

Report from Rome by Antonio Gaspari

Do oil multitis run Italian politics?

Enrico Mattei tried to set up a national oil entity, independent of the "Seven Sisters," and paid with his life.

The recent exposure in Rome of Operation Gladio, the secret paramilitary organization set up to fight guerrilla war against a potential Soviet invasion, but used to destabilize the nation's institutions, has thrown a spotlight on Anglo-American control over Italian political life. But not even the Communist opposition has pointed to the *financial* interests who profit from such controls.

The Italian government's submission to the interests of the major oil companies is manifest. After the first oil crisis in 1973, Italy was the only industrialized nation to increase its imports of hydrocarbons—from 67% to 81%—while France, Germany, Japan, and even the United Kingdom and the United States decidedly lowered their dependency. After the farcical 1987 nuclear referendum, Italy shut down the Trino and Caorso nuclear plants, and halted work on the Montalto di Castro plant.

Oil has been known as a fuel for over 150 years. Its industrial exploitation began in 1870. Despite wars, government interventions, and secret service maneuvers, the control of production, refinement, and transport has remained largely in the same hands: seven large companies linked by tacit cartel agreements which give them a kind of monopoly. The division of zones of influence between the Anglo-Dutch BP and Shell, and the American Esso and Mobil, was first set up on Sept. 17, 1928 at Achnacarry Castle in Scotland, property of Shell's Sir Henry Deterting, where they decided to crush all outside competition.

The Anglo-Persian Oil Company,

better known as British Petroleum, was until 1987 the majority stockholder of the British government. The OSS, the pre-CIA U.S. intelligence service, was run by such figures as Paul Mellon of the Mellon family, which long controlled Gulf Oil, and John Archibold of Rockefeller's Standard Oil.

The tragic example of how the companies operated on Italian soil is Enrico Mattei. The president of Italy's National Hydrocarbons Entity, ENI, wanted to use the wealth from oil reserves to unlock the rapid development of Middle Eastern countries. Mattei's famous deal with Iran, in which he was ready to pay 25% more for oil to the producing countries than the companies, was a mortal threat to what he was the first to call the Seven Sisters. Mattei had also stated in more than one public speech, that he wanted to found an Arab Development Bank.

His policy would have brought development and lasting peace to the Middle East. Nearly 30 years after his death, the ongoing monopoly of the companies has instead led to destruction and wars throughout the Gulf countries. The companies used the U.S. government, especially the State Department and CIA, against Mattei's vision. Even though Mattei was a staunch Atlanticist, journalists in the Seven Sisters' pay wrote vile slanders against him, accusing him of being a dictator, an underhanded manipulator, a corrupter, and even a possible Soviet agent.

In a State Department secret report cited by Roberto Faenza (*Il Malaffare*, Mondadori, 1978, p. 41) before

Mattei's death, U.S. agents stressed that the ENI head was unmovable unless extreme measures were taken: "Unfortunately Mattei, although technically in the employ of the state, conducts his operations in the same way as a capitalist magnate. He obtains protection from political interferences, distributing money under the table to members of Parliament and the press. He has managed to get a law passed on petroleum, reserving to ENI all geological exploitation, and putting off for centuries the possibility of exploring in depth in the territories of the peninsula. What is even more dangerous in Mattei is his appetite: He is trying to create a series of new industries which could destroy private enterprise. . . . For this reason the restriction on Mattei's power and the reduction to zero of his ability to influence the government illegally, could remove from the Italian scene the political and economic threat he represents." Further on one reads: "Not only does Mattei try to control Italian oil resources, but he hopes to be able to control all energy resources, including atomic energy."

On Oct. 27, 1962, the MS-760 plane in which Enrico Mattei, *Time* magazine journalist William McHale, and pilot Irnerio Bertuzzi were flying, blew up in flight near Milan. The dossier on Mattei's death compiled by the CIA station in Rome on Oct. 28, 1962 was never released by American authorities to investigators in Italy. "National security" reasons were given. The CIA station chief in Rome, Thomas Karamessines, who wrote the dossier, left Italy right after the ENI president died. Then-CIA director John McCone was one of the biggest shareholders in Standard Oil of California (Socal), today Chevron; at the time of Mattei's death he owned \$1 million in shares.

To be continued.