

The CIA's worries according to Webster

Another question which we should ask ourselves is what happened after the changes of 1989 and the Anglo-American response of Bush's "new world order." In a public speech by the former CIA chief under Bush, William Webster, delivered on Sept. 17, 1989, a future of trade and intelligence wars is laid out between the traditional "allies" and "competitors." I stress that the speech was public: We can therefore imagine what the relevant archives will reveal 30 or 50 years from now.

"As the twenty-first century approaches, it is clear that economic considerations will play an even greater role in our relations with our allies and adversaries alike. There is now a universal recognition that economic strength is key to global influence and power. Nations are adjusting, even reshaping their economic systems in order to compete in the global marketplace."

Webster then praised the "further integration of financial markets" as a "revolutionary structural change in the global economy." The U.S. intelligence chief stressed, "The transformation of international financial markets is striking if we observe the figures: Daily transactions on the exchanges are over \$300 billion and in a week the transfers on the financial markets are greater than the volume of Third World debt."

Exalting this financial manna which has officially kept the American economy afloat, Webster announced "for the next five years" a commitment of the U.S. government that debtor countries, including the new eastern European nations, should submit to the dictates of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

What would Mattei's position have been today, in the face of the fantastic prospect which has opened in the East of Europe, or the new, growing sufferings of the Third World, the tragedies in Africa? Without a doubt it would have been the antithesis of Webster's "global financialization" and without a doubt there would have been new, hard clashes with the Anglo-American oligarchy.

To wrap up: Albeit on completely different human and historical levels, we may compare Mattei with Charles de Gaulle. In what sense? In the sense that since World War II and for the entire postwar period they represented, and still represent, for their respective nations, a sense of national identity, an ideal reference point.

It is not a question of turning Mattei into a myth; on the contrary we need to demythologize him, because that has been a way of salving people's consciences. What would an Enrico Mattei do today, in a different situation? We must start from a deeper comprehension of his economic philosophy, which is what we have also proposed to present with this conference.

In the face of today's crisis, the best celebration in honor of Mattei is to understand concretely, that we need more Enrico Matteis.

Is Italy still worthy of giants like Mattei?

by Marcelli Colitti

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To speak about Enrico Mattei today is not easy. He evokes the image of a past that will never return, when Italian society produced men on a very different scale from today. What comes to mind is the famous phrase of the poet Vittorio Alfieri, at the dawn of the Risorgimento—the movement for Italian unity which did not yet have that name—when someone said to him, "But really, what do you Italians want? You are already a people which has become degraded and depressed, and go around looking for masters." And he answered, "Well, in Italy there are still brigands, which means that the 'human plant' is still growing vigorously, and it is just a question of exploiting it." I am hardly saying that Mattei was a brigand! I mean that in that period, people were born who today seem out of place, gigantic, and they would not fit into the rooms where the men who now administer the country live. It is hard to speak about persons who, the further away we get, the bigger they become. . . .

Let us try to say what value the experience and the program of Mattei have for us today. The Republic [of Italy] today is based on a political, economic, and social mechanism which is very different from that time, and I think that the selection process which carried Mattei to the heights he attained would today have worked in reverse: Mattei would never have become what he became in the present system, which has a ruthless selection I would define as upside down, which rewards the behavior of adapting to power, instead of the opposite. So we should ask ourselves whether this strongly positive image which Italians have, despite everything, of Mattei, is still valid. And since Mattei was a doer not a writer, not an intellectual, but one who put things into practice, rather than speak of the message he sent, we have to speak of his example, of what he did, because he educated Italians with his example.

