Chapter 2

Becoming Nuclear: The Politics of Nuclearity in La Maddalena

The Italian government conceded the use of La Maddalena to the U.S. Navy without any parliamentary approval. In 1954 Italy and United States stipulated a Bilateral Infrastructure Agreement (BIA) in implementation of the North Atlantic Treaty, which Italy had undersigned in 1949. On the basis of these executive provisions, whose terms remain classified, Italy agreed to allow the deployment of U.S. military personnel and the use of bases on its territory for defensive purposes established by NATO. After the signature of BIA, several U.S. and NATO military bases opened on the national territory.[1]

Since the beginning of the controversy over the U.S. Navy presence in La Maddalena, those who opposed the submarine base focused on the problem of radiocontamination risks rather than on more abstract ideological discourses about national sovereignty and U.S. imperialism.[2] In part, this was a strategic move. As explained in the previous chapter, over the past century La Maddalena's residents crafted a sense of collective identity around the presence of the Italian Navy. For this reason, anti-militarism never played an important role in local anti-base politics. During the 1970s few people from the archipelago openly protested against the

[1] For the history of the early phase of U.S. military presence in Italy after WWII, see Leopoldo Nuti, "U.S. forces in Italy, 1945-1963," in Simon W. Duke and Wolfgang Krieger (Eds.), *U.S. Military Forces in Europe: The Early Years, 1945-1970*, (Westview Press, 1993): 249-272.

[2] Previous contestations of U.S. and NATO military bases in Italy took place more explicitly as part of Cold War geo-political struggles between the United States and the Soviet Union. In particular, the deployment of the Jupiter missiles between 1961-1963 in Gioia del Colle, Puglia, triggered a wave of protests including parliamentary opposition from Communists and Socialists and the organization of mass protest marches. Two factors probably explain the differences between the case of Gioia del Colle and La Maddalena. First, the installation of the Jupiter missiles happened in a moment of high international tension (with the missile crisis in Cuba). Second, the local population of Gioia del Colle had the immediate perception of the missiles (with nuclear warheads) as nuclear objects and threatening presences. The ramps and the missiles erected in the middle of the flat rural landscape were visible from afar. The meaning of the their presence and their dangerousness could be hardly hidden. On this episode see Leopoldo Nuti, *La Sfida nucleare*; Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters, 1957-1963*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

U.S. Navy installation. Mostly "exogenous" groups—including anti-nuclear movements, pacifists, and leftist parties—went to La Maddalena to rally against the nuclear base.

In the subsequent thirty-five years, public debates centered on the health and environmental effects of the routine operations of the nuclear submarines and on the consequences of possible accidents. Governmental authorities responded to these concerns with two main arguments. On the one hand, they tried to reassure the public that nuclear technology, and in particular the U.S. nuclear submarines, were safe. To strengthen their position they enrolled expert state agencies to provide evidence that the base could cause no harm to the environment and to the local population. On the other hand, the government justified the concession of La Maddalena as an extension of NATO agreements and argued that it was an economic opportunity for local residents. At the local level, the municipal administration of La Maddalena, led by a Christian Democrat majority, supported the government's decision to host the U.S. Navy base, but faced intense opposition from the Communist and the Socialist Parties, which augmented anxieties in the local community.

The second part of the chapter illustrates how national and local debates intersected and unfolded during the first phase (from 1972 to 1974). Given the particular nature of the installation, the Italian government conceded the use of the site without following the standard procedures of environmental monitoring and radioprotection that expert agencies usually implemented around civilian nuclear plants. These restrictions precluded national expert agencies from accessing crucial information, including reactor designs, power, and discharge formulas. The only reassurance offered by the government was a preliminary and very general document that the Center for the Military Applications of Nuclear Energy (CAMEN) issued upon request of the Ministry of Defense.[3] CAMEN's report and the technical advice allegedly produced by CNEN's director, Dr. Ezio Clementel, however, became immediately contested.

[3] CAMEN was founded at the beginning of the 1950s, inside the naval academy of Livorno (Tuscany). It was the technical advisory agency of the ministry of defense for the military applications of nuclear energy. The center had its own specialized personnel and laboratories, including an experimental reactor. Civilian personnel also worked inside the center, but the structure responded directly to the ministry of defense. In the next chapter I explain in detail CAMEN's role and development within the Italian nuclear program and nuclear regulatory regime.

2.1. A Nuclear Site? The Controversial Nuclear Status of La Maddalena

On September 2, 1972 the main newspaper of Sardinia, *Unione Sarda,* reported the unusual visit of the U.S. Navy air carrier Kennedy in front of the Archipelago of La Maddalena.[4] During the same year, the air carrier was stationed in various ports of the Mediterranean: from Greece and Turkey to Spain and France. The turbulent atmosphere that characterized North Africa and the Middle East encouraged a preoccupation with Soviet submarines, and pushed U.S. strategists to embark on a "diplomatic tour" to show that the VI fleet of the Navy was present and vigilant.

Shortly afterwards, La Maddalena became an important asset of the new Mediterranean strategy of the U.S. government. On September 16, 1972 Lucio Manisco, the Washington correspondent for the national newspaper *Il Messaggero*, published a real scoop: unspecified sources within the Pentagon confirmed that the U.S. Navy was going to install "a base for atomic submarines in La Maddalena."[5] The subtitle mentioned that the decision was a response to the increased presence of the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean.[6] In a separate article, Manisco reported that the government of Syria had recently granted Moscow with the use of two naval stations. In the following days, other national newspapers emphasized the concession of La Maddalena by the Italian government as a base for the nuclear submarines of the U.S. Navy. The little Sardinian archipelago instantly became the new hot spot of the Italian foreign policy. Both in parliament and through its official newspaper *L'Unita,* the Italian Communist Party (PCI) mounted a massive campaign against the decision of the center-right administration led by the Christian-democrat Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti. From a political point of view, the PCI perceived the concession of La Maddalena as yet another sign of Italy's acquiescence to American imperialism and an act of aggression that contradicted the efforts of international détente publicly announced by the Nixon administration. At the international level, the initiative of the United States in the Mediterranean obviously did not go unnoticed. An official visit of Prime Minister Andreotti to Moscow was an occasion for the Soviet authorities to express their preoccupation for the recent installation of the U.S. Navy in La Maddalena. Although the agenda of Andreotti's visit was primarily focused on commercial agreements, the events unfolding on the Sardinian archipelago and the Soviet reactions inevitably attracted the attention of the

[4] "Cinquemila visitatori sul gigante del mare," *L'Unione Sarda,* September 2, 1972.
[5] "Base alla Maddalena per sommergibili nucleari," *Il Messaggero*, September 16, 1972.
[6] Documents of the Pentagon insisted that the increased activity of the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean shifted the balance of forces deployed in the area. A new strategy was needed in order to respond to this challenge (Cite reports and docs coming from the library!!!)

media.[7] On October 27, 1972 *L'Unita`* reproduced a vignette on La Maddalena published by the official organ of the Soviet Politburo *Pravda*. The cartoon represented an old American commodore offering to Italy, a crowned woman dressed with a classic white tunic, a bunch of nuclear submarines inside a can of sardines. The woman clearly refuses the offer, sitting directly in front of the island of La Maddalena (Figure 2.1.).

MOSCA — La « Pravda » ha pubblicato nella sua edizione di mercoledì questa vignetta sulla installazione della base USA alla Maddalena. Il disegno raffigura un ammiraglio americano che offre i sommergibili atomici in una scatola di sardine con l'etichetta « Sardine di oltre Oceano ». L'Italia (raffigurata su uno scoglio con la scritta « La Maddalena ») si schermisce

Figure 2.1. Cartoon published on "*The Pravda*" on October 25 and reproduced by the Italian Communist Party organ *L'Unita`* on October 27, 1972.[8]

Besides the obvious diplomatic and military implications of the U.S. installation for Italian foreign policy, at the national level the political campaign of the anti-base front focused from the beginning on the safety problems and the risks for the local population in case of nuclear accidents.[9] Even moderate and conservative national newspapers, generally close to the position of the Italian government, highlighted the problematic nature of the concession of La Maddalena to the U.S. Navy. The *Corriere della Sera*, for example, published a report about the

[7] For example, on October 26. 1972 *Il Messaggero* reported that Soviet Prime Minister Kossighin expressed frank disappointment for the concession of La Maddalena to the U.S. Navy: "Kossighin polemico sulla base USA alla Maddalena." Obviously also *L'Unità* emphasized Soviets' discontent for the cession of La Maddalena to the U.S. Navy: "Kossighin deplora la cessione agli USA della Maddalena," October 26, 1972.
[8] *L'Unita`*, October 27, 1972, p. 6.
[9] "Italians debate U.S. port plan," *The New York Times*, October 2, 1972, p. 14.

anxieties of the local residents about possible environmental contamination from the submarine reactors.[10]

Fears spread also for the reticence of the government, who continued to minimize the question of La Maddalena and did not provide any information about the terms of the agreement, the mission of the U.S. Navy in the newly established base, and the characteristic of the armaments on board of the nuclear submarines. Only during the parliamentary debate of October 6, 1972, did Italian public opinion learn that the government had conceded an area of the island of Santo Stefano to the U.S. Navy for the assistance of the nuclear propelled submarines of the Sixth Fleet. Facing the attacks of communist and socialist senators during the question time, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giuseppe Medici, defended the position of the government with three main arguments.[11] First, the concession of a support facility to the U.S. Navy in La Maddalena was due to the necessity to balance the increasing menace of the Soviet activities in the Mediterranean. The act should not be surprising given that Italy was a partner of the NATO alliance since 1949. The concession of the base, thus, was the logic consequence of the general agreements in implementation of the defensive strategy of NATO. Second, the mission of the support facility, "not a base," was to assist and refit U.S. nuclear submarines of the 22nd Squadron, involved in reconnaissance and surveillance activities in the Mediterranean area. A navy tender equipped with repair shops and specialized personnel would station in front of the island of Santo Stefano ready to assist the submarines. The navy tender was a "normal ship" propelled with conventional engines. It could not perform any refueling operations involving radiological work, which required specific conditions present only in U.S. harbors. The nuclear reactors propelling the U.S. submarines were not dangerous for the environment and for the residents of La Maddalena. Like reactors of civilian nuclear plants—Medici mentioned that Italy already had three, one of which was near Rome—the submarines' propellers were, he argued, a safe technology. In addition, Medici cited a precedent that should have convinced its opponents:

> In 1964 Italy signed an agreement with the U.S. government, allowing the use of Italian ports by a U.S. nuclear merchant ship. Given that nuclear submarines do not differ in this regard from any surface ship, in La Maddalena we agreed to allow [the presence of the

[10] "C'è chi teme le radiazioni dei sommergibili nucleari," *Corriere della Sera*, September 22, 1972. Also *Il Messaggero* reported the spread of concerns in other parts of Sardinia for the possible radioactive contamination coming from the submarines stationed in La Maddalena: "Sorpresa e timori in Sardegna per base nucleare alla Maddalena," September 19, 1972.

