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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/cdlm/7512>

DOI: 10.4000/cdlm.7512

ISSN: 1773-0201

Publisher

Centre de la Méditerranée moderne et contemporaine

Printed version

Date of publication: 30 June 2014

Number of pages: 113-134

ISSN: 0395-9317

Electronic reference

Seamus Taggart, « Italian Relations with China 1978-1992: The Long Carnival Decade - Burgeoning Trade and Diplomatic Kudos », *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* [Online], 88 | 2014, Online since 05 December 2014, connection on 08 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/cdlm/7512> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.7512>

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Seamus Taggart

- 1 Relations between Italy and the People's Republic of China (PRC) since the foundation of the Italian State have often been cast in a negative light and in the last quarter century, have in the main been characterized as negative by the majority of commentators. Up until the Second World War Italy had what could be termed a quite checkered relationship with China, particularly in regard to its pursuance of imperial spoils in the 19th century. This picture however glosses over a much more complex story since the Second World War and in particular overlooks a significant period in relations with the PRC, when Italy played both a dynamic and successful role in economic terms –and succeeded in substantially expanding trade volumes– and in the field of international diplomacy, where it was able to play the role of mediator between East and West it had always coveted. This period essentially lasted from the mid-1980s until the end of the so called First Italian Republic in 1992, when there was a dramatic decline in diplomatic relations, followed within a few years by the same in trade.
- 2 This is a crucial period in the development of both Italy and the PRC. I propose to illustrate the detail of relations between the two countries in this period in order to demonstrate how substantial they were and to correspondingly answer two crucial questions: How did Italy achieve such success in such a short period of time, and why did things fall apart again so quickly in the early 1990s? I will argue that the crucial elements that account for the intensity of relations relate to the underlying policies of both governments in the field of economics which were determined by domestic prerogatives and that the role of Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), development aid and export credit were the determining agents in the development of relations. Economic success provided a credible basis for a more prominent profile in diplomatic

affairs. I propose also to examine relations between the Chinese communist party (CCP) and the Italian communist party, in this period the largest in Western Europe. These relations are important in illustrating the depth and understanding the ultimate outcomes of many political and diplomatic initiatives.

- 3 The former diplomat Mario Filippo Pini provides a useful entry point. He recounts the following exchange when he was stationed in the Italian Embassy in Beijing:

One morning in the summer of 1986 when I was commercial attaché at the Italian Embassy in Beijing, my French colleague phoned me and said he wanted to pay me a visit. Once in my office, he said that Italian exports to China in the previous year had almost doubled, lifting Italy above France and placing it in second place among Europeans, behind only West Germany. He wanted to know what the secret of our success was. How could Italy rise above France? I responded with a partial truth. I could have mentioned our development aid to China, which even then was becoming a significant driving force with much potential in regard to relations. Instead I described a precise instance that I had observed in my business travels to Shanghai and other Chinese cities where I had regularly met Italian nationals even in unexpected places. They did not speak Chinese, but they were flexible, ready to get to grips with the local mentality, courageous in advancing their projects, successfully promoting engines, machine tools and other products that fitted in well with the type of development that China was pursuing. By telling these things to my French colleague, I remember I felt a sense of pride. At that time, amongst the European countries active in China, Italy counted.¹

- 4 This self-aware hubris provides a partial answer and also illustrates the impulse that belies much of official Italian diplomacy in the period. Development aid and the issuing of export credits was a major engine of growth in terms of Italian exports to the PRC in the twentieth century. Most importantly he points out that Italian SMEs were a crucial element in the rapid growth of Italian trade with the PRC. To understand better the context and functioning of this flexible approach it is necessary to shift the focus to the political and economic changes which were rapidly taking place in both countries from the beginning of the 1980s.
- 5 In the PRC the essential catalyst for change was the reforms instigated by Deng Xiaoping from 1978 onwards, termed the Period of Reform and Opening. There was a significant break with the past and the policies of Mao. It was however Zhao Enlai who had first proposed such reforms in 1964,² with his promotion of the Four Modernizations³ in agriculture, industry, defence and science and technology. He made another pitch for them at the Fourth National People's Congress in 1975.⁴ Zhao was however ill with cancer and it was only after his death and that of Mao that Deng was able to provide the necessary bulwark of support for reform and instigate concrete measures. He was well aware that after decades of stagnation there had to be wealth creation. The reforms were market-orientated and opened up space for private enterprise. They were "socialist" in their intention and in this sense Deng can be compared to Gorbachev in his attempts to reform while maintaining the system. Deng succeeded through determination and a wily political sense as well as sheer ruthlessness. Like Gorbachev, he unleashed something that ultimately he could not completely control. Yet he succeeded in establishing parameters. He was pragmatic enough to allow some reforms to play out and go with them even when they resulted in practical liberalization that was beyond what he had originally intended. He was less idealistic than Gorbachev and kept his eye firmly on the bigger picture, unafraid to exert brute force when necessary. He was also wise in experimenting in limited areas

first, setting up Special Economic Zones such as Shenzhen,⁵ next to Hong Kong, where the initial reforms could be observed before some were rolled out across the country. The fact that these reforms followed on quite quickly after the end of the Cultural Revolution stifled dissent, as progress was quickly registered and incomes began to rise. In practice a space was created at the local level where a market began to operate. National control was replaced by local control exerted by public figures and those who most quickly were able to accumulate power and capital in this environment. Once initiated, growth had to be maintained and this required a complete overhaul of the Chinese economy. To achieve this, the PRC needed to engage with western companies to provide the wherewithal to develop its infrastructure. Suddenly opportunities were there for Western companies.⁶

- 6 Unlike in previous epochs, Italy was well positioned. It had gone through its own economic miracle after the Second World War and the 1980s were the years of the *sorpasso*, when Italian GDP overtook that of the United Kingdom. Italy was experiencing a second boom partially due to the economic pump priming activities of Bettino Craxi in government. It had a vibrant manufacturing economy that was on par with other Western European countries. Italian firms were dominated by small and medium enterprises. Sufficient numbers of them had the resources to send representatives to the PRC to make contacts and negotiate contracts. In 1980, a report drawn up by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in Rome on the potential of Italian economic relations with the PRC stated: "Fortunately it seems now that the PRC does not have the intention of following a program of industrialization aimed primarily at exporting."⁷ This situation would obviously change in time but nevertheless there would be at least a decade of opportunity in a primarily buyers' market. The report concluded:

If our analysis of the objectives of the opening of the Chinese economy is correct, then one must conclude that an intensification of economic relations can only be achieved by moving from a purely commercial approach to a strategy of economic cooperation. This means on the one hand, expanding complementarities through a joint venture [...]. Particularly important would be the creation of a financial instrument to facilitate industrial cooperation that can utilize the capital of the joint venture when it is necessary to facilitate the participation of the Italian company and, more importantly, to act as a buffer in relation to any changes in the distribution of shares among the partners in order to avoid possible conflicts. It is also conceivable that some of the funds made available to the credit for exports to China could usefully be redirected to the creation of such a financial instrument.⁸

