

Under attack? The PCI and the Italian Peace Movement in the 1980s

Soon after the Second World War, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) became the main reference point of the international communist movement in the western bloc. Many factors contributed towards its primacy: among them, the presence of several prominent intellectuals (including Gramsci) and leaders with direct contacts to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) such as Palmiro Togliatti, the national re-elaboration of Marxism-Leninism (different national approaches to communism), its prodigious electoral success, its profound penetration of Italian ruling élites as well as its widespread appeal to a large part of the Italian population.

This situation changed at the end of the 1960s. The PCI was challenged from the left by the emergence of extra-parliamentary movements that used Maoist and ‘Third-Worldist’ rhetoric blaming *Botteghe Oscure* (as the PCI was called after the street in which its headquarter was located) for being an obsolete and traditionalist party. The leftist challenge did not affect the party’s electoral performance. In 1976, the PCI almost reached the desired goal of overtaking the Christian Democrats, who had ruled the country continuously since 1948. However, what these new political actors achieved was to threaten PCI’s role as a vanguard of Italian society. One of the main grounds on which this confrontation took place was the 1980s peace movement.

At the end of the 1970s, another threat emanated from the rise of the renewed peace movement. Stemming from anti-American and pacifist protest movements of previous decades, this movement rejected the rigidity of a bipolar world and demanded the departure from peace campaigns being organized by Moscow through national Communist Parties. The protests advocated the development of a peaceful international order. Their targets were both superpowers’ politics against

specific topics: the deployment of the Euromissiles¹, political leadership changes in Western countries, and a renewed Cold War in the wake of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan.²

This article aims to reconstruct the twofold challenge experienced by the PCI in the early 1980s. On the field of the peace movement, it explores, first, the difficult relationship with the Soviet Union, from which *Botteghe Oscure* had begun a painful emancipation process over the previous decade. Second, it takes a closer look at the internal challenge stemming from the popularity of a heterogeneous movement which emerged as a competitor of the PCI in one of its traditional policy fields, namely the struggle for peace. The PCI faced a series of questions during the early 1980s: did the emergence of the peace movement offer a chance for the PCI to carve out more autonomy from Moscow and if so, how did the PCI use this opportunity? Did this situation contribute to a re-definition of the PCI's identity within the international communist movement and provide an opportunity to regain political consensus within the Italian society?

In the last fifteen years, historians have given significant attention to the history of the PCI, thanks to the rich archival depository of the Gramsci Foundation Institute in Rome. Several scholars have analysed in-depth the international dimension of the PCI, while others have focused on inner party politics and policy.³ This article adds to this discussion, using the peace movement as an original case study through which to reflect on the PCI's evolution of its political identity. It draws on archival sources from the Fondazione Gramsci (PCI Archive) in Rome, PCI's official press and documents from the Turin office of Fondazione Gramsci and the Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio.

¹ See L. Nuti, 'L'Italia e lo schieramento dei missili da crociera BGM-109 G Gruphon', in S. Colarizi, P. Craveri, S. Pons and G. Quagliariello (eds.), *Gli anni Ottanta come storia* (Soveria Mannelli 2004), 119-153.

² O.A. Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge 2005), 314-330; E. Obitchkina, 'L'intervention de l'Union Soviétique en Afghanistan', *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, vol. 120, no. 2 (2006), 155-168; A. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge 2011); A. Paczkowski, *The Spring will be ours. Poland and Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (University Park 2003); A. Paczkowski and M. Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: the Polish crisis of 1980-1981: a documentary history* (Budapest. New York 2007); L. Nuti, 'L'Italia e lo schieramento dei missili da crociera BGM-109 G Gruphon', in S. Colarizi, P. Craveri, S. Pons and G. Quagliariello (eds.), *Gli anni Ottanta come storia* (Soveria Mannelli 2004), 119-153.

³ Dealing with the international dimension: S. Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo* (Torino 2006); M. Bracke, *Which socialism, whose détente? West European Communism and the 1968 Czechoslovakian Crisis* (Budapest - New York 2007); F. Heurtebize, *Le peril rouge. Washington face à l'eurocommunisme* (Paris 2014); A. Brogi, *Confronting America: The Cold War between the United States and Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill 2011). On the domestic ground: F. Barbagallo, *Enrico Berlinguer* (Roma 2006); A. Höbel, *Il Pci di Luigi Longo, 1964-1968* (Napoli 2010).

Following the PCI's condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the relationship between the PCI and CPSU gradually deteriorated during the 1970s. Although this decline never evolved into a real rupture between the two parties, their diverging views on the 'way to socialism' was a source of growing disputes. This included the ambition of the PCI to inaugurate an 'Italian way to socialism' which took shape in the Eurocommunism project.⁴ Developed during the 1970s, Eurocommunism which could become, according to the PCI, a true alternative to the developed socialism, even thank to the détente. It aimed a close cooperation among the Communist Parties of Italy, France and Spain Eurocommunism, having its roots in the events of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Western communist parties shared some common goals: the quest for autonomy from the USSR was probably the most important. The search for new political interlocutors (Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia under Dubček), accepting to live behind the Iron Curtain in the opposing bloc, and opening to the European Common Market and to Europe, soon became common ground between parties. A long-range effort to exploit détente was undoubtedly another common point. Unfortunately, at the end of the decade, the emergence of the 'new Cold War' jeopardized the project: while the Spanish CP was committed in the transition to democracy, the French Communist Party preferred to go back to a more orthodox position, abandoning the path to a more autonomous position from Moscow.⁵

Botteghe Oscure was now alone and regarded Kremlin's advocacy of international détente with increasing suspicion. The growing contradictions related to the human rights violations envisaged by the Third Basket of the Helsinki Accords – which had been agreed by the USSR and its satellites –

⁴ S. Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo* (Torino 2006).

