

THE ITALIAN NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY EXPENSES

1971: First situation of resistance to the military expenses in Italy

In Italy the tax resistance against the military expenses started in 1971 when the clerk Manrico Mansueti in Sarzana (La Spezia) resisted in support to the conscientious objectors to the military services restricted in jail.

1972/1981: With the conscientious objection to the military service

On 1972 the act n.° 772 was approved. It allowed and controlled the conscientious objection to the military service. After Mr. Mansueti's action there were few objections on the financial field against the military expenses, acted by people as individuals as Rocco Campanella from Monreale (Palermo) in 1979 and Luciano Benini in 1980.

1981: The Campaign for Conscientious Objection to the Military Expenses (OSM) is born. After these former experiences of objection and of protest against the displacement of Cruise missiles in Comiso, in some movements for peace born the idea to organize a national campaign for objection to the military expenses. It definitely born in 1981 during the spring led by M.I.R. (Mov.Intern.per la Riconciliazione, Italian branch of IFOR), M.N.(Mov.Nonviolento, Italian branch of International War Resisters) and L.D.U. (Lega Disarmo Unilaterale, League for Unilateral Desarmament). The aims were the reduction of the military expenses and the financial option that means the chance to avoid to enforce the budget for weapons devoting the collected amount to projects for peace and Nonviolence. There were attachments and actions for the Osm objectors defense.

1982/1990: The OSM Campaign enlarge. The few objectors since 1981 increased till 1990 reaching the number 4800. In this period other organizations joined the campaign: in 1982 Lega degli Obiettori di Coscienza (LOC) joined the promoters movement and in 1986 Pax Christi. Then, in 1990, l'Associazione per la Pace and Servizio Civile Internazionale. The Campaign created a Fund for Peace which the fund cut off the budget for defense could be collected. Other legal goals were got. The Corte Costituzionale (National Court) delivered many judgements (n° 164 in 1985, n° 113 in 1986 and mostly the n° 450 in 1989) which stated that the defense of the Country is a duty: it may be made by services which must be fair, either using arms or not. The Osm enforced the difference between their resistance action and the evasion.

In that period, in the international ground there is a radical change in the world policy field. With the Berlin wall fall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union the "cold war" ends.

1991: Gulf war: Italy enters in war

With the Gulf war, in Italy there was a strong emotional reaction that pushed many Italian citizens who refused war to several and shared protests. Italy hasn't been sharing directly a war since IInd World War! The OSM Campaign got a meaningful increase in adhesions. In 1991 almost 10000 people supported the objection to military expenses.

1992/1994: The Osm Campaign and international wars. In 1992 the International and civil war in Yugoslavia began. The facts that follow it put in evidence how even in Europe, war returned to be a means of policy of massacre for civil population.

There were demonstrations for peace even in conflict areas, as that one for Sarajevo (1992) and Mir Sada (1993). In the meantime, the Camera dei Deputati (on 25/7/91) and the Senato (on 17/1/92) approved the reform of the act n.° 772/72 on the conscientious objection to the military service.

A reform strongly wanted by movements as LOC and OSM Campaign, because it increased the chances to realize the conscientious objection and mentioned, for the first time in a law, the idea of Nonviolent Popular Defense (DPN).

Unfortunately the reform was stopped by President Cossiga. The OSM Campaign went on to on the battle to get their aims and after the decrease of the adhesions turned their efforts to obtain the official state for DPN and engaged on a level of enterprises of base, supporting researches on DPN, seminars and stages for training nonviolence, the opening of a peace embassy in Pristina, Kosovo (1994!) aiming to prevent the breakout of hostilities between the parties and many other initiatives.

1995/1997: Towards the OSM-DPN Campaign

The progress to institutional recognition led the Campaign to be engaged not only against military expenses but even to a unarmed defense. On the institutional level other steps were passed: the resolution of Camera dei Deputati (19/12/95), which engaged the government to deliver acts to allow the young objectors to join humanitarian missions abroad held by organizations legally connected or by non governmental organizations (called white helmets), and the Senato statement (25/1/96) which involved government to devote a budget of 10 billions of liras to allow and support the interventions by civil peace corps (in former-Yugoslavia) with purpose of peace building. Very meanful openings by State, in the mean time engaged to enforced the New model of defense: creation of a professional army and strong increase of military expense.

1998/2002: Osm between institutional opening and war

On the institutional level another step was passed on 1998 with the act n° 230, which support the participation of conscientious objectors to humanitarian missions out the national land and states the duty to start experience on nonviolent popular defense and popular diplomacy fields.

On 1999, two movements (MIR e MN) abandoned the Campaign. On the same 1999 even Servizio Civile Internazionale cut his adhesion off the promoters. It didn't ever give a true contribution to the Campaign. On those years two movements joined the Campaign: Beati i Costruttori di Pace (1998) and Associazione Papa Giovanni XXIII (1999), both engaged in the development of peace missions even in conflict areas.

The Campaign selects the support to project in action (held by GAVCI, Berretti Bianchi, and others ...). In this direction it turns their efforts to the creation of Rete Caschi Bianchi (White Helmets network, a national network held by organization connected by an agreement for civil services and associations for peace allo aiming to build a civil peace corp composed by objectors) and supporting the creation of Berretti Bianchi who are born on the idea to realize a civil peace corp composed by popular movement and community.

On 2001 at last with n.° 64 Act it has been created the Servizio Civile Nazionale (National Civil Service). In this act, on item 11, there is stated the chance, for the citizens, to support il Fondo Nazionale per il Servizio Civile expressing the kind of intervention selected to be supported. The step between this chance to the authorization to cut the payed amount off the taxes in the income tax return towards the true financial option might be shorter. On 2001 we see the globalization crash and propagation of international terror and the the preventional wars for the control of resources.

The Campaign tries to enforce the chances offered by institutional spaces and to joined them with protests against the increase of military expenses and war. On november 2002, it holds in Roma a protest for a financial act for peace, for the creation of stage for training for peace civili corps and the reduction of military expenses.

2003/2004: Osm engagement DPN between war and terror

The Campaign tries to open spaces in the institutions. At last the Committee for the study of alternatives to armed defense has been created. Onl December 2003 a dicembre it holds in Roma the II protest for a financial act for peace, for the creation of stage for training for peace civilicorps and the reduction of military expenses.

Now the Campaign is trying to turn the efforts to the following aims:

- the achievement of an act which states the financial option. An act which allows to the citizens to decide to give the part of amount to the unarmed defense or not. The Campaign met some members of Senato arrange an agreement about the chance to propose the discussion of a draft of act on the matter. This draft of act will be agreed by the Parliament members and of an equipe of members of the Coordination Committee of the Campaign,
- the creation of a Ministry for Peace where might join some matters as: the international cooperation, the creation and support of civil peace corps and about what is included in the civil intervention in struggle areas, the management of the civil service and other similar matters,
- the nomination of the members of the Committee for unarmed defense and the support to the project of the creation of a civil peace corp to emply in Palestine and Israel,
- the support to a national campaign for the nuclear desarmament, starting with the exit from the italian nuclear-sharing in NATO and the deliver of nuclear bombs to the US government,
- the creation of an observatory on the nonviolent popular defense in Italy in order to support and enforce the experience of small and local organizations by propagating the knowledge and support their connections.