

Mattei and Kennedy: The Strategic Alliance Killed by the British

by Claudio Celani

A renewed public interest in Italy in the post-war industrial and political leader Enrico Mattei has put a focus on the evidence linking Mattei and U.S. President John F. Kennedy in a strategic alliance to eradicate the power of British colonialism worldwide. Contrary to public mythology, the reconstruction of the Kennedy-Mattei alliance shows that after World War II, the main divide in the world was never the conflict between “communism” and the “free world,” but that between the American System and the British Empire—even if the truth has sometimes been obscured by the British-instigated Cold War.

The assassinations of Mattei in 1962 and Kennedy in 1963, bear the fingerprints of the British Empire. The defeat of the American System, following Kennedy’s assassination, has brought upon us the domination of British imperial policies that have caused the current world financial and economic collapse. Reconstructing the Kennedy-Mattei alliance is essential if we are to understand that the British imperial system must be eliminated if we are to overcome the crisis, and establish a new era of peace and prosperity.

On May 3 and 4, a two-installment dramatization of the life of Mattei was broadcast on the Italian national television station Raiuno. The movie, produced by veteran TV producer Ettore Bernabei, scored the highest audience rating both evenings, and provoked renewed interest in Mattei, and in the dirigistic, anti-free-market policies of Mattei and his allies. Italians were reminded of a period in which government cared about building the nation, and compared this with the impotence of today’s governments, which have sold out their sovereign powers to oligarchical financial interests.

Coordinated with the movie, the daily *La Repubblica* published, on May 3, declassified British Foreign Office papers, showing that Mattei was viewed as Enemy No. 1 by the British Empire. On the eve of his assassination, Mattei was described by the Foreign

Office as endangering British economic and foreign policy interests in the world. On top of those papers, *La Repubblica* reminded readers that a *Financial Times* article published Oct. 25, 1962, two days before Mattei’s murder, asked: “Will signor Mattei have to go?”

Mattei was viewed by the British as a threat because he was helping African and Middle Eastern countries to achieve independence from colonialism, through transfer of technology and fair trade relations among equals. He was doing this through revolutionary trade and economic deals that threatened British control of oil resources and the very system of colonial relationships which the British wanted to maintain, even after the formal dissolution of the Empire. Furthermore, Mattei had demonstrated that peaceful cooperation with the Soviet Union and China were possible, thus opening the way for overcoming the East-West conflict, artificially maintained by the British-created Cold War policy.

The point of no return for the British arrived when Mattei reached an agreement with President Kennedy. In 1961, with the inauguration of the Kennedy Administration, the policies of Mattei and Kennedy converged. The Kennedy Administration resumed, on a strategic scale, the fight against British and European colonialism which President Franklin Roosevelt had declared against Churchill during the Second World War, and Eisenhower had announced in 1956, during the Suez Crisis.

Kennedy changed the way the U.S. would look at the “neutralism” of newly independent countries in Africa. For the Kennedy Administration, “neutralism” was synonymous with “independence” and had to be encouraged by the United States. By 1962, the U.S.A. was looking for allies in Europe, and had found them in the Mattei faction in Italy. At the end of that year, the alliance between Kennedy and Mattei was to be officially declared with a planned visit of the Italian leader

to the United States, where he would meet with the President, and be publicly honored, with, among other things, an honorary degree at Harvard University.

According to former Mattei collaborator and historian Benito Livigni, the Kennedy Administration had reached the conclusion that Mattei should become the head of a new Italian government. Whereas evidence has yet to surface in support of this proposition, Kennedy's support for Mattei's policy shift in Italy, namely a government alliance between the Christian Democrats (DC) and the Socialist Party, is a matter of historical fact.

Mattei was killed a few days before his planned visit to the U.S., on Oct. 27, 1962. A bomb exploded on his private jet shortly before it landed in Milan, a circumstance which has been definitively clarified in a 2005 judgment by the court in Pavia.

Mattei's Struggle for Independence

Enrico Mattei was born 1906, in Acqualagna, in the central Italian Marche region. His father was a Carabinieri (police) undergraduate, who gained fame—but no reward—for capturing a famous bandit, Musolino. Seeking better economic conditions, Mattei's family soon moved to another town in the Marche region, Matelica, where it settled, and which Mattei always considered to be his hometown. Matelica is today the home base of a Mattei Foundation.

A self-made man, Mattei set up a chemical firm in Milan in the late 1930s, and joined the antifascist Resistance at the fall of the Mussolini regime in 1943, becoming the leader of the Christian Democratic wing of the Resistance.

