

Editorial

Tigers of the Orient

by Flavio Fusi



Sabre-tooth tigers, tigers hidden in the jungle undergrowth, battle-worn tigers, wounded, bleeding tigers. The title of our dossier is a tribute to the two vast continent-countries (the “dear enemies”) that are currently dictating the turbulent beat of our new century. Two giants: the Indian heirs to the “children of midnight” and the new China that belongs to the voracious grandchildren of the peasant led by Mao Zedong on their ‘Long March’.

Youth, growth, speed. By 2020, the average age of the Indian population will be 29, compared with China’s 37 years. Europeans, whose average age at that stage will be 45, can only be considered old, if not on the verge of becoming ‘ancient’. While the fires may have stopped burning in the West, an explosive mixture is brewing in the Eastern furnace. Beijing is still chasing the ideological spectre of harmony, but ‘contradiction’ is actually the fuel driving both Asian power houses.

China is ‘condemned’ both to grow economically and stall its demographics. Its ‘one child’ policy is a dead end for the future. The new Chinese imperialism is gobbling up whole chunks of the African continent.

The devastating corruption within the huge public sector is a menacing Polyphemus hanging over the new party leadership and the state.

The India of new professions, advanced technologies, huge fortunes and Bollywood splendour is also the India that insults women, where girls are stalked and raped and its lawless urban sprawls have no recourse to justice. And its future is undermined by a dilapidated child healthcare system, a low level of education and mass unemployment. The New Delhi daily, *Tehelka*, openly asks “Have we missed the last train for the 21st century?”.

Huge contradictions and major challenges, compared to which all crisis-stricken Europe can muster is little more than a whimper. If the 26 million unemployed Europeans all voted together, the ‘no job’ party would secure almost 50 seats in the European parliament. In Europe, the young become old without having ever lived. And yet there’s no backlash, no sign of a contradiction: just a ‘weak reasoning’ that feebly and ineffectually wavers between austerity and growth. Listlessness versus fury, political parties on the run and economists at loggerheads.

As far back as 1923, Joseph Roth described Europe as “a sad continent, rapidly digging its own grave”. Even today, its lethargy and indifference resemble a form of death. As history and the tale of the two Oriental tigers teach us, contradiction alone is the painful lifeblood of the future. **E**