⁵ M. Bracke, *Which socialism, whose détente? West European Communism and the Czechoslovak crisis, 1968* (Budapest-New York 2007); V. Lomellini, *Les Relations Dangereuses: French Socialists, Communists and the Human Rights Issue in the Soviet Bloc* (Bruxelles 2012).

revealed the limits of socialism within the Soviet bloc. But even more alarming for the PCI was the aggressive Soviet foreign policy: first, the involvement in Angola, then, in 1979, the invasion of Afghanistan and finally, in 1981, the Soviet support to the military coup in Poland⁶. However, a complete rupture with the Soviets was impossible.

The PCI still had financial ties with the USSR and, above all, it could not break the relationship with Moscow because this would have jeopardized its own identity. Identity was a key element in understanding PCI's difficulties in breaking the tie with the "mother country of socialism".

Thus, at the turn of the decade, the PCI hoped that the Euromissiles crisis, which mobilised international public opinion, would become a new common ground to re-launch internationalist ties. Until then, the PCI joined the "national unity" government, which originate from the need to respond to the huge economic, political and social crisis that Italy had to cope with in the 1970s. At the end of the decade, however, the PCI decided to oppose the Italian government's decision to deploy Pershing and Cruise missiles on Italian territory. Furthermore, it stood against the immediate Italian accession to the European Monetary System. This put the PCI back on the opposition benches and marked the end of any ambition of partaking in a governing coalition.⁷ To the eyes of internal and international observers, the vote on the Euromissiles confirmed the close and enduring links with the Kremlin.⁸

Despite appearances of reconciliation, relations with Moscow were about to enter a highly problematic phase. Between 1980 and 1981, tensions between the PCI and the CPSU developed over the anti-imperialist and pacifist movement, which was taking shape in Italy and the rest of the Western bloc in resistance against a potential nuclear conflict on the European continent. The PCI and Moscow

⁶ F. Barbagallo, *Enrico Berlinguer* (Roma 2006); A. Guerra, *La solitudine di Berlinguer. Governo, etica e politica. Dal 'no' a Mosca alla questione morale* (Roma 2009).

⁷ A. Varsori, *La Cenerentola d'Europa. L'Italia e l'integrazione europea dal 1947 ad oggi* (Soveria Mannelli 2011).

⁸ U. Gentiloni Silveri, *L'Italia sospesa: la crisi degli anni Settanta vista da Washington* (Torino 2009), 220-229.

shared diverging views on the struggle for peace and its meaning.⁹ The discussion about peace and détente obviously involved an evaluation of the Afghan situation. In May 1980, during a meeting between a Soviet and Italian delegation, the latter argued that the military intervention in Afghanistan was not only violating international rules but was also going to ‘raise serious contradictions within the anti-imperialist movement’ that until then had been fighting against US military involvement overseas.¹⁰ The PCI clearly stated that if the Soviet Union’s international posture was based on military interventionism, the ‘identity between socialism and peace’ would be affected in the eyes of ‘common men and women throughout the world’. At the same time, the PCI argued that Soviet policy was going to affect Italian communists’ traditional efforts in campaigning for peace, a policy which – as underlined in a letter to the CPSU – had gained widespread support of the ‘popular masses’, from socialist and catholic ranks.¹¹

The PCI leadership faced the potential loss of its electoral basis, the very electorate that the party had been able to attract at local and national elections during the mid-1970s.¹² Who was responsible for the end of détente that had allowed the improvement of the domestic political dialogue? This question could not be avoided, and the PCI had to address it, vis-a-vis public opinion. Given its official statements on the Afghanistan crisis, the PCI seemed to converge towards an equidistance from both superpowers, holding them equally responsible for the deterioration of the international situation. However, this stance was not easily accepted within the party. Claiming that the US and USSR were equally responsible for the renewal of international tension was hard to embrace: a significant part of the PCI ranks expressed intense anti-Americanism and protested against the tangible American cultural, political and military influence on the peninsula.

⁹ S. Pons, *Berlinguer*, 128-129.

¹⁰ Paolo Bufalini, Istituto Fondazione Gramsci (IFG), Archivio del Partito comunista italiano (APCI), 27 May 1980, Direzione, MF 0466, 8007, 01/39.

¹¹ Letter to the CPSU, undated (probably January 1980), IFG, APCI, URSS, MF 0440, 8002, 169-179.

¹² On the elections see S. Colarizi, *Storia politica della Repubblica, 1943-2006* (Bari - Roma 2007). For a comparison with the French case, see M. Lazar, *Maisons rouges. Les Partis communistes français et italien de la Libération à nos jours* (Paris 1992).

Among leaders, the resistance was therefore marked. According to some senior officials, the condemnation of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan had changed the PCI's alignment: this could not be accepted. The leader of the pro-Soviet wing, Armando Cossutta, continued to stress the US responsibilities.¹³ From a different perspective, even Giorgio Amendola, the historical leader of the party's 'right', did not endorse the party's condemnation of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, but highlighted the US responsibilities within the framework of the SALT 2 ratification.¹⁴ Some prominent Italian communist leaders argued that Soviet and American responsibilities could not be equated with each other.¹⁵ These issues incrementally opened up a battlefield between the two 'brother parties', which the Soviets watched with increasing concerns.