At the end of the war, in 1945, Mattei received from the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (the provisional government) the task that changed his life, and Italy's history: that of dismantling the state petroleum agency Agip. Instead of dismantling it, Mattei rebuilt it and enlarged it into the Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI), and began an intensive search for oil in Italy and internationally. While he did not find significant oil resources in Italy, he did find large gasfields in the northern Po



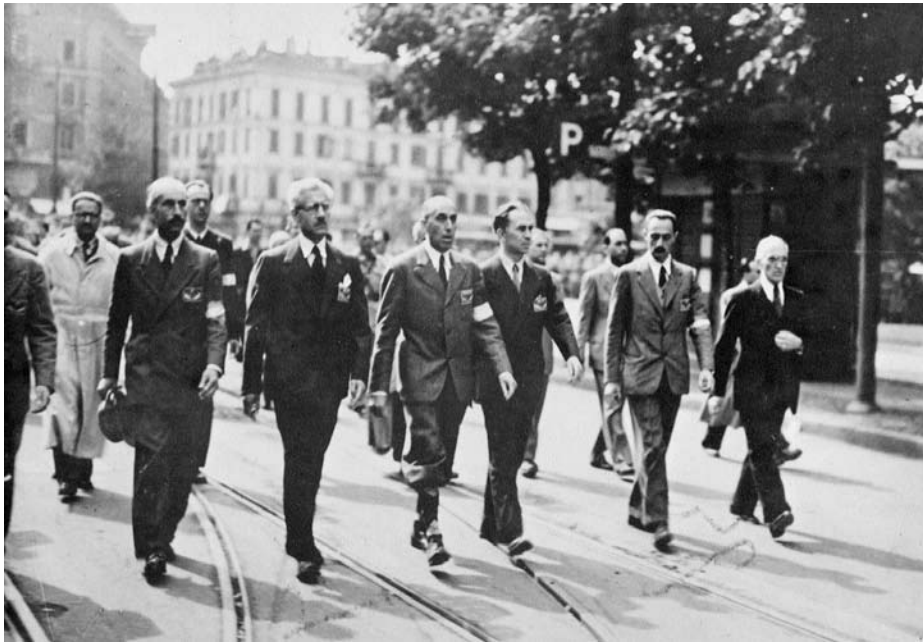
National Archives

Mattei's commitment to help developing nations achieve independence from colonialism, through a revolutionary policy of trade and economic deals, threatened British control of oil resources and the very system of colonial relationships which the British wanted to maintain. The point of no return for the British arrived when Mattei reached an agreement with President Kennedy.

plane (Pianura Padana), which he exploited by building a 6,000 km-long network of pipelines.

Mattei recognized the problem, that Italy did not have a real industrial class. Industry was still dominated by trusts which were in the hands of the same powerful and wealthy families that had brought Fascism to power. Italy's "industrial" leaders were more interested in managing parasitical rents from their monopolies, than promoting industrial innovations and increasing productivity.

Thus, Mattei conceived of a revolutionary role for state agencies such as ENI, as trust-busters. For instance, ENI built a fertilizer plant in Ravenna, which began producing fertilizers at low prices, breaking the private trusts. ENI's gas was key for providing Italian industry with a cheap energy source, thus breaking the electricity trusts. However, Italian families still paid



ENI

Mattei joined the anti-fascist Resistance at the fall of the Mussolini regime, becoming the leader of its Christian Democratic wing. Here, Mattei (second from right) marches in Milan with Resistance leaders on Italian Liberation Day, April 25, 1945.

high prices for domestic gas, which at that time was provided in bottles. The market for bottled gas was also in the hands of a trust. Mattei decided to produce bottled gas and to deliver it with ENI ships, reaching out to the whole Italian peninsula.

Although Mattei aimed at providing Italy with cheap and secure oil and gas supplies, he understood, even then, that the future belonged to nuclear energy. Thus, he foresaw as early as 1956 that Italy's energy needs would soon exceed what oil and gas would be able to satisfy, and founded Agip Nucleare, as a first step towards the construction of Italy's first nuclear power station. The nuclear plant was ready to go on line in 1963, unfortunately, too late for Mattei to see it.

Mattei was a member of Parliament from 1948 to 1953, the year he founded ENI. He had already become the most powerful man in Italy. His faction was hegemonic in the Christian Democratic party, Italy's largest, and he had influence with all the other political parties. His allies in the government established a dirigist system of economic reconstruction through the Ministry for State Participation, which coordinated policy for the large industrial conglomerate IRI (and other state-owned corporations which were leftovers of the 1933 bailouts). For a decade, this policy made good use of Marshall Plan credits, to generate national reconstruc-

tion and economic growth at a sustained rate of 6% annually, which was called Italy's "economic recovery."

Mattei's search for oil, however, soon led him into a confrontation with the British-dominated international oil cartel. This system was still operational after the Second World War, when Mattei started to look for oil concessions in Southwest Asia and Northern Africa. The British Empire, although in a process of formal dissolution under American pressure, intended to maintain its power in the world through its financial empire and control of oil and other raw materials.