- 7 Unfortunately neither conclusion was really followed through upon, the overriding tendency was to promote the short term. A system of export credit was indeed put in place and, as we shall see, this gave a sustained impetus to Italian exports to the PRC. The direction of this aid would have a major impact. Smaller Italian firms found out they could access the Chinese market directly. There was no longer the need to work through entities such as Dino Gentili's Compagnia Generale Interscambi (COGIS). In ignoring the longer term strategic elements of the Istituto Affari Internazionali report, there was the risk that economic relations would become unbalanced and indeed precarious.
- 8 Thus, in the context of increased economic flexibility on both sides, relations significantly intensified on all levels. To illustrate the depth and complexity that they eventually achieved, it is necessary to provide an outline of the main developments. In 1978 Huang Hua visited Europe and Italy comforted itself as being included as a destination. In the same year four Italian Government Ministers travelled to Beijing,

including Minister of Public Education Mario Pedini, Minister of Health Tina Anselmi, Minister of Foreign Trade Rinaldo Ossola, and Minister of Transport, Vittorino Colombo. In addition Ugo La Malfa, leader of the Partito Repubblicano Italiano visited Beijing on 25th September of the same year. Colombo met Deng Xiaoping, who would assume publicly the reins of power in the CCP Congress of December that same year. The PRC was eager to gain a reliable interlocutor in Europe. Since West Germany could only whisper, the UK's European voice was muffled and France apt in any dialogue to conflate Europe with France, an opportunity existed for Italy to make itself heard as a practical interlocutor. Beijing saw Italy as a component of what it hoped would be a united Europe and counter pillar to both United States and the USSR. In the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Deng developed the theme of Europe, continuing on from where Zhou Enlai had left off with Colombo in 1973:

Much more than China, the Soviet troops in Afghanistan affect Europe. [The USSR] wants to maintain a strategy of encirclement; it wants to win without fighting. At this point, Europe must choose, it cannot wait to decide whether the rope is already tight or can be tightened more. It must now decide if it wants to be free, in order to be free it has to be united and strong.⁹

- 9 However, such a strategic discourse mattered more in Beijing than in Rome, where the domestic agenda dominated, and fluctuating political control left Italy very much in the second tier where European decisions were taken. Italy no longer possessed European statesmen. Beijing nevertheless would persevere in trying to convince Italy to play a positive role, as the PRC continued to open to the West. During Huang Hua's visit to Italy from 5th to 10th October 1978 he expanded on the new Chinese theory of the Three Worlds. During his visit a cultural agreement was also signed. The intensification of relations was noted by the USSR and Brezhnev sent an abrasive letter to Prime Minister Andreotti, complaining that the help that Italy was proffering to the PRC was unwelcome, particularly as it seemed that it might well also aid the PRC in modernizing its military sector. This, he maintained, would adversely affect *détente*.¹⁰ Little official or unofficial note was taken of Brezhnev's letter and relations with the PRC continued on an upward trajectory.
- 10 The next year saw Deng Xiaoping visit the US, as official relations were finally established and Prime Minister and President of the Chinese Communist Party Hua Guofeng visited Italy from the 3rd to the 6th November 1979. Rome was now a fixed stop on the route to Paris, Bonn and London. Security and global issues were discussed. This visit also marked the beginning of regular consultations. Meetings were also held with Bettino Craxi, Pietro Nenni and Enrico Berlinguer. Agreements were signed covering economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation, as well as an accord for the opening of consulates in Shanghai and Milan.¹¹ Hua underlined that "these relations have entered a new phase of development and agreements signed in recent days have laid the basis for further growth in exchanges."¹² This was in conformity to Hua's description of Chinese plans: "China is a developing country which has laid the foundations of industrialization. From this year on and for the next three years, China will make serious efforts through further adjustments to its plans for a proportional constant and rapid development of its economy."¹³
- 11 Momentum in relations was maintained by the State visit of Italian President Sandro Pertini accompanied by Foreign Minister Emilio Colombo in September 1980. This was a calculated move on Rome's part, sending the veteran Socialist Party leader and sparring partner of Nenni in tandem with Colombo, who had been Prime Minister when

relations were established in 1970. The difference between the Socialists and the Christian Democrats had always been that the former had a clear international ideology (at least until the advent of Craxi's leadership when it became subservient to domestic imperatives), whereas the latter stuck to an ill-defined and thus hugely flexible amalgam of Atlanticism and support for a more integrated Europe. The priority was to avoid offending international partners rather than incurring the risk of taking any major initiatives. As Pini described it: "Pertini responded to his interlocutors with the idealism which came natural to him, posing those questions out loud, that all men of good sense have always asked."¹⁴ The Italian President was uniquely able to rise above party interests and factionalism and to speak his mind. However such discourses rarely impact actual policy making. During his meeting with Deng Xiaoping, Deng turned to a more practical level and enquired "How is Oriana Fallaci? [...] she put me to the test for four hours." Pertini responded: "It was you who did the testing [...] and I can assure you she passed with flying colours. The interview is a consummate piece of work."¹⁵ Oriana Fallaci's interview¹⁶ with Deng Xiaoping provided an interesting aside to the more regular channels of diplomacy and trade negotiations. The sparring between the two was on a par with Frost and Nixon. The text of the exchanges provides both insight and entertainment and certainly added to Italian prestige in regard to its relations with the PRC. Overall as a goodwill trip Pertini's visit worked well and was seen by Beijing as a gesture that took account of Chinese sensibilities.

- 12 Trade relations were now poised to take off. In 1978 the main imports from the PRC were basic manufactures, including wooden products and textiles, totaling 169,000 million lire.¹⁷ Exports were dominated by chemical products and machine tools, totaling 160,000 million lire,¹⁸ representing a small but significant trade deficit. By 1984 imports had grown by a factor of five, textiles still a very significant element, particularly silk. Exports had grown even more to yield a balance of trade of 25,000 million lire, chemicals and steel products being important elements in the mix.¹⁹
- 13 From 1984 until the Tiananmen Square crackdown, Italian exports to the PRC were second only to West Germany's. In 1985, Italian exports to China grew 40 percent from the previous year.²⁰ Italy would record a comfortable trade surplus until 1988. Italian exports were dominated by machinery and machine tools, produced in the main by SME's. Italian imports from China were mainly labour intensive goods such as textiles. Total trade would continue to grow strongly both imports and exports showing an increasing trend well into the 1990s, before the dip subsequent to the Tiananmen Square incident. Italy however, at least on the economic level, was "punching above its weight" to use Douglas Hurd's recognized international measure.²¹ This period from the mid-1980s until 1992 represented the high point of Italian relations with the PRC in the twentieth century. Even with the Tiananmen Square crackdown, relations would remain relatively close.
- 14 Major Italian companies had entered China in the 1950s. President of the Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) Enrico Mattei made a surprise trip to Beijing in 1958 to promote it. Italian petrochemical and automotive companies had done respectable business in an era of strict controls. This business was to increase steadily in the 1980s. As part of the same delegation led by Hua Guofeng in November 1979, the Chinese Vice-Prime Minister Yu Qiuli paid a visit to FIAT in Turin where discussions were held on the provision of tractors and earth moving machinery by FIAT. Giovanni Agnelli had a separate personal meeting with Hua Guofeng in Rome. Hua also met a delegation of

approximately 50 representatives of Italian industry. On departure Hua declared: "Italy is an industrialized nation. You have much experience that would be of use to us and for this reason we would be very happy to have Italian industrialists visit us."²² This statement basically sums up the rationale behind Chinese efforts to intensify relations between the two countries over the following decade. A protocol had been signed in April that year which opened up a credit line of \$1 billion. Thus on the economic front relations were finally gearing up.

