeated. One is tempted to attribute the *faux pas* to simple negligence; but here is Iudin again, just a few pages later:

> *(3)* *Ленин учит, что <u>пролетарская культура</u> является <u>культурой классовой</u>.* [33]

> *(3)* *Lenin teaches that <u>proletarian culture</u> is a <u>class culture</u>.*

Admittedly, verbal repetition is avoided here, but the cognitive gain is negligible. It is not clear which work by Lenin is meant, but it is hardly necessary to tap sources of political wisdom for what Iudin wishes to convey. Since the proletariat is a class, it seems logically inevitable that its culture would be a class culture.

An article in the main Party journal, *Bol'shevik*, explains in the following tautological terms the then-ongoing process of collectivization:

---

[31]   Iosif V. Stalin, "Politicheskii otchet tsentral'nogo komiteta XVI *s*"ezdu VKP(b) 27 iulia 1930", *Sochineniia*, Vol. 12 (Moscow: GIPL, 1949), 317.

[32]   Pavel Iudin, "K voprosu o proletarskoi, sotsialisticheskoi kul'ture", *Bol'shevik*, 13 (1932): 68.

[33]   Iudin, "K voprosu", 70.

(4) <u>Коллективизация</u> мелкого крестьянского хозяйства переводит это хозяйство на принципиально иную основу – с частной на <u>коллективную собственность</u> на средства производства.[34]

(4) The <u>collectivization</u> of the small peasant economy changes principally this economy's basis: from private to <u>collective ownership</u> of the means of production.

As in the first two examples, the lexical replication makes the tautological gesture manifest. The noun, "collectivization", is a verbal derivative. It means nothing other than "to make collective". The sentence thus ends up saying that making collective is, or consists in, making collective.

The following statement comes from another authoritative source, an academic volume on the history of Soviet economy:

(5) <u>Передовые люди</u> нашей страны <u>задают тон</u> во всех областях жизни советского народа.[35]

(5) The <u>leading</u> people of our country <u>set the tone</u> in all spheres of the Soviet people's life.

In this instance, there is no verbal redundancy, but the duplication of meaning is still plain as day. The expression "to set the tone" does no more than present in the form of action what is already expressed by the adjective "leading" (*peredovye*). We are given to understand that the country's leading people are those representatives of the Soviet people who… lead.

A more elaborate version of this proposition is the following excerpt from a 1930 editorial in *Bol'shevik*:

(6) <u>Коммунист</u> на производстве, на заводе, шахте, промысле, строительстве – боец <u>передового участка</u> фронта социалистического наступления, – и он должен являться подлинным <u>вожаком масс</u>, действующим в первую очередь показом и примером подлинно-социалистического отношения к труду.[36]

(6) The <u>communist</u> in production, in the factory, mine, industry, construction, is a fighter of the <u>vanguard</u> of the socialist offensive, and he ought to be a true <u>leader of the masses</u>, acting, in the first place, through the demonstration and example of a truly socialist attitude toward labor.

---

[34]   I. Anchishkin *et al.*, "O fundamente sotsialisticheskoi ekonomiki", *Bol'shevik,* 3 (1932), 25.

[35]   *Razvitie sovetskoi ekonomiki*, eds. by A. A. Arutanian and Boris L. Markus (Moscow: GSEI, 1940), 424.

[36]   "Na poroge tret'ego goda piatiletki", *Bol'shevik*, 15-16 (1930): 13.

Again, by ideological default, "communist" is synonymous with "a member of the vanguard", that is, the most advanced part of the working class. Therefore, it is *prima facie* redundant to demand that he should be the leader of the masses or to state that he is at the head of the "socialist offensive".

Such pronouncements are quite common in the ideological-discursive corpus of Stalinism. Many more can be adduced at will. But the ones I have given so far should suffice to furnish us with an initial 'feel' for the semantics that interests me. I say 'feel', because I realize that this semantics is in no way immediately legible. It is clear that in all the statements quoted we are dealing with tautological meaning. But it is far from clear what is the meaning of that meaning, that is to say, the reason why the ideological message assumes the redundant form that it does. Pretty much each of the above examples, if taken in isolation, as pure utterance, with no further context, is bound to remain enigmatic. After all, we are asking about the sense of nonsense, and it is probably naïve to expect that it would simply float up from the latter.

The last of our examples (6), as the most elaborate of them all, gives us somewhat ampler foothold for interpretation. Apart from being an exercise in circular meaning, it exhibits what Katerina Clark once termed "modal schizophrenia".[37] Part of the sentence is in the declarative mode, while the other part is in the imperative. It begins by telling us what the communist is, before proceeding to stipulate what he should be. This only twists further a logic that has been twisted into a knot by tautology. If someone is already acting as a "fighter of the vanguard" (in factories, mines, and so on), what could be the point of insisting that "he ought to be a true leader of the masses"? We may well have an instance of confusion here, but it is a symptomatic confusion, which may give us a clue as to tautology's underlying cause. As I have shown elsewhere, Stalinist discourse is prone to collapsing empirical and principled generalizations, making it impossible for the reader to determine whether an actual or potential-theoretical state of affairs is meant.[38] Differently put, it is often impossible to say whether a general rule is being stated or an existing situation is being described. This is the case in the example before us: the beginning of the sentence gives the impression that the generalization is over actual communists working in actual factories, mines, and construction sites. But the switch to the imperative mode suggests that the author might have intended to state what a communist is *supposed to be*, that is, to give a normative definition. The semantic confusion results, apparently, from the author's inability to sustain one of the two modes: either 'is' or 'supposed to be'.

---

[37] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomfield, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 39-42.

[38] Petre Petrov, "The Soviet Gnomic (On the Peculiarity of Generic Phenomena in Stalinist Officialese)", *SEEJ*, 4 (2013): 604-626.

I would like to suggest that behind the tautological formula 'X is X' in Stalinist discourse lies the assertion 'X is the X it is supposed to be', or, in a somewhat extended form: 'X in reality is the same as X in theory'. As Party speeches infallibly pointed out, positive developments in reality were a direct consequence of official policy, itself guided by Marxist-Leninist wisdom.[39] Thus, industrialization is a realization of the policy of industrialization; the struggle against fractions is an implementation of the Party line against fractionalism; and so forth. It goes without saying that the rule of the Party depends for its legitimation on showing that the Word whose custodian it is, Marxism-Leninism, is effective. This entails showing that slogans and directives, which, of course, respond to 'objective tendencies', become true historical factors, actively shaping reality, giving rise to facts. As one illustration, consider this passage from the canonical *Short Course of the History of CPSU*:

> (7) *Следуя директивам XV съезда партии, партия перешла в решительное наступление против кулачества. В своем наступлении партия осуществляла лозунг: опираясь прочно на бедноту и укрепляя союз с середняком, повести решительную борьбу против кулачества.*[40]

> (7) *Following the directives of the Fifteenth Party Congress, the Party went into a decisive offensive against the kulak class. In its offensive, the Party was realizing the slogan: to wage a decisive battle against the kulak class by firmly leaning on the poor peasants and strengthening its union with the middle peasants.*

If we had to reduce this passage to its semantic gist, we would end up with the proposition that the Party fought against the kulak class by following the Party directives to fight against the kulak class. Reality is no more than the realization of a slogan (*partiia osushchestvliala slogan*).

Here is another passage from the *Short Course*, in which Stalin's stance on "building socialism in one country" is explained:

> (8) *Да, отвечала партия, социалистическое хозяйство можно и нужно построить в нашей стране, ибо у нас есть все необходимое для того, чтобы построить социалистическое хозяйство, построить полное социалистическое общество.*[41]

---

[39] "These successes were a direct consequence of the politics of reconstruction, implemented most insistently by the party and government", *Kratkii kurs*, 320.

[40] *Istoriia Vsesoiuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov). Kratkii kurs* (Moscow: OGIZ, 1938), 279.

[41] *Kratkii kurs,* 260.

> (8) Yes, answered the Party, the socialist economy could and should be built in our coun-
> try, for we have all that is necessary in order to build the socialist economy, to build
> a full socialist society.

The tautology of this passage is blatant: it is possible to build socialism because we have everything that makes this possible. The statement, most likely penned by Stalin himself, allows us to trace the tautological effect to its ideological source. On one hand, there are the 'objective conditions' that make the building of socialism possible. The Party, having taken these into account, charts a course toward the "building of socialism in one country". The actual work of building socialism is the realization of the slogan, which is nothing other than the bringing-to-consciousness of the existing 'objective conditions'. The tautology results from having one and the same thing, 'socialism', in two modes, which are distinguished only to be identified. Socialism is first a real possibility, before becoming an actual project. The word of Stalin (the theory of "socialism in one country") mediates between the two: the actual work of building socialism is undertaken because the Leader has become cognizant of the 'objective conditions' and made them the basis of policy. In this way, socialism as an objective possibility gives rise to socialism as a reality.

Other privileged items of Stalinist ideological discourse are similarly inscribed on two levels, as both empirical reality and the essential tendency that the said reality obeys. For instance, one could distinguish between collectivization as a postulate-slogan and collectivization as an actual process of bringing individual peasant farmsteads into kolkhoz collectives. If one then wishes to say that the postulate-slogan has become a true historical factor and is actively shaping reality, one would be saying, essentially, that collectivization collectivizes the countryside. And this is just what is stated in (4). In a similar fashion, one could distinguish between the Party as a notional-theoretical entity ("the vanguard of the working class"; P1) and the Party as an actual body of men currently governing the Soviet Union (P2). Then it would not be wholly redundant to assert that the Party in its current actions (P2) adheres to what the Party, according to haloed Leninist principles, is supposed to be (P1). This is exactly the logic that informs the following passage:

> (9) Неуклонно осуществляя решения XIX съезда партии, укрепляя единство и
> боеспособность своих рядов, всемерно развивая внутрипартийную демокра-
> тию, самокритику и в особенности критику снизу, партия последовательно
> руководствуется выработанными Лениным нормами партийной жизни и
> принципами партийного руководства.[42]

---

[42] "Velikii prodolzhatel' dela Lenina", *Ogonek,* 51 (1954): 2.

(9) *Unwaveringly realizing the decisions of the XIX Party Congress, strengthening the unity and fighting readiness of its ranks, developing in an all-sided manner the inner-party democracy, self-criticism, and, especially, criticism from below, the Party consistently guides itself by the norms of party life and the principle of party leadership worked out by Lenin.*

As we can see, the Party, in its current life, does nothing other than adhere to the "norms of Party life", to principles of what the Party is supposed to be. In short, the Party (P2) is being the Party (P1). It is the very same logic that we find in (5) (the leading people are being leading people) and (6) (communists are being communists). Iudin's two pronouncements admit of analogous interpretation: in (2), socialist competition and shock work, as real practices, are asserted to be materializing the essence of socialism; while in (3), the actuality of proletarian culture is seen as adhering to the universal principle that social class determines culture.

IV. Tauto-logics

How is this different from the general account of ideology proposed by Žižek? The difference is, certainly, not immediately obvious. After all, we are dealing in both cases with the formula 'X is X'. Still, my claim is that the meaning of this equivalence, the meaning of tautology, is not the same. In this section I will try to explicate what makes the Soviet-Stalinist 'X is X' a special case of ideological tauto-logic.

Let us remind ourselves of what is intended when one says, 'Family is family'. Or – to take the master signifier of anti-Semitic ideology – 'A Jew is a Jew', or 'A Jew will always be a Jew'.[43] As I pointed out earlier, this is meant to suggest that the entity in question is equal to itself, that is its own definition. And, by the same token, the tautology ends up disavowing the fact that the Jew, or the family, is a construct, something contingent, conditioned, historical. The formula, 'A Jew is a Jew', claims a *pre-discursive* knowledge of the world. You can paraphrase it as: 'Say whatever you will, but a Jew is a Jew'. It is something prior to reflection; you can try to explain it as much as you want, but *it is what it is*; a Jew is a Jew! Something very different is intended by the analytical distillate of (6), 'A communist is a communist'. Here we are dealing with what I would call *post-discursive embodiment*. The communist is first an ideological concept, a word, a mere item of discourse, and *then* this discursive figment is found embodied in reality: "Look, there he is, in factories, mine shafts, construction sites!". The ideological point being made is that the communist in reality acts exactly in accordance with the concept of a

---

43   Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 106-107.

communist; he is just what he is doctrinally supposed to be. This would not apply to the family or the Jew. It would not make sense to say that the family is what it is supposed to be. And the reason for this is that in bourgeois ideology the family is not posited first as *a concept*, before we need to ascertain whether its actual existence is the same as what the concept presupposes. Quite on the contrary: in the ideological operation that Žižek has in mind, the family, or the Jew, is taken as a quasi-natural fact, a pre-conceptual kernel of the real to which no words could do justice. (To remember, the tautological equivalence of the master signifier with itself was tantamount to its exclusion from the unprofitable game of defining one thing by means of another, and so on.)

By the very same token, the logic behind the Soviet examples is different from what Barthes means by "naturalization". To "naturalize" a concept is to pretend that it is not a concept in the first place, but rather a self-evident fact of life, an item of common sense. Barthes's famous exhibit is the cover of the journal *Paris Match*, with a photograph of a black boy saluting the French flag. According to Barthes, the image gives body to the concept of "French imperiality"; but in so doing, it effaces precisely its notional, 'fabricated', character. The concept is "made absent by this literal sense (*The French Empire? It's just a fact: look at this good Negro who salutes like one of our own boys*)".[44]

But in the Stalinist locutions we have before us a different script is being played out: the concept is naturalized *as concept*. Something is asserted to have reality not because it *precedes* the processing of reality through mind and language. Rather, it is real in the sense that, having passed through that processing, it has gone out into the world and become an object of experience. The tendency to evade the dimension of discourse, which Barthes and Žižek identify with the ideological as such, is not in evidence here. This ideological speech does not try to mask the fact that it is speech. On the contrary, it highlights the discursive commerce in concepts, principles, and slogans. But having done this, it insists on showing that these are not mere concepts, principles, and slogans, but, as Stalinist writers were fond of putting it, "have become life" (*stalis' zhizniu*, *voplotilis' v zhizn*). Since, as we saw in (8), the Party Word mediates between possibility and reality, it does not efface itself as a representation (the way the photograph of the adolescent French patriot does). In order for this legitimacy-conferring mediation to remain in view, an ideologeme must draw attention to itself as an ideologeme. This is the reason why so often in Soviet discourse statements that apparently describe factual happenings have the form of principled (nomic) generalizations.[45] Is (6) describing an actual process currently under way or explaining what collectivization is in principle? It is difficult to decide because the two options that confront us are not mutually exclusive.

---

[44] Barthes, *Mythologies,* 123.

[45] For further discussion, see Petrov, "Soviet Gnomic".

The ambiguity between fact and law is not a random effect. It proceeds from the need to demonstrate, even on the level of linguistic form, that the ideologeme can 'become life'.

In Žižek's general account of ideology, the tautological gesture produces the illusion of a non-discursive surplus, as if behind the word "Jew" and all the definitions one may supply for it, there was a thing-like essence, "Jewishness" (analogously, behind the notion of empire, Barthes identifies the phantasmic essence "imperiality").[46] Tautology in official Soviet discourse points to a different kind of surplus. It is an excess in the signifier as such, as if the word possessed a quasi-magical power by virtue of being an ideological word. Clearly, we are dealing with an ideology that does not conceal but foregrounds its ideological nature, what one might call its "ideologicity". This is the name which we might give to the surplus quality implied by the Stalinist version of 'X is X'. The ideologicity of a thing is not some pre-discursive facticity. Rather, it is that which makes each empirical particular behave in a law-like manner, that is, fully in accord with its doctrinal notion. While ideology according to Barthes evacuates history, ideology according to Stalin makes historical happening indistinguishable from the discursive unfolding of a concept; empirical cause-effect relations are hard to tell apart from purely (ideo-)logical deductions. If there is a compulsion to repeat in Stalinist discourse, it is because one and the same thing has to be posited twice: once as a principle, in its possibility, or ideality, and the second time as the empirical manifestation of that same principle, its *hic-et-nunc* reality. The 'message' of Stalinist tautology is that things are what they are supposed to be, what is implied in their ideological concept. Kulaks necessarily rise against Soviet power, because the notion of kulak is that of a class enemy; while shock workers – also necessarily – care about socialist property, because shock work follows from the idea of unexploited labor, which itself follows from the notion of socialism.[47] In other words, all that is happening in the world, all that can ever happen, is the realm of the ideal duplicating itself in the real, as the real.

---

[46] "[At] first, 'Jew' appears as a signifier connoting a cluster of supposedly 'effective' properties (intriguing spirit, greedy for gain, and so on), but this is not yet anti-Semitism proper. To achieve that, we must invert the relation and say: they are like that (greedy, intriguing…) because they are Jews. This inversion seems at first sight purely tautological – we could retort: of course it is so, because 'Jewish' means precisely greedy, intriguing, dirty… But this appearance of tautology is false: 'Jew' in 'because they are Jews' does not connote a series of effective properties, it refers again to that unattainable X, to what is 'in Jew more than Jew' and what Nazism tried so desperately to seize, measure, change into a positive property enabling us to identify Jews in an objective-scientific way. The 'rigid designator' aims, then, at that impossible-real kernel, at what is 'in an object more than the object', at this surplus produced by the signifying operation", Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 107.

[47] "The kolkhoz farmer, having become a shock-worker, cannot be indifferent to the shortcomings in his brigade, in the kolkhoz. Shock work, by its very essence, eliminates this indifference inherited from the fragmented private-farm ownership. It demands of the shock-worker energetic struggle with the shortcomings in the kolkhoz", N. Rubinshtein, "Udarnichestvo v kolkhozakh", *Bol'shevik* 15-16 [1933]: 63.

THE LANGUAGE BEYOND THE WALL:
ON THE SOVIETISATION OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE
IN THE 'EX-DDR' (1945-1989)

Barbara Delli Castelli

(Università 'G. d'Annunzio', Chieti-Pescara)

I. Introduction

The German history of the twentieth-century – characterised first by the experience of National Socialism and then by the territorial division in two ideologically opposed States – is a typical example of how language can assume different characteristics based on enforced ideology, and of how linguistic manipulation in totalitarian regimes can become an effective tool of persuasion and indoctrination of the masses.

Although relevant for the development of the German language between the end of the World War II and the end of the 1980s, the division of Germany into two States – the Federal Republic, a member of NATO, and the Democratic Republic, linked to the Soviet Union and to the countries of the Eastern Bloc – also brought to repercussions in the field of linguistics. The natural inclination towards linguistic evolution manifested itself in a uniform manner in both East and West Germany through the development of two distinct *Kommunikationsgemeinschaften* ('communication communities'), each of which was related to its respective socio-political context and whose influence is still today partly reflected in the communication between the Germans of the old and new *Länder* ('federal states'), who have experienced the division of Germany.

The processes of linguistic evolution in the *DDR* (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, 'GDR = German Democratic Republic') did not involve morphosyntactic structures – which remained almost unaltered – but more specifically lexical and stylistic aspects.

The communicative problem between East and West Germans emerged, therefore, where the words of the 'Others' were unknown (neologisms and foreignisms being used just by one side), uncommon (new compounds, products of structural calques from other languages) or hardly recognisable in their significance (semantic adaptations due to the dominant ideology or contact with other languages).

The language characteristics of Democratic Germany, and the differences with those of Federal Germany, have been the subject of many critical studies, glossaries and dictionaries that emerged between the early 1960s and the present day, bearing witness to the interest that the topic has generated, and continues to generate, within the scientific community. Further scope for research emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, by monitoring the linguistic evolution following the *Wiedervereinigung* ('German reunification'), which enables one to observe, among other things, which terms of the GDR's lexical heritage are 'survivors' of the *Wende* ('turnaround'), and are still – or once again – in use among speakers.

The present study intends to offer an overview of the direct (borrowed and structural calques) and indirect (semantic calques and processes of resemantisation) influence of the Russian language and Marxist-Leninist ideology on the German language in use in the GDR from the end of the Third Reich until the fall of the Berlin Wall.[1] The analysis of these linguistic phenomena is achieved through a comparative study based on dictionaries and specific researches on the lexicon of the GDR published in the Democratic Republic of Germany and the Federal Republic of Germany between 1968-2000.[2]

II. The Post-War Period in East Germany between Denazification and Sovietisation of Language (1945-1948)

The unconditional surrender of the Wehrmacht (May 1945) not only announced the end of the World War II and the definitive defeat of the Third Reich, but also the end of

---

[1] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for his/her careful reading of my manuscript and his/her insightful comments and suggestions.

[2] They include: Hans H. Reich, *Sprache und Politik. Untersuchungen zu Wortschatz und Wortwahl des offiziellen Sprachgebrauchs in der DDR* (München: Hueber, 1968); Heidi Lehmann, *Russisch-deutsche Lehnbeziehungen im Wortschatz offizieller Wirtschaftstexte der DDR* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1972); Michael Kinne, Birgit Strube-Edelmann, *Kleines Wörterbuch des DDR-Wortschatzes* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1980); Manfred W. Hellmann, *Wörter und Wortgebrauch in Ost und West. Ein rechnergestütztes Korpus-Wörterbuch zu Zeitungstexten aus den beiden deutschen Staaten. DIE WELT und NEUES DEUTSCHLAND. 1949-1974* (Tübingen: Narr, 1992); Sabina Schroeter, *Die Sprache der DDR im Spiegel ihrer Literatur. Studien zum DDR-typischen Wortschatz* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1994); Birgit Wolf, *Sprache in der DDR. Ein Wörterbuch* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2000).

the cultural and linguistic isolation in which Germany had precipitated during the experience of National Socialism. The country was divided into four *Besatzungszonen* ('occupation zones') governed, respectively, by the Americans, the British, the French and the Russians. The functions of the central government were transferred to the *Alliierter Kontrollrat* ('Allied Control Council').

The new start for politics, culture and economy was named *Stunde Null* ('Hour Zero'), an expression borrowed from the military jargon concerning organisational planning. As far as the literature is concerned, terms such as *Trümmerliteratur* ('rubble literature') and *Kahlschlagliteratur* ('clear-cutting literature') were introduced to indicate the sharp split with the recent past that had immediately been put into place by the German intellectuals. The process of linguistic denazification, on the other hand, began in a slower, more gradual way, given that language – as a tool for interaction and socialisation – could not undergo substantial change in such a sudden manner. For one thing, it had to free itself from the lexical heritage and argumentative models imposed by the National Socialist ideology.

It is worth noting that the institutional language, namely terminology relating to the previous political system, was, of course, the first to disappear. Terms such as *Gau* ('regional district'), *Reichskommissariat* ('Reich Commissariat'), *Sturmabteilung* ('Storm Detachment') and even the title *Deutsches Reich* ('German Empire') in use from 1871, quickly became obsolete. In contrast, lexicon related to the immediate consequences of the war was preserved for a longer time and, in particular, the terminology relating to the rationing of foodstuffs and other primary consumer necessities – *Lebensmittelkarten* ('food ration cards'), *Bezugsscheine* ('ration coupons'), *Versorgungslage* ('supply situation'), and so on –, as well as the terms linked to certain forms of 'underground business' – *Hamsterfahrten* ('foraging trips'), *Schwarzmarkt* ('black market'), *Zigarettenwährung* ('cigarette currency') among others.[3]

In the zones governed by the Americans, the British and the French, the primary focus was the linguistic restoration of the *status quo ante*, without preventing the use of certain suitable words to describe the most recent events of the time. The political and cultural denazification of these territories was combined with the process of democratisation, which was also reflected in the language. On the other hand, in the *SBZ* (= *Sowjetische Besatzungszone*, 'SOZ = soviet occupation zone'), modifications shaped by socialism came about. Here, denazification was not linked to democratisation, but rather to the sovietisation of life and language.

---

[3]   Some of these terms, for reasons linked to planned economy, will be preserved in the GDR until the reunification of Germany. Horst D. Schlosser, "Die deutsche Sprache in Ost- und Westdeutschland", *Deutsch aktuell. Einführung in die Tendenzen der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*, ed. by Sandro M. Moraldo and Marcello Soffritti (Roma: Carocci, 2004), 159-168, here 160.

The steady presence of Russian occupants in the area had, as a primary consequence, i) the introduction of new Russianisms, which were linked to the contingent situation – for example *Propusk* ('identification paper, pass'), *Pajok* ('food ration, food-aid')[4] –, ii) the input of new items in the culinary arena, and of related names – *Borschtsch* (beetroot-based soup of Ukrainian origin), *Soljanka* (thick soup of Russian origin with a spicy, sour flavour), *Pelmeni* (meat tortellini typical of Siberia), *Kwaß* ('Kvass', Russian fermented beverage commonly made from rye bread) among others –, as well as iii) the recovery of Russianisms, which had already entered the German language before 1933, among which the following are worth mentioning:

Sowjet 'soviet' (Russian *sovét*)	Literally 'council, assembly, advice, harmony, concord', meaning the kinds of political organisations finalised to the conquest and management of power on a central and on a local level by the working class and by workers. In German, the term had also taken on the meaning *Sowjetmensch* ('Soviet citizen').
Troika 'troika' (Russian *trojka*)	Literally 'a group of three'. Originally the term meant 'a sled drawn by three horses harnessed side-by-side', but later it took on the political-administrative meaning of 'triarchy, triumvirate'.
Datsche 'dacha' (Russian *dača*)	A home located in the countryside, sometimes owned by inhabitants of large cities and used to spend holidays, or to be let to holidaymakers.

Furthermore, whereas in the other occupation zones, a single meaning often had a number of variants, in the SOZ, a univocal terminology was imposed by way of a process of linguistic regulation and censorship for terms relating to history and politics. Examining the epithets relating to the end of Nazi Germany, for example, an important difference emerges in linguistic attitude: while, at the same time, in the Western zones – and later on in the Federal Republic – variants were acceptable such as *Zusammenbruch* ('collapse'), *Niederlage* ('defeat'), *Kapitulation* ('capitulation'), the Soviet occupants and the German communists officially adopted the use of the epithet *Befreiung* ('liberation') alone.

In the zone under Soviet control, the public use of words with a positive connotation – typical of the Nazi-Fascist period – was banned, such as *Großdeutschland* ('Greater Germany'), *Führer* ('leader'), and so on. There was, moreover, an increase in the use of terms with a negative significance referring to Germany of the Third Reich – for

---

[4]   Shortened form of the Russian *suchoi pajok*, literally 'dry provisions', consisting of packets containing potatoes, meat and sugar distributed weekly to a circle of intellectual elite, such as university professors, engineers, doctors and other specialists of some sort.

example *SS-Staat* ('Nazi police state'), *NS-Kriegsverbrecher* ('Nazi war criminals').[5] In addition, the use of new terms was introduced – for the most part, semantic calques or Russian loanwords – with the scope of bridging the linguistic gap related to many areas of public life and to the organisation of work according to the Soviet model. Amongst others, some examples include the following:

Brigade 'brigade'	In the original meaning of 'large military unit', this term migrated from the French to the Russian *brigáda* where it also took on the meaning of 'smallest unit of people working together in a factory involved in campaigns to promote higher productivity', which was its primary meaning in East German since 1945. The derivative term *Brigadier*, 'head of a work brigade', takes on the pronunciation [briga'diːɐ̯] from the Russian *brigadír*, while in the military sense of 'officer commanding a brigade', it borrows the French pronunciation [briga'dje̯ː].
Patenschaft 'godparenthood'	As a semantic calque of the Russian *šefstvo* ('supervision', from the French *chef*) the term acquired a new specialist meaning of 'professional or ideological control, support and joint responsibility on the part of workers or businesses towards groups or single individuals for economic, cultural or political promotion'. *Patenschaft*, in this sense, would regularly feature in a contract, the *Patenschaftsvertrag* ('mentorship contract').
Subbotnik 'working saturday'	Shortened form of the Russian *kommunisticeskij subbotnik* ('communist working Saturday'). The term implied 'a day of unpaid volunteer work at the weekend for the benefit of the collective'. Such days were dedicated to the collection of garbage and recyclable materials, to repairing public property, and to other services of public benefit.

From June 1945, the formation of antifascist political parties was allowed in the area under Soviet influence. Such parties were established as the KPD (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, 'Communist Party of Germany'), the SPD (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, 'Social Democratic Party of Germany'), the CDU (*Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands*, 'Christian Democratic Union of Germany') and the LDPD (*Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*, 'Liberal Democratic Party of Germany'). In April 1946, the two major parties – the KPD led by Walter Ulbricht and the SPD headed by Otto Grotewohl – merged to become a single political organisation, the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, 'Socialist Unity Party of Germany'). This party, with the help of the Soviet Union, gradually strengthened its position, gain-

---

5   Horst D. Schlosser, *Die deutsche Sprache in der DDR zwischen Stalinismus und Demokratie. Historische, politische und kommunikative Bedingungen* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1990), 21-22.

ing more and more sympathy through the establishment and control of mass organisa-
tions, as well as through People's Congresses.

These political choices, shaped by socialism, facilitated the retrieval of terms that
were connected to propaganda, and with a Marxist-Leninist style of political and social
organisation. These terms – that had already entered the German language before 1933
and were diffused almost exclusively within restricted circles of intellectuals and Pro-
Soviet politicians – had fallen into disuse during the period of National Socialism. They
underwent, first in the SOZ and then in the German Democratic Republic, a process
of revitalisation, characterised by a significant increase in the frequency of use. Among
many examples, it is worth mentioning:

Agitation '(political) agitation'	The activity of information and persuasion of the masses concerning terms of political, social and economic interest. The term takes its positive connotation from the Russian *agitacija*, while it is substituted by the Graecism *Demagogie* ('demagogy') with a negative significance.
Aktionseinheit 'unity of action'	In socialist doctrine, the term indicates the cooperation of organisations and political parties of the working class for the achievement of crucial common objectives beyond different ideological-political standpoints.
Wandzeitung 'wall newspaper'	Structural calque from the Russian *stengazeta*, abbreviated form of *stennaja gazeta*. Notice board present in factories, schools and other institutions, organised like a newspaper page with articles, images and communication panels regarding current events and political topics for the purpose of propaganda.

From September 1945, in the SOZ, *Bodenreform* ('land reform') was launched through
the expropriation of estates wider than 100 hectares and the formation of *LPGs* (*land-
wirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften*, 'agricultural production cooperatives'). By
similar measures, banks, factories and insurance companies were confiscated from private
owners and turned into *VEBs* (= *volkseigene Betriebe*, 'people-owned enterprises').[6] New

---

[6]   Here the adjective *volkseigen* ('people-owned') takes on the synonymical meaning of *staatlich* ('state-
owned'), in the sense that, according to the Marxist-Leninist belief, a clear distinction between State and the
people did not exist. It is significant that, even during the Third Reich, certain distinctive traits of commu-
nist lexicon were adopted. The compounds containing *Volk-* represented an evident example: *Volksempfänger*
(literally 'people's receiver'), *Volkswagen* (literally 'people's car'), *Volksgemeinschaft* ('people's community'),
Volksgerichtshof ('People's Court'), *Volkssturm* (literally 'people's storm') and so on. Considering how the
German communists intended the prefix *Volk-* as an essential linguistic manifestation of ideology itself, they
took it as their own, establishing, in this way, an associative link between the so-called *Sowjetdeutsch* ('Soviet
German language') and the language of National Socialism.

compounds and euphemisms appeared in the language with reference to expropriation – *Neubauern* ('newly settled farmers', usually political refugees, to whom expropriated land was entrusted so that they would, in turn, look after it), *Umsiedler* ('resettlers', German refugees who had fled from the former territories of the Eastern German-Polish border),[7] *Volkseigentum* ('people ownership').[8] In addition, the revitalisation of some Russianisms, related to the Soviet-style agricultural economy, was also observed, as well as the introduction of new structural calques, among which the following should be noted:

Kolchos(e) 'kolkhoz'	Abbreviated form of the Russian *kol(lektivnoe) choz(jajstvo)*, literally 'rural collective economy'. The term denotes the farming cooperatives in which the farmers worked the land collectively, dividing equipment and machinery, as well as the harvest, in proportion to the number of hours actually performed by each farmer. The compounds *Kolchoswirtschaft* (from the Russian *kolchoznoe chozjajstvo*, 'rural collective economy') and *Kolchosbauer* (Russian *kolchoznik*, 'collective farmer'), as well as the respective synonyms *Kollektivwirtschaft* and *Kollektivbauer*, in addition to the derivative *kolchosieren* or *kollektivieren* ('to collectivise') can all be attributed to the Russian form *kolkhoz*.
Sowchos(e) 'sovkoz'	Abbreviated form of the Russian *sov(etskoe) choz(jajstvo)*, literally 'Soviet economy'. The term implied large, state-owned farms, created as a result of the collectivisation of land and means of production. The farmers who worked there, the *Sowchosarbeiter* ('sovkhoz workers', Russian *rabotniki sovchoza*) were, to all intents and purposes, dependent on the State, and received financial remuneration, while the entire harvest was property of the State.
Maschinen-Traktoren-Station 'machine and tractor station'	Structural calque from the Russian *mašinno-traktornaja stancija*. This term was used to indicate 'a state enterprise for ownership and maintenance of agricultural machinery that were used in kolkhozes'.

---

[7] In an official context, the term *Vertriebenen* ('refugees') could not be used as it would have put Poland, which was an ally, in a bad light. The term *Flüchtlinge* ('fugitives') was also discarded, as seeking refuge from a socialist State could not be acknowledged.

[8] Expropriation and nationalisation were concealed behind the idea of collective community by the many compound words with the prefix *Volk-* ('people'): *Volkseigentum* ('people ownership'), *Volksgüter* ('people-owned property'), and so on. As a result, the attribute *privat* ('private, personal') was no longer merely the antonym of *öffentlich* ('public'), but also of *kollektiv* ('collective'). Thus, in colloquial language, attributive forms or compounds with *privat* were used to indicate the few things that were not state-owned, such as: *Privatbäcker* ('private baker'), *Privatschreiner* ('private carpenter') or *private Kühe, Schafe, Schweine* ('private cows, sheep, pigs'). On the other hand, in the official language, the sole attribute *individuell* ('individual') was used, such as: *individueller Viehbestand* ('private livestock'). Schlosser, "Die deutsche Sprache in Ost- und Westdeutschland", 164-165.

In summer 1946, the Soviet-style 'single educational course' model, the *Einheitsschule* ('comprehensive school'), was introduced by the Russian occupants into the SOZ educational system replacing the differentiated, formative courses offered by the pre-existing school system consisting of the *Gymnasium* ('grammar school') and the *Mittelschule* ('technical secondary school'). The *Deutsche Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung* ('Central Administration of People's Education') – which, following the birth of the German Democratic Republic, became the *Ministerium für Volksbildung* ('Ministry of People's Education') – was concerned with compiling school programmes that conformed to Marxist-Leninist doctrine.[9] The study of the Russian language became compulsory in all schools beginning from the fifth class. Given that before 1945 the most widely studied foreign languages in Germany were English and French, the first issue to tackle throughout most of the SOZ territory was to find Russian teachers, as well as to overcome the lack of textbooks and other teaching materials. With the help of the Soviet occupants, the problem was quickly solved to the extent that, already by 1946, Russian was being taught in 3000 schools, as well as in all university courses. The Russian language was, in fact, considered an indispensable tool for work that gave immediate access to the principles and knowledge of the Soviet world.[10]

In 1947, the merging of the American and British zones took place – the so-called *Bizone* ('Bizonia') – soon joined in 1948 by the French-controlled territory, constituting the *Trizone* ('Trizonia').

While the Russian occupants in the SOZ, with the help of the new German political class, were introducing a model of Soviet-style planned economy, in the *Trizone* economic reforms were shaped by market economy, with consequent linguistic repercussions. In fact, where planned economy would only have allowed a small amount of consumer goods, for which univocal names and technical jargon defined over a long period of time were used – such as *Waren des täglichen Bedarfs* ('goods for everyday consumption'), *Genussmittel* ('luxury foods, alcohol and tobacco'), *Edelgemüse* ('fine vegetables') –, the Western model quickly showed a distinction in lexicon, undergoing the continual exposure to the diversified products of the market. Such a tendency towards a univocal terminology, on the one hand, and the recurrence of variants that were more or less synonymous with each other, on the other, was also clear for terms that had acquired ideological value, irrespective of them being on one side or the other. For example, in the SOZ, the term *Werktätige* ('worker') had acquired the meaning of 'person (worker, em-

---

9   Eberhard Meumann, "Education laws and schooling: the case of the German Democratic Republic", *Education and the Law. International Perspectives*, ed. by Witold Tulasiewicz and Gerald Strowbridge (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 94-111.

10   Alexandre Pirojkov, *Russizismen im Deutschen der Gegenwart. Bestand, Zustand und Entwicklungstendenzen* (Berlin: Weißensee, 2002), 69-70.

ployee or member of a socialist cooperative) who sustains him/herself from his/her own work and does not take advantage of other people's work', typical of the Marxist tradition, obtaining a wide semantic spectrum, while the variants *Arbeitnehmer* ('jobholder'), *Berufstätige* ('labourer'), *Beschäftigte* ('employee'), *Erwerbstätige* ('employed person'), *Lohnabhängige* ('wage-earner'), which were common in West Germany, gradually became taboos.

Between 1945 and 1948, in a period defined as 'anti-fascist democratic phase',[11] people were not expecting a long-lasting division of Germany, let alone a possible linguistic split. In the SOZ, rulers were working towards the creation of a Pro-Soviet, – or at the least neutral – united German State. The processes of resemantisation of some political terms turned back to an ideological tone – such as *Antifaschismus* ('anti-fascism'), *Demokratie* ('democracy'), *Sozialismus* ('socialism'), *Arbeiterklasse* ('working class'), and so on – date back to this time. Such terms would have represented one of the most evident communication barriers between East and West Germany. On both sides, for example, people declared an ambition to restore 'democracy', which had been shattered by the Nazi-Fascist regime, but opposing political concepts were hidden, by then, behind the very same word. For example, while on the Western side, *Demokratie* was intended to mean a pluralism of opinions within decentralised (federal) structures, Soviets and German communists were aiming at a centralised State within which *Demokratie* would have been further and further downgraded, until becoming a mere label for a new totalitarian order of public life.

III. From the Birth of the 'Two Germanies' to the Building of the Berlin Wall (1949-1961)

The propensity to create two independent German States was established in 1949 when separate Constitutions were promulgated, in both the Western and Eastern areas, bringing to the birth of the *BRD* (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 'FRG = Federal Republic of Germany'), on the one side, and the *DDR* (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, 'GDR = German Democratic Republic'), on the other.[12]

---

[11]   Schlosser, *Die deutsche Sprache in der DDR*, 28.

[12]   While the Constitution in the fledgling Western State was given the temporary name *Grundgesetz* (literally 'Basic Law') in view of a review of the text, which would, fairly shortly, be extended to the whole of Germany, by naming the GDR's constitutive document *Verfassung* ('Constitution'), a demand for *ipso facto* validity was being put forward for the entire German territory, as can be seen from Article 1: "Deutschland ist eine unteilbare demokratische Republik" ('Germany is an indivisible democratic republic'). This first text was then followed by two additional versions, which were far more orientated towards

The first linguistic consequence of the new situation was the implementation of institutional terminology. In the *Bundesrepublik* ('Federal Republic'), whose name bears clear witness to its federal principles, all of the names of figures and institutions of state were introduced with the prefix *Bund-* ('federal'): *Bundesbank* ('Federal Bank'), *Bundeskanzler* ('Federal Chancellor'), *Bundesregierung* ('Federal Government'), *Bundespräsident* ('Federal President'), *Bundeswehr* ('Federal Armed Forces'). Likewise, in the Democratic Republic, in many official terms, the attributive forms *deutsch* ('German') and *Deutschland* ('Germany') were eliminated and replaced with the acronym *DDR*: *DDR-Fahne* ('flag of the German Democratic Republic'), *DDR-Hauptstadt* ('capital of the German Democratic Republic'), *DDR-Hymne* ('German Democratic Republic National Anthem'), *Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR* ('Academy of Sciences of the German Democratic Republic'), *Staatliche Versicherung der DDR* ('state insurance of the German Democratic Republic').

Immediately after the birth of the GDR, many terms of Soviet origin began to play a role in lexical heritage; among these words, which were related to State and party organisation, the following should be highlighted:

Zentralkomitee 'Central Committee'	Structural calque from the Russian *central'nyj komitet*. The term denotes the standing administrative body, elected by Congress, which led the organisation of communist and socialist parties between one congressional session and another, carrying out deliberative roles, and choosing executive authorities. Based on the model offered by the Soviet Union, the structure, tasks and role of the Central Committee were nearly exactly the same in every country of the Eastern Bloc. The use of the acronym *ZK* was also widespread.
Politbüro 'politburo'	Borrowed from the Russian *politbjuró*, abbreviated form of *politíčeskoe bjuró* ('Political Bureau'). Concerning the process of democratic centralism, this was the term for restricted collegiate authority, which was elected by the Central Committee and to which the management of the party was entrusted. Similar to *Politbüro*, the modifier *Polit-* makes up other compounds: *Politarbeiter* ('political worker', structural calque from the Russian *politrabotnik*), *Politökonomie* ('political economy', structural calque from the Russian *politekonomija*), *Politschulung* ('political education'), *Politoffizier* ('political officer').

the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the first established in 1968 and the second in 1974, from which every reference to a united Germany had disappeared, and where the GDR introduced itself first as *Sozialistischer Staat Deutscher Nation* ('Socialist State of the German Nation') and then as *Sozialistischer Staat der Arbeiter und Bauern* ('Socialist State of Workers and Farmers').

Kader 'cadre'	The term was originally borrowed from military jargon with the meaning 'specialised army troop'. As a semantic calque from the plural form of the Russian *kadry* (from the French *cadre*), it acquires also the meaning 'qualified group of people with important functions in every area of social life'. Many are the compounds with *Kader-* as a modifier – *Kaderabteilung* ('personnel department'), *Kaderentwicklung* ('cadre development') – and as the base of the word – *Parteikader* ('party cadre'), *Wirtschaftskader* ('economics cadre'), *Redakteurkader* ('editor cadre').

In January 1951, an academic reform was introduced by the SED with the propagandistic objective of contrasting middle-class objectivism, cosmopolitanism and social democratism, inspired by the Marxist-Leninist ideology. A centralised control system, carried out by the *Staatssekretariat für Hochschulwesen* ('State Secretariat for Higher Education'), was launched for universities. All students from every department had to take a *gesellschaftswissenschaftliches Grundstudium* ('basic course in social sciences') in which political economics, Marxist-Leninist principles, dialectics and historical materialism were taught.[13] In addition, new university courses were opened being based on the Soviet model that allowed students to combine study with work. New terms influenced by the Russian language became part of the lexicon relating to university teaching, some examples being the following:

Aspirantur 'research studentship'	This Latinism had passed through French to Russian, meaning a 'training course for junior researchers', following which one obtained a 'doctoral degree'. Although the term, with this meaning, had already come into use in East German in 1945, the *Aspirantur* was legally established in the German Democratic Republic only in 1951.
Akademiker 'academician'	As a semantic calque from the Russian *akademik*, the original meaning of the Graecism – 'person of higher education' – is set aside in favour of 'member of a scientific community or of an association of scholars, artists or writers from a socialist State outside the GDR'. In this sense, the term came to be used as a title, placed before the proper names of scholars who came from countries of the Eastern Bloc.

---

[13] Jens Wurche, *Marx und Engels in der DDR-Linguistik. Zur Herausbildung einer „marxistisch-leninistischen Sprachtheorie"* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 55.

Abenduniversität 'evening university'	Structural calque from the Russian *večernij universitet*. Originally, this term generally referred to the structures devoted to popular political education. From 1959, however, the term came to be used for university establishments for working students whose educational activities took place during the evening. Similar to *Abenduniversität*, the terms *Abendstudium* ('evening study') and *Abendstudent/-in* ('evening university student') also emerged.

In an attempt to weaken the pre-existing peripheral powers in favour of a new kind of centralised State, in 1952, *Länder* ('federal states') were abolished and replaced with fourteen *Bezirke* ('districts'). The SED took on absolute power, creating a system of political police and secret services that, in fact, limited the personal freedom of all the citizens. The existing gap between party agendas and the political and social reality of the State was widened by the hardening of the work laws, which led to the *Volksaufstand* ('people's uprising') on 17 June 1953, when the citizens claimed, among other things, democratic elections and the reunification with the FRG. The Soviet military government responded by sending troops, stifling the uprising in bloodshed. In the following years, the number of escape attempts from the country increased, resulting in the building of the *Berliner Mauer* ('Berlin Wall', 13 August 1961), and the strengthening of control along the whole border.

The years between 1949 and 1961 represented the end of the 'Pacifist Period' with the abandonment of the concept of a united German State and the establishment, in 1956, of the *Nationale Volksarmee* ('National People's Army'), whose aim was to defend the GDR and the entire Eastern Bloc. The SED was busy in the formation of a new nation, aiming at recognition from other socialist States, and trying to fix a clear borderline between the GDR and the FRG. The latter, in particular, combined with the now clear semantic separation between the 'two Germanies' concerning the political-institutional lexicon, gave rise to fear, on the part of the Western observers, of an imminent *sprachliche Spaltung* ('language split'), along with the resulting development of a 'new language' in the GDR.[14]

---

[14] The titles of some essays published in the BRD in the 1950s are already very eloquent in this sense: *Sprachentartung in der Sowjetzone* ('The linguistic degeneration of the Soviet zone', Karl F. Borée, 1952); *Deutsche Sprache in östlicher Zwangsjacke* ('The German language with the Eastern straitjacket', August Köhler, 1954); *Sowjetdeutsch – Die Sprache als Opfer und Werkzeug der Sowjetisierung* ('Soviet German – Language as victim and tool of Sovietisation', Friedrich Koepp, 1955); *Gefährliches 'Parteichinesisch' – Verhängnisvolle Sprachspaltung zwischen West und Ost* ('Dangerous political jargon – The fatal linguistic split between East and West', Hanswilhelm Haefs, 1956); *Die Sprache als Waffe* ('Language as a weapon', Elisabeth M. Herrmann, 1958); *Sowjet-Deutsch – Die Sprache als politisches Kampfmittel der Kommunisten* ('Soviet German – Language as the communists' political weapon', Brigitte Korntner, 1959). Manfred W. Hellmann, "Die doppelte Wende. Zur Verbindung von Sprache, Sprachwissenschaft und Zeitgebundener

On the other hand, prominent scholars of the Democratic Republic, like Victor Klemperer, responded to the accusations, criticising, in their turn, the linguistic situation of the Federal Republic.[15] However, on closer inspection, during the whole decade of the 1950s, linguists from the GDR concentrated their efforts, above all, on meeting the needs of the new state education system, working for the most part on drafting dictionaries, grammatical manuals and linguistic atlases.[16]

IV. *Abgrenzungspolitik* and 'Linguistic Separation' (1962-1970)

Following the building of the Berlin Wall, for the whole decade of the 1960s, there was a tightening of the *Abgrenzungspolitik* ('demarcation policy'). This was made even more extreme by the adoption of the 'Hallstein doctrine' in the FRG, which marked the breakdown of diplomatic and commercial relationships with those states that had legitimised the existence of the GDR.

Meanwhile the Germans of the Federal Republic – who were by then experiencing a strong economic growth – were losing their perception of the existence of the 'other Germany': in the West, the word *Deutschland* was being used as a synonym of *Bundesrepublik*, and the majority of Western Germans showed little interest in the GDR, compared to the rest of the world.[17] Many *DDR-Bürger* ('GDR citizens'), on the other hand, remained attached to the belief that they were nothing else than *Deutsche* ('Germans'), even though this went against everything the State stood for.

---

politischer Bewertung am Beispiel deutsch-deutscher Sprachdifferenzierung", *Politische Semantik. Bedeutungsanalytische und sprachkritische Beiträge zur politischen Sprachverwendung*, ed. by Josef Klein (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989), 297-326, here 301.

[15]   According to Klemperer, in the FRG, under the cultural influence of the United States of America, there was still no liberation from the 'linguistic plague' of National Socialism. Furthermore, the lexical innovations in the GDR did not represent a splitting of the language, but were rather considered the basis of a development in a 'progressive' perspective. Victor Klemperer, *Zur gegenwärtigen Sprachsituation in Deutschland. Vortrag gehalten im Klub der Kulturschaffenden Berlin* (Berlin Ost: Aufbau, 1953).

[16]   Dieter Schmitt, *Doktrin und Sprache in der ehemaligen DDR bis 1989. Eine politikwissenschaftliche Analyse unter Berücksichtigung sprachwissenschaftlicher Gesichtspunkte* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 27.

[17]   Manfred W. Hellmann, "Zur Sprache vor und nach der ,Wende': Ost-West-Kulturen in der Kommunikation", *Deutschland und die ,Wende' in Literatur, Sprache und Medien. Interkulturelle und kulturkontrastive Perspektiven*, ed. by Hiltraud Casper-Hehne and Irmy Schweiger (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag, 2008), 97-116, here 100. In this respect, it is worth emphasising how even the scarce interest of Western Germans in the 'other Germany' is behind the causes of the discomfort still experienced by Eastern Germans some years after the reunification of the two States, a discomfort that manifested itself, among other things, in a sense of linguistic alienation.

The desire to keep a distance from the FRG – not only in the sense of political ideology, but also on a linguistic level – led to the tabooing of many Anglo-American internationalisms during the 1960s. Terms such as *Jeans*, *T-Shirt*, *Supermarkt* ('supermarket'), already widespread in West German, were not in use in the GDR, where the same items were referred to using different words: *Jeans* → *Niet(en)hose*, *T-Shirt* → *Nicki*, *Supermarkt* → *Kaufhalle*.[18]

Surprisingly, however, in the language of the Democratic Republic, other Anglo-Americanisms, which came from the Russian and were unknown or scarcely used in West German, were accepted, including:

Meeting ['miːtɪŋ]	The Anglicism made its way through the Russian *miting* to German, meaning 'political event, mass meeting'. Many compound words having -*meeting* at their core also emerged, such as: *Abschlußmeeting* ('closing meeting'), *Arbeitermeeting* ('workers meeting'), *Freundschaftsmeeting* ('political friendship meeting'), *Kampfmeeting* ('political fight meeting'), *Solidaritätsmeeting* ('solidarity meeting').
Dispatcher [dɪsˈpɛtʃɐ]	The term, which takes its meaning from the Russian *dispetčer*, was descriptive of a 'worker in socialist shops, responsible for the central management and supervision of the production processes according to state guidelines for the realisation of a development plan'. Many compounds having -*dispatcher* at their core – *Grubendispatcher* ('mine dispatcher'), *Hauptdispatcher* ('chief dispatcher'), *Schichtdispatcher* ('shift dispatcher') – or as their modifier – *Dispatcherdienst* ('dispatching services'), *Dispatchersystem* ('dispatcher system', structural calque from the Russian *dispetčerizacija*), *Dispatcherzentrale* ('dispatcher centre') – were also known.
Kombine 'combine harvester'	The Anglicism came into East German through the Russian *kombajn*. The pronunciation can be [kɔmˈbaɪn], as in English and Russian, or adapted to the phonetic rules of German [kɔmˈbiːnə].

At the 9th Session of the Central Committee of the SED (22 October 1968), the analysis of the *Grundfragen der gesellschaftlichen Wirksamkeit der Sprache* ('fundamental questions of the social effectiveness of language') was chosen by the *Politbüro* as the cen-

---

[18]　*Niet(en)hose*: literally 'trousers studded with rivets'; *Nicki*: in West German, the same term meant a light jumper made from synthetic fibre; *Kaufhalle*: literally 'shopping hall'. During the 1970s and the 1980s other internationalisms in the GDR gave rise to the same processes of tabooing in the official vocabulary: *Diskjockey* ('disc jockey') → *Schallplattenunterhalter* (literally 'entertainer playing vinyl records'), *windsurfen* ('windsurfing') → *(steh)brettsegeln* (literally 'to sail standing on a board'), *Hamburger* → *Grilletta* (from the verb *grillen*, 'to grill'), *Pizza* → *Krusta* (pseudo-Italianism referring to *crosta*, 'crust').

tral subject of sociological interest.[19] Thanks to these studies, sociologists and linguists were supposed to contribute in a fundamental way to the ideological struggle against Western imperialism for the affirmation of the GDR as *entwickeltes gesellschaftliches System des Sozialismus* ('developed social system of socialism').[20] Such encouragement came from the General Secretary of the SED, Walter Ulbricht himself in his speech at the 13th Session of the Central Committee (10 June 1970), when he declared that even the linguistic unity between the GDR and the FRG had, by that time, been compromised, inasmuch as:

> Zwischen der traditionellen deutschen Sprache Goethes, Schillers, Lessings, Marx' und Engels, die vom Humanismus erfüllt ist, und der vom Imperialismus verseuchten und von den kapitalistischen Monopolverlagen manipulierten Sprache in manchen Kreisen der westdeutschen Bundesrepublik besteht eine große Differenz. Sogar gleiche Worte haben oftmals nicht mehr die gleiche Bedeutung.[21]

> ('A large difference exists between the traditional German language of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Marx and Engels and the manipulated language that in some fields in the Western Federal Republic has been corrupted by imperialism and manipulated by capitalistic, monopolistic publishers. Even the same words often no longer mean the same things').

Such a validation of the linguistic split was mirrored in the SED's political propaganda, emphasised by the motto: *Nichts verbindet uns mit der imperialistischen Bundesrepublik und alles mit der DDR, unserem sozialistischen Vaterland* ('Nothing links us with the imperialist Federal Republic and everything unites us with the GDR, our socialist fatherland').

Meanwhile, in the FRG, the belief was spread that the cohesive strength of the language, combined with the aversion of the GDR's population to the jargon imposed by the party, would have proved stronger than any attempt at linguistic separation pursued for political purposes.[22]

---

[19]   Ulla Fix, *Sprache, Sprachgebrauch und Diskurse in der DDR. Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2014), 680.

[20]   Schmitt, *Doktrin und Sprache in der ehemaligen DDR bis 1989*, 28.

[21]   "Rede auf der 13. Tagung des ZK der SED", *Neues Deutschland*, 16 June 1970: 4.

[22]   Hellmann, "Die doppelte Wende", 308.

V. The 'Honecker Era': from the politics of easing tensions to the fall of the Berlin Wall (1971-1989)

In 1971 in the GDR, Erich Honecker, with the Soviet support, became the new General Secretary of the SED Central Committee, replacing Walter Ulbricht. Meanwhile in 1969 in the FRG, the social democrat Willy Brandt had come to power; he was an advocate of the *Ostpolitik* ('eastern policy'), aimed at improving inter-German connections, a policy which came to a head in 1972 with the signing of the *Grundlagenvertrag* ('Basic Treaty'), sanctioning the reciprocal recognition of the two nations as sovereign States.

The easing of tensions in the relationship between the 'two Germanies' brought another success to the SED in foreign politics, that is, the legal recognition of the GDR by the international community with the opening of diplomatic headquarters in many countries, as well as an invitation to join the United Nations.

Having gone beyond Ulbricht's *Abgrenzungspolitik*, the GDR, under the leadership of Honecker, introduced itself to the world as a socialist nation which promoted its autonomous development in the field of politics, social development, science and sport, in order to rival the FRG in all these fields. Culture, history, traditions and customs that connected the 'two Germanies' merged in the concept of *Nationalität* ('nationality'), while peculiarities and differences in production, social structures, and political and economic systems, were at the core of the concept of *Nation* ('nation').[23] The citizens of the GDR were, therefore, Germans (*Nationalität*) of the Democratic Republic (*Nation*).

As far as the linguistic field is concerned, during the 1970s many complaints in the Democratic Republic stressed the lack of studies on the link between doctrine and language, as well as the absence of a linguistic theory inspired by the Marxist-Leninist ideology, even though language and linguistics were seen as ideal tools for developing and reinforcing social consciousness.[24] Even the language, therefore, was considered to have ideological and political value in the two German States, something which came into full evidence in the use of the concept of *Nation*, showing how – as much in the GDR as in the FRG – the linguistic use was determined by two opposing social situations. Thus, although speaking about two different languages was considered inappropriate, distinguishing four national variants of the German language, each possessing equal value – German used in the FRG, in the GDR, in Austria and in Switzerland – was also

---

[23]   Hellmann, "Die doppelte Wende", 311.

[24]   Wilhelm Schmidt, *Sprache und Ideologie. Beiträge zu einer marxistisch-leninistischen Sprachwirkungsforschung* (Halle, Saale: Niemeyer, 1972), 7.

considered theoretically important.[25] This theory, in line with the linguistic politics of the SED, took the name *Vier-Varianten-These* ('four-variants thesis'), a theory which gained a large consensus and influenced linguistic studies in the Democratic Republic for nearly a decade.

Between the 1970s and 1980s, a growing public debt in the GDR caused a notable decrease in the otherwise steady improvement of living standards. The State had a greater and greater need for foreign currency[26] and the Democratic Republic was indebted by then to several Western institutions. Commercial links between the 'two Germanies' were indispensable mostly to the economy of the GDR, and the East did not hesitate to ask the West for loans worth billions in exchange for small improvements in terms of international political relationships.

Inter-German dialogue became a way of collaborating with the FRG and even the 'question of language' was scaled down to a certain extent. Therefore, during the 1980s in the GDR it was noted that, although most of the basic lexicon between Eastern and Western speakers was the same, mutual understanding was not always assured: in fact, the linguistic differences invested even the everyday informal language, to the point of affecting not only the *Verlautbarungssprache* ('release language'), but also the spheres of work and private life.[27] For the whole of the 1980s, scholars in the GDR – in contrast to what had happened until then – tended to minimise the significance of the differences, focussing instead on what brought language together in the two States.

In order not to openly discard the *Vier-Varianten-These*, linguists made a distinction between *Sprachgemeinschaft* ('linguistic community'), including the whole Germanophone area, and *Kommunikationsgemeinschaften* ('communication communities'), referring to the single nations.[28] Eventually the concept of *Variante* ('language variant') was replaced with

---

[25] Gotthard Lerchner, "Zur Spezifik der deutschen Sprache in der DDR und ihrer gesellschaftlichen Determination", *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, 11 (1974): 259-265 and Gotthard Lerchner, "Nationalsprachliche Varianten", *Forum*, 3 (1976): 10-11.

[26] In this way, for example, the same officials who ordered the opening of every package sent from the FRG and other Western countries for fear of the circulation of unwanted books, newspapers and magazines, allowed citizens from the East to accept gifts in foreign currency. Therefore, the Western Mark started to circulate in the GDR as a form of second currency through which one could also buy otherwise rare products in *Intershopläden* ('international shops').

[27] In this respect, it is worth emphasising that, in reference to the GDR, one needs to distinguish between two linguistic planes: the formal plane of politics, the press and institutions, regulated by party officials, and the language of informal communication that, in many cases, escaped a proper control. Moser postulates a sort of diglossia for the East Germans, characterised by the precise use of the official standard in conversations with officials and members of the party, and a 'cautious' divergence from the norm in informal and private situations. Hugo Moser, *Sprachliche Folgen der politischen Teilung Deutschlands* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1962), 47-48.

[28] Wolfgang Fleischer *et al.*, *Wortschatz der deutschen Sprache in der DDR. Fragen seines Aufbaus und seiner Verwendungsweise* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1987).

Varietät ('language variety'), which, in fact, introduced the more neutral notion of pluri-centralism of the German language.[29]

In the meantime, the Soviet Union – still considered strong and dangerous at an international level – was a 'giant in agony': the economy was experiencing a set-back, productivity was scarce and the huge efforts to keep up with the United States in the arms race had worn out the State's finances. In addition to this, increasingly unbridled corruption dominated the State, leading to its downfall. In 1985, after the death of Konstantin Chernenko, Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Soviet Union Communist Party. Gorbachev promoted a political reform, which was shaped by the principles of *glásnost* (literally 'publicity', but generally translated as 'transparency') and of *perestrojka* ('reorganisation'), soon leading to the end of the Cold War between the USA and the USSR, and greatly reducing the risk of nuclear war.

In the GDR, the leaders of the SED saw the Soviet Union's process of democratisation first with a certain embarrassment and then with increasing resistance, in the sense that applying the same principles in the Democratic Republic would have called into question their own power. Meanwhile, opposition anti-regime groups, supported by the evangelical church of the GDR, began reorganizing themselves, to the cry of *Von der Sowjetunion lernen, heißt siegen lernen!* ('Learning from the Soviet Union means learning to win!').[30]

On 7 May 1989, the administrative elections gave a clear result of 98% of the vote in favour of the candidates from the National Front,[31] but immediately the sensation was that the vote could have been rigged, leading to people's protests. Some months later, the citizens of the GDR poured into the Federal Republic embassies in Prague, Warsaw and Budapest in the hope of being able to join the 'other Germany'. Those who stayed in the Democratic Republic, instead, organised *Montagsdemonstrationen* ('Monday demonstrations') in Leipzig, calling for freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and putting pressure on the government.

In October 1989 in East Berlin, seemingly unconcerned by the serious problems afflicting the State, Honecker and the rest of the *Politbüro* were celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the birth of the Republic. In the context of these celebrations – from 31 October to 1st November – the GDR's last linguistic conference took place, characterised by a wide variety of topics. For the first time linguists of the Democratic

---

[29] Wolfgang Fleischer, "Zur Situation der deutschen Sprache heute", *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung*, 42 (1989): 435-442.

[30] The slogan, coined in 1949 by the SED's leadership for the purposes of propaganda, by then had become one of the symbols of people's protests.

[31] The *Nationale Front der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* ('National Front of the German Democratic Republic') was a coalition of political parties and of mass organizations led by the SED.

Republic autonomously chose the subjects to debate without any submission to party guidelines.[32]

The Berlin Wall would be torn down just eight days later, thus declaring the end of GDR's socialist system and the beginning of the reunification process with Federal Germany.

VI. Language after the Reunification of Germany

The events that occurred since the fall of the Berlin Wall at the official celebration of the German reunification on 3 October 1990 are well known and do not need to be recalled here. However, certain processes of linguistic transformation, which took place as a result of these events, are worth mentioning.[33]

By 1990, the first studies to monitor the evolution of vocabulary and communicative behavioural patterns had begun, producing an almost unilateral and selective linguistic transformation, which involved the Eastern speakers much more directly than the Western ones.[34] In fact, in the territories of the former-GDR, there was a rapid disap-

---

[32]   Schmitt, *Doktrin und Sprache in der ehemaligen DDR bis 1989*, 31.

