

A Sketch of Anti-Revisionism in Italy

Part Two: 1970s Fading Blooms

Within Italy the developing strands reflected the growing divergence and divisions within the anti-revisionist movement internationally throughout the 1970s. Events following the death of Mao in 1976 and transformations occurred in China over the past decades saw "a big leap, and disillusionment". Accepting that activists were motivated by different inspiration, some looked more to the orthodoxy espoused from Albania than follow the contending ideological twists and turns from pronouncements in China that saw Lin Biao condemned and Deng Xiaoping rehabilitated and then removed once more before the death of Mao Zedong.



In common with activists elsewhere, there was the common expression of exaggerated praise for events in China that were little understood and largely assessed through the material coming out of China. But there were also signs of differences between the original anti-revisionist groups. Organisations were giving their allegiance to Albania yet in the new century there was also a re-birth of a Maoist trend that identified strongly with militant 1960s Maoism.

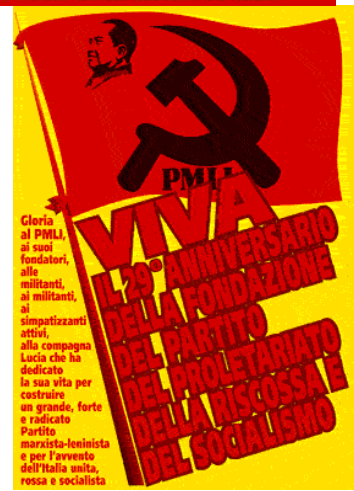
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The new decade saw a continuation of old practices: 1970 saw another breakaway from the Communist Party of Italy (Marxist-Leninist) with the creation of the *Organizzazione del Comunisti Marxista-Leninista* led by veteran communist, Osvaldo Pesce. In May 1977 it merged with two other small groups to form the (mis-named) Unified Communist Party of Italy - PCUd'I - of which Pesce remained General Secretary. The PCUd'I published *Linea Proletaria*. Politically it remained aligned to China after Mao's death, endorsing the "Three World theory" and sent delegations to China in 1977 and 1978.

The **Italian Marxist–Leninist Party (PMLI)** (*Partito Marxista-Leninista Italiano*) was founded in Florence in 1977 by its General Secretary Giovanni Scuderi (b1935-). A veteran of the anti-revisionist movement in Italy, he and Mino Pasca, Nerina "Lucia" Paoletti and Patrizia Pierattini - ("the four pioneers") -began their political activity when in 1967, they joined the Federation of Marxist-Leninist Communists of Italy, but broke in 1968 and joined the Communist Party of Italy (Marxist-Leninist), becoming its Provincial Secretary of Florence. He had a clash with Angiolo Gracci, "red line" that split from the Party, and then subsequently with General Secretary Fosco Dinucci, leader of the "black line" PCd'I(ml), whom was denounced for acting as a left apologists for the revisionism of the PCI.

So on 14 December 1969, the four pioneers and the Provincial Committee of Florence left PCd'I (ml) and, along with other Marxist-Leninist organizations, established the *Organizzazione Comunista Bolscevica Italiana marxista-leninista*, and in the first edition of the newspaper *Il Bolscevico*, wrote:

"Chairman Mao has often said that "without destruction there is not construction. The destruction is the criticism, the revolution. The destruction comes first, it of course brings the construction". By the destruction of PCd'I(ml) of Florence, the Italian Bolshevik Communist Organization Marxist-Leninist arose, on completely Marxist-Leninist foundations. It seeks to build the revolutionary party that assumes Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as the theoretical foundation that leads its thought."



OCBImI drew to it dozen of militants of Tuscany, Lombardy, Sicily and Calabria, and in 1977 the Organization was transformed into **Italian Marxist–Leninist Party (PMLI)** (*Partito Marxista-Leninista Italiano*). The PMLI's central Party headquarters remain in Florence, with the regional cells named as "J. Stalin" ([Forlì](#)), "Red Vesuvio" ([Naples](#)), "Mao Zedong" ([Milan](#)) and "Mao" ([Enna](#)). There has been five Congresses in 1977, 1982, 1985, 1998 and 2008. PMLI

continued to publish *Il Bolscevico* ('The Bolshevik') until September 2013.