- 15 FIAT had since 1976 been developing a China project which envisaged the production of FIAT tractors and other agricultural machinery in China, with an initial projected production rate of 20,000 tractors per annum.²³ A contract to this effect would only finally be signed in June 1985.²⁴ In October 1979 an official FIAT office was opened in Beijing.²⁵
- 16 In the wake of Hu Yaobang's later trip to FIAT in Turin, a contract was signed in September 1986, which provided for the provision of technical assistance from FIAT and the setting up of a joint venture between Iveco and the Nanjing Motor Corporation for the production of light lorries from the *Daily* range. It was envisaged that the Chinese government would invest \$260 million.²⁶ Aeritalia had also just signed a contract valued at \$200 million.²⁷ In 1988 FIAT was still hoping to establish itself as a producer of cars for the commercial marketplace. Back in December 1972 at an Italian Trade Show in Beijing, Marshall Yeh Jan Ying had remarked to Italian representatives: "Your cars are lighter than the Soviet ones and more solid than the Japanese."²⁸ It was the Germans however who were to get in first. Volkswagen had got the go ahead from Beijing to set up a plant in 1985, but its production was still limited, only producing 12,000 cars a year. There was still space in the Chinese market for another player and FIAT proposed its Panda as a suitable option. Nothing eventually came of this and Volkswagen was instead to enjoy massive expansion and a very lucrative monopoly in the Chinese market for the next couple of decades. The ubiquity of Volkswagens on Chinese streets is such that they are considered to be Chinese by much of the population.
- 17 In the 1980s and 1990s however Italian trade with the PRC was dominated by SMEs. The Italian SME sector was a volatile one and fluctuating market trends left many Italian companies focused on the Chinese market for only a number of years. In the recently deregulated Chinese market these smaller companies were often able to negotiate the challenges at this level better than larger enterprises. There had been an influx of smaller Italian companies into the PRC as it opened up. They were able to benefit from both deregulation and lack of oversight. This trade remained substantial until stagnation in the domestic Italian economy constrained the activities of SMEs and trade stagnated from the mid-1990s onwards.
- 18 Returning to the detail of relations, there had in the meantime been some diplomatic missteps. Bettino Craxi finally officially visited China in 1986. The visit was viewed as a catch up measure and the Chinese had noted the lack of an official visit at this level. The French, West German and British Prime Ministers had made the trip mostly shortly after Deng Xiaoping had stabilized his control. Two Chinese Prime Ministers Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang had visited Italy. There had been a visit to the PRC by a delegation of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) led by Alessandro Natta, and on their return to Rome, one of the messages that was to be conveyed to the government was that Beijing had noted the lack of an official visit at Prime Ministerial level. It was billed

of course as historic being the first by an Italian Prime Minister, but Craxi as leader of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) did not follow in the footsteps of either Nenni or Pertini. Craxi's visit was viewed as a superficial one. Andreotti who was part of the entourage as Foreign Minister defined the delegation sarcastically as "Craxi and his fine friends."²⁹ Italy had experienced significant economic growth in the 1980s and its trade balance with the PRC was very healthy. Craxi could afford to be magnanimous and indicated that Italy would be disposed to buy Chinese oil to help balance trade. During the trip, agreements were signed on matters which included taxation, health and nutrition and the cooperation in the university sector.³⁰

- 19 During this period there was also cooperation in defence procurement. A general accord for military cooperation was signed by the Italian Defence Minister Giovanni Spadolini during his mission to the PRC in April 1985. The PRC had previously shown interest in installing FIAT engines in PLA tracked military lorries. MAGIRUS –a German subsidiary of the IVECO branch of FIAT– had sent examples of military lorries with Deutz air-cooled engines to the PRC already in 1978. It was determined that with suitable alterations to the body of the lorries FIAT engines could be installed. A meeting between the Commercial Director of MAGIRUS and the former General Schenz, consultant to MAGIRUS, was held with a Chinese military attaché in Bonn on the 28th February 1979. In the end, it seems that the eventual solution was the production of the FIAT *Daily* lorry in China. IRI (Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale) had been hoping to sell frigates to the PRC but these did not meet the specifications of the Chinese navy. It was however envisaged that Italy would supply the PRC with jet fighters, transport planes, avionics, mines torpedoes and also provide military training for Chinese military personnel in Italy. Italy had to explain the reasoning behind these projected sales to the US military export control committee (COCOM) but permission was eventually obtained.³¹ In 1986 the defence contractor Oto Melara was in negotiation for a large contract for artillery with the PLA.³² Alenia won significant contracts to supply radar installations to civilian airports from 1989 onwards, beating out stiff US competition and in January 1992 established a joint venture with the PRC firm RIDA and the Hong Kong company Dragon Base to produce civilian radar installations.³³ This also had implications for the military sector. Francesco Sisci states that at this point Alenia supplied 70 percent of Chinese radar requirements.³⁴ The US gave its ultimate blessing to all these endeavours after Nixon's visit to the PRC. Previously such cooperation on such developed systems would have been unthinkable. Italy was viewed as relatively neutral in the overall context of the Cold War. This allowed it a certain leeway and the US without being seen as the prime mover, promoted certain exports in armaments to the PRC as a way of counterbalancing the USSR. Despite the importance of these showpiece trade agreements, larger Italian companies accounted for a minority of trade value. Italian SME's accounted for far more business.
- 20 The overall picture of diplomatic interaction and trade relations thus is seemingly a glowing one. However the two most important elements underlying this as previously intimated were development aid and the role of SMEs. An agreement had been concluded in 1979 for the year 1982-1983, that provided for \$48 million in credit and \$25 million in development aid.³⁵ The former was to be a credit line to aid the construction of industrial plant in China under the auspices of projects such as those elaborated by ENI and FIAT to manufacture products in China, the latter was government spending on Italian products such as hospital equipment to be sent to

China. By the third programme 1987-1989, credit aid had risen to \$576 million and \$95 million for development aid. This put Italy among the principal suppliers of development aid and credit in Europe. The main problem with the aid was that it was not programmed or targeted at strategic sectors. It was handed out primarily to benefit the balance sheet of the Italian companies that were involved. The system became analogous to that of government tendering within Italy. Massimo Iannucci, a former Italian ambassador to the PRC, pointed out the problems inherent in an article in 2000, where he lamented the tendency of Italian development aid to be tied to the interests of private companies.³⁶ Aid was dispensed piecemeal and as part of the established system of dispensing favours by the political parties. This was to have major future consequences.