Mattei's program

There is a series of examples which he gave. Let's look at them one by one in the effort to clarify what this person means today. The first, and for me the most extraordinary,

is his *moral* example, which is a word no longer used in Italy. For him labor had a moral value, and this was the principal "value" of the individual. Labor for him was charity, if we want to put it in the terms of Catholic culture, which had strongly influenced Mattei, during his youth and also in his maturity. He conceived of labor as the principal act of charity toward others, and hence as something which is in no way measurable by earnings, by the profit which one gets from it, which is of course necessary in order to live, but which is not the reward for labor, not the purpose of labor. The purpose of labor is to give to others what it is possible to give, to carry out together with others what it is possible to carry out, and then money serves to survive; but it is not the objective. And this was so strong in the magnetic charm that emanated from the personality of Mattei, that no one ever asked him for a raise. Naturally he did not let himself be asked, but no one would ever have asked him, because he would reply, "But I work for free, and what do you do?" This is an example very much out of fashion, but it is an example which indicates a moral and civic tension which we need today.

Let us go on to the second point, his *political* example. The man was not a politician, because he talked little, and he certainly did not have the character of a politician. But he moved in a political realm and he had intuitions, very deep convictions which came from the depth of his spirit, which are just as singular when we look at them today, as his concept of labor. His intuition was that politics is a way of carrying out a project, and for this you must fight to the very end, if possible with the instruments of political action, those of consensus, but if necessary even with weapons, because every real project disturbs the powers that be and therefore creates an imbalance which cannot be healed, because those who have power try desperately to perpetuate themselves, and therefore resist any project that tries to change things.

Mattei's program was for economic and civic development together, and this too is one of those things that we have completely forgotten. Economic development and civic development are not necessarily linked; income and civilization are not exactly the same thing—they have an area of overlap, but it is not total. Hence, a program of economic and civil development was another of his truly first-rate intuitions, which was not limited to his own country, because he worked for his country, but he never saw it by itself. From the very outset he had an absolutely clear idea that this very small country in a quite strategic position ought to have a line of development which was necessarily international, which could not turn inward, but which had to look outward, and which, in keeping with what we said before, with the function of labor, with the moral significance of the commitment of the person, should look toward less favored countries, countries which were then emerging out of colonialism, and from the distortion and human and political devastation which colonialism brings.

Colonialism and the emigration of poor Italians were the two words which made Mattei furious. If you wanted to make him angry, you only had to pronounce one of these two words and he turned all colors and started to shout, which otherwise almost never happened. He had a profound, almost physical, phobia for these two phenomena, which he saw as a degradation of the dignity of man, which was the true motive force behind his activity.

So this program of human and civic development, which was completely unified with his moral commitment, had its outlet in an example which became entrepreneurial, i.e., the man built a company. He felt the need to set up a new company, he could not use the old one any more, because he could not use an old instrument. He felt the need to use a new generation, and he even theorized about this. Mattei was not one who easily expressed what he did, but every once in a while, he would blurt out that his generation, including himself, was so involved with Fascism, and Fascist provincialism, that there was not a lot to be expected of it, and that it was necessary to reach out to a new generation, because the latter would not have had the same involvement with a humiliating and provincial regime like Fascism.

Hence it was young people to whom he needed to turn—and his passion for youth was almost legendary—because it was this generation to which he wanted to leave this message. The young person therefore should be educated essentially by motivating him and making him share the vision of his leader. No one ever questioned his leadership. But he was the leader who convinced others, with his example and his ideas. More than giving orders, he asked for consensus and commitment. He was the leader because he was the man who took the risks, who had the ideas, who absorbed the necessary contradictions of daily actions, and weighed the contradictions, and therefore we followed him as one would follow an almost superhuman person.

Relations among rich and poor countries

This approach of his to business was immediately linked up with his economic and political approach, because he tried at once to operate at the level of the world economy. He had the absolute idea—another of his profound convictions—that the rich needed the poor and vice versa, and this conviction arose from his character as a man. This conviction was then translated into concrete terms, by the fact that the poor of that period largely had control of raw materials, which Italy lacked, especially oil. There was in his political approach, therefore, an extraordinary mixture between the moral and civic thrust which pervaded him and the concrete necessity of satisfying the energy needs of the country. This was a thrust which inevitably went hand in hand with his anti-colonialism; it was all a coherent system.