To understand how important this was for London, here is how a British historian de-

scribed Britain's strategic policy in the 1950s:

Britain pursued a reactionary financial economic goal of re-establishing the former glory of [the pound] sterling as an international currency via sterling-dollar convertibility . . . thus it was financial policy which was the true motor of Britain's attitudes towards western European integration. London had no desire to play a role equal to that of its European partners in new, possibly supranational European institutions, because of its greater aims of creating a "one world economic system" in which sterling would be second to the dollar as an international currency.¹

In order to pursue this strategy, Britain would concede formal independence to former colonies, while maintaining privileged economic and trade relationships with them. Oil was a keystone of the British Empire. Before World War II, Iraqi and Persian oil fields fueled the British fleet. After the war, they fueled

1. James R.V. Ellison, "Explaining British Policy Towards European Integration in the 1950s"; in *European Union Studies Association (EUSA), Biennial Conference, 1995 (4th)*, May 11-14, 1995, Charleston, S.C.

the Bank of England. In 1961, 40% of sterling reserves were held by Kuwait, at that time, a protectorate of Her Majesty. British control over oil was regulated by the famous “Red Line Agreement,” established as part of the Sykes-Picot colonial arrangements.²

When Mattei asked a place for ENI in the consortium, he was summarily rejected. At that point, he decided to go to war with the oil cartel, which he nicknamed “the Seven Sisters.” He went directly to producing countries with competitive offers, such as a 75/25 share of profits (75% for the producing country and 25% for ENI), instead of the 50/50 normally offered by the cartel. Additionally, he offered *in loco* refineries, and education of local labor forces, from the workers to the engineering cadre to the managers. Soon, Mattei was able to sign spectacular concession deals with Morocco, Libya, Egypt, and Iran. Nonetheless, these agreements brought little quantitative results.

In 1955, the election of Mattei’s ally Giovanni Gronchi as Italian State President greatly boosted Mattei’s opportunities. With Amintore Fanfani as DC party secretary, Mattei now had significant command of Italy’s domestic and international policy. He was now looking for an alliance with the Eisenhower Administration, in order to break the oil cartel system.

The chance came in 1956, in the famous Suez Crisis, when Eisenhower ordered the troops of the “Tripartite Alliance” (Britain, France, and Israel) to stop the military invasion of Egypt. Egypt’s new nationalist leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, had nationalized the Suez Canal, and the European colonial powers France and Britain, in concert with Israel, had reacted by launching an invasion. But the U.S. intervention forced the troops to withdraw. Eventually, a U.S.-led UN resolution condemned the invasion.

2. “After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, oilmen sat down and agreed on how the region should be shared among them, using a red pen to indicate the divisions. The members of the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC: Royal Dutch/Shell, British Petroleum and CFP) bound themselves not to operate, except through the company, within the area marked on the map by the red line. This area included almost all of the former Ottoman Empire (except Egypt and Kuwait): In areas within the red line, companies from the United States could bid on subleasing a territory, but essentially had to seek permission or include TPC in their activities. In July 1928, the Red Line Agreement was formally signed. This agreement granted, unknowingly at the time, the largest oil-producing region (primarily Saudi Arabia and Iraq) to non-U.S. companies. Only after the U.S. government intervened did the other companies allow Exxon into their plans.” From Toyin Falona and Ann Genova, *The Politics of the Global Oil Industry*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006).

FIGURE 1



www.israelipalestinianprocon.org

The Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 divided up oil-rich Southwest Asia among the imperial powers, Britain, France, and Russia.

Italy was the only European nation that voted for the resolution. In 1957, Mattei, who had already signed a 75/25 deal with Nasser (in fact, ENI’s drilling equipment on the Sinai peninsula was destroyed by the Israeli Army), pushed President Gronchi to make an official offer to Eisenhower for a strategic alliance with Italy, a sort of Special Relationship in the Mediterranean and in relations with North Africa and the Near East. Eventually, Gronchi’s letter was stopped by Foreign Minister Antonio Martino, a pro-British reactionary, and Mattei’s effort failed.

The Italian support for U.S. anticolonialist action did not go unnoticed by the American administration, and especially by what Lyndon LaRouche calls “the Institution of the Presidency.” This institution, which is larger than the government per se, is what effects long-term policy in constitutional terms, even when the President himself is deficient or even unviable. Thus, even when post-FDR U.S. Presidents, such as, Harry Truman, were steered by British policies, the Institution of the Presidency often acted to avoid the worst disasters. Under Eisenhower, the U.S. had a viable President, but with a strong element of British influence, represented, above all, in the State Department, under Wall Street banker John Foster Dulles. The process steered by the

Institution of the Presidency had a breakthrough beginning in 1960, with the Kennedy Administration.

In a 1958 intelligence report entitled “Neo-Atlanticism as an Element in Italy’s Foreign Policy,” the Mattei faction in Italy was identified as the one supporting the U.S. action at Suez and, in general, anticolonial policy.³ The two main competing factions which emerged at the time of the Suez Crisis were described as the “Atlanticists” or “Europeans” (supporting the Franco-British axis), and the “neo-Atlanticists”:

The “neo-Atlanticists,” who include President Giovanni Gronchi, Enrico Mattei, the head of the state petroleum monopoly, Christian Democratic party chief Amintore Fanfani and Foreign Minister Giuseppe Pella, have been accused by the “Atlanticist” opposition of wanting to carry out an aggressive Middle Eastern policy that will antagonize Italy’s allies and undermine NATO unity.

