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AGAINST THE EUROMISSILES: ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENTS  
IN 1980S ITALY (1979-1984)\*

Between 1981 and 1983, mass mobilization against nuclear weapons represented an extraordinary novelty in Italian history. However, scholars have largely overlooked this topic.<sup>1</sup> Through a study of primary sources, this chapter analyzes this issue by examin-

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1 In the wake of the movement much (including scholarly) interest arose. See in particular, Pierangelo Isernia, "I movimenti per la pace: una realtà in divenire", *Il Mulino* 286 (1983): 233-58; Giovanni Lodi, *Uniti e diversi. Le mobilitazioni per la pace nell'Italia degli anni '80* (Milano: Edizioni Unicopli, 1984); Sergio A. Rossi and Virgilio Ilari, "The Peace Movement in Italy", in *The Peace Movements in Europe and the United States*, ed. Werner Kaltefleiter and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 140-61; Ada Ferrari, "Il pacifismo contemporaneo fra idea nazionale e idea planetaria", *Storia contemporanea* 5 (1986): 889-901; Virgilio Ilari, "Storia politica del movimento pacifista in Italia", in *Sicurezza e difesa. Fattori interni e internazionali*, ed. Carlo Jean (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1986), 231-89; Centro Militare di Studi Strategici, *Rapporto di ricerca su i movimenti pacifisti e antinucleari in Italia, 1980-1988* (Roma: Rivista militare, 1990). In the following years, only a few, and not always accurate, sociological studies were published: Carlo Ruzza, "Institutional Actors and the Italian Peace Movement: Specializing and Branching out", *Theory and Society* 1 (1997): 87-127; Simone Tosi and Tommaso Vitale, "Explaining How Political Culture Changes: Catholic Activism and the Secular Left in Italian Peace Movement", *Social Movement Studies* 8, no. 2 (2009): 131-47. Studies of Italian pacifism are either too partisan or too perfunctory: Antonella Marrone and Piero Sansonetti, *Né un uomo né un soldo: una cronaca del pacifismo italiano del Novecento* (Milano: Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2003); Pietro Pàstena, *Breve storia del pacifismo in Italia. Dal Settecento alle guerre del terzo millennio* (Acireale: Bonanno, 2005); Amoreno Martellini, *Fiori nei cannoni. Nonviolenza e antimilitarismo nell'Italia del Novecento* (Roma: Donzelli, 2006); Gabriella Mecucci, *Le ambiguità del pacifismo. Luci e ombre di un movimento nato dalla Perugia-Assisi* (Argelato: Minerva, 2011). More recently, a series of well-documented articles have been published, but they have not really filled the gap. These include two groundbreaking contributions, such as Giovanni Mario Ceci, "'Pace nella sicurezza' o 'sicurezza nella pace'. Il mondo cattolico italiano e la Democrazia cristiana di fronte alla sfida degli euromissili", *Mondo contemporaneo* 1, no. 2 (2005): 71-75; and Valentine Lomellini, "La fine di un'egemonia? Il PCI, il movimento per la pace e la genesi di nuove identità politiche nell'Italia degli anni Ottanta", in *Dal Sessantotto al crollo del Muro. I movimenti di protesta in Europa a cavallo tra i due blocchi*, ed. Valentine Lomellini and Antonio Varsori (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2014), 127-15; some useful essays, which, however are not devoted to the

ing the origins of the movement between 1979 and 1981 and its main features (first paragraph), the divisions that characterized it, as they emerged at its first gathering in November 1981 (second paragraph), its evolution and inner contrasts between 1982 and 1984 (third paragraph), and it will end with a final appraisal (fourth paragraph).

### THE BIRTH OF THE MOVEMENT (1979-1981)

In the post-World War II period, Italy lacked a strong independent peace movement and the only mass mobilization for peace Italians had experienced was the Communist one.<sup>2</sup> In 1976-1977, a movement against civilian uses of nuclear energy emerged, but it entered a sudden crisis.<sup>3</sup> In 1977 and 1978, a mass protest against the neutron bomb failed to arise, probably because the country was facing other more arduous issues.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that in Italy an anti-nuclear weapons movement started much later than in countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany or the Netherlands, and that it was marked from the beginning by a form of politicization unknown elsewhere. This was due to the role Communists and youth movements belonging to