[11] *Senato della Repubblica VI legislatura, 38^{a} seduta pubblica. Resoconto Stenografico, Venerdi` 6 Ottobre 1972*, pp. 1848-1903.

> U.S. Navy submarines] under the same general terms of eight years ago, assuring the respect of all the safety norms.[12]

Finally, the foreign minister challenged concerns that the U.S. Navy base would damage the local economy: "Instead of alienating the tourists, the arrival of the U.S. Navy personnel and their families will be an important contribution to the economy of La Maddalena, similarly to what happens, for example, in Gaeta and Formia [two naval bases near Naples]. Moreover, their presence will be, in itself, a demonstration of the innocuous nature of the operation."[13]

In his reply to Mr. Medici, Communist senator Ugo Pecchioli contested that the (secret) executive bilateral agreement stipulated for the concession of La Maddalena to the U.S. Navy explicitly violated the norms of the Italian Constitution, which for the ratification of international agreements prescribed the formal approval of the parliament. Pecchioli insisted that the installation of La Maddalena was not just a support facility. It was "a real military base with built-in structures and a massive presence of U.S. personnel in the archipelago." He added that, according to his sources, the base did not respond to NATO commands, but operated directly under U.S. military authorities. Therefore, the legitimacy of the concession, justified by the government as a NATO operation, was largely contestable: "With this act Italy continues to cede its national sovereignty without any parliamentary discussion. The previous installation of U.S. bases in Gaeta, Vicenza, Napoli, Livorno, and Martina Franca confirm the Italian submission to the American ally."[14] Finally, Pecchioli argued that the U.S. nuclear base "represents an ulterior source of radioactive pollution in the hearth of the Tyrrhenian Sea, an ecological bomb that

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[12] Ibidem, cit. p. 1855. Here Minister Giuseppe Medici referred to the visit of the merchant ship *Savannah* in 1964, also documented in a film produced by CNEN for an instructional project. The documentary is available in the historical section of ENEA's web TV site: http://webtv.sede.enea.it/index.php?page=listafilmcat2&idfilm=173&idcat=30. On that occasion on November 23, 1964 the contracting parts undersigned an indemnity agreement concerning any liability that an Italian court may have found in relation to any nuclear accident deriving or caused from the operations and repair of the *N.S. Savannah* in Italian territorial waters: United Nations, *Treaty Series*, Vol. 532, 1965, p. 133. A new agreement between Italy and the United States was registered by the United Nations in 1965 according to which "the United States will provide compensation by way of indemnity for any legal liability which an Italian court may find for any damage to people or goods deriving from a nuclear accident in connection with, arising out of or resulting from the operation, repair maintenance or use of the N.S. *Savannah*, in which the N.S. *Savannah*, may be involved within Italian territorial waters, or outside them on a voyage to or from Italian ports if damage is caused in Italy or on ships of Italian registry. Within the $500 million limitation in such public laws, the operator of the ship shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the Italian court and shall not invoke the provisions of Italian law or any other law relating to the limitation of shipowner's liability." "Exchange of notes constituting an agreement concerning liability during private operation of N.S. Savannah. Rome, 16 December 1965," United Nations, *Treaty Series*, Vol. 534, 1966, p. 140-142.
[13] Ibidem, cit. pp. 1855-1856.
[14] Ibidem, cit. pp. 1873-1875.

constitutes an extraordinary danger for the inhabitants of the area and for the flora and the fauna of the Mediterranean."[15]

Radiocontamination risk was already a primary concern in public debates, but it became even more pressing when important sectors of the Italian scientific community voiced their opposition to the installation of the U.S. base. Only two days before the open question time at the Senate, the Italian Society of Biophysics and Molecular Biology published a statement in which its members unanimously condemned the military applications of nuclear technology and, more specifically, denounced the risks of contamination for the population of Sardinia deriving from the presence of the U.S. nuclear submarines.[16] Scientists promulgated several critiques to the government: 1) with the concession of La Maddalena, Italy became *de facto* co-responsible for the U.S. nuclear aggressions and consequently La Maddalena became a target for Soviet retaliation; 2) the concession of the base was an unacceptable limitation of national sovereignty; 3) the base would inevitably provoke environmental contamination due to probable discharges of radioactive substances, and the secrecy surrounding the installation would prevent national expert agencies from implementing the necessary radiosurveillance measures demanded by national and international regulations; 4) the military nature of the installation increased the risk of accidents with disastrous consequences.

On October 8, 1972, *L'Unità* published a short interview with physicist Edoardo Amaldi, who warned readers about the risks involved in the use of La Maddalena as a base for nuclear submarines.[17] Friend and close collaborator of Enrico Fermi during the 1930s, founder and first president of CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research), Amaldi was an engaged scientist who had always manifested his opposition to the military use of nuclear science and technology.[18] His opinion was certainly important, and the PCI did not miss the occasion to enroll his authoritative statement for its anti-base campaign. Even prominent sectors of the cultural intelligentsia mobilized against the installation of the U.S. base. The same day of the

[15] Ibidem, cit. p. 1876.
[16] "La base della Maddalena: protestano fisici e biologi," *Paese Sera*, October 4, 1972; "Protestano scienziati ed ecologi per la base alla Maddalena," *Il Messaggero*, October 5, 1972.
[17] "Severa critica del fisico Amaldi," *L'Unità*, October 8, 1972.
[18] In his biographical essay, Amaldi explains very clearly how the developments of nuclear physics in the years preceding WWII and immediately after it created a firm opposition within the Italian scientific community towards the military applications of nuclear science and technology. This position prevailed within the Italian school of nuclear physics especially after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. See Edoardo Amaldi, *Da via Panisperna all'America: I fisici italiani e la seconda guerra mondiale*, (Editori Riuniti, 1997). See also Leopoldo Nuti, *La sfida nucleare*, especially Chapter 1, pp. 15-44.

publication of the document by the Italian Society of Biophysics and Molecular Biology, the association *Italia Nostra* sent a letter of protest to Prime Minister Andreotti and to the secretary of the United Nations, denouncing the risks of environmental disaster for the permanence of nuclear submarines in one of the most pristine archipelagos of the Mediterranean.[19]

The attempt of the government to reduce and deviate public attention from La Maddalena became more and more difficult because the Communist party was able to keep the political tension high and to mobilize its activists through its capillary organization, even within expert agencies. For example, on October 22, 1972 employees and technicians of the National Committee for Nuclear Energy (CNEN) adhering to the National Union of Nuclear Workers (SANN-CGIL)—a branch of the communist union CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana dei Lavoratori)—took position against the installation of the U.S. base. In their official statement the "nuclear workers" repeated substantially the previous critiques contained in the document of the Italian Society of Biophysics and Molecular Biology:

> Around civilian nuclear plants safety surveillance is managed by the National Health Institute [ISS – Istituto Superiore di Sanità], CNEN, etc. These norms, already harshly critiqued by local administrations and leftist political movements for their inadequacy and lack of democratic scrutiny, will not be implemented by the Italian authorities in La Maddalena, because everything there will be subjected to the arbitrary control and secrecy of the Pentagon.[20]

SANN-CGIL insisted that the problems of development of an area like La Maddalena, "where even the supply of running water is difficult and unemployment rampant," could not be solved with more military installations: "The center-right government, in disregard of elementary democratic rights, wants to subject our country to the imperialist strategy of the United States, which has already annihilated any hope for democracy and sovereignty in Turkey and Greece."[21]

Whereas critiques addressed to the foreign policy of the Andreotti administration were part of the usual political confrontation between pro-NATO and pro-Soviet positions, the alarms that scientists and the left raised about the risks of accidents and nuclear contamination required

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[19] "Protestano scienziati ed ecologi per la base della Maddalena," *Il Messaggero*, cit. *Italian Nostra* (Our Italy) is one of the most important cultural associations of Italy. It was founded in 1955 by a group of scholars, philanthropists, and politicians belonging to elite circles of the Roman society. Its initial goal was to promote and protect the cultural, archeological, and environmental patrimony of Italy, challenged by massive speculations connected to the booming of the construction industry.

[20] Consiglio Nazionale del SANN-CGIL, "Risoluzione contro l'installazione di una base USA per sommergibili nucleari nell'isola della Maddalena," SANN-CGIL, Sindacato Assembleare Nazionale Nucleari. Roma, October 23, 1972, cit., p. 2. Source: Carlo Papucci, *Personal Archive.*

[21] Ibidem, cit.

careful examination and authoritative responses. The Italian government asked the Ministry of Defense to produce a technical document to confute the alarming hypotheses advanced by the opponents of the base. With this intent, in mid-November 1972 the Center for the Military Applications of Nuclear Energy (CAMEN) issued a preliminary safety assessment describing in very general terms the technical characteristics of the U.S. submarine reactors and the operations that the tender ship would perform in La Maddalena. In addition, a confidential note from CNEN arrived on the desk of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giuseppe Medici, in which president Ezio Clementel allegedly provided reassuring evaluations on the safety of the U.S. base. With the two documents in his hands, Medici considered the controversy over La Maddalena closed; instead, it was only the beginning of a long technopolitical dispute.[22] In the remainder of this chapter, I will first describe the reactions to the U.S. Navy arrival among the Maddalenini and then I will illustrate how the intervention of Italian experts reopened the controversy over the safety of the U.S. Navy base.