But, in fact, “neo-Atlanticism,” so-called, as carried out by Foreign Minister Pella, has differed in only one substantive and one propaganda aspect from the “Atlantic” policy of his predecessors: Italy is more actively attempting to expand its influence in the Moslem world; Italy’s national interests are being stressed more than the free world’s ideological struggle with the Soviet bloc....

These groups, which got the nicknames “Americans,” “neo-Atlanticists” and “Demomussulmen,” leaned to the view that the U.S. role in frustrating the Anglo-French military venture against Egypt might cause an irreparable split in NATO, and that Italy should support the United States as the strongest power. Close collaboration with the United States, the “neo-Atlanticists” held, would permit Italy profitably to pursue its traditional interests in the near and Middle East.

Contrary to the spin contained in the report, written by the Dulles State Department, Italy’s neo-Atlanticists did not lean toward support for the U.S.A. because it was “the strongest power,” but rather, out of a princi-

pled policy. As reported in the same paper, an editorial published in the DC party daily *Il Popolo*, as a comment to Eisenhower’s Jan. 5, 1958 speech (the “Eisenhower Doctrine”), said:

Italy, while cordially close to its continental allies, is not deaf to the aspirations and requirements of the peoples of the Asiatic and African shores of the Mediterranean, and must recognize in President Eisenhower’s proposals measures appropriate to the maintenance of peace amongst the populations of the Mediterranean, and for the guarantee that peace for all will also signify progress for all.

The report then, in a chapter titled “Mattei’s views,” states:

Mattei told a senior American Embassy officer on August 28 that he felt that a new approach was called for in North Africa on the part of the Western powers. He said that Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and possibly Libya, should join a pool or loose federation that would then associate itself with a pool of Western European countries ... and the United States to devise and carry out a long-range economic development project aimed at raising the standard of living of those countries, thus also achieving political stability. The creation of such a partnership, Mattei said, would also serve the useful purpose of creating a counterweight against Nasser’s aspirations to lead a unified Arab world.

Italy could be extremely useful to her allies, including France and the United States, in finding a rational solution to a situation that at present seems hopeless. He asserted that the French were unable to maintain their position in North Africa, that the British were unpopular there and that, while Americans were “less disliked” than the British or the French, their intentions and actions were nevertheless viewed with suspicion, a suspicion that did not attach to Italy, whose counsel and assistance were accepted without reservations by the Arabs.... Mattei also said that Nasser and Egypt were not lost to the West, although Nasser had acted badly in recent months. He felt that the time was ripe for new overtures to Nasser.

3. Intelligence Report N. 7641, “Neo-Atlanticism as an Element in Italy’s Foreign Policy,” Jan. 10, 1958, in NAW, RG 59, Reports of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, quoted in Leopoldo Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l’apertura a sinistra* (Bari: 1999).



In 1957, Mattei (left), signed a deal with Egyptian President Nasser (right) for ENI to develop Egypt's oil. At the same time, Mattei proposed to President Eisenhower that the U.S. and Italy, along with other Western European countries, carry out a long-term economic development project to raise living standards in North Africa.

The report then concludes:

Probably all “neo-Atlanticists” have some neutralist tendencies. Undoubtedly, if frictions between the U.S. and its European allies were to develop to the point where NATO would break up and Italy would have to choose between them, Italy would at first tend to side with the U.S. But this pro-American orientation would probably endure only if Italy were to derive a material benefit from it, as for example, American financial support for Italy’s interests in the Near East. If the U.S. were to rebuff Italy, then the neutralist tendencies of the neo-Atlanticists might prevail over their current pro-American orientation.

The report correctly identifies the pro-U.S. orientation of the Mattei faction, even if it is flawed by a utilitarian interpretation of a choice otherwise dictated by principles. The report is also affected by British propaganda on Mattei’s so-called “neutralism” and describes it as a negative potential. This hostility was steered by the British, who portrayed Mattei as “anti-American,” and prone to lead Italy out of NATO into the neutralist camp. Unfortunately, the U.S. Embassy in Rome, under

Clare Booth Luce, was prone to accept this slander.

In the middle of the Cold War, this was a terrible accusation. The British campaign against Mattei as “anti-Western” increased when Mattei, in December 1958, signed a deal with Moscow for a supply of 800,000 tons of crude oil in exchange for synthetic rubber produced by ENI’s plants in Italy. Mattei was accused of “making deals with the enemy,” despite the fact that many Italian private and state firms were already doing business with the Soviet Union, not to speak of other European countries, who were doing the same.

President Eisenhower viewed Mattei differently. First, Eisenhower was aware of the problem represented by the British Empire. His eyes had been opened by the developments of 1956, and the confrontation over Suez. Here is how he lectured British

Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in a letter dated July 22, 1954:

Colonialism is on the way out as a relationship among peoples. The sole question is one of time and method. I think we should handle it so as to win adherents to Western aims. We know that there is abroad in the world a fierce and growing spirit of nationalism. Should we try to dam it up completely, it would, like a mighty river, burst through the barriers and could create havoc. But again, like a river, if we are intelligent enough to make constructive use of this force, then the result, far from being disastrous, could redound greatly to our advantage, particularly in our struggle against the Kremlin’s power. . . . If you could say that twenty-five years from now, every last one of the colonies (excepting military bases) should have been offered a right to self-government and determination, you would electrify the world.

