

## Italy Today. Analyzing the Viruses Sickening the Country

Marina Melchionda (December 03, 2009)



The book “Italy Today. Politics, economy, and society” is a collection of essays that analyzes various aspects of the present Italian social, political and economical situation, singling out the structural components that make the country “the sick man of Europe”. The work was presented on November 20th at Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò

On the occasion of its publication in the United States, the book “Italy Today. Politics, economy, and society” (Edited by Andrea Mammone, Giuseppe A. Veltri; [Routledge](#) [2], 2010) was presented on November 20th at Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò.

The round table of journalists, economists, and socialists reunited for the occasion was led by Mr. Gianluca Galletto, organizer of the event and member of the association iMille and collaborator to i-



Italy, and included: Claudio Gatti ([Il Sole 24 Ore](#) [3]); Matthew Kaminski ([Wall Street Journal](#) [4]); Raoul Minetti ([Michigan State University](#) [5]); Giuseppe A. Veltri ([Institute for Prospective Technological Studies](#) [6], Seville, Spain).

As Mr. Galletto pointed out in the first place, the essays collected in the book are all written in English, and thus are expressly addressed to a foreign audience rather than to the Italian one. Politics, economy, society: the work embraces a number of fields in order to offer the reader a wide retrospective and prospective of its present, past, and future. "When I read the book, I found it interesting that there was no political analysis, only social analysis presented. Going through the various chapters, I looked at the larger social and cultural trends and dynamics that explain why Italy is the sick man of Europe. Italy is a country where the common good is not only secondary, but is

Individualism is so strong that the worst nickname that you would give to a person is 'fesso' (too altruistic)", immediately added Mr. Galletto. Basing their opinions and comments on the essays found in the book, the protagonists of the round table delineated the mean deficiencies of the Italian system. Each one of them focused on one or more issues and developed them.

In order to give you a better idea of the content of the book itself, we are listing below some of the issues discussed at the Casa.

#### **Claudio Gatti:**

**MES (Middle-and-Small) COMPANIES-BASED-ECONOMY:** In Italy the family is much more important than the economy. The system is family based. The dynamics of the Italian system have thus suffered from some limits: instead of opening the doors to new members and extending their horizons, companies have preferred to remain anchored to the traditional "family-orientated-business" size and management strategies.

**UNDEVELOPED "MEZZOGIORNO", SOUTH OF THE COUNTRY:** Although it is the one of the greatest beneficiaries of support funds from Europe, the Mezzogiorno is the most undeveloped area of Italy. Money is wasted in huge quantities, destined to incomplete infrastructure efforts and the stimulus of an economy that never takes off. The responsibility for this stagnation goes not only to Berlusconi's government, but also to the center-left wing. The case of Naples is enlightening in this case. In December 1993 Center-leftist Antonio Bassolino was elected major and immediately referred as the "renaissance of the city". He has been controlling the city for 15 years but today Naples is everything but a safer place. Just to give a figure: in 1992 there were 102 organized clans, in 2006, 234.

#### **Matthew Kaminski:**

**PARALYZED POLITICAL SYSTEM.** The once leader of the center-left Romano Prodi is nothing else but the spiritual brother of Silvio Berlusconi. Prodi is an outsider as well. Although being a professor with zero charisma, he beat the latter twice. Both of them promised to create a two-party system in the country, but neither of them managed to do it. Berlusconi presented himself as a transformative figure in Italy and promised to liberalize the economy. He had five years to do it, but he failed, and Prodi took over, and viceversa...

**BIASED MEDIA:** Newspapers in Italy are TOO critical. It means that by being politically "oriented", they can't provide the public with "impartial information". The debate is thus heavily biased, and unable to propose deep structural reforms to the present political system.

#### **Raoul Minetti:**

**LACK OF CLEAR REGULATION:** Italy is a country full of laws that are often ambiguous or unclear. This pretty much paralyzes the administrative system, slows the country, and forbids it from



becoming a major power in Europe.

**Giuseppe Veltri:**

**LACK OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVENESS:** There is a significant detachment of the society from the political class that does not encourage and support it in its own efforts to improve the living conditions of the people “from the bottom”. The case of the Mezzogiorno is a good example to prove this argument: part of the society fights hard against the Mafia and underdevelopment. There are NGOs helping them, like Libera Terra, whose mission is to confiscate lands from the organized crime for social use. On the other hand, politicians, both on the national and the local level, seems to be too busy resolving their own quarrels, forgetting that people voted for them and are expecting something to improve, just as promised. This is one reason why the Mafia is still so strong in Southern Italy. Nobody talks about it, the attention of the media is diverted to the numerous scandals that involve our political representatives, either Berlusconi, Bassolino, Fini, Marrazzo or whoever else.

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