- 21 In the 1980s the stultifying rule of the Christian Democrats had produced a honed clientelist system within Italy binding politics and business. This system now met a similar emerging structure in China. As Kwan Ha Yim describes in the Chinese context of the early 1980s:

Up until a few years previously, during the Cultural Revolution, the nation was hypnotized by Maoist rhetoric describing a permanent revolution and one was resigned to the sacrifices required. Now the people have in front of them a vision of happiness which is achievable through the path of material wealth. The party leaders in the countryside, who in the past would have managed the agricultural system, liberated of many of their old duties, have begun to transform themselves into a new class of rural bosses. Other party functionaries thanks to their new power, find themselves in the ideal position to obtain 'brown envelopes' in exchange for favouring foreign investors and local businessmen.³⁷

- 22 Italian businesses thrived in this unregulated nexus. One cannot however negate the point that Pini made that a significant element of entrepreneurship also accounted for Italian success. For half a decade trade continued to burgeon. The hubris of Craxi was to eventually presage a catastrophic fall.
- 23 However events in Beijing were almost to precipitate an even greater catastrophe. Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang had pushed reforms and certain of these were carried through. The funeral of Hu Yaobang brought many of the students onto the streets. The historical visit of Gorbachev to Beijing after thirty years of mutual animosity was overshadowed by the demonstrations. Deng ever the realist decided that matters were not to be allowed to get out of hand. The crackdown on the night of 3rd-4th June 1989 caused many fatalities. An account of these days from a firsthand Italian perspective can be read in the pages of Ilaria Fiore the RAI correspondent in Beijing's account, *Tien An Men*.³⁸ Led by the US, Western governments broke off contacts with the PRC in the aftermath of this and sanctions were imposed, including an arms embargo. This breakdown in relations, the first significant step backwards since the Korean War, was to provide an opportunity for Italy. Within a matter of days after the crackdown, an aircraft was sent to evacuate Italian nationals. The Berlin Wall came down in November of the same year and the whole Communist system in Europe disintegrated. With so much change taking place the wisdom of isolating China was beginning to be questioned. In October 1990 the EU began to reestablish contacts, partly through the efforts of the Italian government who occupied the rotating Presidency in the latter half of 1990. The arms embargo though was left in place. US Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and National Security Advisor Brent Snowcroft arrived in Beijing in November. In the same period an Italian mission led by Bruno Bottai was sent to

Beijing to assess the situation. By this stage the US had long since ceased to issue orders to its Allies on such strategic matters. Europe as a whole had post Nixon exited its US cocoon. The Christian Democrat member of Parliament (and shortly afterwards Minister of the Interior) Vincenzo Scotti travelled to Beijing. In May 1991 Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis headed to Beijing and in November Prime Minister Andreotti sojourned there too. The Spanish Foreign Minister had travelled the previous autumn and there had been some Portuguese and British contacts ostensibly in regard to their colonies. Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng often portrayed as the villain of Tiananmen visited Italy, Spain and Portugal in January 1992. He specifically referred to Italy's role as a bridge in that era.³⁹ Pini states:

Perhaps, with our activism in favour of China, we were opportunists, motivated by the desire to take up business opportunities in contrast to the activism in that era of some of our European partners such as the Scandinavians always ready to crusade for human rights.⁴⁰

- 24 Human rights never really played any meaningful role in dialogue between Italy and China, and Pini is correct to cite commercial interests as a major spur to reestablishing relations. Sisci however also ascribes a strategic element in that there was US support and contact behind the scenes in supporting Italian efforts. This was he maintains in the context of the First Gulf War when the US was worried about having China beyond the Pale when such a conflagration was occurring.⁴¹ In an interview in 1995 De Michelis explained the opening in the following terms.

Newly appointed Foreign Minister in November 1989, I realized that the closure of the West towards China was the wrong answer to Tiananmen. I always thought that the embargo did not serve anything. And above all, the Chinese gave the impression that we did not understand the real issue, and we once again we had undervalued the issues involved and had taken refuge in our reassuring simplifications. In November of 1989 I already assumed the position of a "heretic" at an exhibitors' conference on China organized by the left leaning Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI)⁴² in Bologna. Against the advice of diplomats of the Foreign Ministry, I wanted to go there and explain that our concern was to encourage the opening up towards China and therefore that the punitive sanctions had to be lifted as soon as possible.⁴³

- 25 De Michelis was able to follow through on his analysis, for once an active realist position. Undoubtedly trade was a major factor in his calculations but he was able to present himself as somewhat of a pioneer, though not quite unique, as Pini points out that the Spanish Foreign Minister visited Beijing before him. Almost immediately in order to regain economic momentum Italy guaranteed 600 billion Lira to China in relation to the Pudong development which was just then getting underway and was destined to radically change the face of Shanghai and to present to the world a new skyline as memorable as that of Manhattan. This diplomatic role undoubtedly did help to give Italy a more prominent profile as a constructive actor in the international sphere.
- 26 Then, the flood. The whole Italian political system was swept away in less than two years. Though the Christian Democrat vote had been declining over the years, it was the fall of communism in the USSR that removed a major reason for its existence and support as a bulwark against communism. A bribery investigation initiated in Milan in February 1992 –referred to as *Tangentopoli*– began to spread and eventually when internal divisions scuppered the possibility of silencing the judges, the whole edifice of Italian politics was toppled. The investigations had the effect of decimating the

promised Italian input in the Pudong project, as the funds earmarked were suspended since the awarding of contracts had been illegal. Indeed at least one Italian ambassador was arrested as the investigations reached the level of export credits and foreign aid.⁴⁴ Thus the motor behind the growth in trade was turned off. Di Michelis categorized this as a tragedy:

From the second half of 1992, the Italian crisis began, the Foreign Ministry turned off the taps in relation to cooperation and the entire country virtually disappeared from the international stage. The cooperation between Italy and China was one of the main victims of this. To ensure nothing was done wrong, the Foreign Minister blocked all cooperation projects initiated during my administration, including the Pudong initiative. For nearly three years, no Foreign Minister travelled to Beijing.⁴⁵

- 27 This represented the fracture from which relations have not really recovered. He himself later was almost thrown into a canal in Venice after his own trial and conviction for malfeasance. As Pini dryly states when describing the events: “The Chinese, as I remembered from the first page of the life of Lucius Wu, have long memories”.⁴⁶
- 28 Yet there is also an alternative relevant narrative in this period, one that recounts an important story that was significant for a large section of the Italian population that was not represented in government. It is largely overlooked since it only had a marginal effect on actual diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries. However it is very much worth recounting, as it did have a major effect on how Beijing viewed Italy and thus in some way did affect its conduct both internally and externally. To do this it is necessary to return to the beginning of the period being discussed.
- 29 Vittorino Colombo, then Christian Democrat Minister of the Mercantile Marine, travelled to the PRC in 1978, just shortly after the assassination of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades. Deng expressed his shock at the act and also his bewilderment that the organization responsible ostensibly declared that it drew its inspiration from Marxism Leninism and the teachings of Mao Zedong. The effects of the Cultural Revolution were receding rapidly. It was not long after this that relations were reestablished between the PCI and the Chinese Communist Party (CPC). In Rome in 1979 the first steps were taken when representatives of the CPC met with members of the PCI. It took a year of encounters and position papers and statements declaring the precise positions of each party before practical relations were reestablished. The initial signal had arrived on 1st February 1979 as PCI representative Antonio Rubbi was given the task of developing the renewed links after over 15 years of virtual non communication, as he describes in his volume *Appunti cinesi* dedicated to PCI relations with China from that date up to 1991.⁴⁷ The process of recovery was indeed a “long march.”⁴⁸ It seems as if in one sense that the careful footwork was essentially an unraveling of the detailed denouncements that had presaged the break almost two decades previously. By the time Berlinguer travelled to Beijing in April 1980, he had been elevated to most honoured guest status. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had caused a rupture between the PCI and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) which adjusted their place in the pantheon. The visit was termed an “historical trip” across the Italian press.⁴⁹ Berlinguer outlined the motivations of the visit in an article published in *L’Unità*, “Why We are Travelling to China”:

We go because we believe it is necessary and to our advantage to gain a better understanding of the conditions and real situations in which the two parties

operate and how politics functions. We go with a clear understanding –on our own part and also that of our Chinese comrades– that respect for our respective positions and mutual autonomy is the basis for a frank dialogue, both in terms of points of agreement and on those we have different positions on. These exist and there is no need to hide them. They concern, as is known, many positions, analysis and procedures on various issues. But we go there essentially to look for the space in terms of a possible meeting ground where relations between two parties, two countries and two peoples and the great issues of peace and international cooperation might be constructively developed [...]. Never before, when the international scene is increasingly prone to tensions, divisions and dangers, has this need appeared so necessary. We are witnessing a deterioration of international relations so serious that one might fear an imminent catastrophe. This situation demands the wider mobilization of those forces who realize the need to propose new ideas so as to address the crisis and thus reopen a constructive and peaceful dialogue on issues and objectives on which the salvation of humanity depends: new international relations, founded on justice and equal dignity, respect for the right of peoples to free themselves from imperialist domination and other forms of foreign interference regarding disarmament and the use of resources.⁵⁰

- 30 Berlinguer's use of language is interesting on a number of levels. In the first instance it conveys the fears and preoccupations of the Cold War era. In concentrating on the minute details of interstate relations this element can often lose its significance. Berlinguer speaks as a protagonist. The language of the Christian Democrats was more often than not drawn from the script of a subordinate, eschewing the bigger issues and concentrating on the dues to be paid. Effectively Berlinguer broadened the Italian interaction with China significantly in terms of international relations. The themes however remained largely global rather than bilateral since the PCI remained in opposition. They served well in Beijing however to establish a cordial working relationship again between the two parties. The warmth of Berlinguer's character was also an element which helped cement relations, helping him establish a close personal rapport with Chinese leaders.
- 31 One other thing was clear, at one stroke the PCI had supplanted the PSI as Beijing's preferred interlocutor. During the final meeting between the PCI delegation and Hu Yaobang, Pietro Nenni was lauded in conversations but it was clear that there was no longer any real connection between Beijing and the new leadership of the PSI. Bettino Craxi had visited China in the meantime but only with an invitation from the Association for Friendship between Peoples and had thus not met any politicians of note. On the suggestion of the PCI delegation that Beijing should invite him officially, the Chinese demurred and instead noted the upcoming visit of Pertini, "Is he not a Socialist too?"⁵¹ Hu Yaobang inquired. Rubbi notes that the smiles that greeted Hu's remark indicated that Beijing was well informed on the vicissitudes within the PSI. Dino Gentili was still involved in commercial ventures in China but the political aspect tied to the PSI had distinctly receded.
- 32 Rubbi describes vividly Hu Yaobang's clarification of the Cultural Revolution era and its implications in relation to Italy:

It remained for the visibly embarrassed Hu Yaobang to offer the required clarification. He returned to the years of the Cultural Revolution. They were not only disastrous for the upheaval caused throughout the country, but also for the image of that the CCP had presented to the world. Instead of connecting with the forces more representative of the labour movement and national liberation movements it had often encouraged small groups on the fringes of the political and cultural scenes of their own countries, who claimed to support the political

ideology then prevailing in China. This was also the case in relation to Italy and for that Hu now almost apologized. He expressed his regret and assured us that they would no longer have any kind of links with such groups. Pajetta⁵² relieved him from any further embarrassment with yet another joke: "There are far more serious messes which we could think of".⁵³

- 33 There was no point dragging the issue of the death of Aldo Moro into the conversation and one understands the clear objective of the PCI to reestablish uncomplicated links with Beijing, however Pajetta's remark was ill-weighed in discounting maybe too much. In any case, practical steps were agreed. *L'Unità* gained permission to locate a permanent correspondent in Beijing and like in the 1950s, a group of Italian students would attend Chinese universities to study Chinese culture and language. Interestingly, a request was also made by the Chinese for help in preparing a translation into Chinese of the works of Antonio Gramsci. The final press conference Rubbi describes as a unique experience: "It was the first time in the post-Mao China had opened itself so publicly to the outside world."⁵⁴ At the banquet that followed, in his final speech in Beijing before departure, Berlinguer summed up what had been achieved:

These conversations were very useful, it seems to us, for better mutual understanding of the politics professed by our parties and their objective and subjective motivations. The points of consensus and those of divergence have become much clearer. But it is very important, in any case to have tried even when our respective positions are different and even widely diverging, to find a meeting point where dialogue might emanate from and sometimes bring positive results [...]. You should know, dear comrades, that the links that the PCI has re-established with your party, it intends to maintain and develop in the context of links with other communist parties and many other workers and democratic forces all over the world, corresponding to our vision of internationalism as an Italian element as a force that is part of a larger progressive movement in Europe and the world [...]. We came to China also to contribute to the development of every sector of relations between the two countries, those which correspond to the national interests of Italy and the People's Republic of China. Also in this sense we feel we have made progress.⁵⁵

- 34 One can appreciate from the language used the points of difference Beijing would have had and the fact that they would have through their realist lens have viewed the PCI as being compromised in both the context of national politics and the Communist International. Nevertheless in grappling with their own opening to the West and the consequences of free market economics the relationship certainly was of use and, as Berlinguer stated, the PCI would also promote the Italian national interest as well as theoretical global socialist ideas. *Le Monde* categorized Berlinguer's trip as "another step taken by the PCI on the road away from the USSR and towards Europe."⁵⁶ The PCI had condemned the invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 by the USSR and in declining an invitation to attend an international Communist Party gathering in Paris the same year had made clear its differences with Moscow. This of course greatly pleased Beijing. The PCI's relations with Moscow however remained complicated as it attempted to balance various strategic impulses.
- 35 The relationship between the two parties developed steadily and was marked by respect. In July 1981, Politburo member and ex-Mayor of Shanghai, Pong Chong, visited Rome and Milan when a Twin City agreement between the latter and Shanghai was signed. When Hu Yaobang issued an invitation to Berlinguer and his family to spend their holidays in the PRC in the summer of 1983, it was readily accepted. The Rubbi family were also to be included in the travelling party. The political situation in Italy in