2.2. The Nuclear Question in La Maddalena

After the tense parliamentary debate on October 6, and the abundant coverage that national media gave to the "question of La Maddalena," the municipal administration had the difficult task of making an official position.[23] The local opposition, composed of the Communist and the Socialist Party, immediately mobilized against the installation of the U.S. base through official statements, posters, and poorly attended rallies (see Figure 2.2. and 2.3.). Local residents did not, it would appear, perceive the arrival of the U.S. Navy as an epochal change and demonstrated their willingness to accept the new presence, hoping that it would bring jobs and commercial opportunities. The mayor of La Maddalena was Giuseppe Deligia, a Christian

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23 These are some of the titles that appeared on national newspapers during the five days following the debate at the Senate: "I pericoli della radioattività dai sommergibili nucleari," *Il Messaggero*, October 6, 1972; "Medici: 'Alla Maddalena nessuna base nucleare'," *Il Giornale D'Italia*, October 6, 1972; "Protesta fuori del Senato di radicali e pacifisti," *Il Messaggero*, October 8, 1972; "I sommergibili del silenzio," and "Vivaci contrasti al Senato sulla base militare alla Maddalena," *Corriere della Sera*, October 8, 1972; "L'inquinamento nucleare," *L'Unità*, October 8, 1972; "Nuove pesanti accuse al governo per la cessione della Maddalena," *L'Unità*, October 8, 1972; "Sommergibili atomici in Sardegna: nuova conferma del ministro Medici," *L'Unità*, October 9, 1972; "Medici continua a 'imbrogliare' sulla Maddalena," *Paese Sera*, October 9, 1972; "Confermate le rassicurazioni per La Maddalena," *Il Mattino*, October 9, 1972; "Colloqui di Medici in Sardegna sulla base navale Usa," *Il Messaggero*, October 9, 1972; "La Sardegna una base avanzata per la strategia USA nel Mediterraneo," *L'Unità*, October 10, 1972; "Tre consigli comunali sardi votano contro la base USA alla Maddalena," *L'Unità*, October 12, 1972; "Senato: la Commissione ecologica indaga sulla base della Maddalena," *L'Unità*, October 13, 1972.

Democrat close to the positions of the national government and a long-term employee of the military arsenal. Like other members of the local *Democrazia Cristiana* Deligia was a devout Catholic and a faithful disciple of the Monsignor Salvatore Capula, whom many in town considered the real "governor of La Maddalena."[24] According to Capula's diaries and Deligia's recent "confessions," the two men knew about the arrival of the U.S. contingent well before the official announcement of mid-September 1972. Capula was a very close friend and the spiritual confident of undersecretary of defense Francesco Cossiga, a rising star among Sardinian Christian Democrats.[25] It was Cossiga who first revealed to the Monsignor that the government allowed the installation of the U.S. Navy base in La Maddalena.[26] Given the influence that the priest exercised on his community, Cossiga considered it necessary to orchestrate a strategy with him and the mayor to prepare the terrain for the new arrival, to convince the local residents of the economic benefits of the base, and to reassure them about its safety.[27]

[24] My sources on the central political role of the priest are local historiographies and formal and informal conversations with many Maddalenini who knew him personally. A first account of the political influence of monsignor Capula can be found in the detailed biography published by local historian and writer Gian Carlo Tusceri: *Il governatore. Storia di Mons. Salvatore Capula e della "sua" isola*, (Paolo Sorba Editore, 2000). A more recent book by local historians and journalists Francesco Nardini and Salvatore Abate, *Il Pane del Governo,* describe the role of the priest during the anti-communist hunt inside the military arsenal in the early 1950s.

[25] Francesco Cossiga was born in Sassari in 1928, and still very young became professor of constitutional law at the University of his native city. In 1956 Cossiga led a group of young Christian Democrats from Sassari to the victory of the provincial elections. For their innovative agenda the members of the group became known as the "young Turks" (Giovani Turchi), in analogy with the Turkish revolutionary movement led by Kemal Atatürk at the beginning of the 20th century. After their political exploit all the "young Turks" became important politicians at the regional and national level. During the 1970s Cossiga was first minister of the interior affairs (famously during the kidnapping of Aldo Moro), then prime minister between 1979 and 1980. In 1985 he was elected President of the Republic. At the end of his mandate he was nominated senator for life. He died in 2010.

[26] Gian Carlo Tusceri describes the episode in *Il Governatore*, cit. pp. 171-189. Giuseppe Deligia confirmed Tusceri's version in various interviews. See, for example, Claudio Ronchi, "Quando vennero gli americani," *Almanacco Maddalenino* n. 3, November 2004: 37-43. I heard the same story directly from Giuseppe Deligia during a personal interview on July 2010. He confirmed that he and monsignor Capula received a confidential phone call about the arrival of the U.S. Navy before May 16, 1972. The U.S. Navy obviously sent secret scouting missions to La Maddalena well before Deligia and Capula were informed, as Admiral Antonio Cocco, the commander of the naval base of La Maddalena in the early 1970s, wrote in his memoir: *Per la Patria e per il Re. Memorie di un Ammiraglio ottuagenario*, (Bastogi Editrice Italiana, 2006), cit. pp. 172-174.

[27] The episode became popularly known in La Maddalena also thanks to *Benvenutti!* (Welcome!), the film produced and shot by screenwriters and directors Adriano Tovo and Giorgio Acciaro (see Chapter 1). A selection of scenes from the original movie is available here: http://www.veoh.com/watch/v18220342h9qsPzX9?h1=benvenutti

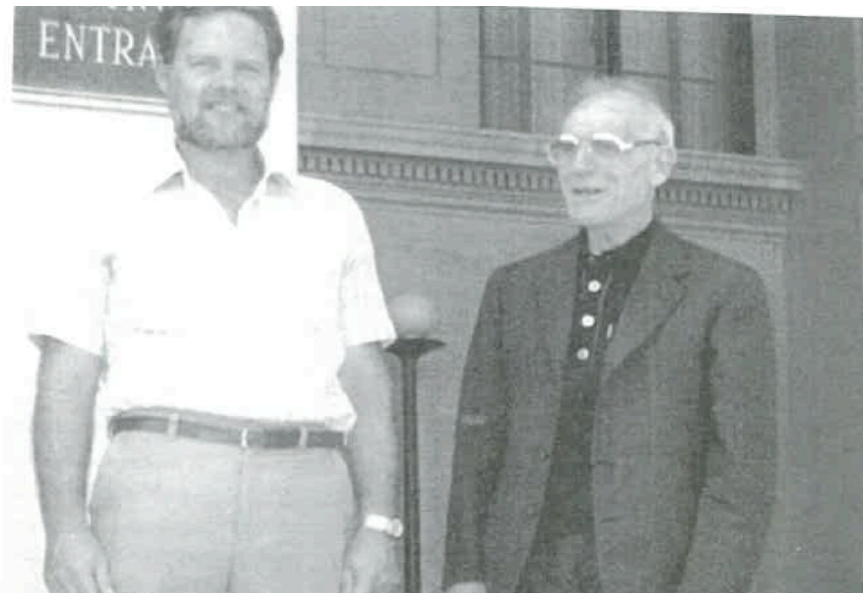


Figure 2.2. Monsignor Salvatore Capula (on the right) received at the Pentagon by Commodore Burkhalter, former Commander of the 22nd Submarine Squadron stationed in La Maddalena (late 1970s). Here Capula is portrayed with Ron Pritchard, assistant of Burkhalter and former liaison for the department of public affairs of the Naval Support Office of La Maddalena from 1973 to 1977 ca. [28]

After the news of the concession of La Maddalena to the U.S. Navy appeared in Italy's major newspapers, Deligia and his majority maintained a rigorous 'no comment' stand. In reality the mayor hoped that the event would not generate much of discussion among the members of his community—so acquainted with the military presence and eager for jobs—and that, with time, the archipelago could simply return to its normal, quiet routine. Although the Maddalenini, as the Christian Democrats predicted, did not mobilize en masse against the base, the pressure coming from the Communist and the Socialist parties, and the unprecedented attention of the national media made the holding of a public debate in the city council unavoidable.

After a month, on October 19th, 1972, the extraordinary meeting of the city council requested by the oppositions finally took place. At the end of a tense debate the municipal assembly unanimously voted a resolution expressing "serious concerns for the possible negative effects of the U.S. Navy presence on the future development of the local economy, particularly on tourism, and above all for the disquieting alarms [about the risks of radioactive contamination] appeared in the national newspapers, which have provoked a state of profound

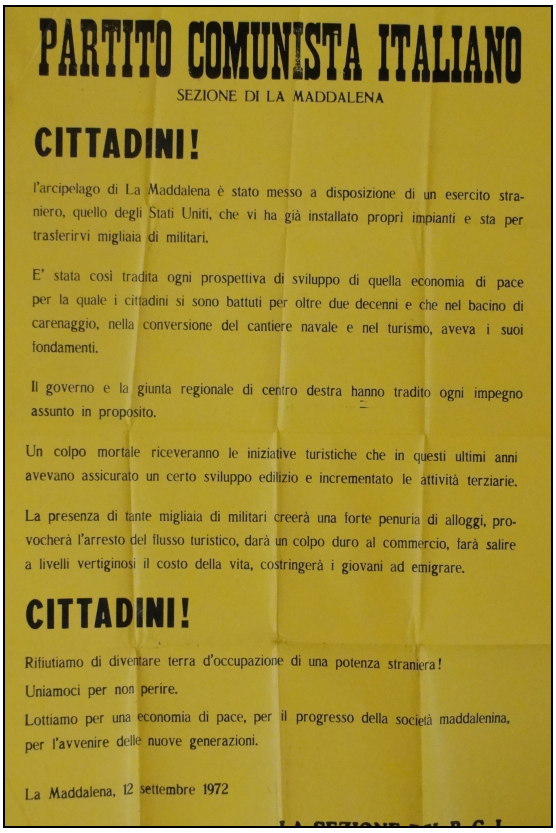
[28] Source: Gian Carlo Tusceri, *Il Governatore*, p. 188. I want to thank Dr. Paolo Sorba for giving me permission to reproduce this picture.

uncertainty among the local population."[29] The deliberation of the city council openly asked both regional and national authorities "to give precise and unequivocal guarantees on the possible risks of environmental pollution connected to the presence and the operations of the U.S. Navy units of the base."[30]

ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY
Section of La Maddalena

CITIZENS!
The archipelago of La Maddalena has been ceded to a foreign army, that of the United States, which has already installed its structures and is going to transfer thousands of soldiers.
In this way any perspective of peaceful development that our citizens fought for has been betrayed […]
The government and the center-right administration of the Region betrayed all the promises they made.
The touristic activities that in the past years have brought some development will disappear.
The presence of thousands military personnel will create a lack of houses, will damage tourism and commerce, and will provoke an increase of prices, which will force the young generations to emigrate.

CITIZENS!
Let's reject the occupation of a foreign power.
Let's rejoin to resist.
Let's fight for a peaceful economy, for the progress of the community of La Maddalena and for the future of our young generations.