Giovanni Scuderi remained a prolific author of polemical material that populated the PMLI's website in the new century.

While it continued to proclaim its Maoist inspirations, taking part in the 1993 International Seminary on Mao Zedong Thought organized by the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany, the PMLI close contacts

with China ended in 1981, when it denounced the restoration of capitalism under Deng Xiaoping. Attempts to maintain relations with the Party of Labour of Albania, finished when Enver Hoxha attacked Mao and Maoism.

There were reports that after 1975, the PMLI had a close relationship with the Communist Party of Kampuchea, even after the invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam, with a PMLI leader visited a CPK-controlled zone of Cambodia in 1987.

Notably the PMLI supported the Iranian Revolution as anti-imperialist revolution and reputedly a Party leader visited Iran in 1992. The PMLI won a lawsuit that she filed against the newspaper *Libero* and *La Padania* who had accused the PMLI of relations with Islamic fundamentalist organizations. In Italy there was unconfirmed gossip about some financial support by Iranian embassy. The PMLI was critic about the diplomatic restoration agreement between Iran and USA, and the perceived support of ISIS is another step which distances PMLI from Iran regime.

Support for struggles based in the Global south maintained an international profile for what was a stagnant domestic party, firm in its orthodoxies but being political outflanked by younger maoist activism. These forces criticized the PMLI for its actions such as when, in October 2015 at the fifth plenary session of the party's central committee, the party took a stance of backing the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant against the "holy imperialist alliance" fighting it. *Maoistroad* blog posting condemned the PMLI, this "reactionary group masked as marxist-leninist PMLI support ISIS - before this group has always defined 'sendero luminoso' as terrorist - we demand to communist blogs do not support these reactionaries". The *Maoistroad* blog explained "all in the world know that Isis is an imperialist's creature"

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The Second congress of the **PCI (ML)** was held in Parma on January 5-7 1973. Prominently displayed on the front page was Hoxha's message to the congress, in Albanian original and Italian translation, while the main front-page report stated that "during the proceedings the messages of the fraternal Marxist-Leninist parties were presented in the first place the messages of the Albanian Party of Labor, signed by Comrade Enver Hoxha."

The resolution adopted by the congress also bears witness to a change in the PCI (ML)'s attitude. The Chinese are mentioned just three times, and each time they are paired with the Albanians, Mao with Hoxha. The "thought of Mao Tse-tung," which not so long ago represented the summation of revolutionary wisdom for Italian Marxist-Leninists, is not mentioned at all; but there is an exemplary quotation from Enver Hoxha.

What did not last long were the sentiments expressed upon the death of Mao Zedong by Fosco Dinucci, General Secretary of the **Communist Party of Italy (Marxist-Leninist)**,

"The passing of Comrade Mao Tsetung has left an incurable wound in the hearts of the Communists, revolutionaries and peoples of the whole world. The merits of Comrade Mao Tse-Tung belong to the international proletariat, the people the world over and the cause of the proletarian revolution and the cause of struggle for liberation. Mao Tse-tung Thought is a fundamental contribution to the development of Marxism-Leninism."¹

Such high praise was soon reserved for the work and record of China's one-time ally, the beacon of socialism in Europe, Albania.