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protests: Guido Formigoni, "La DC e il dibattito sulla pace nel mondo cattolico postconciliare", in *Le sfide della pace. Istituzioni, movimenti intellettuali e politici tra Otto e Novecento*, ed. Alfredo Canavero, Guido Formigoni, and Giorgio Vecchio (Milano: LED, 2008), 231-48; Paolo Pellizzari, "Socialisti e comunisti italiani di fronte alla questione energetico-nucleare 1973-1987", *Italia contemporanea* 259 (2010): 237-61; Matthew Evangelista, 'Atomic Ambivalence: Italy's Evolving Attitude towards Nuclear Weapons', in *Italy's Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century: The New Assertiveness of an Aspiring Middle Power*, ed. Giampiero Giacomello and Bertjan Verbeek (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 115-34; Gregorio Sorgonà, "Gli euromissili e il Msi. Il neofascismo italiano e la sua area giovanile di fronte al rilancio della Guerra fredda 1979-1983", *Italia contemporanea* 276 (2014): 476-500. The few articles focusing on the anti-nuclear movement are usually disappointing. In some cases, they are incomplete from the point of view of the sources, or they offer an interpretation that is completely internal to the movement. This is the case with Alessandro Santagata, "'Invece dei missili'. I cattolici e la 'profezia' della pace: dalla campagna per il Vietnam alla protesta di Comiso", *Italia contemporanea* 276 (2014): 423-47. In other cases, they are written in haste, as is the case with Marco Bizzoni, "L'iniziativa del PCI contro gli euromissili", *Giornale di storia contemporanea* 15, no. 1 (2011): 91-101. Still in other cases, they are or too local in approach, as is the case with Antonio Baglio and Vincenzo Schirripa, "'Tutti a Comiso'. La lotta contro gli euromissili in Italia 1981-1983", *Italia contemporanea* 276 (2014): 448-75.

2 Anna Scarantino, "Tra 'organizzazione', 'cultura' e 'lotta' per la pace. Il pacifismo italiano negli anni della guerra fredda", *Giornale di storia contemporanea* 12, no. 2 (2009): 141-78.

3 Simone Neri Serneri, "Culture e politiche del movimento ambientalista", in *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni settanta. II – Culture, nuovi soggetti, identità*, ed. Fiamma Lussana and Giacomo Marramao (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2003), 367-99, see 381-82.

4 See for instance "La grande equiparatrice. Le polemiche sulla bomba N", *Lotta continua*, April 16-17, 1978, 11.

the different groups of the “New Left” had in transforming the anti-nuclear issue into a battlefield for continual political struggles.

The first political parties to oppose a possible Italian government decision, in September and at the beginning of October 1979, were the Partito Radicale (PR)<sup>5</sup> and the Partito di Unità Proletaria (PDUP).<sup>6</sup> At the end of October, grassroots Catholic groups, in an evident contraposition to the Catholic majority party, the Democrazia Cristiana (DC), proposed the creation of a large, ethically based protest mass movement: a sort of “disarmament party”.<sup>7</sup> On October 31, and then again on December 2, many Catholic movements and associations (including Azione Cattolica) presented an appeal to promote negotiations and refuse any “nuclear rearmament strategy”.<sup>8</sup> However, it was especially the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) that was active on this issue. As the Communist press put it, “it is a matter of implementing a strong united array”.<sup>9</sup> Hence, at the beginning of December, Communists organized hundreds of mass gatherings throughout the country,<sup>10</sup> following a series of strategies and procedures that drew on (explicitly) classical, well-rehearsed, past models introduced by the Partigiani della Pace,<sup>11</sup> such as appeals by intellectuals<sup>12</sup> and the mobilization of students and women.<sup>13</sup> However, even though the PCI acted in an extremely cautious way, avoiding “obviously one-sided anti-Western positions” as a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report noted,<sup>14</sup> it did not succeed in drawing other major parties (neither the DC nor the Partito Socialista Italiano, PSI) to the peace movement.<sup>15</sup>

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5 Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, VIII Legislatura – Discussioni, Seduta del 21 settembre 1979, 1831-32, and Seduta del 26 ottobre 1979, 3459.

6 Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, VIII Legislatura – Discussioni, Seduta del 10 ottobre 1979, 2610.

7 Arrigo Bongiorno, “Euromissili e ‘partito del disarmo’”, *Avvenire*, October 28, 1979, 15, qt. in Ceci, “Pace nella sicurezza”, 71.

8 “I missili non preparano la pace”, *Avvenire*, October 31, 1979, 1 and “La verità è la forza della pace”, *Avvenire*, December 2, 1979, 3.

9 “Lunedì il corteo dall’Esedra per la pace e la distensione”, *l’Unità*, December 1, 1979, 11.

10 “Contro la rincorsa ai missili nucleari in Europa. Migliaia manifestano nelle strade di Modena”, *l’Unità*, December 1, 1979, 17 and “Con i missili la guerra è più vicina: diciamo di no”, *l’Unità*, December 12, 1979, 4.

11 “Con una grande fiaccolata scende di nuovo in piazza un movimento che vuole la pace”, *l’Unità*, December 4, 1979, 8.