[33]   Normally, linguistic evolution occurs slowly and in an almost imperceptible manner. Therefore, it can only be observed and described after a certain period of time. The rapid process of the German reunification, on the other hand, gave the possibility of a direct and almost simultaneous observation of the cultural and linguistic transformations that took place after 1989.

[34]   Among the many publications, the following are worth mentioning: "Die deutsche Sprache nach der Wende", *Germanistische Linguistik*, special issue ed. by Klaus Welke, Wolfgang W. Sauer, and Helmut Glück, 110-111 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1992); *Sprache im Umbruch: politischer Sprachwandel im Zeichen von "Wende" und "Vereinigung"*, ed. by Armin Burkhardt and Karl Peter Fritzsche (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1992); *Sprachgebrauch im Wandel: Anmerkungen zur Kommunikationskultur in der DDR vor und nach der Wende*, ed. by Gotthard Lerchner (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992); *Wer spricht das wahre Deutsch? Erkundungen zur Sprache im vereinigten Deutschland*, ed. by Ruth Reiher and Rüdiger Läzer (Berlin: Aufbau, 1993); Marianne Schröder, Ulla Fix, *Allgemeinwortschatz der DDR-Bürger – nach Sachgruppen geordnet und linguistisch kommentiert* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1997); *Kommunikation in gesellschaftlichen Umbruchsituationen. Mikroanalytische Aspekte des sprachlichen und gesellschaftlichen Wandels in den Neuen Bundesländern*, Peter Auer and Heiko Hausendorf (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000); *Mit gespaltener Zunge? Die deutsche Sprache nach dem Fall der Mauer*, ed. by Ruth Reiher and Antje Baumann (Berlin: Aufbau, 2000); *Deutsche Sprach- und Kommunikationserfahrungen zehn Jahre nach der "Wende"*, ed. by Gerd Antos, Ulla Fix, and Ingrid Kühn (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001); *Ost-West-Sprachgebrauch – zehn Jahre nach der Wende. Eine Disputation*, ed. by Ingrid Kühn, Hans-Joachim Solms, *et al.* (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2001); Patrick Stevenson, *Language and German Disunity: A Sociolinguistic History of East and West in Germany, 1945-2000* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Vorwärts und nichts vergessen: Sprache in der DDR: Was war, was ist, was bleibt*, ed. by Ruth Reiher and Antje Baumann (Berlin: Aufbau, 2004); *Diskursmauern. Aktuelle Aspekte der sprachlichen Verhältnisse zwischen Ost und West*, ed. by Kersten Sven Roth and Markus Wienen (Bremen: Hempen, 2008); "Sprache und Kommunikation in

pearance of many bureaucratic and technical terms, as well as most of the constituent elements of the *Verlautbarungssprache* related to the previous forty years. Unlike what occurred in 1945, however, voids in naming that resulted from the reunification were remedied by drawing on the linguistic repertoire available in the FRG. Furthermore, the introduction of Western communication patterns also assisted the Eastern speakers in the recovery of a public language, which was free from ideological manipulation.

Eastern Germans, therefore, had to become familiar with a new social and political system accompanied by an associated vocabulary as well as to adjust, even in daily communication, to a large number of terms – many of which were Anglicisms – that had been unknown or at least unusual to them up to that point: *Tiefkühlware* instead of *Feinfrost* ('deep-frozen foods'), *Aerobic* instead of *Popgymnastik* ('aerobics'), *Overheadprojektor* instead of *Polylux* ('overhead projector'), among others.

Nonetheless, there are also lexemes specific to the GDR that can be described as *wenderesistent* ('turnaround-resistant'), or rather lexemes that are still in use today, in particular in informal communication and referring to the sphere of everyday life. Over time, some of these were established as geosynonyms of the Eastern area – *Datsche* as a variant of *Wochenendhaus* ('weekend house'), *Broiler* as a variant of *Brathähnchen* ('roast chicken'), *in Größenordnungen* as a variant of *in großer Zahl* ('in great numbers') – while others were even spread, at least in part, amongst Western speakers – *Lehrling* as a synonym of *Auszubildender* ('apprentice'), *abnicken* ('to nod') in the sense of *befürworten* ('to endorse'), *Poliklinik* ('polyclinic') instead of *Krankenhaus* ('hospital'). Even among the *wenderesistenten* lexemes, there are those that were introduced in the German language through Russian. Amongst others, some examples include the following:

Exponat 'something exhibited in a museum, exhibit'	From the Latin *exponere* ('to expose'), the term entered East German in the 1950s through the Russian *éksponat* as a synonym of *Ausstellungsstück*, *Museumsstück* ('exhibition piece', 'museum object').
Kulturhaus 'cultural centre'	Structural calque from the Russian *dom kul'tury*, meaning a building where cultural and artistic events take place, and where leisure activities are organised.
Zielstellung 'goal setting, aim'	The compound derives from the Russian collocation *stavit' tsel'* and is an Eastern variant of *Zielsetzung*.

Deutschland Ost und West. Ein Reader zu fünfzig Jahren Forschung", *Germanistische Linguistik*, special issue ed. by Manfred W. Hellmann, Marianne Schröder, and Ulla Fix, 192-194 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2008); *Politische Wechsel – sprachliche Umbrüche*, ed. by Bettina Bock, Ulla Fix, and Steffen Pappert (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2011); *Politische Konzepte in der DDR. Zwischen Diskurs und Wirklichkeit*, ed. by Stéphanie Benoiste, Laurent Gautier, and Marie-Geneviève Gerrer (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013).

Today, thirty years after the territorial and political reunification of Germany, it can be said that the linguistic wall has also finally collapsed and that, at least in formal situations, it is no longer possible to distinguish between West and East Germans according to the way they speak. However, there is still an element that partly reflects the differences in communication patterns between East and West Germans especially concerning those who experienced the separation: the influences linked to the respective socio-political contexts by which these speakers were shaped.

The need of East Germans to adapt to Western linguistic standards – through the removal of vocabulary and communication habits related to the totalitarian regime – has created a sense of estrangement that can be observed in specific communicative situations: for example, an uncertainty in the use of the personal pronouns *du* ('you' as a familiar form of address) and *Sie* ('you' as a polite form of address), and in that of the impersonal pronoun *man* ('one, anyone, anybody'),[35] as well as in the choice between some lexical variants in use in the rest of the germanophone area – *Krankenhaus/Spital* ('hospital'), *Straßenbahn/Tram* ('tram, tramway'), *Tischler/Schreiner* ('carpenter').[36]

In general, however, it can be said that the desire to be fully recognised as Germans and, at the same time, the fear of losing their own identity as East Germans have favoured, above all at an informal level, a mixed use of the two varieties that can still be seen today in certain groups within the speech community.

VII. Conclusion

As we have highlighted in this paper, processes of differentiation occurred even in the field of linguistics during over four decades of political and territorial division of Germany. Despite many common features in terms of *Grundwortschatz* ('basic vocabulary'), grammar and rules of *Wortzusammensetzung* ('word composition'), the GDR – under the influence of the Soviet Union and of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine – had chosen to follow an autonomous path, especially concerning the release language.

---

[35] The impersonal pronoun *man* in Eastern linguistic use would often replace the personal pronoun *ich* ('I'), witnessing a spirit of collectivity characteristic of Eastern speakers and affirmed for reasons that were not just ideological. Schlosser, "Die deutsche Sprache in Ost- und Westdeutschland", 164.

[36] In this respect, Katelhön (2011, 220) notes that the use of regional variants typical of Southern Germany, Austria and Switzerland in the central and northern areas of Germany such as Thuringia, Brandenburg and Saxony is witness of the linguistic uncertainty of local speakers, which was linked to the strong pressure of linguistic adaptation exercised by Western speakers. Peggy Katelhön, "Divisi dalla propria madrelingua: la lingua tedesca vent'anni dopo la caduta del muro", *C'era una volta il muro. A vent'anni dalla svolta tedesca*, ed. by Emilia Fiandra (Roma: Artemide, 2011), 209-224.

In the Democratic Republic, already by 1946, the compulsory study of Russian had been introduced in all schools and universities. Nevertheless, in the German language of the GDR, the number of true and proper Russianisms was, in fact, limited, probably due to the important phonological and structural differences between the two languages. The influence of the Russian language was much clearer in the loanwords from Russian, which originated from Graecisms, Latinisms, Frenchisms and Anglo-Americanisms, as well as in the structural calques and process of semantic adaptation of many terms already present in the German language.

The study of the nature and of scope of the phenomenon of lexical differentiation between the 'two Germanies' is surely of great linguistic and historical interest. Nevertheless, one cannot approach the topic solely in a strictly lexicological sense; instead, one needs to question what role these differences have played in the process of inter-German communication and understanding, while simultaneously taking into account important non-linguistic factors, such as political events, economic changes, cultural climate, living conditions and other psychological and social aspects that were also of influence.

This study of the process of sovietisation of the German language in the GDR, in the context of fundamental historical events, was conducted with the hope of raising attention on the ideological development of language in what was becoming, for all intents and purposes, the fourth standard variant of the German language, and of opening the doors to further detailed analyses of the linguistic development after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

UNRELIABLE ALLIES: THE PEASANTS IN THE ROMANIAN EARLY COMMUNIST DISCOURSE (1948-1965)

Călin Morar-Vulcu

(Independent Researcher)

I. Introduction

Marxism considered classes as objective entities defined by their relation to the means of production. However, the Soviet and Soviet-inspired regimes did not allow class identity to 'grow' from these objectively existing entities. Instead, they actively ascribed class to virtually all citizens[1] or, in other words, interpellated them.[2] Romania was no exception: after taking power, the communist party (named between 1948 and 1965 Romanian Workers' Party, hereafter RWP) began a process of identity ascription af-

---

[1]   Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia", *The Journal of Modern History* 65, 4 (1993): 745-770; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "L'usage bolchévique de la 'classe'", *Actes de La Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 85, 1 (1990): 70-80; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks! : Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Isabel A. Tirado, "Peasants Into Soviets: Reconstructing Komsomol Identity in the Russian Countryside of the 1920s", *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 18 (2001): 42-63; Dmitri Stanchevich, "The Rhetorical Construction of Social Classes in the Reports of Stalin's Secret Police", *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 43, 3 (2013): 261-288; for China, see Eddy U, "Third Sister Liu and the Making of the Intellectual in Socialist China", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 69, 1 (2010): 57-83; Eddy U, "Reifications of the Intellectual: Representations, Organization and Agency in Revolutionary China", *The British Journal of Sociology*, 64, 4 (2013): 617-642; Eddy U, "What Was the Petty Bourgeoisie? Cultural Positioning and Reification of Marxist Classes in Early PRC Discourse", *Modern China*, 41, 6 (2014): 575-602.

[2]   Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-186.

fecting older identities, from nation to ethnic minorities and from working class to women. This process was a mixture of terminological and conceptual changes (restricting use of some terms, defining new social actors and introducing new terms to name them). Using as main source a corpus containing 425 articles taken from the party daily *Scânteia* (*The Spark*)[3] on topics of class and class relations, this chapter attempts to investigate how the official discourse ascribed class identity to the Romanian peasantry[4] in the first two decades after RWP took power.

Class ascription was a form of making people visible and 'legible'[5] for the State bureaucracy, but it was also linked to procedures of establishing legitimacy. Louis Althusser viewed states ('ideological State apparatuses') as organizations aimed at maintaining a specific form of relations of production not by force alone, but also by presenting their claims as natural and unquestionable and by providing individuals with an identity as subjects of this naturalised order.[6] These subject positions or identities[7] were constructed in a discourse, that is, in a situated attempt to stabilise the meanings of terms designating the social world in a certain coherent, systematic configuration and to eliminate alternative meanings advanced by competing discourses.[8] The meaning is conferred by what Laclau and Mouffe call 'nodal points', that is,

---

[3]   *Scânteia* (from 1954 on orthographed *Scînteia*) was the daily of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (between 1948 and 1965 Romanian Workers' Party). Between 1931, the year of its first issue, and 1944 it was published clandestinely. It ceased publication in December 1989, after the overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu. It had a circulation of 800,000 to 900,000.

[4]   I am not referring to the peasantry as an extra-discursive, essential identity and, therefore, I am not positing it as more real in opposition to the less real communist ones. Here, I use it rather in the sense of Laclau and Mouffe's *element*, a signifier which is not yet articulated in a new discourse.

[5]   James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2-3.

[6]   Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, 173-174. See also, for interpellation in the Soviet context, Antony Kalashnikov, "Interpellation in the late Soviet period: contesting the de-ideologization narrative", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 58, 1 (2016): 23-48.

[7]   I use the term *identity* to indicate the result of a prior operation of identification, which always takes place through discourse. Identity, in this sense, confers upon social actors two properties: coherence (how a certain actor can be understood to be 'the same' at different points in time) and distinctiveness (how can it be understood to be different from other actors). See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992); Ruth Wodak, Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl, Ruth Rodger, and Karin Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, 2nd ed. 2009). For a critique of the use of the concept of identity in social sciences, see Siniša Malešević, "Researching Social and Ethnic Identity: A Sceptical View", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 2, 2 (2003): 265-287; Siniša Malešević, *Identity as Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[8]   Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London; New York: Verso, 1985, 2nd ed. 2001).

higher order signifiers (such as *free market* or *patriotism*) that help articulate the other terms in a logically coherent fashion.[9]

In the communist discourse, particularly in its Stalinist phase, one of these nodal points was 'class struggle', which produced a discursive space organised in polar terms around a central conflict between the working class and the bourgeoisie. All other social identities populating this space were defined in relation to this nodal point of class struggle. However, in incipient communist regimes the necessity to integrate actors with doubtful revolutionary pedigree made it necessary to allow more room between the polar categories of *us* and *them*. Thus, it is useful to conceive this space not in dichotomous terms, but as a continuum containing intermediary points.[10] The occupants of these different positions can be characterised by their relative *licitness*: they are not completely *us*, but neither completely *others*. Closer to *us*, they are more licit and less work is needed to completely integrate them in *our* world; further away, they are less licit (much work to be done) or not at all (radical change or destruction needed).[11] My interest lies in how the 'peasant identity' was articulated in this newly-created political space, particularly in relation to the positive, *us*-actors, among which the working class was the most important.

Officially, the peasantry was designated as an ally of the working class, contributing voluntarily to the transformation of the country, and this alliance was celebrated and enshrined in the constitution.[12] This is the image of an autonomous, conscious political actor. But given the Soviet experience (the distrustful attitude of Bolshevik leaders, the NEP and the collectivization) and the fact that, as in the early Soviet state, RWP had no real experience in rural problems, the position of the peasantry in this newly-created space was not guaranteed in the above-mentioned terms. My concrete aim is to see if the discourse constructs the 'peasant actors' as licit and endowed with their own capacity to act.

As we will see, the communist discourse splits *peasantry* (itself an already allocated identity) in a number of other 'peasant identities', marked textually in different ways and representing social actors[13] participating in different practices. I am interested in

---

[9]   Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 112.

[10]   Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (New York; London: Routledge, 2006), 33-48; Mads Bielefeldt Stjernø, "Vicissitudes of Post-Communist Identities. A Discourse Analysis of Czechoslovak and Czech Constructions of Political Identities, 1989-2000" (MA Thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2001), 31-32.

[11]   I adapt here the discussion in Bielefeldt Stjernø, "Vicissitudes of Post-Communist Identities", 31.

[12]   In its second article, the 1952 Constitution listed the alliance between the working class and the working peasantry as the basis of popular power in the country. See *Monitorul oficial*, 1, 27 September 1952.

[13]   To designate the referents of these identity-allocating terms, I hereafter use the term 'actor'.

providing a 'contextual definition' of the terms used to refer to these 'peasant identities', using an analytic framework developed within the discipline of social semiotics by Theo van Leeuwen for investigating the representation of social actors and their actions.[14] I want to see, first, how these actors are represented in discourse as *being* in the first place – whether they are interpellated as individual or collective, specific or generic, single or associated in groups, what are their boundaries, relations and so on. Second, I am interested in how these actors *act* – in what actions are they involved and in what roles are they distributed – are they performing the action or undergoing its effects? Van Leeuwen makes several distinctions between types of action: *doing* (material action), *meaning* (semiotic action), *behavioural* (*feeling* and *thinking*, mental processes).[15] Particularly important for my analysis are the material actions. These usually involve a transaction between two participants, following the schema *agent – action – patient* (or "who does what to whom"[16]). Since "the ability to 'transact' requires a certain power",[17] the involvement in these actions indicates how much the actor can affect the world around it or, in other words, if this actor is represented as having *agency*.

Selecting one lexico-grammatical option over the other to represent a certain reality helps solidifying and naturalizing the reality in a particular way (compare 'x *killed* y' with 'y *was killed*' or 'y's death'). This selection is, thus, a mechanism that enables ideology to operate.

I will supplement this with an analysis in terms of metaphor, particularly important when collective actors are interpellated. Representing the *working peasantry* as doing or being something signals a metaphoric transfer: the target domain, related to the complex social world (*working peasantry*) is conceived in terms of a better known, simpler source domain (gravitation, motion, human body, living being, movement along a path and so on). Metaphoric representation has effects not only on its target domain, but it spills over by "inferential generalisations",[18] facilitating the understanding of other aspects of the situation in terms of the selected metaphoric framework. In addition, the

---

[14] Theo van Leeuwen, "Language and Representation. The Recontextualisation of Participants, Activities and Reactions" (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1993); Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Theo van Leeuwen, "The Representation of Social Actors", *Texts and Practices. Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. by Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), 32-70; Theo van Leeuwen, "Representing Social Action", *Discourse & Society*, 6, 1 (1995): 81-106.

[15] van Leeuwen, "Representing Social Action".

[16] Deirdre Burton, "Through glass darkly: Through dark glasses", *Language and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Stylistics*, ed. by Ronald Carter (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), 200.

[17] van Leeuwen, "Representing Social Action", 90.

[18] George Lakoff, "Contemporary Theory of Metaphor", *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 209.

use of metaphors is not limited to the deployment of a neutral cognitive mechanism to facilitate understanding, but performs ideological functions too,[19] since, as in the case of representing actors, the choices made in selecting the metaphoric framework encourage particular 'takes' in the discourse about social world.

In this chapter I discuss, first, how the 'peasant identities' were constructed as social actors, particularly in relation to other identities undergoing change at the same historical moment, trying also to chart their use in time. Next, I examine how the various actors were represented as performing actions in order to establish their 'action profile', from which I draw conclusions concerning their agency and discuss the link between their agency and licitness. But before I move on to the analysis, I will briefly sketch the historical context in which this process of class ascription took place.

II. Historical Context

At the end of the Second World War, Romanian rural population, comprising 76% of the total, faced numerous problems: fragmented and polarised land ownership, poor productivity, poor medical assistance, all compounded by the effects of the war.[20] In the first post-war years, the pro-Communist regime tried to establish a 'friendly relationship' with the peasants, enacting in 1945 a land reform which expropriated the large estates and redistributed the land to poor peasants, similarly to other reforms taking place in Eastern Europe at the time.[21] The declared goal of the law was "the establishment of strong, healthy and productive agricultural holdings which are the private property of those owning them", but, given the lack of other supporting policies, its effects were limited. In parallel, due to the post-war food shortages caused by war, drought and payment of war reparations, a system of quotas was introduced.[22] In the summer of 1948, after the Cominform conference in Bucharest discussing the strategy of collectivi-

---

[19] Andrew Goatly, *Washing the Brain: Metaphor and Hidden Ideology* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins 2007), 3.

[20] Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania; Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951).

[21] Dumitru Şandru, *Reforma agrară din 1945 în România* (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2000); Irwin T. Sanders, "Changing Status of the Peasant in Eastern Europe", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 271, 1 (1950): 78-93.

[22] Constantin Iordachi and Dorin Dobrincu, "The Collectivisation of Agriculture in Romania, 1949-1952", *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe: Comparison and Entanglements*, ed. by Constantin Iordachi and Arnd Bauerkämper (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2014), 256.

zation in the Eastern Bloc,[23] the RWP re-focused its discourse on the countryside, which was presented as a place of deep class divisions and conflict. In March 1949 a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the RWP launched officially the collectivization of agriculture. As in Soviet Union, it targeted several goals simultaneously: controlling the land, the last means of production outside of the control of the regime, securing food for the growing urban population, pushing a part of the rural workforce to town and industry and harnessing the agriculture to the effort of producing the capital needed for industrialization. In Romania, this process had three distinct phases. The first stage (1949-1953) was characterised by a wide range of strategies meant to determine the peasants to set up collective farms: persuasion, economic incentives (a quota system aimed to ruin the richer peasants and push the other peasants towards the collective farms), destruction of solidarity networks in villages, mass arrests and demonstrative violence.[24] This generated widespread discontent and violent revolts[25] and achieved mediocre results (in 1953 only 10% of the total arable land was collectivised). After Stalin's death, a phase of retreat ensued until 1957: quotas were eliminated in 1956, softer policies were implemented and looser forms of association were favoured (peasant associations instead of *kolkhoz*-type farms). The third phase (1957-1962) was characterised by targeted campaigns mobilizing thousands of party activists simultaneously, a tougher legal framework and, again, widespread violence, which had as result the complete collectivization of agriculture in 1962.

III. The Peasantry: from Homogeneous to Heterogeneous and Back

In the first post-war years (1945-1948) the rural population was referred to by only one term, the *peasantry* (*țărănimea*). The social actor designated by it was regarded as a container with opaque boundaries: the discourse did not 'look' inside it and no effort was made to actively define it. It was also homogeneous: its individual members, *the*

---

[23]   *The Cominform: Minutes of the Three Conferences, 1947/1948/1949*, ed. by Giuliano Procacci and Grant Mkrtychevich Adibekov (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1994), 617.

[24]   Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 215-317; Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, "How Communist Cadres Persuaded Romanian Peasants to Give Up Their Land", *East European Politics & Societies*, 25, 2 (2011): 361-87; Iordachi and Dobrincu, "The Collectivisation of Agriculture in Romania"; *Transforming Peasants, Property and Power: The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949-1962*, ed. by Dorin Dobrincu and Constantin Iordachi (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2009).

[25]   Iordachi and Dobrincu, "The Collectivisation of Agriculture in Romania", 271.

peasants, were regarded as similar, doing the same things and having the same goals. The *peasantry* existed in a world of similarly unitary and homogeneous actors, with well-defined boundaries – *working class*, *intellectuality*, *bourgeoisie* (*clasa muncitoare*, *intelectualitatea*, *burghezia*). Most frequently, the *peasantry* was represented as a victim of past injustices perpetrated by the exploiting classes and a recipient of help from the state after 1945. By virtue of its subaltern status, although the *peasantry* was not considered a revolutionary class, it was considered a "similar Other"[26] and a potential ally of the working class.

In the summer of 1948, the unitary and homogeneous character of the peasantry began to be questioned. The resolution of the Central Committee of the RWP in March 1949 that decided the start of collectivization called peasantry "the ally of the working class", but at the same time identified five strata of rural population: (1) rural proletariat (or landless peasants); (2) poor peasants; (3) middle peasants, considered as having a central role, since they detained half of the means of production and produced three fifths of the grain production; (4) the *chiaburi*, the bourgeoisie of the villages and (5) the remnants of the landowner class.[27] Thus, this fragmentation warranted the verdict that "[t]he peasantry is not, first of all, a class, but inside it there are deep and sharp class differentiations and contradictions".[28] As a consequence, after 1948 the term *peasantry* entered a period of restricted use, being replaced with terms designed to interpellate its various sub-members.

Two forms of categorization appeared in the first stage of collectivization, both Soviet imports. The first is the so-called "tripartite categorization",[29] based on the above mentioned categorization of rural population, according to which the peasantry was composed of poor peasants (*țărani săraci*), middle peasants (*țărani mijlocași*) – reunited under the umbrella term *working peasantry* (*țărănime muncitoare*) – and kulaks (*chiaburi*). The tripartite categorization was, by itself, a direct negation not only of the unitary character of the *peasantry*, but also of its licitness, because the *chiaburi* were simultaneously members of the peasantry *and* of the exploiting classes.

The membership in these three categories was governed by a set of criteria. Peasants were *poor* if they owned up to five hectares, *middle* if they owned between five and ten hectares and *chiaburi* if their land surface was over ten hectares or if they fulfilled one of the numerous supplementary criteria (owning means of production, employing paid

---

[26]   Bielefeldt Stjernø, "Vicissitudes of Post-Communist Identities", 31-32.

[27]   *Rezoluția ședinței plenare a Comitetului Central al P.M.R. din 3-5 Martie 194*9 (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Muncitoresc Român, 1949), 12-14.

[28]   Nestor Ignat, "Clasa muncitoare, forța conducătoare", *Scânteia*, 12 July 1948, 1.

[29]   Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class", 751.

work and so on, all these correlated with soil quality, productivity, family size or geographical area). These criteria were touted as objective and clear, but they were changeable and extremely interpretable[30], allowing the party activists involved in collectivization much leverage in how they categorized the peasants.

The tripartite categorization was directly linked to the start of the collectivization and had practical importance, because it prescribed distinct fiscal duties for each category, in a steep progressive quota system designed to push peasants to form collective farms (their members were exempt from contributions). It thus was a way of embodying class in daily practice, reifying it.[31] Moreover, the discourse attempted to transform the members of this categorization into full-fledged collective actors (*poor* and *middle peasantry* and *chiaburime* – an equivalent to Soviet term *kulachestvo*) with clearer boundaries and more homogeneous contents than the now-backgrounded actor *peasantry*. In other words, it tried to introduce a 'classification', which, in van Leeuwen's terms, is a form of identifying social actors as "what they, more or less permanently, or unavoidably, are",[32] in terms of "major categories by means of which a given society or institution differentiates between classes of people".[33]

The second form of categorization was 'administrative'. It distinguished the peasants based on their membership in various associative or institutional organizations promoted during collectivization. Its categories were the *individual peasants* (*țărani individuali*), the *collectivist peasants* (*țărani colectiviști*) and the *associated peasants* (*țărani întovărășiți*, members of agricultural associations, similar to the Soviet TOZ, considered a precursor of the full-fledged collective). Unlike classifications, which categorize people in terms of what they 'are', this type of categorization, termed by van Leeuwen *functionalization*, occurs when "social actors are referred to in terms of an activity, in terms of something they do, for instance, an occupation or role".[34] Differently from the tripartite categorization, which had legal and fiscal weight, these were not linked to categories of class and class struggle and their boundaries were less significant from the point of view of licitness: for example, the category of *individual peasant* was not attached a negative value. Consequently, they were 'softer' forms of identity ascription and no effort was

---

[30] Robert Levy, "The First Wave of Collectivization Campaign: Central Policies and Their Regional Implementation (1949-1953)", *Transforming Peasants*, ed. by Dobrincu and Iordachi, 27-48.

[31] David L. Hoffmann, "The 'Peasantisation of the Soviet Working Class: Peasant Migration's Ebb and Flow, 1917-1932", *Transforming Peasants. Society, State and the Peasantry, 1861-1930*, ed. by Judith Pallot (London: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 125; Stanchevich, "The Rhetorical Construction of Social Classes", 269.

[32] van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 42.

[33] van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 42.

[34] van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 42.

made towards constructing a positive identity, even if some of them were represented as collective actors (the *cooperatist peasantry*).

Differently from both the 'administrative categorization' and the pre-1948 *peasantry*, much effort was invested in constructing a positive identity for the sub-classes of the 'tripartite categorization', this becoming the focus of peasant identity construction in the Stalinist phase (up to 1953). The umbrella term *working peasantry* intended to designate a totally licit actor reuniting *poor* and *middle peasantry* and was defined as "the peasantry that does not exploit the work of others".[35] The choice of the qualifier *working* signaled both the break, and the continuity with the now backgrounded pre-1948 identity of *peasantry*. Moreover, it was a clear reference to the working class and marked politically, not only in terms of stratification, the difference between itself and the *chiaburi*, defined as peasants having an illicit relation to work – they did not work or used the work of other people.

In my corpus, the terms *working class*, *chiaburi* and *progressive intellectuality* are frequent collocates of the term *working peasantry*. The first two were distributed in polar roles, as ally and, respectively, enemy, while *intellectuality* appeared associated with the *working class* and *working peasantry* in the so-called 'two classes and a half' formula.[36] The third frequent collocate is the *party*, whose role was to realize "the policy of strengthening the alliance between the working class and the working peasantry".[37] The alliance was thus conceived in two contradictory ways: a direct relation between classes as two human-like and self-conscious actors, via the metaphor 'social group as an individual' and as physical entity having its own, open-ended dynamics – it hardened, it solidified, it could be weakened by other actors, hence the need for party assistance. This foregrounded the role of the party and emphasized the lack of autonomy of the two class actors involved.

Within the tripartite categorization, the main target of interpellation was the *middle peasantry*. The *poor* and the *middle peasants* were frequently represented as associated,[38] that is, as involved together in the same actions, which signalled strong connections and a certain convergence of their identities. However, the association is asymmetrical: in my corpus *poor peasants* are associated in 67% of cases with *middle peasants*, while the latter are associated in only 27% of cases with *poor peasants*. In other words, *poor peasants* were represented as more dependent of the middle peasants

---

35 "Cu privire la lupta de clasă la ţară", *Scânteia*, 16 July 1948.

36 Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, 84.

37 Alexandru Moghioroş, "Întărirea partidului clasei muncitoare, chezăşia victoriei socialismului în Romînia", *Scânteia*, 6 June 1952, 2.

38 Van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 38.

than inversely. The collocates of the terms designating each actor are different: for the *poor peasants/peasantry* they are *middle peasantry* and *relying on* (as in "our party is relying on the poor peasantry"), while for the *middle peasants/peasantry* these are *chiabur* (*kulak*), *policy*, *alliance*, *poor peasants/peasantry*. This suggests that *middle peasantry* was situated in a wider social environment, surrounded by other actors (*party*, *chiaburi*) and involved in other relationships (*alliance*, *policy*). As in the case of the superordinate actor *working peasantry*, the *party* played also an important role for the two actors, but in a different way: it *relied upon poor peasantry* (see the above-mentioned collocate), while with the *middle peasantry* it was *allied* or followed a certain *policy* towards it. In addition, compared to the *working peasantry* – allied with the *working class* –, the *middle peasantry* was allied directly to the *party*, signalling its prominence in the official discourse during collectivization.

The presence of the *chiaburi* among the relevant actors of the *middle peasants/peasantry* is due to the need to differentiate between the two. Over 20% of the total occurrences of the term *middle peasant* dealt with how to correctly classify one as such or as *chiabur*. In comparison, there was no sustained effort to differentiate the *middle peasant* from the *poor peasant*, the stratification boundary being considered sufficient. Thus, the biggest stake in drawing the internal boundaries within the tripartite categorization was to determine who was on the right, respectively wrong side of the border of licitness.

The need to clearly define the *middle peasants* is highlighted by the use of generic reference, or what van Leeuwen calls "genericization".[39] This consists in abstracting the typical features of a class of actors and attributing them to a prototypical actor, in this case *the middle peasant*.[40] Its features were presented as the essence of that identity, suggesting the respective group was homogeneous.

Not all actors were genericized in Romanian discourse. At the top end of the scale are *the middle peasant* (26% of occurrences), *the chiabur* (10%), *the woman* (9%) and *the enemy* (the highest score of all analysed actors, 34%). At the bottom end are *the worker* (2,8%), *the intellectual* (2,3%) and *the poor peasant* (3%). This distribution of genericiza-

---

[39]   In van Leeuwen's words, genericization is a according to which "generalized essences, classes, constitute the real and in which specific participants are 'specimens' of those classes"; van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 35.

[40]   As Petre Petrov convincingly shows, the Stalinist cultural model included what he calls the "gnomic" statement, which refers to concrete events, situations and social actors, but has also an intrinsic generic value derived from the timeless truth of the Marxist-Leninist theory, this leading to the fusion of the generic and the specific. Here, however, I use a narrower criterion, considering as generic only the prototypical reference, indicated by the use of the singular (the middle peasant) and simple present tense. See Petre Petrov, "The Soviet Gnomic: on the Peculiarities of Generic Statements in Stalinist Officialese", *The Vernaculars of Communism. Language, Ideology and Power in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Petre Petrov and Lara Ryazanova-Clarke (London; New York: Routledge, 2015), 40-62.

tion allows detecting the important sites of interpellation: the higher the score, the more strategically important the respective actor was as subject of interpellation. What is significant for our discussion is that no other 'peasant identity' is so intensely genericized.

The prototypical middle peasant was described in terms of mental processes and psychological life: hesitant, but calculated, reluctant to offer support to the regime and joining the collective farm only after having proof of its advantages. He was considered capable of reaching conclusions rationally and making marginal utility calculations, but this placed him in a dubious position, as unreliable ally, by difference from the *poor peasant* or *worker*, who sided with the party without waiting for the benefits to become evident.

Genericization was not used to neutrally give information about a social actor, but to provide to party activists a 'code of conduct' towards it:[41]

> The middle peasant is a practical man. He wants to see the advantages that he has if he follows this path. To convince the middle peasant, we have to pursue towards him a policy based on FACTS. To get him rid of indecision, we have to show him by FACTS the advantages he has if he joins the working class and the poor peasantry.[42]

By genericization, the production of identity came full circle and had a strong essentializing component. The first step in the process was what Underhill calls "personified reification": individuals are objectified (the *masses*), then "the objectified assembly of people is conversely personified" by resorting to metaphors,[43] which flesh out the new identities by giving them psychological traits. By genericization, these traits were then attributed to a prototypical individual, who functioned metonymically and had the role of expressing the essence of the class.

However, there was a discursive undercurrent representing these identities as unstable. A litmus test for this was the perceived upward mobility involving members of the tripartite categorization, described and decried frequently up to 1953. It was maintained that, under the 'propitious conditions assured by the party', many poor peasants became middle peasants and many middle peasants became *chiaburi*, crossing the boundary of licitness. However, the premises of this evolution were in-built in the process of class

---

[41]   Stanchevich remarks the insistence of the early Bolshevik informative ChK materials (svodkas) in emphasizing "the consistency and intensity of this class division and the attitudes associated with each class". Stanchevich, "The Rhetorical Construction of Social Classes", 277.

[42]   "Să întărim alianţa cu ţăranul mijlocaş", *Scânteia*, 25 June 1949, 1, capitals in original.

[43]   James W. Underhill, *Creating Worldviews. Metaphor, Ideology and Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 105.

ascription. Membership was defined administratively by the state,[44] using rigid, but in practice easily surmountable criteria: a hectare of land could make one a poor peasant or a middle peasant. As the class was essentialized and thought to be inscribed in the *psyche* of individual members, Party officials interpreted change in the above-mentioned designators as change in class consciousness, which was dangerous because it blurred the distinctions between licit and illicit.[45]

The use of terms designating 'peasant identities' evolved in time. The tripartite categorization was intensely used between 1948 and 1953, in the first stage of collectivization, after which the use of the terms *poor* and *middle peasant* dropped steeply, virtually disappearing after 1955. The term *chiabur* continued to be used until in the final stage of collectivization (1957-1962), albeit less frequently than before. The *working peasantry* had a longer and more consistent career, starting in 1948 and continuing until mid-1960s, albeit with decreasing intensity after 1960. The 'administrative' categorization (*individual*, *associated* and *collectivist peasant*) started to be used in parallel with the tripartite categorization, but its use did not fluctuate in time, registering only a small increase after the 1953 strategy shift in collectivization − consisting in abandoning temporarily the constitution of collective farms and favouring the looser 'agricultural associations' − and disappearing in the last phase of the collectivization.

The term *peasantry* had a sinuous trajectory. As an immediate consequence of the introduction of the two categorizations (tripartite and administrative), it entered a period of restricted use. It was used in negative contexts, to highlight the lack of unity and purity or the backwardness of its referent, in historical accounts or as a background identity for its sub-groups, as in 'the working masses *of the peasantry*'. From 1956 on, in a period of relative relaxation of the collectivization, the rules of restricted use changed: the term was used again to refer to present events and in positive contexts, in parallel with the terms *working* and *collectivist peasantry*. As these latter terms underwent a slow decline after the end of collectivization in 1962, the term *peasantry* completely replaced them in all contexts. This evolution coincided with the 'purification' of its ranks: since the *chiaburi* were considered annihilated as a class towards the end of the 1950s, the class struggle within the peasantry had no point anymore. On the other hand, this ascendant course in the construction of the new peasantry was made possible not only

---

[44]   Hoffmann, "The 'Peasantization' of the Soviet Working Class", 124-125.

[45]   Adding to that, social mobility in the peasantry was considered potentially malignant if not evolving out of the peasantry, but within. Moreover, the mobility was taken into consideration only if it was ascendant, thus capable of offering arguments for a disadvantageous (from the point of view of the individual) re-classification, since once a *chiabur* was classified as such, it could not become middle peasant even if he sold the land. See also Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 120.

by the disappearance of *chiaburi*, but also by deemphasizing its internal divisions, loudly asserted before (the existence of the poor and middle peasantry). This paved the way for a new paradigm in the construction of political community as composed of two non-antagonistic classes, the working class and the peasantry, which was the mainstay of the official description of the class structure in Romanian late socialism.[46] Occurring almost simultaneously with the discursive reintegration of other older identities (such as the *nation*), this is an instance of what Jowitt termed "selective reintegration of tradition" after the relevance of this tradition has been decisively altered.[47]

Class ascription was, thus, an ebb-and-flow process, complicated by the inherent indeterminacy discussed above. In this process, identities appeared, gained clear-cut boundaries and class essence, only to suddenly drop out of use as result of a change in RWP's strategy (for example the *poor* and *middle peasant*). In this 'mixed-mode inter-pellation', sudden changes in establishing subject positions alternated with slow, gradual evolutions or with periods of stabilization and 'normalization'. Thus, in a communist State, the ideology worked both covertly, as a naturalizing and 'soporific' alternative to coercion, as Althusser described it, but also overtly.

IV. Peasants as Agents and Patients

The next part is devoted to analysing the agency conferred in discourse to the 'peasant actors'. There is a certain similarity in how the agency of all peasant actors is constructed. On the other hand, in several respects *middle peasantry* stands out, showing small, but relevant differences. I will first present the common features and then discuss the differences between these actors.

First, the 'peasant actors' affected the surrounding world very little. They performed mostly standard instrumental actions, which by definition take as patient an object, not an animate actor:[48] they *harvested* their crops, *sowed* and *worked* the fields, *sold* their produce, *joined* their lands or *handed over* their quotas. They performed few interactive

---

[46]   Călin Anastasiu, "Premise teoretice ale abordării structurii de clasă în socialism", *Structură socială. Diversificare, diferențiere, omogenizare*, ed. by Honorina Cazacu (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1988), 27-55; Elisabeta Trăistaru and Ion Trăistaru, *Omogenizarea societății românești* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1979); Honorina Cazacu, "Mobilitatea socială și structura de clasă", *Dinamica structurii de clasă în etapa construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate*, ed. by Ilie Rădulescu (București: Editura Științifică, 1972), 159-214.

[47]   Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development: The Case of Romania, 1944-1965* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1971), 115.

[48]   van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 60.

actions, that is, actions accepting only animate patients[49] – the most significant was the *unmasking* of the *chiaburi*. The collective actors (particularly the *working peasantry*) performed instrumental actions having as object rather abstract entities: they *supported* the democratic popular regime, *took* the power in their hands, *conquered* the freedom. As we can see, most of these actions were specific – no other actor performed them –, were circumscribed in time and space or extended upon abstract patients.

Second, these actors were passivized, that is, they were patients of actions performed by other actors, who were implicitly constructed as more powerful. It is significant that these powerful agents were situated on both sides of the border of licitness (negative – *landowners, kulaks, exploiters* – or positive – *the party, the working class*). Also, there was a difference in the temporality of their actions. In the past, the *peasants* were defenseless victims of radical interactive actions aiming at their physical integrity or welfare, which were performed by actors such as the landowners, the old regime and their agents: they were *robbed, killed, oppressed, played off against each other, hurt, shot, forced, herded, pushed* and *exploited*. In the 'present' time the *chiaburi* (the actualised enemy) performed also interactive actions, but these were not radical: the *peasants* were surreptitiously *influenced* by the *chiaburi*, suggesting they were in a state of semi-consciousness,[50] easily manipulable.

In relation to licit agents, the 'peasant actors' were passivized in three main ways: (a) they were patients in 'soft' interactive actions – they were *convinced*,[51] *educated* or *stimulated*; (b) they were represented as receiving benefits from the party and the working class (they were *supported, helped, freed, delivered from the yoke of the exploiters*); finally, (c) they were patients of instrumental actions performed by positive actors, the *party*, the *working class* and *the state*: they – in particular the *poor peasants* – were *led, attracted, supported, lifted* or *moved* towards the working class. The instrumental actions typically accept objects as patients, but here these objects were animate (either as individual or as anthropomorphised collective actors), meaning that they were treated *as objects*, further diminishing their status.[52] These actions were inscribed within two related metaphoric frameworks, spatial and inertial. In the spatial metaphor used here, the defining positions (*up – down* and *center – periphery*) were attached ethical values: *up* and *center* was good, *down* and *periphery* was bad. As in all modernization discourses, 'peasant actors'

---

[49]   van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 60.

[50]   Referring to the representation of peasantry in Chinese official discourse, Ann Anagnost observed a similar tendency of passivization: "The Chinese peasantry, it would seem from post-Maoist representations, is an 'object' that must be awaked from a state of torpor". Ann Anagnost, *National Past-Times. Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 86.

[51]   For this, see Verdery and Kligman, "How Communist Cadres Persuaded Romanian Peasants".

[52]   van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 61.

were placed *down*, particularly in relation to the *working class*, or they were presented in the process of being *lifted* or *attracted*, suggesting they were inert, heavy bodies. The agents (the party and the working class) were implicitly more powerful and licit than their patients, whereas the peasantry was 'excentric' and immobile. The typical patient of these actions was the *poor peasantry*, thus its high level of licitness was coupled with a low level of agency – it was treated as a fixture rather than as an autonomous actor.

A third common feature is that the 'peasant actors' were represented as having mental states and affective reactions: they *had suffered* in the past, they *wanted* justice, *desired* change, *were happy* about the favourable policies directed to them. These behavioural reactions construed the *peasantry* as an affect-dominated actor. It is significant that the positive affects were characteristic of the 'purified peasantry' after 1955, in the context of a discourse which highlighted the raised living standards.

There is an exception to this general picture: the *middle peasantry*. This actor was not presented as benefitting unconditionally from the actions of the powerful positive actors, was less passivized and represented as victim only when associated with the *poor peasant/peasantry*. It engaged in actions denoting superior mental processes (*to see*, *to bear in mind*, *to realize*, *to think*), which elevated it to a superior status as compared to the *poor peasants*. These actions clustered around the topic of economic reasoning mentioned above – the *middle peasant reasoned* about the benefits of entering the collectives and acted only after he *saw* the benefits.

Also differently from the *poor peasantry*, *middle peasantry* was represented as capable of meaningful interaction, *understanding* the favourable policies implemented and becoming an ally of the party. The *middle peasantry* had more features of a human-like, rational actor compared to other 'peasant actors' and particularly to poor peasantry. In the hierarchy of possessing human-like features, the *middle peasantry* was accompanied by the *working class*, but also by *chiaburi* and *enemies*, represented too as powerful actors characterised by *thinking* and *doing*, albeit in a totally deviant framework.[53]

To put it in a nutshell, 'peasant actors' were largely passive – either victims, recipients of benefits, or inert actors in need of guidance and administration.[54] The *middle peasantry* was marginally more activated and autonomous, but in a deviant way, since its autonomy was expressed as economic rationality. By virtue of their passivation, they occupied the same structural position in the discourse as *the women* and *the youth*,[55] also

---

[53]   Călin Morar-Vulcu, *Republica își făureşte oamenii: construcția identităților politice în discursul oficial în România, 1948-1965* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2007), 209-210.

[54]   Olga Velikanova, *Popular Perceptions of Soviet Politics in the 1920s: Disenchantment of the Dreamers* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2013), 98.

[55]   Morar-Vulcu, *Republica își făureşte oamenii*, 209-210.

very passivized actors, by difference from the essentially active actors of the communist discourse: *the party*, *the working class*, *the enemy*, *the bourgeoisie* and *the kulaks*.

V. Help, Alliance and Moral Debt

We have seen that help was a major topic involving 'peasant actors' as patients. First, we can notice the pair 'past victimization'-'present beneficialization',[56] which was inscribed in a narrative whose agents (both positive and negative) were allocated the actantial roles of Subject and Opponent, while the passive peasants were the Object. This narrative facilitated the inference that all 'peasant actors' had a moral debt and implicitly requested the payment of this debt by acquiescing in the goals and policies promoted by the RWP.

Second, there was a special 'dynamics of help' between the *working peasantry* and the *working class*. The *working peasants* were helped by the *workers* not only in political, but also in concrete matters. For instance, they helped the *working peasants* to perform agricultural work at peak times or repaired their tools, while the *working class* helped by producing machinery and putting it at the disposal of the *working peasantry*. This framing – collective actors helping other collective actors – indicated the functionalist nature of the envisaged political community. In it, each actor was allocated specific roles and areas of competence – the *working peasantry* in agriculture, the *working class* in industry and in politics, the two being distinct. In this functionalist framework, the helper not only fulfilled its specifically prescribed role, but provided help to another, who failed in fulfilling his. This elevated the helper on a superior moral position compared to the recipient. What is more, unlike the *working class*, the *working peasantry* was never represented as offering help to anyone.

It is useful to link this discussion with the topic of alliance between the working class and the peasantry. This alliance was presented, on the one hand, as generated by the consciousness of the two classes, engaged in the pursuit of a common goal, building socialism. On the other hand, it looked like a contractual relationship between the two classes, viewed as agents providing each other goods and services. The working class produced industrial goods[57] and political freedom for the working peasantry which, in

---

[56] Beneficialised actors are the ones that benefit from the action of other actors, van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, 33.

[57] As Kenneth Jowitt wrote, the central site of the alliance between the working peasantry and the working class were the Machine and Tractor Stations, "organisations imposed on the countryside to perform control functions" and implement the official policies of containing the kulaks and manipulating support for poor peasants. Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs*, 123.

exchange, produced foodstuffs and political support for the working class, again in a functionalistic schema:

> An important factor in the strengthening of the alliance is the goods exchange between village and town, exchange that ties together the working class and the working peasantry through their mutual economic interests. The workers […] provide to the working peasantry ever more agricultural machinery, tools, clothing and all sorts of goods peasants and their households need. By selling to the State the quotas foreseen to be collected […], the working peasantry ensures the supply of foodstuffs to the working population in towns.[58]

Thus, the alliance was motivated by class self-interest, and this (in fact, Joseph Stalin's position) was repeatedly asserted until 1953 and in a more attenuated way later. But, as in the case of help, the contribution of each actor was valued differently: for the peasantry it was a *duty*, while for the working class it was a *bonus* awarded to the *working peasantry* (its output was conceptualised as *help* or *gift* to the peasantry). In a broader sense, what the *working peasantry* did was seen as following the logic of the contract and economic calculation (here the middle peasantry was the case in point, as we have already seen), while what the working class did was seen as altruistic behaviour, which feeds back into the topic of help discussed above. To sum up, the discourse of help and alliance placed the *working peasantry* in a morally delicate position, that of debtor which has to repay its benefactors, but cannot or does not want to. Thus, although the working peasantry was presented as a trusted ally, its full engagement of for the cause was implicitly questioned.

VI. Conclusion

The answer to my initial question has to take into account the multiplicity of the 'peasant identities', which were different in terms of licitness and evolved in distinct ways. In the first phase, the peasantry was a unitary actor with an unclear position on the licit-illicit continuum (which was itself in process of forming). In the second, hard collectivization phase (1948-1953), this unitary identity split in many sub-identities with different levels of licitness: totally licit (*poor peasantry*), less licit (*middle peasantry*), totally illicit (*chiaburi*). The partner of the working class was the working peasantry, composed of two actors with different levels of licitness, which implied that this actor was permanently undermined by its heterogeneous nature and was represented as mo-

---

[58]   "Alianța între clasa muncitoare și țărănimea muncitoare", *Scânteia*, 23 May 1951, 1.

rally indebted and politically inert. The third phase witnessed the slow ascent of a new unitary actor, designated by an old name (peasantry), which replaced all other categories in a context where the licit character was not discussed in the same terms as in the first phase of collectivization.

Despite the many forms of interpellation, the resulting actors had a common feature: they were non-autonomous – they had very little agency and were intensely passivized. The middle peasantry, less passivated and marginally more activated, was less licit in part due to two factors: the marginalist economic rationality – which conferred it a modicum of agency – and its proximity with the *chiaburi*. Thus, it seems that the licitness did not correlate linearly with activation. At the totally licit end of the spectrum, the correlation is direct – licit actors are powerful and autonomous actors. Outside it, this correlation is inverse: the most licit actors are the most passivized, reinforcing thus the hierarchical view of the society in which the revolutionary centre activated the periphery. If we see the interpellation in its productive dimension too, describing, but also prescribing roles, this representation did not encourage the subjects to see themselves at the same time as autonomous, licit and conscious actors, but always as dependent and deriving their political legitimacy from their dependence.

LANGUAGE OF THE COMMUNIST TOTALITY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA: INFLUENCE ON OUR AWARENESS AND ITS PROJECTION INTO REALITY (1952-2010)

František Čermák

(Charles University Prague)

I. Introduction: The Time of the Communist Totality and the Present Time

Originally, the label for the specific post-war period of 'non-freedom' was used for the postwar Communist rule only; recently, however, it has been extended to cover the war-time fascist times, too.[1] The adjective 'totalitarian' meaning 'not free, governed or controlled by somebody', is based on the word 'total' and 'totality' retains basically, its meaning, that is being devoid of one's freedom in many respects, too. Necessarily, an important and often the first tool of this control has been the language as the tool of transmission of ideas and influence. Consequently, these had soon begun to reflect both the changing terminology of the times and ways of political thinking behind it, especially in both totalitarian periods. Many words changed their meaning, the use of which changed, too, and new words emerged while some of the old ones, considered to have become 'uncomfortable', receded or faded out. New contexts started to point to new words and collocations and their new use.

---

[1] This chapter is based on a modified version of František Čermák, "Jazyk totality a dneška: jak odráží realitu a ovlivňuje lidské vědomí" [Language of Totalitarianism and of Today: How it Reflects Reality and Influences Human Consciousness], *Jazyk v politických, ideologických a interkultúrnych vzťahoch, Sociolinguistica Slovaca 8,* ed. by Julia Wachtarczyková, Lucia Satinská, and Slavomír Ondrejovič (Bratislava: Veda, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2015), 50-60.

In the following, this will be shown selectively in a *pars pro toto* way on some key terms, or rather, lexemes, standing here as substitutes of many other. In order to be able to estimate properly these new words and expressions of the Totalitarian times, there will be a comparison offered with the lexicon used today. The *Communist totalitarian times* and its language will be represented by a *Corpus of Czech Totality* leading subsequently to *Dictionary of the Communist Totality*[2] while the present time is represented by the relevant part of the *SYN2010* of the Czech National corpus.[3] The first corpus is based on samples from three critical historical periods of the Communist rule (dating in 1952, 1968 and 1977) as published by *Rudé právo* (*The Red Justice*), main Communist daily, made up of over 400,000 words (consisting of 2700 texts, in a representative selection). The second having over 500,000 words is based on the contemporary language (its name suggests the year of its completion, 2010) and is selected in a representative way as the first one, namely from the newspapers (both central and regional ones).

Hence, the time difference between the two periods is, on the average, 37 years and, if the extremes in the dating of the documents included is taken into account, the time gap is 50 years. In the meantime, the Communist language has lost quite a few words preserving very little of other, while many new words and meanings have emerged, being unknown at that time or being less used then. In the following, however, this aspect, though important, will not be taken into account here.

Let us first inspect the nature and order of some of the period words in comparison (see par. II) and then we shall try to analyse briefly some of the words of the period, their usage and meaning, these being jointly common to both periods (III).

II. The Notional Core of Both Periods Illustrated

The most important notions in the core vocabulary of a time, including its propaganda, or, more recently, advertisements are best reflected in its most frequent words (below, absolute frequencies of all the words are given). To get a closer view, in the first approach, 1000 of the most frequent words have been taken up from both periods studied, that of Totality and of Today. A primary attention will be given, understandably, to autosemantic words (i.e. nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs) since synsemantic words (grammar words and those remaining) do not reflect changes of the times much. This approach will be divided into two parts, into a smaller lexicon (2.1) and a larger one (2.2), offering two views.

---

[2]   *Slovník komunistické totality* [A Dictionary of the Communist Totality], ed. by František Čermák, Václav Cvrček, and Vera Schmiedtová (Praha NLN, 2010).

[3]   https://www.korpus.cz, last accessed on 2 May 2019.

II.1. The First View: Sequence of 25 Most Frequent Autosemantic Words and Their Meaning

The most frequent lexemes used in the Totality times (not taking into account their polysemy or homonymy) are the following:

FREQ.	Czech word	English translation
1	*být, rok, práce, sovětský, socialistický*	to be, year, work, Soviet, socialist
6	*nový, stát, země, moci, člověk*	new, state, country, can, man
11	*národní, výrobní, organizace, politický, lid*	national, production (adj.), organisation, political, people
16	*úkol, pracující, síla, závod, svaz*	task, working, force, enterprise/factory, union
21	*rozvoj, soudruh, výbor, společnost, den*	development, comrade, committee, society, day

As against these the most frequent words used Today are the following:

FREQ.	Czech word	English translation
1	*být, mít, rok, moci/moct, člověk*	to be, have, year, can, man
6	*velký, nový, stát, muset, chtít*	great, new, state, must, want
11	*český, říci/říct, koruna, místo, město*	Czech, say, crown, place, town
16	*dobrý, den, strana, hodina, doba*	good, day, party, hour, time
21	*dítě, poslední, dostat, uvést, firma*	child, past, get, introduce, firm

There is not much of imagination needed to realize:

(A) why the verb 'to have' (*mít*) has not been stressed in its use including related 'property' linked to it (which was not supposed to be eventually private at all). Next to timeless notions of 'year' and 'day' (*rok*, *den*), notions and a high usage of the terms from

(B) the sphere of 'work' (*práce,* being the third most frequent word) appear here, including 'work' itself (*práce*), 'task' (*úkol*), 'worker' (*pracující*) and 'enterprise'/factory' (*závod*). These followed by

(C) 'social and political organisations' were rather important, notably its words 'state', 'country', 'production', 'organisation', 'political', 'people', 'force', 'comrade', 'committee', 'society' (in Czech: *stát, production, organizace, politický, lid, síla, soudruh, výbor, společnost*) where a specific usage is to be seen in the two dominant and almost omnipresent adjectives 'Soviet' and 'socialist', belonging to stable epithets of the period. Let us remind ourselves, that this interpretation is, necessarily, devoid of context and is related, just like in the case of the verb to 'have' (*mít*), to the basic meanings only.

Today's Lexicon is rather different reflecting, in the order of its words (apparent even from such a narrow selection), very different priorities.

(A1) 'Property' is already undisputable ('have', *mít*, but compare also 'firm' and 'get' implying it, i.e. *firma, dostat*) as well as the stress laid on the

(B1) 'human individual' as in 'man', 'child' (*člověk, dítě*) and their needs; see, in connection to this, also much more far-reaching modality signified by verbs 'can', 'must', 'want' (*moct, muset, chtít*) suggesting that the human being is not only permitted many things, but also that he/she, as a subject, 'may' in the democratic times also want something. New topics are already brought in, too, including

(C1) 'human seat' as in 'place', 'town' (*místo, město*) as well as that of

(D1) 'communication' between people (as in *say, říct*), including the commercial one, 'crown' (*koruna*).

Some words and terms, highly used by the Communist regime, receded, such as 'work' (B above) or 'social' and 'political' (C above). This way, the word 'people' (*lid*), very much popular then, has flown into background, while 'comrade' (*soudruh*) has almost disappeared (being preferred by certain groups of Today's society only).

It is then evident that even a simple scrutiny of the words with the highest frequency can tell a lot about preferences of the period which allow for a simple semantic classification.

II.2. The Second View: Nature of some Lexemes and their Relatioship

Broadening one's perspective while inspecting both corpora as a whole (about 400,000 and 500,000 words) and selecting only the first 1000 most frequent words, our view will become both finer and deeper. Again, let us look first at the Corpus of Totality and then to the one covering Contemporary time.

In the Totality corpus, it is typical to observe blending and melding of topics related to

(A)

Political and Social Topics with Topics Concerning Work (B and C in II.1). On reading these the Totality period is, rather characteristically, depicted here by both their frequency and social importance.

First of all, the lexeme 'party' (*strana*, devoid of polysemy) is found here predominantly. It is being followed by other:

FREQ.	Czech word	English translation
1	*sovětský, socialistický, národní, výroba, politický*	Soviet, socialistic, national, production (adj.), political
6	*úkol, pracující, závod, svaz, soudruh, výbor*	task, worker, enterprise/factory, union, com-rade, committee
11	*vláda, politika, plán, hospodářský, podnik*	government, policy, plan, economic, plant
16	*sjezd, socialismus, komunistický, KSČ, třída*	congress, socialism, communist, CPCz (Com-munist part of Czechoslovakia), class
21	*ÚV, stranický, lidový, SSSR, orgán*	CC (central committee), party (adj.), peo-ple's, USSR, organ (which has soon changed to de-note police)
26	hnutí, komunista, kapitalistický, družstvo, ČSSR	movement, communist, capitalistic, coopera-tive, ČSSR (Czechoslovakia)
31	USA, pokrokový, zasedání, závazek, us-nesení	USA, progressive, session, obligation, resolu-tion
36	imperialismus, říjnový, třídní, kolektiv, výchova	imperialism, October´s, class (adj.), collecti-ve, education
41	JZD, proletariát aj	JZD (agricultural cooperative), proletariat, and so on.

Let us recall that words such as 'reactionary' (*reakční*) did not enter this frequency selection, since these belonged to the first period around the year of 1952, receding later into background. It is, however, interesting to inspect the words 'market' (*trh*, with frequency 2974) and 'trade unions' (fr. 2974, being outside of those listed here) in a much narrower meaning than today.

Two interconnected aspects of the time that faced many obstacles were mirrored in the use of 'question' (*otázka* with frequency of 15,710) and 'problem' (*problém*, fr. 9643), whose solution found its quasimilitaristic way which always used to be 'fight/struggle' (*bojovat*) and, eventually, to 'win' (*zvítězit*, see more about this in 3).

This way, the second most important topic of the time becomes evident, namely

(B)

Fight(ing), war and enemy telling that the ruling regime lived in a permanent fear. Again, this quasimilitaristic setting is reflected in a fitting sequence of notions and words, such as 'fight'/'struggle', 'war', 'revolution', 'military', 'army', 'victory', 'peaceful', 'war' (adj.), 'fight', 'enemy', 'weapon', 'win', 'armed', 'army'.[4] The underlying Czech expression here are: *boj*, *válka*, *revoluce*, *vojenský*, *armáda*, *vítězství*, *mírový*, *válečný*, *bojovat*, *nepřítel*, *zbraň*, *zvítězit*, *ozbrojený*, *vojsko*.

A simple concordance of the lemma *boj* ('fight') or *bojovat* ('to fight') is enough to enable us to realize how inflationary these terms were and how diluted their original meaning has become. All of these did have an impact on people's thinking and perception of the world. See, for example, collocations such as 'struggle'/'fight for every single grain' (*boj o každé zrno*), 'fight for the flag of the Communist party's congress' (*boj o prapor sjezdu strany*), or 'fight for the recovery of the health in the sphere of popular music' (*boj o uzdravení v oblasti zábavné hudby*). If comprehensible at all, most of these far-fetched slogans, hanging often in the streets, seem funny and odd today, due to the goals they announced, such as Communist party flag in some sort of competition as a reward, or ill music that must be healed somehow (meaning, probably, that it was considered non-Communist, probably still too western-like).

Two interesting observations may be added here. The modal verb 'can'/'be able' to (see II.1 above) is joined by a second, 'must' (*muset*) announcing a necessity and public obligation. Although the second of these two may seem to belong to the periphery, it is, in fact rather characteristic adding the vocabulary of the time, lacking any colour terms, the first one: 'red' (*rudý*), an eloquent reminder of the ruling Communist regime [please, clarify].

---

[4]   See more about this in František Čermák, "Slovník komunistické totality: lexémy, nominace a jejich užití" [Vocabulary of the Communist Totality: Lexemes, Nominations and Their Use], *Slovník komunistické totality*, 16-39.

Of course Today's Lexicon is quite different, and none of the two totalitarian topics above is any longer prominent here, though there appear other topics that are economic, administrative and the perennial topic of sport, too.

(C)

Economy and Trade. Linked to the contemporary world and time, these have, in their content, completely swapped the original socialist economy and trade terms with the contemporary ones. Thus, there are entirely new and modern terms found here, such as 'percent', 'price', 'money' (these not being part of the Totalitarian vocabulary inspected), 'market', 'bank', 'billion', 'financial', 'enterprise'/'factory', 'fund', 'dollar', 'operation', 'share'/'stock' (completely unknown before), 'economical', 'fee', 'customer', 'investment', 'finance', 'euro'. Let us add that the above two terms for 'obstacles' and 'solution' have swapped their order, 'problem' (with frequency 9924) becoming the first followed by 'question' (4879) while 'enemy' disappeared entirely having been replaced by the nonmilitaristic 'rival'. The underlying Czech terms are: *procento*, *cena*, *peníze*, *trh*, *banka*, *miliarda*, *finanční*, *podnik*, *fond*, *dolar*, *provoz*, *akcie*, *ekonomický*, *poplatek*, *zákazník*, *investice*, *finance*, *euro*.

(D)

Administrative and political field reflects terms of the modern time. However, central terms such as 'free' (*svobodný*) and 'democratic' (*demokratický*) are missing here, obviously because they are strongly self-evident and obvious, which was not the case of the Totalitarian period. The situation is to be seen from the frequency order of other terms, such as 'police' (Czech *policie*, the word being a taboo one during the Communist times never having discovered a decent substitute for it), 'spokesman', 'court', 'mayor', 'project', 'information', 'parliament', 'citizen's', 'political', 'town-hall', 'right', and so on. The Czech counterparts are: *mluvčí*, *soud*, *starosta*, *projekt*, *informace*, *parlament*, *občanský*, *politický*, *radnice*, *právo*.