He had understood, well in advance of his time, and even today this is not common culture in Italy, that the rich need the poor, not only because the poor control, by a joke of

fate, certain raw materials, and not only because the most desperate country in the world, which was Saudi Arabia, had the world's largest petroleum reserves, but because there exists an insurmountable limit in the mechanism of capitalist economy, which can only be overcome by broadening the base. This is another one of those things which, even if it is discussed today, brings up a lot of skepticism, but which can be demonstrated on the technical level.

Technological progress

Mattei was certainly not an economist, but he had a passion for economics and surrounded himself with economists, and with them he defined a very simple criterion, which is still extraordinarily timely today. The mechanism of technological progress is based in modern economies on industries which produce so-called capital goods, i.e., machines, lathes, stamping presses, containers for the chemical industry, and so forth. Thus industry incorporates technological progress: a machine which in year 1 produces 10 pieces for 10 liras apiece, in year 2 produces 20 pieces at a cost of nine liras, and in year 3 it produces 600 pieces at a cost of five liras. Such technological progress can only be achieved if the industries that produce these capital goods have a broad enough market. In individual capitalist countries, inevitably, there is a limit to the volume of investment which a country can absorb, and therefore there is a limit to the capacity of development of these industries. Hence it is necessary to export capital.

This is a mechanism from which colonialism also derives, because from every mechanism of the economy, both good and bad derive. It is a mechanism which implies, for example, today, that if we wanted to say what is the surest way by which Europe can emerge from the present economic crisis, it is by exporting capital. Europe or Italy must make investments, for example, in North Africa. Because for sure, the Italian market, the productive basis of the Italian system, is too narrow to be able to absorb sufficiently the output of its capital goods industry. The mature countries need the markets of the countries which are not yet mature.

Hence, to get back to Mattei, his moral intuition that it is unjust that there are poor people, and that the poor and rich need each other, ended up being reinforced and made extremely powerful by economic reality, because his moral analysis agreed with his economic intuition, which then his economists were able to write about.

We have sketched the profile of a giant, and we said at the beginning that this giant would not be at ease, that the ceilings of the rooms of power today would be too low for him. But are these things we have said still valid or are they past history? Let us begin with the end, with the discussion about rich and poor, and let us speak for a moment about the oil industry, which is an industry in which Mattei lived a large part of his life and in which he built his extraordinary corporation.



Marcelli Colitti: The two words that Mattei hated most were "colonialism" and "emigration" of poor Italians.

There is no doubt that in the next 30 years the preeminence of traditional oil-producing countries is going to increase and not decrease, that the increasing demand for petroleum projected for the next 30 years will be satisfied almost completely by the OPEC countries, but within OPEC, almost entirely by the Gulf nations, such as Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, which have geology on their side. So there is no doubt that the problem of Europe and the western world is to find a way of linking up with these countries, a way which will not be degrading for these countries, which does not oppress them, because oppression cannot last—oppression leads to violent revolution—and at the same time a way to obtain energy at a price which is not prohibitive.

Hence this problem, which Mattei saw in all its clarity as the need to supply Italy, is today on the agenda at the world level: The oil-producing countries of the Middle East will be in the next 30 years the main suppliers for the additional quantity of crude oil needed by Italy and the United States, which in Mattei's day was a producer and today has become an importer. So there is on the table the whole dimension of the problem of relations between consuming and producing countries which Mattei had posed with such force and enthusiasm, and with so much capacity for making them come true.

Not only is the relation with poor countries more important now than in the past, but that chokepoint in capitalist economy which I mentioned earlier has become more impor-

tant as well: The limitation of the investment base in the rich countries is drastic, we are experiencing a crisis which to a large extent derives from that. This problem, which Mattei never tired of reiterating, at all levels—his polemic against colonialism, the problem of relations between poor and rich countries—is truly a problem of today.