12 “Intellettuai contro la corsa al riarmo”, *l’Unità*, December 9, 1979, 12; and “Stasera tutti in piazza per la pace. Il significato di una mobilitazione unitaria e spontanea”, *l’Unità*, December 14, 1979, 10.

13 “Con i missili”.

14 *Peace Groups and Leaders in INF Basing Countries*, November 1, 1982, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (hereafter NARA), Freedom of Information Act, Electronic Reading Room (hereafter FOIA), Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, DDRS, 1990, doc. n. 2489.

15 “Il discorso di Berlinguer a Firenze”, *l’Unità*, February 18, 1980, 2.

When, in April 1980, European Nuclear Disarmament (END) appealed to its “European friends” to create a common movement against missiles, Italians failed to react. They did so only in the second half of 1981, when a series of changes transformed people’s attitudes: a major turn in US policies, following the election of Ronald Reagan to the White House (and especially the announcement that the United States would develop the neutron bomb);<sup>16</sup> the selection on the part of the Italian government of the small Sicilian town of Comiso for the installment of cruise missiles;<sup>17</sup> the air fighting in the Gulf of Sidra that abruptly evoked the specter of war just a few miles off the Italian shores;<sup>18</sup> the growth of a mass protest movement in northern Europe in which the main Socialist parties took part.<sup>19</sup> On September 1981, the Movimento Nonviolento (again close to the PR) launched an appeal for a new edition of the Perugia-Assisi peace march. The slogan they used was: “Against the war: it is up to everyone to do something”. On September 27, 60,000 people participated in the march (from the PCI, the PDUP, Democrazia Proletaria, the PR, various antimilitarist and nonviolent groups, Evangelicals and Catholics, and even Socialists in contrast with the PSI’s official position).<sup>20</sup> According to philosopher Norberto Bobbio, public opinion was exhibiting “its anguish, fears, wills”.<sup>21</sup>

The first major meeting of the movement took place in Rome on October 24 and was promoted by a Coordinating Committee formed by young members of the PCI and New Left activists.<sup>22</sup> Participation went beyond the most optimistic expectations: 300,000 people attended (200,000, according to the CIA).<sup>23</sup> The Turin newspaper, *La Stampa*, wrote: “It is not since the metalworkers’ demonstration in 1969 that the capital has seen so many people parading through its streets”.<sup>24</sup> Another aspect the press high-

16 “Bomba N: ‘decisione americana’. Il via alla sua fabbricazione”, *Avanti!*, August 11, 1981, 1, 8; “Bomba N: l’Urss mette in forse il negoziato sugli euromissili. Reagan difende la scelta della bomba N”, *Avanti!*, August 12, 1981, 1, 8; Mary Onori, “Con il ‘piano Weinberger’ Reagan decide la svolta militare”, *l’Unità*, August 18, 1981, 1, 12.

17 Sergio Baccelli and Ovidio Della Croce, “Il risveglio del movimento pacifista in Europa”, *Politica internazionale* 10, no. 6 (1982): 108-23, see 113.

18 Paolo Gentiloni, Alberto Spampinato, and Agostino Spataro, “Pio La Torre, i missili, il movimento pacifista”, in *Missili e Mafia. La Sicilia dopo Comiso*, ed. Gentiloni, Spampinato, and Spataro (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1985), 69-77.

19 Luciano De Pascalis, “Mentre si intensifica la corsa al riarmo cresce nei popoli la volontà di pace”, *Avanti!*, August 18, 1981, 6.

20 Ruggero Conteduca, “Ad Assisi, in 50 mila ‘Il mondo vuole pace’”, *La Stampa*, September 28, 1981, 1, 2.

21 Eugenio Manca, “Bobbio: tragica scalata che la gente può fermare”, *l’Unità*, September 29, 1981, 1.

22 Baccelli and Della Croce, “Il risveglio”, 113.

23 *Peace Groups and Leaders in INF Basing Countries*, November 1, 1982, NARA, FOIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, DDRS, 1990, doc. n. 2489.