In the early 1980s, denouncing the equation of American imperialism with Soviet foreign policy became a key political strategy of Boris Ponomarëv, the head of the CPSU's International Department. In an article published in the periodical *Problemi della pace e del socialismo*, Ponomarëv warned against 'those' who stood as proponents of a 'sort of third way in the field of international relations', capable of 'challenging' the US and Soviet policies. Ponomarëv stressed that 'attempts of linking the struggle for peace with the fight against socialist foreign policy and any form of anti-Sovietism are always utopian [thinking]'.¹⁶ This negative judgment included the PCI's commitment to the peace movement. Moscow did not fail to point out the need for a more convincing attitude of the largest Western Communist Party to the battle for peace.¹⁷

On the other side, Italian communists were more inclined to criticize even the content of the Soviet strategy about the peace movement. For example, in May 1981, after a meeting at the World Peace Council, the PCI representative Amerigo Terenzi criticized the international body, claiming

¹³ Armando Cossutta, 24 September 1980, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 0487, 8106, 38/78.

¹⁴ Giorgio Amendola, 4 January 1980, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 0440, 8003, 0054/0097.

¹⁵ Letter by the CPSU CC to the PCI, 28 August 1980, IFG, APCI, URSS, MF 0485, 8009, 0082-0083.

¹⁶ B. Ponomarëv, 'Un patto di pace e un patto di aggressione', *Problemi della pace e del socialismo*, no. 8 (August 1980), IFG, APCI, URSS, MF 0485, 1066.

¹⁷ V. 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 V. Lomellini and A. Varsori (eds.) *Dal Sessantotto al crollo del Muro: i movimenti di protesta in Europa a cavallo tra i due blocchi*, (Milano 2013), 127-152.

the debates had been ‘generic and useless as always’, ‘speeches [had been] lifeless and superficial’, focusing on excitement about USSR peace efforts and harsh blame against US policies. Terenzi concluded that Italian Communists were tolerated only because ‘the absence of a PCI representative at this meeting would be seen negatively’.¹⁸

The relationship remained tense, although some positive developments seemed to change the situation. The first of those took place after the PCI participation in the third Perugia-Assisi peace march in September 1981. During a meeting on foreign policy issues and disarmament with Zagladin, the Soviet responsible for international relations in the western bloc, Pajetta was pleased to note that his Soviet counterpart did not discharge the PCI positions ‘with simply negative repulse’.¹⁹ Zagladin’s stance seemed to echo Moscow’s attitude in 1969 when, after the strong dissent manifested by the PCI against the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the convergence between the parties had revolved around the anti-imperialist struggle. PCI leaders believed that the anti-imperialist struggle could constitute a solid platform for building a new relationship between Italian and Soviet communists.²⁰ The pro-Soviet Italian communist leader Armando Cossutta interpreted such declaration as a sign of a new equilibrium in the relations with the Soviets, which would have limited the conflicts on the ideological grounds.²¹

The second development was the exchange of ideas between the two brother parties on the rise of the *Comitato per la pace* (Peace Committee), the Italian cross-party grassroots peace movement.

The CPSU welcomed the PCI’s public statement that positively evaluated the Soviet foreign policy initiatives ‘against the threat of a war’. This was considered a ‘good’ basis to deploy ‘common actions’ to defend peace.²² Thus, the Kremlin attributed a central role to the PCI within the anti-

¹⁸ Amerigo Terenzi’s memorandum, 26 May 1981, IFG, APCI, Movimento per la pace, MF 8110/0165-0179.

¹⁹ Gian Carlo Pajetta, 3 November 1982, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 8212/2-5.

²⁰ Gianni Cervetti, 3 November 1982, IFG, APCI, Riunione, Direzione, MF 8212/8.

²¹ Armando Cossutta, 3 November 1982, IFG, APCI, Riunione, Direzione, MF 8212/7.

²² Letter by the CPSU CC to the PCI, 8 February 1983, IFG, APCI, URSS, MF 8302/093-094.

nuclear movement, as a ‘powerful factor’ to ‘challenge the hazardous plans of USA and NATO’.²³ In a letter sent to the CPSU General Secretary Jurij Andropov in November 1983, Berlinguer emphasized the importance of his party within the pacifist movement, stressing its role in the cross-party protest demonstration organized by the *Coordinamento nazionale dei Comitati per la pace* (Peace Committees’ National Coordinating Board) in Rome in October of the same year.²⁴

Nonetheless, as mentioned, this improvement was just apparent. Brezhnev’s declining health and subsequent death brought about rapid changes within the CPSU leadership that partially affected the brother parties’ talks on the peace movement.²⁵ From 1983, Moscow tried to influence the PCI more openly on the anti-imperialistic fight.

Beyond the traditional official rhetoric of internationalist relations, the CPSU never ceased to hope to directly influence the internal dynamics of Western Communist Parties and pacifist movements which had developed during the fight against the Euromissiles. Letters by Soviet leaders about a new Cold War in Europe and essential action for peace included implicit and explicit suggestions on how to direct the peace movement. While in November 1983 Andropov reassured the PCI that the CPSU would be a ‘loyal ally’ in the Italian’s party struggle of the ‘peace fighters’ (*Combattenti per la pace*),²⁶ the Soviets did in fact intervene in 1984, sending detailed instructions on how to effectively exert influence on the fight for peace within the western bloc. For instance, the Central Committee suggested new slogans according to the ‘specific conditions in each country’.²⁷ Also, the Soviets warned their Italian comrades about anti-Communist and anti-Soviet tendencies which, according to the Kremlin, were infiltrating the anti-imperialist movement in the West: ‘It is

²³ Letter by the CPSU CC to the PCI, 25 July 1983, IFG, APCI, URSS, MF 559, fasc. 8307/211-242.

²⁴ Enrico Berlinguer to Jurij Andropov, 27 October 1983, IFG, APCI, URSS, MF 8311/0220-022; see also: memorandum about peace committees, 12 March 1984, IFG, APCI, MF 0564, 0553-0556.