those years of extremist violence had made the annual summer holiday more of a period of almost house arrest as security was deployed with a heavy hand. Instead the two weeks that Berlinguer spent in China he described as splendid.⁵⁷ The other aim apart from some relaxation was to discern the Chinese position on a number of national and international issues, which they were to discover as essentially the same as those expressed three years previously. On arrival in Beijing, Berlinguer was given a distinguished reception, on the same level Rubbi maintains that was only reserved for Kim Il Sung.⁵⁸ Rubbi describes the meetings with Hu Yaobang and other officials as jovial⁵⁹. On his departure Hu Yaobang, used the opportunity to get his own message across that: "For the socialist modernization of China –we need peace and stability."⁶⁰ Berlinguer's parting words were to invite Hu to Italy, his response: "I will... I will visit with pleasure, as soon as I can."⁶¹ Unfortunately Berlinguer would not see Hu Yaobang visit Italy; instead in June 1984, Chinese Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang interrupted his visit to Norway to attend Berlinguer's funeral in Piazza San Giovanni. Zhao remained the following day in Rome. The PCI seemed a little taken aback concerning the strength of feeling displayed by Zhao and his entourage in regard to Berlinguer. Rubbi related the enquiries of Zhou regarding the scenes at Berlinguer's funeral:

What does it mean for Italy and the Italians I have seen in Piazza San Giovanni? He maintained it was something similar to the funeral of Zhou Enlai (the pain of the people when it is sincere, one senses and feels it well beyond the [formal] directives of the party).⁶²

- 36 Alessandro Natta replaced Berlinguer as party leader and astutely continued the development of relations with Beijing. The PCI speaker of the House of Deputies, Nilde Iotti, briefly visited China shortly afterwards, invited by a Chinese Women's Association, followed by Giorgio Napolitano, Macaluso and Pajetta. Natta as new party leader arrived in Beijing in October 1985. The invitation had been proffered a year previously, when Natta had been elected to replace Berlinguer. At the first banquet Hu Yaobang invoked the memory of Berlinguer: "his vision, his deep thought, his self-effacing style and honesty, his firmness and determination will remain forever in our memory."⁶³ He added a reference to a Chinese proverb: "flowers in spring, fruit in the autumn."⁶⁴ Berlinguer had caused the blossoms to flower and Natta was there to harvest the benefits.
- 37 The meeting with Deng Xiaoping was auspicious. Deng spoke about his first encounter with representatives of the PCI in the 1920s when he had spent a period of time in Paris working and ostensibly studying as a youth. He recalled his encounters with Togliatti, Longo and with Berlinguer in 1980 and summed up relations briefly and somewhat dryly:
- Over the years we have made mistakes but even you in certain circumstances have not done everything right. But for five years now we have had a very positive relationship and that is what counts.⁶⁵
- 38 Both parties had now taken the measure of each other and had obviously developed a respectful working relationship. Beijing hoped to see the PCI move further outside the orbit of Moscow and the PCI hoped to see Beijing integrating itself more and more into international institutions. Natta's trip was however to be cut short due to the fall out of the *Achille Lauro* incident⁶⁶ and the resulting political destabilization in Rome and ramifications of the standoff between Italian and US authorities.
- 39 Further discussion had to wait until Hu Yaobang visited Rome in June 1986. This was a visit well thought out and Hu, assiduously paid his respects to all the key state office

holders from Prime Minister Bettino Craxi, Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti and President Francesco Cossiga, through the speakers of both houses, Fanfani and Iotti to the graceful acknowledgement of ex-President Pertini. This did not go amiss in a country that so values recognition. Apart from the special request for a day apart to deal with meetings with the PCI, Hu also paid a visit to Turin and the headquarters of FIAT as the last stop on his trip.

- 40 Rubbi states: "We were proven right. Upon returning home Hu accelerated the drive toward political reform and renewal."⁶⁷ The question remains in the context of these reforms and also the position taken by Zhao Ziyang, how much of an influence did the detailed dialogue between the PCI and the CPC have on the outlook and policy of these two key figures in the Chinese administration. Their admiration for Berlinguer and his ideas was clearly apparent. The outpouring of grief at his funeral certainly as previously evidenced had a distinct effect on Zhao Ziyang. I believe that the interaction between the two parties did influence these two individuals greatly in regard to their reformist stance. However it is nigh impossible in the available documents to find traces of this. In the transcription of a meeting on Natta's trip Hu did declare that: "Social democracy must be fostered and promoted through the development of democracy within the Party. A Party that has vitality and dynamism can promote democracy within our country."⁶⁸ This seems a clear echo of PCI thinking. Both Hu and Zhao recognized the implications for the PRC of failure to reform, Deng himself made that clear in declaring that his reforms were essential to maintaining the CPC at the apex of power. Both Hu and Zhao had observed how in Italy a Communist party could command widespread allegiance and respect in a pluralistic system. I believe it was the popular response to the passing of Berlinguer that convinced them that radical reform was the way forward in China. In this sense Zhao seems very much a character in the Gorbachev mould. Deng was much more of a realist and had understood also how his own reforms had followed a path that was not completely of his making but had not gone beyond any threshold that would seriously threaten the power of the CPC. It would only be a short time before the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square would command the headlines.
- 41 The events in Tiananmen Square caused a rupture in relations between the two communist parties as in the wake of public opinion, the PCI broke off relations with the CCP. They were never really reestablished as the fall of the Berlin wall soon brought about the end of the PCI as it transformed in a new entity the Partito Democratico della Sinistra. A minority effused to accept this and renamed themselves Rifondazione Comunista. Thus by the time relations between Italy and China were again properly constituted again in the early 1990s, the party of Togliatti, Berlinguer and Natta was no more.
- 42 There is a clear sense that post *Tangentopoli*, Italy lost China, this is the gist and title of a seminal article by Francesco Sisci in *Limes* in 2005.⁶⁹ We have seen how a half dozen years of real commercial and diplomatic success had been achieved and now almost all was lost in the explosion of *Tangentopoli*. It was not simply that Italy had lost its place because of the stasis of those years of investigations, rather economic relations went into a tail spin because the Italian State had never invested in coherently supporting them and thus whenever the political and economic winds varied there was always the risk that what had been established would wither away. The motor of development aid was simply turned off. The dynamic SME's would continue to maintain a high volumes

of exports for a number of years, but without government support their decline was inevitable, as the Craxi boom came to an end and the Italian economy entered a period of stagnation from which it is yet to emerge. Furthermore in the new governments of the Italian Second Republic, despite the fact that a process of *trasformismo* had effectively left the underlying elites still in control, most of the old guard that had experience in China were toppled. From the Chinese side there was a sense that Italy had let China down. From this point on the nature of trade was altered. China began to export substantially and Italy suddenly found its textile sector in particular in trouble as cheaper Chinese manufactures entered the market. The end of the Cold War and the fall of the First Italian Republic marked the end of a time period covering just over four decades where despite certain plateaus, relations between Italy and the PRC had tended to follow an upward trend from both perspectives. Thereafter the relationship would become more distant and Italy would rapidly slip down the pecking order of commercial and strategic partners.