24 Marco Tosatti, “Roma, imponente sfilata per la pace ‘Vietate’ le ambasciate Usa e Urss”, *La Stampa*, October 25, 1981, 5.

lighted was the fact that this impressive mobilization was characterized by two different – and at times contrasting – groups: on one side, the Communists and their allies, on the other side, youth movements.<sup>25</sup> Lacking trade unions' support, the movement drew its strength from young and left-wing activists. In the second half of the 1970s, reduced participation in student movements and New Left groups created a situation that can be defined, using Alessandro Pizzorno's words,<sup>26</sup> of "militancy excess". In other words, there were now many young activists eager to participate in anti-missiles protest. However, this double origin of the mobilization was characterized by a contradiction (and a consequent political problem, which proved difficult to overcome) between Communist mass organizations, with their "united front" strategy and their request for a balanced solution, and young members of the New Left, with their tendency toward unorganized forms of struggle and their intransigent anti-nuclear unilateralism. Furthermore, the anti-nuclear movement came out "strongly intertwined with parties and political debate" and characterized by the "projection" of the left-wing parties' juvenile organizations on it.<sup>27</sup>

#### DIFFERENT, BUT UNITED? THE NOVEMBER 1981 FLORENCE CONVENTION

Italian sociologist Giovanni Lodi defined the movement's features as "united and different". According to him, the fact that the movement had a shared platform and a manifold structure was an element of extraordinary strength<sup>28</sup>. While there is no doubt about the movement's multiplicity, uncertainty remains about its cohesion.

The leftist Catholic journal *Testimonianze* launched the idea of a convention in Florence, scheduled on November 14-15, 1981, only a few days after the large Rome demonstration. The number and the quality of participation (more than 2,000 crowded the Auditorum of the Palazzo dei Congressi)<sup>29</sup> transformed the meeting into a sort of national conference of Italian pacifism. The main mass force supporting the movement remained the Communists who, however, remained internally divided. The party leadership asked for a "reversal from the Comiso decision",<sup>30</sup> it advanced a proposal for a

25 Tosatti, "Roma, imponente sfilata".

26 Alessandro Pizzorno, "Political Exchange and Collective Identity in Industrial Conflict", in *The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe since 1968*, ed. Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno, vol. 2, *Comparative Analyses* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978), 277-98.

27 Baccelli and Della Croce, "Il risveglio", 113.

28 Lodi, *Uniti e diversi*.

29 *Se vuoi la pace, prepara la pace. Atti del Convegno Nazionale di "Testimonianze"*, *Testimonianze* 25, no. 1-3 (January-March 1982), 7.

30 *Se vuoi la pace*, 55.

balanced disarmament, and held a traditional collateral vision of the peace movement as a “supporter”. At the convention, Lucio Lombardo Radice commented about the movement that, “*It is not true it is spontaneous*. I am against this definition; it is, however, an *autonomous* movement, and it has to remain as such. It must have its individuality, its features, its autonomy, as trade unions, the women’s movement, and other movements have”.<sup>31</sup> The Federazione Giovani Comunisti Italiani (FGCI) had a very different position, and seemed willing to openly discuss the issues anti-militarist and nonviolent activists were proposing, such as unilateral disarmament, the exit from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), conscientious objection,<sup>32</sup> even though young Communists shared with party leaders the need to pursue a “political synthesis and solution”.<sup>33</sup>

The PR represented the real alternative political reference point. Radicals were intransigently anti-Communist: they probably considered the Soviet Union to be more dangerous than the United States,<sup>34</sup> they supported forms of civil disobedience, and reproached Communists for proposing what Marco Boato has called old “international mobilization models” coming from the “Vietnam age”, which they deemed no longer acceptable given that now “international reality” was “different”.<sup>35</sup> More than on the issue of missiles, Radicals focused on military budgets and preferred demonstrative actions (like Marco Pannella’s hunger strike against “the Holocaust and extermination of 30 million people dying from hunger in Third and Fourth World countries”)<sup>36</sup> to mass gatherings. A minority but ideologically aggressive (with the exception of the evangelical Movimento internazionale per la Riconciliazione, MIR, linked to the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, IFOR)<sup>37</sup> galaxy of small movements was connected to the Radicals: the Movimento Nonviolento polemicized with the Catholic and Communist underestimation of nonviolence, it supported conscientious objection and asked for “popular nonviolent defense”;<sup>38</sup> the Lega per il disarmo unilaterale, which was close to the Radicals and was promoted by writer Carlo Cassola, promoted antimilitarism,<sup>39</sup> a struggle for unilateral disarmament<sup>40</sup> and a rejection of both NATO and the clauses of the Italian Constitution that made the country “an armed nation”.<sup>41</sup> This coalition cri-

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31 *Se vuoi la pace*, 53.

32 *Se vuoi la pace*, 202.

33 *Se vuoi la pace*, 211-12.

34 See Francesco Rutelli’s opinion quoted in *Se vuoi la pace*, 156.

35 *Se vuoi la pace*, 142.

36 *Se vuoi la pace*, 143.

37 *Se vuoi la pace*, 184.

38 *Se vuoi la pace*, 119, 166.

39 *Se vuoi la pace*, 137.

40 *Se vuoi la pace*, 138.