(E)

The perennial topic of Sport has become more important, offering now a rich variety of terms, such as 'play', 'player', 'competition', 'match', 'trainer', 'goal', 'race', 'win', 'league', 'rival', 'referee', 'attack' (mostly in a nonmilitary sense), 'tournament', and so forth. The Czech terms are here: *hrát*, *hráč*, *soutěž*, *utkání*, *trenér*, *branka*, *závod*, *vyhrát*, *liga*, *gól*, *soupeř*, *rozhodčí*, *útok*, *turnaj aj.*

III. The Third View: Absence of Lexemes in the two Periods

Conclusions that can easily be made on the basis of only basic frequency may also be summed up negatively pointing to major differences, too. Thus, it is remarkable to note that during the Communist period (almost) no trace is recorded of lexemes 'police', 'money', 'share(s)'/'stock', 'bad', 'private', 'may'/'be allowed' (Czech *policie*, *peníze*, *akcie*, *špatný*, *soukromý*, *smět*).

The absence of such terms as the Czech *kádrový* ('personell', 'viewed politically') and *uvědomělý* ('politically', 'class-conscious'), is conspicuous, these not even having good counterparts in English. Though these were often used in the very beginning of the Communist period, they somewhat receded later, but their absence may also be due to a random choice from the corpus.

For the Contemporary times, on the other hand, low or hardly any use can be recorded of lexemes, such as 'comrade', 'collective' (noun), 'Communist', 'Communist' (adj.), 'personell', 'class-conscious' (for these, see a note above), 'class' (adj.), 'win', 'try to find in shops', 'socialistic', 'Soviet', whose Czech original counterparts are *soudruh*, *kolektiv*, *komunista*, *komunistický*, *kádrový*, *uvědomělý*, *třídní*, *zvítězit*, *shánět*, *socialistický*, *sovětský*.

III.1. An Analysis of Key Terms of Both Periods: Pravda (Truth), Cíl (Goal), Bojovat (Fight), Zvítězit (Win) with their Collocations

Having looked into isolated, though frequency-ordered sample above (being relatively exhaustive from the point of view of the semantic groups identified there), whose meaning and importance become clear only in the frequency company of other by their place in the whole, our next step will be to look at the usage and broader relationship of four basic and, in a sense, timeless notions of *Pravda* ('Truth'), *Cíl* ('Goal'), *Bojovat* ('Fight'), *Zvítězit* ('Win'). Though their choice is somewhat arbitrary, it is made in an attempt to show many associations they have, as well as the great changes they have undergone during the time. Through their most frequent collocations (standing for minimal context of use) their basic specific use in their microcontexts will be recorded, and, in this way, also their semantics and usage in the period inspected.

Totality Period (the most frequent collocations, in the order 1-75, in decreasing frequency):

Pravda	Cíl	Bojovat	Zvítězit
historická	hospodářský	proti	nad
objektivní	hlavní	za	zaslouženě
vědecká	stanovený	rozhodně	družstvo
hluboká	vytyčený	aktivně	mužstvo
skutečná	konečný	důsledně	tým
známá	společný	nesmiřitelně	přátelství
překrucování	dosáhnout	mír	proletariát
psát	politiky	splnění	revoluce
mít	realizace	svobodu	soutěži
poznání	agresívní	zachování	boji
rozvoje	politický	imperialismu	socialismus
poznat	splnění	fašismu	kapitalismem
		nedostatkům	volbách

Today's Time (the most frequent collocations in the order 1-50/75, in decreasing frequency):

Pravda	Cíl	Bojovat	Zvítězit
je	hlavní	proti	zaslouženě
máte	projekt	záchranu	volbách
nepříjemná	jasný	postup	nad
naprostá	konkrétní	o	kategorii
vítězí	programový	titul	rozum
svatá	měnový	život	přehledem
známá	útok	statečně	rozdílem
stará	turisté	svobodu	soutěži
historická	strategický	přežití	anketě
říct	zvýšit	kluci	turnaji
znát	inflační	medaile	těsně
vědecký	politický	udržení	boji
hledání	soutěž	tituly	jednoznačně
rozhodně	dlouhodobý	prvenství	družstvo
mluvit	oblíbený	kůrovcem	finále
		korupci	závodě
		krizí	převahou
		zloději	konkurencí
		kvalifikaci	štafetách
		únavou	zlem

Interpreting these, let us add just a couple of notes about their meaning and contexts where they are to be found while more details are easily to be seen in the corpora on the web. This possibility is also the reason why no English equivalents are offered here.

(1)

Truth (*pravda*) is a basic and philosophical term. Since it is strongly linked to the concrete situation that can be interpreted in more than one way, none of the two periods attempts to define it. Nonetheless, its collocations suggest that the communist approach tended to identify it with the prevailing period ideology, hence the collocation 'objective truth' (*objektivní pravda*), that is just proclaimed but never explained, and, similarly, 'historical truth' (*historická pravda*), the usage of which is quite different in both periods. A subjective and, therefore, alternative approach to other possibility (and not the only one) and its usage is found in Today's Period, see dialogic expressions, such as 'You are right' (*Máte pravdu*), 'Holy truth!' (*svatá pravda*) or 'unpleasant truth' (*nepříjemná pravda*) suggesting a possibility to express diversity of opinion and subjective stand, which was not imaginable in the Communist period. The favourite Communist expression 'distorsion of truth' (*překrucování pravdy*) suggesting the perennial Communist struggle with the Western world (which, by definition, can never see the truth and resorts only to its distorsion since the only truth is that of the Communists) is confronted by today's typically philosophical 'search for truth' (*hledání pravdy*).

(2)

Goal (*Cíl*) is, in contrast to truth, a notion tied entirely to a specific period, reflecting all the more aptly momentaneous preferences of the society and accents placed on these. The Communist goal, or rather goals, are only 'political' *(politický)* and 'economic' (*hospodářský*), all strictly planned and given centrally from above, that are clearly 'staked out' (*vytyčené*) and 'determined' (*stanovený*) or even 'definitive' (*konečné*), all of these supposed 'to be realized' (*realizovat*), 'fulfilled' (*splnit*), or 'attained' (*dosáhnout*). Modern time is not so clear-cut and definite, there is no suggestion that they are coming, dictated from above, though their relatedness and dependency on a 'framework' (*programový cíl*) is noted. Often, these are openly viewed as a search or inspection by collocations such as 'goal of the project', 'competition' (*cíl projektu*, *soutěže*). Moreover, next to political and economic goals, other goals are mentioned, too, including those related to 'sport competition', 'tourism', and so forth (*cíl útoku*, *cíl turistů*).

(3)

Fight (*bojovat*) is a dynamic notion suggesting a shortcut to developmental problems of many kinds. In the Communist time, one fought 'against' somebody/something and

'for' something, 'against an enemy and for a goal'. The enemy was 'Imperialism' and 'Fascism' usually (*bojovat proti imperialismu*, *fašismu*), though the enemy could have been conceived of in a rather abstract and collective way, too, such as in 'deficiencies' (*bojovat proti nedostatkům*). This goal that was 'pursued' (called in the jargon of the time), could be of several kinds, somewhat heterogeneous: 'freedom' (*svoboda*, *bojovat za svobodu*) where it was, primarily, the 'freedom of the oppressed nations standing outside the Communist world', 'peace' (*mír*, *bojovat za mír*), but also, rather vaguely, 'accomplishment' (*splnění*, as in accomplishment of 'Communist party congress resolution', *splnění závěrů komunistického sjezdu*). Here, the way how it must be accomplished has been stressed, being usually 'intensive', 'active', 'consequent' and 'intransigent' (*bojovat rozhodně*, *aktivně*, *důsledně*, *nesmiřitelně*, and so on).

Modern times are no longer so straightforward and no simple picture is offered. One is still 'fighting against' (*proti*), but much less 'on behalf of' (*za*) something/somebody, or rather 'for' (*o*) something. Neither is the enemy a personified state of affairs as in the Communist times ('fight against imperialism', *bojovat proti imperialismu*), it is merely period-bound or timeless (*bojovat s korupcí*, 'fight with corruption'). Communist period did not mention corruption at all, and that is why an equivalent term from this time is missing.

However, rather than 'fighting against' (*bojovat proti*), a new meaning appears signalling competition and rivalry using the preposition 'with' (*s*), cf. 'fight with thieves', 'bark beetle' (*se zloději*, *s kůrovcem*), but also with 'crisis', or subjectively, with 'fatigue' (*s krizí*, *únavou*). This recent aspect becomes dominant in a different kind of fight, namely in sport. Thus, one 'fights', next to the old 'fight for one's life', 'for freedom' or, specifically, 'for the title to be gained', 'primacy' or a 'medal' (o *život*, *svobodu*, *titul*, *prvenství*, *medaili*), and so on.

(4)
Win (*zvítězit*) makes sense, mostly, if combined with fighting, both must be viewed together. Yet, the usage of this verb is very different in both periods. The Communist time prefers to stress the agent, namely the winner in a victorious fight, offering, for the first time, also winning in sports. Thus, the 'winner' may be seen in a 'team' (*družstvo*), 'squad' (*mužstvo*), but also in a personified 'movement' or 'situation' ('friendship', 'proletariat', 'revolution', 'socialism has prevailed', *přátelství*, *proletariát*, *revoluce*, *socialismus zvítězil*). An evident goal, hence the object of the fight, is political, primarily ('defeat the capitalism', *zvítězit nad kapitalismem*), but, interestingly, there appears a processual view of the fighting using a different preposition ('win (in) the fight', 'elections', *zvítězit v boji*, *ve volbách*). This usage may suggest an ambiguous, alternative result, which has not been often achieved, however.

Modern time has 'usurped win' (*zvítězit*) dominantly, especially in sports ('win in a category', 'tournament', 'finals', 'race', 'relays', *zvítězit v kategorii*, *turnaji*, *finále*, *závodě*, *štafetách*). A rare exception is represented outside the sport, too, namely, in 'win inquiry'/'poll' (*zvítězit v anketě*).

A rather unique and solitary, though quite significant, of fight is, next to 'win the elections' (*zvítězit ve volbách*), an ethical and philosophical collocation 'triumph over the evil' (*zvítězit nad zlem*). A similar, though rare case, in contrast to the Communist times, is to be seen in the use and explicit mention of the subject of the fight and, hence, its winner, cf. however, next to the sports use, the 'team won' (*družstvo zvítězilo*), also a general and psychological one 'common sense prevailed' (*rozum zvítězil*).

IV. A Summary and Open Problems

This kind of approach, trying to sketch at least some significant key terms of two different periods and their general nature, prevailing political values and psychological situations involved may be easily critised. This depends, however, on the point of view and criteria used, it is a matter interpretation. Yet, it seems that this approach is reflected in the language of the two periods up to a high degree. Without a large and indepth probe, that happens to offer itself in the two existing corpora used here (should anyone be interested to undertake it), this cannot be more than a few notes, hints and traces that this approach could offer. It seems, however, that a persuasive and distinctive picture of both periods does loom here.

Author's notes

On the data chosen from two comparable large corpora, one from the period of the Communist Totality, the other from Today, post-totalitarian period, an attempt has been made to compare vocabulary of both periods and some of its typical lexemes as well as collocations. Through this corpus approach both a skeleton picture of both periods as

well as of the current notions, typical of these widely different times, could have been, hopefully, drawn and through that, main features of both periods and society living in them obtained. The research is an off-spin of a Dictionary of the Totalitarian Period published recently and is to be seen as a continuation of it. The Totalitarian vocabulary and the corpus have been based (each around half a million of words), mostly, on the Communist newspapers while a corresponding corpus of the same newspaper type of texts from the Czech National Corpus has been used as a counterweight. Thus, effectively, vocabulary of these two periods spanned over some 50 years.

In two steps, the first probe has concentrated on a simple inventory of the most frequent words of both periods. The initial small probe offered 25 most frequent autosemantic words where a considerable difference, even in such small vocabulary, is already evident. The prevalence of political notions in the Communist period was to be expected with dominant adjectives such as 'Soviet' and 'socialistic'. On the other hand, contemporary vocabulary reveals, among other things, a remarkable presence of words related to private ownership already. The second step has tried to confirm and make more precise the first one, offering a semantic analysis of the most frequent 1000 words from both times. It became more clear to what degree the Communist have been bent on all sorts of fight, struggle or war which reflected their constant uncertainty, a feature not to be found today (if any, fighting is now related to sports). Another prominent feature, dominant today but strongly underrepresented in the Communist time, is one related to economics and business (words such as 'private', 'money', 'investment', 'shares', 'customer'). A contrastive list of lexemes not to be found in one of the periods is offered by way of a summary.

The research has subsequently moved on to typical collocations of some key notions and words, showing thus rudimental semantics of these notions and their associations with other, period-prone words. Four words have been chosen for the comparison of their collocations here, namely 'truth', 'goal', 'fight' and 'win'. A comparison of the use of these four words through their collocations in both periods is shown in a table (having some 50 up to 75 most frequent collocations).

Typically, Communist collocations offered for 'fight' include words as 'against imperialism', 'fascism', 'for peace' while modern times seem to prefer fighting with 'corruption', 'crisis' or even, more personally, 'with fatigue', 'for sport medals'. Similarly, Communists won their fights mostly politically or at war, cf. 'proletariat'/'revolution has won', 'win over capitalism', while today 'win' refers to sport mostly, such as 'in their category'/'in tournament', and so on.

Admittedly, this has been just an attempt which could be easily improved, if more data were used, although it did show some aspects of the public life of both periods.

BROTHERHOOD AND UNITY:
LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE POLITICS IN THE SOCIALIST
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (1945-1991)

Maria Rita Leto

(Università 'G. D'Annunzio' Chieti-Pescara)

In Old Church Slavonic, the word *jęzikŭ*, which in modern Slavic languages means only 'language', encompassed the meaning of both 'language' and 'people'. This connection between people and language can also be found in later texts, such as the Croatian manuscript of 1495 in which the priest Martinac describes the Christian defeat of Krbava in 1493 saying that "[the] Turks tormented the Croatian language/people". In Slavic languages characterized by a great similarity, this overlapping of meanings can create some embarrassment in the case of 'fluid' situations, thus accounting for the crucial position of the linguistic issue in the Slavic area in general and in the Serbo-Croatian area in particular. The problem lies in the fact that this area saw the growth of two populations – the Serbs and the Croats – who speak the same language, albeit with two standard variants, but have seen a different development in terms of religion, culture, politics, and economy. A further complication is that this language is also spoken by other peoples, such as Montenegrins and Muslims,[1] who do not identify, or only partly or temporarily identified, with the Serbs or the Croats. Moreover, about twenty-seven languages were spoken in Socialist Yugoslavia, on which this essay focuses, with extremely complex interconnections between language and national identity. With respect to

---

[1]   The Muslim nationality, acknowledged as such in 1968, includes the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but does not include all followers of the religion, since Muslims can be of several other nationalities such as Turkish or Albanian. Today, the Muslims of Bosnia are usually referred to as Bosniaks in official discourse.

the linguistic minorities, the Socialist government adopted a ground-breaking policy, which other nations would later take as a model, as it included the protection of all the nationalities in the country (particularly with the 1974 constitution).[2] However, the insurmountable stumbling block that played a critical role first in the conception and then in the dissolution of the idea of Yugoslavia was its main language, starting from the very name it should bear. Consequently, the present essay focuses on this aspect of the linguistic policy adopted in the second Yugoslavia. In order to understand this intricate linguistic situation and the difficulties that socialist Yugoslavia had to face in this field, though, we need to start by briefly retracing the path that led these peoples initially to Yugoslavism and then to their dramatic separation during the 1990s.

I. An imagined language

The national awareness of Serbs and Croats is largely determined by the fact that the former belong to the Orthodox-Byzantine sphere of influence, while the latter are part of the Latin-Catholic area. Unlike the Croats, the Serbs had a strong medieval kingdom and an equally strong nineteenth-century State structure. Their Byzantine-influenced cultural tradition is uniform, unlike that in Croatia, and their language developed into only one of the dialects of the Serbo-Croatian area, *štokavian*, albeit in the *ekavian* and *ijekavian* variants.[3] Moreover, they traditionally use the Cyrillic alphabet. In contrast, the Croats did not have an autonomous State until 1991 (with the exception of the short-lived reign of King Tomislav in the tenth century, and the infamous years of the Independent State of Croatia),[4] were separated into different States, and spoke different dialects. This possibly explains why they have concentrated their fears regarding

---

[2] August Kovačec, "Jezici narodnosti i etničkih skupina u Jugoslaviji", *Kulturni radnik*, 39, 1 (1986): 83-96, see 84.

[3] The Serbo-Croatian linguistic area is traditionally divided into three dialects that are named after the interrogative pronoun 'what?': the *štokavian* dialect, far more common than the other two, spoken in Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro and in a large part of today's Croatia; the *čakavian* dialect spoken in Istria, Dalmatia (from the north to the Pelješac peninsula and, on the islands, from the north to the island of Lastovo, which also features *štokavian* elements), and the *kajkavian* dialect spoken in the Zagreb area. The latter has many traits in common with Slovene (whether it should be considered a Croatian or Slovene dialect has long been debated). Another dialect classification results from the ancient Slavonic vowel *jat'*, so that *štokavian* can have an *ikavian*, *ijekavian* or *ekavian* accent (according to the sound *i, je* or *e* of the *jat'* vowel), whereas *čakavian* is basically *ikavian*, while *kajkavian* is basically *ekavian*. Over time, these dialects have developed their own literatures.

[4] King Tomislav reigned around 925; the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH), a satellite of the Axis, was established on 10 April 1941 and ceased to exist in May 1945.

their national identity onto language. There is the fear of being Italianized, Magyarized, Germanized and, lastly, of being incorporated into the stronger, much more compact, linguistically and ethnically so similar Serbian nationality.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, however, in the wake of the Pan-Slavic enthusiasm of Austrian Slavs, the Croats did promote the Illyrian Movement, aiming to unite all the Slavs of the Balkans into a multi-ethnic State in which each constituent part could keep its identity.[5] In 1850, leading Croatian and Serbian personalities co-signed the Vienna Literary Agreement that established a joint literary language based on the *štokavian ijekavian* dialect. With the goal of advocating the much wished-for cultural and linguistic unification, the Croats dropped the Zagreb dialect, *kajkavian*, in favour of the *štokavian* dialect, as it was the most widespread and the only variant that they could share with the Serbs. The latter, though, did not renounce the *ekavian* dialect spoken in the capital city, Belgrade, and in Vojvodina. *Ekavism/ijekavism* thus became an insurmountable obstacle to the creation of a unified language, even if behind this, other problems were lurking. The Illyrian Movement, which was successful only among the Croats, thus marked the beginning of a linguistic, cultural, ideological, and political misunderstanding that, *mutatis mutandis*, has persisted to the present day. The Serbs saw a possible union with the other South Slavs as a way to expand their borders and to restore their medieval 'great Serbia'. The Croats, on the other hand, with their experience in the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Habsburg empire, were firmly determined to preserve their national and linguistic characteristics. This misunderstanding between Serbs and Croats on the terms and goals of their union continued not only during the first Yugoslavia (1918-1945), but also throughout the socialist period (1945-1991), with heightening tension and mutual reproaches whose pivotal point was language.

In the first Yugoslavia, which was initially called the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians (*Kraljevina Srba*, *Hrvata i Slovenaca*), the national and linguistic problems were clearly underestimated, probably due to difficulties in cross-cultural mediation between the parties. For example, the Corfu Declaration, signed on 20 July 1917 and considered the first step in the creation of Yugoslavia, stated that this people with three names is actually

> one and the same, by blood, by written and spoken language, by the feelings of their unity, by continuity and integrity of the territory they inhabit undividedly, and by common vital interests.[6]

---

[5]   Egidio Ivetić, *Jugoslavia sognata. Lo jugoslavismo delle origini* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2012).

[6]   *Krfska deklaracija 1917. saradnja Jugoslovena na internacionalizaciji jugoslovenskog pitanja*, http://www.znaci.net/00001/138_7.pdf, last accessed 2 May 2019.

The unitary spirit of this statement held the germ of future clashes, as it could not but displease the weaker peoples of the nation, particularly the Croats. Then, with King Alexander's coup in 1929 and the transformation into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (*Kraljevina Jugoslavija*), unitarism was strengthened and underlined in the new motto of the country: 'one King, one language, one people'. Political unitarism was matched by linguistic unitarism: the official language of the first Yugoslavia, in both the 1921 and 1931 constitutions, was Serbo-Croatian-Slovene (*srpsko-hrvatsko-slovenački*). This name was chosen as a compromise. It acknowledged Serbo-Croatian as the official language and attributed Slovene the status of a local dialect. However, several other linguistic minorities were not considered at all. In 1930, following the directives of the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians,[7] a manual was published with the aim of unifying Serbian and Croatian orthographic rules. Based on a work written by the Serb Aleksandar Belić in 1923, this new manual was strongly opposed by the Croats, because they saw it as a way to 'Serbianize' their language. It is possible that the Serbs – the largest and strongest people in the Kingdom unified under their rule and with Belgrade as the capital city – considered imposing their norm as the natural and legitimate standard. However, they did not do this. In fact, there was not a true unitarism, as this would have required the imposition of one variant over the other. In Croatia – as Snježana Kordić has pointed out – newspapers, schoolbooks and literary works were not in *ekavian*, and neither courts nor the Parliament were forced to use it. The two variants continued to coexist and the "two main centres of codification, Zagreb and Belgrade, continued codifying their variants".[8]

The Yugoslavia born out of the ashes of World War II,[9] a socialist and federal State, inherited the unresolved issue of the language from the first, monarchic and centralized Yugoslavia.

Right from the outset and repeatedly, the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian Communist Party[10] addressed the issue of Serbo-Croatian as 'one' (*jedan*) but not a

---

[7]   "Pravopisno upustvo", *Prosvetni Glasnik* (15 June 1929): 747-771.

[8]   Snježana Kordić, *Jezik i nacionalizam* (Zagreb: Durieux, 2010), 287.

[9]   The so-called 'second' Yugoslavia had several names: Democratic Federative Yugoslavia (*Demokratska Federativna Jugoslavija*) from 1943 to 1946, Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (*Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija*) from 1946 to 1963 and Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (*Socijalistička Federativna Republika*), from 1963 to 1991. It consisted of six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia) and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) that belonged to Serbia.

[10]   Making reference to Marx's *Manifesto* of 1848 and following the 6th conference of YCP held in Zagreb on 2-5 November 1952 that declared the split with the Soviet model, the Yugoslavian leaders changed the name of the Yugoslavian Communist Party into the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

'unitary' (*jedistven*) language spoken by about 75% of the population.[11] The decisions taken in this regard were mostly contradictory and harbingers of further complications, as they were determined by contingencies. From an initial stance that acknowledged – at least formally – the existence of Serbian and Croatian as two separate languages, the situation changed and increasingly more noticeable attempts were made to create a single national language – Serbo-Croatian or Croatian-Serbian. At the same time, however, the equality of variants and alphabets was underlined, thus implicitly contradicting the intention of creating a unified norm. In fact, socialist Yugoslavia also continuously oscillated between unitarism and separatism without being able to define a consistent and shared policy.[12] From the federal constitution of 1963 onwards, the decision regarding the choice of the official language/languages was delegated to each republic,[13] with the result that the Federation ended up without really having an official language. In the case of Serbo-Croatian, this represented a further complication: if Serbian and Croatian were considered different languages, it would be necessary to protect the linguistic rights of the Serbian minority in Croatia, as well as those of the Croatian minority in Serbia.[14]

---

[11]   Serbo-Croatian, Slovene (the mother tongue of about 8% of the population) and Macedonian (6%) were the languages of the 'nations' (*narodi*) of Yugoslavia, that is, those who belonged to States within Yugoslavia (Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Montenegrins, Slovenians and Macedonians). Albanian (8%) and Hungarian (2%) are the two main languages of 'nationalities' (*narodnosti*, as minorities were called) whose country of reference was outside Yugoslavia, but which enjoyed various rights, along with the languages of other nationalities (Turkish, Slovakian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Ruthenian, Italian, Czech, Ukrainian). Finally, there were some ethnic groups (Roms, Vlachs and small minorities such as Germans, Poles, Russians and Greeks) who were not granted any language rights. As nationality was declared and not conferred, it is possible to see fluctuations from one census to the other. Over the years, for example, the number of people who declared to be Yugoslavian increased. For further details on the linguistic situation of Yugoslavia in general, see *Language in the Former Yugoslav Lands*, ed. by Ranko Bugarski and Celia Hawkesworth (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica Publishers, 2004) and Ranko Bugarski, "Jezička politika i planiranje jezika u Jugoslaviji", *Jezik u kontekstu*, ed. by Ranko Bugarski (Beograd: Čigoja štampa, XX vek, 1997), 30-57; about the Yugoslavian linguistic policy towards Romani, see Grattan Puxon, "Romanēs and Language Policy in Jugoslavia", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 19 (1979): 83-90.

[12]   A compelling metaphor used by Ranko Bugarski is the 'fire-fighter policy', Ranko Bugarski, "Nekoliko napomena o našoj jezičkoj politici", *Jezička politika i planiranje jezika u Jugoslaviji*, ed. by Vera Vasić (Novi Sad: Institut za južnoslovenske jezike, 1990), 81-85, 83.

[13]   For example, in the autonomous Province of Vojvodina, five official languages were recognised: Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian and Ruthenian; in Kosovo four: Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, Turkish and Romani. In Vojvodina, the need for equality was the subject of more than twenty laws.

[14]   The problem mainly affected the significant Serbian minority in Croatia (about 15% of the population), also considering the fact that Tito's Yugoslavia had just suffered a bloody war and that the Croatian Serbs still remembered the slaughters perpetrated by the Ustashi.

II. What's in a Name

The second Yugoslavia was founded on 29-30 November 1943 in Jajce, Bosnia, when most of the territory was still occupied by the Germans. During the second session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ),[15] a provisional parliamentary assembly was established and Josip Broz, also known as Tito and the undisputed leader of the resistance, was appointed Marshal and became Prime Minister. The session outlined the guidelines of the future Yugoslavia based "on democratic, federal principles, as a state community of peoples with equal rights".[16] A major principle of the new country is distilled into the slogan 'Brotherhood and Unity' (*Bratstvo i jedinstvo*),[17] which occurs three times in the founding act of the People's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia dated 29 November 1945. Destined to become the most popular political slogan during the fifty years of existence of Yugoslavia,[18] this claim is much more complex than it may at first appear. The concept of 'Brotherhood' can refer to ethnic and social categories,[19] thus generating an ideological ambiguity that was useful when the communist partisans were supported by Great Britain, but would backfire later on. In fact, this principle of legitimation, which aimed to create internal cohesion between the various nations of the federation, failed when the ethnical aspect began to prevail over the social element. On the other hand, the notion of 'Unity' underscored the importance of the fact that the remodelled Yugoslavia should stay united by virtue of a voluntary agreement among parties that were given equal status and equal rights, including the right to self-determination and even secession. Moreover, the slogan 'Brotherhood and Unity' also met the needs of the most disadvantaged peoples in the Federation, as 'Brotherhood' implies equality within the unity of the State, which is what the Croats had been asking for since the time of Illyrism.

---

[15]   Even if during the first AVNOJ meeting held in Bihać a year earlier the majority was in the hands of the communists, a moderate political programme was presented to gain the backing of the western supporters and non-communist political forces.

[16]   *Ustavi i ustavna dokumenta socijalističke Jugoslavije 1942-1981*, ed. by Ratko Marković and Milutin Srdić (Beograd: Naučna knjiga, 1987), 15.

[17]   For the story behind the slogan, see Drago Roksandić, "'Bratstvo i jedinstvo' u političkom govoru jugoslovenskih komunista 1919-1945. godine, *Tito – viđenja i tumačenja*, ed. by Olga Manojlović Pintarić, Mile Bjelajac, and Radmila Radić (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2011), 28-43.

[18]   The other pillars of SFRY were self-management, promoted in the 1950s in opposition to the Soviet centralized-State model; non-alignment with the two cold-war blocs, the Soviet and the American organisations, which from its formulation between 1956 and 1960 gave Tito and Yugoslavia a key role among the non-aligned countries; and the myth of Tito that began to emerge from the years of the partisan war.

[19]   Dejan Jović, "Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Communism: from Tito to Kardelj", *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea 1918-1992*, ed. by Dejan Djokić (London: Hurst & Company, 2003), 157-181.

As proof of the crucial role of the linguistic issue, on 15 January 1944, less than two months after the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia had been proclaimed, the AVNOJ deliberated on which languages would be used for the official resolutions and notices issued by the National Liberation Committee. With express reference to the "federative principles of Yugoslavia founded upon the right of self-determination and national equality granted to the peoples of Yugoslavia by the decisions taken during the second session of AVNOJ",[20] the Committee decided that all official documents be published simultaneously in Serbian, Croatian, Slovene and Macedonian, and that these four languages be considered equal throughout the Yugoslavian territory.

This document marks a surprising and significant break with the past. The new Yugoslavia was based on principles that were completely different from those of the first Yugoslavia, as it claimed to be a voluntary unification of equal peoples (initially three – Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians – and subsequently also Macedonians, Montenegrins and Muslims). Right from the start, the political, cultural, and linguistic equality of the peoples and nationalities was acknowledged and almost obsessively stressed. Moreover, the AVNOJ resolution of 15 January 1944 mentioned a new language for the first time: Macedonian. This had not existed in the monarchic Yugoslavia because the Macedonian nationality was not recognised. Up to that moment, the Macedonians had in fact been considered as Serbs, just like – at other times in their history – they had been identified as Bulgarians (who still today consider the Macedonian language as western Bulgarian). The national liberation movement, largely controlled by the communist party, took its strength from the people's support: it was only thanks to this that it achieved incredible successes, and was acknowledged and helped by Great Britain and the United States. However, in order to gain the people's support, the movement had to find a way to reach out to and be understood by the people. Thus, as early as 1941, the communist party addressed the Macedonians and Slovenians using their own languages. Just as the German language (as well as Slovene) was born to facilitate understanding of the Bible and Luther's preaching, so, during World War II, the Macedonian language was born and codified as the official language of the Republic of Macedonia immediately after the end of the war.[21]

The other innovative aspect of this resolution is that it identified Serbian and Croatian as two separate languages. This decision was probably made as an understandable reac-

---

[20]   *Odluka o objavljivanju odluka i proglasa Antifašističkog vijeća narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije, njegovog Pretsjedništva i Nacionalnog komiteta na srpskom, hrvatsko, slovenačkom i makedoskom jeziku*, http://hjp.znanje.hr/?show=povijest&chapter=27-odluka, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[21]   The codification of the standard Macedonian language is mainly connected to Blaže Koneski (1921-1993), author of the Macedonian orthographic manual, grammar and dictionary, and founder of Macedonian Language Studies at the University of Skopje, as well as a writer and poet.

tion to the unitary attempts of the old Yugoslavia, and also to dispel suspicions – always around the corner among Croats and Slovenians – of again falling under Serbian dominance. The explanation put forward by Milan Šipka[22] that the authors of the document were not expert linguists and that the state of war did not grant the time or conditions for sophisticated sociolinguistic analyses is not very satisfactory. Indeed, the decisive role played by the linguistic issue in the previous Yugoslavia and the sensitivity of both Croatians and Slovenians to this question were well known to Tito (a Croatian born at the border with Slovenia) and the other leaders of the party who throughout the existence of Yugoslavia had to strike a very difficult balance between unitarism and separatism. The complex maneuvering between the two sides was significantly reflected in the language issue, particularly in the majority language, Serbo-Croatian, whose very name – variously written as a compound, with inversion of the terms, hyphenated, as one or two separate words, or separated by an 'or' – highlights the political tendencies of the moment.[23] On the one hand, the Serbs did not want to renounce their function as majority nation and leader of the Federation (a sort of Piedmont of Yugoslavia, a term commonly used around the end of the nineteenth century), on the other, the Croats and Slovenians felt that their national identities were being threatened. In the delicate initial stage of the establishment of the new country, the balance between the various constituent parts had to be managed with great care. Thus, in order not to displease the Serbs, it was decided that Kosovo, the cradle of their nationhood, would not become the seventh republic of the Federation[24] as Tito had initially intended. Similarly, Albanian was not considered the fifth official language, even though the number of Albanians in Kosovo would have justified such a decision. At the same time, the document issued on 15 January 1944 seems aimed at reassuring the Slovenians and Croats, as shortly after the second AVNOJ session, Tito met the two delegations separately and promised Slovenians that they could use their language even in the army.[25]

---

[22]   Milan Šipka, *Književnojezička politika i jezička kultura* (Sarajevo: NIŠRO 'Oslobođenje' OOUR Izdavačka djelatnost, 1987), 25.

[23]   A need, bordering on paranoia, for equality is also proven by the fact that, at some point, the name of the language became 'Serbo-Croatian/Croatian-Serbian, Croatian or Serbian' (*srpskohrvatskihrvatskosrpski, hrvatski ili srpski*). The same tendency seems to be at work also in recent times. In 2011, in Montenegro – in order for any student to have their nationality mentioned – the teaching subject was called 'Montenegrin-Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian language and literature', Marko Samardžija, *Politika, zakonodavstvo i jezik* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2013), 29.

[24]   The Serbs hardly accepted the autonomy of the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, as the events following Tito's death in 1980 and up to their suppression by Slobodan Milošević in 1989 indicate.

[25]   Tito reassured the Slovenian general Jaka Avšič, while asking him to be patient until Yugoslavia established itself at an international level (Tito's main concern at that time), but that promise was never kept: the language of the army, throughout the duration of Tito's Yugoslavia, was only Serbo-Croatian

If for the Slovenians and the Macedonians the matter was seeing their language rise from nothing more than a dialect to a literary language in its own right, the situation for the Croats was more problematic, since the same *štokavian* dialect base they shared with Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bosnians opened up the possibility of a shared language. Indeed, the term Serbo-Croatian had a long tradition[26] which, in the years of war, the Independent State of Croatia was working hard to eradicate. The four years of the NDH (1941-1945) were characterized by a sort of obsessive 'linguistic patriotism' directed at 'purifying' the Croatian language from Serbisms and making it as different as possible from Serbian.[27] In mentioning the two languages separately, the AVNOJ document could not avoid taking into consideration what was happening in Croatia at that time, and therefore sought to reassure Croatians that language would not operate as a Trojan horse for a return to Serb political and national hegemony.

It was no accident that in the following years, various Croatian linguists made repeated appeals to the principles that had guided the linguistic policy of AVNOJ, underlining how some leaders of the communist party were perfectly aware that they were dealing with two different languages.[28] To this end, they mentioned a letter written by Tito to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1941 in which he observes that the Soviet constitution was translated into three languages (Serbian, Croatian, Slovene). They also called attention to a resolution of 14 December 1944 signed by Tito, which reaffirmed decisions of 15 January 1944 and stated that the *Official Gazette of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia* (*Službeni list Demokratske Federativne Jugoslavije*)[29] would be printed in Serbian, Croatian, Slovene and Macedonian.

(Novica Veljanovski, "Titove dileme o AVNOJ-u i o ustavnom uređenju Jugoslavije 1943-1946). Sa posebnom osvrtom na Republiku Makedoniju", *Tito – viđenja i tumačenja*, 293; Aleš Gabrič, "Slovenian Language and the Yougoslav People's Army", *Between the House of Habsburg and Tito. A Look at Slovenian Past 1861-1980*, ed. by Jurij Perovšek and Bojan Godeša (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino/Institute of Contemporary History, 2016), https://hdl.handle.net/11686/file19369, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[26]   Jacob Grimm was the first, in 1824, to use the term Serbo-Croatian, which was then spread by the Slovenian slavist Jernei Kopitar.

[27]   The Independent State of Croatia immediately addressed the problem of a national language by creating the Croatian State Office for Language (Hrvatski državni ured za jezik) in April 1941. In charge of supervising the correctness and purity of the Croatian language in public use, the office published lists of words to be banned and to be replaced with 'authentic' Croatian words, Marko Samardžija, *Jezični purizam u NDH* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 1993).

[28]   Stjepan Babić, "Iz bliske prošlosti našega jezika (I)", *Jezik*, 35 (1987): 13-17.

[29]   The *Official Gazette of the DFY* – later renamed *Official Gazette of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia* (*Službeni list Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*) – printed laws and regulations which came into effect on the eighth day after their publication.

On 10 August of the same year, however, the cultural section of the State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia (ZAVNOH) organized a Conference on literary language that contradicted the above-mentioned position of AVNOJ in taking a markedly unitary stance. The conclusions of this conference were surprising but, as we will see later, came to nothing. Looking back to the Vienna Literary Agreement of 1850, which had established that the basis for the literary language of Croats and Serbs was to be *štokavian* in its *ijekavian* variety, the concluding document of the conference states that "if there are any differences in the writing of *ijekavian* Serbs and Croats, these must be regarded as local and not national". Real differences were to be ascribed to Germanisms, Turkisms, Gallicisms – foreignisms that ought to be removed.[30] This actually meant considering the Serbian use of the *ekavian* form as exclusively 'local'. However, the document granted freedom to choose between orthographic variants and the use of the Latin or Cyrillic alphabets, which had equal status, while both had to be used in schoolbooks. The name of this language was quickly settled with its designation as the 'Popular/National' language (*narodni jezik*) and the suggestion to eliminate all previous names. It cannot be overlooked that this document mentioned neither the Montenegrins (who at that time and up until recently believed that they spoke Serbian) nor the Muslims (who were not yet recognized as a 'nation' and therefore felt discriminated).

At the end of the war, the coalition government (twenty members of AVNOJ, three of the Royalist Yugoslav Government in exile in London, and five of the pre-war parties) broke up and the subsequent formation of the Popular Front favoured the consolidation of the Communist Party. The 1946 constitution,[31] modelled on the 1936 Soviet constitution, centralized all power, greatly reducing the sovereignty of the republics of the Federation, without any mention of the individual languages. Article 65 stated: "Laws and other general prescriptions of the federative people's republic of Yugoslavia are published in the languages of the people's republics".[32] The constitutions of the member republics, promulgated immediately afterwards, defined the name of the official language differently: Serbian in Serbia and Montenegro; Serbian or Croatian in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatian or Serb in Croatia, Slovene in Slovenia, and Macedonian in Macedonia. In the 1953 constitution, in which the Yugoslav Communist leadership

---

[30]   *Zemaljsko antifašičko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske. Zbornik dokumenata 1944 (od 10. svibnja do 31. prosinca)*, ed. by Hodimir Sirotković (Zagreb: Institut za istoriju radničkog pokreta Hrvatske, 1975), 237-238.

[31]   The Constitution of 1946 was published in the *Službeni list FNRJ* n. 10/46 of 31 January 1946. Eloquently, during the proclamation of the constitution at the constituent assembly, articles 1-43 were read in Serbian, articles 44-76 in Croatian, articles 77-114 in Slovene, and articles 115-139 in Macedonian.

[32]   *Ustavi i ustavna dokumenta socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 42.

sought an alternative path to socialism following the split from the Soviet Union in 1948, the same pattern of language definition can be found.

The third constitution of 7 April 1963 stressed the socialist orientation of the country, starting from its very name. The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia became the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, "in a move which demonstrated that the ideological character of the State became more important than its territorial (and thus also ethnic) structure".[33] This constitution guaranteed "freedom of the press and other media of information, freedom of association, freedom of speech and public expression", but with the admonition that nobody should use "these freedoms and rights […] to overthrow the socialist, democratic order determined by the constitution".[34] In addition, article 41 affirmed that "the citizen shall be guaranteed the freedom to express his own nationality and culture, as well as the freedom to speak his language";[35] while article 42, confirming the equality of the languages and alphabets of the peoples of Yugoslavia, ensured that everyone was entitled to school instruction in their own language, even in the territory of a republic other than their own. The only exception was for the Yugoslav People's Army, in which commands, military drill and administration had to be in the Serbo-Croatian language (JNA).[36] The constitution did not specify the official language of the Federation, but article 131 makes it clear that the previous four languages had become three:

> The federal laws and other acts of the federal organs shall be made public in the official Gazette of the Federation, in the authentic texts in the languages of the peoples of Yugoslavia: in Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian, Slovene and Macedonian. In official communication, the organs of the Federation shall abide by the principles of equality of languages of the peoples of Yugoslavia.[37]

In the constitutions of the four republics, promulgated immediately after the federal text, the name of the official language becomes Serbo-Croatian and Croato-Serbian (in the Croatian version). Whereas Bosnians and Croatians had called their language with the double name since 1947, Serbs and Montenegrins modified their own constitutions by replacing Serbian with Serbo-Croatian.

---

[33]   Dejan Jović, "Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Communism: from Tito to Kardelj", 166.

[34]   *Ustavi i ustavna dokumenta socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 98.

[35]   *Ustavi i ustavna dokumenta socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 98.

[36]   Indeed, the language of YPA was the Serbian variant of Serbo-Croatian, but this was the only case of actual imposition of the majority variant, due to understandable practical reasons related to the good functioning of the army.

[37]   *Ustavi i ustavna dokumenta socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 117.

The AVNOJ policy of separating Serbian and Croatian had thus been discarded and a common linguistic norm using Serbo-Croatian for all the four republics was now under discussion with the goal of turning this norm into a sort of *lingua franca* of the Federation, a language that would be spoken throughout a whole area rather than in some individual nations. However, it should be noted that even when unitarism was at its peak, the two variants were treated as two different languages at official level.[38] In fact, all the documents published in the *Službeni list SFRJ* were printed in both variants (Croatian and Serbian), as well as in Macedonian and Slovene. Likewise, parliamentary documentation was made available to delegates in both variants. From 1948, the party newspaper, *Borba,* was also published in a Zagreb edition with the required linguistic adjustments. All four languages were used on banknotes and passports. The only difference with respect to Slovene or Macedonian was that no interpreters between Serbs and Croats were provided in official meetings, which, in my opinion, would have been and would still be costly and ridiculous.

However, it soon became clear that the creation of a common linguistic norm was a questionable and controversial matter. The 1950 publication of a new edition of the orthographic manual written by the Serbian linguist Aleksandar Belić[39] that sought to unify the two linguistic and orthographic norms raised complaints and grievances among Croats. In particular, in an interview published in *Borba* on 21 December 1952, the Serbian linguist invited people to consider his manual as a possible point of departure for a common orthographic norm. This resulted in an angry reaction from Croatian linguist Ljudevit Jonke. In reviewing Belić's manual, Jonke went straight to the heart of the matter when he argued that not so much the unification of the spelling rules was a stake, as the strengthening of 'the brotherhood and unity' between the two Yugoslavian peoples.[40]

In an attempt to put an end to this controversy, the party prompted a meeting in Novi Sad that was attended, among others, by *Matica hrvatska* (the Croatian cultural society) and *Matica srpska* (the Serbian cultural society), the major cultural institutions of the two republics.[41] The conference, which took place from 8 to 10 December 1954, is a milestone in the long series of arguments and discussions regarding the language issue that had started a century earlier with the Vienna Literary Agreement. As in the past, the possibility of creating a unified norm, in which both variants would relinquish

---

[38] Šipka, *Književnojezička politika i jezička kultura*, 27.

[39] It was a second, revised, and extended edition of the 1923 *Pravopis srpskohrvatskog književnog jezika* which now also included the *ijekavian* variant of the language.

[40] Ljudevit Jonke, "Aleksandar Belić: Pravopis srpskohrvatskog književnog jezika; Beograd 1950, str. 546", *Jezik 1* (1953): 124-127, 126.

[41] Jože Pirjevec, *Tito e i sui compagni* (Torino: Einaudi, 2011), 452.

something in favour of the unity of the language (for example, the Serbs would abandon the Cyrillic alphabet and the Croats the *ijekavian* pronunciation) was again taken into account. Although the majority was in favour of maintaining the two variants, an attempt was nonetheless made to bring them closer together. Signed by twenty-five writers and linguists, seven Croats and eighteen Serbs,[42] the conclusions reaffirmed the unity of the language (implemented when the Croatian patriots dropped the *kajkavian* dialect of Zagreb and the *čakavian* dialect of Dalmatia – which had developed their own literature over the previous centuries – in favour of the *štokavian* dialect), and reaffirmed the absolute equality of the *ekavian* and *ijekavian* pronunciations, the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, and the two constituents of the name of the language (Serbian and Croatian), both of which were to be used officially. They also decided to compile a joint orthographic manual (published in 1960) and a dictionary in six volumes. Of the latter, only the first three volumes appeared in both variants (Cyrillic alphabet and *ekavian* variant; Latin alphabet and *ijekavian* variant), while the last three volumes were published only in Cyrillic with *ekavian* variant, as the Croats had in the meantime withdrawn from the project, believing that some positions were too unitary and threatened their linguistic (and therefore national) identity. The decisions made in the main town of Vojvodina represented yet another attempt to strike a difficult balance between separatism and unitarism, but ended up by displeasing everybody because from the outset, each party interpreted the issues in a different way, while the conclusions were disowned even by some of the signatories.

III. Language and Politics

From this moment on, the controversies over language became more intense and started appearing not only in linguistic journals, but ever more frequently also in party newspapers, as the disputes were interpreted as an exacerbation of nationalistic tensions. In the 1960s, the linguistic issue catalysed protests of almost all the constituents of the Federation: the Slovenians and Macedonians due to the dominance of Serbo-Croatian;[43]

---

[42]   This difference in numbers was censured by Jonke who declared that "the crucial mistake was attending a conference and drawing up the *Conclusions* with an unbalanced number of Croats and Serbs (seven and eighteen)", Ljudevit Jonke, "Teorija i praksa Novosadskog dovogora", *Hrvatski književni jezik 19. i 20. stoljeća* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1971), 210-221, 216. The belief that the results depended on the numbers of the forces on the ground reveals that the participants felt that this event represented a clash between two opposing perspectives – unifying (the Serbian view) and separatist (the Croatian position) – and also the risk of possible dangerous political and social consequences.

[43]   In 1964, Miha Marinko, secretary of the League of Slovenian Communists brought up the question of equality between Slovene and Serbo-Croatian, complaining that Serbo-Croatian was studied

the Bosnian Muslims because their language was not granted a distinct standard nor was their nationality recognized (up to January 1968, when they were formally listed as a founding people of the Federation); the Montenegrins who claimed their own nationality as distinct from that of the Serbs; the Kosovo Albanians, whose language was not mentioned at federal level and who, eager to emancipate themselves from Belgrade, protested violently in 1968 for the recognition of their national identity; the Serbs, because they deemed that, to their own detriment, too many concessions had been made to Kosovo Albanians; the Croats who, after the Novi Sad Agreement, felt even more threatened in their linguistic and national identity.[44]

In March 1967, the Croats delivered what Tito described as a stab in the back of the State[45] when the Zagreb newspaper *Telegram* published the *Declaration on the Name and Status of the Croatian Literary Language*[46] signed by one hundred and forty personalities of Croatian culture and eighteen cultural institutions. In the ten theses of the *Declaration,* the Croats reaffirmed the right to use the name 'Croatian' for their language, as they did not speak the Croatian variant of a standard Serbo-Croatian language, but simply Croatian, just as the Serbs spoke Serbian and not a variant of a non-existent Serbo-Croatian language. Addressed to the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia (SRH) and to the Federal Parliament of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), this *Declaration* ultimately demanded a change to art. 131 of the Constitution, meaning a return to the four official languages, as the AVNOJ session had decreed in 1943.[47] Reactions to the *Declaration* were heated. Prompted by

---

from primary school in Slovenia (since 1948) and Macedonia (since 1950), while the same did not apply to Slovene and Macedonian in the other republics of Yugoslavia, Vanya Ivanovna, "Language Policy and National Equality in Socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1974)", *European Studies*, 29 (2012): 81-111, 103.

[44]   During the Eighth Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia held in Belgrade from 7 to 13 December 1964, the problem of the relationships among the nationalities of the Federation was taken up by Tito himself. On the one hand, he criticized the "assimilation and bureaucratic centralization, unitarism and hegemony" of those who "mistake the unity of the peoples with the destruction of nations and creation of something new, artificial, that is, a single and unified Yugoslavian nation"; on the other hand, he condemned nationalism and chauvinist declarations. The discussion was reported in a special section of *Naše teme*, a monthly student magazine that was published by the Central Committee of the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia, "Međunacionalni odnosi u našoj Federaciji, iz referata druga Tita na VIII Kongresu SKJ", *Naše teme,* 8-9 (1965): 1159-1167, 1160.

[45]   Cited in Josip Pavičić, "Hajka bez premca. Kronologija", *Deklaracija o nazivu i položaju hrvatskog književnog jezika, 1967-1997*, ed. by Jelena Hekman (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1997), 85-94, 93.

[46]   Literary language is the translation of *književni jezik*, a term that includes both the concept of 'standard language' and 'literary language' (meaning a language that has developed its own literary tradition).

[47]   Forty-two Serbian writers, some of whom where members of the party, supported the *Declaration* and signed the *Proposal for Consideration* (*Predlog za razmišljanje*): they also wanted to go back to the decisions of AVNOJ and their language to be renamed as only Serbian, see Ivanovna, "Language Policy

party organizations, harshly critical articles appeared in a number of newspapers and magazines in the various republics. The signatories of the *Declaration* were accused of undermining 'the brotherhood and unity' of the country and, therefore, the very principles of the Yugoslav idea itself. An article published in *Borba* on 1 April 1967 reports the disapproval of the *Declaration* voiced the day before the meeting of the Educational-Cultural Council of the Croatian Parliament, together with an appeal by representatives of cultural institutions to disclose the names of the signatories in order to punish them.[48] The *Declaration* was also censured by the Central Committee of the Communist League of the various republics,[49] because it was considered a deeply political and counter-revolutionary action and an attempt to return to the previous antagonistic relations between Serbs and Croats. The signatories, members of the party, were expelled from the League of Communists.[50] Some of them were fired, and if they did not suffer imprisonment it was only thanks to the intervention of the Croatian politician Vladimir Bakarić, one of Tito's most influential collaborators, who initially had seemed to support the *Declaration*.

Once again, the language issue was connected to a much broader problem. The *Declaration* was seen and read as the first step in a process resulting in 1971 in the *Croatian Spring* (*Hrvatsko proljeće*) or *Maspok* (*Mass Movement/Masovni pokret*), a Croatian reform movement formed in the wake of 1968 that called for greater economic, cultural and political autonomy and attracted some of the most nationalist fringes.[51] Requests were partly granted and amendments were made to the Constitution, which in recognizing the equality of nations and nationalities also implicitly included the equality

---

and National Equality in Socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1974)", 92. The *Proposal* was seen as an expression of Serbian linguistic nationalism, which had already previously surfaced in the attempt of insisting on Serbo-Croatian unitarism thus implicitly denying the existence of variants, Slavko Vukomanović, "Zablude i sporovi oko jezika", *Novosti* (4-16 March 1983).

[48]   "Sjednica Prosvjetno-kulturnog vijeća Sabora Hrvatske. 'Deklaracija' je nanijela ogromnu štetu ugledu hrvatskog naroda i kulture", Borba (1 April 1967), 4. Many of the articles related to the debate following the publication of the *Declaration* are collected in the volume *Deklaracija o nazivu i položaju hrvatskog književnog jezika*, ed. by Jelena Hekman.

[49]   The Central Committees' statements, reported on the newspapers, were also picked up by the Croatian magazine *Jezik*: "Izvršni komiteti CK SKH i CK SKS o suvremenoj jezičnoj problematici", *Jezik*, 15, 3 (1967-1968): 65-69. After the controversies ensued from the Novi Sad Agreement the publication of magazine *Jezik*, which had made them widely-known, was suspended from 1960 to 1961. When it resumed its activity, its subheading *Periodical for the Culture of the Standard Croatian Language* was changed into *Periodical for the Culture of Croato-Serbian Language*.

[50]   These included writer Miroslav Krleža, a personal friend of Tito, who resigned from the party as he did not want to withdraw his signature from the document.

[51]   *Maspok* was also infiltrated by the most extremist fringes of nationalists who had migrated abroad and undertaken several attacks on Yugoslav embassies and consulates.

of the languages.[52] However, since the protests continued and greater autonomy was demanded, the now elderly Tito together with the more conservative area of the party summoned the Croatian leaders and at a dramatic meeting held in the *Karadordevo* royal hunting lodge in Vojvodina forced them to resign, threatening to send the army to Zagreb if the protests were not stopped. Tito also attacked *Matica hrvatska*, which in April of the same year had publicly repudiated the Novi Sad Agreement, as "it had turned into a means to justify linguistic discriminations and to impose the Serbian literary language (*ekavian* variant)".[53]

IV. The Deconstruction of a Language

Despite the repression of *Maspok* and the replacement, also in Serbia, of the more liberal leaders who had been open to collaboration with other republics, the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution – with 406 articles one of the longest and most complicated – took account of the separatist tendencies and granted considerable autonomy to the republics. Just as in the previous texts, this fourth and final constitution left the decision regarding the official name of the language to the constitution of each republic. Furthermore, it specified that the federal laws and norms would also be issued in Albanian and Hungarian. The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia promulgated on 22 February 1974, the day after the introduction of the new federal constitution, ambiguously acknowledged a request made in the *Declaration*, as article 138 stated that "in the Socialist Republic of Croatia there is in official use the Croatian literary language – the standard form of the national language of Croats and Serbs in Croatia, to be called 'Croatian' or 'Serbian'".[54]

The 1980s were characterized by an escalation of measures taken by the party on the language issue. Unlike in the past, politicians now intervened personally through the press and by arranging official meetings. They repeatedly underlined that all public insti-

---

[52]   Amendment 19 recognized the national minorities' "right to use their language in the exercise of their rights and the performance of their duties, and in proceedings before state agencies and organizations exercising public power", in *Ustavi i ustavna dokumenta socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 156.

[53]   "Novosadski dogovor odbačen. Izjava Matice hrvatske", *Jezik*, 18 (1970): 5, 138. The Institute for the Language of the Yugoslavian Academy (Institut za jezik JAZU) also officially rejected the Novi Sad Agreement, linking the "unification and Serbization of the language" to "the economic exploitation and alienation of the values that workers in Croatia had built", "Institut za jezik o JAZU o nosadskom dogovoru", *Jezik*, 18 (1970): 5, 139.

[54]   "Ustav socijalističke Republike Hrvate", Narodne novine, 22 veljače 1974, http://hjp.znanje.hr/index.php?show=povijest&chapter=30-ustav-SRHrvatske, last accessed 2 May 2019.

tutions should aim to sanction separatist as well as unitary tendencies in the language.[55] On 4 May 1980, Tito died and the Federation was deprived of its symbolic father. Since there was no suitable successor, a complex government system devised before Tito's death came into effect, whereby a collective presidency consisting of representatives of the six republics and two autonomous provinces would govern alternately with a strict rotation of offices. Predictably, this solution did not work. The recession – the worst since the existence of Yugoslavia – the worsening of relationships between the peoples, the lack of an authoritative central government, and the interests of various international actors were all factors that concurred in the shattering of Yugoslavia. Likewise, for the language, the obsessive search for equality, the lack of central planning, and the decision to delegate the issue to the various republics created an extremely complicated mechanism that finally led to paralysis.[56] When awareness of these implications became widespread, it was already too late to find a remedy.

The Croatian politician and sociologist Stipe Šuvar expressed particular concern about what he defined 'linguistic nationalism'.[57] As Croatian Minister of Education, Šuvar prevented the publication of a grammar of the Croatian literary language and made several appeals to the Communist League against the consequences of Croatian nationalism.[58] However, it was an article by Franjo Butorac, published on 5 July 1985 in *Komunist* (the party weekly), that provoked a parliamentary interpellation and stirred up an endless series of reactions. A young party official in Rijeka, Butorac claimed that Croatian nationalists who had been defeated in 1971 were active again, well organized, and using the linguistic issue as a pretext to brainwash young people as early as in primary school. Indeed, from one edition to the next, the language of schoolbooks changed, as it was infiltrated by an ever-increasing number of old Croatian words retrieved from dusty books dating back to the beginning of the century or coined during the NDH. Little by little, these words replaced those that Croats had in common with the Serbs in order to educate the youth to nationalism. Thus, instead of being a nursery of 'brotherhood and unity', schools increased the linguistic distance between the Croatian youths

---

[55]   This is what can be found in a series of articles published in the newspaper *Politika* between 20 and 22 April 1986, titled "Current problems of the Serbo-Croatian language" ("Aktuelni problemi srpsko-hrvatskog jezika").

[56]   Bugarski, "Jezička politika i planiranje jezika u Jugoslaviji", 50.

[57]   Stipe Šuvar (1936-2004) was a member of the Presidium of the League of Communists of the Socialist Republic of Croatia and, later, also of the Presidency of the Federation. He promoted a controversial school reform in Croatia and inspired the so-called 'white book', which blacklisted intellectuals and artists whose statements or works were considered dangerous for the Federation.

[58]   Such as the appeal he made during the 27th session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia held on 10 June 1985 (reported in *Vjesnik*, a Zagreb newspaper, on 11.6.1985).

and those of the other republics. Butorac's article ends with a plea to the Communist League and the party organs to probe the legitimacy of his fears, because

> the nationalism of the language is only the forefront of nationalism in general – directed against the foundations of the existing system and therefore also against the historical interests of the Croatian people and all the other peoples and nationalities of Croatia and Yugoslavia.[59]

Following the publication of this article, a commission was established with the task of examining schoolbooks. The commission's response was that notwithstanding the presence of linguistic exclusivism in a limited number of words, there were no particular signs of nationalism. This conclusion did not satisfy the Central Committee of the LCC, and a meeting of the Communist Leagues of all four republics and two autonomous provinces, together with linguists and representatives of the institutions was arranged in Zagreb to discuss the topic. Unlike the meeting in Novi Sad, the party intervened directly, making clear how the problem was explicitly and alarmingly political. The resulting document, known as the Zagreb Agreement, was the last important official attempt to find a solution to this long-standing issue. Without exaggeration, the agreement can also be seen as an effort to save Yugoslavia, whose disintegration was symbolically evidenced in the language question.

After criticizing both linguistic separatism and unitarism as harmful for the affirmation of the 'brotherhood and unity' of Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins and Muslims and for the success of a policy aiming at the 'harmony' of the Serbo-Croatian language and its variants, the conclusions of the Zagreb meeting underline the need to take whatever measures necessary to achieve the equality of the variants. As in Novi Sad, the meeting in Zagreb underscored the requirement for an orthographic manual, a dictionary and a grammar, and encouraged Yugoslavian linguists to work in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Linguists were also invited to help spread a deeper knowledge of Slovene and Macedonian, as well as of the other languages of the peoples. Finally, the meeting recognised that the federal constitution must clearly identify the names of the languages of the peoples of Yugoslavia, analysing and standardising "practical ways of achieving the equality of the variants, that is to say standard linguistic expressions within the framework of the standard (literary) Serbo-Croatian/Croatian-Serbian, Croatian or Serbian language".[60]

---

[59] Franjo Butorac, "Nacionalizam i jezik", *Komunist* (5 July 1985): 18-19.

[60] The conclusions of the Zagreb Agreement were published in the *Vjesnik* issue of 9 December 1986 and then reprinted in Stjepan Babić, *Hrvatski jezik u političkom vrtlogu* (Zagreb: Ante Pelivan i Danica Pelivan), 177-185, 182.

Literary Croatian was never mentioned, but the procedure to amend article 138 of the Croatian Constitution – which was considered unconstitutional – had already been started. Amendment 41 proposed to the Croatian parliament intended to replace the definition of 'Croatian literary language' with 'Croatian or Serbian language'. This proposal generated a series of protests among Croats, while it was supported by the Serbian minority in Croatia and the Orthodox Church. In the end, the amendment was rejected by the Croatian parliament, but this rejection should be interpreted in the light of opposition to the ever more pressing nationalism of Belgrade.[61]

The League of Yugoslavian Communists broke up during the 14th Congress held in Belgrade from 20 to 22 January 1990. Four languages have emerged out of Serbo-Croatian/Croatian-Serbian: Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian. Judging from the controversies, debates, discussions, and public forums devoted to this topic, we are still very far from any agreement regarding this pluri-centric language which, now that the centres are no longer within the same State, could be linguistically comparable to English, German, or Portuguese if only it would cease to replicate the seemingly unresolvable dilemma of the name(s) used for its designation. Should this be BCMS, that is, Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian, as if they were different languages? Or should the much criticised, but linguistically sanctioned, double name Serbo-Croatian/Croatian-Serbian be maintained? How should the teaching of this language be named abroad? The question is still open, but the issue is much more political than linguistic.

---

[61]　In those years, the Serbian press – now subservient to Slobodan Milošević – worked to portray the Serbs as the main victim of socialist Yugoslavia: see Davor Pauković, "Diskurs o ustavnoj formulaciji jezika u Hrvatskoj 1989. godine u hrvatskom i srpskom novinstvu", *Srpsko-hrvatski politički odnosi u 20. veku – zaštita identiteta*, ed. by Darko Gavrilović (Novi Sad: Grafo finiš, 2014), 125-134.

PART IV.

BEYOND EUROPE:
WOR(L)D COMMUNISM IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY

THE ECUADORIAN LEFT DURING GLOBAL CRISIS: REPUBLICAN DEMOCRACY, CLASS STRUGGLE AND STATE FORMATION (1919-1946)

Valeria Coronel

(FLACSO Ecuador)

For historian Alexei Páez, the origins of the Ecuadorian left can be traced back to a diverse range of currents formed in the first two decades of the twentieth century, including anarchism and utopian socialism, that, international in nature, began to filter into Ecuador through the port of Guayaquil where they then connected with popular ideologies described as "mythical, millenalialist, and archaic".[1] For Paez, the Ecuadorian Socialist Party (the SPE, founded in 1926) maintained this heterogeneity until 1929 when one of its members, Ricardo Paredes, came into contact with the Communist International (CI) and committed the SPE to undertaking particular doctrinal adjustments which culminated in the formation of the PCE in 1931. Páez suggests that the PCE, subordinate to the CI, became largely irrelevant due to its fixation on the notion of the proletariat which lacked any real historical precedent in the country. According to Páez, the party's neglect of popular culture and its attempts to force the existence of a class that could not arise in a society such as Ecuador with low levels of industrialization culminated in its relative marginalization as a historic political force in the country.

