
Interview: Bartolomeo Ciccardini, Italian Undersecretary of Defense

'Opposition to beam weapons comes from the lack of military culture'

The Italian Undersecretary of Defense, Hon. Bartolomeo Ciccardini, granted the following interview to Paolo Vitali and Giuseppe Filippini of Executive Intelligence Review in Rome on Sept. 24. In it the defense official concurs with recent statements by high-ranking Italian military officers, including Gen. Gianfranco Farotti, who described beam weapons as "the basis for arriving at . . . universal peace" in an eight-page article in the Armed Forces journal, Rivista Militare. Farotti is head of procurement for the Italian Armed Forces. In addition, Gen. Giulio Macri (Ret.), former candidate for the Italian Parliament and one of Italy's top experts in advanced-technology weaponry, praised President Reagan's call for development of beam weapons in the September issue of the widely circulated Italian weekly, Gente. Macri was interviewed on the same theme in EIR last June.

EIR: How do you assess the projected new antimissile defensive system proposed by President Reagan last March 23?

Ciccardini: I am not a technician or scientist; I speak as a politician. I prefer the equilibrium of the shield to that of the lance; it is a defensive equilibrium, which is safer and can appeal to good faith. It is not a constant race like that of missiles against missiles.

I therefore advocate a political decision which would accentuate replacing the nuclear deterrent with systems that guarantee defense.

Is a laser shield perfect? It is still difficult to say, but every step in this direction is right. I find ridiculous the attempt to ridicule the American President's proposal by calling it science fiction or "star wars."

EIR: There is a debate in the United States initiated by Democratic Party spokesman Lyndon LaRouche, on the need for a crash program to build these defensive systems which would produce a fundamental impact on the world civilian economy. This position has been recently taken up again in

Italy by Generals Macri and Farotti. What is your view?

Ciccardini: I speak for a certain tendency. I am convinced that defense represents an important lever for technological advancement which can be re-utilized in civilian life. I will give an example. Today in Italy we would not have an aeronautics industry with very advanced aircraft construction, nor specialized skills, nor even a national airline, had there not been previous technological development and research carried out by the air force.

We too must take part in these new technological developments. To give another example, I would like to recall that on the international level we contributed significant parts for the Tornado. We should not only be happy therefore with technological developments and the "spinoffs" into the economy, as has taken place through the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); it is also important to reshape our research programs to participate with our specialized capabilities in similar great projects undertaken together with friendly countries.

We can do good things in Italy. To accept the new strategic defense policy means also spending money in order to share later in the results.

EIR: President Reagan and Defense Secretary Weinberger since last March have offered the Soviet Union the possibility of joint development of these new defense systems. Hence the bad faith of Soviet attacks on the new American strategy is evident. How should one evaluate this attitude?

Ciccardini: The superiority, the defensive guarantee of the shield compared to the lance lies precisely in this, that to prove one's own good faith, one of the sides can offer the shield to the other: "Let's make ourselves equal."

This can contribute to lowering the psychological resistance of the adversary, something which with missiles is impossible. All the sarcasm, in our country and elsewhere, about "star wars," as if this led to an increase in the danger

of war, is due to a lack of military culture which afflicts the political and intellectual world.

These new defensive systems represent real progress in relation to the present extremely dangerous strategic situation. They represent a change in mentality. We must favor the defensive attitude rather than the policy of deterrence.

Once the deterrent is used it is finished—once the deterrent is fired, it is no longer a deterrent. It is strange how persons who ought to have been very happy about this new defensive possibility have instead described President Reagan as a cowboy in a science fiction film.

EIR: What is being done in Italy in this direction?

Ciccardini: There is also theoretical work in Italy, but no decisive programs yet. There is a debate in our country on the validity of possible defenses. From a strategic standpoint we must understand that Italy is also important for the southern flank, not just because of the frontier at Gorizia [Italy's last outpost at the border with Yugoslavia], and therefore the image of a tank battle in the Po valley fought with nuclear bombs is not the only possible scenario.

I repeat that we need a reinforcement of the defensive approach with respect to the deterrent, for which reason we need a more effective defense not just in Northern Italy, but also on the southern front, and in particular we need defensive

projects that could function as an antimissile or anti-aircraft shield even in the southern part of the country.

It is no accident that today the radar and interception network is more important than 15-20 years ago, and that there is a need for an effective anti-aircraft system on the entire national territory. Already this debate is leading toward a more defensive mentality.

EIR: How can one confront the escalation of provocations by the Soviet Union, especially after the shootdown of the South Korean airliner?

Ciccardini: The Soviet attitude is complex and is shaped by complexes. There is a dangerous shift in balance between East and West, an unbalance. The Soviets have seen their conventional superiority drop thanks to western technological progress in tactical arms, and they could lose it altogether if the West spends more.

The Soviets have, however, increased their own nuclear response capability, to the point of reaching near-superiority. In a certain sense the roles are reversed, and that tends to increase tension and danger. Today we see that, at the Geneva negotiations, the U.S.S.R. does not want to lose its nuclear superiority at any cost. What the U.S.S.R. fears is the potential technological development of the West, also of Europe and Japan. The U.S.S.R. still manifests an encirclement

complex, in a way I would venture to call theological, and this has been so since the time of Stalin. The U.S.S.R. considers the Western proposals aggressive, and every project is seen with mistrust, as an "anti-Soviet plot." There is no hope for a rational response in the short term.

EIR: How can we deal with this situation?

Ciccardini: Up to now we have lacked the conditions to coordinate a unified response, on the technical as well as diplomatic level, between Italy, the U.S.A., and our other allies. What counts at this time is a full adherence to the philosophy of defense: to replace the atomic deterrent with defense-based arms.

This project needs all possible political support. Technically we are still in the initial phases, we need to know more, but political support is extremely important. We must defend President Reagan's proposal from the very foolish attempt to downplay and deride it.

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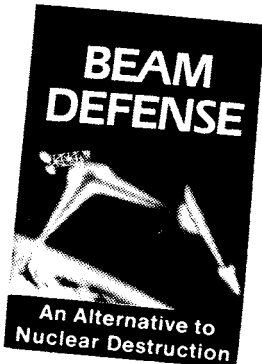
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