41 *Se vuoi la pace*, 160.

tiqued Communists and Catholics for not opposing in a clear-cut way the two blocs, as Angelo Gaccione of the Lega per il disarmo unilaterale stated in Florence;<sup>42</sup> for looking for “possible and concrete solutions” to the nuclear threat when non-violent solutions and total disarmament had already proved to be more effective, as physicist Antonino Drago argued;<sup>43</sup> for keeping silent over the “disgrace” of Italian weapon factories, as Gaccione pointed out; and for not supporting the rights of imprisoned antimilitarists and conscientious objectors.<sup>44</sup> This varied front shared an anti-institutional approach: according to the Evangelical Baptist pastor Davide Melodia, secretary of the Movimento Nonviolento, “the true peace culture of the future” could not establish itself “through institutions and power, but rather against institutions, against power”.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, all these groups declared they were against “party mediation”.<sup>46</sup> The Movimento Nonviolento, MIR and the Lega per il disarmo unilaterale agreed on two objectives, namely the “objection to renewed military service” and the “tax objection” (refusing to pay taxes intended “for military expenses”, and devolving the sum to instruments of peace), which they linked to “civil disobedience and no-collaboration campaigns”, not with nuclear issues.<sup>47</sup> When their protest concerned nuclear issues, they refused to focus exclusively on military aspects: one of their proposals was the promotion of “a League of Municipalities that would refuse missile installations and the installation of any nuclear structure”, explaining that this was a “no’ to both civilian and military nuclear power, not only to Euromissiles”.<sup>48</sup>

A third component of the movement was made of New Left groups and parties, such as DP and Lotta continua, which stood halfway between Communists and antimilitarists. Whereas their Marxist culture drew them closer to the former but distanced them from the pacifist and nonviolent movements, their antagonistic culture drew them closer to the latter. As Rossana Rossanda told the Florence audience, the New Left groups were “*against bipolarisms*, not only in the sense that we are against the one and the other, but that we want their disaggregation”.<sup>49</sup> These groups also contested the main Socialist and Communist trade union, the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), for not devoting enough attention to the issue of weapons production.<sup>50</sup>

The promoters of the Convention, who were members of the Catholic Left, also stood halfway between Communists and antimilitarists. Along with the Communists,

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42 *Se vuoi la pace*, 137-38.

43 *Se vuoi la pace*, 163-64.

44 *Se vuoi la pace*, 138.

45 *Se vuoi la pace*, 119.

46 *Se vuoi la pace*, 205.

47 *Se vuoi la pace*, 206.

48 *Se vuoi la pace*, 120.

49 *Se vuoi la pace*, 96.

50 *Se vuoi la pace*, 138, 73.

progressive Catholics did not approve of absolute pacifism, as, in the name of the Pax Christi group, theologian Enrico Chiavacci declared in Florence,<sup>51</sup> nor, as Raniero La Valle stated, did they share the Radicals' perspective of considering the struggle against the Soviet world as one of the features of the battle for peace.<sup>52</sup> However, as nonviolent groups and radicals, they seemed ready to use individual rather than political actions, highlighting the difference between conventional war and the use of nuclear weapons. They were convinced that the principle of legitimate defense was not valid in the case of the atomic bomb. They invited young conscripted soldiers, "in case of alarms and wars", to object "at least to the use of every nuclear weapon or to be trained in them"; they asked nuclear scientists to object; they promoted a campaign for the control, limitation and possible abolition of weapons production;<sup>53</sup> and they campaigned on issues relating to underdevelopment and hunger.<sup>54</sup>

It is undeniable that the Italian movement was characterized by a profound heterogeneity of perspectives. At the time, the Radical Marco Boato emphasized this point, which he considered as a positive aspect of a new "way of being together":

One is pacifist to the limit, the other not. One thinks the whole of Europe must be denuclearized, the other is for unilateral disarmament etc. The fact is not that we are eclectic or aseptic in our judgements, because everyone among us is firmly convinced that some objectives are more valid than others, but nobody thinks any more, as others believed in the past, that this could be a discriminating factor inside the movement; while this is a discriminating factor, if anything, toward those who do not want anything of this and prefer to continue in the logic of terror, war and death.<sup>55</sup>

The opinion of the CIA experts was less optimistic and more realistic: according to them, "the preeminent role of the PCI in peace activity" had not "precluded differences within the movement over everything from ideology to tactics". "A broad community of purpose sometimes" had united "the diverse groups in demonstrations", but "major differences of attitude" clearly remained "never far from the surface", and caused "scuffles between rival groups on occasion".<sup>56</sup> In fact, internal contrasts were one of the main weaknesses of the Italian anti-nuclear movement.

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51 *Se vuoi la pace*, 58.

52 *Se vuoi la pace*, 157.

53 These were the Pax Christi's proposals: see *Se vuoi la pace*, 62-64.

54 *Se vuoi la pace*, 61.