The work of Páez (1989), itself influenced by EP Thompson's critique of mechanistic Marxism, questioned a teleological narrative of history that presupposed that the industrial development of each country would come to produce a revolutionary proletariat. In effect the routes of capitalism and the history of popular classes are far more complex.

---

[1]   Alexei Páez, *Los orígenes de la izquierda ecuatoriana* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 2001), 97.

It would also be erroneous, however, to equate the historic identity of the Ecuadorian popular classes merely with traditional customs or archaic perceptions of reality. On the contrary, Ecuadorian history shows that the uses of modern political language among the popular classes was not driven solely by external forces.

In analyzing the Ecuadorian left between the end of the 1910's and the beginning of the Cold War, we find, contrary to Páez, that the emergence of the left in Ecuador is inherently connected to previous national political cycles and the various ways political language was harnessed at the time. In this essay we analyze various sources from the press, legal proposals and public discourse to examine how conceptions and expressions of the left, in both their political and discursive forms, developed both in reference to international leftist currents (including Russian, Peruvian and Mexican Revolutions), but importantly also in a relatively autonomous fashion. The left combined the use of national political language – the discourse of the liberal democratic party – with the previously mentioned international sources in light of the demands of political practice and the need to advance strategic analysis in certain spheres of conflict.

The use of Marxist language in the 1920s, including references to international guidelines that the PCE partially adopted, inevitably took shape in dialogue with a broad spectrum of political language: formed within the field of political antagonism, which the left had also influenced through analytic interventions, social mobilization and contributions to State formation. The socialist tendency – that which placed class conflict and the emancipatory horizon of the proletariat at the center of its agenda – emerged in the midst of a reformulation of democratic republican discourses and based around such notions as popular sovereignty, freedom and common good.

The historiography of the northern Andes as well as the Atlantic Caribbean confirms the existence of a nineteenth century and early twentieth century democratic-popular republicanism or plebeian revolutionary republicanism that provided the language for the dispute and/or negotiation of racial borders during a revolutionary moment constitutive of the nation across the region.[2] This discourse included the ideas that the republic should guarantee the existence of the people and combat all forms of domination that prevented their freedom, including that of property when it endangers the first social law guaranteeing (the people's) existence. The popular classes, some of them with strong ties to the peasant world, have historically resisted economic dispossession. The concept of popular sovereignty and the vision of a republic that empowers populations to emancipate themselves from tyranny pointed to the idea that the State should con-

---

[2]   For a genealogy of marxism based in classic and modern revolutionary republicanism see Anthoni Domenech, *La democracia republicana fraternal y el socialismo con gorro frigio* (La Habana; Barcelona: Editorial de ciencias sociales, 2017).

trol any social power which subordinates the people and impedes their participation in the deliberations around the common good or public interest. Patriarchal domination, servitude related to land concentration and imperialism were all deemed part of this potential tyranny.

In Ecuador and southern Colombia, this trend lasted throughout the cycle of nineteenth century independence revolutions in the framework of the inter-party wars,[3] and in Ecuador specifically continued during the first decades of the twentieth century when it constituted a central discourse of public power,[4] and remained popular for more than a century of political-military mobilization by different social classes confronting the predominance of the landed elite of the sierra on behalf of both the racialized population and the State. The discourse was adopted between 1883 and 1906 by the people's army and between 1895 and 1925 by the ruling liberal party, the latter of which reproduced it through a civil society formation program harnessing educational institutions and a vigorous print industry. Democratic republicanism became *the* language of the popular and middle classes under the leadership of Eloy Alfaro (1895-1912, "America's Garibaldi", and the civic rhetoric constituted a central language of contention against the conservative party until approximately 1920 when the global crisis created a class tension within the "liberal nation" that the newly born Left could lucidly build upon. Since as far back as 1917, capitalist monopolies were also identified as containing the potential for tyranny. More than just a millennial or archaic mythical discourse therefore, the popular classes, especially those from the historical party of Alfarismo, can be seen to appropriate the language of republican democracy.

Neither anarchism, utopian socialism, nor the Marxist current, arrived in Ecuador in the nineteen twenties to meet a void of popular politics, but rather intertwined with a long-established republican trajectory from which their terms were to be translated and their forms of political dispute were to be renewed. In fact, the founders of the SP argued that the organization brought together Marxism from the Russian Revolution with the Popular Republicanism of Alfaro in a historical moment of the 1920s marked by global economic crisis which, in turn, produced an internal crisis within the Liberal Party,

---

3   James E. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans : Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth Century Colombia* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2004). Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). James E. Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World. Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). Carmen Dueñas de Anhalzer, *Sobneranía e Insurrecciòn en Manabi* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 1991).

4   Valeria Coronel y Mercedes Prieto, *Celebraciones centenarias y negociaciones por la nación ecuatoriana* (Quito: FLACSO, Sede Ecuador/Ministerio de Cultura, 2010). Valeria Coronel, "El liberalismo y el pueblo. Alianzas, postergaciones y aspiraciones en torno a la Revolución Liberal. (1895-1922*)*", *El tiempo de Alfaro*, ed. by Rafael Barriga (Quito: Odysea Producciones, 2009), 39-70.

both of which were characterized by an increase of the banking sector's control over State institutions. A powerful antecedent of popular and democratic struggle already existed in the liberal party which by the 1920s was increasingly recognized as under threat, thereby triggering a renewal of revolutionary discourse which this time placed class struggle closer to its core. The confrontation between 'the people' and landowners, a central discourse of radical liberalism, was reconstructed with marxist concepts using a historical analysis that incorporated the idea of the working classes (and racialized peasants) confronting a banking oligarchy, commercial monopoly and large States.

Historical records point to the need for an interpretation based around the convergence of two interconnected processes identified by militants on the left in the 1920s: on the one hand was the development of a capitalist system of accumulation that, by the 1920s, was increasingly characterized by the emergence of 'new forms of imperialism' or monopoly capital. This created an environment in which both bourgeois economic alliances and foreign capital were increasingly regarded with skepticism. On the other hand, there was a powerful antecedent of popular and democratic struggle in the liberal party that had largely been shut down by the 1920s. Having long since played a central role in the formation of popular political identities (incorporating a discourse of proletarian redemption, for example), even defining the State's own legacies, the spectacle of the corruption of liberal discourse and the decline of the liberal party created a vacuum into which could arrive marxist analyses of exploitation and the economic dimensions of political rights.

Having suggested that the historic trajectory of the left in Ecuador cannot be understood in isolation from the historical trajectory of the liberal party, we can now go on to state that the founding of the socialist party cannot be understood in isolation from the Juliana Revolution of 1925. The left was a force in dialogue with others and, far from marginal, was influential in the State reforms that were introduced in Ecuador and other Latin American countries as a result of the political transitions constructed in the context of the interwar crisis.[5] The Juliana Revolution was a civil-military coup in response to the increasingly plutocratic nature of the State under the LP that kickstarted a reformist process geared toward greater State intervention in the economy, in labor relations, and in forms of land ownership.

---

[5]   Laura Gotkowitz, *A Revolution for our Rights: Indigenous Struggles for Land and Justice in Bolivia, 1880-1952* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). Alan Knight, *La revolución cósmica. Utopías, regiones y resultados. México 1910-1940* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2015). Valeria Coronel, "Justicia laboral y formación del Estado como contraparte ante el capital transnacional en Ecuador 1927-1938", *ILLES I IMPERIS (Monográfico), Justicia, violencia y construcción estatal. Revista de La Universidad Pompeu Fabvra*, 15 (2013): 171-196. Valeria Coronel, "Izquierdas, Sindicatos y Militares en la disputa por la tendencia democrática del Ecuador de entreguerras (1925-1945)", *El movimiento obrero y las izquierdas en américa latina. Experiencias de lucha, inserción y organización*, ed. by Martín Mangiantini and Hernán Camareno (USA: The University of North Caolina Press, 2018), 195-220.

The discourses of the partisan left before the Cold War repeatedly refer back to a conjuncture between two revolutionary cycles; Alfaro's 1895 democratic revolution that for more than two decades referenced 'obrerismo' or 'workerism', and the aforementioned civilian-military revolution of 1925, which was the product of the agency of subaltern classes alongside the radicalized middle classes against the enthronement of monopoly capital, and is widely considered a movement that aimed to deepen the economic dimensions of democratization.

At the beginning of the 1920s, the concepts of class and the proletariat were crucial in diagnosing the crisis of republican hegemony. The class concept was so conjugated with both intellectual reflections and organizational political language that it nourished popular, middle and even bourgeois identities in Ecuador during the crisis of the liberal party. Radicalism, the discourse of the liberal revolution (1883-1906); Modernism, the aesthetic discourse of liberal civil society (1900-1925), and the Marxist political and cultural avant-garde (1920-1946), all maintained a critical discourse against the myth of a paternalist culture. Liberals and the left associated traditional customs with clericalism "feudalism" or "colonial aristocratism".[6]

Through literature as well as through the writing of legal demands and public speeches, radical and socialist intellectuals tried to make visible the violence that hid behind the paternalistic discourse they described as colonial. Witnessing rural conflicts in the sierra, the communists noted the long-term disputes between communities and the large estates, and particularly how the rural community defended notions of the common good and collective ownership that had been recognized during previous moments of democratic opening within the State. The hacienda, meanwhile, was seen to defend the exclusive character of private property and exercize forms of racial violence against the communities.

A key development amongst the communists was the bringing together of terms such as 'modernity' and 'the nation', with terms such as proletarian, race and 'revolutionary Indianness', this together with their treatment of traditional paternalistic customs as part of a wider culture of domination. In this sense ethnicity was understood within the framework of political antagonism to racialization. The communist left identified Indians and rural communities struggling against dispossession as part of a broader struggle against all antisocial forms of ownership. The idea of 'revolutionary indians' proved central to both communism and socialism in Ecuador, and suggests that the

---

[6]   See for instance the novel "A La Costa-Costumbres Ecuatorianas" by Luis A. Martínez, published by the Quito National Press, 1904. This novel was publicized by the cultural weekly *Guayaquil Artístico* (1900-1906) within a broad project of the critique of *Hispanicism* and the Catholic tradition in Ecuador. See also *Los Guandos* by Joaquin Gallegos Lara (1936) and *Huasipungo* by Jorge Icaza (1934), as well as newspapers such as *La Tierra* and *Nucanchic Allpa*.

country was little adjusted to the notion of an industrial proletariat as *the* privileged revolutionary subject.

The various socialists, vanguards and communists on the left, though marked by differences, did nevertheless at certain times manage to build convergence strategies in the interests of challenging antagonistic blocs and constructing hegemony, as well as to further State reform and broaden the horizon of social rights, particularly those relating to labour laws, the right to organize, and access to land and justice for rural communities and campesinos. Indeed the influence of the Ecuadorian left over State reformation in the 1930's is comparable to the historic cases of Mexico and Bolivia. Throughout the 1930s, the communist current worked to complement the strategies of the SPE in the processes of State reform and popular organization. They were key to the formation of a national-popular cultural program by means of organizational newspapers, interventions in the public sphere, and a visible leadership in the public education system.

The communists integrated the language of class conflict and above all the vision of a revolutionary working class subject from the Russian revolution, while the Mexican revolution together with the popular demands in Ecuador, taught them more about the central issues of land and race, and the possibility of the left holding onto power and driving State reform.

Between the thirties and forties, the left had to confront the reconfiguration of rights, reflecting on the problem of fascism and incorporating socialist notions of democracy and particularly the crisis of democracy under the existing power of monopoly capital. Their reflections on democracy went beyond the electoral sphere and entailed State intervention in the economic sphere in the name of upholding social rights and guarantees, and in this sense reclaimed the leftist notion of the social function of property basing the democracy of the majority on material conditions.

In the following pages we will undertake a concrete examination of documentary sources which indicate the existence of what we have previously suggested is a constitutive relationship between the political languages of Radicalism (another word for Popular Republicanism) and Marxism. The newspapers studied and the memories collected in the bibliography show how the discourse of class conflict and the proletariat emerge in the associative and participative spaces of the liberal party, as well as in the liberal press, which together nourished the critical elements of intellectual production of both Democratic Republicanism in politics and Modernism in aesthetics. In both spaces, the emergent left confronted the crisis through an analysis of (the contradictions of) social class and the conditions for political struggle, and in doing so radicalized and transformed its legacy.

I. *Juan Cholo*: Class and Race in the Radical Press during the Crisis of the Liberal Party

One of the most powerful factors at the origin of class politics was the articulation of two organized spheres of civil society, *liberal workerism* and *the press*. The liberal press had been constituted between 1900 and 1920 as a powerful cultural industry. Publishing circles committed to the formation of a democratic public sphere themselves fostered circles of popular education. The most famous journalists and modernist artists promoted intellectual circles for workers, and it was there that Modesto Chavez Franco and Emilio Gallegos del Campo joined together with the WCG in creating literary education programs for the people, where reflections of a 'worker sociology' and the 'social question' were rehearsed; this process was part of a broader reflection then present in the liberal press regarding the character of revolutionary culture. Despite the assassination of Alfaro and other leading radicalist figures in 1912, these circles of political and cultural formation continued to grow.

All strata of *Guayaquileña* civil society, including the civil associations, experimented with editorial projects. Some press and publication associations specialized in the liberal arts, associations geared towards civic training and the progress of worker and worker-craftsmen classes of the city, as well as spaces to increase the civic participation of women.[7] There existed a great diversity of printed and editorial projects, and a public and counterpublic sphere was formed that were attentive to the news and to interpretative analysis, as well as to cultural innovations and publicity.[8] Journalists, intellectuals, political organizers and civil society organizations regularly intervened in editorial experiments as an instrument of economic and cultural formulation. Alongside mainstream media output, a broad range of political analysis newspapers, magazines of modern art and civilization, workers' newspapers, treaties of practical sociology and so on, were published between 1900 and 1920.[9]

---

[7]   Sonia Fernández, *La escuela que redime: Maestros, infancia escolarizada y pedagogía en Ecuador, 1925-1948* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 2018). Ana M. Goetschel, *Educación de las mujeres, maestras y esferas públicas: Quito En La Primera Mitad Del Siglo XX* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 2007).

[8]   See, among others, *Guayaquil Artístico,* 1900-1906; *Revista de la Sociedad Jurídico-Literaria*, 1902-1906; *Altos Relieves*, 1906; *Letras*, 1912; *El Telégrafo Literario*, Guayaquil, 1913; *Renacimiento*, Guayaquil, 1916; *La Ilustración*, Guayaquil, 1917; *Frivolidades*, Quito, 1919.

[9]   Alfredo Sanz, editor of the radical weekly *Telegrafo Literario*, referred to the Workers' Literary Centers and their printing presses as vehicles for supporting democracy among the working classes. Alfredo Sanz, "Centros de Alfabetización", *Guayaquil Artístico*, 3 (1904): 185-186. Among the works published by the printing press of the Workers' Confederation of Guayas were the newspaper *Confederación obrera*, the liberal feminist magazine *La Aurora*, brochures, statistics, as well as more ambitious works such as *The Treaty of Practical Sociology* by Juan Elias Naula, lost from the national libraries, and referred to frequently

Between radical journalism, which published critical editorial projects, and popular journalism that had access to the printing press linked to organizations such as the WCG, public opinion about the crisis was (in)formed, and the place of class in national politics became a topic of discussion.

In 1919 began to take shape in Guayaquil a multifaceted crisis that included an economic dimension stemming from the impact of the World War I on the cocoa economy, as well as a quasi-embargo that resulted from loans that had to be assumed by both the agro-export sector and the State. The perceived wearing away of the liberal party's cultural hegemony caused by the deterioration of its instruments of social integration, the withdrawal of its mechanisms of political negotiation and its attempted control of the press, also clearly suggest an interrelated political dimension. To compound matters further, the financial elite had by this point taken greater control with apparently little interest in nurturing the political instruments of the party, and the army, the press, organized labor in the *Workers Confederation of Guayas* (WCG*)*, as well as various party operators in civil society, were all impacted by the deterioration of political representation and lack of influence in the party policy.

With some degree of sensationalism, newspapers *El Día*, *El Comercio* and *El Guante* (1919) began to report on the first seedlings of rebellion amongst the artisans of the port, the workers of public service companies and numerous *campesinos* and rural workers. Lawsuits demanding democratic inclusion where it was not conventional to do so began to appear, such as in the rural periphery of Guayaquil.

Among the reading circles of liberal workerism, a group of youths close to the Tomas Briones Cosmopolitan Society of Cocoa Workers (known as *Cacahueros*) introduced anarchist and socialist concepts into labor policy debates. Their testimonies speak of printed materials being brought by sailors including *Alba Roja* (*The Red Dawn*), *El Proletario* (*The Proletarian*) and *Solidaridad de la IWW* (*The Solidarity of the IWW*). Alejo Capelo (a young typographer) visited Andrés Mora and Narciso Velis, members of the *Cacahueros* society, to conduct discussions, as they had had many times before, about Juan Montalvo, anarchism, and the social question in democracy. People of different generations and trades converged in what would become a radically heterogenous political and anti-imperialist organization. Among these were Luis Maldonado Estrada (accountant), Floresmilo Romero (hairdresser), Tomas Briones (cocoa worker) and Manuel Donoso Armas (teacher); names that by

---

in *Confederation* as a reference of collective life; José María Chávez Mata, *Estado actual de las instituciones obreras de Guayaquil* (Guayaquil: Sociedad de tipografos, 1914) and José Buenaventura Navas, *Evolución social del obrero en Guayaquil, Obra historica. 1849-1920* (Guayaquil: Imprenta Guayaquil, 1920).

the 1920s would be widely recognized as founders of socialism in the province of Guayas.[10]

They leased a room to the Hijos del Trabajo (Sons of Work) association, from where they would offer a formalization service to new organizations. As a means of strengthening popular representation the circle proposed the expansion in both number and content of the workers' organization that already existed in the port, and for each of the petitions that arrived in their corner, they began to form a general secretariat, a program, and commissions, in addition to writting documents demanding better salaries and labor conditions. They advanced political work with shipyard workers and approached industrial food workers, grain and rice huskers, metalworkers, urban public transport workers, and those in the electricity services and at the railroad in an effort to further extent participation.

> The workers who came to the *Cacahueros* society were classified as students. There were the central barracks. We became organizers. Everything was secretarial: as the presidential form was typical of mutualism, we appointed a *secretary-general*, and a procedural culture. In those days the organization was done with the purpose of making lists of petitions, for salary increases, work condition improvements, etc. […] Mass assemblies were held in the large hall of the *cacahueros* society, which was often insufficient to contain so many people […] since they did not fit, they put a lot of tables, their secretaries and the crowd in the park.[11]

These were spaces of reading and training on issues of radical republicanism, where conceptual and strategic discussions were conducted that concerned the suitability of anarchist syndicalist concepts and Marxist notions of class as instruments suited to the diagnosis of the crisis and the future of these organizations. These liberal political training circles would later give rise to both the Regional Workers' Federation (RWF) and the concept of 'revolutionary workers school'.

In this context would enter the notion of class struggle in political language. The *Bandera Roja* (*Red Flag*) newspaper, founded by the Revolutionary Workers' School installed within the old Sons of Labor Society (founded in 1896) was the first socialist weekly in Guayaquil. For journalists at the *Bandera Roja*, the sermon on the values of civilization – secularity, progress, freedom of the press, and even social justice – had become a kind of 'second providence'; this is a new religion. It was time to note that

---

[10]   Manuel Donoso, *El quince de noviembre de 1922 y la fundación del socialismo relatados por sus protagonistas* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional: 1982).

[11]   Donoso, *El quince de noviembre de 1922.*

such values would not lead to the 'progress' of all, for the bourgeoisie was no longer a progressive class but had become an agent of monopoly capital.

> [T]his progress does not benefit anyone but those who have money […] those (the commercial and agrarian bourgeoisie), who have become vain on it, have refined their tastes until the unspeakable, have become more heartless, more corrupt, arriving at what has come to be known as monopolizing capitalism.[12]

Bandera Roja discredited the alliance between the popular, middle and bourgeois classes of the party and directed its criticism to the conservative role of the popular leadership of the WCG for promoting the idea of class harmony: "Granted in Ecuador there exists no proletarian politics, the ex-workers who until now have led the working masses have become accomplices to all the filth of bourgeois politics".[13] It also reflected on the nation's enduring popular affinity with a liberal party that was "impervious even to the global commotion of the workers' world" and presented it as akin to the divorce that took place in Colombia between the people and the liberal party, though there the elites of the bipartisan system had attacked their popular bases resulting in a more clasically socialist organization. The existence of a Workers' Confederation linked to the political work of what was increasingly recognised as a crumbling Liberal Party was the predominant factor in such a scenario: the Workers' Confederation had integrated and thereby halted workers' demands for decades in Guayaquil.[14] The *Bandera Roja* questioned how its leadership had become a broker for the elite of a Party which they exclaimed, had even taken down the portrait of Alfaro from the wall of the COG.

The socialist weekly induced a significant transformation in how *workerism* was presented at the time. Instead of the image of the dignified worker taken at face value, the socialist circle introduced the fictional character of *Juan Cholo,* a proletarian and racialized subject who spoke in the first person and singlehandedly intervened in the *workerism* discourse by inserting a critical perspective right in the heart of the mainstream press industry.[15] "I, Juan Cholo, haughty and dignified, honest and poor with my brain free of adoration toward the great big-bellied men, white and rich; if they came to ask for my vote for a bourgeois candidate, I would demand an agenda".[16]

---

[12]   Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly*, 3 (1920).

[13]   Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly.*

[14]   Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly.*

[15]   A decade later they would position themselves as the central characters of a popular national literature series.

[16]   Bandera Roja*, Socialist Weekly*.

The rise of proletarianism occurred alongside conflict between the bourgeoisie, deemed increasingly close to monopolistic forces, and the racialized and impoverished popular classes that had reconsidered their political inclussion in the party of the liberal revolution. It was not long before the weekly would begin to associate Juan Cholo with rural conflicts in the periphery; a 'champion of the people' commenting on news regarding the repression of peasant initiatives, speaking of monopolistic imposition, and responding to all the letters received by the weekly, largely sent from readers in the rural peripheries of Duran, Daule and Milagro. The articulation of news from rural conflicts with that of the public sphere of the city was an innovative turn that the socialists associated with the image of the proletariat, and which they used against the progressive bourgeoisie's strategy of only selectively incorporating popular classes within its program. As can be seen in the letters from the representatives of various parish associations offering to conduct a collection among workers to help finance it, the interest generated among popular organizations and the communities involved in rural conflicts was significant. In its issue on 5 June 1920, marking 25 years since Alfaro's revolution, the weekly was expressive in establishing a genealogy between two red flags: the triumph of the revolution of 1895 and socialist struggle. Having undertaken the struggles and conquests associated with Alfarismo, the people would surely continue the fight against the diverse reactionary forces located both inside and outside of the historical party.

> The day that the workers and liberal bourgeois came together against the troops that defended clerical terrorism, and with that act of citizen's independence solidified the throne of Freedom that, threatened by reactionaries, betrayed by those who call themselves liberals, nevertheless still holds. Our mistake has been great. Each new conquest of the people has been rough and tenaciously attacked by the coalition of all the reactionary elements of society. But it is sustained in its pristine purity […] like the rest of the conquests that, with blood, secured liberalism after long years of rough battle. [17]

The *Bandera Roja* debated the possibility of creating a Liberal Workers Party, but ultimately chose to found a socialist party to honor the legacies of Alfarismo. Four years later the first socialist weekly in Quito, *La Antorcha*, would take up the issue of the relationship between the radical legacy of the Alfaristas and the proletarian movement in Ecuador. Leonardo Visconti's article "The advent of red socialism in Ecuador" (1 May 1925) stated that, in order for the Ecuadorian people to identify class struggle within the framework of their own language, it was essential to focus on establishing a connection with its main cultural language, referring to the language of the struggle

---

[17]   Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly,* 5 (1920).

between political parties. For Visconti, it was clear that the 'essentially political' people were motivated by democratic republican language, for "nothing impassions them as the struggle between parties […] only tyranny has aroused the rebellion of the masses". The deprivation of public liberty in the last period of liberal party dominance had "marked the antagonistic separation of government and people" so crucial to the demarcation of the proletariat as a political subject, confounded by advances in capitalism that were seen as an absurd protection of the plutocracy by the State. While Visconti identifies a generation that was aware and allied to the language of Marxism, ready to advocate for socialism, he simultaneously advised that it was essential to speak the political language of the people if they were to understand that their employer was also their exploiter and not be further alienated.

> In order to flourish in this deeply political country, of moral spirit, with that external religiosity of worship common to Latin countries, Socialism must enter for us in the form of a political party. Socialism should not be introduced in Ecuador in a cold or dogmatic way, but in a sentimental way; in the midst of a large dose of politics will the doctrine will be adopted […]. The extent of the bankocracy's extortion of the proletarian classes means that the public spirit will react unconsciously in the form of a socialist movement if we but speak of exploitative governments.[18]

The discursive interventions around the country's early engagements with socialism were, in summary, to install the image of the class contradiction of an oligarchic economy; to connect the proletarian vocabulary with perceptions of racial difference and the dangerous articulations between the poverty of the city and the violence of the countryside; to provide a voice to this formative subject through an innovative use of the printed public sphere; and to try to appropriate the revolutionary legacy of Alfarism by questioning its abandonment by a crisis-ridden liberal party and the complicity of the workers' leadership linked to it.

When *Bandera Roja* confronted the worker with the commercial mafias of the port and the banks, the extent of the banking elite's control over the organs of State power had not yet been fully revealed. On 14 November 1922, when the management of the tramway company in Guayaquil refused to negotiate an agenda of workers' demands, the leadership appealed to a republican rhetoric that was made visible to the sovereign on the city's public roads. The young leadership of the RWF quickly called upon its allied organizations, both old and new, to strike in solidarity with the tram workers and on 15 November forces combined in a stark display of the popular leadership's control over the city's urban services.

---

[18]   Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly* (1925).

Newspapers records confirm vast crowds in the streets. The founders of the FTRE warned of the threat of violence. Maldonada Estrada was among those who tipped off the leaders of the COG. The collective action was met with genocidal violence that claimed the lives of hundreds of workers, an event remembered as the Workers' Massacre of 15 November 1922. Two months later, Alejo Capelo commented that "[T]hey expected a human response, encouraging, perhaps even paternalistic; while, we say, a breath of death spread menacingly".[19]

The traumatic scene of hundreds of corpses lying along the city's boulevards caused a profound impact on the people's collective memory, leading to political breakdown and further persecutions. Parts of the popular leadership and the intelligentsia had to take refuge in the peripheral areas and radical strongholds of provinces such as Esmeraldas. Accusations during the 1922 Workers' Massacre memorial organized by survivors, some of whom came from radicalized sectors of the FTRE such as Maldonado Estrada and Alejo Capelo, maintained that the "plutocracy" had directed the hand of the liberal party to massacre the workers.[20] This version of events was later repeated in Quito during the Liberal Assembly meeting of 1923[21] further cementing the notion of national and anti-national classes into the peoples' collective memory. One of the key mobilizing concepts of the Left between 1923-1925 was the fight against the banking elite. This event and its memory created the discursive space for the Left to antagonize the banking elite and to present alternative economic models associated with ideas of social integration and national political economy.

II. State Reform, Popular Mobilization and Political Dispute Between 1925 and 1945

While the socialist circuit in Quito centered around the publication of *La Antorcha* made an impact in the press from its very beginning, much like the *Bandera Roja* in Guayaquil, its founders became close to the liberal printing press through a very different route. The socialist associations from Quito and their peers in Loja and Riobamba had risen up through public education establishments in which schools, colleges and public universities – considered a matrix for citizenship formation.[22] The liberal State

---

[19]   José A. Capelo, *El crimen del quince de noviembre de 1922* (Guayaquil: Imprenta El Ideal, 1923).

[20]   Capelo, *El crimen del quince de noviembre de 1922.*

[21]   Pio Jaramillo Alvarado, *La asamblea liberal y sus aspectos políticos* (Quito: Imprenta Editorial, 1924).

[22]   Sonia Fernández, *La escuela que redime: Maestros, infancia escolarizada y pedagogía en Ecuador, 1925-1948* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 2018). Ana M. Goetschel, *Educación de las mujeres,*

had required technicians and professionals to work in public policy but also to serve various functions within civil society. Publication of cultural magazines, and scientific journals were well embedded in Latin American networks as far back as 1900.[23]

The axes of the discussion driven by *La Antorcha* demonstrates the conjugation of different political languages. Demands were regularly made to ensure the freedom of public opinion and the press's persecution by president Gonzálo Córdova (1924-1925) was denounced as 'tyrannical'. Class enemies were portrayed with anti-imperialist rhetoric, as those who manipulate the State for the sake of committing public fraud for private interests. A scam by a circle of elite Guayaquileñas in which resources destined for the construction of a railroad to Esmeraldas were siphoned off, halting the construction of a maritime port in Manabí, was chosen as an emblematic case. In light of this preexisting image in the anti-imperialist texts and nineteenth century republican nationalism of thinkers such as Juan Montalvo and José Martí, the socialist weekly proposed that, considering the oligarchy's tendencies towards using regionalist-imperialism as a weapon for its own betterment (which was subsequently deemed an obstacle to national progress and integration), the proletariat was the only truly universalist class.

This notion of *the people* (in Spanish, *el pueblo*) was often used interchangeably with *the proletariat* and, coming from a society characterised by structural heterogeneity, included a variety of social factions.

> And the people who constitute the power of socialism are numerous in Ecuador, and include the subaltern public official and employee, laborers of the land (the Indian), the apprentice worker, the common soldier, the school teacher, etc. All those whose work is stolen by the exploiter, whether this might be the government, the banker, the merchant or the hacienda owner.[24]

Alongside this use of republican language, notions of class conflict was inserted:

> What is necessary for there to be a socialist party? Exploitation. And in Ecuador, in proportion to its wealth, we are exploited with as much audacity as in any other industrial country.[25]

---

maestras y esferas públicas (Quito: Abya-Yala, 2007).

[23] Gladys Valencia, *El círculo modernista: La autonomía del arte según el modernismo ecuatoriano* (Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Magister, 2004).

[24] *La Antorcha,* 12 (1925).

[25] *La Antorcha*, 12 (31 January 1925).

Inspired by the Russian revolution, class critique was articulated through a discourse inspired by the *unfinished* trajectory of the the liberal revolution and the powerful experience of the Mexican revolution. In May 1925 the Mexican communist leader Rafael Ramos Pedrueza was received with high praise by the weekly when he arrived as Mexico's *chargés d'affaires* in Ecuador. The presence of this deputy of the Mexican congress (1921), a professor of history and commissioned by the PCM (the Mexican Communist Party) to contribute to the formation of a communist group in Ecuador had a significant impact on the language of the left in the following years.[26] The Ecuadorian Socialist Party developed a Mexican-inspired agenda that combined the politics of class struggle with the construction of a "Restorative State", with a proletariat and peasant focus that was willing to intervene in the economy and territory in the name of social rights. In this vein in the pages of Quito's socialist weekly a program of centralized State reforms was clearly defined. There was talk of the need of a transformation of the State towards social rights, and economic intervention to guarantee the political rights of the majority. There were proposals based around the organization of ministries focused on the regulation of labor relations, as well as a department in charge of interventions designed to resolve the problem of indigenous servitude and their demands for land.

This project of popular empowerment and State reform inspired the formation of various socialist nuclei around the country geared toward the "recovery of the people's sovereignty", as recorded in a speech by the civic-military coup of June 1925. In that year young officers questioned civil war veteran officers, accusing them of having ceased to preserve sovereignty and having become a mercenary of 'mafia capital'. For liberals the national army founded on the basis of revolutionary militias was the nucleus of public power and responsible for the expansion of democracy: "The guarantors of the people's rights in a society under conservative and imperialistic threat".[27] The contact between Luis Napoleon Dillon (president of the National Assembly of the LP in 1923) and the Antorcha group facilitated the use of the concept of the proletariat under the new regime of 1925.[28] The government of the Julian Revolution put the bankers on trial, calling them fraudsters of the nation, and instigated the formal recognition of the socialist party in 1926, the same year it created the Ministry of Social Welfare, Labor and Land (SWLLM), many of whose officials were committed to socialism. The gov-

---

[26] Víctor Jeifets and Lazar Jeifets, *Internacional Comunista y América Latina, 1919-1943: Diccionario Biográfico* (Ginebra: Ariadna Ediciones, 2015), 277

[27] Ángel F. Rojas, *La novela ecuatoriana* (Guayaquil: Graficas Ariel, 1948).

[28] As a way of sponsoring the socialist cycle, DILLON commercial advertizing from the cotton fabric's "la Internacional" for *La Antorcha* and promoted socialist industrialism. Alejandro Lopez, *Dominación y Consenso en Ecuador, 1922-1938. Un estudio de la construcción de la hegemonía estatal en el ámbito del trabajo* (FLACSO Ecuador, Ph.D., 2018).

ernment effectively constituted an internal government body responsible for resolving conflicts on the basis of the social function of property.[29] The Ministry of Social Welfare, Labour archives draw attention to the numerous demands coming from different places around the country based on the revolutionary aspirations that Alfarismo had failed to fulfil, covering subjects concerning everything from violence in rural labor relations, to precariousness, dispossession and a lack of recognition of property titles and collective possessions among peasants. They address in the spheres of traditional haciendas and foreign capital investment alike. The socialists served as public authorities, community lawyers and visitors, and the ministry effectively became an investigative body and court of justice for the popular classes.

This perspective on the rural and Indian nation had a number of different sources. The inspiration of the Mexican Revolution and the translation of the concept of the proletariat to the analysis of historically existing classes added to the body of written work concerning the question of the nation. The Ecuadorian left participated in the Latin American debate on the problem of national formation by questioning how to build a national culture in societies characterised by racial segregation. In this area, the intellectual exchanges with the founders of the socialist vanguard in Peru were both long-winded and of particular importance. *La revista obrera de Lima (The Workers' Magazine of Lima)*, a socialist literary magazine, *Cuba Contemporánea*, Ateneo of Honduras directed by Froilán Turcios, *Renacimiento de La Habana*, and others, maintained exchanges with the *Letras* journal in Quito, where intellectuals related to both socialism and modernism participated. In 1916 they enthusiastically announced the launch of the *Cólonida* magazine in which Abraham Valdelomar and Jose Carlos Mariategui collaborated in a renewal of the concept of the colonial. They were fascinated by Valdelomar's creole tale which announced the arrival of distinct voices and scenarios to modern literature in a movement proposed that "on the basis of Inca civilization could be build an original and beautiful art".[30] This program was central to Mariategui's work in *Amauta* magazine, and of great interest to Ecuadorians. *Colonida* spoke critically of the colonial condition, about building an *Indigenismo* that was not a cult to tradition but instead a vision of Indians as transforming subjects that would build a radical anticolonial modernity. From Valdelomar's publications in Ecuadorian modernist magazines, to the recognition given by the Communist leader and narrator Joaquin Gallegos Lara in the 1930s, to

---

[29]   Valeria Coronel, *A Revolution in Stages: Subaltern Politics, Nation-State Formation, and the Origins of Social Rights in Ecuador, 1834-1950* (New York University, Ph.D., 2011). Valeria Coronel, "Orígenes de una Democracia Corporativa: estrategias para la ciudadanización del campesinado indígena, partidos políticos y reforma territorial en Ecuador (1925-1944)", *Historia social urbana: espacios y flujos*, ed. by Eduardo Kingman (Quito: FLACSO/Ministerio de Cultura, 2009), 323-364.

[30]   Isaac J. Barrera, "La revista, libros hispano-americanos", *Letras* (1915), 159.

Mariategui as the most influential revolutionary intellectual in the Americas. This source of inspiration spurred the creation of remarkable avant-garde productions in Ecuador between the mid-twenties and the mid-forties. The communists intellectuals Joaquin Gallegos Lara, Adalberto Ortiz, Demetrio Aguilera, Enrique Gil, Alfredo Pareja and José de la Cuadra, were, with the socialists Pablo Palacios and Angel Felicisimo Rojas, fundamental figures in the political and cultural dispute of the time.[31] These productions aided the work of State reform and demonstrated the longstanding relationship between the vanguard and *communist indigenismo* in Ecuador, as opposed to the conditions of harassment and "agony" that Mariategui's Andean socialism must have experienced both under the pressure of communist orthodoxy and due to the oligarchic pact of the Peruvian government.[32]

For Ricardo Paredes and Joaquin Gallegos Lara, the role of the vanguard was to accompany the Andean proletarian class, the *Indians*, in their potential transformation into an organized people (*political unit*) and provide a protean language for that struggle. What would be the subject that could emancipate and revolutionize language as had been done by the anti-Hispanic bourgeoisie during modernism? Questions began to be asked about the relationship between crisis and national culture, and the concept of revolution that was alive in the Ecuadorian intellectual and political lexicon was subsequently reinvigorated.

When Ricardo Paredes presented the Ecuadorian left to the Communist International in 1928, he advanced a historical analysis of the ruling classes in which "the grand bourgeoisie […] pursues with great energy the concentration of capital by ruining the petty bourgeoisie and exploiting the workers"; commerce consists largely of foreign capital; and the large "feudal domains or estates […] constitute the chronic evil of Ecuador" for their unproductive hoarding and the condition of servitude that they impose on the Indian peasants. Characteristically, Indians are identified as one of the key actors of class conflict in which "the dispute between classes is the one that occurs between the offensive strategies of land owners in order to expand their private property, be it for a commercial orientation or that of estates, and the rural communes that continue to exist in numerous regions of Ecuador".[33] Paredes maintains that combating a complete

---

[31] Humberto E. Robles, *La noción de vanguardia en el Ecuador: recepción, trayectoria y documentos (1918-1934)* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional: 2006). Valeria Coronel y Gabriela Aleman, *Vienen ganas de cambiar el tiempo: Epistolario entre Nela Martínez Espinosa y Joaquín Gallegos Lara-1930 a 1938* (Quito: Instituto Metropolitano de Patrimonio, 2012). José de la Cuadra, *El Montuvio Ecuatoriano: Ensayo de Presentacion* (Quito: Libresa, 1996).

[32] Alberto Flores, *La agonía de Mariátegui: La polémica con La Komintern* (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo, 1980).

[33] Ricardo Paredes, "El Movimiento Obrero en el Ecuador", *El pensamiento de la izquierda comunista*

expropriation and vigorously defending the "communal regime" has a revolutionary influence on the Indians, setting forth the notion of a *double condition of exploitation*, based on both race and class, and focusing on the constitutive dispossession of private property and racial oppression as key elements of capitalist accumulation.

Paredes argued that in order to understand class conflict and its potential one had to understand the political landscape of the country, by which he meant the localized forms of class struggle in the partisan conflict of the democratic revolution. According to his reading, bourgeois and even petit bourgeois democratic revolutions with a successful social orientation had already existed in Ecuador, as they had in Mexico, and for this reason it was better to use the concept of *dependent* countries than *semi-colonial* countries. The emergence of the Marxist discourse allowed the popular classes to combine the republican democratic with the socialist, and Paredes described Ecuador's government between 1926-1928 as a labor government "similar to that of Calles in Mexico but in many cases more radical".[34] Yet the reformist civil-military government required popular support in order to be better positioned to resist the elite's attacks. Evaluating the confluence of interests between the middle classes in control of the State apparatus in that period and their organizational allies on the left, Paredes noted how popular power did not consist mostly of salaried workers and Ecuador would therefore have to follow the cases of Mexico, Peru and Bolivia in relying on the revolutionary movement of "Indian communities", adopting their concept combining a mixture of primitive communist traditions, the historical struggle against landowners, participation in national political processes and the most recent socialist organization. He wrote "the spirit of class is very widespread among the Indians".[35]

In 1929 the civil-military government convoked a Constituent Assembly seen as a precondition for calling an election. The left used the constitution to introduce motions to ban bonded labor relations, coercion, the imprisonment for debts arising from purely civil obligations, and the establishment of contracts that entailed a loss of individual freedom; all of which were regarded as an unacceptable breach of inalienable rights.[36] Presenting it as a danger for the State and a wound on the nation, the PLR and the left agreed to reject "feudal domination", arguing that indenture labor was merely another

---

(1928-1961), ed. by Hernán Ibarra (Quito: Ministerio de Coordinación de la Política y Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados, 2013), 67-78, 69.

[34] *El pensamiento de la izquierda comunista (1928-1961)*. For a critique of the close relation between the Mexican Communist Party and Lazaro Cardena's reformist regime see Elvira Concheiro, Massimo Modonesi, and Horacio Gutiérrez Crespo, *El comunismo: otras miradas desde América Latina* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007).

[35] Paredes, "El Movimiento Obrero en el Ecuador", 77.

[36] National Congress, Ecuador. *Constitución de la República de Ecuador de 1929* (26 de marzo de 1929) section 151, subsections 1, 2 and 3.

name for slavery. It was agreed the State should ensure access to justice for all and land-owners were prevented from impeding access to Indians through *gamonalismo*; a local structure of domination in which *hacendados* held a patron-client relationship with local authorities, privatizing the ultimate power to judge and imprison, and preventing the passage of lawsuits and conflicts from reaching the national courts.

For some authors the critical discourse of the Liberal Party and the Left concerning the highland haciendas and conservative politics was an expression of regional elites antagonism, and had no relation to popular politics. Beyond any redemptive rhetoric, however, in contemplating the right to organization and introducing the notion of the social function of property, the constitution of 1929 provided resources which would later be harnessed for popular struggle and guided State intervention in local power. It would determine the obligations, limitations and rights in support of the general interests of the State, national economic development, and of public health and wellbeing. It was also dedicated to permitting State intervention, by means of a judicial ruling, in expropriation cases when faced with demands from towns or communities that lacked land or water, and guaranteed a right "to be provided with them, taking them from the immediate properties, and harmonizing the mutual interests of the population and the owners".[37] State dominion over all territorial mineral resources was established as a means to manage foreign companies and subject them to the laws of the republic. In addition to strengthening the power of parliament vis a vis the executive, the constitution also widened the representation of Parliament including the corporate vote of new subjects of political recognition and social welfare. Fifteen institutional spaces for 'functional senators' were established which would include public teachers and journalists; workers, peasants and Indians; one representative from the military, and three from the various business branches of the bourgeoisie.

The intellectual notion that Andean Indians had constituted a "great communist empire, the first State founded on agrarian socialism" became increasingly powerful after 1926, gathering even more strength after 1929 when huge numbers of peasants began to demands State intervention in land conflicts. Joaquin Gallegos and Ricardo Paredes separated from socialism and, alongside others, founded a communist group saying that they saw the PSE as preserving its position as an intermediary, unwilling to let a popularly rooted leftist leadership speak for itself. The CPE decided to strengthen agrarian unionization, focusing on the provinces of Pichincha and Cotopaxi in the highlands, and Guayas, Los Rios, Guayas and Esmeraldas on the coast. It was unique at that time for its inclusion of Indian and peasant leaders within the main body of the party.

---

[37]   National Congress, *Constitución de la República de Ecuador de 1929*, section 151, subsections 1, 2 and 3.

Gallegos contributed by positioning the exploitation of Indians and the resultant violent repression of the indigenous leadership squarely in the public sphere, following-up on the multiple harassments and eventual imprisonment of indigenous leader Ambrosio Lasso and reporting it in local and international newspapers creating an international solidarity campaign.

He proposed naming Ambrosio Lasso an Indian colonel of the Liberal Revolution, a figure who would serve as a bridge within the communist party. In his historical essay *Biography of the Indian People* (1936), and novel "Los que se van" (1930) Gallegos also helped instigate an Ecuadorian communist avant garde literature, while communist militants Nela Martinez and Luisa Gomez founded schools teaching in Quichua in rural areas and created a newspaper called the "*Ñucanchic Allpa*" (*Our Land*) which contained news and testimonies of the popular struggle for Spanish Quichua bilingualism and was designed to encourage the articulation of struggles and facilitate the construction of both a proletarian and Indo-American identity. As a result, Indians became more visible in the political bureau of the Communist Party between the 1930s and the end of the Second World War, helping to advance prominent leaders such as Dolores Cacuango who, like Gualavisi, came from a trajectory of community territorial defense.[38] These efforts would come together over the next two decades with the formation of the Ecuadorian Federation of Indians (FEI) within the Communist Party and the Indian communist leaders participation in the Workers of Latin America Confederation (CTAL) before the Cold War.

In the thirties, the PCE on the coast supported the peasant and small business struggle against the formation of monopolies including the United Fruit Company.[39] They created unions and peasant confederations, activated the press, and demanded State compliance with social legislation in several well-known conflicts between peasants who had settled on the land of old cacao haciendas and entrepreneurs seeking to rebuild the large property for the cultivation of rice, sugar or banana. In 1938 the National Constituent Assembly convoked by Enriquez Gallo received input from the left regarding how to contain the monopolies and impositions of transnational capital, culminating in the declarations of the inalienable state ownership over mining resources, and the banning of bank agents and foreign corporations from running as candidates for the executive. The State was committed to dissolving the latifundia, to guaranteeing land and water to the peasant economy, and to including small rural landowners as

---

[38]   Marc Becker, *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indigenous Movements*. (London: Duke University Press, 2008). Raquel Rodas Morales, *Dolores Cacuango. Gran líder del pueblo indio* (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, 2005).

[39]   Steve Striffler, *In the Shadows of State and Capital : The United Fruit Company, Popular Struggle, and Agrarian Restructuring in Ecuador, 1900-1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

'functional senators' before the Senate. At the same time the PCE promoted a United Antitrust Front, Committees for the Defense of Labor Code, the Ecuadorian Labor Confederation and National Teachers Union.[40]

Business corporations considered it urgent to regain control of the State through the coming presidential election. Lombardo Toledano and Guillermo Rodríguez, the president and vice-president of the CTAL (The Workers Confederation of Latin America), commented with surprise on the violent response of the Ecuadorian Government against the National Workers Congress in 1943. In other countries it meant working class progress, yet the communist leader Primitivo Barreto described the Ecuadorian communist platform as a "powerful citizen bloc" with a "class political line" likely to regain State control.

To understand the Ecuadorian left and the strands of socialism and communism within it, we must understand how the ruptures and legacies that came out of the "bourgeois and petty bourgeois democratic revolution" of 1895-1920 and 1925-1930 took place; a historical process mediated by the press in which organizational experiences and legal language combined with the language of the Russian revolution, the Alfarist revolution and the Mexican Revolution. Concepts such as worker and Indian redemption, the nation, class and the people, proletariat and race, democracy and revolution, all found themselves combining Marxist analysis together with languages from the Ecuadorian party system.[41] Class conflict, the State, and the public sphere were all battlefields.

The middle classes on the left waged their struggles around the issue of land and labor relations alongside workers and ethnic communities. The communist party played a key role in strengthening different levels of the struggle. The construction of an indigenous political directorate in the sierra and a peasant directorate at the coast are important examples of national platforms that were developed between the 1930s and 40s. This political training interacted with the institutional development of the guarantor State and social policy. Forms of collective action were combined with forms of legal litigation. The program on the left included notions such as the redemption of indigenous servitude, labor rights, the formation of a popular leadership, the expansion of popular national culture, the social function of property, and a revamped antiimperialist predicament when legislating on natural resources.

Though the PCEs and the PSEs participation in the construction of the State and legislative power were successful, representative democracy proved very difficult.

---

[40] Miguel Á. Zambrano, *Breve historia del Código del Trabajo Ecuatoriano: Su génesis, elaboración y expedición* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 1962).

[41] Guillermo Bustos, "La politizacion del 'problema obrero'. Los trabajadores quiteños entre la identidad 'pueblo' y la identidad 'clase' (1931-34)", *Antología ciudadanía e identidad*, ed. by Simón Pachano (Quito: FLACSO, 2003), 189-230.

While the left managed to prevail alongside the first faction in the Julian Revolution, the internal struggle of the PL between multiple attempts to form a modern right by both liberal and conservative factions were to prove powerful rivals in the thirties and forties. Polarization turned the executive into a volatile place and constitutional efforts in Ecuador were, as Angel Felicisimo Rojas suggested, "geological traces to locate the past. They represent, in a more or less profound way, the footprint of a revolution or a counterrevolution".[42]

In the face of the loss of the PL to the hands of its oligarchic faction, the left is driven into an alliance with the forces of conservative populism in an attempt to reject the dictatorship of the financial elite and rebuild democracy in light of the influence of the international anti-fascist struggle, but this alliance turns out to be onerous.[43] When the concept of democracy became restrictive and divorced from the history of the democratic revolutions in the postwar global system there was a strengthening of the re-accommodation of reactionary forces within the country. In 1946 during Velasco Ibarra's dictatorship the conservative elite of the highlands and the oligarchy of the coast finally made a pact under the auspices of the FBI. Ecuador was one of the fields of struggle between socialist democracy and liberal democracy – somehow a struggle between between plebeian democracies and oligarquich democracies – at the beginning of the Cold War.

It is intriguing that the Ecuadorian communist party, with its experience in political disputes, with peasant and indigenous bases that staged miltiple cycles of mobilization and public litigation, with its significant participation in State formation, and with its record of influential cultural production, has almost disappeared in comparative research on Latin America Communist Parties. The silencing of this history is likely to be partly the result of the Cold War. According to research by historian Marc Becker the FBI described the Ecuadorian left as a 'continental danger'.[44] In contrast to the Colombian or Chilean cases, the communist party in Ecuador was nonorthodox.[45] The prevalence of the left in the party system and in popular organizations contrasted with populist movements in the Southern Cone.[46] To this we must add that the left of the sixties and seventies stopped thinking historically about revolution in terms of connect-

---

[42]   Rojas, *La novela ecuatoriana*, 19.

[43]   Alianza Democratica Ecuatoriana, *Los postulados de la Revolucion de Mayo: Programa* (Quito: Talleres Gráficos Nacionales, 1981).

[44]   Marc Becker, *The FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

[45]   Klaus Meschkat and José M. Rojas, *Liquidando el pasado. La izquierda colombiana en los archivos de la Unión Soviética* (Bogotá: FESCOL-Taurus, 2009).

[46]   Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1988).

ed cycles. Rather new branches of revolutionary Marxism in the 1960s-1970s tended to reject the historical Communist Party and populist movements for their collaboration with bourgeois democracy. For this new generation "feudalism" was not opposed to modernization and underdevelopment was structural, thus the old communist struggle would never lead to democratization, national integration nor revolution.[47] For the contemporary left, one that has experienced rapid changes in the twenty first century, from severe crisis to progressive State reforms and back again to an authoritarian neoliberalism, the effort to reconnect with Andean Marxist reflections on revolution and democracy, on social conflict and State formation, on the relevance of class struggle amidst global crisis, is clearly of the utmost importance. In this vein, a new Political History in Latin America studies political language and recuperates historical notions in which the dialectics between social struggle and institutional building can be illuminated.

---

[47]   *Memorias del seminario internacional: El legado intelectual y político de Fernando Velasco Abad*, ed. by Santiago Ortiz Crespo and Soledad Álvarez Velasco (Quito: Flacso Ecuador, 2014), 207-225. Cristóbal Kay, *Latin American Theories of Development and Undevelopment* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), chapter 1. Ruy M. Marini, *El Maestro en rojo y negro. Textos recuperados* (Quito: Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales, 2012). Agustín Cueva, "El estado latinoamericano y las raíces estructurales del autoritarismo", *Ensayos sociológicos y políticos*, ed. by Fernando Tinajero (Quito: Ministerio de Coordinación de la Política y Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados, 2012), 143-156. Agustín Cueva, "El populismo como problema teórico político", *Ensayos sociológicos y políticos*, ed. by Fernando Tinajero (Quito: Ministerio de Coordinación de la Política y Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados, 2012), 221-234. Hernán Ibarra, "Los idearios de la izquierda comunista ecuatoriana (1928-1961)", *Los idearios de la izquierda comunista ecuatoriana (1928-1961)*, 11-64.

THE RISE OF THE UNION BETWEEN THEORY AND PRAXIS: CHILEAN COMMUNISM IN THE COLD WAR (1934-1990)

Joaquín Fermandois

(Universidad San Sebastián, Pontificia Universidad católica de Chile)

Lenin always thought that language was closely linked to content and criticized the language of those who avoid clear definitions and prefer vague, incomprehensible, and fallacious phrases. About this manner of speaking and writing, Lenin said: "They don't use simple words, only complicated ones […]. And with this monstrous language, without providing new information, without new examples, without much effort, drill trite socialist ideas, coated in vulgar terms of their own intent".[1]

The language of an anti-systemic left emerged in Chile in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century.[2] Chile, since its

---

[1]   A. Olivares, "El lenguaje dentro del Partido", *Principios*, 139 (October-December 1970): 92. Unless stated otherwise, all translations in this essay are mine.

[2]   On the 1973 coup, see Paul E. Sigmund, *The Overthrow of Allende and the Politics of Chile, 1964-1973* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Joan E. Garcés, *Allende y la experiencia chilena: las armas de la política* (Santiago: BAT, 1991 [original 1976]); Ian Roxborough, Philip J O'Brien, and Jacqueline Roddick, *Chile: the State and Revolution* (New York: New York MacMillan, 1977); Arturo Valenzuela, *El quiebre de la democracia en Chile* (Santiago: UDP, 2013); Tomás Moulián, *La forja de ilusiones: el Sistema de partidos, 1932-1973* (Santiago: Universidad Arcis, FLACSO, 1993); *La unidad Popular treinta años después*, ed. by Hugo Fazio Vengoa and Rodrigo Baño Ahumada (Santiago: LOM, 2003). For the insertion of Chilean politics in the Cold War, see Tanya Harmer, *El gobierno de Allende y la Guerra Fría Interamericana* (Santiago: UDP, 2013); *Chile y la Guerra Fría Global*, ed. by Tanya Harmer and Alfredo

birth as a nation, followed larger world political trends.[3] In a way, in Chile there were communism and anti-communism before the Russian Revolution. In the years prior to 1914, a revolutionary or, rather, an anti-systemic language developed along with a counterrevolutionary one. On 4 June 1912, Luis Emilio Recabarren founded the Workers' Socialist Party. Recabarren visited Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution and, upon his return to Chile, transformed the party into the Communist Party on 2 January 1922 – the date the Communists considered the official birth of their party until the end of the Cold War. Shortly after its founding, the Chilean Communist Party (PCCh) would join and faithfully follow the directions of the Komintern.[4] Simultaneously, it had deep roots in and had to act upon the Chilean reality. The PCCh pursued a revolutionary goal in a political system in which institutionalization had preceded mobilization.[5] After a few upswings, the party became thoroughly stalinized by the end of the 1920s. It survived persecutions – not too violent – and after 1932 it was firmly established in the Chilean political system.[6] The PCCh would remain in that political system with the exception of the period between 1948 and 1958, when it was banned.[7] Its faith in the Soviet model as the grand communist paradigm would not weaken until the advent of Perestroika in the late 1980s.[8]

Riquelme Segovia (Santiago: Ril, Instituto de Historia Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2014); Kristian Gustafson, *Hostile Intent: U. S. Covert Operations in Chile, 1964-1974* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2007); Alfredo Joignant and Patricio Navia Lucero (compiladores), *Ecos mundiales del Golpe de Estado. Escritos sobre el 11 de septiembre de 1973* (Santiago: UDP, 2013).

[3]   Joaquín Fermandois, *Mundo y fin de mundo. Chile y la política mundial 1900-2004* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica, 2004), 16.

[4]   Sergio Grez Toso, *Historia del comunismo chileno. La era de Recabarren (1912-1924)* (Santiago: LOM, 2011).

[5]   Joaquín Fermandois, *La revolución inconclusa. La izquierda chilena y el gobierno de la Unidad Popular* (Santiago: CEP, 2013), 1-40; J. Samuel Valenzuela, *Democratización vía reforma: la expansión del sufragio en Chile* (Buenos Aires: Ides, 1995).

[6]   Gonzalo Vial Correa, *Historia de Chile (1981-1973)*, vol. IV, *La dictadura de Ibáñez (1925-1931)* (Santiago: Editorial Fundación, 1996); Jorge Rojas Flores, *La dictadura de Ibáñez y los sindicatos (1927-1931)* (Santiago: DIBAM, 1993).

[7]   Andrew Barnard, "El Partido Comunista de Chile y las políticas del tercer período, 1931-1934", *1912-2012. El Siglo de los comunistas chilenos*, ed. by Olga Uliánova, Manuel Loyola Tapia, and Rolando Álvarez Vallejos (Santiago: IDEA, 2012), 128; Olga Uliánova, "El Partido Comunista chileno durante la dictadura de Carlos Ibáñez (1927-1931)", *Boletín de la Academia Chilena de la Historia*, 111 (2002): 385-436.

[8]   Olga Uliánova, "El PC chileno durante la dictadura de Ibáñez (1927-1931): Primera clandestinidad y 'Bolchevización' estaliniana", *Chile en los archivos soviéticos 1922-1991*, tomo 1, *Komintern y Chile 1922-1931*, ed. by Olga Uliánova and Alfredo Riquelme (Santiago: DIBAM, 2005), 215-258.

Even though the PCCh had a clear international orientation, it was rooted in Chilean politics and society and its language, as all orthodoxies, allowed for some practical accommodations. In any case, the party always found in Moscow-oriented communism a means of self-explanation and a vital breath that kept alive the hope of a radiant and infallible future.[9] Before the Cold War, this adherence to Moscow allowed the party to assume the positions of the "Third Period", the popular fronts – and help elect a left-wing president in 1938 through its alliance with bourgeois parties – and promote the "National Union" strategy during World War II after stoically and obediently accepting the Nazi-Soviet Pact.[10] Representative of this attitude are the editorial words of the party's magazine in July 1941:

> *Principios* (magazine) will strive to raise the ideological, political, and theoretical level of the working class and the popular masses, will help them employ all the rich teachings and experiences of the international workers' revolutionary movement and, above all, those of the country of triumphant socialism, the Soviet Union. It will help them apply these experiences in their own struggle, for their best success. *Principios* is a theoretical and political organ of struggle. It is a weapon the Communist Party of Chile lays in the hands of the working and peasant masses in their struggle in the ideological, theoretical, and political front.[11]

The PCCh became one of the main engines of the country's workers' movement and it enjoyed sustained electoral growth at the beginning of the Cold War, gaining about 10% of the votes in 1945 and 1947.[12] The PCCh's electoral performance was very good, considering that it was a strictly disciplined party. It was linked to a wider Marxist political subculture, which would progressively define virtually the entire Chilean Left in later decades. In September 1946, the PCCh helped elect a center-left president, Gabriel González Videla, who appointed Communists in three ministries. In April 1947, the

---

[9]   Santiago Aránguiz Pinto, "El Partido Comunista chileno y la Revolución de Octubre: 'herencia viva' de la cultura política soviética (1935-1970)", *1912-2012. El Siglo de los comunistas chilenos*, 219-240; Eugenia Fediakova, "Rusia Soviética en el imaginario político chileno 1917-1939", *Por un rojo amanecer. Hacia una historia de los comunistas chilenos*, ed. by Manuel Loyola Tapia and Jorge Rojas Flores (Santiago de Chile: Valus, 2000).

[10]   Marcus Klein, "La elección presidencial de 1938. El despertar fortuito de la era radical", *Camino a La Moneda. Las elecciones Presidenciales en la Historia de Chile 1920-2000*, ed. by Alejandro San Francisco and Ángel Soto (Santiago: Centro de Estudios Bicentenario, Instituto de Historia UC, 2005), 160-162.

[11]   "Editorial", *Principios*, 1 (julio 1941). It is not clear whether it was written before or after the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

[12]   The PCCh obtained 10.2% of the vote in the congressional election of 1945 and 16.5% in the municipal elections of 1947. Ricardo Cruz-Coke, *Historia electoral de Chile 1925-1973* (Santiago: Editorial Jurídica, 1984), 70.

Communists exited the government and, after a bitter fight with the president, the party was banned through the Law of Defense of Democracy (LDD) in 1948. As a result, party members suffered persecution and hundreds of them were confined to detention camps.[13] The persecution lasted a year and a half; the formal banning – actually, the party acted publicly – until 1958.

I. Political Subculture

The PCCh is better understood as a political subculture: it existed within Chilean society but it also had a life on a parallel road, subjected to rituals and discipline in a much more evident way than other Chilean parties or movements.[14] Its world went beyond a political structure; it was more of a lifestyle, under rigorous control – at least in comparison with other political forces – and showed the typical signs of the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century, even though the party acted within the framework of a democracy, an institutional system to which it adapted. The party drew its strength from three main sources: organized labor; its own political structure, capable of mobilizing effectively the party's membership; and its influence in the cultural and academic worlds.[15] The PCCh was particularly strong in a few provinces and was able to maintain a significant presence at the national level. It even reached to segments of the upper-classes, replicating the historical trope that revolutionary processes draw members of elites – a sort of reverse "revolt of the notables".[16]

Although the directive bodies of the PCCh included more persons from organized labor than the case of other persons, in general its leaders belonged to an intelligentsia.

---

[13]   Carlos Huneeus, *La guerra fría chilena: Gabriel González Videla y la Ley Maldita* (Santiago: Debate, 2009); Cristián Garay Vera and Ángel Soto, *Gabriel González Videla: "no a los totalitarios, ya sean rojos, pardos o amarillos"* (Santiago: Centro de Estudios Bicentenario, 2013). On anticommunism in Chile see Marcelo Casals Araya, *La creación de la amenaza roja. Del surgimiento del anticomunismo en Chile a la "campaña del terror" de 1964* (LOM: Santiago, 2016). On the inter-American factor, Andrew Barnard, "Chilean Communists, Radical Presidents, and Chilean Relations with the United States, 1940-1947", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 13, 2 (1981): 347-374.

[14]   Some even considered that marriage between Communists would "reach the objective of mutual help, education of the children in the ideology of the proletariat, and the active participation of the working class in the struggle to transform society", Carlos Robles, "Nuestro concepto del matrimonio", *Principios*, 63 (1959).

[15]   Luis Enrique Délano, "El Partido conecta a los escritores con el mundo del trabajo", Partido Comunista de Chile, *Intervenciones y Resoluciones del XIV Congreso celebrado entre el 23 y el 29 de noviembre de 1969* (Santiago: s/e, 1970).