PARTITO COMUNISTA ITALIANO

SEZIONE DI LA MADDALENA

CITTADINI!

l'arcipelago di La Maddalena è stato messo a disposizione di un esercito straniero, quello degli Stati Uniti, che vi ha già installato propri impianti e sta per trasferirvi migliaia di militari.

E' stata così tradita ogni prospettiva di sviluppo di quella economia di pace per la quale i cittadini si sono battuti per oltre due decenni e che nel bacino di carenaggio, nella conversione del cantiere navale e nel turismo, aveva i suoi fondamenti.

Il governo e la giunta regionale di centro destra hanno tradito ogni impegno assunto in proposito.

Un colpo mortale riceveranno le iniziative turistiche che in questi ultimi anni avevano assicurato un certo sviluppo edilizio e incrementato le attività terziarie.

La presenza di tante migliaia di militari creerà una forte penuria di alloggi, provocherà l'arresto del flusso turistico, darà un colpo duro al commercio, farà salire a livelli vertiginosi il costo della vita, costringerà i giovani ad emigrare.

CITTADINI!

Rifiutiamo di diventare terra d'occupazione di una potenza straniera!

Uniamoci per non perire.

Lottiamo per una economia di pace, per il progresso della società maddalenina, per l'avvenire delle nuove generazioni.

La Maddalena, 12 settembre 1972

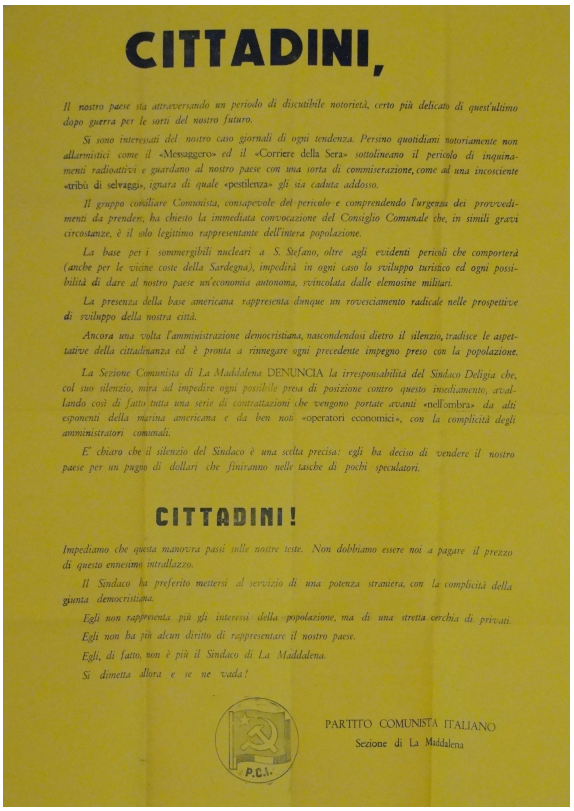
Figure 2.3. Poster of the local section of the Italian Communist Party, protesting the secret agreement for the installation of the U.S. navy base in the archipelago, Sept. 12, 1972.

The document was clearly the outcome of a political compromise between the obsequious position of Deligia's administration toward the superior decisions of the national government, and the firm opposition to the base expressed by communists and socialists.

[29] "Verbale di Deliberazione del Consiglio Comunale di La Maddalena," n. 37, October 19, 1972. *Municipal Archive of La Maddalena*.
[30] Ibid.

CITIZENS,
Our community is receiving, unwillingly, a lot of attention. National newspapers of all tendencies have paid attention to our case. Even moderate newspapers like 'Il Messaggero' and 'Corriere della Sera' underline the risks of radioactive contamination and look at us like a "savage tribe" ignorant of the pestilence that will fall upon us.
The communist group in the city council, aware of the peril and understanding the urgency of the provisions to adopt, has requested the immediate meeting of the assembly, which in such a dramatic circumstance is the only legitimate institution representative of the entire community.
[…]
The Communist Party section of La Maddalena denounces the irresponsibility of mayor Deligia, who through his silence is trying to avoid any expression of opposition to this installation and in fact favors secret agreements conducted by the high spheres of the US Navy and well known local contractors with the complicity of the local administration.
It is clear that the mayor wants to sell our community for a fist of dollars that will end into the pockets of local speculators.

CITIZENS,
[…]
The mayor prefers to safeguard the interest of a foreign power. He does not represent the interests of this community any more. He does not have any more the right to represent our community. He, in fact, is no more our mayor. He should resign and go home.



CITTADINI,

Il nostro paese sta attraversando un periodo di discutibile notorietà, certo più delicato di quest'ultimo dopo guerra per le sorti del nostro futuro.

Si sono interessati del nostro caso giornali di ogni tendenza. Persino quotidiani notoriamente non allarmistici come il «Messaggero» ed il «Corriere della Sera» sottolineano il pericolo di inquinamenti radioattivi e guardano al nostro paese con una sorta di commiserazione, come ad una incosciente «tribù di selvaggi», ignara di quale «pestilenza» gli sia caduta addosso.

Il gruppo consiliare Comunista, consapevole del pericolo e comprendendo l'urgenza dei provvedimenti da prendere, ha chiesto la immediata convocazione del Consiglio Comunale che, in simili gravi circostanze, è il solo legittimo rappresentante dell'intera popolazione.

La base per i sommergibili nucleari a S. Stefano, oltre agli evidenti pericoli che comporterà (anche per le vicine coste della Sardegna), impedirà in ogni caso lo sviluppo turistico ed ogni possibilità di dare al nostro paese un'economia autonoma, svincolata dalle elemosine militari.

La presenza della base americana rappresenta dunque un rovesciamento radicale nelle prospettive di sviluppo della nostra città.

Ancora una volta l'amministrazione democristiana, nascondendosi dietro il silenzio, tradisce le aspettative della cittadinanza ed è pronta a rinnegare ogni precedente impegno preso con la popolazione.

La Sezione Comunista di La Maddalena DENUNCIA *la irresponsabilità del Sindaco Deligia che, col suo silenzio, mira ad impedire ogni possibile presa di posizione contro questo insediamento, avallando così di fatto tutta una serie di contrattazioni che vengono portate avanti «nell'ombra» da alti esponenti della marina americana e da ben noti «operatori economici», con la complicità degli amministratori comunali.*

E' chiaro che il silenzio del Sindaco è una scelta precisa: egli ha deciso di vendere il nostro paese per un pugno di dollari che finiranno nelle tasche di pochi speculatori.

CITTADINI!

Impediamo che questa manovra passi sulle nostre teste. Non dobbiamo essere noi a pagare il prezzo di questo ennesimo intrallazzo.

Il Sindaco ha preferito mettersi al servizio di una potenza straniera, con la complicità della giunta democristiana.

Egli non rappresenta più gli interessi della popolazione, ma di una stretta cerchia di privati.

Egli non ha più alcun diritto di rappresentare il nostro paese.

Egli, di fatto, non è più il Sindaco di La Maddalena.

Si dimetta allora e se ne vada!

PARTITO COMUNISTA ITALIANO
Sezione di La Maddalena

P.C.I.

Figure 2.4. Poster of the local section of the Italian Communist Party, protesting against the secret agreement for the installation of the U.S. Navy base in the archipelago, September 12, 1972.[31]

[31] This poster and other political documents I use in this chapter come from the municipal archive of La Maddalena. I want to thank the administrative personnel of the municipal archive for their assistance and generosity. Many thanks to the Angelo Comiti, former mayor of La Maddalena, for allowing me to consult all the documentary sources I requested access to. Many thanks also to Antonello Tovo for sharing this document with me and for allowing me to use some of the archival material he collected during his honor thesis research on the U.S. Navy base of La Maddalena. His detailed analysis of the impact of the U.S. Navy on "his archipelago" and the impressive number of documents he consulted, allowed me to start my research with great advantages. For this, and for his insights and friendship I will be thankful forever.

An Italian port given as a present by the Andreotti-Malagodi administration

THE ISLAND OF LA MADDALENA (SARDINIA)
TRANSFORMED INTO A SOURCE OF POLLUTION,
AN ATOMIC PERIL, AND A MILITARY TARGET
THIS IS AN ACT AGAINST DIPLOMACY AND PEACE
A SECRET AGREEMENT TACITLY STIPULATED
OUTSIDE THE PARLIAMENT
AGAINST THE WILL OF THE ITALIAN CITIZENS

Let Italian ports be ports of peace
Out of Italy the atomic bases

Figure 2.5. A poster produced by the Italian Communist Party on La Maddalena, Sept 1972.[32]

More importantly, from Deligia's perspective, with this tactical armistice the local Christian Democrats bought some time to set a strategy in agreement with the national authorities. The mayor had to wear two hats. At the national level he asked the government for support to defang the local opposition. This could be done only by dissolving the doubts about the safety of the base and by showing his community that its "sacrifice for the national interests" would be concretely rewarded. At the local level, Deligia wanted it to appear that his administration was not in a subservient position to the national government. He could finally welcome the Americans only after receiving technical and economic guarantees from the state that the presence of the nuclear submarines was not dangerous, but offered only advantages.

[32] Salvatore Sanna, private archive.

Lì
,20 Ott. 1972
CITTÀ DI LA MADDALENA
PROPOSAL

For a Special Development Plan of La Maddalena prepared by the Municipal Administration delegated by the City Council during the assembly of October 19, 1972.

In reference to the attached deliberation unanimously approved by the City Council during the extraordinary assembly of 19.10.1972, the municipal administration, preoccupied for the possible consequences that the permanence of the American tender ship can have on the security and integrity of the entire territory of the Archipelago of La Maddalena, and above all for the possible negative effects on the local economy and on tourism; interpreting the anxiety of its citizens and their legitimate aspirations for a peaceful progress, after careful examination of the social and environmental situation of the Island, submits to the attention of the Superior Authorities directly interested a proposal for a special plan, articulated in the following points, which have been previously illustrated but for the most part not adequately considered:
[.....]