²⁵ A. Graziosi, *L'Urss dal trionfo al degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991* (Bologna 2008).

²⁶ Confidential letter by the CPSU, 13 September 1983, IFG, APCI, URSS, MF 8309/204.

²⁷ Letter by the CPSU CC to the PCI, 12 January 1984, IFG, APCI, URSS, MF 559, 8401/32-56.

self-evident that some of its factions are not immune to the imperialist propaganda, and others tend to emphasize existing political and ideological divergences'. Large damage was done by those who acted independently, outside the Community of Socialist countries, and in line with the so-called 'dissidents'. Thus, the CPSU accepted that the anti-military movement could be cross-party, but it also stressed that the leadership should be Communist.²⁸

In early 1984, Ponomarëv, the influential CPSU ideologue, particularly emphasized the PCI's 'weakness' in 'developing a mass fight for peace'. He also criticized the Italian communists' analysis that equated the responsibility of both superpowers for the deterioration of international relations.²⁹ Moreover, the CPSU condemned a political resolution of the PCI for allegedly suggesting that the fight for peace and détente, and against imperialism had to come from 'leftist forces' and Europe's working class, 'without the interference of the USSR and the other Socialist parties of central and Eastern European countries and [...] almost against socialism'.³⁰ This perception was at the basis of the Kremlin's fight against 'revisionist parties' which not only criticized the existing socialism of the Soviet bloc but also challenged the anti-imperialist crusade, up to that point a unifying factor between the Communist 'brother parties'.

This criticism and the need to maintain a good relationship with the USSR led the PCI to miss the opportunity to reassess its identity, using the peace movement's framework. Soviet interference was not the only problem the PCI faced in regard to the peace movement; the movement's internal dynamics also posed a challenge, especially during Enrico Berlinguer party's leadership, which in turn had an effect on PCI's perceptions and divisions over the peace movement.³¹

After the end of the 'national unity' government in 1979, the PCI was relegated to the opposition benches. As underlined by Silvio Pons, Berlinguer was unable to shape an alternative

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Letter by the CPSU CC to the PCI, 8 February 1983, IFG, APCI, URSS, MF 8302/092-108.

³¹ L. S. Wittner, *Toward Nuclear Abolition. A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present. The Struggle Against the Bomb*, vol. III (Stanford 2003).

strategy which would overcome the outdated historical compromise.³² Moreover, the domestic political situation allowed only limited room for manoeuvre. After the death of Aldo Moro, the former CD leader assassinated by the Red Brigades in May 1978, Berlinguer could not rely on the idea of developing a special relationship with the Christian Democrats any longer.

Even relationship with the Socialists were not good at all, since their leader – Bettino Craxi – had based his political strategy on challenging Communist leadership within the Italian workers movement. A true ‘leftist alternative’ for the country almost impossible.³³

The PCI leadership started to regard the peace movement as a means to overcome its domestic political isolation and to rebuild political alliances. While this view was shared by the leadership, the question of how to shape the relations with the peace movements remained a source of controversy, reflecting not only different political strategies, but also a different way of interpreting relations with movements and, more generally, with new political actors.

From the 1940s the PCI was highly experienced in the anti-imperialist fight³⁴. Furthermore, by 1979-80, the struggle for peace had been recognised as a ‘necessary’ element against the ‘bloc logic’ and a founding factor of the PCI policy.

Some leaders including the Secretary General Berlinguer underlined the necessity to ‘strengthen’ and ‘update’ old-style peace initiatives of the PCI.³⁵ Its leadership called for ‘a more constant engagement of the various ruling organs of the Party’ and for ‘more frequent debates among Communists’.³⁶ Changes in political communication strategies occurred: political communication was becoming more modern and appealing to the electorate, and, more generally, to the public opinion.³⁷ The PCI leaders were aware of their lack in this regard, and attempted to reassess party

³² S. Pons, *Berlinguer*.

³³ A. Spiri (ed.), *Bettino Craxi, il socialismo europeo e il sistema internazionale* (Venezia 2006); M. Gervasoni and G. Aquaviva (eds.), *Socialisti e comunisti negli anni di Craxi* (Venezia 2011).

³⁴ A. Guiso, *La colomba e la spada: lotta per la pace e antiamericanismo nella politica del Partito comunista italiano, 1949-1954* (Soveria Mannelli 2006).

³⁵ Meeting, 24 September 1980, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 0487, fasc. 8106, 38/78, particularly: Adalberto Minucci’s speech, 046; Enrico Berlinguer’s speech, 051-052.

³⁶ Trivelli’s notes, 14 June 1982, IFG, APCI, Note a Segreteria, MF 0508, 2152.

³⁷ P. Pombeni, ‘Il sistema dei partiti dalla Prima alla Seconda Repubblica’, in S. Colarizi, A. Giovagnoli, P. Pombeni

communication skills – nonetheless, in the 1980s they were unable to implement coherent structural planning in that regard. For instance, the regional and federal party secretaries proved incapable of grasping the ‘potential, difficulties and complexities of the movement for peace’ during the preparation and realisation of the Milano-Comiso march, an important event organised between November and December 1982 to protest against the deployment of the Euromissiles.³⁸ Moreover, the party élite failed to see the ‘disparity of engagement and mobilisation’ of the communist ranks for the fight for peace.³⁹

After the peace march of 24 October 1983, at the height of peace mobilisation, the PCI still had not found an effective strategy for organising national and local demonstrations and was lacking leadership personalities. Its final goal was to avoid the marginalisation of the party in the general fight for peace and for solidarity with the ‘global South’.⁴⁰ Different party bodies involved in the peace struggle had overlapping responsibilities and failed to cooperate, which jeopardised the PCI’s role in the movement.⁴¹

This was not just a simple organizational flaw. Instead, it reflected a crucial problem of political strategy: the PCI was not able to position itself as the leader of the peace movement in Italy. As in other European countries, the emergence of the peace movement was paradigmatic of a wider political shift: the stark contrast between traditional party politics and new forms of political action that were driven by protest movements.⁴² While traditional parties dominated the struggle for peace in the 1940s and 1950s, the Italian peace movement of the 1980s was more heterogeneous, consisting

(eds), *L’Italia contemporanea dagli anni Ottanta a oggi. Istituzioni e politica*, vol. 3 (Roma 2014), 307-332; M. Gervasoni, *Storia d’Italia degli anni ottanta. Quando eravamo moderni* (Venezia 2010).