[16]   Luis Enrique Délano, *La base* (Santiago: Editorial XA, 1958).

The party's secretaries general came from humble origins, albeit not exactly from the ranks of the industrial proletariat.[17] Luis Corvalán, secretary general of the party between 1958 and 1990, was a primary teacher and, through his intellectual and political capacities and interests, got to master a public language that allowed him to gain a position of hierarchy within the Chilean public sphere. As it is often the case, from a sociological point of view, persons like Corvalán and other Chilean Communist leaders became members of a political class and are no longer pure representatives of 'the people'. In the 1960s and 1970s, two other key figures of the party, Orlando Millas and Volodia Teitelboim, were typical members of an upper middle-class. Millas came from a family that, had its members dedicated to more profitable activities, would have belonged in the upper class. A lawyer and avid reader, albeit always looking at the world through the prism of a scholastic knowledge of marism-leninism, Millas devoted his entire life to the party and political activism.[18] Teitelboim, for his part, descended from a Russo-Jewish immigrant family and became a writer of some consequence in his younghood and again in his last years. Socially, he had access to a wide range of classes in the country, and personally he was linked to traditional elites. Like Millas – with whom he sustained a veiled rivalry – Teitelboim's adhered intellectually to a pro-Soviet orientation of Marxism, of which, at least externally, he never doubted and experienced with stoicism the fall of Soviet Communism as a result of Gorbachev's reforms. Teitelboim excelled at polemics, in which he combined Leninist orthodoxy with cultured and sometimes archaic expressions that elicited laughs sometimes but always made substantive impressions on various audiences.

Party leaders and functionaries mingled in their daily lives with actors of various social milieus; these experiences, however, did not affect their relations with the organized labor base of the party. Some intellectuals and professionals carried a sort of double life, enjoying the material perks of the 'bourgeois' experience while propagandizing fiercely a cataclysmic transformation of Chilean society – although this type was more common in other left-wing parties. In general, party members carried themselves rigorously and discreetly in their personal lives, especially avoiding the ostentation of wealth, if they had any. Orientation toward a proletarian lifestyle was dominant, and sometimes forced. The organizational structure, compartmentalized in cells, guaranteed a minimum of uniformity that kept in place the party's subculture.

---

[17] Luis Corvalán, *De lo vivido y lo peleado* (Santiago: LOM, 1997).

[18] Orlando Millas, *En tiempos del Frente Popular. Memoria. Primer volumen* (Santiago: CESOC, 1993); Orlando Millas, *Memorias, 1957-1991. Una digresión* (Santiago: Ediciones Chile-América). It is a fundamental text to understand the daily life of Chilean Communist leader, willfully obedient of Soviet orthodoxy as all the other leaders.

Being a Communist was a way of life that integrated the whole of a person into a community; in parallel, all members of the party lived domestic and professional lives that had their own, discrete characteristics.[19] The many exceptions to the experience of the typical Communist lifestyle in the ranks of the party do not disavow the capacity of the PCCh to produce great self-abnegation in the vast majority of its members. It was unbelievable how the Communists could sacrifice their personal lives in situations of deprivation to create cells and organizations in remote places where no previous infrastructure existed. The party's outreach combined an identification with demands, aspirations, and non-ideological specific problems with a drive to recruit and convert, which bears similarities with the ability of religions to awake vocations. Unions and universities were the preferred grounds for these actions. The Communists created a body filled with a homogeneous language, much more intensely developed than that of any other party and in constant communication with the structure of the party.

The Committee of Membership Control (Comisión de Control de Cuadros) played a fundamental role in the PCCh, organizing the theoretical and ideological formation of the members of the party and prospective members of the committee.[20] The historiography of the party has overlooked one very significant aspect in this regard: even though the PCCh carried itself within the boundaries of legality, many of its members held parallel experiences in secret organization, considering the potentiality of clandestine life under conditions of political persecution. Although it is not easy to discern whether it was a spontaneous reaction or a rational decision, this practice had its origins in the conditions of the adhesion of the party to the Third International's instructions to have a clandestine apparatus. Even though it was never formally recognized by the PCCh, the Communists sometimes insinuated that the Law of Defense of Democracy, which banned the party and provoked the persecution of its members for a few years, had shown that the training in secret organization was justified. The forced disappearance of many members, especially leaders of the party in the aftermath of the 1973 coup would tragically attest to the existence of that parallel organization. The party was able to preserve its organization until the 1980s and celebrate some formal meetings clandestinely and later semi-clandestinely.[21] All

---

[19]   Alfonso Salgado, "Antroponimia Leninista: Santiago de Chile, 1914-1973", en *Seminario Simon Collier 2009* (Santiago: Instituto de historia, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2010), 159-200; Rolando Álvarez, *Arriba los pobres del mundo. Cultura e identidad política del Partido Comunista de Chile entre democracia y dictadura. 1965-1990* (Santiago: LOM, 2011).

[20]   A. Escobar, "La disciplina en nuestro partido (intervención en la XIV Sesión Plenaria del C. C. del Partido Comunista", *Principios*, 33, marzo 1944; J. Molina, "El trabajo de las Comisiones de Control y Cuadros", *Principios*, 67 (1960), 30-33.

[21]   Rolando Álvarez Vallejos, *Desde las sombras: una historia de la clandestinidad comunista (1973-1980)* (Santiago: LOM, 2003); Javier Rebolledo, *Camaleón, doble vida de un agente comunista* (Santiago: Planeta, 2017).

of this activity was carried out despite the fact that, until the end of 1976, being caught by the secret police of the Pinochet regime meant not only confinement, but also disappearance, which almost always entailed being tortured to death.[22]

As in most of modern societies in the world, communism in Chile produced a political language with traits of a secular religion. Influenced by nineteenth-century socialism, especially by Marx's and Engels' combination of eschatological trends with contents with a scientific aspiration, communism created a 'subjective' dynamic that would be as strong as or even stronger than 'objective' reality. The anti-systemic left already established a close relationship with a particular language by the turn of the twentieth century, in the cultural environment of a country where the majority of the people were still illiterate.[23] The Russian Revolution gave a great boost to the prestige of Marxism, specifically to the strain identified with the works of the founders and the Marxist parties of the nineteenth century, in which the 'correct' interpretation of historic patterns played a primordial role, which in turn required of great intellectual and doctrinal capacities. In sum, in organizational terms – and this goes beyond the Communist Party – Marxism in Chile would entail the assumption of a "culture of the book" of sorts, as an integral part of the formation and the practice of the membership.[24] As a result, the foundational texts would become continuous and reiterated points of reference.

Thus, the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin early became a fundamental triad that would keep its relevance within the left until 1973 and for Chilean communism until the end of the 1980s.[25] In a second and changing tier were the names of Trotsky, Stalin, and Mao – with their respective rises and falls. Then came the secretaries general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during their tenures and occasionally those other communist countries. In a third tier were communist leaders from non-communist countries, some communist intellectuals, and those whom their critics called philo- or crypto-communists. Of course, the word of the secretary general and the Political Committee – the equivalent of the Politburo – of the PCCh had absolute authority and was for many an object of quasi-veneration, more spontaneous than what occurred in

---

[22]   The issue of the Communists having a military apparatus is still a matter of political debate in Chile. I have discussed the matter in my book *La revolución inconclusa*.

[23]   Literacy in Chile reached 28.9% according to the census of 1885; 31% in 1895; and 40% in 1907. Comisión Central de Censo, *Memoria Presentada al Supremo Gobierno por la Comisión Central del Censo* (Santiago: Universo, 1908), 1273.

[24]   Alfredo Riquelme Segovia notes that the PCCh integrated into a "global ideology," structured as a "science of revolution" with knowledge about how to realize the passing of power from the capitalists on to the communists; Alfredo Riquelme Segovia, *Rojo atardecer. El comunismo chileno entre dictadura y democracia* (Santiago: DIBAM, 2009), 42.

[25]   Fort he Communists' ideology in the twentieth century, see Riquelme, *Rojo atardecer*.

totalitarian countries, as it happened in an open society. Occasionally, heroes from other parties were recognized, insofar as they were in line with communist policies. There were few specifically communist intellectuals, but the world that surrounded communism – where men and women, at the crossroads of choice, opted for 'anti-anticommunism' – boosted its legitimacy in large segments of society.

II. Neruda, Culture and Intellectuals

The case of Pablo Neruda warrants special attention.[26] Although he formally joined the party only in 1945, Neruda was in fact within its sphere of influence and even complied with instructions or insinuations from it since the years of the Spanish Civil War. The war had a great impact in Chile and provoked polarization in the world of culture and ideas.[27] Chilean communism used the Spanish Civil War to acquire relevance in the domestic political debate and Neruda was one of the party's performers in this task. A famed poet, Neruda was well-known internationally before he won the Nobel Prize in 1971. Though removed from theory, when Neruda argued politically he assumed thoroughly the doctrinal communist discourse, somewhat softened by his writer's skills – even if his non-political writing was brighter and better. In Chile, he did much for the legitimation of communism in academia, of great importance in the 1950s and 1960s; abroad, Neruda raised awareness of the persecution of Chilean communism as a result of the Law of Defense of Democracy, albeit its harshest part was relatively brief (about a year and a half). Neruda himself was able to return to Chile after his theatrical escape in 1948. A significant cohort of poets and writers accompanied communism until 1973, partly influenced by Neruda, in addition to other fellow-travelers.

Inside the PCCh, however, the definition of the doctrine allowed for less flexibility. This process was directed by a hierarchical organ, the aforementioned Committee of Control, that worked to incentivize the reading of texts in small cells, through courses, and occasionally for wider audiences. The party exercised vigilance over the conduct of its members and, in general, most of them carried a uniform lifestyle. At the base of the social pyramid of the PCCh, through the experience of the cells and indoctrination courses, the party offered a path to education and self-education. Chilean communism's was the language of a sect that also provided its speakers with tools for political sociabili-

---

26   Rafael Pedemonte, "La diplomacia cultural soviética en Chile (1964-1973)", *Revista Bicentenario*, 9 (2010) 57-100.

27   Rafael Pedemonte, "Pablo Neruda, su tiempo y el 'sentido de la historia': postura ideológica y creación poética durante la Guerra Fría", *Revista Ayer*, 98, 2 (2015): 159-185.

ty and a certain degree of distinction. It was widely recognized in unions and universities that Communists from all social origins possessed a similar style of language, sometimes a little cliché, but in any case adorned with a better pronunciation than the language of other people in the same environments. This trait gave Communists tangible advantages in the places where, in accordance with their functions, they found themselves.[28]

All party education showed a strict intellectual discipline, with an almost Jesuitical quality and different levels of difficulty, depending on the role of the aspiring members, members, functionaries or leaders and according to the place where they carried their political work. Even though hypothetically there were differences between, say, a known university professor and a railroad union leader, both persons, usually men, could find a meeting point in a common language and a few topics. The approach to the foundational texts and the fact that they were considered as immutable points of reference, and the philology that derived from them, or, alternatively, their correct commentary and interpretation, occupied a prominent place in the process of collective formation. Through this process came about the party's explanations of the national situation, its institutional reactions to it, and the policies of the socialist bloc. For Communists, Moscow was like Rome was for Catholics, in a way that no place in the West could match for anti-communists. As a political religion, Marxism, as no other ideological persuasion, was able to combine an organization of reality based on concepts that can be simplified with a high level of intellectual sophistication. However, this dialectical process was always conducted with great care, so as not to clash with the dominant orthodoxy, which in any case evolved from Lenin to Chernenko – practically, not ideologically.

Why is all this important? Because around the PCCh revolved great artists and scientists, and brilliant academics, writers, and journalists.[29] However, it did not emerge in Chile truly autochthonous Marxist thought nor complete monographic studies that could be considered an enrichment of Marxist thought.

A liminal case was that of Marta Harnecker, who, as a disciple of Louis Althusser, gave a modern hue to Marxist orthodoxy through a wide work of divulgation.[30] She dynamized the language of Marxism during the 1960s and early 1970s, even though she was not a creative intellectual nor did she write advanced monographic studies. She was an intellectual of action, oriented toward the Castro model and remained thus until her death in 2019. In the years of the Allende government, Harnecker converged with

---

[28] Fermandois, *La revolución inconclusa*, 241-250. Ernesto Ottone, *El viaje en rojo: un ejercicio de memoria* (Santiago: Debate, 2014).

[29] Germán Albuquerque Fuschini, *La trinchera letrada. Intelectuales latinoamericanos y guerra fría* (Santiago: Ariadna, 2011), 26

[30] The most renowned work of Marta Harnecker is *Los conceptos del materialismo histórico* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1975 [original 1971]).

the forces of the far-left, where most of the Socialist Party and the MIR found their place. Harnecker's ideas were, ultimately, a form of intellectual Guevarism.[31] In general, Communists saw these trends with suspicion, considered them contaminated by bourgeois ideas, and disavowed the use of sophisticated or pretentious language, depending on the circumstance, to speak of the doctrine. This opposition to the type of language characteristic of Althusserian Marxism is the idea at the core of the epigraph at the beginning of this essay, reiterated by the same author in another telling paragraph:

> The indispensable condition for a clear and comprehensible language lies in the permanent connection with the masses, in knowing their demands, and above all in awareness of their cognitive and receptive capacities. If these conditions are note met, we inevitably will fall prey to an intuitive, arid, abstract language that will cool the masses off and thus render them alien to the revolutionary seed […]. We must add that the beauty of the works of the classics and the precision of the documents of the Party and of the brother communist parties are so seductive that pushes certain orators to repeat mechanically their idiomatic turns. The temptation to speak to the masses in a bookish and doctoral language is highly negative for the political purposes of the party.[32]

Besides its rejection of the abstruse language employed by various Marxist politicians and intellectuals, the excerpt reflects the peculiar interpretation of the inseparable link between theory and praxis, which joins communism with the activity of the labor movement directed by its vanguard. Fear of 'adventurerism' and 'Trotskyism' underlies this type of critique.

By mid-twentieth century emerged a Marxist school of historical thought mostly oriented toward communism. The most important names of this school were Hernán Ramírez Necochea (Communist), Jorge Barría (Socialist), and, for a brief period, Álvaro Jara. The three of them provided the first historiographic tools for this angle of interpretation. Later they were joined by Julio César Jobet, who occupied a high position in the Socialist Party and was the only renowned Chilean Marxist who, in the years of the Allende government, said that the countries of the socialist bloc were not democracies. Luis Vitale, an Argentine residing in Chile, was close to the MIR and mentored a new generation of Marxist and non-Marxist historians, Gabriel Salazar among them.[33] Marxist historiography did not influence substantially Chilean historiography

---

[31] Michael Lowy, *El Marxismo en América Latina* (Santiago: LOM, 2007).

[32] Olivares, "El lenguaje dentro del Partido", 93.

[33] Gabriel Salazar Vergara, "La historiografía marxista (clásica) en Chile", *La historia desde abajo y desde adentro*, ed. by Gabriel Salazar Vergara (Santiago: Departamento de Teoría de las Artes Facultad de Artes de la Universidad de Chile, 2003), 47-67; Luis Moulián, "Marx y la historiografía chilena", *Encuentro*

as a whole, but it did have a perceivable impact in the left and those who received indoctrination in the PCCh.

III. A Substitute Home

Undoubtedly, the Communists' living around the word that stemmed from the foundational texts created a special atmosphere, an authentic political subculture. This is the sense of residing in the word of a world charged with ideology and simultaneously connected with some important cultural currents. Those who joined the Communist Party did not see their experience as alienation; on the contrary, the experience of joining the party replaced an atomized life with a life in a community that gave sense to their being. This experience served as a powerful magnet for totalitarian and radical ideologies, heirs of sorts of millenarianism and other sects, fed by the conviction that they represented a moral imperative and, more importantly, the correct interpretation of the laws of history and a supposedly scientific explanation of the qualitative leap that will end the fundamental contradictions of social existence.

In this way, communism had a welcoming element, the spontaneous attraction of modern political religions, the sensation of living in a community that gives sense to individual life, even in its state of subordination. It was also possessed with a conscience of superiority and infallibility that allowed it to castigate and denigrate all enemies, real or presumptive; it condemned mercilessly all those who, having opened themselves to the militant conscience of the party, later abandoned it. In a relatively soft case, Luis Hernández Parker, a famed journalist of the mid-twentieth century, was ejected from the ranks and the confidence of the party for having been detained by the police in Buenos Aires in 1939 and, apparently under torture, confessed some of his and the party's connections; he remained in the spectrum of the left anyway. More dramatic was the case of his contemporary Marcos Chamudes, also a journalist and an intellectual. Chamudes belonged to the generation that crossed all the way over to anticommunism, pushed by the experience of the Stalinist persecutions and the totalitarian atmosphere that, in some cases, made its mark in the Chilean party as well. Not only the Communist but the entire left declared war on Chamudes, condemned him, and mocked him systematically, in line with a practice that became habitual among Communists and Socialists since the mid-1950s.[34]

XXI, 3 (1997), 119-130; Jorge Rojas Flores, "Historia, historiadores y comunistas chilenos", *Por un rojo amanecer*, 1-80.

[34]   Marcos Chamudes, *La reincidencia tiene su hora* (Santiago: s/e, 1976); Marcos Chamudes, *Chile una advertencia americana: semimemorias de un periodista chileno que durante 40 años fue actor y testigo de la*

IV. Willful Orientation toward Moscow: from the Immediate Postwar to the Allende Government

Undoubtedly, the Communists attempted to apply Moscow's directions to a distinct Chilean situation; it was not pure obsequence on the part of the Chilean PCCh. It is hard to ascertain what belonged in the realm of a spontaneous application of ideas and projects and what resulted from a willful and fervent subordination to a world authority deemed the vanguard of the universal socialist experience. Communists explained the convergence of these two strains as the perfect union between theory and praxis and, as a result, theirs was an interpretation scientifically superior to any other. In actuality, in a political system like Chile's, an open preference for revolutionary or quasi-revolutionary direct action would have led the party to a sure and swift defeat. Only acting within the institutional framework, which was facilitated by Chile's political evolution in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, could the Communists consolidate a permanent presence in national politics.

The Chilean Communists faced the realities of the immediate aftermath of World War II promoting a "National Union", in faithful observance of the Soviet model, according to which the post-war had to be a continuation and widening of Popular Front antifascism, including bourgeois parties and, thus, being able to exert leadership over a supposedly progressive majority.[35] Chilean politics did not allow for the implementation of this strategy and the PCCh had to content itself with the formation of a purely left-wing alliance. That was the way in which the coalition of Communists and Radicals presented itself, even though in fact its course was largely defined by the latter. For a brief period, the alliance expanded toward its right and included parties of the right and the left. Soon thereafter the Chilean Communists had to leave the government, against the backdrop of a continental context in which Communist participation in other Latin American government was in retreat, as a result of mutual distrusts and the changes in the foreign policies of the United States and the Soviet Union.[36]

The position of the Socialists evolved independently toward a convergence with the Communists. Whereas Communists had their paradigm in the Soviet Union, Socialists found it first in Tito's Yugoslavia, then in Algeria's anticolonial fight, and finally, in a thorough and uncontestable manner, in the Cuban Revolution. The Communists took

---

vida política de su país (Santiago: PEC, 1972). The rebuttal of the journalist to the Communist attacks in Marcos Chamudes, *El libro blanco de mi leyenda negra* (Santiago: PEC, 1964).

[35]   Carlos Contreras Labarca, *Unión Nacional: Informe ante la XV Sesión Plenaria del Partido Comunista* (Santiago: s/e, 1944).

[36]   Jody Pavilack, *Mining for the Nation: The Politics of Chile's Coal Communities from the Popular front to the Cold War* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011).

a slightly different position with respect to the Cuban Revolution, expressed in their strict adherence to the language of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union regarding international politics. The Cubans attacked Neruda once, which probably was nothing more than a way to criticize the Soviet Union, on which they depended.

In 1967, after Guevara's death in Bolivia, the Socialist Party decided to abandon the electoral path and assume armed struggle. This shift did not go beyond rhetoric, except for the fact that a handful of members of the party trained actively for guerrilla warfare and even collaborated with Guevara's surviving forces and would later remain in a state of expectancy.[37] In parallel, a handful of left-wing activists founded in 1965 the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), a small group oriented toward the Castro model, many of whose members where trained militarily in Cuba, which would enjoy a disproportionate influence on subsequent events.[38] In 1968 and 1969, an incipient movement of urban guerrilla emerged in Chile. The Communists criticized this attitude and strategy as 'adventurist' and 'Trotskyite', even though some of them also had military training, but apparently not for guerrilla warfare. This difference, however, did not affect the Alliance between Socialists and Communists, which had propelled a true electoral revolution in Chile.

The Cuban Revolution caused some tension at first in the left-wing alliance, but in the end strengthened it through the addition of a mystique that would animate it and would also commit it to a course of action whose language was irreconcilable with that of other political forces that could have joined the alliance. The assumption of a more determined revolutionary language in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution reduced the left-wing alliance's chances of genuine transactions with other forces reluctant to the Marxists' final goal. The left seemed to reached the summit of its electoral possibilities in the presidential election of 1964, in which Allende obtained 38,8% of the vote. The result was not good enough to win, however, as the right supported the center-left candidate, Eduardo Frei, who got 56% of the vote.[39] Few seemed to ponder the fact that the left had reached almost 40% of the national vote.

---

[37] Bayron Velásquez, "La Organa y la escuela de guerrilla de Chaihuín (1968-1970): Leninización y guevarización del socialismo chileno", *Izquierdas*, 49 (April 2020), 412-431.

[38] Eugenia Palieraki, *¡La revolución ya viene! El MIR chileno en los años sesenta* (Santiago: LOM, 2014); Mario Amorós, *Miguel Enríquez: un hombre en las estrellas, biografía de un revolucionario* (Santiago: Ediciones B, 2015); Sergio Salinas, *Memorias de militancia en el movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR)* (Santiago: Ril, 2014); Sergio Salinas, *El tres letras: historia y contexto del Movimiento de izquierda Revolucionaria* (Santiago: Ril, 2013); Andres Pascal Allende, *El MIR chileno: una experiencia revolucionaria* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cucaña, 2003).

[39] Cristian Gazmuri y Alvaro Góngora, "La elección presidencial de 1964. El triunfo de la Revolución en Libertad", *Camino a La Moneda*, 301-331.

In a country with an incomplete modernization, but with a strong political and institutional tradition, where widespread and visible poverty coexisted with a considerable middle class, for the most part frustrated, and segments of the populations that seemed to live in the World War I, in the 1960s a typical situation of pre-crisis was emerging, in a process similar to situations that have preceded revolutionary moments in modern history.[40] The center-left adversaries of the revolutionary left, the Christian Democrats, had assumed, in line with the times, a messianic language. They announced the fulfillment of a 'revolution in liberty', with unlimited promises. Conservatives spoke in an apocalyptic language, which in a way was a reverse reflection of the positions of the center-left and the left. All this in the context of a society with low levels of political violence, though growing during the 1960. Even social Christian sectors that had adhered to an anti-Marxist position, enthusiastic with social reform, assumed a language inclined toward Marxism, some of them in its most radical version. All of them eventually accepted Castro's Cuba as a model of a desirable goal. This was the contribution of the global sixties to Chilean politics, which the Communists saw with distrust.[41] A period of polarization was dawning in Chile, underscored by an inflation of political languages in their references to the possibility that an institutional system could open the way toward socioeconomic modernization, alongside a trajectory of modest economic growth that did not satisfy even minimally the most widespread aspirations of Chilean society.[42]

V. Socialism at Hand: Triumph and Tragedy

The Communists were the main force behind the idea of a Popular Unity, the alliance of the left. They also promoted the idea that those were times of a historic "shift in the correlation of forces between capitalism and socialism". As a result, the gates for a revolutionary change through electoral means would open.[43] The Socialists accepted this ideas and strategy with some reluctance, partly because Fidel Castro did not want

---

[40]   Ahumada, *En vez de la miseria*.

[41]   Patrick Barr-Melej, *Psychedelic Chile. Youth, and Politics on the road to Socialism and Dictatorship* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017) points to the critical reaction of the Communist Party.

[42]   Rolf Lüders, "El proceso económico", *América Latina en la historia contemporánea. Chile. La búsqueda de la democracia*, tomo V, ed. by Joaquín Fermandois (Madrid: MAPFRE, Taurus, 2015); Markos Mamalakis and Clark Winton Reynold, *Essays on the Chilean Economy* (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, 1965).

[43]   Luis Corvalán, "Unidad Popular para conquistar el poder. Informe al XIV Congreso Nacional del Partido Comunista (23 de noviembre de 1970)", *La Izquierda Chilena 1969-1973: documentos para el estudio de su línea estratégica*, tomo I, ed. by Víctor Farías (Santiago: Centro de Estudios Públicos, 2000), 148.

to become an obstacle in the way of his friend Salvador Allende. The choice of Allende as the presidential candidate of the coalition in 1970 pleased the Communists much more than the Socialists, but managed to gain strength during the campaign. Allende triumphed over his rival of 1958, Jorge Alessandri, by a margin of thirty-nine thousand votes, equivalent to just 1.4% of the total vote. But that victory in the popular election eventually sufficed to give Allende the presidency.[44] A desperate attempt to provoke a coup by some political and military actors that ended with the murder of the chief of the Army, which caused great commotion in the country, failed to block Allende's road to the presidency and put down the enthusiasm and fervor felt by a large part of the country, and the sense of surprise and dread that took over the rest.

Thus, an extraordinary period in the history of Chile was set in motion, characterized by a global interest in Chilean politics, especially in Europe and the Americas. The Allende government became a sort of international star. Sectors of the democratic left and even some liberals across the world saw with enthusiasm the possibility of pacific transition to socialism, one with a 'human face', seeing parallels between the Chilean experience and the Prague Spring, whose crushing the PCCh had supported with discipline. The Allende government also elicited the sympathy and political support of almost all Marxist or radical revolutionary regimes of the Third World, and certainly those of the Soviet bloc.[45] It was a kind of modern utopia; anything from the other ideological pole that were to follow it would be, inevitably, an anti-utopia. Through all this process, the Communist Party was considered the moderating force and the Socialist Party the radicalized one. The dichotomy was real, but has been exaggerated by the literature. Both parties differed in their tactics and means, but not in their goals.

The Communist Party, always condemning some excesses of the 'ultra-left', and trying to attract other political forces, kept immutable its goal of a socialist society, modelled after one of the standing Marxist systems, insisting that the Allende government opened a somewhat long period of transition; sometimes they said it would not be so long.[46] The PCCh's secretary general, Luis Corvalán, maintained that a dictatorship of the proletariat was democratic, and that all political systems, including Chilean democ-

---

[44] Alejandro San Francisco, "La elección presidencial de 1970. Sesenta días que conmovieron a Chile (y al mundo)", *Camino a la Moneda*, 333-370; Sebastián Hurtado-Torres, "The Chilean Moment in the Global Cold War: International Reactions to Salvador Allende's Victory in the Presidential Election of 1970", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 21, 3 (2019): 1-30.

[45] Tanya Harmer, *El gobierno de Allende y la Guerra Fría interamericana* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2013); Joaquín Fermandois, *Chile y el mundo, 1970-1973: la política exterior del gobierno de la Unidad Popular* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 1985).

[46] Luis Corvalán, "Lo más revolucionario es luchar por el éxito del Gobierno Popular. Informe del Comité Central del Partido Comunista (26 de noviembre de 1970)", *La Izquierda Chilena 1969-1973: documentos para el estudio de su línea estratégica*, tomo II, ed. by Víctor Farías (Santiago: CEP, 2000), 491-502.

racy, were dictatorships; in the Chilean case, it was a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Did this line of thinking reflect a conviction, a double language, hypocrisy, discipline in the use of an ideological language and loyalty to the only means of liberation? The experience of history shows that a democracy that evolves toward a State that overcomes liberal democracy is no longer democratic. The PCCh tried to intercede with the Soviet Union for more resources.[47] Some Popular Unity leader and, apparently, Allende himself saw Moscow's refusal to provide more assistance, even though it had aided the UP government to the full extent of its possibilities, as an abandonment of the Chilean left's project.[48] In actuality, the 'socialist camp' was weaker than it seemed. Until the end of the 1980s, the Soviet bloc rejected any type of 'Eurocommunism'.

VI. Nadir and Survival

After the coup, the PCCh went through an extraordinary phase. From the underground and exile, the party responded with an old theme of the ideological tradition of the twentieth century: the antifascist front. Its military apparatus virtually did not respond to the coup; the mobilization of workers was almost null. In addition, the military had acted supported by societal opposition to mobilization, which was probably majoritarian. The clandestine apparatus of the PCCh elicited the fury of the military, which were in any case trained in counterinsurgency methods, modelled after what they imagined to be Marxist insurgency techniques.

As in no other instance in Chilean history, the ordeal of the dictatorship revealed the sense of community of communism. About a thousand members of the party were either executed or disappeared; most of the latter were tortured to death. The party, however, managed to survive through a constant succession of members of the Central Committee, even as they kept falling under the net of the dictatorship's secret police. The existence of a clandestine apparatus, understandable after the banning of the party in 1948 and which responded to directives from the Komintern issued as early as 1919, was an element of latent instability for democracy. In any case, the ability of the party to survive and the self-abnegation of the majority of its members was outstanding. Even the exiles complied with the orders of the party and came back to Chile, on many occasions just to be caught by the DINA, Pinochet's secret police. The dynamic lasted

---

[47]   The Soviet support of the PCCh is studied by Olga Uliánova and Eugenia Fediakova, "Algunos aspectos de la ayuda financiera del Partido Comunista de la URSS al comunismo chileno durante la Guerra Fría", *Estudios Públicos,* 72 (1998): 113-148.

[48]   Corvalán, *De lo vivido y lo peleado*, 108.

until the end of 1976, when the DINA caught and made disappear the entire Central Committee.[49] Pinochet dissolved the DINA in mid-1977 and, for a while, violent repression let up and Chile stabilized into a 'normal authoritarianism'.

Throughout the years of the dictatorship, the higher echelons of the party stuck to a strict orthodoxy, whose main tenets were antifascism – a broad coalition strategically directed by the Communists – anti-imperialism and adhesion to the Soviet bloc as model of socialist society. Chilean Communists reconciled fully with Castro's Cuba and, in the first years, marched alongside the Socialists, even though the latter did not see favorably the prospect of an alliance with centrist sectors that had supported the overthrow of Allende. Within Communist ranks there was no public dissent. Instead, a number of Communists began to leave the party by the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, either because of the influence of the political and intellectual atmosphere of Western Europe or because of the disillusion caused by their direct experience of living in countries of the Soviet bloc.[50]

In 1980 Chilean communism made a strategic shift of historic relevance oriented by the idea that the party had to embrace "all forms of struggle", which fundamentally meant armed struggle.[51] As a result of this shift, the party created the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez, FPMR). It is not entirely clear whether the creation of the FPMR responded to a Soviet-Cuban plan or emerged from a segment of the leadership of the PCCh – not everybody within the party agreed with this strategy.[52] In part, the creation of the FPMR resulted from the views of a younger generation of party members, in some cases children of the disappeared, who were angered by repression and imbued with a militaristic spirit of armed rebellion. Some of them had participated in the Sandinista fight against Somoza. A relatively powerful urban guerrilla movement grew in Chile. It received some support from some sector of Chilean society and became strong in a few poorer urban neighborhoods. All this against the backdrop of an acute economic crisis that provoked massive protests and

---

[49]   Olga Uliánova, "El exilio comunista chileno 1973-1989", *Estudos Ibero-Americanos*, 39, 2 (2013): 212-236.

[50]   Mariana Perry, *La dimensión internacional del pensamiento político chileno. Aprendizaje y transferencia en el exilio* (Leiden: Tesis doctoral de la Universidad de Leiden, 2016); Eugenio Ortega Frei, *Historia de una alianza política: el partido Socialista y el partido Demócrata Cristiano* (Santiago: tesis para optar al grado de licenciatura en Historia Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1992).

[51]   Riquelme, *Rojo atardecer*, 109-145; Luis Rojas Núñez, *De la rebelión popular a la sublevación imaginada: antecedentes de la historia política y militar del Partido Comunista de Chile y del FPMR 1973-1990* (Santiago: LOM, 2011); Ricardo Palma Salamanca, *Una larga cola de acero: historia del FPMR, 1984-1988* (Santiago: LOM, 2001); Cristóbal Peña, *Los fusileros: crónica secreta de una guerrilla en Chile* (Santiago: Debate, 2016).

[52]   Cristián Pérez, *Vidas revolucionarias* (Santiago: Universitaria/CEP, 2013).

offered a favorable stage for the new Communist strategy.[53] The most spectacular feat of the FPMR was an attempt on the life of Augusto Pinochet in September 1986 that nearly killed him.[54]

The failed attempt on Pinochet's life, however, would be a kind of swansong for the armed struggle strategy of the PCCh. Some sectors of the left, converted to European-style social democracy and enthusiastic about the gradual end of the military regimes that ruled Latin American countries during the 1980s, rejected decidedly the strategy of armed struggle.[55] It was not just tactics, but a convinced defense of the Western democratic model. Most of Chilean society also rejected the insurrectional path, which in the end served to galvanize Pinochet's followers.

Above all, in the second half of the 1980s some cracks in Chilean communism became publicly visible due to some of the same factors that had influenced the political shift of the Socialists: the influence of Western critiques of Marxism, disillusionment with real socialism, and the new realities brought about by Perestroika and the other Gorbachev's reforms. At first, Chilean Communists supported Gorbachev's reforms in a reflection of their automatic loyalty to Moscow; they changed track when these reforms in fact disavowed the Leninist model. The PCCh could not accept this and kept its ideological core principles unaltered. However, by the end of the 1980s and until 1990, the year of the end of the Pinochet dictatorship, a great number of members, especially from the intelligentsia, left the party, for at that point not only did they reject the armed struggle strategy but they also adhered to the traditional democratic paradigm.[56] The PCCh had rejected the strategy of the center-left since 1985. It initially refused to participate in the plebiscite that eventually ended Pinochet's rule – the Communists joined the call to vote only a few days before the referendum – and to join the alliance that carried Patricio Aylwin to the presidency in the foundational act of Chile's new – they also called to vote for Aylwin a few days before the election. Their own candidates in the congressional election suffered a hard rejection from the electorate.

---

[53]   Ascanio Cavallo, Manuel Salazar Salvo, and Oscar Sepúlveda Pacheco, *La historia oculta del régimen militar* (Santiago: Grijalbo, 1997), 332-340; Carlos Huneeus, *El régimen de Pinochet* (Santiago: Taurus, 2016), 459-504.

[54]   Cavallo, Salazar, and Sepúlveda, *La historia oculta del régimen militar*, 428-436; Rafael Otano Garde, *Nueva crónica de la transición* (Santiago: LOM, 2006), 29-40.

[55]   A "popular rebellion at the polls" became an objetive of the PCCh by the end of the 1980s, thus abandoning the armed struggle strategy to overthrow Pinochet; Riquelme, *Rojo atardecer*, 165-198.

[56]   Alfredo Riquelme Segovia and Marcelo Casals Araya, "El Partido Comunista de Chile y la transición interminable", *El Partido Comunista de Chile. Una historia presente*, ed. by Augusto Varas, Alfredo Riquelme Segovia, and Marcelo Casals Araya (Santiago: Catalonia, 2010), 366.

Unlike what happened in Europe, the end of the Cold War did not result in the end of the Chilean Communist Party. It survived first oriented toward the Cuban paradigm and, since 2000, supporting neopopulist movements in Latin America. Some Communists have also made expressions of support for the North Korea's regime and, as a spontaneous echo of a tradition stripped of its ideological connotations, have sympathized with Putin's anti-American attitudes. The survival of Chilean communism after the fall of the Berlin Wall – considering how important the paradigm of East Germany was for the Chilean left – demonstrated that it was not a mere conditioned reflex of the waves sent out by the Russian Revolution, but that it was inscribed in a possibility of Chilean politics, whose actors assumed, at least formally, the language of modernity. However, the PCCh lost its power of mobilization and recruitment and, in general, its electoral strength has been roughly a third of what it was before the 1973 coup, but it still has a disproportionate weight in Chilean politics and culture. As a protagonist of a battle for memory, based on the sacrifice of tis members under Pinochet's dictatorship, the PCCh still possesses considerable, but limited strength.

"CONTINUITY, ADAPTATION, AND CHALLENGE": THE CHINESE COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY AND POLICY ON MINZU (1922-2013)

Guo Wu

(Allegheny College, Meadville, PA)

I. Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist Discourses on the National Question

The Chinese word *minzu* (民族) can mean nation, nationality, and minority group, and in this sense the entire Chinese people, or all the PRC (People's Republic of China, proclaimed in 1949) citizens residing within the territory of the country belong to the Chinese nation, or the *zhonghua minzu* collectively, regardless of ethnic backgrounds. The majority of the *zhonghua minzu*, the ethnic Han people are called *Han minzu.* The Chinese definition of *minzu* in the early 1950s departs from classical Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist discourses on this issue, and it is of immense importance for us to trace the original meaning of nation and its adaptations in revolutionary practices in the Soviet Union and China.

Marxism is primarily an ideology of revolution based on the assumption about unequivocal irrevocable class struggle and towards a classless communist society, and nation was at the core of Marxist theory. For Marxism, "The nation was explained as a historically evolved phenomenon that comes into existence only with the demise of feudalism and the rise of capitalism".[1] Marxism insists that nation as a historical phenomenon occurred only after the new, capitalist economic relations were entrenched, and

---

[1]   Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 7.

nationalism, as part of superstructure, was nothing but a device for the bourgeoisie to assert its class interests. The ambiguity and insufficiency of the Marxist view of nation lies also in its perception of the nation being an economic unit, a congregate of all people living within a State, or sometimes, an ethnic-national group based on shared linguistic and cultural traits. It sees nationalism as both progressive and reactionary, depending on concrete historical stages and situations. Yet in the final analysis, Communism is above nationalism as an ecumenical vision of human future.

While classical Marxism prioritized class consciousness and class struggle over nation and nationalism, Lenin in his revolutionary practice of building a Soviet State coopted national forces and advocated national self-determination as the main weapons of his struggle. Self-determination was instrumental for Russian revolutionaries in 1903, because it was a means to build an alliance among the forces that were willing and able to bring down the Tsarist empire.[2] World War I became a catalyst in Lenin's mind while he developed growing interest in nationalism. As an important strategy to weaken colonialism, Lenin unequivocally called for national self-determination and insisted that nations had a right to political secession. The Chinese nationalist Party, or Guomindang (GMD), dropped the term *minzu zijue,* or national determination as early as 1931. In contrast, the Soviet constitution of 1936 "recognizes the right of self-determination of all peoples in the Soviet Union, including the right of secession".[3] Although the Chinese Communist Party later denied the Chinese nationalities' right to pursue secession as a means to understand "national self-determination", it inherited the Leninist advocacy of "guaranteeing the members of each nation to use their own language and to an education in that language".[4] This practice of cultural rights but not separation was called by Chinese Communists *zizhi*, or 'autonomy', not *zijue*, or 'self-determination', which has the connotation of pursuing independence.

As Anthony Smith suggests, a quintessential Western concept of nation is "predominantly territorial", and nations are compact impermeable [territorial] units whose citizens share a homogeneous culture in states of their own,[5] that is, economic cohesion, and a common psychological make-up, and "a nation constitutes the combination of all these characteristics taken together". For Stalin, a nation should be a stable community

[2] Hélènè Carrere d'Emcausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State, 1917-1930*, translated by Nancy Festinger (New York: Homles and Meier, 1992), 34.

[3] Paul R. Brass, "Language and National Identity in the Soviet Union and India", *Thinking Theoretically About Soviet Nationalities*, ed. by Alexander J. Motyl (New York: Colombia University Press, 1992), 99-128, see 113.

[4] Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory*, 7.

[5] Anthony Smith, "Ethnic Identity and Territorial Nationalism in Comparative Perspective", *Thinking Theoretically About Soviet Nationalities*, 45-65, see 46.

of people with common language, common territory, common economic life, that is economic cohesion, and a common psychological make-up, and "a nation constitutes the combination of all these characteristics taken together". Stalin also distinguished nation from tribe, which was merely an ethnographical category, and he also denied the nationhood of the people living under ancient empires because these human groups were not stable and cohesive. As with classical Marxism, Stalin defines nation as a historical phenomenon "belonging to a definitive epoch […] of rising capitalism".[6]

II. Construction of the Chinese Communist Ideology of Nationality

The Chinese Communist view of the national question was shaped by three forces. The first was the deeply-ingrained Confucian cult of Great Unity (*da yi tong*), the traditional perception of China being the center of civilization, and the Chinese (Han) culture being inclusive and paternalist to the neighboring inferior cultures. As the eminent twentieth century Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan (1895-1990) points out, "Confucius advocated political and cultural unifications".[7] This dimension was hidden in the CCP's early years of ideological formation due to the heavy influence of the Comintern and the instrumental needs of its own struggle, yet it became increasingly visible in the late 1940s, when the Communists became more like constructors of a new State rather than the destroyers of the old one. The second influence came from the anxiety about modern China's loss of vigor and a quest for national wealth and power. In this process of searching for a strong Chinese State to confront imperialism and to revive the historical greatness of China, the Communists had a huge common ground with the Nationalists, and both parties inherited the inclusive, ethnic neutral concept of *zhonghua minzu*, proposed by Liang Qichao, and the transcendental value of the term *zhonghua*, which led the Communists to name their State *Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo*, or the People's Republic of China. The eminent anthropologist in the PRC, Fei Xiaotong (1910-2005) defines *zhonghua minzu* as "a whole composed of all nationalities and jointly created by them through exchanges, merging, (re)separation, mutual reliance and mutual promotion".[8] The third dimension of the Chinese Communist national ideology was the outcome of the Soviet influence on its ideology and practices,

---

6   Joseph V. Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (New York: Red Star Publishers, 2015 [first edition, Natsional'nye vopros is Sotsial-Demokratii, 1913]), 7, 9, 14.

7   Feng Youlan, *Zhongguo zhexue shi xinbian* [A New History of Chinese Philosophy] (Beijing: remin chubanshe, 1964), 95.

8   Fei Xiaotong, *Fei Xiaotong minzu yanjiu wenji* [Collection of Essays of Fei Xiaotong on the Nationality Question] (Beijing: minzu chubanshe, 1988), 191.

such as identification and classification of nationalities, implementation of the citizens' nationality identity registration, favorable treatment of minority nationalities, and the training of minority cadres.[9] However, the national policy pronouncements of the CCP under the guidance of the Comintern should not be mistaken to be the CCP's sole and unchangeable dogmas.

Founded in 1921, the CCP, as a branch of the Comintern, began to pay attention to the 'national question' in 1922, which was represented by the issue of Mongolia. Part of the collapsed Qing empire, Outer Mongolia showed tendency of seeking independence from the young Republican China, proclaimed in 1912. The CCP supported, not surprisingly, the Comintern's stance of backing all Chinese nationalities' 'liberation' from the Republic, for the concept of secessionist self-determination also dominated the CCP ideology and policy at the time. In an article to defend the Communist stance on the national question published in 1925, the author denounced the bourgeois nationalism as self-contradictory for it pursued self-emancipation yet denied the liberation of the nations that were subjugated by it. Instead, the article extolled the proletarian nationalism which advocated national self-determination of all nations and more importantly, the liberation of nations that were weaker and subjugated by the stronger nation to which the proletarian revolutionaries themselves belonged. The author named this "egalitarian nationalism", and proclaimed that the Mongols' right of self-determination to decide whether they wanted to stay in China should be respected.[10] The CCP was defeated in 1927 by a coup staged by the Nationalist military leader Chiang Kai-shek, and engaged in its mountain-based armed struggle and the Long March (1934-1935), ending up in a poor arid region of northwestern China. During the westward Long March, the CCP Red Army engaged Tibetans and other non-Han people in the southwest, Miao, Yao, Yi, and Qiang, and the relationship was not always friendly and trustful. The Red Army attempted to engage "upper class representatives" of the non-Han peoples, showed compassion to their lower-class people based on the class theory, and began to advocate an egalitarian anti-"great Han Chauvinism" (*da hanzu zhuyi*) ideology among revolutionaries who were overwhelmingly Han nationals.[11]

Facing the threat of the encroaching Japanese imperial army, the CCP enhanced its ideological and rhetorical thrust of constructing a united and self-defensive *zhonghua*

---

[9]   Ma Rong, "Lijie minzu guanxi de xin silu – shaoshu zuqun de 'quzhengzhihua'" (Depoliticization: A New Approach to Chinese Ethnic Relations), *Beijing daxue xuebao*, 6 (2004): 122-133.

[10]   "Xianweijing xia zhi xingshipai" [The Wakened Lion Faction under Microscope] *Makesi zhuyi zai zhongguo zaoqi chuanbo shiliao changbian, 1917-1927* [Historical Source Materials Concerning the Early Spread of Marxism in China], ed. by Lu Yanqin, vol. 3 (Wuhan: Changjiang chubanshe, 2016), 217.

[11]   Xiaoyuan Liu, *Recast All Under Heaven: Revolution, War, Diplomacy, and Frontier China in the 20th Century* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Group, 2010), 118.

minzu led by itself and emphasized that all nationalities should be incorporated in the common cause of fighting the Japanese. During the CCP's Yan'an years from 1936 to 1945, the Yan'an Institute of Nationalities (*Yan'an minzu xueyuan*) engaged in empirical studies of the conditions of the Hui and Mongol peoples in northwestern China, and it is said to have used "Marxist standpoint, viewpoint, and methodology to analyze and study the problem of minority nationalities", according to Lin Yaohua (1910-2000), a Harvard-trained eminent Chinese anthropologist.[12]

After the end of World War II, the CCP was on full swing as a political party with its own military force of 900,000 troops. Towards the end of the Civil War (1947-49) years, the CCP anticipated its own the building of the new socialist State, and the leadership began to abandon the old slogan of national self-determination, which could imply the split of new China. Here, the traditional Confucian political concept of 'great unity' was implicitly revived, and the instrumental need for territorial integrity and development of resources in the vast non-Han areas also required the CCP to espouse the Leninist slogan of self-determination. Leninist 'united front' tactic lent both the GMD and the CCP theoretical justification for incorporating non-Han minority groups and especially their elites.[13] Chinese scholars were not hesitant to admit the Chinese changing attitude towards national self-determination based on purely pragmatic political consideration:

> In October 1949, the New China has been established. To achieve the great cause of unification by thwarting imperialists and their followers' conspiracy of splitting China and undermining national solidarity, we should no longer emphasize minority nationalities' right of self-determination. Instead, we should highlight the friendship, cooperation, mutual aid, and unity.[14]

The Chinese Communist desire for acquiring natural resources in the regions inhabited by minority nationalities was stated explicitly by Mao Zedong in 1956: "Underground in the minority areas there are buried many valuable deposits which are needed for our socialist construction".[15] Against this background, the PRC discourse on nationality emphasized 'intermingling' (*ronghe*). One 1958 work document of Guilin Municipal People's Committee shows how the discourse had trickled down to the grass-

---

[12]   Lin Yaohua, "New China's Ethnology: Research and Prospects", *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, 21, 1 (1988): 34-55, see 35.

[13]   James Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism: How the Qing Frontier and Its Indigenes Became Chinese* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 82.

[14]   Lang Weiwei, *Deng Xiaoping yu xinan shaoshu minzu* [Deng Xiaoping and Southwestern Minority Nationalities] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2004), 37.

[15]   Mao Zedong, "On the Ten Relationships", *Government and Politics in Revolutionary China Selected Documents, 1949-1979*, ed. by Harold Hinton (Washington: Scholarly Resources INC, 1982), 37.

roots level of the State apparatus: "A *minzu*'s development and formation itself is a blending process of the people under certain conditions. Without this process, modern *minzu*s could not be formed and developed".[16] In the definition of the Communist Chinese *Dictionary of New Nouns*, the entry "Right of National Self-determination" (*minzu zijue quan*) was conceptualized as a basic right of the oppressed nations and the peoples of colonies and semi-colonies to strive for. It is also a "Marxist principle of solving the national question", which emphasizes that "national self-determination cannot be achieved in capitalist society".[17] This definition was positive on "national self-determination", but the use of the concept was limited to the international anti-(Western) imperialist/colonialist struggle, not in domestic nationality politics of China.

If the PRC government envisioned a cohesive nation called *zhonghua minzu* under the unified governance of the Socialist State, then recognizing and naming multiple non-Han peoples as official nationalities seemed to be superfluous and potentially splitting. The Nationalist regime, which shared the Communist vision of a *zhonghua minzu*, rejected further recognition beyond the four officially recognized large non-Han groups. The Nationalists maintained that southern non-Han groups were historically branches of the Han, and they pursued a policy of assimilation in the southern non-Han areas. In some regions, speaking non-Han native languages was forbidden by the GMD.[18] The CCP, however, pursued a policy of recognition and used the rhetoric of equality to justify its different policy. For the CCP, failure to recognize the existing distinctiveness of non-Han peoples was not respectful to their own culture, and would lead them to hide identity and feel inferior about their difference. In the CCP's design, the first National Congress, to be convened in 1954, was intended as a show of national solidarity, manifest in the participation of Han as well as multiple non-Han groups. The CCP in fact adopted the expression "multiple nationalities in China" (*zhonghua zhu minzu*) to differentiate themselves from the Nationalists who used "the Chinese nation" as a singular. The terminology "multiple nationalities in China" in plural as appeared in the dictionaries of neologisms published in the early PRC years seemed to emphasize New China's nature as a cultural congregate. Inconceivably, the singular *zhonghua minzu* did not appear in any early PRC dictionaries that I examined.

---

16 Guilin shi renmin weiyuanhui, "Guanyu minzu gongzuo jihua zongjie, huibao, jianbao, diaochao cailiao" [Summaries, Bulletins, Investigation Reports Concerning Nationality Work], file number 68, catalogue number 1, Guilin Municipal Archives.

17 Chunming chubanshe, *Xin mingci cidian* [Dictionary of New Nouns] (Shanghai: Chunming chubanshe, 1955), 7028.

18 Mette Halsknov Hansen, *Lessons of Being Chinese: Minority Education and Ethnic Identity in Southwest China* (Seattle: University of Seattle Press, 1999), 49.

III. How the Chinese Communists Departed from the Soviet Model in Nationality Question

It is more pertinent to rethink the PRC's nationality policy in a Third World historical context. And the practice in China after 1949 should not be considered merely a cloning of the Soviet model, but had global relevance, for it faced the same problem of all multicultural Third World countries which needed to accomplish State-building, nation-building, and rightful placement of its diverse peoples in a unified political framework. For instance, the postcolonial Indian government undertook the same task as China did in the 1950s of recognizing the minority groups within its territorial boundary, classifying them as 'tribes' and 'backward classes', and granting favorable treatments. This process accelerated in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in 2006, there was still ethnological survey conducted in India by State ethnologists, and there have always been yearnings from marginalized groups to be officially recognized by the government as a 'tribe', so that the minority group could expect the benefits of affirmative action and local autonomy. The anthropologists in India also had tensions with the bureaucracy about the academic criteria vs political consideration when deciding whether one minority group should be qualified to become a 'tribe'.[19]

The PRC was influenced by the Soviet ideology and policy but did not always follow the Soviet path. In the early 1950s, the Chinese Communist leaders and the anthropologists who were trained in the West and adopted a "Marxist" standpoint, such as Fei Xiaotong and Lin Yaohua, collaborated to modify the Soviet theory of resolving the national question. By using the terms *zhonghua* and *zhonghua minzu*, the CCP inherited the Chinese quest for building a multi-nationality and inclusive Chinese nation as a cultural entity and the foundation of the modern Chinese State, as discussed above. It also revived the Confucian value of 'family/household' (*jia*) and imagined *zhonghua minzu* as a big family and all nationalities as brothers (*xiongdi minzu*) that could prosper in an egalitarian and common cultural climate. The familial metaphor, which was not unique to China, enacted by the CCP and its internalization rendered *zhonghua minzu* less coercive in the eyes of non-Han peoples. It is also notable that if the imagery of the 'Mother Russia' denotes a home for the Russians, yet *zhonghua* was imagined as a home

---

[19] Townsend Middleton, *The Demands of Recognition: State Anthropology and Ethnopolitics in Darjeeling* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015). For the rise of Hindu nationalism and the tension among the ethnic groups in India, see Richard G. Fox, "Hindu Nationalism in the Making, or Rise of the Hindian", *Nationalist Ideologies and the Production of National Cultures*, ed. by Richard G. Fox (Washington: American Association of Anthropology, 1989), 63-80. For power-sharing and pluralism as a common experience in modernizing multi-ethnic societies from Yugoslavia to Czeshoslovakia, see Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), 58-60.

to not just for the Han but for all peoples living in China.[20] The Chinese metaphor of *jia* also helped internalize the value of an inseparable family bond in which members depend on each other, unwilling to assert full independence. In traditional Chinese values, the breaking-up of a big family was never desirable, and the harmony among family members was given high priority.

When tackling the issue of southwest minority nationalities in 1950, Deng Xiaoping, the supreme CCP in the southwest region, admitted that

> The People's Republic of China is a multi-national country and only by ending this national estrangement and enlisting the concerted efforts of the various nationalities can we form a truly great, happy family of the Chinese nation.[21]

In the Soviet Union, *narod* was used to refer to the integrated 'Soviet people', which was different from ethnic (Russian) nation *(natsiia)*.[22] If the *zhonghua minzu* was the Chinese equivalent to the Soviet political construction of *narod*, then the former was more entrenched, for, as we discussed above, the *zhonghua minzu* concept was invented not by the Chinese Communists but by late Qing nationalist intellectuals and appropriated by the PRC. During the process of implementing the nationality policy in the 1950s, the CCP also appealed to human emotion when cautioned its Han cadres against being "callous to the pain that minority nationalities suffered in the past".[23]

The PRC definition of the term equivocal *minzu* eschewed the Soviet connotation of its 'nationality' *(natsional'nost')* which legitimized a nation's search for its State, as we discussed above, although *minzu* was a "generic term with a complex and relatively recent history in China that has been translated into English as 'nation', 'nationality', 'ethnicity', or 'people'".[24] For the purpose of our analysis here, only 'nation' and 'nation-

---

[20] For other culture's familial metaphors, see Walker Conner, "Beyond Reason: The Nature of the Ethnonational Bond", *Ethnicity*, ed. by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 69-75, see 74.

[21] Deng Xiaoping, "Guanyu xinan shaoshu minzu wenti" [On the Question of Southwest Minority Nationalities], available at http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64186/66655/4492596.html, last accessed on 2 May 2019. Official English translation is available at http://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-10/13/content_13918125.html.

[22] M. Crawford Young, "National and Colonial Questions and Marxism", *History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR*, ed. by Alexander J. Motyl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 67-98, see 87.

[23] Zhonggong zhongyang tongzhanbu [CCP Department of United Front], "Guanyu guoqu jinian dang zai shaoshu minzu zhong jinxing gongzuo de zhuyao jingyan zongjie" [Summery of the Key Experiences in the Past Several Years Concerning the Party's Work Among Minority Nationalities], available at http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64186/66659/4492943.html, last accessed on 2 May 2019.

[24] Dru Gladney, *Ethnic Identity in China: The Making of a Minority Nationality in China* (Fort Worth: Hartcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 14.

ality' are pertinent. The PRC discourse also rejected the possibility of building China into a Soviet-style federation. According to the reminiscence of Fei Xiaotong, a State leader told him in 1949 that "it is Chairman Mao's decision that we will not follow the suit of the Soviet Union to implement a federal system".[25]

Thus, the Chinese *minzu* acquired two layers of meaning: the *zhonghua minzu* is collective regardless of ethnic origins, meaning all Chinese citizens living within the boundary of the PRC territory, and it can also extend as a pan-cultural group to cover overseas Chinese who share the language and culture. Pamela K. Crossley aptly points out that the Russian language and the Soviet discourse presents a far more sophisticated set of words to precisely describe 'people', 'nation', and 'nationality', while the Chinese language "make do with *minzu*" in almost all these instances.[26] It is notable that modern (physical) anthropology arose in Russia as a full-fledged academic discipline as early as the last two decades of the nineteenth century to examine the different 'tribes' in Tsarist Russia, Jews in particular, and the sophisticated social knowledge of Stalin can be better understood in this context.[27]

The second layer of *minzu* was at a micro level, meaning each individual internal component of the *zhonghua minzu*. The larger *zhonghua minzu* was the political entity that is qualified to pursue independence from the imperialist dominance, and this nation-State now assumes the form of the PRC. Yet, the *minzu*s at the micro level are all denied, unlike in the Soviet Union, the right to separate from the PRC, for this *minzu,* nationality, is in fact a 'subnation' rather than a full-fledged nation by itself. For instance, the Chinese nation, or *zhonghua minzu* is sanctioned to pursue its statehood and global prominence, but that is not for the Tibetan nationality, or *zang minzu*, for the latter is a subnational 'nationality'. Here I borrowed the word 'subnation' from a study of Western European nationalism, and argue that nation/subnation can be used as an effective analytical framework to approach the Chinese national question.[28] By adopting the unified term and definition of *minzu*, the minority groups that had longer history of distinct culture, religion, or State apparatus and those who were small, loosely organized, or newly renamed and promoted such as the Hezhe and the Zhuang, were treat-

---

[25]   Fei Xiaotong, *Fei Xiaotong minzu yanjiu wenji*, 259.

[26]   Pamela Kyle Crossley, "Thinking about Ethnicity in Early Modern China", *Late Imperial China*, 11, 1 (1990): 1-35, see 12.

[27]   For the rise and research topics of Russian anthropology, see Eugene M. Avrutin, "Racial Categories and the Politics of (Jewish) Difference in Late Imperial Russia", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 8, 1 (2007): 13-40.

[28]   See William Petersen, "On the Subnations of Western Europe", *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience,* ed. by Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 117-208, see 181-182.

ed in the same way, and the place that a potential (minority) nation inhabit were not regarded as historical 'territory' in political sense, but only places where a certain *minzu* have relatively concentrated inhabitance (*juju*).[29] In 1996, Fei Xiaotong reaffirmed that the concept "*minzu jujuqu*" (an area where a certain nationality has concentrated its dwelling) as a Chinese creation helped China to deemphasize the political implication of (minorities') territory and thus enhanced China's internal integration and national unity.[30] When the Chinese authors discussed 'national self-determination', the first layer, namely, the Chinese nation/*zhonghua minzu* was considered eligible and justifiable to pursue self-determination as opposed to imperialist domination, but the second-layer nationality would be discouraged to pursue national self-determination after 1949. The *zhonghua minzu* was thus constructed as a pre-eminent "terminal community".[31]

The PRC government thus redefined '*minzu*/nationality'. It admits that the Chinese use of the word *minzu* in the 1950s was indeed loose and broad, and Chinese nationalities have been intermingled with one another for centuries and the forms of residence demonstrate the characteristic of "big ethnic co-residing, small concentration (of one single nationality)" (*da zaju, xiao juju*). The Chinese *minzu*, according to the theory of the PRC government, was not predicated on the rise of capitalism but was a political concept incorporating the communities of people at various stages of social development. In 1953, Mao Zedong pointed out that it was politically inappropriate to distinguish nationality from clan (*buzu*) or tribe (*buluo*) though it was academically acceptable.[32] This principle of avoiding a developmental hierarchy departed from the Soviet (also Indian) practice of using 'tribe' (*narodnost*) to formally describe and politically determine the status of certain 'backward' communities of people.[33] Contemporary Chinese ethnologists continued to confirm that the suffix '*zu*' implies, first and foremost, a "recognized political identity", not merely "a group of people".[34]

---

[29] For the importance of territory in defining a nation-State, see Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, "In Search of a Theory of National Identity", *China's Quest for National Identity,* ed. by Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim (Itacha; London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 1-31, see 27.

[30] Fei Xiaotong, "Jianshu wo de minzu yanjiu he sikao" [A Brief Review of My Nationality Studies and Thinking], *Minzu shehui xue yanjiu tongxun* [Sociology of Ethnicity], 6 (1996): 2-10, see 5.

[31] For the concept of terminal community, see J. Milton Yinger, "Intersecting Strands in the Theorisation of Race and Ethnic Relations", *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, ed. by John Rex and David Mason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 20-41, see 40.

[32] Shi Lianzhu, *Minzu shibie yu minzu yanjiu wenji* [Essays on Nationality Identification and Nationality Studies] (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 2009), 10.

[33] M. Crawford Young, "National and Colonial Questions and Marxism", 86.

[34] Shi Maoming, *Kuaguo Miaozu yanjiu: minzu yu guojia de bianjie* [A Study of Hmong, a Cross-Border Ethnic Group: Boundary between Nation and State] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2004), 315.

The PRC showed resilience when applying Stalin's classic "four commons" to suit the Chinese reality. The policymakers and scholars realized that Stalin based his theory on the study of the nations "after the development of European modern capitalism", while *minzu* in China is defined as a historically formed human community, and in reality none of the Chinese *minzu*s contains all the four features defined by Stalin.[35] Fei Xiaotong subtly suggests the lack of relevance of the Stalinist theory to China when he remarked that the Stalinist theory was a "scientific summary of the Western nation formed in the period when Capitalism was on the rise".[36] He asserts that Chinese nationalities were in the pre-capitalist stage and thus did not possess the four traits of modern nations, or only showed some "sprouts" (*mengya*). Chinese nationalities are fluid and spread very widely, Fei says, and it is very difficult to say that a certain nationality has fixed territory or common economic life among its own members. Fei seems to be most vocal about the importance of "common psychological make-up" in the Stalinist scheme, and for him, this means a subjective feeling among the group members about their sameness. However, in *Marxism and the National Question*, Stalin added an alternative way to explicate "common psychological make-up", which he also called "national character". This "psychological make-up manifest in a common culture" for Stalin was an objective existence, but for Fei, the determinant became more like subjective feeling. The context of Fei's discussion about the adaptation of the Stalinist criteria to China was the PRC's State project of identifying and classifying Chinese minority nationalities, beginning in 1954, and the Stalinist theory served as theoretical guidance of the identifying work, but in practice, the Chinese government and anthropologists "turned to historical and linguistic methods" to determine the status of a nationality.[37] Lin Yaohua relied on the overlapped language, identical cultural practice, social organization, and economic life to make proposal about identifying the Zhuang nationality living in southern Yunnan Province, rather than its most concentrated western Guangxi.[38]

The PRC discourse on *minzu* emphasizes each nationality's equal historical process of identity formation and their gradual mutual blending. One 1958 work document of Guilin Municipal People's Committee shows how the discourse had trickled down to the grassroots level of the State apparatus:

---

[35]   Huang Guangxue, *Shi Lianzhu, Zhongguo de minzu shibie: wushiliu ge minzu de laili* [Nationality Classifucation in China: Origins of the 56 *minzu*s] (Beijing: minzu chubanshe, 2005), 1, 101.