Secondly, Eisenhower admired Mattei personally. On Sept. 23, 1957, when Dulles organized a meeting between the President and the oil companies which had



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President Eisenhower's views on British colonialism converged with those of Mattei. His eyes had been opened by the confrontation over Suez in 1956. Even earlier, in 1954, Ike had lectured Churchill, "Colonialism is on the way out as a relationship among peoples." The President is pictured here with his anglophile Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles.

objected to Mattei's "unfair" tactics with oil-producing countries, Eisenhower, in the presence of Dulles, told them that the issue was of no interest to the U.S. government; that if Mattei could establish relations with Arab countries, this was positive, especially since other Western countries were not even able to start a dialogue; and that he appreciated Mattei as the archetype of the self-made man.⁴ A similar statement by Eisenhower on Mattei is reported in the minutes of a National Security Council meeting.⁵

Giuseppe Accorinti joined ENI in 1956, and was appointed by Mattei as director of Agip Commerciale in North Africa in 1962. In commenting on the above epi-

4. Giuseppe Accorinti, *Quando Mattei era l'impresa energetica, io c'ero* (2007).

5. Eisenhower commented that Mattei simply followed the inexorable law of competition. See Minutes of 337th NSC Meeting, Sept. 22, 1957. Reported in Alessandro Brogi, "Ike and Italy: The Eisenhower Administration and Italy's 'Neo-Atlanticist' Agenda," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Summer 2002. The date differs by one day with the date reported by Accorinti. It might have been a NSC briefing to the President preparatory to the meeting with the oil companies, or one of the two authors made an error.

sode in a recent discussion with this author, he said: "Mattei probably never knew about this reaction by Eisenhower, because it was not published until recently, when the records were declassified. Had he known it, history might have been different."

Compare Eisenhower's admiration of Mattei, and his disregard for the sorrows of the oil cartel, with the British government attitude, as evidenced in declassified records.

A confidential report from the U.K. Embassy in Rome to the Foreign Office, dated Aug. 8, 1961, states that "Mattei can create problems for us in the Arab world... Mattei intends to enter the African market." In doing that, Mattei is confident that African countries will get rid of colonialism and "cut their traditional ties with Great Britain. At that point, Mattei will enter the scene." Mattei's theories are coming true, the paper says, "for instance in Iraq and Algeria." It seems that Mattei had succeeded in "infiltrating" Iraq, and establishing contacts with the FLN (National Liberation Front) in Algeria. If the current situation of hostilities between Mattei and "Western oil companies" continues, "problems will become of a political nature."

A paper written by a Foreign Office official, A.A. Jarrett, on Aug. 7, 1962, says that Mattei's ENI "is becoming an increasing threat to British interests, not in the commercial sense, ... but in the political sense of playing on the latent distrust of Western companies in many parts of the world and in encouraging oil autarchy at the expense of British companies' investment and trade.

"...There is no doubt that ENI's influence and offers of assistance have spread considerably during the last 18 months, particularly in Africa; that the Group has continued to make the lot of Western companies in Italy as uncomfortable and as unremunerative as possible and that they intend to expand their activities in this direction into the [European] Community as a whole as well as the UK; that they are still attached to Russian oil and are one of the main obstacles to securing a sensible agreement on Russian oil in the Six [European Community]; and that they are having their influence on Community thinking about future relationships with the producing countries of a kind that could only be detrimental to the Western oil companies. Our ideas for introducing stability into the European oil market will not reach fruition if ENI extends its present practices unchecked, whilst their intervention in other parts of the world could be at least



ENI

A paper written by a British Foreign Office official, in August 1962, states that Mattei's ENI "is becoming an increasing threat to British interests..." Shown: Mattei (third from right), inspects works at the first Italian nuclear power station, in Latina, 1962.

as damaging to Western oil interest as the activities of the Russians themselves."⁶

Kennedy, and the 'Opening to the Left'

By no later than 1957, Mattei had concluded that the Christian Democratic alliance with the small centrist parties was a non-starter. The DC had only 42% of the vote in Parliament, and could rule only through coalition governments. However, the small centrist parties, the Liberal Party (PLI), the Social Democrats (PSDI), and the Republican Party (PRI), demanded roles disproportionate to their electoral strength. Often they acted in a reactionary way. For instance, Foreign Minister Antonio Martino, from the small Liberal Party, had blocked President Gronchi's letter to Eisenhower. Martino's PLI, but also the PRI and even the PSDI, would team up with pro-free-market factions in the DC and block social reforms.

Thus, Mattei and his faction moved to accelerate the project of "opening to the left," i.e., a government alliance with the Socialist Party (PSI). The PSI alone, with 14%, had more popular votes than all centrist parties together.

6. Copy of the original published at <http://casarrubea.wordpress.com/2009/05/02/anche-senza-mattei/mattei-pdf-documenti/>.