- 43 This should however not obscure the very real successes of the 1980s. It represented a period when there were effective synergies between the two countries. It allowed Italy on the back of the confidence gained in the economic realm to play a meaningful diplomatic role. In the long term however trade volumes were just not sustainable without a consistent export policy underpinned by appropriate investment.

APPENDIXES

Oriana Fallaci's interview with Deng Xiaoping

The interview by Oriana Fallaci was an interesting episode in itself, echoing somewhat Nixon's interview with Frost. It is again another vignette illustrating a small facet of relations between the two countries without the scenario of institutional restraint. Ironically due to this Fallaci became one of the few Italians to actually discuss directly high level strategic issues with Chinese leaders. In practice this was a subject largely avoided by visiting Italian politicians. Deng Xiaoping, with a more precarious hold on power, hoped that the interview might help shore this up on the international stage rather than leave a record for posterity. The interview had significant international impact and was another episode in the same vein as *Chung Kuo Cina* which both sheds light from a more media based perspective on relations between Italy and China in a global context. Fallaci was certainly an interesting choice. Mao had used Edgar Snow for an interview to set out his ideas, to be broadcast to the world. His encounter with Curzio Malaparte as already described was a much smaller scale effort and had only an Italian audience in mind. This time Deng's interview was to be published jointly in Italy and the US. It was as Pini describes, a message designed to be broadcast '*urbi et orbi*',⁷⁰ a message that was to clarify and stabilize the position of the new regime. One might have expected Deng to have gone for an English speaking journalist to increase impact. It seems that Fallaci's reputation as not being a walk over and one that was sufficiently international met Deng's criteria. She had previously interviewed Nenni in April 1971⁷¹

and Kissinger in November 1972.⁷² In 1980 she had done an interview with Enrico Berlinguer, not long after relations had been reestablished between the two communist parties. Such diversely political interviewees would certainly have recommended her as a suitable candidate, as well as the fact that they were certainly not banal. Indeed Deng seemed to be so happy with the first encounter with Fallaci that he conceded a second session. Deng also had one to one encounters with another lady of forceful character Margaret Thatcher, which he also seemed to relish. Fallaci's opening gambit was to wish him a happy birthday which caught Deng off guard:

Deng: My birthday?! It's my birthday tomorrow?!

Fallaci: Yes, I read it in your biography

Deng: Uhm! If you say so... I do not know when my birthday is and nevertheless if it is my birthday it is not exactly something to be congratulated upon. It means I have reached the age of seventy six. Seventy six is a decadent age to be.

Fallaci: My father is the same age Mr. Deng, and if I said to my father that he had reached a decadent age he would give me a slap.

Deng: Alright! You wouldn't want to say something like that to your father, eh! ⁷³

Thus the ice was broken and one can sense the tone of benign sparring immediately, that ran through the whole encounter. Fallaci moved on immediately to more serious matters and directly the crucial question:

Fallaci: Mr. Deng, in an article published by the Western papers you wrote that China is at a turning point comparable to a second revolution. And indeed, a traveler who arrives in Beijing today, in the late summer of 1980, experiences an almost physical sensation of great change: no uniforms, no slogans, no enveloping red. As for the portraits of Mao Tse-Tung, so far I've only seen three, including the one above the entrance to the Forbidden City in the company of the images of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. I have chosen this particular detail to lead into my first question: Will these rare portraits of Mao remain?

Deng: They will definitely remain. They will remain forever, including the one in Tiananmen Square. In the past there were too many portraits of Chairman Mao. In the end this reduced them to the level of banality making them trivial, even disrespectful, and therefore we removed them, but... Look, Chairman Mao made mistakes, yes. But he was also one of the principle founders of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China. Even taking into account his errors, his positive actions remain primary. This means that the contribution he gave to the Chinese revolution will always sustain his memory. We will always think of him as one of the founders of the party and the People's Republic.⁷⁴

Deng thus got his primary message delivered and more relaxed, was happy to range over many issues and respond in his own way. As the interview drew to a close he echoed the message in no uncertain terms:

Deng: Thank you and please make it understood [to your audience] everything I have said. Explain well that it is necessary to promote an objective evaluation of Chairman Mao, to first consider his merits, then his mistakes. Explain well how we will continue to follow the 'Thought of Mao Tse-tung', but that we also clearly point out where he made mistakes. Above all explain well that some of those mistakes were also our responsibility, including mine!

Fallaci: I will indeed Mr. Deng, please allow me one last question: What evaluation would you give himself?

Deng: Hmm! Listen: I've made mistakes, yes, and sometimes even serious mistakes. But I have never done anything with malicious or bad motives. I have always done what I have done with good intentions. So there is nothing that I feel I have a guilty conscience about. Hmm! Listen: I would say that I could give myself a score of fifty percent. Yes, fifty percent is fine.⁷⁵

Thus straightforward Chinese self-criticism met the Italian Catholic confessional, with Deng throwing in his own redemption. He was able to get his message immediately across that there was a change in regime which was stable and which would not desecrate the memory of Mao in the way Khrushchev had demolished Stalin. Deng reserved his only harsh words for Mao's widow Jiang Qing, whom he described as absolutely rotten, meriting one part good, to one thousand nine hundred and ninety nine parts bad.⁷⁶ Mao himself in contrast received the assessment of one third bad, two thirds good, a position adopted formally by the party in July 1981. As Pini notes that was the quotient that Mao himself had applied to Deng in 1973.⁷⁷

NOTES

1. Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina. 60 anni tra passato e futuro*, Rome, L'Asino d'oro, 2011, p. 167-168.
2. Quansheng Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy: The Micro-macro Linkage Approach*, Hong Kong, Oxford University Press (China) Ltd., 1996, p. 50.
3. See George C. Wang, ed. (and translated by) *China under the Four Modernizations: Part 1. Selected Papers Submitted to the Joint Economic Committee. Congress of the United States, Ninety-Seventh Congress, Second Session*, Washington, DC., US GPO, 1982.
4. Quansheng Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy...*, op. cit., p. 50.
5. See articles on 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Shenzhen SEZ in the China Daily: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/shenzhen30years/sz.html>, accessed 12.03.2014.
6. See Fan Ying, "Research on Joint Ventures in China: Progress and Prognosis", *Journal of Euromarketing*, vol. 4, n° 3-4, 1996, p. 71-88 for further background.
7. Giacomo Luciani, *Alcune ipotesi e considerazioni sui possibili sviluppi di una politica di cooperazione economica fra l'Italia e la Repubblica Cinese*, Rome, IAI, 1980, p. 7.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 16-17.
9. Vittorio Colombo, *Incontri con la Cina*, Milan, Istituto Italo Cinese, 1995, p. 77.
10. *Testi e documenti sulla politica estera dell'Italia*, Rome, Ministero Affari Esteri, 1978, p. 168.
11. Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina...*, op. cit., p. 175.
12. Aldo Rizzo, "Hua è partito", *La Stampa*, 7 November 1979, p. 1.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina...*, op. cit., p. 177.
15. Michaelangelo Jacobucci, *Pertini uomo di pace: i viaggi del presidente*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1985, p. 152-153.
16. See appendix.
17. *Statistica annuale del commercio con l'estero 1978*, Rome, ISTAT, 1978.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Statistica annuale del commercio con l'estero 1984*, Rome, ISTAT, 1984.
20. "La grande industria italiana alla scoperta del pianeta Cina", *La Repubblica*, 7 November 1986, p. 49.
21. The phrase was coined by UK Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd at a Chatham House lecture in 1993. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk_politics/2001/open_politics/foreign_policy/uks_world_role.stm, accessed 11.03.2014.
22. Aldo Rizzo, "Hua è partito", art. cit., p. 1.
23. Archivio Storico FIAT, Turin, Fondo Pedrani, b. 11, *China Project - Agricultural Tractors, Considerations on the New Production Programs*.
24. "La Cina apre le porte ai trattori FIAT", *La Repubblica*, 8 June 1985, p. 39.