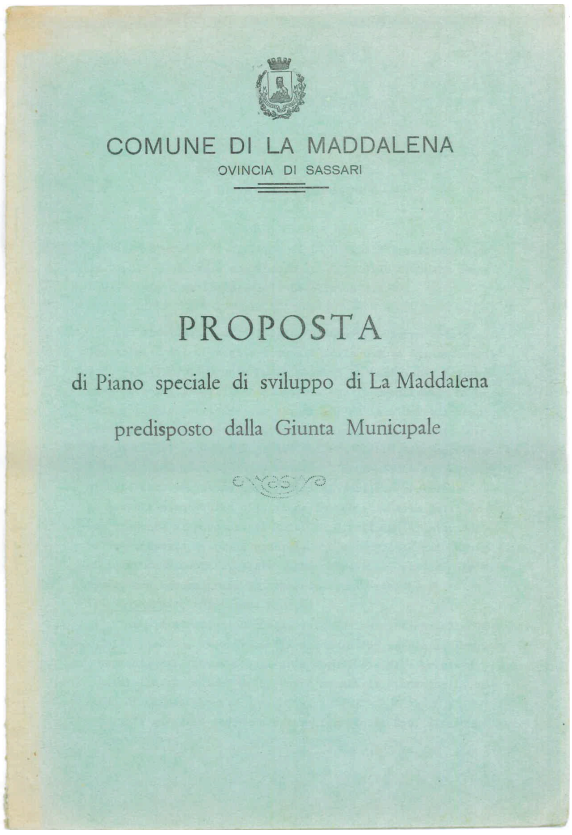


Figure 2.6. Proposal for the development of La Maddalena submitted to the attention of the national government by the local administration.[33]

For this reason, before the extraordinary meeting of the city council, the mayor of La Maddalena and his collaborators composed a document with a long list of requests for the government and the Region of Sardinia (see Figure 2.5.). Articulated in 19 points, the list included in the first place an official act of the Ministry of Health with the "unequivocal reassurance that the presence and the operations of the U.S. naval units will not provoke any contamination. Qualified agencies will need to provide these guarantees."[34] The requests were explicit and detailed, including the estimated costs for each project: "expansion and more admissions of the military arsenal school for specialized workers […], the guarantee that the Italian Navy schools will remain in La Maddalena," a new hospital, a more efficient water

[33] "Proposta di Piano special di sviluppo di La Maddalena predisposto dalla Giunta Municipale," October 20, 1972. *Municipal Archive of La Maddalena*.
[34] Ibidem, cit. p. 1.

service, a school for tourist operators, a bridge to link the archipelago with northern Sardinia, sport infrastructures and recreational areas, new houses for the indigent, a natural preservation area on the island of Caprera, the conversion of dismissed military structures civilian use, and so forth. The accuracy and the details of Deligia's list gave the appearance that the special plan had been orchestrated in advance with central authorities. The unanimous deliberation of October 19, expressing "serious concerns' about the negative effects of the U.S. presence on the archipelago, was just smoke in the eyes of the opposition.

In mid-November, just a few days before the next meeting of the city council, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giuseppe Medici, sent Deligia a letter in which he reassured the mayor that all the requests of the local community would be examined and reasonably satisfied. He also included a technical report from CAMEN to "confute all the alarms created by interested parties."[35] In their concise safety assessment, consisting of three pages, the technicians of the Center for the Military Applications of Nuclear Energy generically illustrated the available information about the characteristics of the pressurized water reactors propelling the U.S. fast attack submarines stationed in La Maddalena. The document affirmed that concerns regarding the risks of nuclear contamination were not justified:

> The only peril for the population living in the proximity of a nuclear plant or nuclear ships is represented by the disposal of radioactive waste at sea. For what concerns naval reactors, the radioactive waste consists of liquid or solid material created during the activation of the cooling system. This material is stored within special tanks and is collected in particularly safe inland repositories for ulterior treatment or dispersed and diluted at sea in very high waters.[36]

The report described at length that a network of radiosurveillance stations installed along the Italian coastal lines monitored the levels of radioactivity of the seawater since 1961. The radiometric system had never revealed, during the visits of nuclear powered ships to national ports, any anomalous concentration of radionuclides (especially Strontium 90 and Cesium 137) above the natural levels. Thus, according to the experts of the military agency, the safety of naval nuclear reactors was guaranteed and excluded any hypothesis of contamination.

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[35] Here Medici clearly accuses the opposition of using the problem of nuclear contamination instrumentally. The letter of the Minister of Defense Medici to the mayor of La Maddalena, (October 17th, 1972) is included in the "Verbale di deliberazione del Consiglio Comunale di La Maddalena," n. 38, November 21, 1972, cit. p. 3. *Municipal Archives of La Maddalena.*

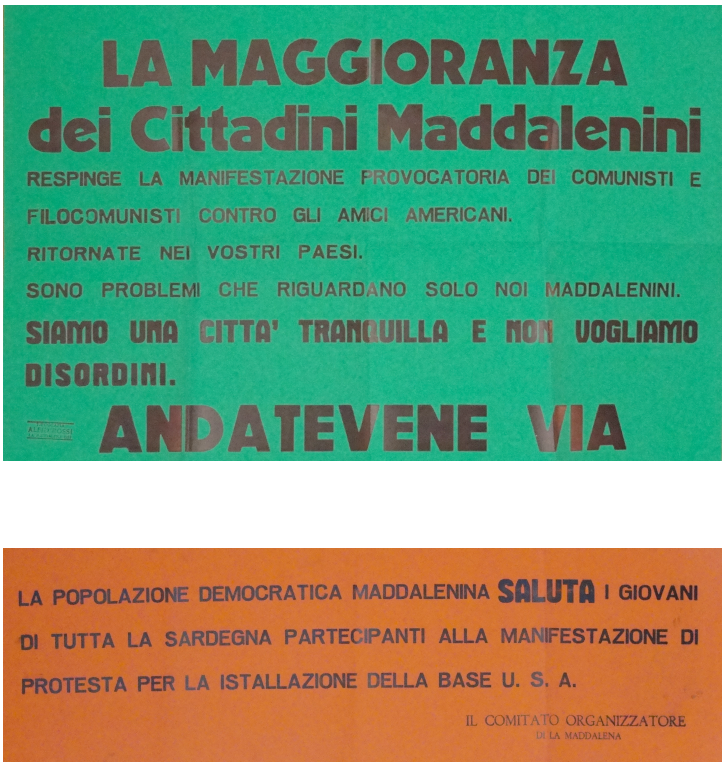
[36] CAMEN's report, illustrated by mayor Deligia during the meeting of the city council, "Verbale di deliberazione del Consiglio Comunale di La Maddalena," n. 38, November 21, 1972, cit. pp. 6-8.

Backed by the reassuring communications of the national government and by the "scientific explanations" of CAMEN—which Giuseppe Deligia read aloud during the November 21 session—the Christian Democrats could easily justify a complete revision of their initial evaluation, and voted a resolution diametrically opposed to the unanimous deliberation of October 19:

> The City Council of La Maddalena, convened for the ordinary session of November 21, 1972, on the basis of the reassuring information received from the government, through the reliable scientific report of CAMEN, which excludes any possibility of contamination; given the substantial acceptance of the government and the Region of the Special Plan for the Development of La Maddalena proposed by the municipal administration […] Declares that the serious concerns expressed a month earlier by this assembly are no more subsistent, […] and condemns the political rally organized by the Communist Party of La Maddalena [two days earlier] against our American allies […].[37]

The opposition protested in vain. The small number of communist and socialist councilors inside the municipal assembly could not impede the resolution approval and previous attempts to mobilize the local residents on the streets were equally unsuccessful. On November 19, 1972, PCI and PSI organized a march of protest through the main squares and streets of La Maddalena, but most of the participants came from outside the archipelago. Journalist Gino Zasso, who reported on the event for *La Nuova Sardegna*, noted that Maddalenini did not participate: "They watched the march from inside their cars or through the windows of the houses, with indifference, as if what was happening did not concern them at all."[38]

[37] Ibidem, cit. p. 24.
[38] "In tremila a La Maddalena per contestare la base U.S.A.: Massiccio intervento delle forze dell'ordine – La battaglia dei manifesti – Indifferenza tra gli isolani," *La Nuova Sardegna*, November 21, 1972.



THE MAJORITY
Of Citizens of La Maddalena
Pushes back against the provocative march of the communists and philo-communists against our American friends.
Go back to your own towns.
These are problems that should concern only the people of La Maddalena.
WE ARE A PEACEFUL COMMUNITY AND DO NOT WANT DISORDERS
GO AWAY

The democratic community of La Maddalena **WELCOMES** the youth of Sardinia who take part to the protest march against the installation of the U.S.A. base.

Figure 2.7. The "battle of the posters" before the protest march organized by the Communist Party of La Maddalena on November 19, 1972. On the upper left side is the poster of the Christian Democrats, at the bottom the poster of the Communist Party.[39]

The only way in which the isolated anti-base front could hope to destabilize the carefully orchestrated narrative of the government and the local administration was to put into question the authority of the technical document from CAMEN (Figure 2.7).

[39] The so-called "battaglia dei manifesti" (battle of the posters) was the way in which Deligia's majority and the socialist and communist opposition tried to mobilize their respective supporters in La Maddalena. Given the control that the Italian Navy exercised on the archipelago, the community had never experienced (apart from the elections of 1948 and the protests after the anti-communist hunts inside the arsenal in 1952) the staging of intense political contrapositions on public squares and through the streets. The Christian Democrats and their allies asked the "peaceful and quiet" population of La Maddalena to stay home and the protesters coming from outside to go back to their towns. On the other side, the local opposition knew that only an "invasion" of protesters from the rest of Sardinia could guarantee the afflux of a critical mass, which symbolically would demonstrate the existence of a consistent support for their anti-base mobilization.

A serious and risky omission

In clear contradiction with the deliberation approved by the city council on October 10 [19], which expressed serious concerns for the possible contamination of water and air, the mayor, the D.C. group [Christian Democrats] and the P.S.D.I. group [Social Democratic Party of Italy], have used questionable and non objective documentation (CAMEN is a military institute) to acquiesce to all sorts of pressures for the purpose of making the Maddalenini swallow the presence of the U.S.A. base for nuclear submarines.

They [mayor and majority in the city council] do not represent the interests of the majority of our citizens, who want instead a civil development within a general plan for the renaissance of Sardinia.