55 *Se vuoi la pace*, 141.

56 *Peace Groups and Leaders in INF Basing Countries*, November 1, 1982, NARA, FOIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, DDCS, 1990, doc. n. 2489.



## TO WIN AT COMISO (1982-1984)

Both Communists and Radicals transferred their target to Comiso. The slogan of the first large demonstration (10,000 participants)<sup>57</sup> held there on April 4, 1982 was: “To Win at Comiso”.<sup>58</sup> Their objectives, however, remained divergent: on the one hand, Communists proposed a collection of signatures addressed to the government, asking for a “suspension of the works in the Comiso base”; on the other hand, Radicals wanted to create a large front of protesters in Comiso, to mobilize – as a Radical activist said in Florence –, “every ... ‘different’ person”: “heretics, Quakers, conscientious objectors with their refused request, and hence fugitive rebels, prostitutes, transsexuals, or drug addicts ..., the homeless and the evicted, occasional and unemployed workers, oppressed and repressed persons, unmarried and aborted mothers, Iranian students oppressed by Khomeini”.<sup>59</sup>

During the entire year 1982, a harsh dispute divided the Peace Committees. When, during Reagan’s official visit to Italy, the PCI promoted a national demonstration in Rome to be held on June 5, the PR accused the promoters of “poor commitment against the military budget”. At the international Comiso camp, which started in the summer, the antimilitarist and “unilateralist” wing created a separate organization, the Campo Internazionale per la Pace (CIP), which led to the first disturbances with the police.<sup>60</sup> At the Rome November 14 Peace Committees’ national coordination meeting, a violent clash split the movement’s different components.<sup>61</sup> Whereas the PCI supported the organization of a peace march from Milan to Comiso and the holding of a referendum against the installation of the missiles,<sup>62</sup> the Movimento Nonviolento, the Radicals, DP, the Lega per il disarmo unilaterale, along with representatives of the Federazione Giovanile Evangelica, argued that a Christmas antimilitarist march should be promoted, with the goal of establishing a “symbolic” blockade of military bases (as was done for the Sigonella NATO base).<sup>63</sup> A new meeting of the Peace Committees in Rome, held on January 23, 1983, succeeded in launching a common course of action,<sup>64</sup> but once again mobilization did not take off and new divisions arose. On August 8, at the new,

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<sup>57</sup> *Peace Groups and Leaders in INF Basing Countries*, November 1, 1982, NARA, FOIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, DDRS, 1990, doc. n. 2489.

<sup>58</sup> Baccelli and Della Croce, “Il risveglio”, 114.

<sup>59</sup> *Se vuoi la pace*, 197.

<sup>60</sup> *Memoria Comiso. La Sicilia contro la guerra*, [http://memoriacomiso.terrelibere.org/mostra\\_notizia.php?num=3&tab=info\\_cronologia](http://memoriacomiso.terrelibere.org/mostra_notizia.php?num=3&tab=info_cronologia), last accessed November 1, 2012.

<sup>61</sup> *Memoria Comiso*.

<sup>62</sup> “Appello per una marcia di pace da Milano a Comiso”, *l’Unità*, November 7, 1982, 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Memoria Comiso*.

<sup>64</sup> Maria Giovanna Maglie, “Da Comiso a Ginevra la scommessa ‘83”, *l’Unità*, January 26, 1983, 7.

unanimous, second International Meeting Against Cruise (IMAC),<sup>65</sup> held in Comiso, police charges left many people injured and arrested, and provoked a harsh confrontation between Communists and the government, which accused them of “grassroots adventurism”.<sup>66</sup> On October 22, the biggest Italian demonstration against the missiles (which coincided with European forms of mobilization) was organized in Rome: it represented a great success, with around 500,000/one million people marching.<sup>67</sup> Once again, however, Radicals contested the one-sidedness of the Communist participation and organized their own separate demonstration, not surprisingly in Prague.<sup>68</sup> When, after the installation (without disturbances) of the first missiles, the PCI decided to ask the government for a public vote,<sup>69</sup> Radicals fiercely attacked the initiative, which ultimately failed. Radical leader Pannella stated – and was violently contested by the Communists – that the proposal to hold a referendum against the missiles in Comiso was offensive, because it neglected “the existence of other thousand and more nuclear pages in Italian history”. He declared his hostility to every form of “unilateral pacifism”, as well as to every “neutralist and pseudo-pacifist” form of opposition.<sup>70</sup>

#### AN APPRAISAL

Both the CIA and Italian observers argued that, compared to other movements in INF basing countries, “peace activism in Italy” was “concentrated more on the far left”.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the movement had a common political basis, a sort of *koiné*, which was not rooted in the position of the Communists, or in the position of their nonviolent opponents, but rather in the culture of the New Left. The anti-missiles movement shared a series of features with other European movements, but in Italy they acquired a strong anti-system, anti-Western, and anti-liberal character. Starting from a disarmed form

65 Sergio Criscuoli, “Comiso, più di 1000 giovani si sdraiano davanti alla base”, *l'Unità*, August 7, 1983, 1, 16.

66 “Provocazioni e scontri a Comiso”, *Avanti!*, August 9, 1983, 1, 3; and Sergio Criscuoli, “Segnale politico allarmante”, *l'Unità*, agosto 9, 1983, 1, 16.