Fosco Dinucci supported the Albanian intervention amongst the European Marxist-Leninists to condemn the Chinese party, arguing at an internationalist rally hosted in Rome in February 1977, that,

There are false, devious and conniving Marxists-Leninists in Italy and other countries who contemplate struggling against the two superpowers – or better, against only one of the two superpowers thus siding with reactionary forces and fascists. And in order to fight one superpower they want to be able to rely on the other. This is the worst form of opportunism.²

The PCd'I (ml) joined with Spanish, Portuguese, West German and Greek organisations in publishing in October 1977 a "Joint Declaration" that the 'theory of three worlds' could never constitute the strategic basis of the world communist movement, "this theory

¹ Peking Review, No. 42 1976

² Zanga, Louis (1977) Albania and China in the view of the ML splinter parties. Radio Free Europe Research. Background Report/ 48 (World Communist Movement) 1st March 1977

is not a Marxist-Leninist theory, but a revisionist and complete fabrication of Marxism-Leninism... a counter-revolutionary strategy.”³

The rejection of its Maoist past failed to stabilise the organisation, and the PCd'I(ml) had seen further division: first in 1979 by the group gathered around the newspaper *October*, which argued that the PCd'I (ml) should give more favourable attention to the Soviet Union and to the left of the PCI. The following year, 1980, Ubaldo Buttafava then broken away from the Communist Party of Italy (Marxist-Leninist) forming his own grouping, “Our Struggle” which maintain the political line of Enver Hoxha. His politics was described, by admirers as, “the ideological Stalingrad against capitalism.”⁴ (He died May 9th 2007)

Ubaldo Buttafava was founder-leader and Secretary of the Central *Committee of the Organisation for the Communist Party of the Proletariat of Italy*. Under the title, Organization for the Reconstruction of the Communist Party of the Proletariat of Italy, they participated in the (pro-Enver Hoxha) International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organisations held in April 2000 but became defunct within a few years.

The ideological rigour of earlier years was well diluted by the time of the Extraordinary Congress held in Rome, 14 to 15 September 1991. Then the original maoist organisation signalled its evolution when the PCd'I (ML) dissolved. Many of its members went into the *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista, PRC - founded in Dec 1991*. Essentially a left critic of the old revisionist Italian Communist Party (PCI), led by Achille Occhetto, that became the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) that same year.⁵ Although in 1994 there was a self-declared maoist split from the PRC to form the Workers' Party Marxist Leninist headed by Michele Panotti.

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Buttafava's Organizzazione per il Partito Comunista del Proletariato d'Italia was largely succeeded by the Communist Platform (*Piattaforma Comunista*) within the ICMLPO.

Communist Platform (Piattaforma Comunista) had a Hoxhaist background, founded in February 2008 as a merger of the editorial board of *Teoria & Prassi* and members of Lenin Circle. Communist Platform publish the theoretical review "*Teoria & Prassi*" (Theory and Practice), the political journal *Scintilla* (Spark) and maintains a web site (<http://piattaformacomunista.com/>). The main task of Communist Platform is the theoretical and political struggle for the formation of a communist party as an independent working class and revolutionary party based on the principle of Marxism-Leninism and Hoxhaism. It is associated with the international grouping of the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (publication, *Unity & Struggle*).

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³ Joint declaration (1977) of the Communist Party of Germany [ml], the Communist Party of Spain [ml], the Communist Party of Italy [ml], and the Portuguese Communist Party [reconstructed]. Tirana: The <8 Nentori> Publishing House

⁴ Comrade Ubaldo Buttafava Has Died! <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv13n2/ubaldo.htm>

⁵ *The splintering of the old revisionist Left in the new century has seen the emergence of pro-Soviet Union supporters emerge in their own organisations. The PCIml - Marxist-Leninist Italian Communist Party was founded on 3rd December of 1999 by Domenico Savio together with the comrades Alfredo A. La Picciarella of San Severo (Foggia), Gennaro Savio (Domenico Savio's son). It was formed on initiative of the Centre of Marxist Culture and Initiative (Centro di Cultura e Iniziativa Marxista) established May 1979 by Domenico Savio (b.1940-), after 18 years (1958-1976) of membership of the PCI having been involved in the internal resistance to the "revisionist, reformist, opportunist, electoral, little-bourgeois and capitalistic drift of the Party". Its politics is old fashion Stalinist.*

By 1980, post-Mao China had clearly abandoned Western Maoism; reconciliation was the order of the day. Renewed contacts with organisations like the PCI, who had publicly condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan earlier that year, were on ideological agonistic grounds.



