

# Nuova Rivista Storica

Anno XCIV, Maggio-Agosto 2010, Fascicolo II

## Abstracts

MASSIMO BUCARELLI, All'origine della politica energetica dell'ENI in Iran: Enrico Mattei e i negoziati per gli accordi petroliferi del 1957

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1957, the Italian state oil company AGIP and the Iranian state oil company NIOC signed a partnership agreement with the purpose of researching, producing and commercially exploiting the Iranian oil. The AGIP-NIOC deal was an unprecedented one, since for the first time the producer country was involved in the management of its oil resources. As a result, a new contracting formula enabled the Iranian State authority to share in the profits of crude oil production in addition to the royalties arising as usual from the oil concessions granted to foreign companies: Iran would get 75% of the overall profits (50% as royalty payments and 25% as revenues), whereas the Italian company would gain only 25%. Such a revolutionary agreement was supposed to have been planned and proposed personally by Enrico Mattei, the president of the Italian national energy group ENI (AGIP's parent company). To Mattei's mind, the «75-25» formula (which was also called «Mattei formula») appeared to be the only way to break the monopoly of the major Anglo-American oil companies, which had founded their power in the Middle East oil market on the «50-50» principle. Mattei's crucial objective was to attain a share in the Middle East oil market so that Italy could have its own international petroleum supply, independent of the other international corporations (which had prevented AGIP from participating in the Iranian consortium, established after the international crisis caused by the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry). As a consequence, Mattei was firmly convinced that there were no other alternatives than upsetting the «50-50» principle and weakening the existing international oil arrangements.

The article is based on new archival sources, which have been recently made available by ENI's Historical Archive and which allow to shed some more light on the negotiations that led to the AGIP-NIOC agreement of March 1957. The article argues that the overall picture is slightly different from the version which has been accepted so far. ENI was not admitted to the Iranian consortium not only due to the Anglo-American companies' unwillingness, but also because Mattei himself was in doubt as to the capability of Italy's political and diplomatic system to compete with the British and American powers. Moreover, the innovative contracting formula actually was an Iranian proposal, presented to ENI as not negotiable. ENI's management, however, immediately understood the great opportunities that such a deal could offer. Mattei and his entourage decided not only to accept the «75-25» principle, but also to build their international strategy upon such a formula, so as to play a leading role in the oil industry and fulfill the dream of achieving energy independence.