25. Disposizione Organizzativa n. 2/79, 15 October 1979, Archivio Storico FIAT, Turin, Fondo Delibere, 1002.
26. "Maxicontratto della FIAT con la Cina per la produzione di camion leggeri", *La Repubblica*, 13 September 1986, p. 47.
27. "La grande industria italiana alla scoperta del pianeta Cina", *La Repubblica*, 7 November 1986, p. 49.
28. Quoted in an interview with Dino Gentili: "COGIS – Dal commercio una sorgente di amicizia", *Il Giorno*, 21 December 1972.
29. Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina...*, op. cit., p. 193.
30. *Testi e Documenti sulla politica estera dell'Italia*, Rome, Ministero Affari Esteri, 1986, p. 179.
31. "Spadolini a Pechino – La Cina dice No alle guerre stellari", *L'Unità*, 6 April 1985, p. 2.
32. "La grande industria italiana alla scoperta del pianeta Cina", *La Repubblica*, 7 November 1986, p. 49.
33. "Alenia sulla rotta di Marco Polo, punta alla leadership nei radar", *L'Unità*, 25 January 1992, p. 16.
34. Francesco Sisci, "Come abbiamo perso la Cina", *Limes*, n° 6, 2005, p. 273.
35. Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina...*, op. cit., p. 190.
36. Massimo Iannicci, "La Politica della cooperazione italiana in Cina", *Mondo Cinese*, n° 103, 2000, http://www.tuttocina.it/mondo_cinese/103/103_iann.htm#.UyCGMmeYY5g, accessed 12.10.14.
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38. Ilaria Fiore, *Tien An Men*, Turin, Nuova Eri, 1990.
39. Radio Radicale interview with Li Peng (sound recording), Rome, 1992, <http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/44257/44302-visita-ufficiale-in-italia-del-leader-cinese-li-peng>, last accessed January 2014.
40. Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina...*, op. cit., p. 201.
41. Francesco Sisci, "Come abbiamo perso...", art. cit., p. 274.
42. The CeSPI is an independent Italian think tank, which had for long close ties with the former Italian communist party.
43. Gianni De Michelis, "La Cina: istruzioni per l'uso", *Limes*, n° 1, 1995, p. 209.
44. Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: A Political History*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1997, p. 484.
45. Gianni De Michelis, "La Cina: istruzioni...", art. cit., p. 209.
46. Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina...*, op. cit., p. 203.
47. Antonio Rubbi, *Appunti cinesi*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1992, p. 3.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
50. Enrico Berlinguer, "Perché andiamo in Cina", *L'Unità*, 13 April 1980, p. 1.
51. Antonio Rubbi, *Appunti cinesi...*, op. cit., p. 140.
52. Giancarlo Pajetta was a member of the National Secretariat of the PCI, with responsibility for its international relations.
53. Antonio Rubbi, *Appunti cinesi...*, op. cit., p. 141.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
55. Archivio Gramsci (Rome), Fondo Berlinguer, Viaggio in Cina 1980, Discorsi Pubblici, b. 168, *Brindisi di Enrico Berlinguer al banchetto di commiato offerto alla delegazione italiana dal compagno Hu Yaobang*, Beijing, 22 April 1980.
56. Antonio Rubbi, *Appunti cinesi...*, op. cit., p. 150.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
 61. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
 62. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
 63. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
 64. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
 65. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
 66. The hijacking of the Italian cruise liner *Achille Lauro* in the Mediterranean by members of the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) led to somewhat of a crisis in the Italian government and a standoff between the Italian and US armed forces in regard to taking the captured hijackers into custody.
 67. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
 68. Archivio Gramsci, Fondo Natta, Scritti e Discorsi, b. 42, *Viaggio in Cina, Riscontro*.
 69. Francesco Sisci, "Come abbiamo perso...", art. cit., p. 269-275.
 70. Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina...*, op. cit., p. 180.
 71. Oriana Fallaci, *Intervista con la Storia*, Milan, BUR Rizzoli, 2008, p. 334-365.
 72. Oriana Fallaci, *Intervista con la Storia*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1977, p. 15-38.
 73. Oriana Fallaci, *Intervista con il Potere*, Milan, Rizzoli, 2009, p. 463.
 74. *Ibid.*, p. 464.
 75. *Ibid.*, p. 498. Giulio Andreotti despite his regular trips to the confessional never offered the same level of public examination of conscience. Deng's comments on his clear conscience have however been echoed by Andreotti on numerous occasions.
 76. *Ibid.*, p. 516.
 77. Mario Filippo Pini, *Italia e Cina...*, op. cit., p. 181.
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ABSTRACTS

This article identifies the high point of relations between Italy and the People's Republic of China and argues that it was the prerogatives of domestic politics and specifically the aftermath of the imploding of the Italian political system in the wake of the "Clean hands" investigations initiated by judges in Milan that was responsible for the subsequent major rupture. The analyze focuses on the varying trajectories of both states, which produced the circumstances that permitted a very significant growth in Italian exports to the PRC, to the extent that in Europe only West Germany boasted a superior performance. Attitudes within the Government are further examined to account for the volatile nature of relations both in the economic and diplomatic spheres.

Les relations entre l'Italie et la République Populaire de Chine connaissent une phase particulièrement intense dans les années 1980-1990. À partir de ce contexte, cet article propose d'analyser comment une question interne, l'implosion du système politique italien à la suite des enquêtes judiciaires de *mani pulite*, engendre une rupture majeure dans ces relations. Les évolutions des trajectoires de ces deux États permettent notamment le développement de circonstances favorables aux échanges : les exportations italiennes en République Populaire de Chine font un bond en avant, et l'Italie se classe alors au second rang des exportateurs européens en Chine, derrière l'Allemagne. L'examen des différentes tendances qui se manifestent au sein du gouvernement permet cependant de souligner une relative instabilité des relations entre les sphères économiques et diplomatiques.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Italie, République Populaire de Chine, relations diplomatiques, commerce, relations économiques, Tangentopoli

Keywords: Italy, People's Republic of China, diplomatic relations, trade, economic relations, Tangentopoli

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