Italian Communist Party
Section of La Maddalena
NO
TO THE
USA BASE

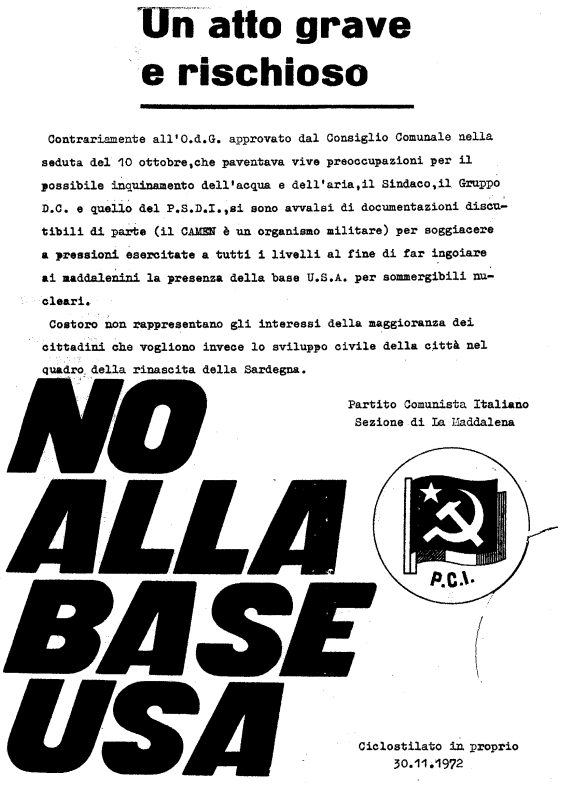


Figure 2.8. Protest against the city council's deliberation of November 21, 1972. Poster produced by the Italian Communist Party, section of La Maddalena. November 30, 1972.[40]

Some help came again from outside. After the report from CAMEN, which "convinced" Deligia and his majority to welcome the Americans unconditionally, another contested safety assessment, this time issued by CNEN, activated a series of political reactions within expert agencies.[41] Instead of closing the controversy over La Maddalena, the government's attempts to silence the opposition using the authority of technical documentation had the effect of shifting the terrain of conflict from international relations to nuclear safety (although the two dimensions remained, obviously, hardly separable).

[40] Salvatore Sanna, *Personal Archive*.
[41] "Polemiche sulla cessione della base alla Maddalena," *L'Unità*, November 28, 1972.

2.3. Italian Experts Speak: The Birth of a Technopolitical Controversy

As stated above, the Italian scientific community did not remain indifferent towards La Maddalena. After the intervention of the Italian Society of Biophysics and Molecular Biology, the Italian Society of Physics (Società Italiana di Fisica, S.I.F.) joined the protest against the U.S. Navy installation. On November 1, 1972—at the end of the Society's annual meeting held in Cagliari—the Italian physicists almost unanimously (only one vote contrary and two abstained) decided to support the document of their colleagues.[42] During the debate, different opinions were put forth on how to formally express the opposition to the government's decision. The general feeling of the assembly was that the problem of La Maddalena presented both technical and political aspects that could hardly be separated. Thus, for some members, like professor Russo: "[…] we should express our opinions not only as experts who adhere to the position other colleagues; we should also reclaim our rights of citizens who have a political conscience. Therefore we should not limit our discussion only to the problem of radioactive contamination."[43] For the proponents of a more combative version of the document, like doctor Eugenio Tabet, the text should make clear that the U.S. installation not only violated existing national and international norms on radioprotection, but also that it had a precise political meaning: "[…] In order to be coherent with the objective reality, the document should also include a critique of the overwhelming presence of military installations in Sardinia."[44] Other members, like professors Salvini and Spillantini, suggested that remaining "politically neutral" could be more effective: "If we limit our observations to the technical aspects [of radioprotection], to which we can speak as physicists, our position could be more influential on public opinion, in the Parliament, and within advisory boards [...] because it will be more

[42] "Il congresso nazionale dei fisici contro la base alla Maddalena," *L'Unità*, November 2, 1972; "I fisici italiani condannano l'aggressione USA nel Vietnam. No alla base americana alla Maddalena," *Avanti!*, November 3, 1972. The document approved by the plenary assembly of the Italian Society of Physics on November 1, 1972 and the transcripts of the debate can be found on the official bulletin of the Society: *Bollettino della Societa` Italiana di Fisica* 97 (11), June 1973: 29-52.

[43] Ibidem, cit. p. 44.

[44] Ibidem, cit. p. 46. Eugenio Tabet was a health physicist working at the Physics Laboratory of the Italian National Health Institute, directed by professor Gloria Campus Venuti. Dr. Tabet would become a member of the team selected by CNEN and ISS to conduct the preliminary radioecological studies instructed by the Minister of Public Health in the summer of 1974. I will explain the role of Dr. Eugenio Tabet and other personnel of the two agencies in the following chapters (see especially Chapter 2).

difficult for our adversaries to dismiss the document as the political intervention of 'a bunch of communists.'"[45]

The proposal to focus on technical arguments prevailed within the assembly and—as I will detail below—it became a strategic choice not only of Italian experts but also of environmentalists and anti-base activists in the following years. The terrain of political confrontation was shifting toward a more technical domain. The leitmotif of the anti-base front from then on was that the military nature of the U.S. Navy base in La Maddalena could not justify the lack of ordinary safety measures routinely implemented—according to national and international laws—for other nuclear installations. Therefore, the government could not consider La Maddalena a safe site until Italian nuclear regulatory agencies completed scrupulous radioecological studies in the archipelago, installed a system of radiosurveillance, and prepared an emergency plan. Both health physicists and supporters of the anti-base front strongly criticized CAMEN's report for being classified as confidential and for the informal procedures through which the government requested it: given the circumstances of the U.S. Navy installation in La Maddalena, the fact that the military advisory body of the ministry of defense produced the safety assessment for the base looked like an enormous conflict of interest. But apparently CAMEN was not the only expert agency to issue a (preliminary) safety assessment. On November 15, 1972 *Corriere della Sera* published some excerpts "from two studies that the government requested independently from both CAMEN and CNEN." The title of the article, probably inspired by interested governmental sources, was assertively reassuring: "'No risks of radiation from the submarines,' experts announce."[46] The evaluations of the study attributed to CNEN—substantially overlapping with CAMEN's—provoked a political earthquake inside the civilian agency.

During a political rally co-organized on November 22 by PCI, PSIUP (Italian Socialist Party for the Unity of the Proletariat) and the leftist union of nuclear workers SANN-CGIL, communist national deputy Giovanni Berlinguer attacked the position of the Italian nuclear agency, who "in contrast with its regulatory mission, instead of evaluating the problem of La Maddalena in a neutral way offered [the government] a technical cover-up to the entire

[45] Ibidem, cit. p. 44.
[46] "'Nessun pericolo di radiazioni dai sommergibili' dicono gli esperti," *Corriere della Sera*, November 15, 1972; "Nessun pericolo di radiazioni dai sottomarini atomici a La Maddalena," *La Nuova Sardegna*, November 23, 1972.

operation."[47] To make things even more confusing was the fact that the cited CNEN's document apparently did not have an author. In the following days the "mystery" of the phantom CNEN report turned into an open political conflict inside the agency. A group of CNEN technicians and researchers distanced themselves from the safety assessment attributed to their institute: "Neither the personnel of sanitary protection and nuclear safety divisions [of CNEN], responsible for the technical evaluation of the authorization procedures for nuclear plants, nor the technical commission have been consulted about or seen any data concerning the base of La Maddalena. Therefore, we are wondering how a safety report could be legitimately produced by this agency."[48] The experts of the two divisions sent a formal request of clarification to the president of CNEN, professor Ezio Clementel, and the executive committee of the agency.[49] In the meantime, the personnel of CNEN's laboratories adhering to the Italian Communist Party published a 7-page document explaining why, according to them, the base of La Maddalena should be considered a "nuclear installation," which required specific radiosurveillance and safety controls similarly to in land nuclear plants.[50]

The insistence of expert activists on specific technopolitical arguments for the recognition of La Maddalena as a nuclear site oriented the debate towards a discussion of the safety of nuclear submarines: were nuclear submarines as nuclear as nuclear plants? How did they work? What if an accident happened?[51] Experts and non-experts opposed to the U.S. Navy

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[47] "Per La Maddalena manifestazione al centro nucleare," *L'Unità*, November 23, 1972.

[48] "CNEN: non c'è 'parere favorevole' per la base USA a La Maddalena," *L'Unità*, November 24, 1972; "Irresponsabile si del CNEN per la base a La Maddalena," *Avanti!*, November 24, 1972; "Il governo prepara un altro falso sulla Maddalena," *Paese Sera*, November 24, 1972; "Scandalo sul 'falso parere favorevole' del CNEN per la base alla Maddalena," *L'Unità*, November 25, 1972; "Il ruolo del CNEN deve essere chiarito," *Avanti!*, November 30, 1972.

[49] The assembly of the personnel of the nuclear safety and the sanitary protection divisions of CNEN unanimously undersigned a letter to president Ezio Clementel and the executive committee of the agency asking for clarifications about the "reassuring assessment that various newspapers attributed to CNEN." "The personnel of the two divisions, and in particular technicians and researchers […] declare to be completely extraneous to this episode [the production of the contested document], and exclude their responsibility about any assessment allegedly issued by this agency." *Mozione al Presidente del CNEN ed alla Giunta Esecutiva*, Rome, November 20 1972. Carlo Papucci, *Personal Archive*.

[50] Partito Comunista Italiano, Cellula CNEN della Casaccia, "La base nucleare U.S.A.alla Maddalena: problemi politici e di sicurezza," Roma, November 21, 1972. Carlo Papucci, *Personal Archive.*

[51] Here I use the adjective *technopolitical* to point out the use and deployment of technical arguments to justify and reach political goals. In her study on the French nuclear program Gabrielle Hecht defines *technopolitics* as "the strategic practice of designing or using technology to constitute, embody, or enact political goals." See Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after WWII*, (The MIT Press, 1998), cit. p. 15. For more examples on the politics of technological designs see Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High-Technology*, (University of Chicago Press, 1986), especially Chapter 2, pp. 19-39; For similar uses of the concept of technopolitics see also Rebecca Slayton, *Arguments that Count: Physics,*

installation of La Maddalena, or simply advocating the adoption of congruent safety measures, represented La Maddalena as a nuclear site. The government instead continued to either deny La Maddalena's nuclear status or to banalize nuclear technology (in particular nuclear submarines) as ordinary and completely safe and therefore not in need of specific safety measures. On December 9, 1972 mayor Deligia, assisted by Captain Antonio Cocco, commander of the Italian naval base of La Maddalena, and Colonel Ameli, from the Italian Navy Engineering Department, repeated to a selected audience of journalists that the Maddalenini had nothing to fear from the nuclear submarines, as demonstrated by the technical studies of CAMEN and CNEN. [52] The polemic continued for another month, until it became clear that the government extrapolated only certain passages of the safety assessment by CNEN and left less reassuring statements aside, such as those confirming the lack of information about the characteristics of the submarine reactors.[53] The mobilization of CNEN's personnel against the "personal initiative" of president Ezio Clementel did not have concrete repercussions (a request to discuss the episode of the 'false report' in the executive committee was denied) but the image of the agency certainly did not benefit from the scandal.[54] The impression that CNEN was not an impartial expert institution and that the Italian scientific community was not independent from politics began to spread.