The problem was that the Socialists were allied with the Italian Communist Party (PCI), and very much pro-Soviet. The PSI, indeed, received money from Moscow. However, PSI leader Pietro Nenni was in favor of an "autonomist" policy vis-à-vis the Communists, and of a clean break with Moscow. Mattei began to finance the Socialists, and to promote a process of full integration of the PSI into the Western camp.

This policy was backed by the Kennedy White House, and involved members of the Kennedy team, such as John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger, and also United Autoworkers leader Walter Reuther and others. Their contact in the Kennedy Administration was Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

Even before appointing an ambassador to Rome, President Kennedy decided to send Averell Harriman on a European tour, with special emphasis on Italy.

In Rome, Harriman had official talks with President Gronchi, Prime Minister Fanfani, Foreign Minister Antonio Segni, and the economics ministers. But he also had a secret meeting with Mattei. This talk made a great impression on Harriman. As reported by Leopoldo Nuti,⁷ Mattei complained to Harriman about U.S. oil companies, and addressed the issue of decolonization. Mattei characterized this as the new "battlefield" between East and West, criticizing the policy of Western countries towards newly independent nations. When it came to the Italian situation, Mattei told Harriman that the electoral growth of the Italian Communist Party was due to the fact that social reforms in Italy had been blocked by large "institutionalized interests," and that it was necessary to bring Nenni's Socialists into the democratic camp. Mattei said he had worked for some time on this project, adding that he was confident he could carry 40% of the party in support of Nenni.

In his report to Kennedy, Harriman stressed that, "In my opinion, we have contributed to the strength of Communism ... because we have not been able to insist enough on social reforms at the time of the Marshall

7. Memorandum of conversation, March 10, 1971, in JFKPL, NSF, in Nuti, op. cit.

Plan, and recently because the last two American ambassadors have been identified with aristocracy and large industry.”

However, Harrimann added, the moment is now very favorable in Italy. There is significant sympathy for the new American administration. Italians are seeing Kennedy as a potential new Roosevelt, not least because of his human side, similar to Roosevelt, who could speak both to the common people and to governments.

The problem represented by the Rome Embassy was solved with the appointment of Frederick Reinhardt, a career diplomat who was personally selected by Kennedy. Significantly, in a critical juncture in 1962, he defended Mattei from allegations that Mattei was planning to lead Italy out of NATO. As usual, this allegation was spread by British intelligence, as documented in a later report, classified “strictly personal and confidential,” sent by Foreign Office official A.A. Jarrett, and dated Aug. 7, 1962. The report says:

Someone recently had a conversation with “a leading personality in the oil industry” who had recently been in touch with Mattei and who stated that Mattei had said to him: “It has taken me seven years to move the Government to the ‘*apertura a sinistra*’ [opening to the Left]; I can tell you it is not going to take me seven years to move Italy out of NATO and to become head of the neutralist states.”

There is no reason to doubt that this statement was, in fact, made.⁸

It is to be presumed that the British were constantly feeding the State Department with such slanders against Mattei. At one point, to calm down Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Reinhardt wrote that it was true that Mattei had supported the “opening to the Left,” but that this policy was supported by a large sector of Italian politics, and that the embassy had no evidence that Mattei wanted to lead Italy out of NATO. Reinhardt also



ENI

Mattei's oil deals with Russia, an aspect of the Christian Democracy's policy of "opening to the Left," caused apoplexy, not only in London, but among anglophile circles in the U.S. State Department as well. Here, Mattei signs an oil deal with the Soviet Union in 1960.

calmed Rusk down on the nature of ENI oil deals with Russia.

Reinhardt then decided to go to Washington to discuss the subject personally with the Secretary of State. As a result of a meeting on March 17, 1962, it was decided that Undersecretary of State George Ball would go to Rome and meet Mattei. Before this took place, Mattei sent an emissary, Vincenzo Russo, to Washington to discuss possible dates for a Mattei trip to the U. S. A. Russo explained that Mattei wanted to discuss with Kennedy “issues that went beyond the oil question.” Following that meeting, George McGhee, who was present, met with W.R. Stott of Standard Oil of New Jersey (later Exxon) to discuss a deal with Mattei.

Meanwhile, in Rome, in February 1962, the first government with half an “opening to the Left,” i.e., external support of the Socialists, had been formed, led by Fanfani. The U.S. administration's approval of this move was signalled by the presence in Rome of Bobby Kennedy and Arthur Schlesinger the day before the cabinet was sworn in.

Finally, on May 22, Ball met Mattei in Rome. They presumably discussed details of Mattei's upcoming visit to the U.S.A. and his meeting with Kennedy. Ball

8. Cf. Casarrubea, op. cit.

also met PSI leader Nenni and, briefly, Pope John XXIII. He wrote a general report of his visit to Rome, describing a situation in positive evolution, both politically and economically. Interestingly, Ball was very much impressed by the Vatican II Ecumenical Council, as an historical shift of the Catholic Church in favor of people's development. He hinted that Italy could be the "ally that we are looking for:

One of the fascinating elements involved is that although Italy was a colonial power like all the rest of them, in fact, a much more recent colonial power than France or England or Holland, and became a colonial power through some fairly brutal methods like the Ethiopian War, in spite of all of this, the people around the Mediterranean on the African and Middle Eastern side simply do not consider Italy an ex-colonial power and they have a tremendous advantage. I would not be at all surprised if Italy did not become the dominant business nation around the African and Middle Eastern rim of the Mediterranean, extending all the way into Somaliland and even Ethiopia.