³⁸ R. Moro, ‘Against the Euromissiles: Antinuclear Movements in 1980s Italy (1979-1984)’, in E. Bini, I. Londero, *Nuclear Italy: An International History of Italian Nuclear Policies during the Cold War* (Trieste 2017), 199-211; A. Baglio, V. Schirripa, ‘Tutti a Comiso. La lotta contro gli euromissili in Italia, 1981-1983’, in *Italia contemporanea*, 276/2014, 448-475.

³⁹ Trivelli’s letter to Berlinguer, 16 December 1982, IFG, APCI, Note a Segreteria, MF 0508, 2179; see also Renzo Giannotti’s note, 17 November 1983, IFG, APCI, Sezione Esteri, MF 0557, 0385.

⁴⁰ Trivelli’s notes, 27 October 1981, IFG, APCI, Note a Segreteria, MF 0506, 0345.

⁴¹ See, for example the reference to the group for peace established within the Party and its relationship with the Department for International affairs: nota conclusiva sulla riunione per i problemi del movimento della pace, 15 June 1982, IFG, APCI, Note a Segreteria, MF 0508, 2155-2156.

⁴² P. Gassert, ‘Accidental Armageddons: The Nuclear Crisis and the Culture of the Second Cold War, 1975-1989’, *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute Washington DC* 48 (2011), 114-20.

of and supported by traditional parties, new social movements and spontaneous activists. The new actors openly challenged the dominance of political parties,⁴³ particularly that of the PCI – which had aimed at being the vanguard of the anti-imperialist struggle from World War II onwards.

To a certain extent, the conflict between traditional and new political actors was inherent to the nature of the peace movement, which is shown by the example of three events. Firstly, at the second European conference for nuclear disarmament in Berlin from 9 to 14 May 1983, the PCI representative experienced conflicts with different ‘souls’ of peace movements with stronger grassroots connections, in particular religious groups such as the Dutch IKV and several German groups and the British CND.⁴⁴ Secondly, the demonstration in Rome on 22 October 1983 was promoted by a number of people with no party affiliation, which underlined the independent character of the demonstration. Thirdly, the self-managed referendum against the deployment of missiles in Comiso in May 1984 demonstrated a similar grassroots dynamic.⁴⁵ All three events revealed the rise of a diverse political actor, a burgeoning civil society, and showed a tense, even competitive relation between the movements and the PCI.

The PCI regarded the Italian peace movement as a means to draw new alliances, minimising the sense of isolation felt after the end of the national solidarity government. In this sense, the strategy of *Botteghe Oscure* resembled that of the anti-imperialist movement in Italy against the US intervention in Vietnam during the late 1960s.⁴⁶ Between the late 1960s and early 1970s, the same approach was pursued in the opposition to the American involvement in Chile and in the struggle against the authoritarian regimes in Spain, Greece and Portugal, which echoed the anti-fascist front.⁴⁷ The PCI intended to spearhead the cross-party peace movement, tapping into anti-imperialist trends

⁴³ S. Colarizi, ‘Politica e antipolitica dalla Prima alla Seconda Repubblica’, in S. Colarizi, A. Giovagnoli, P. Pombeni (eds), *L’Italia contemporanea dagli anni Ottanta a oggi. Istituzioni e politica*, vol. 3 (Roma 2014), 333-350.

⁴⁴ Fabrizia Baduel Glorioso to Antonio Rubbi, 9 April 1983, IFG, APCI, Sezione di lavoro-Esteri, MF 557, 325-329.

⁴⁵ Memorandum by Giannotti, 17 November 1983, IFG, APCI, MF 0557, 0390-0391.

⁴⁶ Dealing with the PCI commitment against the war in Vietnam: A. Höbel, *Il Pci di Luigi Longo, 1964-1968* (Napoli 2010), 407-411. See also: Corteo nazionale per la pace in Vietnam - Milano, 4 November 1967, Archivio audiovisivo del movimento operaio (AAMOD), M/PPos/2486.

⁴⁷ On the anti-Americanism of the PCI see: A. Brogi, *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill 2011).

among supporters of other parties such as the DC (Christian Democratic Party) and PSI (Italian Socialist Party). In so doing, the PCI hoped to diminish anti-communist resentments and win support among a large part of the electorate. Moreover, the peace movement was expected to establish a dialogue ‘from below’ with the leaders of all main Italian parties.