[36]   Fei Xiaotong, *Fei Xiaotong minzu yanjiu wenji*, 171.

[37]   Louisa Schein, *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2000), 83.

[38]   Lin Yaohua, *Zai daxue yu tianye zhijian* [Between University and Field] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011), 206.

> *Minzu* is a historical category. It had its own process of appearance and develop-
> ment, which in turn was a process of the blending of people under certain circum-
> stances. A modern nation cannot be built without this process.[39]

By turning to the historical foundation of a modern Chinese minority *minzu* and the historicity of a *minzu*, the Chinese Communist leaders and anthropologists who accepted the Communist nationality theory unwittingly became closer to a sociological approach to the national question, which emphasizes the importance of 'primordial' ties within a *minzu* based on language, historical memory, and collective cultural ties and sentiments. This pre-capitalist, historical cultural community, or what Anthony Smith called "ethnie", became the *de facto* criterion of the PRC State to 'identify' and classify a *minzu*, and it served as the foundation for writing 'brief history', which ubiquitously trace minority nationalities' historical origin and ancient names, for each officially iden-tified and recognized minority nationalities in China.[40]

IV. The Communist Party vs. the Nationalist Party

The Nationalist Party, which ruled mainland China from 1928 to 1949, recognized the Republic of China, proclaimed in 1912, as a country of five ethnically distinct na-tionalities, but its nationalist theory had two distinct features different from the CCP's. First, Sun Yat-sen in general advocated the notion "State-nation" (*guozu*) and in China the nation and the State had been one.[41] By putting the State ahead of nation, Sun showed his inclination of prioritizing a strong State which was supposed to somewhat suppress rather than assert the rights of internal minorities. Second, the Nationalist government's scheme did not recognize the non-Han peoples as 'nationalities' the way the Communists did. In the Chinese version of Chiang Kai-shek's book *China's Destiny*, published in 1943 in Chinese and in 1947 in English, all minorities including the officially recognized Mongols and Tibetans were called "*buzu*" and in the official English translation, "*buzu*" was rendered as "clan". Chiang Kai-shek emphasized that the Chinese nation is "of one stock", which had undergone centuries of blending of

---

[39]   Guilin shi renmin weiyuanhui, "Guanyu minzu gongzuo jihua zongjie, huibao, jianbao, diaochao cailiao" [Summaries, Bulletins, Investigation Reports Concerning Nationality Work], file number 68, catalogue number 1, Guilin Municipal Archives.

[40]   For different approaches to modern nation and nationalism and the concept "ethnie", see Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

[41]   Peter Zarrow, *Educating China: Knowledge, Society, and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902-1937* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2015), 125.

"clans", and the still existing different cultures were only due to "the differences in their geographical environment".[42] Based on the assimilationist assumption, both Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek refused to recognize southern minority groups such as the Miao, the Bai, and the Zhuang.[43] Regarding southern minorities as just branches of the Han descent group or vague "border population", the local governments pursued a policy of radical assimilation of them, which often aroused the minorities' resentment.[44]

There is no doubt that the Nationalist government's exercise of political authority in the non-Han frontier regions was not only driven by the ideology of a unified Chinese nation, but also by pragmatic concerns about national security, because its political decisions were largely spurred by the crisis of foreign and civil wars.[45] The Communist government, as we mentioned above, also sees the control of the borderlands as a strategic imperative. However, the two parties differed in their treatment of the non-Han peoples. Disavowing the Nationalist government's untenable assimilation and non-recognition theory after 1949, the PRC government embraced a "modern notion of dignity", for "non-recognition or recognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being".[46] And its forceful promotion of the discourse of *zhonghua minzu* as a large family with internal differentiation and diversity presented a less stern and impersonal image of future China in terms of nationality relations.[47] By studying, classifying, and naming southern minorities, the PRC policy allowed local ethnic elites to assert their cultural distinctiveness and to call for political recognition and identity. The CCP's rejection of the use of terms such as 'clan' or 'tribe' helped promote the self-esteem of non-Han minority groups with less population, for the loose yet practically generic and egalitarian *minzu* elevated the political standing of small ethnic groups to an equal footing with large groups.

---

[42]   Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny and Chinese Economic Theory* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1947), 29-30.

[43]   Colin MacKerras, *China's Minority Cultures: Identities and Integration Since 1912* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 9.

[44]   June Tuefel Dreyer, *Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 40. Katherine Palmer Kaup, *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China* (Boulder; London: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2000), 61.

[45]   For the motivation of the Nationalist government in extending its authority into the non-Han regions, see Hsiao-ting Lin, *Modern China's Ethnic Frontiers: A Journey to the West* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011).

[46]   Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", *Multiculturalism, Examining the Politics of Recognition,* ed. by Charles Taylor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25-73, see 25.

[47]   For the comparison and contrast of the CCP and GMD's nationalist ideologies, also see Thomas S. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 28-29.

In addition to the rhetoric of unity and equality, the PRC government also faced the task of implementing the population census, which had never been thoroughly done in pre-Communist Chinese history. Classification of minority nationalities, which started in China in 1950, was not unique to China but was also required in the census of the United States, and in the US there was such artificial construction of racial categories as the vague "Asian/Pacific Islander", created for census.[48] The population management function of a modern State based on accurate statistics required the PRC government to publish the exact number of the Han and non-Han peoples inside China. The first Chinese nation-wide census in 1953 shows that the overall population was 601,938,035, and minority nationalities had a population of 35,320,360, making up 6.06% of the Chinese population.[49] The census report also listed 10 minority nationalities with over 1 million people including Mongols, Tibetans, Uighur, Miao, and Tong (renamed Zhuang later). The need for population statistics and registration was a major factor that should not be neglected.

V. Broad Nationalism vs. Narrow Nationalism

Internally, modern China as a nation and with its various nationalities shows a tension between the unity of the country and individual groups' assertiveness. The conceptualization of the two layers of the Chinese nation and nationalism began with Liang Qichao, who proposed the terms "broad nationalism" (*da minzu zhuyi*) and "narrow nationalism" (*xiao minzu zhuyi*). For Liang, the former means China as a nation-State, and the latter means ethnic nationalism within China and among various groups, and there was apparent value judgment because Liang Qichao supported the ideal of a corporate national identity.[50] This schematization was also inherited by the Chinese communists who since the early 1950s kept cautioning against "great Han chauvinism" (*da Hanzu zhuyi*) and "local nationality chauvinism" (*difang minzu zhuyi*), but the connotation was modified: the word "*da*", big, or great, changed from a positive attitude that embraced national solidarity, as Liang Qichao defined, to self-aggrandizement that the CCP repudiated.

---

[48]   Sharon M. Lee, "Racial Classifications in the US Census: 1800-1990", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16, 1 (1993): 75-93.

[49]   See Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia tongjiju [State Statistics Bureau, the People's Republic of China], "Diyici quanguo renkou pucha gongbao" [Bulletin of the First National Population Census](November 1,1954), available at http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/200204/t20020404_30316.html, last accessed on 2 May 2019.

[50]   John Fitzgerald, "The Nationless State: The Search for a Nation in Modern Chinese Nationalism", *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. by Johnathan Unger (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 68.

The PRC attitude against any nationality's self-aggrandizement was first reflected in the compilation of dictionaries. A pocket *Dictionary for People's Study* (*renmin xuexi cidian*) published in 1953 defined "*da minzu zhuyi*" as

> An erroneous nationalist thought in a State of multiple nationalities. It is a tendency of narrow nationalist thought that departs from the interests of the broad masses of the people, namely, an ideology aiming at enslaving and annihilating alien nationalities.

The critique was then applied to 'great Han chauvinism' which was defined as an ideology that "advocates the superiority and nobleness of the Han nationality, lacking the spirit of equality when treating other nationalities and advocating the Han nationality's dominance of all China". The entry added that "The Chiang Kai-shek bandit clique are great Han nationalists".[51] Another influential dictionary, *Dictionary of New Nouns*, in that same year defined "*da minzu zhuyi*" as a "megalomaniac of bourgeoisie nationalism, assuming one's own nation is a big and outstanding nation and one's nation should enjoy political, economic, and cultural privileges. It disrespects the rights of other nations, supports national oppression, and opposes national equality". This entry emphasizes the word's imperialist tone: "It is a thought that serves the policy of imperialist invasion".[52] The *Dictionary of New Nouns* sees "narrow nationalism" as synonym of another word that did not exist in the *Dictionary for People's Study*, "*difang minzu zhuyi*", or "local nationality chauvinism". For the compilers, *difang minzu zhuyi* was a sentiment of hostility against other nationalities, spread by the "public enemy" within a certain minority nationality of China, who opposed the fraternity, mutual aid, and cooperation among China's various nationalities and created enmity between one's nationality and other nationalities. In the political practice of the PRC, advocates of revitalizing a certain ethnic minority culture could be accused of committing the mistake of "local nationality chauvinism", which runs the risk of becoming secessionist "split-ism" (*fenlie zhuyi*).[53]

The repudiation of "local nationality chauvinism" accelerated in 1957 during the Anti-Rightist Movement, when the CCP Center issued a directive concerning carrying out rectification and "Socialist Education" among minority nationalities. The directive said:

---

[51] Chen Beiou, *Renmin xuexi cidian* [Dictionary of People's Study] (Shanghai: Guangxi shuju, 1953), 31, 33.

[52] Chunming chubanshe, *Xin mingci cidian* [Dictionary of New Nouns] (Shanghai: Chunming chubanshe, 1955), 2023.

[53] Janet L. Upton, "Home on the Grasslands? Tradition, Modernity, and the Negotiation of Identity by Tibetan Intellectuals in the PRC", *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan*, ed. by Melissa J. Brown (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 118.

> Nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*) is the reflection of Bourgeois thought on the nationality question. Local nationality chauvinism (*difang minzu zhuyi*) spread because of the struggle and rebellion of the Bourgeois and other exploitative classes against the background of the continuous victory of socialist revolution

and "Local nationality chauvinists are part of Bourgeois rightists, who wear the cloak of nationality". It further defined *difang minzu zhuyi* as manifest in the following aspects: conservativeness and xenophobia in terms of inter-nationality relations; passive or even opposing attitude towards the solidarity and mutual aid among the nationalities; unlimited demand for enlarging autonomous areas and excessive promoting of the status of autonomous regions. The directive determined that the struggle between socialism and "nationalism" (*minzu zhuyi*) was an important part of the struggle between socialism and capitalism.[54] Here, the radicalized CCP political discourse after 1957 built an equivalence between *difang minzu zhuyi* and capitalism, the confrontational enemy ideology of socialism.

A lexicological close examination of the words reveals that although the CCP used *difang minzuzhuyi* and *minzuzhuyi* interchangeably as synonyms, the English translation can be difficult, because the standard English rendition of *minzu zhuyi* is 'nationalism' whose political connotation in the Western context is different from *minzuzhuyi/ difang minzuzhuyi* in Chinese political vocabulary. *Minzuzhuyi/ difang minzuzhuyi* in China was more a xenophobic sentiment or self-assertiveness rather than an ideology or movement leading to the building of nation-State. If we apply the above-mentioned two-layer *minzu* scheme and the concept of sub-nation here, then *minzu zhuyi* in this scenario, as an often derogatory term in contemporary Chinese lexicology, did not indicate the legitimate 'nationalism (patriotism)' of the holistic Chinese nation or the support of the Chinese State, but the assertive or self-aggrandizing sentiments of a certain minority nationality, which is placed at a lower, subnational level.

VI. Rethinking "Minzu" and "Ethnic Group"

While discussing the Chinese nationality ideology and policies by understanding its rationale and logic, I try to avoid the use of the terms 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group', because they have their own context and connotation that are distinct from the Chinese political background and theoretical assumption in the first half of the twentieth century. As late as 1969, the term 'ethnic group' appeared in *A Modern*

---

[54] Zhongyang dang'anguan, *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji* (1949.10-1966.5) [Selected Documents of the CCP Center] vol. 26 (Beijing: renmin chubanshe, 2013), 269-270.

Dictionary of Sociology, in which an ethnic group was defined as a 'culture subgroup' of a larger society. And both terms, as largely neologisms in the 1970s, had the connotation of being marginal, exotic, or troublesome. More importantly, in the context of Western ethnic politics, the terms ethnicity and ethnic groups are often associated with 'interest', 'interest group', and 'conflict'.[55] In scholarship, ethnicity is approached as a highly contested modern discourse that provides a window into the "politics of cultural struggle for peoples on the 'margins'".[56] In the PRC, *minzu,* extensively used as a historicized political category with added values such as equality, unity, harmony, and friendship, did not have the conflict-based meaning contained in Western theory of ethnicity. In addition, an ethnic group in the West might not necessarily be a cultural-linguistic-territorial community but can also be a religious denomination or a pan-cultural group.[57] This is also different from how *minzu* was defined in China even after the modification of the classic Stalinist criteria. *Minzu* in the Chinese socialist discourse also means symbolic political representation of the identified and classified group in the People's Congress, and the identification and classification in the 1950s were to fulfil the political promise of allowing proportional representation of non-Han peoples in the first National Peoples' Congress.[58]

The traditional Chinese rendition of nation, nationality or minority nationality are all *minzu*, and in recent years, a neologism that exactly renders 'ethnic group' entered the Chinese lexicology: *zuqun*, which does not have *minzu*'s connotation of political identity but merely implies a cultural subgroup. It is in this context that in recent years, the Chinese government, wary of the rising separatist tendencies in China, began to use 'ethnic group' to replace 'nationality' in translating the names of concerned research journals or institute of higher education, in order not to instigate the association of the latter with State-making and separatism among non-Han elites.[59] The sociologist Ma Rong of Peking University became a strong advocate of using the de-politicized term 'ethnic group' and its less fixed classification to replace 'nationality' to

---

[55]   Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, "Introduction", *Ethnicity and Experience*, ed. by Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1-26, see 4-5.

[56]   Ralph Litzinger, *Other Chinas: The Yao and the Politics of the National Belonging* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2000), 239.

[57]   William Petersen, "On the Subnations of Western Europe", 181. J. Milton Yinger, "Intersecting Strands in the Theorisation of Race and Ethnic Relations", *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations,* ed. by John Rex and David Mason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 23.

[58]   Thomas Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 21.

[59]   Mark Elliott, "The Case of the Missing Indigene: Debate Over a 'Second-generation' Ethnic Policy", *The China Journal*, 73 (2015): 186-213.

describe the internal demographic composition and cultural diversity of China, while retaining the *zhonghua minzu* as the only self-appellation of an integrated Chinese nation, which is also a political entity.[60] Ethnologist of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Shi Maoming, however, suggests that it is more appropriate, mainly politically, to continue to call Chinese State-sanctioned human groups 'nationality', while he admits that 'ethnic group' is broader and more inclusive.[61] While agreeing with what Professor Ma Rong explained in my interview with him that "no nomenclature is perfect", I would caution that the legal adoption of 'ethnic group' as an alternative conceptual framework, might cause new problems in China, because some subcultural groups which are traditionally considered Han, such as the Cantonese, the Hakka, and the Fujianese might seek their cultural and linguistic assertiveness and distinct identity, which would exacerbate the regionalist, or 'local nationalist' tendency in the body politic of contemporary China.

VII. Conclusion

Following the contour of the CCP's construction of the nationalist discourse, it is arguable that the CCP leaders, with the later collaboration of Western-trained Chinese anthropologists, developed their own nationalist theory after several decades of adoption, appropriation, and modification of a plethora of often conflicting ideologies. The Chinese Communist revolutionaries were influenced by the deeply ingrained Confucian ideal of great unity and cultural assimilation, modern Chinese nationalism calling for a diverse yet united and integrative China to confront Western imperialism and Japan, and the Leninist advocacy for national self-determination. The actual political and war experiences during the Long March and anti-Japanese War drove the CCP to modify its earlier radical policy of instigating internal national self-determination, which was used also as a strategy to weaken the Nationalist regime and embraced greater Chinese unity. While facing the mission of building a strong and unified China after 1949, the CCP abandoned the slogan of national self-determination and enhanced the propaganda of a blended, family-like, and reciprocal *zhonghua minzu* as the ultimate national community for Chinese citizens under the socialist State, while denying the subnations, *minzu*s

[60]   Ma Rong, *Zuqun, minzu, yu guojia goujian* [Ethnic Group, Nation, and State-building] (Beijing: shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2012), 4, 46.

[61]   Shi Maoming, *Kuaguo Miaozu yanjiu: minzu yu guojia de bianjie* [A Study of Hmong, a Cross-Border Ethnic Group: Boundary between Nation and State] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2004), 2-3. Shi directly uses the English term "ethnic group" and the international self-appellation of Miao people outside China, "Hmong", to indicate the diaspora of overseas Miao people.

the right of pursuing their own independence. This ideological evolution to certain extent mirrored Sun Yat-sen's shift from an anti-Manchu revolutionary to a national leader who attempted to build an inclusive State with territorial and national integrity. In the two-layer scheme that I have conceptualized, the great nation has the ultimate legitimacy while the local and ethnic nations, 'nationalities' in the PRC's parlance, were subjugated by the great nation. By doing so, both the Nationalists and the Communists reclaimed political authority over the populations living on the territory of the Qing empire that crumbled in 1911.

In its endeavour of achieving national integration, however, the PRC rejected the Nationalist government's attempt to impose assimilation, and instead insisted on differentiating *minzu*s and recognizing their internally distinct identity, which promoted the social status as well as raised the political awareness of these groups. The PRC government also changed all derogatory and colonial names of the non-Han regions. For instance, the capital of Inner Mongolia was renamed Hohhot, a Mongolian name meaning "Green City", which replaced the old Chinese name "*Guisui*", and implying "return to and be pacified".[62] Through this well-woven, complicated network of words, meanings, ideologies, and policies, the PRC maintained the façade of a "unified multi-nationality country", and importantly, from the very beginning, it snuffed the constitutional legitimacy of any separatist attempt, because from the very beginning, the PRC was not built as a federation that could be joined and withdrawn by a proto-nation-State, as occurred in the Soviet Union. To use traditional Chinese words and dialectic cultural concepts, the PRC government walked a fine line between *fen* (to separate or to differentiate) and *he* (blending and unification). It is important to keep in mind that the PRC device of minority nationalities regional autonomy (*minzu quyu zizhi*) "maybe viewed as in many ways having being influenced by the past rule of the native chieftains" in imperial times.[63]

The PRC's nationality ideology and policy are not without ambiguities, contradictions, and excessive State intervention. First, while promoting equality among all nationalities by rejecting a hierarchy of clan, tribe, and nationality, the PRC government still saw the majority Han nationality as the 'big brother' whose mission was to 'help' and to normalize the 'backward' 'brother nationalities'. The Communist discourse of 'advancement' (*xianjin*) vs. 'backwardness' (*luohou*) rendered the intra-nationalist relationship between Han and other nationalities more paternalistic than egalitarian and more alienating than integrating. The living conditions and lifestyle of minority nationalities are also often depicted as 'primitive', while the Han who had achieved so-

---

[62]   Li Ziyuan, *Zhongguo gongchandang minzu gongzuo shi*, 250.

[63]   Guo Xiaolin, *State and Ethnicity in China's Southwest* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 12.

cialism were naturally ahead of all non-Han minorities.[64] The development of medical and hygienic work in southwest non-Han areas is often described as assistance of the nationality, namely, the Han, to minority nationalities that lagged behind (*houjin*).[65] Due to this pursuit of equality and protection of minority nationalities' rights, the PRC government perpetuated the official labeling of minority identity, as printed on the PRC Citizen's ID card and fixated the boundary between the Han and the minority nationalities and the regional autonomy system. Overemphasis on the cultural difference of the minority nationalities and the subsequent lack of the cultural cohesiveness and national sense of belonging as members of an integrated *zhonghua minzu* has become a new problem in China.[66] Moreover, the protection and special favour granted by the State has in fact divided China along the *minzu* boundary. Although the Han nationality is one of the officially recognized 56 nationalities of the PRC, the term '*minzu*' is reserved exclusively to refer to non-Han minority nationalities in real life linguistic and social practices. For instance, a university for nationalities (*minzu daxue*) is an institution of higher education established for and open to non-Han students, and the governmental branch "Commission for Nationality Affairs" (*minzu shiwu weiyuanhui*) handled policy and affairs solely related to minority nationalities. Perhaps due to the semantic ambiguity 'nationality', the Central University for Nationalities changed its English name to Minzu University of China in 2013. The official explanation was that the new pinyin word would be more accurate and seem more self-confident.[67] Thus, I will use the year 2013 as the end of the time span of my essay.

Second, the inherent tension between broad nationalism and narrow nationalism made the relationship between the PRC central government and local minority elites uneasy. Minority nationality elites were placed in a difficult position while they asserted

---

[64]   For the discourse of "backwardness" and "primitiveness" of minority nationalities, see Stevan Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 47; Litzinger, *Other Chinas*, 44. Morris Rossabi, "Introduction", *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 3-18, see 8.

[65]   Lang Weiwei, *Deng Xiaoping yu xinan shaoshu minzu*, 136.

[66]   For the negative effect of the perpetual minority identity, see Ma Rong, *Zuqun, minzu, yu guojia goujian*, 23-24, and his "Lijie minzu guanxi de xin silu". For a detailed review of the intellectual debates among contemporary Chinese intellectuals regarding the viability of the CCP's minority nationality policy, see James Leibold, *Ethnic Policy in China: Is Reform Inevitable?* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2013). Another historian and scholar of Tibetology, however, contended that the removal of nationality category from the citizen identification card, as suggested by Ma Rong, would weaken the sense of belonging to their own group among minority nationality people.

[67]   http://edu.sina.com.cn/en/2013-12-31/081778600.shtml, last accessed 2 May 2019.

their nationality's right of self-development, cultural distinctiveness, or local self-interest, largely as a positive response to the CCP's encouragement with the official discourses of equality and autonomy, because they could be easily accused of committing the error of 'local nationality chauvinism' for self-promotion; third, a lexicological study of word *minzu* in social life reveals its ambiguity.

Finally, if the Chinese government accepts ethnicity as an alternative political category and social analytical framework, it may avoid the sensitive association between *minzu* and concepts such as independence, yet it may encounter more fissures even among the Han people following the lines of religious affiliation, dialect, or geography, and the State will run the risk of accepting the assumption about the inherent conflict of interests among the ethnic groups. Consequently, the State will have to redefine its role no longer as the head of a harmonious 'big family', but an arbiter of the interethnic conflicts within the nation. It is likely that China would still be like the Soviet Union: not a "melting pot", but just "the incubator of nations".[68] Unlike what Ma Rong optimistically conceives, 'ethnic group' is not truly depoliticized. Rather, "Nations may be created by the transformation of an ethnic group in a multiethnic state into a self-conscious political entity".[69] So far there has been no sign that the PRC government will replace the existing nationality category, that is, Han plus 55 minority nationalities with more self-claimed ethnic groups. Yet, as reflected in the translation of the Central University for Nationalities, the adoption of the Chinese word *minzu* serves as a new semantic and political strategy to circumvent the problem.

It is plausible that China may reestablish its citizens' common political identity based on equal individual civic rights rather than nationality-based group identity after thoroughly "depoliticizing" ethnic identity, as Ma Rong suggests. However, this will require, as its prerequisite, the establishment of a modern constitutional democracy in China based on the recognition of individual civic rights. After all, the PRC was and, in a sense, still is a third world country, and the practice in the post-industrial United States should not be the only reference point.

---

[68]   Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 87.

[69]   Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 20.

THE POWER OF WORDS:
LABELS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES IN MAO'S CHINA
(1949-1976)

Ji Fengyuan

(Australian National University, Canberra)

When Confucius was asked what he would do if he were a ruler, he said that his first step would be to rectify the names or labels given to things, because "If names are not rectified, the language will not flow smoothly. If language does not flow smoothly, then social acts cannot be carried out".[1] More generally, thinkers in the Confucian tradition believed that the proper regulation of terminology would provide the categories for an agreed and correct perception of reality, which would in turn provide the basis for moral self-cultivation, good government and social harmony. In accordance with this doctrine, successive emperors sought to control language by issuing lists of banned characters and promoting standardised linguistic formulae that encouraged 'correct' thought.[2]

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) inherited this tradition of linguistic engineering and greatly extended it. Inspired by the example of the Soviet Union, the CCP taught the whole population a new political vocabulary, gave old words new meanings, used traditional terms for revolutionary purposes, suppressed words that expressed

---

[1]   Chad Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 66.

[2]   Ori Tavor, "Naming/Power: Linguistic Engineering and the Construction of Discourse in Early China", *Asian Philosophy*, 24, 4 (2014): 313-329; and Fengyuan Ji, "Language Planning and Policy in China: Unity, Diversity and Social Control", *Language Planning in the Post-Communist Era: The Struggles for Language Control in the New Order in Eastern Europe, Eurasia and China*, ed. by Ernest Andrews (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 67-92.

'incorrect' thought, and made the whole population recite slogans, stock phrases and scripts that expressed 'correct' views in 'correct' linguistic form. This language, it was assumed, would transform people's minds, helping to produce large numbers of new, revolutionary human beings; and because everyone had to speak the new language to avoid suspicion, it also operated as a conformity-inducing instrument of social control.[3]

I. Labelling, Class and Revolution

At the heart of this new language was a labelling system for the friends and enemies of the revolution that had brought the CCP to power in 1949, and at the heart of that labelling system lay the language of 'class'. The members of every household were given a collective 'class of origin' or 'family background' (*jiating chushen*), based on the occupation, wealth or political affiliation of the male head of the household between 1946 and 1949. These class designations were described as 'good', 'middle' or 'bad', depending on whether their members seemed more or less likely to support the revolution. The main ones can be classified as in Table 1.[4]

Because the new class system was intended to distinguish the friends of the revolution from its enemies, it sometimes used political criteria, rather than economic ones, to distinguish classes – as when it classified CCP officials, soldiers and party members as good-class, while consigning officials, soldiers and party members associated with the Nationalists to the bad classes. These political criteria trumped economic oånes, so everyone who joined the CCP or the People's Liberation Army before 1949 became a 'good class' revolutionary cadre or revolutionary soldier irrespective of social origin; and everyone linked to the Nationalists became a member of the 'bad classes' on the same basis.[5]

The new class system completely inverted the pre-1949 social order. The lowest stratum consisted of the country's former rulers and socioeconomic elite, while the highest stratum consisted of workers, peasants, and the CCP cadres and soldiers whom the Nationalists had labelled as 'bandits'. All class labels were printed on people's identity cards, and the CCP used them as a guide as it went about turning the social order on

---

[3]   For a detailed treatment, see Fengyuan Ji, *Linguistic Engineering Language and Politics in Mao's China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004). See also Michael Schoenhals, *Doing things with Words in Chinese Politics: Five Studies* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1992).

[4]   Source: adapted from Richard C. Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

[5]   Andrew G. Walder and Songhua Hu, "Revolution, Reform, and Status Inheritance: Urban China, 1949-1996", *American Journal of Sociology*, 114, 5 (2009): 1395-1427, see 1403.

Table 1 – China's New Class System after 1949

'Good' classes (*chengfen hao*)					
Revolutionary cadres (pre-1949 Party members)	Revolutionary soldiers (pre-1949 members of the People's Liberation Army)	Revolutionary martyrs (descendants of those who died for the revolution)	Industrial workers	Poor peasants	Lower-middle peasants
'Middle' classes (*yiban chengfen*)					
Middle peasants	Petty bourgeoisie, peddlers	Professionals, teachers, white collar workers			
'Bad' classes (*chengfen buhao*)					
Landlords	Rich peasants	Nationalist government officials, military officers, and party members.	Bureaucratic comprador capitalists (linked to the Nationalist government and imperialists)	National capitalists (not linked to the Nationalist government and imperialists)	

its head, ruthlessly and systematically crushing the bad classes and elevating the good classes. Moreover, until the class system was abolished, the labels remained hereditary in the male line, blighting or blessing the lives of hundreds of millions of people who had not even been born when the CCP came to power.

The transformation of China's social structure to make it match the new hierarchy of the class labels began with the great revolutionary campaigns of the early 1950s. The first campaign involved land reform, and it began with the process of identifying and labelling the landlords who were to be dispossessed through class struggle. There was a problem here, because in many villages there were few or no people who met the CCP's definition of a landlord, which meant that to fill their quotas the local cadres had to *invent* them. They did this by the simple expedient of pinning the label 'landlord' on the required number of politically vulnerable people – rich peasants, people with links to the Nationalists, troublemakers, or those who had fallen out with local revolution-

aries. Similarly, if there were not enough rich peasants, the cadres just labelled as 'rich peasants' the more politically vulnerable people who matched the official criteria for middle peasants. In this way they found or invented an enemy in every village – a small pariah class against which they could rally the poor and lower-middle peasants who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population. The Party was then able to achieve its objective of using class struggle to teach every inhabitant of every village three revolutionary truths: that the bad classes were oppressors and social pariahs, that the Party was the champion of the poor and lower-middle peasants whom the bad classes had oppressed, and that the Party had the power to mobilise the 'revolutionary masses' to crush everyone who opposed it.[6]

Having identified and labelled the landlords, the CCP did not simply use its cadres and soldiers to dispossess them. Instead, it got the revolutionary masses to do it through carefully orchestrated class struggle. Party cadres started the process by seeking out people with grievances or grudges against the landlords, and then getting them to expose their targets' real and alleged crimes at public 'struggle meetings' in which the whole community participated. Activists forced the landlords to hang their heads as their accusers 'spoke bitterness' against them, while the villagers chanted the slogans of class war and demanded savage punishment. Nobody spoke up for the accused because nobody wanted to be labelled a class enemy. In this way the CCP turned China's peasants into active participants in the class war, implicating them personally in the execution of perhaps a million or more members of landlord families.[7] It also implicated them in the impoverishment, vilification and maltreatment of the members of landlord families who survived, and in the persecution of their descendants. This shattered forever the bonds of kinship and deference that had often existed between landlords and their communities. Moreover, through this reform and the subsequent dispossession of the rich peasants, the CCP completely crushed the prominent families that had run the villages and distributed welfare through the clans. This left its own cadres unchallenged as the new rulers and the sole distributors of welfare.[8]

---

[6]   This account of the labelling process is based on Philip C.C. Huang, "Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution", *Modern China*, 21, 1 (1995): 105-143, see 111-125; Yang Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 97-113; Edward Friedman, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Mark Selden, *Chinese Village, Socialist State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 92-98.

[7]   Ji, *Linguist Engineering*, 69-71, 320 n. 4.

[8]   This account of class struggle during the land reform is based on Huang, "Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution"; Friedman, Pickowicz, and Selden, *Chinese Village, Socialist State*, 92-110; Su, *Collective Killings*

The same pattern of popular mobilisation was repeated, with variations, in the other major campaigns that followed the CCP's victory. The 'bureaucratic comprador capitalists', who had wisely fled, were expropriated as soon as the CCP gained power, but the 'national capitalists' (the 'least bad' of the bad classes) were not dispossessed until the period 1953-1956.[9] The CCP needed their cooperation and skills to ensure economic stability, but it also placed them under 'proletarian leadership' through the Five Antis campaign of 1951-1952. As usual, the Party started by sending teams of cadres into factories and offices where they encouraged the workers to 'speak bitterness' against their employers and managers, accusing them of unfair treatment, corruption and malpractice. The cadres then got revolutionary activists to drag the accused before meetings where they were denounced and humiliated by their subordinates, forced to confess their crimes, and made to beg the revolutionary masses for forgiveness. As a result 500 employers and managers were executed, 34,000 were imprisoned, and a further 2000 were driven to suicide.[10] China's national capitalists had been taught that they were at the mercy of the urban good classes – the cadres and workers who had interrogated them, accused them, and all too often dragged them out and delivered judgment.

The class labels that were central to these campaigns were complemented by more flexible political labels or 'hats' that were imposed for particular offences. These labels were recorded in the official dossiers of those to whom they were applied and they were widely publicised; however, they did not appear on people's identity cards and were not passed on to their children. The most important 'hat' in the early period was 'counterrevolutionary', a term associated with the campaign for the Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries in the early 1950s, which targeted bandits, as well as armed groups, spies, political operatives, and others associated with the Nationalists. This campaign, like all the others, started with attempts to get people to show their revolutionary commitment by informing on their friends, colleagues and enemies; it provided intimidating demonstrations of the Party's power to mobilise millions of people who demanded that the accused be punished; and it led to the often arbitrary labelling and sentencing of several million people, of whom at least 712,000 were executed, often

---

in Rural China, 100-113; Ch'ing-K'un Yang, *A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2nd ed. 1965); and the sources listed in Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 70.

9   Because the national capitalists had no ties to the Nationalist government, they had been admitted to the National Front that swept the CCP to power in 1949. Their cooperation was essential to a smooth economic transition after 1949 and even after they had been dispossessed the CCP used their skills to run their former businesses. During the Cultural Revolution, however, they were persecuted viciously like other members of the bad classes.

10   Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 318; Lowell Dittmer, *China's Continuous Revolution: The Post-Liberation Epoch* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 47.

simply to meet the quotas that Mao had specified.[11] The campaign eradicated all active resistance, but it was followed in 1955 by a further campaign to Uproot Hidden Counterrevolutionaries, which was intended to purge and intimidate a group that Mao mistrusted – those whose possession of at least a full secondary school education qualified them as 'intellectuals'.[12] This campaign led to the formal labelling of another 81,000 people as counterrevolutionaries and the subjection of a further 1,400,000 to criticism and class struggle.[13]

The other main political 'hats' in the 1950s were 'Rightist', a highly damaging label, and 'bad element', a less serious tag attached to common criminals and other miscreants whose actions undermined the building of socialism. For convenience, Rightists, bad elements and counterrevolutionaries were lumped together with landlords and rich peasants as the Five Black Categories (*heiwulei*). They were singled out for class struggle in every political campaign, and were routinely subjected to humiliation and discrimination. More generally, in some rural areas people with bad-class backgrounds were paid less than people with good-class backgrounds; in all areas they were usually passed over for the best jobs; with only rare exceptions they were denied membership of the CCP; their children were often deprived of educational opportunities; and their young men, especially, had limited marriage prospects because their bad-class status would be passed on to their children.[14]

The Five Black Categories were contrasted with those whose family background gave them elevated status as revolutionary cadres, revolutionary soldiers, revolutionary martyrs, workers, and poor and lower-middle peasants. These latter five groups were known collectively as the Five Red Categories or 'five kinds of red' (*hongwulei*). They had all the privileges that the Five Black Categories were denied, and their members had a sense of

---

[11]   Kuisong Yang, "Reconsidering the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries", *The China Quarterly*, 193 (2008): 102-121.

[12]   The use of the term 'intellectuals' in this extended sense was a legacy from imperial times, when graduates of the imperial examination system qualified as intellectuals eligible for employment in the imperial civil service. In China today, the term 'intellectual' is defined much more narrowly because secondary school education is now the norm.

[13]   Fengzheng Yu, *Gaizao: 1949-1957 nian de zhishifenzi* [Reform: Intellectuals in the Years 1949-1957] (Zhengzhou: Henan People's Press, 2001), 417; Ningkun Wu, *A Single Tear* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993), 34-46.

[14]   Jonathan Unger, "The Class System in Rural China: A Case Study", *Class and Social Stratification in Post-Revolution China*, ed. by James L. Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 121-141; Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen, and Jonathan Unger, "Students and Class Warfare: The Social Roots of the Red Guard Conflict in Guangzhou (Canton)", *The China Quarterly*, 83 (1980): 397-446; Martin K. Whyte, *Small Groups and Political Rituals in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 245; Kraus, *Class Conflict*, 133-136.

superiority based on their 'red' class origin. The CCP encouraged them to take pride in their family background, and by the 1960s their children had begun to see themselves as 'revolutionary successors' who would safeguard China's socialist future.

There was potential here for the development of a caste system based on the patri-lineal transmission of 'good' and 'bad' class labels, but for a time the CCP was deter-mined to ensure that this did not happen. Indeed, by late 1956 Party leaders believed that classes as functioning economic or political entities were becoming a thing of the past. All actually existing counterrevolutionaries had been killed, imprisoned or terrified into inactivity; the holdings of the landlords and rich peasants had been redistributed to the poor and lower-middle peasants; collectivisation was proceeding rapidly; and the capitalists had been dispossessed. In other words classes in any real sense had vanished. Party leaders freely acknowledged this. In September 1956, for example, Liu Shaoqi re-ported that the exploiting classes – the bureaucratic comprador capitalists, the national bourgeoisie, the landlords and rich peasants – had been eliminated or were being rapidly transformed; in the same month Deng Xiaoping argued that occupations were changing rapidly, that "the former classification of social status has lost or is losing its meaning", and that most intellectuals had "come over politically to the side of the working class"; and the CCP's 8th National Congress declared that the major contradiction was no longer between workers and capitalists but "between the advanced socialist system and the backward social productive forces".[15] In future, the revolution would be driven for-ward, not by class struggle, but by economic development and comradely criticism and self-criticism. Mao agreed with all this and in February 1957, speaking "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People", he told a Party audience that class struggles in China had "basically come to an end".[16] Class labels and class struggles, the Party's leaders agreed, were now largely irrelevant, and would soon disappear.

II. Entrenching the Labelling System

Class labels and class struggles did not disappear. Instead, the Party soon found good reason to emphasise them, even though the economic relationships and political net-works designated by the language of class no longer existed. This change of sentiment

---

[15]   Kraus, *Class Conflict*, 41.

[16]   Michael Schoenhals, "Original Contradictions – on the Unrevised Text of Mao Zedong's 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People'", *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 16 (1986): 99-112; Stuart R. Schram, "Classes, Old and New in Mao Zedong's Thought", *Class and Social Stratification in Post-Revolution China*, ed. by James L. Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 29-55, see 35-36; Kraus, *Class Conflict*, 39-58.

occurred because the CCP was suddenly confronted with evidence that huge numbers of people resented both the conduct of its cadres and many of its policies. The Party's leaders then reverted to their traditional method of dealing with dissent: blame it on a minority of 'class enemies' or people who disseminated the ideology of class enemies, and then mobilise the 'overwhelming majority' of the population in a class struggle to identify them, label them, and demand that they be punished. And, of course, everyone who was not targeted joined in this class struggle because anyone who did not was sure to be labelled a class enemy.

The event that led to the revival of class struggle was the disastrous final act of the Hundred Flowers campaign. From May 1956, in response to de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union, Mao tried to prove that he was no Stalin by urging intellectuals to help build socialism by engaging in constructive criticism in the spirit of the slogan "Let a hundred flowers bloom, and a hundred schools of thought contend". At first the intellectuals were afraid to speak up, but in May 1957 some finally took him at his word. When they were not at first punished, there followed a torrent of criticism of the Party's cadres, policies and methods, along with demands for intellectual freedom and even democracy. Students mounted protests, workers mobilised and went on strike, there were disturbances in many villages, in some regions there were mass revolts against collective farming, and some people even criticised Mao himself.[17] All of this went far beyond the boundaries of what the Party was prepared to regard as 'constructive criticism' and it had the potential to develop into a challenge to the CCP's supremacy. All Mao could do to save face was to claim, disingenuously, that he had intended all along just to "lure the snakes out their holes", and then to crush the Party's critics with a savage revival of labelling and class struggle.[18]

The new round of class struggle took the form of the Anti-Rightist campaign, which made an example of all those who had criticised the Party or its policies but was aimed mainly at the intellectuals whose 'bourgeois ideology' was blamed for infecting others. Teachers and students had to prove their revolutionary loyalty by identifying critically minded or ideologically suspect friends, colleagues and teachers, who were then subjected to mass criticism and officially labelled as Rightists. Those who suffered most were people with bad-class backgrounds, who were the easiest targets when work units could not find enough genuine Rightists to meet their assigned quotas.[19] The campaign led

---

[17] Andrew G. Walder, *China under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 139-148.

[18] Walder, *China under Mao*, 150-151.

[19] The quotas ranged from one percent to ten percent of each work unit's members. See Perry Link, "Introduction: Writers in the People's Republic", *Roses and Thorns: The Second Blooming of the Hundred Flowers in Chinese Fiction 1979-1980*, ed. by Perry Link (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 12.

to the labelling of over half a million people, most of them members of the country's intellectual elite. Many were sentenced to labour camps where they were worked to exhaustion, forced to study Mao Zedong Thought, and compelled to 'remake' their minds through endless criticism and self-criticism.[20] The CCP had given the country a lesson, demonstrating that it was still prepared to mobilise the 'revolutionary masses' to label and destroy everyone who criticised it.

Mao took another step towards the entrenchment of class labels and political 'hats' in 1959 when the Great Leap Forward, which he had claimed would transform China into a leading industrial nation, instead plunged the country into famine. When the Defence Minister, Peng Dehuai, told Mao privately that the Party had made mistakes, Mao furiously attacked him and his supporters as "Right Opportunists" who had launched a "frantic attack on the Party".[21] He then doubled down on the policies that were causing the famine and launched a campaign against Right Opportunism that led to the labelling and expulsion of many lower level cadres in some provinces.[22]

As the death toll rose towards 30 million or more, Mao stepped into the background, allowing more pragmatic leaders like Liu Xiaoqi and Deng Xiaoping to end the disaster that he had created.[23] They did this by abandoning or moderating key policies of the Great Leap Forward – reducing the scale of collective production, allowing some cultivation on private plots, and taking advice from the experts whom Mao had scorned. They also rehabilitated many Right Opportunists, eased restrictions on intellectual debate, and gave the country a respite from labelling and class struggle. However, Mao believed that the reforms had gone too far, and once the crisis had passed he attacked them openly at meetings with other Party leaders.[24] Liu staged a partial retreat, but for Mao it was not enough. He no longer trusted Liu and by January 1965 he had resolved to crush

---

[20] Hongda H. Wu and Carol Wakeman, *Bitter Winds: A Memoir of My Years in China's Gulag* (New York: Wiley, 1994), 73-175.

[21] Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and Decline of Party Norms, 1990-1965* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2nd ed., 1993), 325.

[22] Teiwes, *Politics and Purges*, 335-342.

[23] While many current estimates put the death toll at around 30 million, some put it much higher, with Frank Dikotter arguing for a figure of 45 million or more. For a range of estimates and a discussion of the evidence, see Frank Dikotter, *Mao's Great Famine: the History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2010); Judith Banister, *China's Changing Population* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine* (London: John Murray, 1996); Jisheng Yang, *Tombstone: the Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2012).

[24] Walder, *China under Mao*, 182-185, 188; and more generally, Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 3: the Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961-1966* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press; Columbia University Press, 1997), 261-296.

him – along with all the CCP leaders, intellectuals, technical experts and cadres who shared his 'revisionist' views.[25] He decided to do this, moreover, not through a simple purge, but through a revolution that would enable him to create a new socio-political order based on obedience to his will.

III. Mao's Cultural Revolution: Labelling and Violence

Mao launched his revolution from above and below. From above, he executed a series of brilliant manouevres in late 1965 and early 1966 through which he placed his personal supporters in control of the country's capital, its military, its propaganda apparatus, the media, and the newly formed Central Cultural Revolution Group. Then in May 1966 he started the revolution from below by getting the Party (which was still uncertain of his ultimate intentions) to mobilise millions of Mao-worshipping students in attacks on the intellectuals, the Black Categories, the cultural apparatus and the education sector. The students soon began to form Red Guard units, and when they were powerful enough Mao turned them against the Party, calling on them to destroy the capitalist roaders who existed at all levels. The revolution finally became irresistible in late 1966 when Mao's lieutenants encouraged workers and administrators in state and collective enterprises to overthrow the bureaucrats and cadres who ruled their lives. At that point many younger cadres sensed the inevitable and joined the revolutionaries, and by early 1967 the Party had imploded. Mao had become the only ruler in history to carry out a revolution against his own party.[26]

The onset of the Cultural Revolution signalled the start of a golden era of labelling, and at first those most active in applying the labels were the student Red Guards, who were drawn exclusively from the red classes. They desperately wanted to serve Mao but many were also anxious to consolidate their own privileges as 'revolutionary successors' to their red-class parents by turning their red-class labels into the markers of a hereditary ruling class. To rationalise this attempt, they adopted a theory of 'natural redness' whose assumptions were expressed in verses that they recited to humiliate their social inferiors:

---

[25]   Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 110-112.

[26]   The account of Mao's revolutionary strategy in this paragraph is based on Walder, *China under Mao*, 180-242; Andrew G. Walder, "Rebellion of the Cadres: The 1967 Implosion of the Chinese Party-State", *The China Journal*, 75 (2016): 102-120; MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 381-465; Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), chapters 1-10; and Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 109-149.

A dragon begets only dragons,
A phoenix begets only phoenixes,
A rat's descendant knows only how to dig holes.
A hero's child is a brave man, a reactionary's child is a bastard.[27]

The erection of a caste system based on class labels, however, was almost the reverse of what Mao wanted. His objective was to punish the majority of the CCP's impeccably red-class leaders and largely red-class cadres, so he grew increasingly frustrated as the main Red Guard units avoided a direct confrontation with the Party, preferring instead to direct their attacks at individual cadres who had made political mistakes or had non-red backgrounds. In October 1966 Mao finally lost patience and his lieutenants denounced the mainstream units for taking a 'reactionary line'. They also condemned the doctrine of natural redness and endorsed minority-faction 'rebel' units that had clashed with their CCP supervisors. These units promptly opened their ranks to non-red students (nearly always from the middle classes) and grew rapidly in size and power. These were the Red Guards who played a significant role in the destruction of the Party.[28]

The divisions within the Red Guard movement were just one aspect of a many-sided conflict in which all the combatants used labels as weapons. Local Party leaders tried to survive by sponsoring armies of sympathetic workers or forming alliances with Red Guards opposed to the rebels, while the motley coalition of different rebel groups soon disintegrated acrimoniously. Amidst the confusion, Mao and the Central Cultural Revolution Group backed whichever local factions seemed most likely to advance their cause, sometimes sending in the Army to tip the balance in their favour.[29] So the country descended into a low-grade civil war in which rival groups in every province engaged in a Hobbesian struggle for power as the key to survival. All sides in the conflict quoted Mao and claimed to be his true supporters, and they all labelled their opponents as class enemies to justify attacking them in pitched battles, beating them, locking them up, and sometimes killing them in cold blood.

Although the existing labels for suspected class enemies were still used during the Cultural Revolution, many new labels made an appearance. The Five Black Categories were revised and extended to become the Nine Black Categories, which now included not only landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements and Rightists,

---

[27]   Zhenhua Zhai, *Red Flower of China* (New York: Soho Press, 1992), 79-82; Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 133-136.

[28]   This account is based on Walder, *China under Mao*, 219-230; and Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 134-139.

[29]   Walder, *China Under Mao*, 231-242.

but also renegades, enemy agents, capitalist roaders, and intellectuals. The labels 'capital-ist roader', 'renegade' and 'enemy agent' were included because were applied to top Party leaders, and in particular to Liu Shaoqi, while intellectuals were added as the 'stinking ninth category' because they were seen as the source of the 'bourgeois ideology' that had corrupted the Party.

Political 'colour' had always been a feature of the CCP's labelling conventions. 'Red' (*hong*) was the colour for everything revolutionary and good, and during the Cultural Revolution its use as a colour-label was all-pervasive. Mao himself was the reddest red sun (*sui hong de hong taiyang*) in the Chinese people's hearts, his revolutionary words were red words (*hongzi*), his revolutionary line was a red line (*hongxian*), and the Red Guards inflicted a red terror (*hongse kongbu*) on class enemies.

By contrast, the colour-label for class enemies was black (*hei*). Taking their cue from the official press, the revolutionaries described their targets as black gangs (*heibang*) whose members belonged to a black party (*dixia heidang*), spoke black words (*heihua*), issued black instructions (*heizhishi*), and published black books (*heishu*). They disguised themselves by waving a red flag (*hongqi*), but owed allegiance to a black flag (*heiqi*).[30]

As Lowell Dittmer has pointed out, the colour red symbolised the World of Light with Mao (the sun) as its source, while the colour black symbolised the World of Darkness. This dichotomy between light and darkness was linked to another crucial polarity, that between appearance and reality.[31] The inhabitants of the World of Darkness were hidden class enemies, who appeared to be human beings when they masqueraded in the World of Light, but in reality were demons and savage beasts. As the Mao-controlled *Liberation Army Daily* put it:

> The enemy in daylight look like men, in darkness devils. To your face, they speak human language, behind your back, the language of devils. They are wolves clad in the skins of sheep, man-eating smiling tigers […].[32]

Such enemies were 'poisonous snakes' that could disguise themselves as beautiful wom-en, 'jackals' and 'wolves' that emerged from their lairs to attack unwary revolutionaries, and 'injurious vermin' that silently sapped their victims' strength. These labels were used to suggest hidden evil and deception, the characteristics that Mao attributed to Party mem-bers who had professed loyalty to his Thought while setting China on the capitalist road.[33]

---

[30] For a more extended account of colour-labels, see Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 189-193.

[31] Dittmer, *China's Continuous Revolution*, 83-90.

[32] *Liberation Army Daily*, 23 August 1966, quoted in Dittmer, *China's Continuous Revolution*, 83.

[33] Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 193-194.

Mao's own speeches and writings were the model for the animal labels, and they also inspired the identification of class enemies with the evil spirits of Chinese tradition. It was Mao, for example, who in 1957 had used the term *niugui sheshen* to describe the intellectuals who were unmasked as Rightists when they spoke out during the Hundred Flowers campaign. This term is usually translated as 'ghosts and monsters' or 'monsters and demons', and it referred to a class of spirits that took on human shape to perform evil deeds and then reverted to their ghostly form. It became the standard label for intellectuals whose demonic natures were exposed during the Cultural Revolution. Other class enemies were labelled as devils (*muogui*), demons (*guiguai*), vampires (*xixie*), and apparitions and spectres (*wangliang guimei*). Again, it was Mao himself who fostered this imagery, partly by organising the publication of a collection of traditional ghost stories in which he suggested that class enemies had a ghostlike ability to assume human form, and that they had to be wiped out.[34]

In labelling their targets not only as class enemies but as hostile animals and evil spirits, Mao and his linguistic engineers deliberately framed them in ways that denied their humanity. This stance had its roots in Mao's longstanding refusal to acknowledge that members of different classes shared a common human nature. "In class society", he had said in 1942, "there is only human nature of a class character; there is no human nature above classes". He dismissed the notion of love of humanity, asserting that "there can only be class love" and that "we cannot love enemies".[35] This doctrine supplied the theoretical rationale for the systematic promotion of labels that dehumanised class enemies throughout Mao's rule. It also underpinned the revival of the ancient art of curse sorcery during the Cultural Revolution, as revolutionaries hurled ferocious curses at opponents whom they had labelled as animals and demons. The old curse "Deep fry the devils!" rang out once more, along with modern variants like "Deep fry the black gangs!" and "Set fire to the black city government!" Revolutionaries chanted "Smash the dog's head!" as they forced victims' heads to the ground; and they warned the "traitor, renegade and scab" Liu Shaoqi that "We will ferret you out, pull out your tendons, strip off your skin and kick your head like a ball".[36]

These images explicitly linked the labels for class enemies to violence, and the linkage was reinforced by the all-pervasive language of war. Mao set the theme early in the

---

[34] Simin Guo, *Wo yanzhong de Mao Zedong* [Mao Zedong through my eyes] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei People's Press, 1990), 189-190.

[35] Zedong Mao, "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art", *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1971), 256, 276-277.

[36] Nianyi Wang, "'Dapipan' yu zuzhou wushu: Wenge xiang yuanshi wenhua 'fanzu' de shizheng yanjiu" ['Mass criticism' in the Cultural Revolution and ancient China's curse sorcery], *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences*, 7, (1996), 122-139.

Cultural Revolution by using the slogan "Bombard the Headquarters!" in his call for a revolutionary assault on capitalist roaders at senior levels of the Party. The Red Guards took their cue, adopting names like 8.28 Fighting Squad, First Brigade of the First Army Division of the Red Guards of Number Four School. Their newspapers were filled with nouns like headquarters, swords, foe, gunfire, mobilisation, encirclement and block-house, and with verbs like strike, hack, batter, fight, defeat, annihilate, exterminate and destroy. Their language was dehumanising and savage:

> The handful of diehard capitalist roaders […] make threatening gestures with their bare fangs and claws, vainly attempting to swallow all the revolutionaries, fully revealing their wolves' natures![37]

> Aiming at the heads of the capitalist roaders, fiercely hack! Aiming at their throats, shoot! We must give them a deadly blow.[38]

In such a conflict, no compromise, no armistice, no humanity was permissible. It was a fight to the death against class enemies with the natures of demons and savage beasts, and if the revolutionaries believed even half of what they said any cruelty was possible.[39]

Because class enemies were sub-human and a mortal threat, the codes of conduct that governed behaviour towards fellow revolutionaries did not apply. The CCP had established precedents for how to deal with them in previous class struggles, beginning with the campaigns against landlords and counterrevolutionaries in the early 1950s that made local communities complicit in the deaths of over two million people. So when the red-class Red Guards degraded, beat and sometimes killed 'bourgeois intellectuals' and members of the Black Categories early in the Cultural Revolution, their actions were based on precedent. When Mao turned the labelling process and revolutionary activism against class enemies *within* the Party in 1966, it was predictable that the rebel Red Guards and revolutionary workers would humiliate, abuse and imprison them. And when rival revolutionary factions labelled each other as class enemies, they felt justified in attacking, beating and sometimes killing those whom they labelled.

The bloodiest phase of the labelling process, however, occurred from 1968 as China was brought under the rule of Revolutionary Committees consisting of the Army, locally dominant revolutionary factions, and rehabilitated cadres. With Mao's

---

[37]   *Shoudu hongqi chiweijun xuanyan,* 21 January 1967, quoted in Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 203-204.

[38]   *Zhi nong hongqi*, 7 January 1968, quoted in Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 201.

[39]   For a discussion of the relationship between language and violence, see Fengyuan Ji, "Language and Violence during the Chinese Cultural Revolution", *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, 11, 2 (2004): 93-117.

support the Revolutionary Committees labelled rival revolutionary groups as class enemies, and then the Army and armed workers crushed them. The targets were sometimes executed in cold blood after they had surrendered, and in some rural areas the slaughter was extended to the Black Categories as local cadres established their revolutionary credentials by wiping out the class enemy. This was followed by the murderous Cleansing of the Class Ranks campaign in 1968-1969, which cleared the way for a new political order by targeting the Black Categories and people who had made political mistakes. Overall, according to a recent estimate based on a conservative methodology, between 1.1 and 1.6 million people were killed between 1966 and 1971, three-quarters of them as a result of repression by the Revolutionary Committees and the Army after April 1968.[40] In all these cases the victims were people who, through the labelling process, had been denied recognition of their human nature and then reimagined as class enemies with the natures of savage beasts and malevolent demons.[41]

IV. Labelling in the Later Mao Era

With the restoration of centralised control, Mao set about reconstructing China so as to ensure that he would never again feel challenged by rebels or by political, technical or intellectual elites. The Red Guards, who had quoted Mao while acting as a law unto themselves, were demobilised and exiled to scattered rural locations. Between 60 and 80 percent of the cadres had been purged,[42] and they were now sent to "May 7 Cadre Schools" where they were subjected to a reform process that involved hard labour, criticism and self-criticism. They were released and reinstated only if they were judged to have reformed, and they knew that if they made further political mistakes they would be

---

[40]   Andrew G. Walder, "Rebellion and Repression in China, 1966-1971", *Social Science History*, 38, 34 (2014): 513-539.

[41]   The account of mass killings in this paragraph is based on Walder, "Rebellion and Repression"; Yang Su, "Mass Killings in the Cultural Revolution: A Study of Three Provinces", *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, ed. by Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew G. Walder (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 96-123; Su, *Collective Killings*; Xiaoxia Gong, "Perpetual Victims: Persecution of the Bad Classes during the Cultural Revolution", *China Information*, 11, 2/3 (1996): 35-53; and Jonathan Unger, "Cultural Revolution Conflict in the Villages", *The China Quarterly*, 153 (1998): 82-106. The pattern of mass killings in Mao's China is consistent with recent research on mass killings elsewhere, which emphasises how powerful actors label the victims, frame them as a deadly threat, and organise the killing. For a recent summary, see Benjamin A. Valentino, "Why We Kill: The Political Science of Political Violence against Civilians", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17 (2014): 89-103.

[42]   Dittmer, *China's Continuous Revolution*, 96.

sent back. They understood that under Mao's new, revolutionary order "All who disobey get sent to May 7 Cadre Schools for labour".[43]

Mao complemented the reconstruction of the Party with three further reforms designed to disempower every group that could accumulate enough intellectual or technical knowledge to challenge his judgment. Firstly, workers Mao Zedong Thought propaganda teams were placed in charge of all universities, schools, and literary or cultural institutions. Uneducated workers then supervised meetings, lessons and performances to ensure that every word was politically correct. Secondly, to prevent the re-emergence of intellectual and cultural elites in the next generation, Mao broke the nexus between academic excellence and career paths. School leavers were assigned to jobs without considering their academic records; almost all high school graduates were sent to labour in the countryside; and the universities were shut down for six years and after reopening enrolled only small numbers of students, all of them chosen for their red-class background and political excellence without considering their academic ability. Thirdly, medical doctors, who as 'bourgeois intellectuals' had often been imprisoned by the Red Guards, were subjected to labour and thought reform alongside the cadres in May 7 Cadre Schools. On their release, they were still mistrusted, and in Maoist ideology, although not in practice, they ranked far below the untrained but celebrated 'barefoot doctors'.[44]

These reforms established that conformity to Maoist norms was the only path to success and ensured that even the most able students from bad-class backgrounds remained workers or peasants. They were a devastating assault on the meritocratic elements in Chinese society, and they transformed the country into a "virtuocracy" in which Mao Zedong Thought served as the overriding criterion of virtue and truth. People now had to succeed by inheriting or acquiring political labels that displayed political virtue, by engaging enthusiastically in revolutionary activities, and by saying all the correct revolutionary things.[45] In the functioning of this virtuocracy, class labels and political hats were used to mark the polar opposites of good and evil, to distribute rewards and punishments, and to impose patterns of privilege and disadvantage.

The creation of a virtuocracy reflected Mao's vision of a society ruled by his Thought and responsive to his will. It was not, however, enough to make him feel secure. By 1970 he believed that he had become too dependent on the radicals of his inner circle, led by his wife Jiang Qing, and on the Defence Minister Lin Biao. He addressed this problem

---

[43]   The words are those of Mao's lieutenant Wang Hongwen, quoted in Jiaqi Yan and Gao Gao, *Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 227.

[44]   For more on the above reforms, which were known collectively as the "Newborn Things of the Cultural Revolution", see Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 223-227.

[45]   Susan L. Shirk, "The Decline of Virtuocracy in China", *Class and Social Stratification in Post-Revolution China*, ed. by James L. Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 56-83.

by distancing himself from Lin (who died as he fled the country) and by playing off the radicals against moderates led by Zhou Enlai. Those who fell from favour were labelled and targeted by political campaigns. Lin Biao, for example, was declared a 'traitor' and subjected to a sustained posthumous attack, and the moderate Deng Xiaoping (a rehabilitated 'capitalist roader') was sacked again and condemned at mass rallies as 'the unrepentant capitalist roader'.

V. Labelling: its Power, its Failures, and its Abolition

The use of labels in inner-Party power struggles in the 1970s was symptomatic of their use throughout the CCP's history. In every case positive labels were used to enhance the status of allies, while negative ones were used to stigmatise enemies, both real and invented. The labels always served power. The CCP used them as tags to identify friends and target enemies after its victory in 1949; it used them to create a new class structure that stood the old one on its head; it used them as it displayed its ability to instigate mass mobilisation to crush real or imagined enemies through savage class struggle; and it used them to destroy the 'Rightists' who spoke out during the Hundred Flowers campaign in 1957. When Mao felt that his dominance was threatened in the wake of the Great Leap Forward, he manipulated the labels to organise a revolution against his own Party; he gave his revolutionary shock troops the labels that they used to attack Party in his name; and when his shock troops used those same labels to fight each other instead, he labelled many of them as counterrevolutionaries and suppressed them. Finally, Mao used the main class and political labels as an organising principle in establishing a 'virtuocratic' socio-political order that made his Word the ultimate criterion of revolutionary virtue and truth. In all these cases, the labels were the weapons and tools of the powerful, and of Mao above all others. Their application structured and restructured the socio-political realities of Chinese society, determining the fate of hundreds of millions of people.

As heirs to the Chinese and Marxist traditions of linguistic engineering, Mao and other CCP leaders well understood the power of words. They also became increasingly aware that words had their limitations. A lot of the damage was self-inflicted because after 1966 Mao and his wordsmiths applied the labels in flagrantly contradictory ways. During the Cultural Revolution nearly all of the CCP's leaders, who had hitherto been praised as models of revolutionary commitment, were suddenly unmasked as 'capitalist roaders', 'traitors' and 'man-eating smiling tigers'; less than two years later many of the Red Guards who had destroyed those leaders in Mao's name were labelled as 'counter-revolutionaries' and brutally suppressed; and in 1971 Lin Biao – Mao's 'best student', his 'most loyal follower' and his designated successor – was unmasked as a 'traitor' who

had plotted an armed uprising. One young peasant spoke for many: "We came to see that the leaders up there could say today that something is round; tomorrow, that it's flat. We lost faith in the system".[46]

Even when words were no longer believed, they retained their coercive function. To avoid suspicion and collective criticism, people still had to mouth the correct slogans, recite the correct political scripts and apply the correct labels, and every time they did this they modelled correct beliefs and attitudes. It was their voices, not their thoughts, that kept the 'virtuocratic' order in place. This coercive function of an obligatory discourse explains why labelling and other aspects of linguistic engineering were so effective in sustaining Mao's rule, even as their effectiveness as a form of persuasion declined. It also helps to explain why, after Mao died in September 1976, there was no immediate change. One of the first acts of his successor, Hua Guofeng, was to secure his position by arresting Mao's wife Jiang Qing and her radical supporters and labelling them, in true Maoist fashion, as 'the Gang of Four Anti-Party clique', as revisionists, and as representatives of the bourgeoisie who wanted to 'restore capitalism'.[47]

By 1978, however, reformers led by Deng Xiaoping had gained the upper hand. Most of them had been labelled as capitalist roaders during the Cultural Revolution, and they had long since rejected Mao's use of the labelling system to underpin the 'class struggles' that he used to intimidate potential critics and eliminate both real and invented opponents. The reformers' vision of society was meritocratic, not 'virtuocratic', and like the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people they wanted to end political disruptions and focus on economic growth. In short order, they denounced the Cultural Revolution as a 'complete mistake'; they rehabilitated cadres who had been labelled, persecuted and dismissed; they launched an investigation into the labelling, sentencing and persecution of many other innocent people; they quickly removed the designations of 'landlord', 'rich peasant', 'counterrevolutionary', and 'bad element' from all but a few; and then in 1984 they abolished those labels altogether.[48] This marked the end of an era in which labels were used to single out minorities who could be targeted by the majority in orchestrated class struggles that showed the fate of anyone who failed to conform to the Maoist model of a true revolutionary.