2.4. Amendola's Campaign

In 1973, La Maddalena did not attract the attention of national mass media with the intensity of the previous year, and local newspapers focused on other aspects of the American presence in the archipelago. This changed dramatically again in March 1974.

Computing, and Missile Defense, 1949-2012, (The MIT Press, 2013) and Sonja Schmid, *Producing Power: The Pre-Chernobyl History of the Soviet Nuclear Industry*, (The MIT Press, 2015).

[52] After the press conference conservative newspapers guaranteed an abundant media coverage in favor of the government's positions: "Si sgonfia la speculazione sulla base USA alla Maddalena," *Il Tempo*, December 9, 1972; "Nessun pericolo di radiazioni per la base Usa della Maddalena," *Il Giornale D'Italia*, December 10, 1972; "Per La Maddalena (assicurano gli esperti) nessun pericolo," *Il Giorno*, December 10, 1972; "La Maddalena: nessun pericolo, ma grossi problemi di sviluppo," *Il Globo*, December 10, 1972; "È escluso che provochi Danni la base navale alla Maddalena," *Gazzetta del Popolo*, December 10, 1972; "La Maddalena: nessuna contaminazione," *Avvenire*, December 10, 1972.

[53] "Un rapporto tecnico del CNEN ammette: 'Non sappiamo nulla sulle navi nucleari USA'," *L'Unità*, December 10, 1972; "Maddalena: nuovi tentativi del governo di servirsi di un falso 'si' del CNEN," *L'Unità*, December 10, 1972; "Forte imbarazzo del governo per la base della Maddalena," *Avanti!*, December 10, 1972; "La Maddalena: reali i rischi di contaminazione," *L'Unità*, December 17, 1972.

[54] "Maddalena: il Sindacato CNEN smentisce il Presidente," *Paese Sera*, December 24, 1972; "Il parere del CNEN fu atto personale del presidente," *L'Unità*, December 24, 1972.

The judge Gianfranco Amendola was the protagonist of a new media campaign on the safety of the U.S. Navy installation. Founder of the environmentalist movement *Gruppo Ambiente* (Environment Group), Amendola was an early advocate of ecological rights in Italy and a promoter of legislative proposals to regulate and reduce the impact of industrial pollution.[55] His involvement with La Maddalena, at least publicly, started on March 22, 1974 with an op-ed in *Il Messaggero* titled "Basi infette" (Infected Bases).[56] Amendola's article focused on a recent scandal concerning U.S. Navy nuclear submarines stationed in Japan. Two months earlier, during a parliamentary audit of the Japanese Diet, Secretary General of Japan Communist Party, Tetsuzo Fuwa, denounced that the National Institute of Analytical Chemistry forged radiometric data about the ports where the U.S. Navy stationed its nuclear powered fleet.[57] After conducting an internal investigation, with great embarrassment and concern, the Japanese government admitted to the irregularities and made other institutions responsible for the radiosurveillance program. In the meantime, they asked the U.S. Navy to suspend the visits of nuclear powered ships until a new radiometric system was put into work.

By illustrating the Japanese scandal Amendola wanted to focus once again the attention of the Italian public opinion on the negligence of the government: "Is not La Maddalena exactly in the same situation of Japanese ports that host U.S. nuclear submarines?" If Japan asked the U.S. Navy to take its submarines away because potentially not safe—insisted the judge—what was Italy doing to guarantee the safety of its people in Sardinia? The rhetorical question introduced the readers to a brief review of the situation in La Maddalena. Some time after the arrival of the U.S. Navy, CAMEN and CNEN started to analyze samples of seawater, algae, sediments, and mollusks from the archipelago, but the measurements happened every 6 months and were not homogenous. CAMEN's data were not accessible because secreted, whereas CNEN's monitoring campaigns were still fragmentary. In fact, CNEN radioecologists were

[55] Gianfranco Amendola held the office of *pretore* (a magistrate competent for the ordinary administration of justice on various matters—both in civilian and penal causes) in Rome. During the 1980s he also started a political career within the Italian Greens and was elected at the European Parliament for one legislature (1989-1994). He published several books on environmental law. His first famous publication is *In nome del popolo inquinato* (In the Name of the Polluted People), Franco Angeli Editore, 1990. After his political experience he went back to his career of judge. Gianfranco Amendola is currently the *Procuratore Capo della Repubblica* (corresponding to the role of Chief Public Prosecutor) at the tribunal of Civitavecchia (near Rome), and continues to participate to conferences and public debates on ecological legislation and environmental protection.

[56] "Basi infette," *Il Messaggero*, March 22, 1974.

[57] "Waste Data on N-subs found false," *Mainichi Daily News*, January 30, 1974; "Gov't Admits False N-sub Waste Data," *Mainichi Daily News*, February 6, 1974; "On Science and Scientists," *Mainichi Daily News*, February 7, 1974; "Who'll Check on N-subs Waste," *Mainichi Daily News*, February 7, 1974.

taking random samples around the base but could not access the area where the submarines were stationed. Results of the analyses were not directly comparable because sampling and radiometric procedures changed: at times, CNEN experts measured the concentration of radioactive elements in the algae, other times in mollusks and seawater. Also, the results assumed different meanings according to whether the samples examined were fresh or exsiccated. Nothing was known yet about the water currents surrounding the archipelago and other atmospheric variables, which may have affected the dispersion of the radionuclides in the environment. Still unknown were the characteristics of the reactors and their discharge formula. "In this situation—asked Amendola—how can we be sure that the residents of La Maddalena and north Sardinia do not live in peril?"

Finally, the judge activist announced that the preliminary data informally communicated by CNEN—but not yet published—showed concentrations of Cobalt 60 and Manganese 54 (typical reactor activation products) well below the safety threshold established by international sanitary institutions. Citing Alvin Weinberg's famous article "Science and Transience," Amendola suggested that: "While this is reassuring at the moment, we cannot have any certainty about processes of accumulation which may cause long-term genetic effects on future generations." He argued that scientific authorities such as Alvin Weinberg had rejected the validity of the threshold model admitting the impossibility, even for science, to test hypotheses about the long-term effects of low-radiation dose exposures."[58] For this reason, continued the article, those who conceded the use of La Maddalena to the U.S. Navy were exposing local residents to risks that for various reasons could not be assessed.

"Basi infette" was the first of a series of op-eds intended to interrupt the silence of Italian public authorities and break the inertial state of the haphazard radiosurveillance program initially implemented in La Maddalena. Almost three weeks later, Amendola published another article

[58] The article of Alvin M. Weinberg cited by Gianfranco Amendola is "Science and Trans-science," *Minerva* 10 (2), April 1972: 209-222. This is the quote where Amendola "enrolls" Weinberg to make his argument on La Maddalena more compelling: "Let's take as reliable the data collected so far in La Maddalena, which say that the levels of radioactivity are well under the limits for human beings. One of the most important nuclear experts of the world, the American Alvin M. Weinberg, former director of the grandiose Oak Ridge nuclear laboratories where the first atomic bomb has been produced, in an article published in 1972 with the suggestive title 'science and trans-science,' affirms that it is impossible to determine with certainty the long-term genetic effects of radioactive exposure even of the lowest levels." Gianfranco Amendola, "Basi Infette", *Il Messaggero,* March 22nd, 1974, p. 3. For a short history of radiation protection regulations and debates see Samuel J. Walker, *Permissible Dose: A History of Radiation Protection in the Twentieth Century*, (University of California Press, 2000).

with an equally disturbing title: "Alarm! The radioactive wave."[59] Thanks to the collaboration of CNEN's laboratories, the leader of Gruppo Ambiente acquired the official data of three radiometric campaigns that had been conducted until then in the archipelago. According to the report, the concentration of Manganese 54 and Cobalt 60, although still very low, increased over time. For Amendola this evidence suggested that the presence of nuclear submarines provoked phenomena of accumulation, which could threaten the health of local residents.

Not surprisingly, the alarming campaign mobilized by the Roman judge provoked concerned reactions in La Maddalena, in Rome, and also in Washington. Among the frequent updates on the evolving political scenario of Italy, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was informed of the submarine base of La Maddalena. The U.S. Ambassador in Rome, John Volpe, monitored the anti-base campaign of the left, including the "alarmist" articles by Gianfranco Amendola, suggesting strategies for limiting their impact on Italian public opinion.[60] In the meantime Italian newspapers propagated the image of La Maddalena as a contaminated place and Communist and Socialist representatives in parliament submitted numerous requests of clarification to the government.[61]

The echo of Amendola's campaign certainly reached the archipelago, where the isolated voices of the anti-base front were ready to reignite the debate.[62] On April 13, 1974 the "Antonio Gramsci" section of the Communist Party of La Maddalena circulated hundreds of fliers with attached Amendola's later article. The Communist group asked the mayor to call an immediate meeting of the assembly to discuss the worrisome findings of CNEN and to invite Deligia's administration to reconsider its position towards the U.S. Navy presence. A week later the city council met in an atmosphere of consternation. The Christian Democrat majority felt for the first time all the weight of the political responsibility for its decision to support the American

[59] "Alarm! The Radioactive Wave," *Il Messaggero,* April 11, 1974.
[60] For example, a confidential cable sent on April 11, the day in which *Il Messaggero* published Amendola's article "L'Onda radioattiva," Volpe informed Kissinger that the president of CNEN was disappointed about the leaking of information about the radiometric report in preparation and that the agency decided to not comment on national media. *Cable U.S. Embassy in Rome to Secretary of State*, ID: *1974ROME05156_b*, Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review June 30, 2005.
[61] "Interrogazione socialista sulla Maddalena inquinata," *Il Messaggero*, April 12, 1974; "Radioattività alla Maddalena," *Paese Sera*, April 12, 1974; "Escluso alla Maddalena l'inquinamento atomico," *Il Tempo*, April 12, 1974; "Maddalena: sale la radioattività provocata dai sommergibili USA," *L'Unità*, April 12, 1974; "Alla Maddalena aumenta la radioattività," *Avanti!*, April 19, 1974; "Maddalena: radioattività in aumento," *Rinascita*, April 19, 1974; Giorgio Tecce, "Una farsa sotto il mare," *L'Espresso*, April 28, 1974.
[62] "Il Comune chiede a Roma accertamenti," *La Nuova Sardegna*, April 9, 1974; "L'inquinamento nucleare sotto i limiti di sicurezza," *La Nuova Sardegna*, April 13, 1974.