67 Carlo Ruzza, “Institutional Actors and the Italian Peace Movement: Specializing and Branching out”, *Theory and Society* 26, no. 1 (1997): 87-127, see 92.

68 “Pacifismo a senso unico: ancora no degli intellettuali”, *Avanti!*, October 9, 1983, 1, 3; and “Una grande spinta organizzativa per la marcia pacifista a Roma. Sforzo organizzativo per la marcia di Roma”, *Avanti!*, October 22, 1983, 1, 3.

69 “Il comunicato della segreteria”, *l'Unità*, March 27, 1984, 1.

70 “L'Italia persegue la via della trattativa” and “Scontro tra due opposti pacifismi”, *Avanti!*, April 4, 1984, respectively 1, 16 and 1, 3.

71 *Peace Groups and Leaders in INF Basing Countries*, November 1, 1982, NARA, FOIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, DDRS, 1990, doc. n. 2489; and *Se vuoi la pace*, 114.

of neutralism, they proposed, against multilateral forms of disarmament, to exit from NATO (as a facilitator of a similar dissolution of the Warsaw Pact), to abolish military conscription, and adoption Gandhian strategies of passive resistance.<sup>72</sup> Notwithstanding the Radicals' campaigns, the majority of the movement was convinced that the threat to peace came more from American and European anti-Communism than from Soviet political and military power.<sup>73</sup> It did not only reject US foreign policy but also the American (and Western) model as such. In a poem written for the peace movement, "Salmodia per la pace", father Davide Turollo wrote: "And the worst of all evils is that everything, everything becomes Western"; and, "the deadly disease is the West". Revolutionary armed movements in the Third World were treated with remarkable indulgence,<sup>74</sup> environmentalism was interpreted in a radical and anti-industrialist way,<sup>75</sup> and feminism in an antagonist and catastrophist key. In February 1980, a group of feminists in Naples wrote, "in a society based on commodities and trade, we can no longer produce 'commodities of life' for deadly purposes, commodities of life that disdain life. We cannot produce life following an ideology of love, and allocate it to the system's lacerations we experience today". "Let us suspend motherhood", they proclaimed, "until society is totally transformed".<sup>76</sup> Pessimism and existential anguish prevailed, and writer Carlo Cassola was convinced there was only a 15 per cent chance that mankind would survive after the year 2000.<sup>77</sup> In spite of scientists' and physicians' commitment,<sup>78</sup> nuclear weapons were not considered as a problem per se, but as the symptom of a meaningless social development.<sup>79</sup> The movement opposed traditional politics, and the 1983 rift was between those, such as the left-wing parties, who demanded more political organization and those, such as environmentalists, feminists, and nonviolent activists, who criticized the movement for promoting homogeneity and hierarchies.

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72 Carlo Cassola, *Contro le armi* (Marmiolo, RE: Ciminiera, 1980); Cassola, *La società militarista* (Firenze: Rotoffset, 1982); Cassola *La rivoluzione disarmista* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1983); Cassola, *Disarmo o barbarie*, ed. Bruno Zanotti, afterword by Cesare Medail (Trento: New Magazine, 1984). But see also Adriana Chemello, "Le donne di fronte alla nonviolenza," in *Per un futuro non violento. Lotte delle donne, non violenza, pacifismo*, ed. Chemello (Torino: Cooperativa Satyagraha, 1984), 27-30; Chemello, "Spezziamo il fucile. Una campagna per l'obiezione di coscienza femminile", in *Per un futuro*, ed. Chemello, 85-88.

73 *Se vuoi la pace*, 27, 155.

74 *Se vuoi la pace*, 117.

75 *Se vuoi la pace*, 97, 169.

76 Qt. in Chemello, *Per un futuro nonviolento*, 76.

77 Qt. in Pàstena, *Breve storia*, 153.

78 See Adriano Buzzati-Traverso, *Morte nucleare in Italia* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1982), and Antonino Drago and Giovanni Salio, eds., *Scienza e guerra. I fisici contro la guerra nucleare* (Torino: Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 1983).

79 *Se vuoi la pace*, 26.