The rapprochement between the PCI and the CPC was sealed with an official visit to China by a delegation of the PCI headed by General Secretary Enrico Berlinguer in May 1980. Basically they agreed (on what was to prove the template for party-to-party relations for the ruling Chinese party): to reserve their views and accept (a non-judgemental) co-existence that would not provide an obstacle to develop relations between them.

The PCI had resisted the attempts to expel the CPC from the international communist movement on Russian terms in the 1960s without accepting or endorsing Maoist ideas or policies. And by now, neither were the Chinese party.



From the wreckage of the ML movement's left trends, **Comitati di Appoggio alla Resistenza per il Comunismo (CARC - Committees to Support Resistance for Communism)** emerged out of a national conference in Florence in 1992. A veteran of the movement was elected Secretary General, Giuseppe Mai. Especially in Campania and Tuscany, the movement over the years has been the focus of strong controversy regarding the links

between the party, militant anti-fascists and the second wave of Red Brigade activists operating in Italy, expressing solidarity with "comrades under investigation".

2004 saw the founding of the *(new) Italian Communist Party [(n) PCI]* headed by General Secretary Ulisse. (n)PCI thought the Red Brigades constituted a healthy innovation in the communist movement in the imperialist countries. Their position was that in their activities they combined political struggle with the armed struggle, and asserted that the socialist revolution in imperialist countries is not an event that breaks out, but a process that the Communist Party builds. The Red Brigades were ultimately defeated because they degenerated in militarism, but their criticism of the Left was valid. This public attitude and its street level activity on the basis "No to racism, fascism and homophobia" (no a razzismo, fascismo e omofobia) indicates a radical politics that attracts the authorities interests. The arrest of its militants at protests or in state operations

is not uncommon. There has been two trials of a group of its activist on terrorist related charges; both times they were acquitted.

(n) PCI has a substantial theoretical output on the basis that Maoism is the third higher stage of communist thought, after Marxism and Leninism, arguing that:

Never in humanity's history, an ideological-political movement developed so greatly and rapidly as the communist movement did from the half of the 19th century to the half of the 20th century. To limit ourselves to Marxism-Leninism means to refuse to overcome the old communist movement's limits, which prevented it from utilizing those great successes achieved until the half of the 20th century. Those limits allowed the modern revisionists to gain ground, corrode and corrupt the communist movement from inside until the loss of the great part of its conquests. The balance of the great advancement of the communist movement in the first century of its life and of the great retreat sustained in the next fifty years prepared the instruments for the success of the new wave of proletarian revolution.⁶

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The Party explained its strategy in its *Manifesto Program* produced in 2008⁷ and maintains a lively exchange in the international movement. It advertises its analysis of the international situation, the general line and its strategy, seeking to contribute to the second wave of proletarian revolution advancing all over the world. The Revolutionary Protracted People's War (RPPW) is the strategy of the (n)PCI. In the Manifesto Program the Party distinguishes between the universal laws of RPPW and the particular ones, valid for the socialist revolution in Italy and in other imperialist countries.

A much reduced self-identifying Maoist movement could still be fragmented by ideological differences as (new) Italian Communist Party [(n) PCI] explained the divergences between them and Proletari Comunisti (also known as Communist Proletarians – CoPro in Italy).

