



The vicissitudes of Marco Biagi: an issue which has yet to be dealt with (*)

by Michele Tiraboschi

“Marco Biagi no longer rides his bicycle, honour to Mario Galesi (†), honour to our fellow terrorists.” This is the delirious writing that appears on the walls of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia – where Marco Biagi taught labour law and where I teach the same subject – on the 16th anniversary of his vicious assassination, a few hours before public and private commemorations and acts of remembrance took place in Modena and elsewhere. This message speaks for itself, and calls for a more general reflection, one that goes beyond these horrifying acts the human being is capable of.

As Italians, we have never managed to carry out such a reflection. Maybe we did so on the day after Marco Biagi’s assassination, where the grief was still fresh and made it possible for some glimmer of truth to emerge among the usual comments and declarations. There is something that hurts more than the words on the wall, namely those thoughts that at times have been half-said and at times have been explicitly referred to during public events, thoughts which have asserted that – while Marco Biagi’s murder had to be condemned – he was guilty of favouring unstable employment in Italy, taking the wind out of young people’s sail.

In other words, it was as if an editorial on *Il Sole 24 ore*, for which Marco enjoyed writing, or a well-documented White Paper could trigger unstable employment in Italy’s labour market. This was, of course, a far-fetched assumption, especially if we consider that in the years Marco Biagi served as a government consultant, Italy reported the highest levels of unemployment and inactivity rates for youth and women, and the highest share of undeclared work in Europe. Italy also headed the list of European countries where pseudo-self employment and the abuse of internships were widespread.

We have already documented that the true nature and purpose of Marco Biagi’s reform project was his honest and brave commitment to creating a fair and more inclusive labour market.

On this occasion, it appears to be more useful – and even more urgent – to remind to those who are surprised by the profound lacerations in our society and the growing resentment marking our country, that we are witnessing the negative effects of a time we have yet to deal with. Evidence of this time can be seen in the carelessness used when remembering the 40th anniversary – of the attacks committed by the Red Brigades on 16 March, 1978 – during which the terrorists were allowed to speak and to go so far as to argue that “being a victim has become a full-time occupation.”

After many years, I can say that Marco Biagi did not view himself as a “bourgeois hero,” nor did he aim at being awarded plates and medals to remember him. He was an idealist, but by no means naïve or utopian. As a father and as a man, he feared this “bullfight atmosphere” – as

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† Mario Galesi, a member of the “Red Brigades” terrorist commando, was found guilty of taking part in Marco Biagi’s murder.

he wrote in an article published in *Il Sole 24 Ore* on 28 November, 2001 – was being fuelled by many acting in bad faith, for political or intellectual purposes. They contributed to distorting his ideas with the only goal of “fomenting the most irrational protesters against the modernisation of the labour market” and providing a misleading picture of him.

As Andrea Casalegno wrote in *Il Sole 24 Ore* on 21 March, 2002: “Marco Biagi has been regarded as an enemy by his assassins also because his ideas were distorted. This is why today it is not enough to condemn his murderers, especially if there is not a willingness to consider any political opponent first and foremost as a person worthy of respect, especially their ideas.” For this reason, I think it is important that Marco Biagi should be publicly remembered, even by those who do not enjoy being pushed into the limelight. This is not meant to be a drawn-out commemoration, but a battle for the truth. Marco Biagi’s death was absurd and unjust and took place in a climate of hate and intolerance which has not yet dissolved. It is up to all of us to ensure that things do not worsen and reach a point of no return.

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