During the confidential meetings among communist leaders this topic recurred again and again. The preservation of peace was considered to be a ‘priority’ because it could potentially mobilise ‘revolutionary forces’, but not only them.⁴⁸ As the long-term leader Gian Carlo Pajetta noted, the US American adventurism and aggressiveness had further nurtured anti-American feelings among numerous people.⁴⁹ Although Christian Democrats and socialists were not anti-American per se, many of their supporters shared a critical view of US foreign policy.⁵⁰

PCI policy was based on three main principles: peace, disarmament and negotiations; peace and development; peace, independence and sovereignty of the people. The three macro-topics were to be developed ‘within the framework of a larger unitary spirit’, ‘with a national vision’: it was therefore necessary to ‘raise a debate with other democratic political forces.’⁵¹ For these reasons, as the Directorate member Renzo Trivelli argued, it was imperative to go beyond the traditional communist rhetoric. Thus, at a meeting in June 1982 a number of senior party officials decided to ‘widen’ and ‘qualitatively expand the movement for peace’ and its communication ‘instruments’; by including speeches by John Paul II and President of the Italian Republic Sandro Pertini as well as statements by the Democratic US Senator Edward Kennedy.⁵² While keeping the communist stance unaltered, it was decided to expand the movement’s field of action by inaugurating a series of talks

⁴⁸ Paolo Bufalini during the Direzione’s meeting, 24 September 1980, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 0487, fasc. 8106, 50/51.

⁴⁹ Pajetta during the Direzione’s meeting, 10 June 1982, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 8208/125.

⁵⁰ V. Lomellini, B. Zaccaria, ‘Decay and Catharsis: Perceptions of the United States in Italian Political Cultures Between the 1960s and 1970s’, in A. Varsori and B. Zaccaria (eds.) *Italy in the International System from Détente to the End of the Cold War. The Underrated Ally* (London 2017), 253-275.

⁵¹ Trivelli’s memorandum, 30 March 1982, IFG, APCI, Note a Segreteria, MF 0508, 2126-2128.

⁵² *Ibid.*

with CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour), FGCI (Italian Communist Youth Federation) and the ACLI (Italian Christian Association of Labour).⁵³

Within this framework, the dialogue with Catholics and socialists was of crucial importance⁵⁴: the heterogeneity of the mobilization was one of the most important features of the peace movement in Italy.⁵⁵

On the national and local level, the analysts of *Botteghe Oscure* monitored the policy of John Paul II closely. Since his election in 1978, they observed the Polish Pope and his new approach which they thought might herald ‘a close dialogue’ or rather a ‘collaboration’ with leftist forces in the country.⁵⁶ Regarding the relations with socialists and social democrats, the struggle for peace was seen as a tactical tool to cooperate and overcome differences with Craxi’s PSI, which had made criticism of the PCI a core issue of its strategy since the early 1970s.⁵⁷ For this purpose, the PCI emphasised the common ground between *Botteghe Oscure* and European Socialist and Social Democratic parties, promoting a wider ‘Euroleft’.⁵⁸

The importance of cooperating with other political forces was echoed in internal party debates about the organisation of the demonstration in Rome on 22 October 1983, which revealed the strategic reasoning of the party’s ruling élites. The upcoming European elections brought home the urgency of the matter. At the beginning thus, the peace movement events could lead to the development of

⁵³ Final memorandum – peace movement’s meeting, 15 June 1982, IFG, APCI, Note a Segreteria, MF 0508, 2155-2156. The melting pot of political cultures is analyzed in S. Tosi, T. Vitale, ‘Explaining how Political Cultures Change: Catholic Activism and the Secular Left in Italian Peace Movement’, in *Social Movement Studies*, 8-2 (2009), 139-140.

⁵⁴ G.M. 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, 2 (2005), 71-75.

⁵⁵ G.M. Ceci, L. Cigliani, ‘Gli italiani, le guerre e la pace: dalla crisi degli euromissili alla Seconda guerra in Iraq’, in S. Pons, A. Roccucci, F. Romero (eds.), *L’Italia contemporanea dagli anni Ottanta a oggi. Fine della Guerra fredda e globalizzazione*, vol. 1 (Roma 2014), 282-286.

⁵⁶ Demitry’s memorandum to Berlinguer, January 1980, IFG, APCI, Chiesa e movimenti cattolici, MF 0440, fasc. 2235. On the Catholic contribution to the topic of peace, see also: R. Moro, ‘I cattolici italiani tra pace e guerra: dall’inizio del secolo al Concilio Vaticano’, in L. Goglia, R. Moro and L. Nuti, *Guerra e pace nell’Italia del Novecento: politica estera, cultura politica e correnti dell’opinione pubblica*, (Bologna, 2006), 359-402

⁵⁷ V. Lomellini, *L’appuntamento mancato. La Sinistra italiana e il dissenso nei regimi comunisti (1968-1989)* (Firenze Le Monnier).

⁵⁸ Giannotti’s analysis, 17 November 1983, IFG, APCI, MF 0557, 0390-0391; F. Lussanna, ‘Il confronto con lesocialdemocrazie e la ricerca di un nuovo socialismo nell’ultimo Berlinguer’, in D. Caviglia and A. Varsori (eds.), *Dollari, petrolio e aiuti allo sviluppo. Il confronto Nord-Sud negli anni '60-'70* (Milano 2008), 211-241.

further political alliance – as hoped at the eve of the 22 October 1983 peace demonstration.⁵⁹ Soon, however a dialogue with the other forces of the peace movement proved harder to achieve than initially thought, becoming one of the main obstacles in the coordination of the fight for disarmament.

The peace movement was a heterogeneous phenomenon. As the Directorate member Renzo Giannotti warned in November 1983, PCI leaders had a ‘weak knowledge of the pacifist movement and its potentiality’. On the other side, Giannotti continued, young people were not moved by the ‘reasons of politics’ but by those of ‘morality’, ‘of the revolt against injustice, of faith, of equality among men’. Armament limitation talks were, at the end of the day, just one aspect of the fight for peace, and often with difficult comprehension ‘for those who revolt against the oppressors.’⁶⁰

Thus, the PCI felt outdated: in confidential reports, those party leaders who dealt with the peace movement admitted that communist contributions to the movement were poorly organized, only grudgingly tolerated by some sectors of the peace movement itself and, above all, ineffective. Nonetheless, the party’s senior officials seemed to be divided on the necessity to alter their approach. The key question concerned the relationship with the other currents within the movement: the keyword was that of a unitary initiative, but this implied a hegemonic initiative of the party. The clash between traditional political actors and new forces of the movement led to an inner party confrontation.