presence, but decided once again to take a diplomatic position. The final deliberation asked the Ministry of Health "to verify the reliability of the last data [CNEN's preliminary report divulged by Amendola] and to assess with more frequency the ecological situation of La Maddalena with absolute and unequivocal certainty." It also asked the government "to make available and public all the data produced so far by CAMEN and CNEN. If the data will indicate the existence of either an immediate or potential danger for local residents, warned the statement, this administration will ask the government to revoke its permission for the installation of the U.S. base."[63] Some councilors of the Social Democratic Party and one from the Republican Party (usually supporting Deligia) decided to abstain during the vote. The opposition, who hoped to reach a unanimous motion for the immediate removal of the base, voted against the DC document. For the Communist and Socialist groups Deligia's position was too moderate and threatened to delay the only possible solution to the problem: "getting the U.S. base out of the archipelago in light of the already alarming evidence provided by CNEN's data."[64]

News about the increased concentration of Cobalt and Manganese near the submarine base pushed other sectors of the local community to voice their opposition to the American presence. Even the organizations of the Christian Democrats Youth of La Maddalena, Palau, and Arzachena (a little town on the north-western coast of Sardinia) wrote an official statement to ask the immediate disestablishment of the U.S. base and expressed their disappointment for the deliberation approved by Deligia's majority.[65] More critical was the document by the students of the Istituto Tecnico Nautico (Nautical Institute) of La Maddalena. They requested the closure of the base and asked Deligia to resign because "responsible for the delays with which the local administration—shamefully subservient to the political positions of the central government—decided to deal with the problem."[66]

The polarization of the debate became evident through the visceral reactions of the opposite factions. A flier circulated by the DC intimated "BASTA!" (STOP!), and invited the Maddalenini to react against the "prejudiced battle of the false patriots [PCI and PSI]... The so-called paladins of freedom, who predict serious calamities for our Island, are only provocateurs

[63] "Verbale di Deliberazione del Consiglio Comunale di La Maddalena n.4 del 20.4.1974," *Municipal Archive of La Maddalena*, cit. pp. 3-4.
[64] Ibidem, cit. p. 4.
[65] "Ciclostile proprio - Movimento Giovanile D.C. - Via R. Margherita - La Maddalena - May 3, 1974," Salvatore Sanna, *Private Archive.*
[66] "Mozione conclusiva - Studenti Istituto Tecnico Nautico 'D. Millelire'," May 6, 1974.

and disruptors of our moral equilibrium."[67] The text also accused some members of the majority, who abstained during the vote of April 20, to act in the shadow and only for personal political gains. In early May the national magazine *L'Europeo* captured the state of collective anxiety pervading the archipelago with a long reportage titled "Here is La Maddalena. Our correspondents from the radioactive island."[68] The article presented a series of interviews of local opponents to the U.S. base and mayor Deligia. Both admitted their disappointment for the way national institutions disregarded the problems of the community: "I know everybody calls me 'the mayor of the Americans,' even members of my party in Cagliari, and I reply, not so ironically, that it is true. I am the mayor of the Americans because the Italians abandoned me."[69] U.S. officials perceived that Deligia was in a difficult position. He started to put his veto on U.S. Navy requests with more frequency. According to Ambassador John Volpe, local political developments "threatened to affect seriously U.S. Navy's activities in [the] town of La Maddalena," and suggested addressing directly the Italian minister of defense (now Giulio Andreotti) to take care of the situation.[70]

Meanwhile in Rome something seemed to move, as Gianfranco Amendola confirmed in two subsequent editorials.[71] Under pressure from environmentalist groups and the alarming titles featured in local and national newspapers, the Sardinian regional institutions and the Ministry of Health asked their expert agencies to draft the guidelines for a series of radioecological campaigns around the U.S. Navy base. In late April a committee of experts from ISS and CNEN

[67] Some members of the local D.C. commissioned the anonymous flier. The document is not signed and does not have any political symbol on it. Salvatore Sanna, *Personal Archive*.
[68] "Ecco La Maddalena. I nostril inviati nell'isola radioattiva," *L'Europeo*, May 2, 1974.
[69] Ibidem, cit. p. 1.
[70] In a confidential cable to the office of the U.S. Secretary of State, Ambassador John Volpe admitted that: "Local political developments over past several days have threatened to affect seriously US Navy's activities in town of La Maddalena. Post-divorce referendum situation and Sardinian regional elections scheduled for June 16, coupled with nuclear pollution allegations, have caused mayor and other local officials to feel that new measures must be adopted which would insure support for local administration and majority party (Christian Democratic) [sic!]... While we believe that the most pressing immediate problem will be resolved, there remains the long term one of maintaining decent relations with the mayor. In this connection we have proposed to foreign office that Emboff [embassy office] and appropriate GOI [government of Italy] official, as well as the US Navy representative, visit La Maddalena in the near future to sit down with the mayor and review the entire situation with him. If this meeting is held, we suspect the mayor will make certain requests of an economic nature with which we may or may not be able to comply. We will keep you informed of subsequent developments." *Cable U.S. Embassy in Rome to Secretary of State*, May 30, 1974 - ID: 1974ROME07431_b, Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review June 30, 2005.
[71] "La Maddalena radioattiva: Qualcosa si muove," *Il Messaggero*, April 14, 1974; "L'esempio giapponese," *Il Messaggero*, May 3, 1974.

arrived in La Maddalena for a preliminary survey of the site.[72] Six weeks later the Minister of Health, the Christian Democrat Vittorino Colombo, sent a confidential note to CNEN and ISS asking them to collaborate on the implementation of "a program for environmental analyses" similar to those that Italian regulatory agencies prescribed for the authorization of civilian nuclear plants.[73] In a few pages the document illustrated the research design that a committee of experts from ISS and CNEN elaborated on the basis of national and international radioprotection protocols.[74] These consisted of two complementary activities. The first one concerned the study of the general ecological, meteorological, and environmental characteristics of La Maddalena, which normally should have been conducted before the installation of the base to assess the so-called environmental receptivity of the site. The second part of the program focused on the implementation of a system of radioecological surveillance for the evaluation of the long-term impact of the U.S. Navy presence in the Archipelago. This long-term study would investigate phenomena of accumulation in marine bio-indicators across time and would be conducted through separate biannual and monthly sampling activities and radiometric analyses. In addition, the radioprotection program would be completed through the installation of a network of continuous monitoring stations. The latter would detect in real time any alteration of the levels of radioactivity following hypothetical accidents and allow specialized personnel to launch the alarm for the activation of an emergency plan.[75]

After two years of heated debates and the deployment of conflicting technopolitical arguments, the initiative of the Ministry of Health was moving towards the direction that Amendola and its allies auspicated. The prescription of a complete radioecological program was an evident recognition of La Maddalena as a nuclear site: like for other nuclear installations, radioprotection protocols would be applied around the U.S. base. But for those who, instrumentally or sincerely, manifested their satisfaction for the apparent conclusion of the dispute, others, including Amendola, warned that this was only a starting point: "The initiative of

[72] "Arriva la commissione e parte la 'Gilmore'," *La Nuova Sardegna*, April 26, 1974.
[73] "Tutela sanitaria della popolazione contro i pericoli derivanti dalle radiazioni ionizzanti e controllo sulla radioattivita` ambientale dell'isola de 'La Maddalena,' Ministry of Health, Doc. 400.5 / A 5/1/75, June 10, 1974. *Municipal Archive of La Maddalena*. Various newspapers illustrated the program of studies: "Istruttoria della Sanità alla Maddalena," *Avanti!*, June 13, 1974; "I fisici chiedono indagini senza veli per La Maddalena," *L'Unità*, June 15, 1974; "Maddalena: indagine sulla base nucleare," *Il Messaggero*, June 16, 1974.
[74] *Indagine ambientale nell'intorno della base nucleare navale situate nell'isola de La Maddalena*, Report of the ISS and CNEN expert committee for the implementation of a radioecological study of La Maddalena, unknown date. *Municipal Archive of La Maddalena*.
[75] Ibidem.

ISS and CNEN, with two years of delay, demonstrates that in La Maddalena the most elementary precautions have not been taken. Until these measures will are fully implemented—and it will take time to do so—it is difficult to say that the population is safe."[76]

Was Amendola just having a premonition of what would have happened in the following years? Or did his warning come from a profound knowledge and awareness of the complexity of the Italian bureaucratic system and of the limits imposed by Cold War military secrecy that, despite the official reassurances of the Ministry of Health, would remain largely unresolved?

2.5. Conclusion

In the context of the archipelago's historic acquiescence of the military presence and its positive economic benefits, debates over the U.S. nuclear installation were only marginally inspired by anti-American or anti-military sentiments. Instead debates focused on the risks related to the presence of the nuclear submarines and over the implementation of a plan for public safety. Because the local opposition was exiguous, exogenous groups usually took the lead of the anti-base struggle. Between 1972 and 1974 the variegated anti-base front, composed by pacifists, radioecologists and radioprotectionists, anti-nuclearists, the Italian Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and environmental movements, contested the absence of radioprotection measures to assure the safety of the local population. The Italian government and the U.S. Navy responded with "technical" arguments that presented the submarine base and the nuclear submarines as totally safe and manageable without any particular measure. On the other hand, important sectors of the Italian scientific community, including expert radioprotectionists and radioecologists inside regulatory agencies, insisted that the U.S. Navy base should be treated as civilian nuclear plants, for which the Italian legislation established precise safety measures. Nuclear submarines—I argued—are not like an inland nuclear plant, with a huge reactor building that makes visible and concrete the threat of accidents and nuclear contamination. Because of their mobility and partial visibility, they were more difficult to identify as nuclear objects. Therefore, until 1974 the U.S. Navy base's nuclear status remained a point of contention between the supporters of the U.S. Navy presence and its opponents, who used different registers of nuclearity.

[76] "Un punto di partenza," *Il Messaggero*, June 23, 1974.

At the local level, at least immediately after the installation of the U.S. Navy, images of nuclear technology and understandings of the risks associated with the presence of nuclear submarines were mediated by political allegiances and the observation of U.S. personnel behavior, which shaped assumptions about the safety of the base. After Gianfranco Amendola, a Roman judge and environmental activist, led a massive mediatic campaign to raise awareness about the threat of the nuclear submarines, the Italian Ministry of Health finally commissioned a series of radioecological surveys and installed an environmental monitoring system managed by expert agencies and local authorities. But this was only the first step to make radiological risk in La Maddalena visible.