“The current leading team of CoPro participated in the founding of the RIM in 1984. For CoPro to join Maoism is to wave a flag. For CoPro Maoism is like a badge that it put on in order to be recognized, as a sign of identity and recognition. CoPro says that Maoism is the third higher stage of communist thinking, but it has never defined which the main contributions of Maoism to communist thinking are. Still less it carried Maoism out in any positive innovation in comparison to the left of the old PCI. In the theoretical field CoPro repeats the principles of Marxism-Leninism turned into empty formulas. In the political field it has not formulated any strategy to establish socialism. It does not distinguish between strategy and tactics. It reduces the political struggle to the claiming struggles: growing in number and strength, sooner or later those claiming struggles should lead to the outbreak of the revolution (this is the real strategy of CoPro).”⁸

PCm had its roots with some Italian Maoists who quickly associated the arrest of the ‘Gang of Four’ with a political change in China. The Torino-based *Organizzazione Comunista Proletaria marxista-leninista* was a signatory to the pre-RIM Communiqué “To the Marxist-Leninists, the Workers and the Oppressed of All countries” that circulated in the autumn of 1980. Its view was that after the fall of the Cultural

⁶ Nicola P. The Eighth Discriminating Factor. *La Voce* - organ of the CP of the (new)Italian Communist Party, n 9, November 2001 and n.10, March 2002

⁷ <http://www.nuovopci.it/eile/en/in080619.html> You find the English, Spanish and French versions of many documents of the (new) Italian Communist Party in the Eile (Edizioni in Lingue Estere) section on Party website.

⁸ <http://proletaricomunisti.blogspot.it/>

Revolution and the death of Chairman Mao, the work of RCP US to bring together all parties and organizations, refusing to liquidate the communist movement inspired by Mao Tse-Tung, was very important. The RCP US has the merit of this successful work, which led in 1984 to the International Conference that founded the RIM on the basis of its Declaration.

A small group of Italian Maoists - the Organizzazione Comunista Proletaria marxista-leninista -declared affiliation with the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement – along with the Communist Collective of Agit/Prop and the Communist Committee of Trento, and were separately listed in “A World To Win” magazine. By 1991 the Italian affiliate was listed as the Communist Organisation Red Worker (“Rossoperayo”), following the merger of the three groups.⁹ “Red Worker” (“Rossoperayo”), in 2000 was transformed into the Maoist Communist Party (Partito Comunista maoista, PCm) It published the newspaper *proletari comunisti* and a magazine called *La Nuova Bandiera*. It has attracted attention of young people organised in “Red Block”, guided by the PCm. On the international front, PCm activity includes the support for the people’s war in India. It has already begun working within Italy and internationally, with comrades from France, Spain, and Canada, to advance in the line of the People’s War in the imperialist countries. -- *We are at the stage of ideological and political preparation to fulfill our duties as genuine internationalists.* -- While involved in the co-ordination and publicity of the website and new journal *Maoist Road*, PCm believes that any internationalist organisation has “no chance to advance if it does not advance also the flag of the universality of People’s War, if it does not advance also the organizing parties for the people’s war in the imperialist countries and the new beginning of the People’s War in some of them.”¹⁰

Whilst a long time member of RIM, PCm argued “there was a phase of maximum difficulty and confusion in our movement, up to the complete emergence in the recent years of the opportunistic, revisionist and, in some features, even reactionary approach of Bob Avakian, now called “New Synthesis”, to which is added objectively the develop of revisionist positions in the leadership of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).”¹¹

So PCm Italy supported the critical text ‘Against Avakianism’ produced by the Communist party of India (ML) Naxalbari as the basis for a new alignment of MLM parties and organisations -in the ex-RIM and out of the RIM - in preparation towards an International Seminar and International Conference of all MLM parties and organisations that was being proposed in 2013/2014.

In the wake of the street protests at the G8 Summit in Genoa, PCm supporters were active in the formation of the “**Red Block**”, “a revolutionary youth organization that wants to contribute to the construction of the new Communist Party in Italy.”¹²

The PCm also sponsors the comrades of **Revolutionary Proletarian Feminist Movement**, who publically appeared in 2012. Both organisations spoke the International Conference in Support of the People’s War in India took place in the city of Hamburg, on 24th of November 2012.



⁹ A World To Win #16 1991

¹⁰ Intervention of PCm– Italy at the International Conference in Hamburg 2011

¹¹ Intervention of PCm– Italy at the International Conference in Hamburg 2011

¹² www.redblock-it.blogspot.com