The abolition of bad-class labels caused some grumbling among dedicated Maoists and some older members of the red classes, but former bad-class households were quick-

---

[46] Quoted by Anita Chan, Richard Madsen and Jonathan Unger, *Chen Village: The Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 231.

[47] Ji, *Linguistic Engineering*, 307.

[48] Hong-Yung Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 163-192.

ly reintegrated into their communities. Even in marriage decisions their children soon suffered little or no disadvantage.[49] At the same time, Mao's word ceased to be holy writ, his virtuocracy was dismantled, the meritocratic elites that he had suppressed re-emerged with a vengeance, and his totalitarian goal of remaking people's minds through class struggle, linguistic engineering and obligatory revolutionary role-modelling was abandoned.[50]

Despite these changes, the power of words expressed in the application and inheritance of class and political labels has left its mark. China is still ruled by the descendants of the revolutionary cadres who used the labelling system as a tool to invert the social order and establish themselves as the new elite after 1949; and, while the children and grand-children of the bad classes now frequently join the Party, they are still under-represented in elite administrative and policy-making positions.[51] The descendants of former landlords, rich peasants, capitalists and counterrevolutionaries, however, are no longer socially disadvantaged, impoverished, and consigned to the bottom rung of society by the power of words. On the contrary, their relentless pursuit of education under the meritocratic systems of post-1978 China has enabled them to re-emerge in other spheres, especially the professions.[52] The labelling system that for some thirty years condemned their families to penury and persecution is becoming a distant memory.

---

[49] Unger, "Class system", 138-141.

[50] Fengyuan Ji, "Language, State, and Society in Post-Mao China: Continuity and Change", *Legacies of Totalitarian Language in the Discourse Cultures of the Post-Totalitarian Era*, ed. by Ernest Andrews (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 183-208.

[51] Walder and Hu, "Revolution, Reform, and Status Inheritance", 1420-1421.

[52] Walder and Hu, "Revolution, Reform, and Status Inheritance", 1420.

IDEOLOGY AND DISCOURSE: RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF MAO ZEDONG'S 'NEW COMMUNIST PERSON' (1949-1976)

Xing Lu

(DePaul University, USA)

I. Introduction

Ideology is commonly understood as a political doctrine and is closely related to mass consciousness or the collective state of mind. In his essay, "Power of the Powerless", Vaclav Havel defines ideology as "a specious way of relating to the world. It offers human beings the illusion of an identity, of dignity, and of morality while making it easier for them to part with them".[1] Further, Michal McGee states that "ideology in practice is a political language, presented in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior".[2] Ideologically imbued language is often in the form of what he calls "ideographs" or rather, slogans, that are often propagated in cultural contexts and socialized among the members of a society. Discourse is socially constructed and then socially conditioned. It is "produced, circulated, distributed and consumed in society".[3] Discourse is often embedded in hegemonic structures. When he-

---

[1]   Vaclav Havel, *Living in Truth: Twenty-two Essays Published on the Occasion of the Award of the Erasmus Prize to Vaclav Havel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 42.

[2]   Michael McGee, "The ideograph: A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology", *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 66 (1980): 1-16, see 5.

[3]   Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen, "Critical Discourse Analysis", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29 (2000): 447-466, see 448.

gemony is exercised to achieve the consent of the masses, alternative voices are prevented or silenced in public and private discourse.[4]

In a number of his works, Michel Foucault showed his concern with how humans are confined by a system of thought and how such thought system is disseminated through discourse formation in a society's history and power structures. Foucault laid out three criteria for discourse formation: (1) the individualized discursive formation in defining rules; (2) generation of new rules from history on topics, concepts, and operations, and (3) connection of discourse between one area with other related areas in society and institutions.[5] When each type of discourse permeates into society and people's mind, it provokes change or transformation.[6] Such discourse can involve into a new cultural code and create a new system of speaking. However, at the same time a system of discourse, when controlled, distributed, propagated in society and among its people, not only creates new systems of speech, but also constrains other forms of expression, in particular, opposing discourse. Political discourse has served such rhetorical functions. It enables a new way of speaking while silencing dissent voices.

In the case of China, after eight years fighting against Japanese from 1937 to 1945, a three-year civil war followed between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party (also known as Kuomintang). The Nationalist Party, headed by Chiang Kai-shek, was defeated and retreated to Taiwan. In 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP thereafter). The new China, also known as 'Red China' in the West was facing formidable tasks of recovering from the war, economic development, establishing diplomatic relationships with foreign countries. Most importantly, Mao had to prove to the Chinese people that his Party was capable of leading the Chinese people out of poverty in order to change the image of the Chinese people as 'East Asian Sick Man' in the negative perception of Westerners. His ambition was to transform China from a Confucian society to a socialist nation-state guided by the communist ideology through a new way of thinking and speaking in the new era.

Mao held a negative view of ordinary Chinese people in his early years of writing. In his letter to his friend, Li Jinxi, dated 23 August 1917, Mao wrote, "I feel that my countrymen have accumulated many undesirable customs, their mentality is too anti-

---

[4] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971).

[5] Michel Foucault, "History, discourse and discontinuity", *Readings in contemporary rhetoric*, ed. by Karen A. Foss, Sonja K. Foss, and Robert Trapp (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 2002), 283-301, see 285.

[6] Foucault, "History, discourse and discontinuity", 286.

quated, and their morality is extremely bad".[7] Mao blamed Chinese history for shaping a morally weak, narrow-minded, and behaviorally uncivilized Chinese person. Mao believed these problems required "enormous force" to be removed and resolved and that fundamental change must occur within the individual mentalities. Changes included development of sage-like qualities of morality, wisdom, and intelligence. Mao used the concept of "ultimate principles" to name the qualities necessary for embodying a correct moral state.[8] These ultimate principles composed of correct ideological orientations and ethical conduct. In his belief, moral education with the correct ideological orientation would transform the mindset and behavior of the Chinese people from the undesirable ways. The transformation process had to start from the individual's desire to be a good person. A good person automatically would be motivated and would choose to do the right thing. No external pressure such as laws or regulations was needed for a good person to perform good acts.[9] In other words, the individual's will and determination decided the outcome of his or her action.

By the time he became the supreme leader of China in 1949, Mao has built a legacy of communist sage himself through his inspiring speeches, visionary writing, and shrewd military strategies to defeat his enemies. Moreover, Mao undertook the mission to convert the Chinese people by changing the fabric of their thoughts and actions. The ideological doctrine he passionately propagated to the Chinese people was the Marxist mantra of class struggle with the goal to shape the Chinese people into new communist persons. Qian Liqun writes that "Mao's logic is that the masses (workers and peasants) granted him and his Party the mission of finding the Way (communism, socialism) to achieve peace and prosperity for China".[10] Driven by this logic, Mao projected his moral standard onto the Chinese people, using constant thought reform and moral teaching in a life-long pursuit of transforming traditional Chinese culture into a new communist society. While Mao appropriated classical Marxism and adapted it to the Chinese situation in establishing a proletarian dictatorship, he was paradoxically opposing Marxist concern that ideology of the dominant group or the ruling class can control the state's information systems and determine the consciousness of large masses of people. Moreover, such an ideology served to suppress alternative ideologies and diverse ways of speaking.

---

[7]   Stuart Schram, *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings 1912-1949*, vol. I (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), 132.

[8]   Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, 132.

[9]   Schram, *Mao's Road to Power*, 205.

[10]   Liqun Qian [钱理群], *Mao Zedong shidai he hou Mao Zedong shidai 1949-2009* [毛泽东 时代 和 后毛泽东时代] [Mao Zedong Era and post-Mao Zedong Era, 1949-2009] (Taiwan: Lianjing chuban shiye youxian gongsi, 2012), 175.

Remoulding the Chinese people, especially intellectuals, was singlehandedly the most important facet of Mao's ideological endeavor. This remoulding was accomplished through a series of thought reforms. Mao launched several rectification movements or thought reforms to restructure the minds of party members and intellectuals. Following Lenin, Mao believed in the idea of continuous, unmitigated reform because "the influence of the bourgeoisie and of the intellectuals who come from the old society, the very influence which constitutes their [bourgeoisie] class ideology, will persist in our country for a long time".[11] Thus, a Chinese person was expected to repeatedly fight against any capitalistic ideas and reform themselves accordingly for the Party. Mao wrote that "fighting against wrong ideas is like being vaccinated – a man develops greater immunity from disease as a result of vaccination".[12] Robert Ivie stated that metaphor in essence is a rhetorical invention. It elaborates "a primary image into a well formed argument" and "produces a motive, or interpretation of reality, with which the intended audience is invited to identify".[13] Mao's use of the disease metaphor inevitably served this rhetorical function.

The history of the CCP is filled with a never-ending cycle of thought reform in both the public and private domains. Popular political ideographs like 'thought reform', 'denouncing selfish thought', and 'loyalty to the Party' pervaded in all spheres of life – in the workplace, at home, and in social settings during Mao's era (1949-1976). These ideographs embodied the values and ideology of communism. They signaled a call for political commitment of the collective members to a normative goal.[14] McGee cautions us that "When one appears to think and behave collectively, therefore, one has been tricked, self-deluded, or manipulated into accepting the brute existence of such fantasies […]".[15] Such fantasies or myth have persuasive power. When an individual participates in the myth-making process through the use of ideographs or symbols, they can create a new perception of reality and use the myth as motivation for change within themselves.

---

[11]   Zedong Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1977), 409-410.

[12]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977, 410.

[13]   Robert Ivie, "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War Idealists", *Communication Monographs*, 54 (1987):165-182, 166.

[14]   McGee, "The ideograph: A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology".

[15]   McGee, "The ideograph: A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology", 2.

II. Mao's Rhetorical Construction of New Communist Person

I grew up in Mao's China. I was a 'youth pioneer' when I was nine-years old along with millions of other children who wore a red scarf symbolizing our dedication to the communist cause, but more importantly, wearing the red scarf shows that you are striving for becoming a new communist person. The lyrics of the song "The Hymn of the Young Pioneer" goes:

> We are the successors of communism;
> Carrying on the glorious tradition of the revolutionary predecessors.
> [we] love our motherland and love our people.
> Bright red scarf is waving on our chest.
> [We] are not afraid of any difficulties, nor our enemies.
> [We] study diligently and fight with determination;
> Toward victory and marching bravely.
> Marching bravely;
> We are the successors of communism.

This song embodies the criteria and expectations for the future new communist persons. A new communist person, according to Mao, must be "versed in Marxism-Leninism, politically far-sighted, competent in work, full of the spirit of self-sacrifice, capable of tackling problems on their own, steadfast in the midst of difficulties and loyal and devoted in serving the nation, the class and the Party".[16] Moreover, a new communist person "must be free from selfishness, from individualistic heroism, ostentation, sloth, passivity, sectarian arrogance, and must be selfless national and class heroes".[17] In sum, a new communist person is a moral person who must exhibit the following characteristics: (1) Having a correct ideology aligned with the Party; (2) Sacrificing for the Party and serving the people; (3) Participating in criticism and self-criticism, and (4) Living a plain life.

II.1. Having a Correct Ideology Aligned with the Party

Mao faced two kinds of Chinese people that he wanted to transform to new communist persons when he took power in 1949. One group were peasants who comprised 80% of Chinese population and who were only concerned about feeding themselves and

---

[16] Zedong Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. I, 1937/1967 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1967), 291.

[17] Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. I, 1937/1967, 291.

their families. 90% of them were illiterate at the time. For Mao, peasants must be endowed with a new communist consciousness by engaging in 'political work' or 'communist ideology'. They had to be transformed from focusing on their families to devoting themselves to the Party and the country, and ultimately become selfless, new communist persons. To achieve this goal, Mao launched the 'eradicating the illiterate' campaign in 1950, so that peasants could read Mao's works and digest the communist propaganda.

The other group Mao was concerned about were the educated intellectuals; some of them were influenced by Western liberal ideas of democracy. Mao faced more challenges to transform this group. For Mao, Marxism-Leninism was infallible and absolutely correct, but he was aware that Marxism and communism were foreign concepts. To make these concepts appealing and relevant to the Chinese, Mao appropriated certain tenets of Marxism and communism into basic and concrete moral values such as honesty, loyalty, and selflessness. Mao linked these values with ideological correctness and proletarian consciousness.

In 1942, Mao launched his first Rectification Movement in Yan'an among party members. He was mainly concerned with those party members who came from a rich family background and have doubts about communism. Mao believed that even these party members demonstrated revolutionary zeal, their minds were still not completely aligned with Marxist or communist ideology due to their backgrounds. In Mao's words, "the revolutionary fervour of these comrades was admirable […] but they had brought with them into the Party ideas which are out of keeping or not altogether in keeping with Marxism".[18] Mao was deliberately vague about the nature or specifics of these ideas. According to Gao Hua's research (2000),[19] these ideas were the demands for freedom of speech, the demands for equality between the officials and soldiers, and insistence on respect for democracy. Mao justified his launch of the movement by condemning these ideas as contradictory to Marxism.

The purpose of the Rectification Movement, according to Mao, was to spread Marxist education so that "our Party can go forward with great, firm strides in unprecedented (though not complete) ideological, political, and organizational unity".[20] Mao heralded Marxism as the theoretical guidance for China's revolution and lauded communism as the sole belief and value system for China. Those who refused to conform to the Mao's version of Marxist ideology and who expressed different views from the Party line

---

[18]   Zedong Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. III, 1945/1967 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1967), 278.

[19]   Hua Gao [高华]. Hongtaiyang shi zenyang shengqide: Yan'an zhengfeng de lailongqumai [红太阳是怎样升起的：延安整风的来龙去脉] [How Does the Red Sun Rise: The Story of Yanan's Rectification Movement] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press), 2000.

[20]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. III, 1945/1967, 278.

were labeled as morally defective people who needed to be rescued. This Rectification Movement was the kickoff to China's continuous rounds of thought reforms for the educated Chinese after 1949. For Mao, the Rectification Movement was effective in 'curing' the moral defects of the political dissidents, but the approach should be self-persuasion through self-criticism. He used a weather metaphor and a health metaphor to illustrate his points:

> From now on, all problems among the people or inside the Party are to be solved by means of rectification, by means of criticism and self-criticism, and not by force. We are in favor of the method of the 'gentle breeze and mild rain', and although it is hardly avoidable that in a few cases things may get a little too rough, the over-all intention is to cure the sickness and save the patient, so we truly may achieve this end instead of merely paying lip-service to it.[21]

Mao called such ideological reform a political task and the "life-blood of all economic work".[22] He labeled communist ideas and socialist practices as *new*, while thoughts and actions deviating from communist ideology and socialist practice as *old*. Moreover, Mao associated 'new' with 'good' and 'old' with 'evil'. Thus, he argued, it is natural and reasonable to abandon the old and establish the new, placing ideological differences on a high moral ground. As Meisner writes, Mao's thought reforms "marked the appearance of a rigid ideological determinism that since has governed the history of Maoism".[23] Mao's success in establishing ideological conformity in China remains unprecedented in Chinese history.

II.2. Sacrificing for the Party and Serving the People

After studying China for many years, John K. Fairbank went to China after Nixon's visit in 1972 and wrote his impression of the Chinese people at the time, observing that "Mao not only created a new society, but also a far-reaching moral crusade to change the very human Chinese personality in the direction of self-sacrifice and serving others".[24] Although China had never had any institutional caste systems, the Chinese people even

---

[21]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977, 348.

[22]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977, 260.

[23]   Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1977), 185.

[24]   John K. Fairbank, "The New China and the American Connection", *Foreign Affairs*, 51 (1972): 31-43, see 37.

before Mao's era were very class conscious. Confucius divided people into *junzi* (gentleman) and *xiaoren* (small person, base person). *Junzi* symbolized the educated social elites, who supposedly possessed moral attributes, while *xiaoren* represented the uneducated masses who only cared about pursuing material self-interests. In traditional China, *xiaoren* also were looked down upon for their participation in manual labor. Interaction between the two groups was limited. Mao's revolution not only brought these two groups together, but also reversed the social hierarchy and subverted traditional perceptions of morally desirable and undesirable people. Mao claimed that the proletariat class, which consisted of the uneducated masses such as peasants and workers, was the true emblem of morality. He called on the educated to learn from the humility of the masses as a way to dissolve their inherent hubris as members of the social elite.

Speaking to party members and intellectuals who tended to come from wealthy family backgrounds, Mao faced the task of transforming their possible bourgeoisie worldview and instilling the proletarian consciousness in the mind of the educated by forcing them to mingle with and serve for the masses or the uneducated workers and peasants. The hallmark of the CCP, according to Mao

> is that we have very close ties with the broadest masses of the people. Our point of departure is to serve the people whole-heartedly and never for a moment divorce ourselves from the masses, to proceed in all cases from the interests of the people and not from the interests of individuals […].[25]

Throughout his life Mao emphasized this point of the Party's necessity to integrate with the masses. Mao's call for serving the people functioned as a rhetorical strategy to win the support of the majority of the Chinese people as well as to maintain the Party's legitimacy. To serve the people, Mao believed, every comrade must

> love the people and listen attentively to the voices of the masses; to identify himself with the masses wherever he goes and, instead of standing above them, to immerse himself among them; and, according to their present level, to awaken them or raise their political consciousness […].[26]

Accordingly, party members had a twofold mission. They must humble themselves to learn from the masses the first-hand experiences, but were also responsible for disseminating communist ideals among the masses. To Mao, this integrated experience was the best way to "solve their problems and help them achieve liberation

---

[25] Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. III, 1945/1967, 265.

[26] Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. III, 1945/1967, 265-266.

and happiness".[27] Integrating with the masses would allow party members, the new social elite, to cultivate 'the proletarian consciousness' and remain connected with the real world.

Mao's identification with and sympathy for the working-class Chinese people gained him support for his revolution. Confucius taught his students to put family duties first, be considerate of others, and sacrifice for the collective. Mao turned these traditional values of personhood into a secular dogma of serving the people and performing sacrifice for the Party and the State. In her study of Chinese moral models selection, rhetorical scholar Rya Butterfield contends that Chinese rhetoric surrounding the selection and promotion of moral models in China plays an epideictic function and "provides symbolic equipment by which people can make sense of their community, engage in self-definition, [and] shape collective memory [...]" for the service of the nation.[28] Ironically, Mao's desire to construct a new communist person was based on a traditional Chinese approach of model emulation in moral teaching/learning.

Mao perceived altruism and self-sacrifice as crucial facets of the virtue for a new communist person. On March 5, 1963, Mao inscribed "Learn from Comrade Lei Feng" and launched a nationwide propaganda campaign to cultivate new communist persons. Lei Feng (1940-1962) was an ordinary soldier of the People's Liberation Army. After his accidental death, his diary was published, which was filled with writing devoted to upholding the beliefs of Mao and the Party. Lei Feng was exalted as a model of a new communist person, a shining example of selflessness and modesty, and a model of serving the people. Mao called on the Chinese people to emulate his communist spirit and moral integrity. Soon Lei Feng became a household name and a celebrated soldier. He has remained a cultural icon for decades.

In serving the people, Mao demanded the deprivation of self. To Mao, selfishness was the kernel of the bourgeois world outlook while selflessness was the core quality of a communist. In his essay, "Combat Liberalism", Mao identified eleven types of selfish behaviors, such as "To let things slide for the sake of peace and friendship when a person has clearly gone wrong [...]" or "To indulge in irresponsible criticism in private instead of actively putting forward one's suggestions to the organization".[29] Other examples of selfish behavior include showing no regard to the collective life, disobeying orders, and attacking others. Mao listed many common human flaws, but he attributed these

---

[27]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. III, 1945/1967, 158.

[28]   Rya Butterfield, "Rhetorical Forms of Symbolic Labor: The Evolution of Iconic Representations in China's Model Worker Awards", *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 15 (2012): 95-126, see 100.

[29]   Zedong Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. II, 1937/1967 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1967), 31.

types of behavior as stemming from the selfish motives of the petty-bourgeois. A true communist, according to Mao, must subordinate his or her own interests to those of the people and the revolution; a true communist must value "the collective life of the Party and strengthen the ties between the Party and the masses".[30] In the name of serving the people, Mao denied that selfishness was inevitably a part of human nature and politicized the Chinese collectivistic cultural traits in ideological terms. Not until the end of the Cultural Revolution and after Mao's death was the question raised of whether a person could achieve a state of total selflessness. There was no sense of self in Mao's moral teaching; the individual had to subjugate himself or herself to the prevailing political standard and party line.

II.3. Participating in Criticism and Self-criticism

Mao claimed that the necessary tools for remolding oneself were 'criticism and self-criticism'. Mao believed that the method of criticism and self-criticism was the most effective approach for educating and transforming a person to the accepted communist morality with proletarian consciousness. Mao justified his position by evoking a hygiene metaphor: "As we say, dust will accumulate if a room is not cleaned regularly, our faces will get dirty if they are not washed regularly. Our comrades' minds and our Party's work also may collect dust, and also may need sweeping and washing".[31] Mao concluded that criticism and self-criticism was "the only effective ways to prevent all kinds of political dust and germs from contaminating the minds of our comrades and the body of our Party".[32] Mao reasoned that a true communist person must acknowledge his or her own shortcomings and be willing to self-correct; the abilities to do so would demonstrate high levels of morality and self-cultivation.[33]

In every thought reform campaign, intellectuals and party members were expected to denounce their past 'immoral behavior' (selfishness) and 'erroneous views' (doubts about Mao's leadership). They were to report how they would work hard to overcome their 'ideological disease' and how they would move closer to becoming a new communist person under Mao's guidance. In order to avoid being labeled 'class enemy', many intellectuals and ordinary people strived to gain acceptance into the revolutionary fam-

---

[30]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. II, 1937/1967, 33.

[31]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. III, 1945/1967, 267.

[32]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. III, 1945/1967, 267.

[33]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. III, 1945/1967, 177.

ily and reinvent their identities as new communist persons by publicly confessing their 'flaws' and aligning with the Party.

Actually, criticism and self-criticism were not Mao's invention. As an approach for self-cultivation, the word *fanxing* (self-examination, self-reflection) was a Confucian concept appropriated from a line in *The Analects*: "I examine myself three times a day".[34] *Fanxing* was commonly practiced among ancient sages and *junzi* – even today, self-examination is embedded in the Chinese culture as it is a part of the Confucian tradition. Criticism and self-criticism proved to be an effective approach in bringing uniformity within the Party during the Yan'an 1942 Rectification Movement during which Mao requested the party officials and intellectuals who were the targets of rectification to write self-criticism journals and reflect their "incorrect" thoughts and rectify their errors.[35]

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Mao continued his Rectification Movement and his emphasis on the importance of criticism and self-criticism. Although he had defeated Chiang Kai-shek and ultimately had won the war, Mao was not confident that the Chinese people, particularly intellectuals and party officials, were truly convinced by the communist ideology and the CCP's legitimacy to rule. In his report to the Third Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao called for continuous thought reform and criticism to "raise the ideological and political level of cadres and rank-and-file Party members".[36] To prove the CCP's legitimacy, Mao focused on consolidating ideological uniformity, emphasis on good work ethic, and the selfish behavior among party members. Either by coercion or by willingness, some well-known intellectuals cooperated with Mao by publishing their confessions.

During the Anti-Rightist Movement (1956-1957), many people, including college students, engaged in the political ritual of self-criticism. Qian Liqun, a professor from Beijing University recalled the time when he had to write self-criticism reports constantly to criticize his "western democratic thought" and denounce his "bourgeois family background" as a way to show his loyalty to the Party and willingness to reform.[37] Yang Dongping, a research fellow from Beijing Institute of Technology, remembered the times when he was criticized by his high school peers that he had too much "bourgeois thought and feelings, lacking principles and a fighting spirit" simply because he showed

---

[34] Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, transl. by Simon Leys (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 1-4.

[35] Gao, *Hongtaiyang shi zenyang shengqide: Yan'an zhengfeng de lailongqumai.*

[36] Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1950/1977, 31.

[37] Liqun Qian [钱理群], *Yilu zuolai* [一路走来] [A road walked through] (Henana wenyi Publishing, 2016), 110.

his interests in traditional Chinese paintings and the life of the recluse.[38] Any thought, feelings, behaviours that showed the trace of Western influence and traditional Chinese values would be criticized or forced to engage in self-criticism. One must eliminate anything 'old' (old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas) in order to become a new communist person.

During the Cultural Revolution, criticism and self-criticism reached its climax. A typical self-criticism report, in either spoken or written form, would begin with a poetic eulogy of Chairman Mao and Mao's quotation, and then moved to the confession of the writer's own flaws and 'incorrect' thinking. The deeper a person could dig into their 'dark side', the more their confession proved their true revolutionary passion. The practice was known as a 'revolution in the deepest part of the soul'. The confession would then be followed by more quotations from Mao Zedong and then an application of Mao's quotations to the analysis of one's flaws and incorrect thought. In the report, the person also had to express how Mao's teaching elevated their moral perceptions, which led them to act according to these moral guidelines. In their conclusion, the person had to admit they still had room for further improvement and to express a willingness to engage in more self-criticism. The self-criticism report would conclude with adulation for Mao and an expression of determination to follow Mao down the revolutionary road.

For example, Hua Luogeng, a famous Chinese mathematician, wrote a self-criticism report following this format, where he criticized himself as a 'self-made man from the old society' and he denounced his attachment to science without consideration for the interest of people. He thanked Mao and the Party for helping him realize his moral defects and for guiding him in doing science. He expressed his admiration for those who worked selflessly and mingled with the masses, beginning his report with the line: "had it not been for the guidance of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, I dare say that I would surely have been contented with what I was".[39] Hua ended his report by writing, "Chairman Mao's thinking has stayed the sun for me. Under the brilliance of this sun that never sets, I will resolutely and ceaselessly walk on the road of revolution!".[40]

Ba Jin, a well-known and well-accomplished writer, is another example of being forced to engage in self-criticism and redeem himself. He admitted that he genuinely felt guilty when he was denounced by Red Guards. He was determined to transform

---

[38]   Zongtao Li [李宗陶], Silv zhongguo [思虑中国] [Worrying China] (Beijing: New Star Press, 2009), 223.

[39]   *Communist China*, ed. by Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell (London: Penguin Books, 1967), 163.

[40]   Gao, *Hongtaiyang shi zenyang shengqide*, 166.

himself, heart and soul, into a new communist person.[41] He believed that he was a person who came from the old society with old ideas, thus needed to be reformed and transformed. During the Cultural Revolution he wrote many self-criticism reports to deny himself as an author and a good person. He was determined to "change bones and start anew" to reform and transform himself.[42] These examples exhibit a willingness to expose one's alleged selfish motives and show an ability to overcome one's own flaws, which signaled loyalty to the Party and true political commitment to the communist cause. Those who were reluctant to engage in self-criticism were immediately accused of counterrevolutionaries. In fact, criticism and self-criticism had become political rituals that served to recreate a political identity and to communicate the myth of transcending to a new communist person.

Lifton notes that this political ritual of self-criticism was constituted by the manipulation of emotions.[43] He writes that

> it employs no theologians, but it closely resembles an attempt at inducing religious conversion – saving souls, stressing guilt and shame, demanding atonement, recantation, and rebirth. It makes use of no psychiatrists, but is certainly a coercive form of psychotherapy – focusing upon catharsis, analytic interpretations, and causative influence from early life.[44]

Lifton's observation echoes with Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theory of redemption which consists of three steps: pollution, purification, and redemption.[45] Although it is based on the Christian notion of soul cleansing, the process of redemption applies to physical, spiritual as well as psychological state and patterns.[46] Pollution is the stage when a person feels guilty for having done something wrong measured by the hierarchy or social order created by language or symbols. This guilt creates the need for redemption and purification as the means through which redemption can be achieved. Purification can be achieved by finding a scapegoat (blaming others) or by self-mortification (blaming the self). By assuming guilt and then purging that guilt through either means, a community or individual can achieve a sort of vicarious atonement for

---

[41] Jin Ba [巴金], *Sui xianglu* [随想录] [A Collection of Reflections] (Beijing: Life, Reading & New Knowledge, 1987).

[42] Ba, *Sui xianglu*, 77.

[43] Robert J. Lifton, "Brainwashing in Perspective", *New Republic* (13 May 1957): 21-25.

[44] Lifton, Reprinted in *Communist China*, 142.

[45] Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

[46] Foucault, "History, discourse and discontinuity".

sins and thus find redemption, remove the error, and experience a new birth.[47] Thus, the purification stage is the effort to cleanse the guilt and achieve redemption. Mao's methods of criticism and self-criticism involved these stages of redemption. Through his speeches and writings, Mao established Marxism-Leninism and Mao-Zedong Thought as the moral and political hierarchy for Chinese people. A person had guilt if his or her thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours were not in alignment (or were accused of not being in alignment) with Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism. The guilt would inevitably force the person to conscientiously self-correct by acknowledging the infraction publicly and by offering remorse.

Under the banner of criticism and self-criticism, the person accused of wrong-doing would have no option but to choose the route of mortification (blaming self, self-sacrifice, self-denial) for redemption to demonstrate that growth or change had taken place and to prove their loyalty to Mao and the Party. Mao bestowed intellectuals with original sin since most of them had come from wealthy families and were often critical of the Party's policies. As a result, the intellectuals had to constantly repeat the process of guilt, purification, and redemption or pollution, purification, and redemption. Because of the inherent nature of human imperfection, the cycle never ended. In his book *The Captive Mind*, Czesław Miłosz shares his experience with Polish communist practices, which also consisted of remolding a self into a "new man" who is "conditioned to think and act like others".[48] Overtime, this new man could "no longer differentiate his true self from the self he simulates, so that even the most intimate of individuals speak to each other in Party slogans".[49] The independent thinking of Ba Jin, Hua Luogeng and that of many other Chinese intellectuals was dissolved by the political ritual of self-criticism; the repetition facilitated their becoming slaves of the party discourse.

Diary writing was a prevailing trend for self-criticism after the publication of Lei Feng's Diary in 1963. This 'private' zone was invaded to drive out any faulty thinking that deviated from Mao's teaching. Here is an example of self-criticism when a 13-year old teenage was sent to labour in the countryside with her family. She wrote in her diary dated March 1970:

> Because of the bourgeoisie trace in my mind and because of the feudal education in the old school, I look down upon the working class people; I want to avoid hard labor; I refused to use an oil lamp and sleep on an earth-made bed. When I talk

---

[47] Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change*: *An Anatomy of Purpose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[48] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 76.

[49] Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, 55.

with the peasants, I find them like country pumpkins. When I live with them, I find them dirty. In sum, I do not like anything in the rural area. I only think of myself and believe those who come from the city are noble people.[50]

Li continued to criticize herself and expressed how much she had learned from the peasants and how Mao's words had enlightened her and made her aware of her wrong thoughts. Through diary writing, a person reflects his or her own 'sins' and scrutinizes any selfish thoughts and motives. It is expected that by repeatedly engaging in this kind of self-criticism, selfish thoughts will be cleaned up, loyalty to Mao and the Party will be solidified, and a new communist person will be made. Wang writes that

> the transforming of the soul is carried out through the voluntary cooperation of the participant, who must learn to hate him-or herself for the slightest deviation from the party line and watch over his or her mind with utmost vigilance.[51]

Indeed, many people genuinely felt guilty about not living up to Mao's moral standards. Publicly or privately, exposure of their guilt was viewed as courageous and they were seen as potential candidates for genuine thought reform. This process of self-persuasion served as a powerful mechanism of control in thought and action.

II.4. Living a Plain Life

In his book, *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism*, Maurice Meisner identifies several Maoist values: selflessness, hard work, frugality, self-discipline, diligence, and honesty.[52] Meisner contends that these ascetic values are similar to Western bourgeois virtues and Protestant ethics of capitalism. However, for Mao, these were not just social and cultural values – they were constituent parts of the communist ideology and were appropriated as 'socialist and communist values'. Mao consistently emphasized building the ethos of party members on two aspects: plain living and modesty, two Confucian values coded in communist terminology. He reiterated these two values a few times in his works. Upon his victory over the Nationalists in 1949, Mao's peasant-based army moved to the cities. Mao was concerned that his new government would be in danger of losing legitimacy if party members became weak-willed, facing the temptation of a better material life.

---

50   Shuang Li, Personal Diaries, 1970-1972.

51   Ban Wang, *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 222.

52   Meisner, *Mao's China*, 120.

Mao cautioned party members in his speech at the Second Session of Seventh Central Committee that

> with victory, certain moods may grow within the Party – arrogance, the airs of a self-styled here, an inertia and unwillingness to make progress, a love of pleasure, and a distaste for continued hard living.[53]

Mao was worried that such party members would be defeated by "sugar-coated bullets" rather than being conquered by enemies with guns. Thus, Mao advised the Party that

> the comrades must be taught to remain modest, prudent and free from arrogance and rashness in their style of work. The comrades must be taught to preserve the style of plain living and hard struggle.[54]

Mao relied on the party members' discipline, resistance to materialistic temptation, and stoic living styles to build the new China. For Mao, plain living was essential to preserve even after the CCP took power, and he called these values "intrinsic political qualities".[55]

A few years after the CCP came to power, Mao was still deeply concerned about party members' moral integrity. According to Mao's own observations, some cadres

> scramble for fame and fortune and are interested only in personal gain […]. They vie with each other not in plain living, doing more work and having fewer comforts, but for luxuries, rank and status.[56]

Moreover, Mao described party members who had become bureaucratic in their leadership styles, further creating conflict with their subordinates, like workers and students. Mao saw this separation as a threat to the CCP's legitimacy and issued a warning for sanctions. In his words,

> There are several hundred thousand cadres at the level of the county Party committee and above who hold the destiny of the country in their hands. If they fail to do a good job, alienate themselves from the masses and do not live plainly and work hard, the workers, peasants and students will have good reason to disapprove

---

[53]   Zedong Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. IV, 1949/1977 (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1967), 374.

[54]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. IV, 1949/1977, 374.

[55]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977, 349.

[56]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977, 350.

of them. We must watch out lest we foster the bureaucratic style of work and grow into an aristocratic stratum divorced from the people. The masses will have good reason to remove from office whoever practices bureaucracy, makes no efforts to solve their problems, scolds them, tyrannizes over them and never tries to make amends. I say it is fine to remove such fellows, and they ought to be removed.[57]

In 1957, Mao announced that there would be another rectification movement. In his speech at the Party National Conference on Propaganda Work, Mao claimed that the goal of the Party's propaganda was "to carry forward our Party's tradition of plain living and hard struggle".[58] Mao criticized those party members for their purported dwindling revolutionary spirit, lamenting that "they are clamoring for position and for the limelight, becoming particular about what they eat and wear, competing for salary and scrambling for fame and gain".[59] Mao called on party members to

maintain the same vigor, the same revolutionary enthusiasm and the same death-defying spirit we displayed in the years of the revolutionary wars and carry our revolutionary work through to the end.[60]

Mao demanded that party members maintain a plain life style as they did during the war period, to demonstrate their devotion to the revolutionary cause. In Mao's logic, too much comfort would weaken one's spirit; hardship and suffering would help build resistance to temptations and pave the way for becoming a new communist person.

III. Conclusion and Impact

The communist ideology had exerted extraordinary power transforming Chinese society and the Chinese people. Mao made the transformation possible by appropriating Marxist-Leninist theories of social change and combining them with Confucian values of character development. For Mao, politics, ideology, and morality were intertwined. Transforming the Chinese people into new communist men and women with desirable moral attributes put into practice Mao's ambition as a young man to change the cultural character of the Chinese people. He successfully directed the moral sense of the Chinese people from a cultural orientation rooted in the Confucian vision of an ideal society

---

[57]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977, 345.

[58]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977, 436.

[59]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977, 436.

[60]   Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. V, 1957/1977, 437.

of harmony to an ideological battle and political formulation in a communist state. Mao's rhetoric toward the construction of a new communist person does not merely resemble the Confucian concept of *junzi* or gentleman, more notably, Mao has effectively appropriated Confucian moral standard for character development and use it as a persuasive appeal to enforce ideological uniformity and legitimize the CCP's rule. In this sense, Mao successfully combined his own individualized rhetoric with the discourse in Chinese history and culture in creating a new system of thought and a new way of speaking in communist China.

Mao's rhetorical charisma, his moral argument for the necessity of the thought reforms, combined with his brutal approach to ritualize and institutionalize them left little room for counterarguments and chance for resistance. As Ip points out,

> when the top leadership of an authoritarian party pressed for changes that were unassailable in both ideological and pragmatic terms, the situation did not encourage others to question his decision, however unreasonable.[61]

Rectification through means of self-criticism became a deprivation of individual freedom in thought and speech as everyone had to conform to the Party line and infallible Mao Zedong thought. Those who refused or failed to conform to Mao's orthodoxies were politically persecuted and deprived of their dignity and political freedom.

When Mao first launched the Hundred Flower Campaign in 1956, Chinese citizens were encouraged to openly criticize the Party for any wrong doings. However, this short period of freedom of speech was soon shut down and followed by the Anti-Rightist Movement when Mao perceived that criticism of the Party was too harsh and had threatened the Party's legitimacy. Either out of fear or due to repeated inculcation, Chinese people, particularly Chinese intellectuals, were silenced. Some chose compliance over resistance, subjecting themselves to manipulation and coercion by political power. Some stopped speaking altogether and their critical and reflective capabilities disappeared; some became cynical and disillusioned. The political ritual of criticism and self-criticism turned out to encourage lies, personal attacks, self-denial, and self-humiliation. Not until after Mao's death did some Chinese intellectuals begin to tell the truth and play active roles in public and political life.

Mao's efforts to transform the Chinese people into new communist persons were, in some ways, successful for the time in which he lived. When Orville Schell visited China in early 1970s, he noted the spirit of sacrifice among the Chinese people. In his comparison between China and the US, Schell remarked, that

---

[61] Hung-Yok Ip, "Mao, Mao Zedong Thought, and Communist Intellectuals", *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. by Timothy Cheek (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 169-195, see 139.

to work and forget oneself is one of the leitmotifs of these young and politically ambitious workers. They seem to view sacrifice with the same relish that their Western counterparts view self-indulgence. They make sacrifices during the normal day which most men in our society make only at times of extreme hardship. They discuss sacrifice as a way of life for ordinary times, rather than as an unusual event.[62]

This image of the new communist person is the one Mao had wished for, rhetorically constructed, and effectively remolded.

On the other hand, Mao's efforts of constructing a new communist person failed after his death. Mao's efforts to create a new communist person are seen by many Chinese people as propaganda, as the manipulation of fears, hopes, and passions in today's China. The emergence of Lei Feng and many other communist moral models was seen merely as the products of Mao's propaganda tactics and mind control. In fact, ever since Deng Xiaoping launched economic reforms in the early 1980s, China has become increasingly materialistic and preoccupied by consumption. Chinese people are more interested in money than politics. Although government-controlled media still propagates the "Lei Feng spirit" to promote virtuous behaviour, such an effort is largely regarded by the average Chinese person as an ex post facto. Based on Mei Zhang's research of model emulation in post-Mao China,[63] the CCP continues to promote role models of altruism and self-sacrifice for the public good. However, the efficacy and impact of such models have lost its moral appeal as the pursuit of money and self-interest rises. Mao's political enterprise of remoulding the Chinese people through ideological education has largely failed.

In fact, since its economic reform forty years ago, China has been experiencing an ideological and moral void. Mao's notion of a "New Communist Person", directly opposes the generation of the "exquisite egocentric person", – a term coined by Qian Liqun to refer to the current Chinese educated youth who are highly intelligent, but selfish, crafty, cunning, and know how to take advantage of the system for personal gains.[64] In response to this moral crisis, Xi Jinping, the current President of China, proposed a set of "socialist core values" that include "prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity and friendliness".[65]

---

[62]   Orville Schell, *In the People's Republic: An American's First View of Living and Working in China* (New York: Random House, 1977), 183.

[63]   Zhang Mei, "Official Role Models and Unofficial Responses: Problems of Model Emulation in Post-Mao China", *Chinese Perspectives in Rhetoric and Communication*, ed. by D. Ray Heisey (Stanford: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 2000), 67-86.

[64]   Liqun Qian [钱理群], *Daxue li juedui jingzhi de liji zhuyizhe* [大学里绝对精致的利 主 义者], May 20th, 2015, http://edu.qq.com/a/20150520/041737.htm.

[65]   Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2014), 71.

These core values are proposed as criteria for the 'New Socialist Person' in contemporary China. These core values, in the form of a new set of ideographs, are publicly disseminated and reiterated among Chinese citizens, displayed on billboards, and circulated on internet. This set of core values embraced both Confucian value of harmony and civility as well as Mao's elements of patriotism and dedication (to the Party) in the criteria for the 'New Communist Person'. At the same time, the 'New Socialist Person' criteria have also incorporated concepts of Western origin such as democracy, freedom, and equality. Ultimately, however, these words come across as empty slogans as there is no true sense of democracy, freedom, and equality under Xi's new authoritarian regime. Moreover, the Chinese people do not really take them seriously. Thus, the discourse of the socialist core values becomes inert when communist/socialist ideology lost its rhetorical appeals and replaced by capitalism and consumerism.

FROM CLASS TO CULTURE: RECONFIGURATIONS OF VIETNAMESE COMMUNISM (1925-2015)

Patricia Pelley

(Texas Tech University, Lubbock)

I. Resist

Contemporary Vietnamese historians trace their country's loss of sovereignty to the reign of Tự Đức (1847-1883). He was the fourth of thirteen Nguyễn kings who ruled, actually and then only nominally, from 1802 to the August Revolution of 1945. Representatives of Tự Đức's court signed the first of several treaties that resulted in territorial and political concessions to France. After decades of brutality, which colonists characterized as 'pacification', French Indochina was complete. It consisted of five principal pieces: the colony of Cochinchina (southern Vietnam) and four protectorates: Annam (central Vietnam), Tonkin (northern Vietnam), Cambodia, and Laos.[1] By the late nineteenth century, French advocates of empire were no longer as committed to Catholic evangelism as their predecessors. Instead, they advanced a new ideal – the Civilizing Mission – and emphasized the unique ability of France to 'tutor' colonial subjects, to lead them out of 'darkness' and into the 'light'.[2]

---

[1]   Pham Diem discusses the legal framework of French Indochina in more detail in "The State Structure in French-ruled Vietnam (1858-1945)", *Vietnam Law & Legal Forum* (24 February 2011), http://vietnamlawmagazine.vn/the-state-structure-in-french-ruled-vietnam-1858-1945-4404.html, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[2]   Like many of his compatriots, Paul Monet accepted the principle of the *mission civilisatrice*; but he was appalled by the manner in which it was carried out. See Paul Monet, *Les Jauniers* [The Slave Drivers],

The French occupation of Vietnam (1862-1954) was complex and multifaceted. Apologists stress its accomplishments. They maintain that colonists improved the country's infrastructure – by creating 'broad, well-cut boulevards', building railways, and developing ports.[3] They built hospitals and clinics and conducted path-breaking medical research. They built elegant residential districts; they built cathedrals; they built centers for the performing arts. In fact, inspired by the Opéra Garnier in Paris, colonists built the Opera House in Hà Nội. (Here, in March 1946, in what was for French imperialists the most iconic spot, Vietnamese revolutionaries convened the Democratic Republic's first National Assembly.[4]) The colonial building spree thoroughly reshaped urban and rural space. The colonial occupation transformed the world of scholarship as well. Experts in history and literature and folklore; linguistics and anthropology; agricultural science; Buddhist sculpture and Buddhist texts; and archaeology, architecture, and art scrutinized, measured, analyzed, and assessed and, over time, produced impressive works of great erudition. Critics, including many Vietnamese who loathed communists more than the colonists, point out that the French occupation also caused a great deal of suffering. It required an extensive police force, a startling array of prisons and penitentiaries, at least one guillotine, an expansive regimen of taxes, and unprecedented levels of uncompensated labor.[5] Colonial officials created a massively bureaucratic State by superimposing their own administrative system on top of the one that Nguyễn rulers had put into place. Weaving them together resulted in a dense web of ministries and institutes; agencies, offices, and councils; departments and tribunals. Anti-colonial activists, including communists, railed against these tendencies, but rather than abandon the bureaucratic patterns of the Nguyễn court and colonial administrators, the Democratic Republic (beginning in 1945) added to them; the Socialist Republic (beginning in 1976) devised still more intrusive norms.

Narratives of the Vietnamese Communist Party's descent, meaning its lineage, and its ascent to power pay homage to the anticolonial activists who, from the beginning, waged war against France. Stories of this genre venerate Trương Công Định, a Nguyễn commander who refused to disband his militia even when he was ordered by the court to do so.[6]

4th ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1930).

3   Albert de Pouvourville, quoted in Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 161.

4   "Kỳ họp đầu tiên của Quốc hội khóa I năm 1946" [The first meeting of the National Assembly in 1946], http://thegioidisan.vn/vi/ky-hop-dau-tien-cua-quoc-hoi-khoa-i-nam-1946.html, last accessed 2 May 2019.

5   Trương Bửu Lâm includes extensive excerpts from key sources in *Colonialism Experienced: Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism, 1900-1931* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

6   "Bài 1: Khái lược Lịch sử Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam" [Lesson 1: Summary History of the Vietnamese Communist Party], http://dukdn.laichau.gov.vn/Files/dukcdn/users/130/2017/Thang8/BAI-1-DOI-

These chronicles also honor Nguyễn Tri Phương, another Nguyễn commander who died battling against French forces. They express respect for the scholar Thủ Khoa Huân, executed by French officials in 1875. They celebrate the 'Save the King' Movement (Cần Vương) that erupted in 1885 after colonists deposed the reigning monarch Hàm Nghi. Rather than submit to French power, he fled with some officials into the hills. Far from the capital, they turned to local, non-Việt peoples, and in this way converted what began as a burst of loyalist activism into a multi-faceted stance against the occupation. In many ways this episode, always idealized, provides the template for the August Revolution and the nine-year war of resistance against France (1946-1954). Conventional accounts of the Vietnamese Communist Party esteem the Scholar Movement (Văn thân), which succeeded 'Save the King' and lasted into the mid-1890s. In official renditions of the past, these individuals and these movements are clearly deserving of praise. Unlike the communist revolutionaries who succeeded them, however, early activists lacked critical skills: they didn't know how to mobilize the people (*động viên nhân dân*). Therefore, invariably, their efforts to defeat the colonists failed.

Narratives of resistance and overcoming shift their focus from the first generation of anticolonial activists to luminous figures such as Lương Văn Can (1854-1927), Phan Bội Châu (1867-1940), and Phan Chu Trinh (1872-1926).[7] These men were trained in Chinese literature and history; they prepared for the Confucian exams; all of them earned degrees. For a time Phan Chu Trinh even served in the Nguyễn Dynasty's Ministry of Rites.[8] Like their contemporaries, they looked with alarm at what was happening in their country. Unavoidably, they criticized the French imperial project and the military and civilian officials who carried it out.[9] But they also denounced educated Vietnamese who were complicit and people from non-scholarly backgrounds who submitted to corrupt authorities and demonstrated respect for archaic norms. In other words, besides criticizing the poisonous effects of the French conquest and occupation, these activists looked internally as well, at themselves and other Vietnamese, and developed a more complex picture of what had gone awry.

Seeking a way out of the miasma, Lương Văn Can, Phan Bội Châu, and Phan Chu Trinh began to explore what was for them an entirely new intellectual tradition: western studies (*tây học*), a body of texts they gained access to not through French colonial scholars or officials but East Asian intermediaries. The Japanese iconoclast Fukuzawa Yukichi

TUONG-DANG.PDF, last accessed 5 October 2019.

7   "Bài 1: Khái lược Lịch sử Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam".

8   Nguyễn Q. Thắng and Nguyễn Bá Thế, *Từ điển Nhân vật Lịch sử Việt Nam* [Dictionary of Vietnamese Historical Figures], 2nd ed. (Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh: NXB Văn Hóa, 1993), 420, 772, 775.

9   The literature on this topic is extensive. See, for example, two of the books by David Marr: *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) and *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

(1835-1901), founder of Keio University in Tokyo (1858), and the Chinese reformers Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao (1873-1929) were especially influential. Inspired by Japanese and Chinese exemplars, these men promoted the idea that ordinary people and not only the male children of elites should have access to education. They also became attuned to the possibility of broad, socially inclusive expressions of dissent. Sensing the transformational potential of mass literacy, they promoted *chữ quốc ngữ*, the Romanized script that Catholic missionaries and Vietnamese converts had devised in the mid-seventeenth century to promote catechetical training.[10] This revolution in learning manifested itself in innumerable ways and culminated in the Tonkin Free School, which opened in Hà Nội in March 1907. Like movements that came before it, such as Go East (Đông Du), as well as those that followed, including Reform (Duy Tân), the Tonkin Free School was initially, briefly, a tremendous success. But in December, only months after it opened, French authorities forced it to close![11] They also arrested some of the key figures, Lương Văn Can, for one, and sentenced others to hard labor.[12]

In these examples of anticolonial activism, scholars played the principal roles. Increasingly, though, people from non-scholarly backgrounds also organized to resist the occupation. In 1907, for instance, to protest the mistreatment they suffered, railway workers in northern Vietnam went on a rampage, torched the encampment where they were based, then fled before the contractors could strike back.[13] In 1908 villagers (*dân xã*) in the central province of Quảng Nam complained to a Vietnamese official (in the district of Đại Lộc) about the increased demand for uncompensated labour.[14] They were not satisfied with his response. Because they understood the rapport between subalterns and superiors, around one hundred villagers headed next to the office of the French resident. At this point the original dispute metamorphosed into something much larger. Thousands of people came to protest against corvée labour – the subject of the original confrontation – and also against the burden of taxes. World World I sharpened tensions further, in part because tens of thousands of Vietnamese soldiers and labourers (*lính thợ*) served on behalf of France.

---

[10] Peter C. Phan, *Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998).

[11] Trường Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục. Dương Kinh Quốc, *Việt Nam: Những sự kiện Lịch sử* (1858-1918) [Vietnam: Historical Events, 1858-1918], 2nd ed. (Hà Nội: NXB Giáo Dục, 2002), 306-307.

[12] Lương Văn Can received a life sentence but was released after three years. Nguyễn Q. Thắng and Nguyễn Bá Thế, *Từ diển*, 623.

[13] They were working on a segment of track that linked Lào Cai and Vân Nam. Dương Kinh Quốc, *Việt Nam: Những sự kiện*, 309.

[14] Phan Chu Trinh, *Trung Kỳ Dân biến Thỉ mạt ký* [An Account of the Commotion in Central Vietnam], trans. Lê Ấm and Nguyễn Q. Thắng (Sài Gòn: Phủ Quốc Vụ Khanh Đặc Trách Văn Hóa XB, 1973): 26-96. Reflecting his traditional background, Phan Chu Trinh originally wrote in Chinese; but because he had partially adjusted to new norms, he translated the Chinese version into *quốc ngữ*.

Of these, more than three thousand died.[15] Then, in 1917, hundreds of people in Thái Nguyên, including criminals, political dissidents, and prison guards, seized control of the prison and occupied administrative posts as well.[16]

Relatively safe while outside of Vietnam, anticolonial activists began experimenting with party politics in Hong Kong (a British colony since 1842), southern China, the Soviet Union, and France.[17] In 1927, swayed by the example of Chinese who had founded the Guomindang, Vũ Hồng Khanh (1898-1993), Nguyễn Thái Học (1902-1930), and Nhất Linh (1906-1963) established the Vietnamese Nationalist Party.[18] It is likely that, given a chance to develop and mature, the nationalists would have attracted a wide following. In February 1930, however, in Yên Bái (northern Vietnam), they launched a bold and terribly botched operation. French forces responded with a devastating blow from which the nationalists never recovered. Meanwhile, in February 1930 in Hong Kong, an electrifying speaker, a Comintern agent known then by the name of Nguyễn Aí Quốc, urged representatives of several small communist groups, leagues, and parties to disband in order to form the Vietnamese Communist Party.[19] Today the VCP traces its origins to this moment precisely and to the charismatic figure at the center of these events – the man who, after casting off dozens of aliases, took the name Hồ Chí Minh.

Vietnamese communists speak respectfully about those who resisted the occupation via traditional means. To a far greater degree they revere their own instrumentality, their search for new forms of knowledge, and their ability to localize paradigm-shifting ideals. Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, communists learned that it no longer sufficed to make social distinctions merely on the basis of place: rural people (*dân xã*) versus urbanites (*dân thành phố*). Identities that stemmed from one's patrilineal clan (*họ*) or from one's occupation (*nghề nghiệp*) were similarly insufficient. Instead, communists had to master a new vocabulary, starting with class (*giai cấp*) and class struggle (*cuộc đấu tranh giai cấp*) and an implausible array of 'isms': feudalism (*chủ nghĩa phong kiến*), capitalism (*chủ nghĩa tư bản*), socialism (*chủ nghĩa xã hội*), and communism (*chủ nghĩa cộng sản*). Communists had to reimagine the past in terms of developmental stages instead of traditional cycles of dynas-

---

[15]   "Vietnamiens dans la Grande Guerre – Entretien avec Mireille Le Van Ho", https://indomemoires. hypotheses.org/category/billets/entretiens/page/2, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[16]   Peter Zinoman, "Colonial Prisons and the Anti-Colonial Resistance in French Indochina: The Thai Nguyen Rebellion, 1917", *Modern Asian Studies*, 34, 1 (2000): 57-98.

[17]   Historians often identify the Indochinese Constitutionalist Party (Đảng Lập hiến Đông Dương), founded in 1917 by the naturalized French citizen Bùi Quang Chiêu, as the first political party in Vietnam. Because of its limited membership of not more than a few dozen members, it may be more reasonable to view it as a private club.

[18]   Việt Nam Quốc dân Đảng [VNQDĐ].

[19]   Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam.

tic rise and decline. They had to wrestle with enigmatic allusions to the 'Asiatic Mode of Production'. In a purely impressionistic sense, the distance between Vietnamese social realities and Marxist theoretical models was enormous. Quantitative data further clarifies the gap. For one, the Marxist definition of working class (*giai cấp công nhân*) excluded farmers – the group whose labour was essential to all and, not incidentally, the second most critical class (after scholars) according to Confucian models. More perplexing still, in 1929, on the eve of the VCP's founding, the working class – as it was defined by Marx – constituted less than 1% of the population.[20]

Of thirty million people, perhaps 250,000 worked on railways, mined coal (Tonkin) or nickel (New Caledonia), or tapped rubber trees (Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Laos). Because of these incongruities, Vietnamese communists recognized the importance of Marx but they regarded Lenin as the more crucial figure because, through the 'vanguard party', he solved the problem of the 'missing' proletariat. Moreover, class struggle as Marx envisioned it seemed to signal the inevitability of violence among Vietnamese, not only against the occupying power. Lenin, however, theorized that colonies functioned as the 'working class' of imperial powers. In this way, he suggested a way of defining class conflict as a struggle against those who abetted French domination. Perhaps it is for this reason that, more than thirty years after the VCP introduced 'market socialism', the megalithic statue of Lenin still stands in the park in Hà Nội that bears his name.

From the beginning, well before the founding of the VCP in 1930, communists recognized the importance of propaganda and teaching (*tuyên giáo*) and for this reason they published on an impressive scale. Between 1925 and 1930, in fact, they produced dozens of newspapers and journals, including *Thanh Niên* [Youth], which was initially (1925) written by hand, and *Búa liềm* [Hammer and Sickle].[21] In August 1930, however, the 'historical mission' (*nhiệm vụ lịch sử*) of these sources ended when the VCP began publishing *Tranh đấu* [Struggle].[22] To naturalize new ways of thinking and behaving, the Party also created the Propaganda Committee, which laid the foundation for scores of subsequent initiatives.[23]

---

[20]   Nguyễn Khắc Viện, *Vietnam: A Long History* (Hà Nội: NXB Thế Giới, 2009), 272.

[21]   'Báo chí cách mạng Việt Nam trước năm 1945 dưới sự lãnh đạo của Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam' [Vietnamese revolutionary newspapers and journals before 1945 under the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party], http://www.tapchicongsan.org.vn/Home/PrintStory.aspx?distribution=36020&print=true, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[22]   "Tranh đấu: tờ báo đầu tiên của Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam" [Struggle: the first newspaper of the Vietnamese Communist Party], http://m.vov.vn/chinh-tri/tranh-dau-to-bao-dau-tien-cua-dang-cong-san-viet-nam-380486.vov, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[23]   Ban Cổ động và Tuyên truyền. "Kỷ niệm ngày truyền thống Ngành Tuyên giáo của Đảng" [Commemorating the establishment of the Party's propaganda branch], http://thvl.vn/?p=535829, last accessed 2 May 2019. *By the late 1940s, many provinces were equipped with an information service (ty thông tin) that served this purpose. Among the many committees (ban): Ban Giáo dục Trung ương [Education], Ban Tư*

From the beginning, communists recognized the importance of organization and structure. Initially they organized five overlapping and interlocking layers: cells (*chi bộ*), districts (*huyện bộ*), towns (*thị bộ*) or zones (*khu bộ*), provinces (*tỉnh bộ*), and urban units (*thành bộ*) or special units (*đặc biệt bộ*). An executive committee monitored conditions within each of these five administrative layers.[24] When the VCP became the Indochinese Communist Party in October 1930, it introduced five new overarching spheres of authority to correspond to each of the four protectorates (Tonkin, Annam, Cambodia, and Laos) and the colony of Cochinchina.[25] It also inserted a new layer of administrators into cantons (*tổng*), the level above cells and below districts.[26]

Today the Vietnamese Communist Party monopolizes political power – at least officially, if not in actual practice. Visually it is ubiquitous; and it has mastered the art of grand spectacle. Nevertheless, in the beginning the Party was not the awesome and imposing power that it has become. Speaking of the early years, Trần Trọng Thơ emphasizes its fragility. In September 1930, after absorbing members of the small regional parties, the VCP had only 800-900 members.[27] By April 1931 the number approximately tripled (to 2400).[28] Having more or less wiped out the nationalists, colonial police agents aimed in a more concentrated way at the communists. Trần Trọng Thơ traces the damage wrought by the colonialists' campaign. For instance, during the fifteen-year period 1930-1945, he points out, there were eleven central committees. Besides listing each member by his actual and assumed names, the author adds brief biographical details. Of the nearly fifty men who served, French security agents arrested more than fifteen, some of them multiple times.[29] They also put four of them to

tưởng Văn hóa Trung ương [Ideology and Culture], Ban Tuyên giáo Trung ương [Propaganda and Training], Ban Tuyên huấn Trung ương [Propaganda and Training], Ban Tuyên truyền Trung ương [Propaganda], Ban Văn hóa Văn nghệ Trung ương [Culture, Literature, and Arts].

24 Trần Trọng Thơ lays out the framework in *Xây dựng Cơ quan Lãnh đạo cấp Trung ương, Xứ ủy của Đảng Thời kỳ 1930-1945* [Building the Organs of Leadership in the Party's Central Committee and Regional Committees in the Period 1930-1945] (Hà Nội: NXB Chính trị quốc gia-Sự thật, 2014), 16.

25 Đông Dương Đảng Cộng sản.

26 Trần Trọng Thơ, *Xây dựng*, 18-19.

27 Trần Trọng Thơ specifically mentions the Indochinese Communist League (Đông Dương Cộng sản Liên đoàn), Indochinese Communist Party (Đông Dương Cộng sản Đảng), Annamese Communist Party (An Nam Cộng sản Đảng), Tân Việt Communist League (Tân Việt Cộng sản Liên đoàn), and a segment (*phan bộ*) of the Chinese Communist Party of Indochina (Đảng Cộng sản Truong Quốc ở Đông Dương). *Xây dựng,* 320-321.

28 Trần Trọng Thơ, *Xây dựng,* 321.

29 Among those who were arrested: Hạ Bá Cang and Nguyễn Hới (May 1930); Phạm Hữu Lầu (July 1930); Ngô Đức Trì, Nguyễn Trọng Nhã, Trần Phú, and Trần Văn Lan (April 1931); Nguyễn Phong Sắc (May 1931); Nguyễn Văn Dựt and an unnamed 'southern comrade' (April 1935); Phan Đình Hy (May 1935); Phạm Văn Xô (June 1935); and Võ Nguyên Hiến (July 1935). Bichzhan (identified as an 'ethnic minority from the north') was arrested in mid-1935. Also arrested: Ngô Tuân (August 1935) and Đinh Thanh (September 1935).

death.[30] These details make the peril involved in taking on the colonial regime more palpable and explain why, in 1935, after five years of recruiting, the Party had fewer members than it did at the beginning.[31]

In fall 1940 Japanese imperial soldiers occupied Vietnam. At this point, communists began to promote the idea of 'saving the country' (*cứu quốc*) and emphasized that the ability to do so required the unity of all the people, regardless of class, against France and Japan. In the early months of 1941, after an absence of thirty years, Hồ Chí Minh walked across the border separating Vietnam and China. In May, in the mountains of Cao Bằng, in the tiny village of Pác Bó, he and other anti-colonialists formed the Việt Minh Front.[32] Its survival depended on ethnic minorities, particularly Dao, Mông, Nùng, and Tày peoples in the midlands and mountains of northern and north-central Vietnam. Some sources identify General Võ Nguyên Giáp's 'right-hand man' as Nông Văn Lạc, who was Tày and came from the critical province of Cao Bằng. Writing under various aliases, Hồ Chí Minh contributed hundreds of pieces to *Cứu Quốc*, the Việt Minh newspaper launched in 1942. In an attempt to recruit more support from minorities, the Việt Minh established the Vietnamese Liberation Army Propaganda Team (Đội Việt Nam Tuyên truyền Giải phóng quân) in 1944. Recently, to dispel the sense that this gesture attracted only a few dozen people, one journalist identified more than one hundred members.[33] In March 1945 Japanese abruptly terminated their war-time cooperation with the French and organized an 'independent' Vietnamese State within the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Communists regarded this gesture as a sham. Allied Powers, principally the US, pummeled Japan with incendiary devices and then dropped two atomic bombs, one on Hiroshima (6 August), another on Nagasaki (9 August). On 15 August Japan surrendered.