Given these features, what kind of conclusion can we draw about the movement's relevance? Many data seem contradictory: a survey carried out in summer 1983 demonstrated that 59,9 per cent of Italians was against the installation of missiles.<sup>80</sup> However, the movement did not succeed in imposing the atomic issue on public opinion. As Fabrizio Battistelli (a participating observer) wrote, the bomb still remained "the great Absent" from the analysis.<sup>81</sup> There is some evidence that the government expressed concern about the size of the peace movement, but we also have evidence that the movement did not represent a serious political threat. At the May 1983 Williamsburg Summit, participants debated fiercely about peace movements. As Italian Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani recounted in his diaries, together with the West German and Canadian Prime Ministers Helmut Kohl and Justin Trudeau, he insisted on the "NATO difficulty in negotiating both with the Soviet Union and its public opinion" and on the need to "clarify that we want peace, and then explain why, in order to have it, we have to deploy the missiles", and pushed Margaret Thatcher to react and accuse them of "servility to Moscow".<sup>82</sup> At the same time, CIA experts pointed out that the Italian peace movement "so far" had "focused mostly on organizing protest demonstrations and rallies and circulating petitions". Only "some groups" had advocated "more vigorous tactics to impede GLCM [ground-launched cruise missile] base construction at Comiso, Sicily, and a few demonstrators" had "tried to obstruct construction vehicles". According to the CIA, the movement was still under the influence of the Communists. "In principle", it consisted of "more than 500 local, regional and national committees and associations representing both secular and religious organizations across the political spectrum, with the exception of the extreme right". In fact, "most of the non-Communist groups" had "a small membership, and no strong national organization devoted exclusively to 'peace'" had "arisen". The "small Radical Party" was "militant and active", but "its influence" was "weak". Thus the movement had "suffered from a leadership vacuum": "no major political figure" had "made a full commitment to the peace movement", and "the movement itself" had "not produced a charismatic figure capable of transforming it into an independent force" that could "exert significant pressure on the Italian Government". The CIA's conclusion was that the movement against Euromissiles posed "no threat to the stability of the government or to the successful installation of GLCMs in Sicily".<sup>83</sup>

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80 Giorgio Gatta, "Missili a Comiso? Piacciono a pochi", *Panorama Mese*, July 13, 1983, 54-55, see 54.

81 Fabrizio Battistelli, "L'Accademia degli Ammutoliti. Gli intellettuali italiani e la Bomba", in *Educazione e cultura della pace*, ed. Paolo Serreri (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1988), 72.

82 Archivio storico del Senato della Repubblica, Roma, Italia, Fondo Amintore Fanfani, Diario, 1983, May 28 and 29, 1983.

83 *Peace Groups and Leaders in INF Basing Countries*, November 1, 1982, NARA, FOIA, Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, DDRS, 1990, doc. n. 2489.

Any evaluation depends on the way in which one looks at movements: whether one considers their immediate impact on political decisions, or their long-term influence on political cultures and mentalities. In the first case, it is obvious that the Italian anti-nuclear movement suffered a clear political. In the second case, already at the time many observers argued that a deep transformation in politics had occurred. The Communist Ennio Polito wrote of “new forms of individual and mass participation, which often rejected traditional parties’ hegemony”.<sup>84</sup> The Radical Marco Boato spoke of “the crisis of politics” and of the “party system”, and pointed out that the anti-nuclear movement was the expression “of a different politicization”, because it had brought a deep transformation of what it meant to “being left-wing”.<sup>85</sup> The Catholic Paolo Giuntella argued that “ecologists, “greens”, radicals, pacifists” had “lifestyles, sensibilities, leanings in daily life much different from the lifestyles, daily life, ethicality, ideas about family and education” prevalent in the Left.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, some members of the antinuclear movement, even though initially weak, left a long-lasting legacy, namely a strong critique of ideologies and parties; the pursuit of direct action and civil disobedience; a new grassroots form of politics; a political culture based on individuality and critical of Communists’ and Catholics’ emphasis on the community; a split between Catholics and the DC and between the youth and the PCI. Therefore, anyone wanting to investigate the reasons behind the crisis and the end Italy’s “Republic of Parties”<sup>87</sup> has to take into account the story of the early 1980s anti-nuclear movement, which probably represents one of the deep roots of that crisis.

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84 Ennio Polito, “C’è anche una nuova idea di Europa nel movimento per la pace”, *l’Unità*, October 27, 1981, 1, 18.

85 *Se vuoi la pace*, 141.

86 Paolo Giuntella, “Essere di sinistra”, *Appunti di cultura e politica* 7-8 (July-August 1982): 15.

87 Pietro Scoppola, *La repubblica dei partiti. Profilo storico della democrazia in Italia (1945-1990)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1991).