... London is of tremendous importance, so is Paris, so is Bonn, so are a number of other places. In fact, today we can no longer say that any capital of any country, any area is without importance and significance to the United States. All I'm trying to say is, we should not allow ourselves to be mesmerized by place names with which we have become so familiar in terms of crises and problems, to the exclusion of Italy, from which may emerge an element, a factor, a technique, a dynamic of tremendous value to all of us. Watch Italy. ... Out of this ancient country may come quite unbeknownst to us, not unbeknownst but unnoticed by us, the thing, the element, the ally that we are all looking for."⁹

To understand what Ball meant by the expression "the ally that we are all looking for," we must go back to the 1958 paper on "neo-Atlanticism." Formally, the U.S. had plenty of "allies" in Europe. Wasn't NATO an alliance, the "Western Alliance"? You read that in textbooks today. In reality, on the main strategic front, the

9. George Ball's report, made available in facsimile to the author, by Benito Livigni.

abolition of colonialism and the establishment of a community of independent nation-states in the world, the U.S. had very few allies.

Author Benito Livigni is convinced that the Kennedy Administration and the Mattei faction were planning a wide-ranging strategic alliance. In 1962, Livigni was working for ENI in Sicily, and reported regularly to Mattei on oil development on the island. "In one of our last meetings, at lunch, Mattei hinted at his imminent deal with Kennedy. 'Things will change with the new U.S. administration', Mattei said."

Mattei was negotiating a deal with the newly independent Algerian government, to be signed in November, and a secret deal with Iraq. In 1958, a military coup had overthrown the monarchy and established a government led by general Abdul Karim Qassim. Qassim's government immediately began negotiations with ENI, aimed at freeing the country from dependence on the British Oil deal with Iraq. In December 1961, the Qassim government enacted a bill which cancelled 99% of the territories conceded to the Iraq Petroleum Company, the British consortium. In reviewing the concession, the Iraqi government had been technically assisted by ENI experts.

This decision rang all the alarm bells in the British Foreign Office. British Ambassador Ashley Clarke, in a recently declassified document, reports that he was instructed by Her Majesty's government to put official pressure on the Fanfani government, to tell Mattei to stay away from Iraq. Fanfani capitulated to the British, and again put pressure on Mattei on Soviet oil, after which, Mattei "was very clear and told Fanfani that from that moment on, he would withdraw any political support" for him. According to Livigni, Mattei shifted his financial support to Aldo Moro, whom he considered more capable and independent than Fanfani (Moro eventually led the first center-left government, with the PSI in the cabinet). Mattei, Livigni writes, was confident that with Kennedy's support already achieved, he could now dispose of Fanfani.¹⁰

Then, on Sept. 30, the Iraqi government announced the formation of the Iraqi National Oil Company (Inoc). Livigni remarks that this had to remain secret, as the next step was a joint venture between Inoc and ENI, called the Iraqi Italian Oil Company, which would develop, explore, and produce 20 million tons of oil yearly.

Less than one month later, Mattei was assassinated.

10. Livigni, *In nome del Petrolio* (Rome: 2006).

Still, in 1963, when it was not yet clear who his successor would be, the British Foreign Office was writing:

Apart from the relinquished territory available in the Middle East there is the dangerous possibility that ENI might seek concessions from oil-producing contracts in the territory in Iraq which was taken from the IPC [Iraq Petroleum Company] by the late president Qassim. If they were to do so, their feud with the international oil companies would enter an altogether more serious phase.¹¹

After the death of Mattei, the Kennedy Administration continued to support the “opening to the Left” project, culminating in JFK’s meeting with Nenni in the U.S. Embassy in Rome, on July 1, 1963. In the briefing prepared by the CIA for Kennedy, while Nenni was described as courageous man who had made a clean break with the Communists, and maybe the most popular politician in Italy, Aldo Moro was described as the most powerful political leader for the future, if the center-left project were successful.

Moro did become Italy’s most powerful politician, and the British killed him too, in 1978, using the terrorist group, the Red Brigades.

Kennedy’s Confrontation with the British

Everyone speaks about the “Special Relationship” between Washington and London in the post-war period. That expression was invented by Winston Churchill, but, at best, corresponded only to the way the British wished to shape their relationship with the U.S.A. A frank account of the British view is delivered by Harold Macmillan, the man who replaced Anthony Eden as Prime Minister after the Suez Crisis and who tried to engage Kennedy in a strategic partnership.