On 19 August, when the Party had around 1300 members, anticolonialists in Hà Nội staged the August Revolution. On 2 September, Hồ Chí Minh recited the Declaration of Independence, which brought the Democratic Republic of Vietnam [DRV] to life.[34] To those who claim that these events stemmed merely from opportunism – from the

---

For the year beginning September 1935, the central committee was inactive. Trần Đăng Ninh was arrested at the end of 1941. Trần Trọng Thơ, *Xây dựng*, 309-319.

[30]   According to Trần Trọng Thơ, French authorities executed Lê Mao, Nguyễn Phong Sắc, and Trần Phú (in 1931); Đinh Thanh (1935), Phùng Chí Kiên (1942), and Hoàng Văn Thụ (1944). *Xây dựng*, 311-317.

[31]   At this point there were 552 members. Trần Trọng Thơ, *Xây dựng*, 322.

[32]   Ngọc Châu, "Bác Hồ thời gian ở Pác Bó" [Uncle Hồ in the time of Pác Bó], http://tinhdoannghean. vn/?x=148/theo-dau-chan-bac/bac-ho-thoi-gian-o-pac-bo, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[33]   Ngọc Tước, "Đội Việt Nam tuyên truyền giải phóng quân chỉ có 34 người?" [Did the Vietnamese Liberation Army Propaganda Team have only 34 people?], http://giadinh.net.vn/xa-hoi/doi-viet-nam-tuyen-truyen- giai-phong-quan-chi-co-34-nguoi-20100901093642386.htm, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[34]   Việt Nam Dân chủ Cộng hòa.

ability of the Việt Minh to fill the political 'vacuum' at the end of the war – communists respond: for more than fifteen years they had systematically prepared. They also emphasize that these events allowed the Party to attract more people: by the end of the year the Party had approximately 5000 members.[35] Rather than recognize that the era of empire in Asia had come to an end, French colonialists were determined to reoccupy Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Sensing the difficulty of the years to come and the necessity of widespread support, members of the VCP, which by this point had become the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), officially dissolved the Party. Nevertheless, to improve conditions for the poorest Vietnamese and gain support for the war, revolutionaries waived or reduced the rents of tenant farmers. In December 1946 the Resistance War Against French Colonialism erupted.[36]

II. Resolve

Today dozens of shops in the Old Quarter of Hà Nội sell reproductions of propaganda posters (*tranh cổ động*). They are often exquisitely rendered and in brilliant hues. The originals, especially in the early years, were more subdued. The earliest one I've come across was created in 1947; it has two colors: red and black. The message, a slogan, is clear: Long Live the Successful Revolution! In the background: the flag; in the foreground: a Việt Minh soldier rests one foot on the back of a body labelled 'Fascist' (Phát Xít). Foreshadowing the commemorative mania that came later, the caption reads: 19 August Uprising.[37]

That same year, students at the School of Fine Art in Hà Nội created a more complex narration that unfolds in a sequence of thirteen separate panels.[38] Most of the captions have precisely four lines of verse written in the six-eight form of traditional poetry. Again the palette is muted: black, green, and brown. The first frame captures rural well-being: men and women work peacefully in the field. "Thanks to the Government and Uncle Hồ", it reads, "the crop is good and everyone is happy". In the second frame, it is time to prepare for the summer seeding; engaging in 'emulation' (*sự thi đua*), villagers hoe deeply and fertilize the fields. These scenes of order and calm abruptly yield (frame three) to the picture of destruction: water rushes violently through the broken chambers of

---

[35]   Trần Trọng Thơ, *Xây dựng*, 324.

[36]   Cuộc kháng chiến chống thực dân Pháp, also known also as the First Indochina War.

[37]   Bộ Văn hóa-Thông tin, *60 năm Tranh Cổ động Việt Nam, 1945-2005* [Sixty Years of Propaganda Posters] (Hà Nội: Sự thật, 2014) 1/9. My references to this text contain two digits. The first corresponds to the number of the image; the second identifies the page.

[38]   Trường Mỹ thuật Hà Nội, *60 năm*, 2.1-2.13/10-13.

a bridge; the enemy tries to cause starvation by bombing the dykes and destroying the crops. Faced with aggression, how should villagers respond? (Four): They have to over-come all difficulties; instead of rice, they must grow subsidiary crops. (Five): Blistering sun causes drought and makes the soil infertile. As the rivers and canals run dry, people fear losing their crops and feel hatred for the enemy. (Six): The invaders commit crimes and cause suffering; the people are determined to wipe them out. (Seven): The villagers, men, it appears, meet in the communal house to discuss the drought. Elder Lam (cụ Lam) an "emulative fighter", suggests digging a canal to bring water from the stream. (Eight): Villagers form an organizing board (*ban tổ chức*). (Nine): Some dig while others hoe. The villagers have nearly completed the canal. (Ten): The enemy bombards it. (Eleven): The enemy forces are like rabid dogs (*chó dại*); villagers must overcome the clique of invaders. (Twelve): The canal is done; villagers again have access to water. (Thirteen): The chairman of the Provincial Committee appears. On stage with Elder Lam, "who represents all of the people", the chairman presents him with a flag.

Such things as fertilizer, ditch-digging, and principal versus subsidiary crops are not the traditional topics either of poetry or the visual arts. In this sense the text conveys a revolution in culture. More striking still is that villagers, whose attitude toward the State is traditionally one of indifference, light up when a flag-bearer from the Provincial Committee appears. Explicitly this text illustrates how rural Vietnamese are supposed to endure even when they are under attack. Implicitly it communicates new norms: rural Vietnamese are now bound to the State by affective ties.

Other texts are similarly didactic but aim specifically at historical narration. For example, in 1948 the Ministry of Propaganda Painting produced a lengthy series (eighteen images in all). It begins with an assault launched by the French enemy (*giặc Pháp*) on 17 December 1946.[39] In the second frame, Chairman Hồ calls on all people to join the resistance. (Third): Confident in the Government and Chairman Hồ, everybody joins. (Fourth): French forces terrorize the Vietnamese. (Fifth): After two years of resistance, Vietnamese forces are stronger; the French have weakened. (Sixth): The people are forged in battle. (Seventh): In the South (Nam bộ), the resistance has scored glorious victories. (Eighth): Every commune (*xã*) has traditional military forces and guerillas. (The ninth frame is missing.) In the tenth, the people heed the slogan: increase production; self-sufficiency at every level. (The eleventh and twelfth frames are also missing.) (Thirteenth): In fall and winter 1947, the people of Việt Bắc triumph over colonial forces. (Fourteenth): French commanders are called back to France. (Fifteenth): Writers, artists, and intellectuals contribute powerfully to the resistance. In July 1948 the National Culture Assembly took place. To contextualize the point of the next two frames, it is worth mentioning

---

39   Bộ tranh tuyên truyền, *60 năm*, 3.1-3.18/14-17.

that Vietnamese communists have always emphasized their connections to the wider world. Thus, the sixteenth image points out: foreigners admire the fighting spirit of the Vietnamese and follow news of the resistance. (Seventeenth): Many foreign reporters have interviewed Chairman Hồ. They respect him because he is clear sighted and fights ardently for independence and unification. The series concludes: on 19 June 1948 Chairman Hồ declared a patriotic emulation movement for all the people: "The sooner the resistance ends in victory the sooner the French enemy will leave". In other words, at this point, early in the struggle against France, propaganda posters were fairly complex.

Later they delivered – practically shouted – simple and brief commands. In 1948 the Provincial Information Service of Tuyên Quang announced preparations to 'smash' the French enemy's fall-winter assault. In 1949 the Provincial Information Service of Bắc Giang broadcast news of an emulative movement to prepare for the general counter-offensive. In 1950 the Information Branch of Inter-Zone Twelve urged all people to support the regular army and local militia. The dynamic in these images is clear: Vietnamese must fight against the 'French enemy'. A poster from Bắc Giang, also produced in 1948, introduces a new player: traitors (*Việt gian*). To keep the French enemy and their 'henchmen' from coming near, villagers must protect themselves by digging tunnels.[40]

In February 1951, confident that the war was turning in their favour, communists formally reconstituted the Party and brought it out of hiding into the open.[41] In March, they created Liên Việt, a new front that unified the Việt Minh (formed in 1941) and the Liên Việt League (formed in 1946).[42] In spring 1953, with the end of the resistance war in sight, the Government and Party renewed their commitment to class struggle by launching Land Reform.[43] Today official sources characterize this campaign as a success: it allocated more than 600,000 hectares of land to cultivators, completely abolished (*xóa bỏ*) the landlord class, and wiped out the last traces of feudalism in North Vietnam.[44] Other sources dwell more on the process. Land Reform cadres were supposed to proceed in a precisely calibrated way to distinguish those who were landless; those who had a small, but insuffi-

---

[40]   *60 năm*, 24/25. In 1950 the Provincial Information Service of Quảng Bình issued a similar alert (5/18). The Provincial Information Services of Làng Sơn and Tuyên Quang publicized the same warning, but the posters aren't dated: 18/23, 34/31.

[41]   It was known at this time as the Vietnamese Workers' Party (Đảng Lao động Việt Nam).

[42]   "Mặt trận Liên Việt trong cách mạng Việt Nam" [The Liên Việt Front in the Vietnamese revolution]. http://m.baomoi.com/mat-tran-lien-viet-trong-cach-mang-viet-nam/c/5799432.epi, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[43]   Cải cách Ruộng đất.

[44]   "Hoàn thành cải cách ruộng đất và khôi phục kinh tế quốc dân (1955-1957)" [Completing land reform and re-establishing the national economy (1955-1957)], http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/chinhphu/noidungchinhsachthanhtuu? categoryId=797&articleId=10001592, last accessed 2 May 2019.

cient amount of land; those whose land provided enough food and a reserve of grain to seed the next crop; those who owned more land than they themselves could cultivate; and landlords who performed no agricultural labour. In the case of landlords, cadres were supposed to consider their political backgrounds. They were allowed and even encouraged to treat 'reactionary' landlords severely. As for 'progressive' landlords who had supported the revolution and resistance – they were supposed to be treated with leniency. Emphasizing the chaos and violence of Land Reform, Alex-Thai Vo writes about a wealthy landowner named Nguyễn Thị Năm. In the famine of 1944-1945, which claimed the lives of one to two million people, she provided food to people who were starving. She sheltered Việt Minh soldiers. She encouraged her own sons to register for military service. And she gave the revolutionaries large sums of money. Despite her exemplary record, Nguyễn Thị Năm was tried in 1953, convicted of being an 'evil' landlord, and executed.[45]

Today, more than sixty years later, traces of the shock that stemmed from Land Reform are still apparent. This dynamic stems in part from the extreme turmoil that erupted in the countryside. The fact that the Government and Party continue to conceal the truth about what actually happened exacerbates tensions further and contributes to the circulation of wildly divergent accounts of what transpired. At the most basic, fundamental level: how many people died? One thousand? Two thousand? Several thousand? Hundreds of thousands?[46] The current practices of the Government and Party, such as confiscating agricultural land in order to build golf courses and luxury condos, further complicate discussions of the past. Moreover, at the first hint of criticism, authorities deem that the conversation has come to a close.[47] The intensely bureaucratic patterns of the Government and Party and their archival habits as well guarantee that there were, and are, extensive records of what happened – in intimate communal settings, in the contexts of villages, within districts, provinces, zones, inter-zones, and so forth. The prodigious energy of provincial information services, propaganda committees, and propaganda branches undoubtedly resulted in a plethora of images and instructions about how to proceed. However, I have come across only a single poster from the three years of Land Reform. It is oblique and exceedingly

---

[45] Alex-Thai D. Vo, "Nguyễn Thị Năm and the Land Reform in North Vietnam, 1953", *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 10, 1 (2015): 1-62.

[46] For examples of these discordant claims see: Edwin Moïse, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), his revision, http://edmoise.sites.clemson.edu/landbook.html, last accessed 2 May 2019, and Radio Free Asia, "50 Years On: Vietnamese Remember Land Reform Terror", https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam_landreform-20060608.html, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[47] See, for example, David Brown, "Vietnam Quickly Shutters 'Land Reform' Exhibit", *Asia Sentinel* (13 September 2014).

bland. Produced in 1953 by the Cultural Propaganda Service of Bắc Kạn province, it merely states: "Actively participate in the land policies of the Party and Government".[48]

In May 1954, in the mountain valley of Điện Biên Phủ, French forces surrendered. The Geneva Accords that followed (July 1954) established a 'provisional military demarcation line' and specified that the two parties should 'regroup' on opposite sides: forces of the People's Army of Vietnam should assemble on the northern side; forces of the French Union should do so on the southern side.[49] At this point the US began to intrude more extensively into Vietnamese politics by extending diplomatic, military, and financial support to the Republic of Vietnam, a newly-created State in the southern part of the country. In a massive blast of propaganda known as "Operation Passage to Freedom", the US encouraged Vietnamese from the North, particularly Catholics, to migrate to the South. The US sent naval transports to the port of Hải Phòng to retrieve them; established agricultural colonies; and provided settlers with rice, farming tools, and stipends.

Meanwhile, in the DRV, the Party and Government, with abundant assistance from Chinese advisors, continued to 'build socialism' by stirring up murderous struggles in the countryside, which included the dismantling of villages in order to establish cooperatives and collectives. They also seized control of factories. Authorities ushered in what is known today as the 'subsidy period' (*thời bao cấp*), a system based on vouchers (*tem phiếu*) rather than money and a strict rationing of basic commodities, including rice, meat, soy, sugar, and cloth. Adding to the chaos, they began to wage war against traditional customs, such as ritual demonstrations of respect for parents and grandparents on the anniversaries of their deaths. Who knows how many people were arrested? How many were detained? For what crimes were they tried and convicted? To what punishments were they forced to submit? How many people died? Paradoxically, as authorities in the DRV were stirring up violent divisions among Vietnamese, they also encouraged national unity by creating the Fatherland Front.[50] Meanwhile, the pressure on cultivators did not let up. The slogans proliferated: "Renovate farming methods to increase production"![51] In 1960, still in the midst of these upheavals, they created the National Front to Liberate South Vietnam.[52]

---

48 *60 năm*, 55/42.

49 "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam", Chapter I (Provisional Military Demarcation Line and Demilitarized Zone), Article I, https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/KH-LA-VN_540720_GenevaAgreements.pdf, last accessed 2 May 2019.

50 Mặt trận Tổ quốc has been translated as 'Motherland Front' but the more common rendition is 'Fatherland Front', although *tổ* literally refers to ancestors.

51 *60 năm*, 261/120.

52 Mặt trận Dân tộc Giải phóng Miền Nam Việt Nam. In 1964 the Fatherland Front also created *Báo Giải Phóng* [Liberation Newspaper], but the Southern Department of Central Committee Propaganda and Training directed it. "Báo Giải Phóng và tin chiến thắng mỗi độ Xuân về" [Liberation Newspaper and news of

A survey of propaganda posters from this period reveals that the complicated narratives of earlier years have vanished, as have the captions in verse. Individual artists, including Dương Ánh, Cổ Tấn Long Châu, and Phạm Lung, have taken the place of the various provincial propaganda services that were active in earlier years. The rhetoric of these posters is new. They proclaim: "Power to the people"![53] Women, visible before but never the main focus, have assumed more prominent roles. At first glance, the graphics seem to speak in traditional ways: a woman holds a baby. Then the significance of familiar images becomes clear. A woman cradles a child in her arms...but the child is lifeless; blood trickles from its mouth. She embraces a child...while she protects the commune and village. She holds a child...while she promotes collectivization.[54] Some of the images are radically new. Women are armed; they are shooting down planes.[55] The posters keep a running tally: 1500 American planes, then 2000, 3500, 4000.[56] By 1965 the principal concern is clear: Vietnamese must defeat the Americans – the enemy (*giặc Mỹ*, *kẻ thú Mỹ*), the invader (*Mỹ xâm lược*), the enemy invader (*giặc Mỹ xâm lược*) – and those who offer support: Diệm (*Mỹ Diệm*) and the 'puppet' army (*Mỹ Ngụy*).[57] Speaking in the imperative, they command: "Protect the terraced fields and shoot down enemy planes"! "Save the country, oppose the Americans, plant trees"! "Advance"! "Total victory will be ours"! "Fight! Fight until the end"! "Liberate the South, protect the North, reunify the country"![58] The question of food is critical. "Plant manioc"! "Plant potatoes; plant maize; plant wheat, beans, and barley".[59]

On 30 April 1975 the war ended. Celebrating the triumph over the US, the posters proclaim: "Vietnam achieves total victory"! "The Hồ Chí Minh campaign ends in victory"! "South Vietnam is liberated; the country is reunified"! A woman holds a baby in the air, the baby raises the flag: "Our country is completely independent, our people are completely free"![60] In another poster celebrating the end of the war, two children wave two flags: the principal one (red with a gold star) signals the DRV; the secondary one (half blue, half red, with a gold star), symbolizes the PRG (Provisional Revolutionary Government of

---

victory comes every spring], http://www.nhandan.com.vn/tphcm/chuyen-xua-chuyen-nay/item/19346002-. html, last accessed 2 May 2019.

[53]   *60 năm*, 69/51, 70/52, 82/56.

[54]   60 năm, 61/49, 81/56, 122/71.

[55]   *60 năm*, 88/59.

[56]   *60 năm*, 132/74, 137/76, 139/77, 141/77.

[57]   In Vietnamese sources: Cuộc kháng chiến chống Mỹ cứu quốc [Anti-American Resistance War to Save the Country]. *60 năm*, 60/49, 74/53, 78/54, 85/58, 89/59, 98/63, 106/66, 110/67.

[58]   *60 năm*, 86/58, 93/61, 117/70, 133/75.

[59]   *60 năm*, 106/66, 110/67.

[60]   *60 năm*, 199/94, 215/103.

the South, which was formed in 1969). Beneath this image the caption reads: "South and North under one roof"![61] The following year, at the end of the process that unified two formerly separate states – and until the present – only the principal flag, which represents the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, remains.[62] Members of the Vietnamese Workers' Party, returning to their roots, reclaimed their original name: Vietnamese Communist Party. For a period of ten years the Party and Government extended the socialist paradigm of the North throughout the entire country. To clarify the task – the process of converting a landscape ruined by war into something productive – the propaganda posters urged people on: "Turn bomb craters into green fields of manioc and maize!", "Every household: a fishpond and a vegetable garden!". They prodded: "Let's plant white sweet potatoes!", "Grow soy bean DH-4!". They shouted: "Develop Uncle Hồ's orchards!", "Grow oranges and bananas!". They demanded: "Produce 600,000 tons of foodstuff!", "Produce 21 million tons!". They instructed: "Grow tea!", "Produce more coffee!", "Make ceramics!". They cajoled: "Every family: grow mulberry trees and keep silkworms!", "Produce more latex!", "More coconut!", "Raise honeybees!", "Grow bindweed in all ponds and canals!".[63]

III. Remember

Then, abruptly, the experiment ended. At the Sixth Party Congress in December 1986, General Secretary Nguyễn Văn Linh introduced the policy of 'renovation' (*đổi mới*). The new goal: not socialism but 'market' socialism (*chủ nghĩa xã hội thị trường*). No more co-operatives, no more collectives, no more vouchers. To a limited degree, the messages that have proliferated in postsocialist times mirror those of an earlier era. The emphasis on productivity is as insistent as before: "Produce more meat and eggs!","Industrialize!", "Drill oil!", "Build dams!".[64] The commemorative impulse that was prominent in previous years has become more pervasive, but the material – the point of the commemorative ritual – has changed and the number of focal points has narrowed.[65] To make references to the past resonate in every way – visually, emotionally, temporally – representatives of the Party and Government plant flags and hang banners throughout cities and towns; they light

---

[61]   *60 năm*, 206/97.

[62]   *60 năm*, 204/96.

[63]   *60 năm*, 213/103, 217/105, 218/105, 222/106, 230/109, 231/109, 232/110, 233/110, 235/111, 244/114, 245/114, 247/115, 252/117, 253/117, 254/117, 268/121, 276/124.

[64]   *60 năm*, 277/124, 300/131, 303/132, 525/203.

[65]   I discuss the commemorative ethos of the period 1956-1976 in "Chronotypes, Commemoration: A New Sense of Time", *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2002), 163-233.

fireworks; stage operas; write poems. The People must remember; they must not forget. Each day in the present can recall a critical moment from the past. "On 3 February 1930 the VCP was established!".[66] "On 30 April 1975 the People's Army liberated Saigon".[67] "On 7 May 1954 in Điện Biên Phủ French forces surrendered".[68] "Uncle Hồ was born on 19 May 1890".[69] "On 19 August 1945 the Revolution erupted".[70] "On 19 August 1945 the Security Service was founded".[71] "2 September 1945–2 September 2005: Sixty Years of Independence, Freedom, and Happiness".[72]

Clearly dominating these commemorative events is Hồ Chí Minh. In official iconography he is benign; he is avuncular; children crowd about him, laughing and dancing. He is a writer, the author of literally hundreds of works (now consolidated in fifteen volumes). As a young man Hồ Chí Minh adroitly avoided detection; now one cannot avoid his face. It appears on all denominations of the Vietnamese *đồng*; in public places his portrait appears on the most prominent wall; in folk operas he is the star. He appears on billboards that remind passersby to emulate, to remember, to strive. A bomb crater left by an American B-52? "Uncle Hồ's fishpond". An enormous banyan tree in Unification Park? Uncle Hồ planted it... not just generically, but precisely: in 1960. In January. On the eleventh.[73]

The act of commemorating a key moment from the past is always more than innocent recollection. It is also the occasion to emphasize how a particular moment should be recalled. Through skillful juxtapositions – the hammer and sickle paired with a dove, the hammer and sickle with an enormous yellow flower, the hammer and sickle combined with a lotus – the Party retains a potent symbol of the past but converts it into something more mild.[74] A stylized image of the lotus bloom has been stenciled along the perimeter wall of the Ministry of Defense – on the street in Hà Nội named for the Nguyễn commander Nguyễn Tri Phương. What is the significance of the Party today? More doves, another

---

[66] *60 năm*, 415/169. Multiple propaganda posters are dedicated to the commemorative occasions mentioned here. In each case I have chosen one.

[67] *60 năm*, 461-2/183.

[68] *60 năm*, 459/182.

[69] *60 năm*, 512/198.

[70] *60 năm*, 513/198.

[71] *60 năm*, 513/198.

[72] *60 năm*, 514/198.

[73] I saw the fish pond in 1987, the banyan tree in 2014.

[74] For depictions of these compound images – the hammer and sickle and dove, hammer and sickle and flower, hammer and sickle and lotus – see *60 năm*, 424/172, 429/174, 506/196, 508/197. Together the hammer and sickle and lotus also form the logo of Dân vận, the site dedicated to propaganda, http://www. danvan.vn, last accessed 2 May 2019.

hammer and sickle: It means peace, prosperity, and happiness.[75] The Party safeguards great artifacts from prehistory, such as the Đông Sơn bronze drum.[76] It is also the arbiter of culture: in the family, the village, the ward.[77] If the revolution – meaning here the fifty-year period extending from the 1930s to the 1980s – was modern, destabilising, and divisive, its consolidation is stabilising and unifying. In contemporary depictions, the revolution restored political sovereignty to the people. Meanwhile, the global Vietnamese diaspora reminds us that, in 1954 and again in 1975, more than a million people opted for the trauma of exile rather than remain in the DRV or the SRV.

---

[75]   *60 năm*, 507/196.

[76]   The home pages of various ministries incorporate images of the Đông Sơn bronze drum: Culture, Sports, and Tourism (http://bvhttdl.gov.vn); Public Security (http://bocongan.gov.vn); Science and Technology (https://www.most.gov.vn/vn/Pages/Trangchu.aspx); and Transportation (http://mt.gov.vn/vn/Pages/Trangchu.aspx), last accessed 2 May 2019.

[77]   *60 năm*, 529/205.

ABSTRACTS

Giulia Bassi

Giulia Bassi

Università del Piemonte Orientale 'Amedeo Avogadro' (giulia.bassi@gmail.com)

Discipline and Organisation: Performativity and Revolutionary Semantics in Gramsci's and Togliatti's Texts (1916-1928)

Is it possible to appreciate 'the utopia' of a political revolutionary text? And, if so, to what extent? How much of such a performative revolutionary potential has the actual power to orient social identities and practices? In the vein of the historiographical approach of the New Cultural History, this essay responds to the need to reevaluate the research on the political lexicon. Mostly neglected by the historiography of the Italian Communist Party, this methodology considers language not just as a mere superstructure component, but as a fundamental factor founding the structure itself. This essay carries out a historical-linguistic and semantic analysis of some keywords (such as 'revolution', 'discipline', and 'organization') and aims at exploring the political modalities and the instrumental use of language in a sample of early texts by Antonio Gramsci (1916-1918) and Palmiro Togliatti (1925-1928). The goal is to identify the several ways in which these authors addressed their militants so that they would identify themselves with a particular 'must-be' ideal (the 'good revolutionary', the 'good communist')

and in order to mobilise them, first by giving them a system of values and meanings and then by giving them a transcendent motivation for the achievement of the 'future communist civilisation'.

Franco Andreucci
Università di Pisa (francoandreucci@gmail.com)

The Languages of the Italian Communists: Some Descriptive Remarks (1921-1964)

The Italian Communist Party (ICP) was the largest communist party of the West. Although it was part of the International communist movement, it pretended to be an 'original' party, bearer of a 'National way to communism'. Instead, many scholars have successfully demonstrated that the links of the party with the Soviet Union and leninism were strong and solid until the mid 70's. This essay tries to demonstrate that in terms of political language, the ICP was deeply influenced by the Communist jargon as created during the Stalin era. As scholars have written, regarding the cultural identity of the Communist parties, in the 50's there was no need of a centralized cultural authority, because the symbols and the language of Communism were already a common lingo and a standardized jargon. This essay is based on the linguistic analysis of a series of official documents of the ICP and studies the origins of the IPC's *langue de bois*.

Anna Tonelli
Università di Urbino Carlo Bo (anna.tonelli@uniurb.it)

Grammar and Historical Materialism: Linguistic Education in Italian Communist Party Schools (1947-1977)

The Italian Communist Party organised and founded a well-established system of party schools to train its cadres, with the famous Frattocchie School representing its most important institute. One of the cornerstones of the teaching provided to students from the popular classes (mainly workers and peasants) concerned study methods aimed at reading, understanding and using the concepts of classic Marxist writings. Students at these schools would have to engage in written work to show their understanding of

the theories of historical materialism and comprehension of the usefulness of the party school. The subjects taught also included grammar, logic and linguistics, since future cadres would need to be able to write and to speak correctly in public. This article reconstructs the different stages of linguistic teaching for political purposes over a timescale ranging from the post-war period to the mid-1970s, highlighting the persistence and splits in method and content.

Guido Samarani – Sofia Graziani
Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia (samarani@unive.it) – Università di Trento (sofia.graziani@unitn.it)

Socialism and Revisionism: the Power of Words in the Ideological Controversy between the Italian Communist Party and the Chinese Communist Party (Late 1950s-Early 1960s)

In 1962, in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split, an ideological dispute broke out between the Italian Communist Party (ICP) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and eventually led to the interruption of bilateral relations. Togliatti's idea of a transition to socialism through democratic and peaceful means (the so-called *via italiana al socialismo*) was at the core of the Chinese condemnation of the Italian Communist Party's policy as 'revisionist'. Yet, divergences clearly emerged as early as 1959 when the ICP sent for the first time a high-level delegation to China to officially meet the leaders of the CCP. The joint document signed at the end of the visit was the result of a long process of negotiation that disclosed not only the Chinese dissent towards the Italian positions on 'peaceful coexistence' and the *via italiana al socialismo*, but also the difficulties of reaching a consensus over the terminology to be used and translated in Chinese. This chapter will focus on the ICP-CCP dispute as seen through the analysis of language, considering as main sources the Communist official press (Italian and Chinese), Italian and Chinese leaders' speeches and also some relevant archival documents. Our aim is to provide a better and deeper understanding about the relations between politics and language in the context of this controversy, which involved two political parties (the ICP and the CCP), which were searching for their own autonomous road to socialism, albeit in very different historical contexts.

Roberto Colozza

Università di Firenze (rcolozza@yahoo.it)

The Italian Communist Party and the Birth of il manifesto: Languages and Cultures of a Conflict (1966-1970)

The essay describes the rise and fall of the Italian Communist Party (ICP)'s dissident leftist wing taking its name from the journal *il manifesto*, which was its main tribune. The unauthorized monthly, founded in June 1969, was the main cause of a conflict that exploded following a creeping antagonism between the party leading bodies and the minority. This contrast involved some major issues related to international relations, ideology and, most of all, the party's internal democracy. Its worsening was also due to the death of the ICP's general secretary Palmiro Togliatti in 1964, which provoked a lack of unifying leadership and the emerging of such divergent identities within the party. The controversial history of *il manifesto*, which was bound to become one of the major protagonists of the European Left in the 1970s, represents well the evolving handling of dissidences in the post-1968 ICP. With respect to procedural solutions that were mostly based on the punishment of the dissent, the treatment of *il manifesto* shows a more negotiating model, in which administrative disciplinary procedures coexist with informal interactions between the two fronts as well as a real debate within them. The expulsion of the undisciplined militants was the solution of a long-lasting and intense confrontation, which the essay analyses by seeking to decrypt its communicational, cultural and ritual aspects.

Luciano Cheles

Université de Grenoble-Alpes (luciano.cheles@laposte.net)

The Faces of Militancy: Palmiro Togliatti's Propaganda Portraits (1948-1964)

In the early post-war period, the Italian Communist Party (ICP), believing in collective values rather than in the cult of a charismatic individual, rejected any form of publicity centred on its leader, Palmiro Togliatti. However, the attempt on his life, in July 1948, triggered a cult which his party was happy to encourage. The present essay focuses on the use of the portrait as a means of promoting the leader. It will examine the posters and post-cards featuring his effigy that were produced by the ICP on the occasion of various events (for example Togliatti's return to active political life after his attempted assassination, his 60th birthday, the 30th anniversary of the party's foundation, the parliamentary

election of 1953, Togliatti's funeral) in order to show what image the party wished to project of its leader. The analysis of the visual sources of Togliatti's portraits reveals the extent to which such imagery was dependent on that devised in the Soviet Union to celebrate Lenin and Stalin.

Andrea Mariuzzo
Università di Modena e Reggio-Emilia (andrea.mariuzzo@gmail.com)

Cold-War Iconographic Battles: The Italian Communist Party and Italian Anti-Communism (1945-1956)

The negative images of communism that hostile political cultures made up in the course of the twentieth century are essential elements to understand the making of communist identity itself. The essay will deal with the responses of the Italian Communist Party (ICP) to the heavy anti-communist campaigns that took place in Italy during the Cold War, namely in the first decade after World War II. It will be mainly based on the analysis of propaganda posters and other visual communication materials, and will be focused on some significant cases of interchange of graphic references, symbols and narrative styles. As long as it was becoming one of the strongest and most influential elements in the Italian democratic arena, the ICP had to face an intensive and popular hostile discourse, spread by both other political parties' personnel and non-party religious and social activists, and based on its identification with atheism, the betrayal of the nation, the threat of a new global war, and economic inefficiency. The study will highlight to what extent the reaction of the party's propaganda offices to such attacks, and especially the adoption of recurrent anti-communist themes for counter-attack, will contribute to the implementation of a more effective and genuinely national discourse for Italian communists.

Enrico Mannari
Luiss School of Government (enrico.mannari@innovazionedemocratica.org)

Rebellious Walls: Graffiti in Italy during the Cold War (1948-1955)

Graffiti constitutes a significant but very little used source for analysing the relationship between the 'subversive' language of the working classes and the 'micro' propaganda of the ICP (Italian Communist Party) in the central years of the Cold War. These are

the walls that, already extensively used by the rhetoric of Fascism, resume speaking with a rebellious use of language, and where you can find both political orthodoxy and working-class irony. Invectives, incitements to fight, comments on events, humour, aggression, puns. They can be found at street crossings, at the entrances to factories and schools, in the streets of working-class neighbourhoods: all physical spaces where a mark can be left. Their communicative strength lies in their simplicity and immediacy. Moreover, the territory is physically marked and personal presence is given visibility in a context of verbal and ideological confrontation, the traces of which are recorded by the public security organs. Although this phenomenon is not easily measurable and difficult to compare, the language and geography of these 'poor' forms of protest and social and political communication also help us to better understand that 'local' account which represents the uncertain boundary between working-class rebellion and the ICP's propagandistic activities.

Petre Petrov
University of Texas, Austin (petrov@utexas.edu)

Tautology as the Highest Form of Ideology: Reflections on Stalinist Discourse (1930-1953)

The chapter takes theoretical aim at the frequent occurrence of tautology in official Stalinist language. My goal is to shed light on a phenomenon that has been inadequately understood in existing scholarship. The tautologies of Soviet ideological discourse have been traditionally interpreted as either showcasing the primitive intellectual level of party scribes or as exemplifying the general irrationalism of totalitarian language. In the scholarly tradition of *langue de bois* (*dereviannyi iazyk,* "wooden language"), a propensity for meaningless repetition was seen as one of the ways in which the linguistic medium, mobilized in the service of modern political dictatorships, aids in the disabling of independent rational thought. Against this line of interpretation, the present chapter argues that the tautologies of Stalinist language are something more than mind-numbing nonsense. A certain logic lies behind these seemingly anomalous expressions, and it could give us a key to understanding the character of Stalinist ideology. Slavoj Žižiek's theory of ideological discourse, with its emphasis on the tautological nature of the master-signifier, and Roland Barthes's notion of "naturalization" provide the contrasting background for my argument. By analyzing instances of tautology from official Soviet texts, I show that the logic of repetition/redundancy in them is qualitatively different from what these two influential theorizations of ideology have proposed.

Barbara Delli Castelli

Università 'G. d'Annunzio', Chieti-Pescara (barbara.dellicastelli@unich.it)

The Language Beyond the Wall: On the Sovietisation of the German Language in the 'ex-DDR' (1945-1989)

In the four decades of division between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), processes of differentiation took place on ideological, political, economic and sociocultural levels. These processes were also reflected in the language and autonomous linguistic development of the two nations. Despite the many features that remained common at the level of the morphosyntactic structures, basic vocabulary and compositional norms, the GDR, under the influence of the Russian language and Marxist-Leninist doctrine, started to move in an autonomous direction – above all in relation to the development of the part of the lexicon most strongly linked to ideology. This was put into practice through a myriad of neologisms, foreignisms, structural calques and semantic adaptations, and through the recovery of terms that before 1933 had been used in environments related to Communism, the use of which strongly increased in the Democratic Republic.

Călin Morar-Vulcu

Independent Researcher (cmorarvulcu@yahoo.com)

Unreliable Allies: the Peasants in the Romanian Early Communist Discourse (1948-1965)

In the Romanian official discourse and particularly in its Stalinist phase, the peasantry is the object of a constant effort of definition and identity construction, which parallels the collectivization of Romanian agriculture. I examine this process at two levels, lexico-grammatical and conceptual, using tools borrowed from social semiotics and metaphor analysis and I compare the resulting patterns of this process of identity construction with those of other social actors, such as the working class and the women. The discourse uses several meaning-making tools to construe the identity of the peasantry: classification (resulting in sub-entities with different entitlements such as poor and middle peasantry), collectivisation (aggregation of individual actors in a collective actor) and generic reference (prototypical definitions of 'the peasant'). The peasantry is also passivized, that is, it is represented as predominantly acted upon by other actors. As regards the metaphors mostly used to talk and write about peasantry, I identify four

main frameworks: spatial (container and positional metaphors), physical (inertial, gravitational metaphors), biological (body metaphor) and anthropomorphic. Particularly relevant is – via anthropomorphic metaphors – the relationship with the working class, structured around the topics of alliance, help and contract. The peasantry appears as a fragmented, manipulable, inert, unreliable, semi-conscious and self-interested actor, situated in an inferior position compared to other actors. The features of the peasantry are essentialised and considered immutable. The analysis also helps to outline the political community envisaged in Stalinism: a fixed distribution of places and socio-economic functions reminiscent of corporatism.

František Čermák
Charles University Prague (frantisek.cermak@ff.cuni.cz)

Language of the Communist Totality in Czechoslovakia: Influence on Our Awareness and its Projection into Reality (1952-2010)

On the data chosen from two comparable large corpora, one from the period of the Communist Totality, the other from Today, namely post-totalitarian period, an attempt has been made to compare vocabulary of both periods and some of its typical lexemes as well as collocations. Through this corpus approach both a skeleton picture of both periods as well as of the current notions, typical of these widely different times, could have been, hopefully, drawn and through that, main features of both periods and society living in them obtained. The research is an off-spin of a Dictionary of the Totalitarian Period published recently and is to be seen as a continuation of it. The Totalitarian vocabulary and the corpus have been based (each around half a million of words), mostly, on the Communist newspapers while a corresponding corpus of the same newspaper type of texts from the Czech National Corpus has been used as a counterweight. Thus, effectively, vocabulary of these two periods spanned over some 50 years.

Maria Rita Leto
Università 'G. d'Annunzio', Chieti-Pescara (mariarita.leto@unich.it)

Brotherhood and Unity: Language and Language Politics in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1991)

A constant reminder of unresolved national problems, the issue of the Serbo-Croatian language and of the creation of a standard language presented itself in various forms

in both the first Yugoslavia, a centralized and monarchic country, and the second one, a socialist and federal country. In the effort to produce a viable standard language, the Central Committee of the Communist League had to officially address this issue on several occasions, making decisions that more than once turned out to be contradictory and harbingers of further complications. This essay investigates the linguistic policies adopted in Tito's Yugoslavia from its constitutive act (Jajce 1943) to 1991, year of Yugoslavia' s breakup. While the socialist state in many ways followed a leading-edge policy with regard to the linguistic minorities, the issue of a federal language itself and of its variants, by contrast, remained an open question, revelatory of the difficulties to strike a precarious and ultimately impossible balance between unitarism and separatism. The failure to agree upon a name identifying a shared federal language bespeaks of the disintegrating tendencies that in the following years would eventually make Yugoslavia collapse.

Valeria Coronel
FLACSO Ecuador (vcoronel@flacso.edu.ec)

The Ecuadorian Left during Global Crisis: Republican Democracy, Class Struggle and State Formation (1919-1946)

This essay studies the Ecuadorian left in its specific organizational forms as well as examining its interventions in spaces of dialogue and dispute with other political forces such as the public sphere and in State formation. It examines the press and different spaces of leftist participation in political contestations concerning collective action and the organs of the state. It is suggested that the emergence of the Ecuadorian left was rooted in the press and other political organizations closely aligned with *Alfarist* radicalism, and that within the context of the crisis of 1920 the left adopted notions of justice that had been previously popularized during the democratic revolution, combining them with the discourse of twentieth century revolutions, including Russian, Mexican and Peruvian variants of Marxism. The Ecuadorian left had notable successes between the 1920s-1940s, challenging conservative rights, fascism and the threat of the transnational oligarchy; it instigated discourses of the national popular State that successfully connected regional and ethnic identities in the popular imaginary, it promoted popular organization and demanded public recognition of popular causes; and it participated in the political life of the State and its reform. While it had only limited success at the electoral level, it nevertheless maintained a notable presence in the legislative arena, the army, in agrarian politics, labor policy, education and in democratic representation. The

left marked the public sphere with a characteristic cultural production that combined notions of radical modernity with notions of popular culture, in the process managing to displace Spanish intellectual currents in these cultural disputes. From the end of the IIWW, the Ecuadorian state formed by the left and by popular struggle became the main target of the counterrevolution, unifying the oligarchies in their attempt to configure a modern right, and catching the attention of the political intelligence agencies of the Western Hemisphere during the Cold War. The left associated with the beginnings of neoliberalism nevertheless maintained a somewhat distrustful gaze upon this previous stage of the national popular left.

Joaquìn Fermandois
Universidad San Sebastián, Pontificia Universidad católica de Chile (jfermand@uc.cl)

The Rise of the Union between Theory and Praxis: Chilean Communism in the Cold War (1934-1990)

The Communist Party played an outstanding role in Chilean politics during the twentieth century. The party's history sank its roots in the three decades before World War I, when a nascent left-wing language, shaped by socialism and anarchism, created a sort of anti-systemic persuasion in the country, connected with new social movements and protests. The Russian Revolution introduced a big change in the social and political models of the left, even if, as was the case across the world, the emerging left was divided. From the 1920s to the 1930s the Communist Party developed a tightly knitted organization, standing on the Marxist-Leninist tenets determined by the Comintern, even if there were at the same time recognizable Chilean traces in the party's ideological history. Under Stalinist influence, and aided by its own dynamic, the ideology became not just a point of reference, but a language that held the party united through several decades, surviving all the swings of the century, including political persecution at the end of the 1940s and the Pinochet dictatorship's attempts to destroy the party through the murder of many of its leaders and members in the 1970s and 1980s. The common bond, besides the apparatchik and social organizations, remained always the language derived from the ideology approved by the Central Committee, confirmed by quotations of the sacred texts, reproduced in cell life, in the youth branch, the party's media, and the 'cadres school' (education of militants). The ideology and doctrine evolved, as it was a reflection of the evolution of Soviet communism, even if the actual policy of the

party was relatively pragmatic. The force of the ideology was shattered only in the late 1980s, with the visible end of the Cold War, both across the world and inside Chile.

Guo Wu
Allegheny College, Meadville, PA (gwu@allegheny.edu)

'Continuity, Adaptation, and Challenge': The Chinese Communist ideology and policy on minzu (1922-2013)

Marxism and Leninism, the theoretical foundation of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party), had many ambiguous dimensions in treating the national issue, and the CCP's national discourse was influenced by Marxist ideology, Confucian tradition of Great Unity, its own revolutionary practices, and the *realpolitik* concerns over resources and security as the leader of the State after 1949. Its ideology shifted in several stages. Firstly, a liberal-revolutionary national discourse which called for self-determination of all nationalities (*minzu*) within the Chinese territory, who made up six percent of the Chinese population based on the 1954 census. Secondly, the Long March of 1934-1935 fully exposed the CCP to the non-Han minorities in southwest and northwest Chinese borderlands, and the Party had both tensions and accommodations with local tribes. After arriving at Yan'an, the CCP had more experiences in engaging the Chinese Muslims and started empirical studies. In the third place, after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the CCP put more emphasis on the unity of the "Chinese nation" (*zhonghua minzu*) which was invented in the early twentieth century and implied presumably a homogeneous Chinese nation in the common resistance of the Japanese. Finally, after 1949, the CCP explicitly terminated any previous call for national self-determination, emphasizing instead the PRC's nature as a 'unified multi-nation State' (*tongyi de duo minzu guojia*), and the CCP distinguished itself from the Soviet Union by disavowing the Soviet-style federalism. The CCP in the early 1950s also defined the term *minzu* (Chinese generic word for nation, nationality, and ethnic group) as historical formations and cultural entities regardless of its presumed relationship with the rise of modern capitalism, and it rejected the labeling of *buzu* (clan) or *buluo* (tribe) to achieve internal equality. This semantic practice distanced socialist China from the Western definition of ethnicity and nation, but the Chinese Communist concept *minzu*, regardless of its uniqueness compared with the Soviet and Chinese Nationalist ideologies, also had some

intrinsic weaknesses, one of which was paternalist 'neo-traditionalism' which reinforced minority nationalities' dependency on Han nationality.[1]

FENGYUAN JI
Australian National University, Canberra (fengyuan.ji@anu.edu.au)

The Power of Words: Labels and their Consequences in Mao's China (1949-1976)

When Mao and the Chinese Communist Party became supreme in 1949, they used their power to control words. They suppressed words that expressed 'incorrect' ways of thinking, they taught everyone a new political vocabulary, and they required people to recite political formulae and scripts that gave correct linguistic form to correct thought. As part of this project of linguistic engineering, they introduced a system of classification and political labelling that located every individual within a 'good' class, a 'bad class', or an intermediate class. They supplemented this with a system of 'Red' (good) and 'Black' (bad) categories that enabled even people of good class origins to be stigmatised. This essay will explain how this system of classification and labelling affected people's life chances, showing that it was especially devastating when the labels were combined with the language of class war during the repeated 'class struggles' that Mao instigated to attack alleged class enemies and promote revolutionary consciousness. The damage to people's lives reached its climax during the Cultural Revolution, when Mao for a time lost control of the process of labelling and the country descended into low grade civil war. After restoring order by the use of force, Mao brought the process of labelling back under centralised control and used it to condemn the young revolutionaries who had pinned invidious labels on their opponents and attacked them in his name. He then ensured that labelling remained a fundamental technology of social control, using it to institutionalise the Cultural Revolution and instigate new class struggles right down to his death in 1976. From beginning to end, the labelling system was a weapon that advanced the interests and objectives of those who controlled it.

---

[1] I borrow the concepts 'neo-traditionalism' and 'dependency' from Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), believing that the analytical framework can apply to the Chinese inter-nationality relations, mainly that between the majority Han and non-Han minorities. This chapter is largely based on a previous contribution of mine just published as *Narrating Southern Chinese Minority Nationalities. Politics, Disciplines, and Public History* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

Xɪɴɢ Lu
DePaul University, USA (llu@depaul.edu)

Ideology and Discourse: Rhetorical Construction of Mao Zedong's 'New Communist Person' (1949-1976)

In his *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Mikhail Bakhtin contends that language does not merely reflect the world, but actually constructs ideology of a society. The ideology of Chinese communism is disseminated through morally charged slogans, political campaigns, and the mass participation of political rituals. This chapter explores the discursive construction of 'the new communist person' by examining the speeches and writings of Mao Zedong (1893-1976), the paramount leader of the People's Republic of China between 1949 to 1976. While vehemently propagating Marxist theory of class struggle and reinforcing class-consciousness into the Chinese mind, Mao's discursive construction of 'the New Communist Person' utilized and appropriated traditional Chinese values and rhetorical resources. Through rhetorical features such as metaphors, analogies, role models, and guilt redemption, Mao successfully persuaded many Chinese people to become selfless, loyal to the Party, and dedicated to the communist cause. I will identify and analyze these rhetorical features. I contend that while Mao's discourse has its moral appeal, it has also created a radical ideology and unrealistic illusion among the Chinese people. The forced self-criticism political ritual used to construct 'the new communist person' has brought humiliation to many Chinese intellectuals. Whereas Mao's legacy lives on in today's China, the discourse of 'the socialist core values', propagated by the current Chinese government has lost its rhetorical appeal due to ideological crisis.

Pᴀᴛʀɪᴄɪᴀ Pᴇʟʟᴇʏ
Texas Tech University, Lubbock (patricia.pelley@ttu.edu)

From Class to Culture: Reconfigurations of Vietnamese Communism (1925-2015)

This chapter examines the history of the Vietnamese Communist Party [VCP] from its origins in 1930 until contemporary times. I argue that, for a period of around forty years, the VCP tried to reconcile two antagonistic positions. It stressed the necessity of divisive, even violent, class-based struggles in politics and economic life and, at the same time, continually called for national unity against France and the US. At the Sixth Party Congress in 1986, the VCP resolved this tension by introducing the policy of

'renovation' (*đổi mới*), which is responsible for the shift in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam [SRV] from socialism to 'market' socialism (*chủ nghĩa xã hội thị trường*). No longer focused on the dynamics of class, the VCP now emphasizes morality and culture, even though some socialist structures remain in place. The circulation of two symbols clearly articulates this new path. The hammer and sickle signals reverence for Lenin, an indebtedness to his idea of the vanguard party, and respect for Soviet-style communism more generally. The lotus bloom alludes to more primordial patterns. Both icons are similarly pervasive. This chapter is divided into three parts. Part I clarifies the contexts in which Vietnamese communism emerged and the Party's formative years. Part II concentrates on the Indochina Wars (1946-1975) and the period after national reunification in 1976 when the SRV tried to 'protect' socialism in the North and 'build' socialism in the South. Part III centers on the period since the Sixth Party Congress (1986), when the Government and Party systematically dismantled communes, cooperatives, collectives, and many state-owned enterprises as well. When the VCP was established in 1930 it had one principal goal: uproot and eradicate the status quo. Now its overriding aim is to maintain it.

AUTHORS

Giulia Bassi obtained her PhD in Contemporary History from the University of Trieste with a co-tutorship with the University of Reading. She is currently a research fellow in Contemporary History at the University of Eastern Piedmont and Adjunct Professor at the University of Parma. Moreover, she is involved in an active collaboration with the University of Milan. Her research focuses on the history of political thought (mostly on the Italian Communist Party) and on the history of twentieth century historiography (most of all on the European and Italian Marxist and Communist tradition). Her most recent publications include the book *Non è solo questione di classe. Il "popolo" nel discorso del Partito comunista italiano (1921-1991)* (Roma: Viella, 2019), as well as the following articles: "L'eroico cammino alla testa del popolo. La costruzione discorsiva della leadership nel Partito comunista italiano (1944-1964)", *Nuova Rivista Storica* (forthcoming 2020); "Tutto il popolo sotto la bandiera della democrazia. Il Partito comunista italiano e la costruzione discorsiva del popolo (1943-1945)", *Storica* (2017); "Storia, storiografia, manifesto: alcune considerazioni in merito a una sintesi difficile", *Studi storici* (2016); and the chapter "Quanta storia passa? La ricezione dei contenuti storiografici da parte dei lettori. Un'indagine a campione", in *Sfogliare la storia. La storia nei giornali italiani*, ed. by Barbara Bracco (Roma: Viella, 2019).

Franco Andreucci has been a professor of contemporary history at the University of Pisa, where he taught from 1976 until his retirement in 2013. He has also been a visiting professor in Barcelona, Marburg, Chicago, as well as a Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence. His scholarship explores European political history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with particular interests in the fields of the history of Communism, Marxism, and German social democracy. He is the author of several books and articles on these topics.

Anna Tonelli is full professor of Contemporary History at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo, where she also teaches History of Political Systems and Parties, and History of Journalism. She is scientific director of the Institute of Contemporary History in Pesaro, which is affiliated with the Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri. She is also a member of the scientific committee at LaPolis, the Political and Social Studies Workshop directed by Ilvo Diamanti. She is interested in cultural history as well as political and social history, in particular the history of the ICP. Her most recent books include the following: *A scuola di politica. Il modello comunista di Frattocchie (1944-1993)* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2017); *Per indegnità morale. Il caso Pasolini nell'Italia del buon costume* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2015); *Gli irregolari. Amori comunisti al tempo della Guerra fredda* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2014); *Falce e tortello. Storia politica e sociale delle Feste dell'Unità (1945-2011)* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2012).

Guido Samarani is Professor at the Department of Asian and African Studies, Ca' Foscari University, Venice, Italy, where he teaches History of China and History and Institutions of East Asia. He is a member of the editorial board and scientific committees of various national and international journals, Guest Professor at the Research Center for the Study of China's Modern and Contemporary History, Zhejiang University, China and Director of the Marco Polo Centre for Europe-Asia Global Connections, at Ca' Foscari University. In 2018 he published the volume *La rivoluzione in movimento. La Cina della Lunga Marcia*; in 2018 and 2017 he co-edited the volumes *Roads to Reconciliation. People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy during the Cold War period (1949-1971)* and *Chiang Kai-shek and His Time. New Historical and Historiographical Perspectives*, both for Edizioni CaFoscari Digital Publishing.

Sofia Graziani is assistant professor at the University of Trento, Italy, where she teaches Chinese language and modern history. She holds a PhD in East Asian History and Civilizations from the University of Rome "La Sapienza" and has been a recipient of the Post-doctoral Fellowship awarded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (2012-2013). She published the volume *Il Partito e i giovani: storia della Lega giovanile comunista in Cina* (*The Party and youth: a history of China's Communist Youth League*) (Venezia: Cafoscarina, 2013) and coedited *Roads to Reconciliation: People's Republic of China, Western Europe and Italy during the Cold War Period, 1949–1971* for Edizioni CaFoscari (2018).

Roberto Colozza has been educated at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, where he earned his PhD in co-tutoring with the EHESS in Paris. He then worked as a post-doctoral fellow in several research institutes in Italy (Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso, Rome; Scuola Superiore di Studi di Storia Contemporanea, Milan), France (Sciences Po Paris), UK (Kingston University London) and Spain (University Carlos III, Madrid) in the framework of grants funded by various public or private institutions including the EU. His main topic is the history of twentieth century Europe, with a focus on parties and movements of post-WWII Left. In his works, he seeks to blend the political history with issues and approaches of cultural, social, intellectual, and urban history. Among his publications, there are a biographical portrait of the Italian Socialist politician Lelio Basso – *Lelio Basso. Una biografia politica, 1948-1958* (Roma: Ediesse, 2010) –, a monograph on the Italian and French communist parties propaganda on national-patriotic symbols – *Repubbliche rosse. I simboli nazionali del PCI e del PCF, 1944-1953* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2009) – as well as a book on an Italian political and intellectual movement of the 1950s – *Partigiani in Borghese. Unità Popolare nell'Italia del dopoguerra* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2015).

Luciano Cheles has taught at the Universities of Lancaster, Lyon 2 and Poitiers, and is a member of the *Laboratoire Universitaire Histoire Cultures Italie Europe* of the University of Grenoble. His research has focused on political communication from the early twentieth century to the present. He has curated several exhibitions on the visual propaganda of fascism, and that of Italian, French, British and European elections. His publications include: *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, co-edited with R.G. Ferguson and M. Vaughan (London; New-York: Longman, 1995); *The Art of Persuasion*, co-edited with L. Sponza (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); and *Il ri-*

tratto e il potere. Immagini della politica in Francia e in Italia nel Novecento, co-edited with A. Giacone (Ospedaletto: Pacini, 2017). His book *The Faces of Politics. The Portrait as Propaganda*, co-edited with A. Giacone (Routledge) is forthcoming.

Andrea Mariuzzo has taught historical disciplines at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa and at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. In the course of his career, he has been visiting scholar at Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, Harvard University in Cambridge (MA), and Cornell University in Ithaca (NY). His research activity has mainly focused on political communication and political training experiences in post-WWII Italy and on Italian education policy between Fascism and the Cold War. His most recent book is *Communism and Anti-Communism in Early Cold-War Italy. Language, Symbols and myths*, published by Manchester University Press in 2018.

Enrico Mannari is a professor on the Master in Open Government and Institutional Communication course at the Luiss School of Government and he was Scientific Director of the Cooperative Memories Foundation. His research has focused on "rebellion" in contemporary Italy and the history of the cooperative movement. His recent publications are a selection of writings by Gobetti and Gramsci, *Sul Risorgimento* (Milano: Mind, 2011). He also edited the volumes *Custodire il futuro* (Milano: Mind, 2012); *La Coop di un altro genere* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2015); and *Lezioni di democrazia* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2016). He collaborates with the newspaper *Il Tirreno*, part of the *L'Espresso* publishing group.

Petre Petrov is an Assistant Professor of Russian at the University of Texas at Austin. His primary research deals with Stalinist culture and ideology in the context of European aesthetic and philosophic modernism. He is the author of *Automatic for the Masses: The Death of the Author and the Birth of Socialist Realism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015) and co-editor, with Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, of *The Vernaculars of Communism: Language, Ideology and Power in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015). He has published articles on Soviet cinema, socialist realism, modernist literature, cultural and literary theory, ideology, and semiotics.

Barbara Delli Castelli is Research Fellow and Assistant Professor in German Linguistics and Translation from German into Italian at the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures at the University "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara. Her research focuses mainly on topics in the fields of literary and specialised translation, didactics of German as a foreign language, history of the German language with a focus on the twentieth century. Among her publications on the language of the German Democratic Republic are the volume *Acronimi e altre forme di abbreviazione nel DDR-Deutsch* (Milano: LED, 2012), the book chapters "Berlino: una città divisa anche linguisticamente?" (2013) and "Il significato di 'Freundschaft' nella Germania divisa" (2018).

Călin Morar-Vulcu is an independent researcher; his main interests are the history of the communist regimes, the discourse analysis and the history of violence. He received his Phd in History from the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. He has worked as Principal Researcher at the Institute of Oral History, at the Babeş-Bolyai University, and held a Fellowship at the Centre for Contemporary History at Potsdam University. Among his publications: *Republica își făurește oamenii: construcția identităților politice în discursul oficial în România, 1948-1965* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2007); "Becoming Dangerous: Everyday Violence in the Industrial Milieu of Late-Socialist Romania", *European history quarterly*, 45 (2015); "From subject of action to object of description: the classes in the Romanian official discourse during communism", *The Vernaculars of Communism Language* (2015).

František Čermák, PhDr, member of the Czech Learned Society Professor of linguistics, reserching and teaching at Charles University in Prague (now emeritus), specifically linguistics general and comparative, Czech language, phraseology, semantics, lexicology, corpus linguistics. Founded Czech National Corpus (korpus.cz) which enables now a deeper study of languages (Czech and many other in its multilingual section InterCorp). This became the opportunity to compile a number of my books and dictionaries (see http://ucnk.korpus.cz/view.php?2).

Maria Rita Leto is full professor of Croatian and Serbian language and literature at Università "G. d'Annunzio", Chieti-Pescara, Italy. She has mostly worked on the Serbo-Croatian language controversy, the early Croatian literature, Serbian Enlightenment,

and contemporary Serbian literature. She has also translated several Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian authors (S. Drakulić; I. Samokovlija; D. Obradović; S. Basara).

Valeria Coronel has a PhD from the History Department at New York University and is currently a professor and researcher at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, FLACSO-Ecuador. Her research studies the history of democratic revolutions, and contemporary political sociology in Latin America. Her publications include studies on social conflict and the formation of the national state in the Andean region. She has previously studied the articulation between indigenous communities and processes of popular national identification, and political parties from the radical democratic spectrum including various republicanisms, populisms and leftisms. She is currently researching the contest for cultural hegemony, mapping critical Latin American discourses on issues of citizenship and cultural modernity in the press and publications of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She has contributed to various interdisciplinary public policy projects, including acting as an advisor in the drawing up of the law of culture and to the national secretary of Social Memory in post-constitution Ecuador (2008-2019). She is a member of the board of directors at CALAS, the Center for Advanced Studies, for the Andean region (http://www.calas.lat/es), and is part of an international network of republicanism and populism studies as responses to authoritarian neoliberalism within the current global crisis.

Joaquìn Fermandois, currently works at the Universidad San Sebastián, and for many decades has been and remains professor of contemporary history at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Guggenheim Fellowship 1989, he has been visiting researcher at Georgetown University, Hamburg University, Free University of Berlin. His research focus has been in international history and history of political ideas and ideologies. Among his main books, *Mundo y fin de mundo. Chile en la política mundial 1900-2004* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2005); *La revolución inconclusa. La izquierda chilena y el gobierno de la Unidad Popular* (Santiago: Centro de Estudios, 2013).

Guo Wu is associate professor of history at Allegheny College, USA. He obtained his PhD in modern Chinese history from the State University of New York at Albany in 2006 and his research interests include late Qing intellectual history and PRC his-

tory. He has published two books, *Zheng Guanying, Merchant Reformer of Late Qing China and his Influence on Economics, Politics, and Society* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2010), *Narrating Southern Chinese Minority Nationalities: Politics, Disciplines, and Public History* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), and a series of peer-reviewed journal articles that focus on China's cultural and institutional transformations under Communism.

Fengyuan Ji has a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand (1998) and is Senior Lecturer in the Department of East Asian Studies at the Australian National University. Her publications include *Linguistic Engineering: Language and Politics in Mao's China* (2004); "Language, State and Society in Post-Mao China: Continuity and Change", *Legacies of Totalitarian Language in the Discourse Culture of the Post-Totalitarian Era*, ed. by Ernest Andrews (Lanham; Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011); and "Language Planning and Policy in China: Unity, Diversity and Social Control", *Language Planning in the Post-Communist Era*, ed. by Ernest Andrews (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

Xing Lu, born and grew up in China, received her doctoral degree from the University of Oregon in the United States of American in Rhetoric and Communication. Xing Lu's research and teaching (at DePaul University, USA) are centered in the areas of rhetoric, Chinese political discourse, intercultural communication, Asian and Asian American Studies. Her first book *Rhetoric in Ancient China, Fifth to Third Century B.C.E.: A Comparison with Classical Greek Rhetoric* won the James A. Winans-Herbert A. Wichelns Memorial Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Rhetoric and Public Address. She subsequently published three more books respectively titled *Rhetoric of Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Impact on Chinese Thought, Culture, and Communication*; *Introduction to Speech Communication* (in Chinese); *The Rhetoric of Mao Zedong: Transforming China and Its People*. In addition she co-edited two books on Chinese communication studies. Moreover, she published over thirty peer-reviewed articles in journals such as *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *The Western Journal of Communication*, *Howard Journal of Communication*, *Advances in the History of Rhetoric*, *China Media Research, Intercultural Communication Studies*, Chinese *Journal of Communication*, *Discourse & Society* as well as book chapters on rhetoric and intercultural communication.

Patricia Pelley, PhD at Cornell University, teaches a variety of graduate and undergraduate classes in world history, including Topics in Asian History and Readings in World History. She is currently an associate professor in the Department of History of Texas Tech University, Lubbock. Among her publications, there is *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). She has also written numerous articles and reviews on a wide range of topics. Currently, she is working on a new book-length manuscript, *Jesus, Mary, and Marcel Văn in the Vietnamese Revolution*.

INDEX

C

M

N