In January 1982, when Ronald Reagan visited Italy,⁶¹ the PCI Secretary Berlinguer argued for ‘a mass’ and ‘unitary’ event, not necessarily led by his party.⁶² Other groups with the peace movement, however, perceived such a suggestion as an attempt by the PCI to dominate the demonstration. Thus, the ACLI decided to release an autonomous declaration and disassociate itself from the event. At the end, the demonstration was condemned as a unilateral step by various other factions of the movement. But even within the PCI, there were voices of dissent. Giorgio Napolitano,

⁵⁹ Direzione’s meeting, 4 August 1983, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 555, 8309/97.

⁶⁰ Giannotti’s memorandum, 17 November 1983, IFG, APCI, MF 0557, 0390-0391.

⁶¹ AAMOD, Ronald Reagan in Roma, 5 June 1982, M/Ppos/1147.

⁶² Direzione’s meeting, 23 April 1982, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 8207/169.

the representative of the right wing within the PCI (*migliorista*) who had split with Berlinguer in 1981, decided to intervene with a note to the party secretariat. He criticized the unilateral setting of the demonstration. The decision of the most representative Catholic organization in the peace movement, the ACLI, was not just the outcome of a shortsighted political choice which offered pretexts for those who wanted to avoid participating in any demonstration. In Napolitano's opinion, the references to the USSR in the appeal for mobilization – as well as the signatories at its bottom – revealed the Communist matrix of the event. Expressing his criticism towards this kind of initiatives, which would affect the 'international image' of the PCI, Napolitano wondered:

'Had we rather not worked for the development of a peace movement in Italy which should identify with any party, PCI and PDUP [Partito di Unità Proletaria], but for one that should gather a wide range of associations, groups, personalities, respecting their autonomy?'⁶³

Napolitano's position differed from the party's mainstream, which regarded the demonstration as a testing ground of the PCI leadership in the fight for peace. The general feeling was a negative one: the competition by the extreme left was of great concern, not in electoral terms but for its impact on society.⁶⁴ As Pajetta noted right after the demonstration against Reagan, it was necessary to stop the action of PDUP, whose 'catchwords' had even infected the PCI comrades during some peace demonstrations as the one in Rome. The more general question concerned the dynamics between traditional actors and new political interlocutors. This topic clearly emerged during the participation of the PCI at the Conference for disarmament that was held in West Berlin from 9 to 14 May 1983. The head of the PCI International Department, Antonio Rubbi, confessed with disappointment that the leading actors of the events would be the single-issue peace movements and not the parties. Rubbi

⁶³ Giorgio Napolitano's speech about the protest on the 5 June 1982, 3 June 1982, IFG, APCI, note a Segreteria, MF 0508, 2134-2135.

⁶⁴ Pajetta's speech, 10 June 1982, IFG, APCI, Riunione, Direzione, MF 8208/125; W. Gambetta, *Democrazia proletaria: la nuova sinistra tra piazze e palazzi* (Milano 2010).

criticized the ‘tendency to adopt anti-institutional positions (against governments, parties and trade unions) and foster the movement and extra-parliamentary actions’.⁶⁵ What was at stake was not just the leadership of the movement, but the very participation of the PCI in the event.

During the organization of the peace demonstration held on 22 October 1983, this issue became clear. When party officials met at *Botteghe Oscure* to discuss the role of the party within the movement, the atmosphere was gloomy. Given the loss of leadership, Cossutta claimed that the PCI could not maintain a peace movement; Pajetta agreed and noted the weakness of the struggle compared to that in October 1981. The critical points were three: first, as noted by Pajetta, it was necessary to overcome the action of the *Comitato per la pace* and lead a movement which should invite pacifists to mobilize according to a unitary strategy. Second, leaders discussed how mobilization should take place, and thought about repertoires of action. Once again, this was a question of propaganda: young people were inclined towards new ways of protest and the party should adapt itself to this situation. Third, there was the problem of violence, small provocative groups used during demonstrations. According to Pajetta, the weak connection with the peace movement was going to leave room to extremists. Berlinguer concluded: ‘The extremist forces for peace do exist and we cannot exorcise them: instead, we can limit their wrong and their violent “means” with a great mass movement’.⁶⁶ At first glance, Berlinguer’s speech might seem to signal the acceptance of a dialogue with new interlocutors. However, it echoed what the Soviets themselves had suggested to the PCI about the management of the peace movement and about how to behave toward extremists.

The leadership of the PCI and the unity of the movement were at stake. On one side, leftist extremists challenged the PCI’s role. On the other side, Catholics preferred to organize their own meetings, supported by influential members of the Church hierarchy such as those in Milan. This became apparent during the 7 November 1983 demonstration.⁶⁷ In 1984, the fear of a hegemony of

⁶⁵ Antonio Rubbi’s memorandum, 15 April 1983, IFG, APCI, Sezione Esteri, MF 0557, 323-344.

⁶⁶ Berlinguer’s statement, Direzione, 23 September 1983, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 555, fasc. 8309/116.