The state's promotion of enterprise

There is one last point on which I would like to briefly dwell, which is Mattei's idea of the state, which today is also out of fashion. The state is now identified in the mentality of Italian citizens as a mysterious monstrosity, a kind of deeply corrupt Mafia, either corrupt or inefficient, which has a negative role in daily life. Mattei had exactly the opposite concept of the state: He believed that the state should be the one which supplied the capital for economic development, the instrument which collected the capital that the private economy was not capable of supplying to a sufficient degree, and made it available for investment. And hence the function of public enterprise was to be the legitimate channel through which public money was transformed from money into capital, and hence into investment, and hence into economic development.

Mattei came out of private industry. He was a private entrepreneur, one of the few new private businessmen in his time, who came from nothing, and yet he understood perfectly the limits of the private economy, in which he had been so successful, and that it was inevitable and necessary that the state should function as a collector of capital and conveyer of capital toward industry. This theory, which allowed him to build ENI, and which was not completely new, after all, nevertheless was given an enormous importance by him. Little by little, it has been extinguished.

Economics and morality

The Italian state in the last 30 years has done the opposite. It has not accumulated investment capital, it has financed income, i.e., it has used the money gathered through taxation to finance consumption, substantially transferring this money into private hands in a wide variety of forms, some of them not even legal, but that is really secondary. The economic substance was that it financed consumption, i.e., that the money of the state has been given out to maintain demand, not investment.

The consequences have been very clearly visible, both in the exorbitant increase in the public debt, because to sustain demand is a bottomless pit and therefore it creates a bigger and bigger gap in the public debt, and now we are a country with more public debt than income. I would say that the worst effect which this system has had, has been on public morality, in the tone of civic life, and in the fact that by doing this we have put forward to the coming generations the archetype not of the producer, not the man who produces something, who works hard and therefore has a moral, civic, and spiritual

commitment, because hard work has more than a physical dimension. We have instead put forward the model of the man who consumes and no one knows exactly where the money comes from that he is using, but he has an enormous endowment of consumer goods which he continually resupplies.

Now this is an impossible model, not because it is immoral, although in part it is, but because it is impossible for the consumer not to be a producer. There is no alternative to this reality, because the economic circle has to close in some way.

To produce takes work, while to consume does not. Let us say that producing implies a commitment, a daily effort which is no longer included in today's archetypes, where it is instead considered an unpleasant necessity, and not even very dignified. To have seen the state as that which finances consumption, rather than production, has ended up by presenting a model which no longer perceives labor as a fundamental moral factor.

The last point regarding this idea of the state which Mattei had, is his concept of power. There was a time, one or two years before his death, in which an American magazine dedicated a cover to Mattei with the headline: "The Most Powerful Italian since Augustus." Besides the fact that Augustus was not Italian, Mattei had this image of the man of power. He was a man who lived every day in the inner corridors of power and exerted enormous power. He had a very precise idea of power: Power was an inevitable necessity and it had to be justified day by day by whoever exercised it. He found it necessary and inevitable—and he fought hard for this to happen—that he should occupy positions of power, but he also believed that he had to justify this every day by what he did. Power was therefore justified by what he achieved for others, not for himself.

Hence the justification of Mattei's power did not come solely from the fact that he worked 18 hours a day if not more, and that he was incessantly committed in his actions, but also from the fact that he considered this an inevitable necessity, so that what he wanted to do could be achieved.

After the two phobias mentioned above, colonialism and the emigration of poor Italians, Mattei's third phobia was arrogance. Arrogance was unjustified power, i.e., those who hold power and do not justify it on a daily basis, but defend it by arrogance.

I close this remembrance of a person to whom I owe a totally personal debt, because he is the person who gave to me, and to so many others of my generation, an example and an objective to which we could dedicate our lives, a model. It was not a model in the sense that we can imitate such a man, but a model in his moral commitment, and in the clarity and ruthlessness of his analysis, and in his scant reverence for the powers that be, because he had no reverence for power. On the contrary, he demanded of the powerful that they justify themselves.