We ... are Greeks in this American empire. You will find the Americans much as the Greeks found the Romans—great big, vulgar, bustling people, more vigorous than we are and also more idle, with more unspoiled virtues but also more corrupt. We must run AFHQ [Allied Force Headquarters] as the Greek slaves ran the operations of the Emperor Claudius.¹²

11. Casarrubea, op. cit.

12. Quoted in Nigel John Ashton, *Harold Macmillan and the ‘Golden*

In reality, the implementation of this modern version of the Athens-Rome scheme proved to be arduous. Declassified papers and other historical material show that the United States, with the exception of the Truman Administration, found itself always in conflict with the aims and policies of the British Empire, sometimes in a spectacular form, as in the Suez crisis. This is proven also in the case of the Kennedy Administration, at least over two major points of conflict: the Congo crisis, and the nuclear deterrent issue.

Kennedy’s policy on Africa is usually described as a half-failure. Instead, it represented a real change of the U.S. policy in the direction of an uncompromised rejection of the European colonial system, regardless of the threatened implication for East-West relations. Kennedy had chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa and had made dramatic gestures to demonstrate his interest in the continent. During the year of his 1960 election campaign, 17 African nations had become independent. Kennedy had criticized the Eisenhower Administration for its reluctance to support African independence movements. Kennedy’s first announced appointment, even before the Secretary of State, was Mennen Williams as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Similar to the political divide in Italy between “Europeans” and “neo-Atlanticists,” the Kennedy Administration included “Europeans” and “Africanists.”

Throughout 1962, Kennedy had to deal with the chaos the Belgians had left in Congo, where a transition to independence had not been prepared at all. Despite the complication of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which kept the U.S. administration totally occupied in October-November of that year, Kennedy succeeded in defeating the British-supported secession of Katanga, the region of Congo rich in mineral resources.

According to one historian:

Over the Congo crisis, British and American approaches had diverged further and further during 1961-62. The British believed that any firm action by the United Nations to end the secession of the mineral-rich Katangan province of the Congo might serve to destabilize the fragile Central

Days’ of Anglo-American relations revisited, 1957-63 (online). This passage is from a conversation between Macmillan and journalist Richard Crossman at Allied Forces Headquarters in North Africa during the war.



America's sale of the *Sergeant* missiles to NATO, and *Hawk* missiles to Israel, undercut British attempts to sell their *Blue Water* systems. Prime Minister Macmillan's (inset) reaction, denouncing President Kennedy for "trickery," backfired. Macmillan later wrote, "All our policies are in ruins."



African Federation, which they had established to the south. They were also worried by the potential implications for their other colonial possessions of either the imposition of economic sanctions or the intervention in force by the UN in Katanga.¹³

This was occurring against the background of another development that caused U.S.-British relations to deteriorate, nearly to the breaking point. The U.S. government had started a systematic policy of excluding the British from the Western arms market, in a series of unilateral actions, so that the British at one point suspected—maybe rightly so—that the U.S.A. aimed at undermining the British nuclear deterrent.

First, NATO partners were convinced by the U.S. to buy the American *Sergeant* surface-to-surface missile instead of the British-designed *Blue Water* system. Then, the U.S. decided to sell *Hawk* missiles to Israel, undercutting the sales chances of the British *Bloodhound* system. In reaction to this, Macmillan sent one of the most extraordinary personal messages ever sent by a British Prime Minister to an American President:

I cannot believe that you were privy to this disgraceful piece of trickery. For myself I must say frankly that I can hardly find words to express my sense of disgust and despair. Nor do I see how you and I are to conduct the great affairs of the world

13. Ibid.

on this basis.... I have instructed our officials to let me have a list of all the understandings in different parts of the world which we have entered into together. It certainly makes it necessary to reconsider our whole position on this and allied matters.¹⁴

The crisis culminated when the U.S. administration announced, in November, the cancellation of the *Skybolt*, an air-launched ballistic missiles, on which Britain had relied as its future and only nuclear carrier. London was caught by the belief "that the cancellation of the *Skybolt* might be part of an American plot to undermine the British nuclear deterrent.... The danger of a lasting rupture in Anglo-American relations over the issue was thus real."¹⁵

Ultimately an agreement was reached at the Nassau conference in December, by which the U.S. promised to provide Britain with the new *Polaris* launch system. However, the U.S. demanded that this be part of a multilateral NATO force, while Britain maintained that there should be no dual key on the warheads. Despite what looked like a British success in the negotiations, Macmillan was afraid that the administration might renege on the agreement.

While this was occurring, the new French President, Charles de Gaulle, blocked Britain's request to join the European Economic Community. After de Gaulle's announcement in January 1963, Macmillan wrote:

All our policies at home and abroad are in ruins. Our defence plans have been radically changed from air to sea. European unity is no more; French domination of Europe is a new and alarming feature; our popularity as a Government is rapidly declining. We have lost everything, except our courage and determination.¹⁶

The attempt to have the American "Emperor" run by the Greek slaves on the Thames had catastrophically failed. Due to his personal failure, Macmillan had become useless to the British Empire, and he was dumped through the famous Profumo scandal. For the "Emperor," they applied the "Mattei solution" that same year.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.