⁶⁷ Berlinguer’s statement, Direzione, 2 November 1983, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 8311/16.

the independent left came to the forefront. Italian Communist leaders thought more in-depth about the relationship with the extra-parliamentary left and, accordingly, the attitude towards the proposal for a self-managed referendum on the installation of the missiles in Comiso.⁶⁸ The diverse actors within the peace movement disagreed on the proposal to call for a referendum about the missiles' deployment. This revealed the PCI position towards the peace movement and its relationship with the independent left. The Party delegate for the peace movement, who was invited by the Party Direction to refer to this question, confirmed the concerns about the extreme divisions within the peace movement. In Italy, there were more than 700 committees.⁶⁹ The call for a referendum had highlighted the disagreement among the various factions of the movement, with the first departure – once again – coming from the ACLI. Moreover, in some local sections, as for example in Piedmont, *Democrazia Proletaria* (Proletarian Democracy) and other extra-parliamentary leftist groups (in this specific case: the League of revolutionary Communists) influenced the committees for peace. The *Direzione* member Pietro Ingrao urged for a reflection on the presence of the PCI within the movement for peace. Napolitano agreed with them and concluded: 'It would be time to take the X-ray of this coordination: does *Democrazia Proletaria* decide all with its allies? Then our attitude could change'.⁷⁰

In the following months, though the outcome of the referendum was positive – in terms of the creation of a cross-party front – *Botteghe Oscure* grew even more concerned about the internal dynamics of the peace movement. Communists were still present, but their influence was limited. The pro-Soviet group *Lotta per la pace* had been removed, while the *autonomi* – small extremist groups – still continued to exert a 'negative influence'. The perceived weight of groups like *Democrazia proletaria* and *Pdup* was greater than their actual electoral strength.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Giannotti's memorandum, 17 November 1983, IFG, APCI, MF 0557, 0390-0391.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Lodi mentioned about 600 Committees for Peace. G. Lodi, *Uniti e diversi* (Milano 1984).

⁷⁰ Direzione's meeting, 7 March 1984, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 8405/120-145.

⁷¹ Meeting, 15 March 1984, IFG, APCI, Direzione, MF 8404/0036-0046.

The results obtained by the Italian Communists within this framework were rather limited. Their impact on the movement was even less successful: party members were now in a minority within the movement, PCI's leaders admitted. Moreover, the PCI was unable to engage in a deep and constructive analysis. Cervetti was convinced that wider participation would run the risk of the extra-parliamentary left, and the *Democrazia popolare* in particular, taking over. But this was Berlinguer's idea in the early 1980s. The only voice outside the choir was that of the PCI leftist leader Pietro Ingrao. He was the most aware of the development of new forms of politics since the late 1960s, and took the chance to point out that the forms of politics were changing:

'It is true that *Democrazia popolare* is maneuvering, but the facts must be seen more deeply. There are real forces in movement, even confused, that express forms of changing politics. How do we react?'⁷²

The issue was even more pressing because the second national assembly of the *Comitati per la pace* (22-24 March) was approaching. The question was posed as an alternative: to stay or get out of the movement? The young member of the Directorate, Piero Fassino, argued that there were no alternatives: the PCI could not leave. The long-term leader Nilde Iotti agreed on this point and favored a frontal battle with the extra-parliamentary left. The influential leader Paolo Bufalini still hoped the PCI could play a major role, influencing the DC and the PSI. It was the old logic of openness to the masses to facilitate the search for alliances. Once again, Berlinguer's proposal did not depart from the classic internationalist vision of the struggle for peace: the only possible choice was to 'stay inside' the movement more 'authoritatively and massively'.⁷³

⁷² *Ibid.* *Democrazia proletaria* was a Far Left party that originated in the 1970s.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

The resurgence of the peace movement in the 1980s could have been an opportunity for the PCI to renew its strategy and standing within Italian society and the international arena. Instead, it ended in defeat for the Italian Communists, which felt under a double (foreign and domestic) attack. The PCI's strategy regarding the peace movement revealed several issues. Most importantly, the relations between *Botteghe Oscure* and the Kremlin seemed inevitably compromised during the 1980s. Although there was no definitive break with the Soviet Union, the two brother parties no longer shared the same views on international political issues in general.

This became true even in the case of the anti-imperialist struggle and the peace movement, a topic that had been a cohesive factor in the past. The leadership of the PCI did not seem capable to free itself from the internationalist logic that had determined the party's contribution to the anti-imperialist movement since the end of the Second World War. The PCI tried to distance itself from the CPSU in terms of its international identity to attract to new supporters. Yet this attempt failed due to the deterioration of the international situation. But more importantly, the CPSU and the USSR remained the reference framework for the Italian communists, particularly when Gorbachev became General Secretary in the mid-1980s. The new dynamics that became visible with the development of the peace movement, the need for new forms of propaganda for disarmament, the emergence of new political actors – sometimes in direct competition with the PCI – were crucial issues for the party.

Even in this field, the leading circles of the PCI failed to adapt to the situation by altering their rhetoric and attitude. This negligence would become one of the most significant features of the history of the Italian Communist Party in the following years. As mentioned, there were international reasons behind the reluctance of the PCI to alter its strategy; but those domestic were very important indeed. Domestically, Berlinguer was keenly aware of the need to expand the peace movement across party lines and in a consistent manner, but he adhered to a strategy that had proved effective in the 1960s and 1970s movements against the Vietnam war. In the environment of the 1980s and given the heterogeneity of the Italian peace protesters, the old strategy did not have the same appeal. Moreover, the inner confrontation must be considered. Most PCI leaders still cherished the idea that the

communists should play a vanguard role in the peace movement, which would help broaden the pool of potential voters and build a consensus among grassroots with the aim of forming political alliances. However, its international identity prevented the party from achieving this objective.

The unexpected death of Enrico Berlinguer in June 1984 contributed to worsening the situation. The peace movement of the 1980s was arguably the last opportunity to renew the identity of the PCI, but its leadership was unable to use it, as it failed to effectively address the fall of communism.