

GET SKILLED AND GET OUT: POST-WWII ITALIAN EMIGRANTS AND  
TRANSNATIONAL TRAINING

By

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## ABSTRACT

### GET SKILLED AND GET OUT: POST-WWII ITALIAN EMIGRANTS AND TRANSNATIONAL TRAINING

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Increasingly after WWII, both traditional and new destination countries for Italian immigrants maintained the sponsorship system and imposed skill-based selection criteria. In the United States and Canada demands for skilled workers replaced pre-WWII ethnic-based criteria. To prevent labor shortages, the developed Western European countries requested immigrants skilled in specific trades. After twenty years of restrictive fascist migratory policies, the fledgling Italian Republic not only resuscitated its support for emigration but also made it the centerpiece of postwar reconstruction. In the eyes of Italian authorities, emigration became a way to relieve unemployment and bolster the lagging economy through emigrants' remittances. Grounded in an analysis of Italian state and provincial archival sources, oral interviews, and emigration conference proceedings, this dissertation examines the reactions of Italian state authorities, migration experts, and Italian emigrants to the demands for skilled workers. In doing so, it adopts the emigrant country's point of view and explores the formal and informal training Italian emigrants obtained before and/or after their departure. Whereas the previous literature has focused on the receiving countries and their migration policies, this dissertation focuses on the reactions to them and the variety of skill development Italian emigrants went through.

To capture the full range of emigrants' vocational training experiences, this dissertation situates postwar Italian migration in international, national, and local contexts. The first part (Chapters 1 and 2) analyzes the international arena and the economic circumstances that shaped vocational training, including anti-communist propaganda, North America's booming industrial

and urban development, and the European integration process. The second part (Chapter 3) moves away from the international scene to investigate state-run vocational training in Italy. On the one hand, this part describes the Italian state's engagement in the establishment of vocational courses and schools for its citizens. On the other hand, it exposes the inconsistencies of the Italian state interventions through the critiques of migration experts and labor union representatives. The third part (Chapters 4 and 5) examines the migratory experiences between Italy and North America of the inhabitants of the town of Casalvieri, south east of Rome. Unskilled in the eyes of the North American authorities, Casalvierani drew on family networks, pre-migration characteristics, and informal training to become skilled construction workers and entrepreneurs in Detroit, greater Los Angeles and San Diego, as well as the region between Toronto and Windsor, Canada.

By adopting a three-tiered analysis and Italy's point of view, this dissertation ultimately argues that the request for skilled workers benefited Italian schools and vocational training in the long term. Furthermore, it emphasizes that the coexistence of skill-based criteria and family reunification in North American immigration policies allowed unskilled or informally skilled Italian emigrants to bypass the inconsistent Italian state's vocational training programs and create their own migratory paths and skill-building processes.

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Putting in words years of archival research and constant engaging with scholarly literature has not been an easy task. It was surely a challenge, yet a very rewarding one. It introduced me to the mysteries of the historian's craft and showed me that the work of a historian cannot be done in solitude. Contrary to my initial expectations, writing history needs time to "breathe" and take shape through others' feedback and support. Amidst the adversities and the difficulties of writing my dissertation, I learned the profound meaning of gratitude to an army of colleagues and friends on both sides of the ocean.

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Skills and Human Mobility, a Relation Worthy of Investigation*

The Republic upholds work in every form and application. It takes care of training and professional advancement. It encourages and favors agreements and international organizations created to affirm and regulate the right to work. It acknowledges the freedom to emigrate.  
(Italy, Constitution, Art. 35)

When the Founding Fathers of the Italian Republic inserted article 35 in the Italian Constitution (1947), they outlined with large strokes postwar Italian working and migration policy and adumbrated the main themes of my dissertation: work, training, professional development, international organizations, and freedom to move. After twenty years of Fascism, the re-opening of Italian borders, Italian participation in the primary postwar international organizations, and the slow but increasing integration process of Western European economies seemed to foretell a new era of Italian emigration and, perhaps, even a borderless world.<sup>1</sup> Yet, Italians were free to move only to a certain degree.

Increasingly after WWII, while maintaining the sponsorship system, both traditional and new destination countries for Italian immigrants demanded that they become skilled workers. The imposition of skills and specific abilities as selection criteria for immigrants, I want to be clear, was not completely unknown in the pre-WWII receiving countries' migration policies. Yet, it was at the end of WWII that these new criteria became the backbone of immigration regulations.<sup>2</sup> This dissertation tells the story of human mobility and emigrants' vocational training from the emigrant country's point of view, in this case Italy. It investigates how,

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<sup>1</sup> Federico Romero, *Emigrazione e Integrazione Europea, 1945-1973* (Roma:Edizioni Lavoro, 1991); Federico Romero, "L'emigrazione Operaia in Europa (1948-1973)," in *Storia dell'Emigrazione Italiana*, ed. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina, vol. I, Partenze (Roma: Donzelli, 2001), 397–414. Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in Movimento: l'Emigrazione Italiana in Europa, 1945-57* (Roma: Donzelli, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> The skills requested by both the US and Canada were not specified. Yet, the categories of skilled workers more requested by North American employers and trained in the Italian vocational training courses were: mechanics, carpenters, cement layers, cabinet-makers, mosaic and terrazzo workers, car electricians, electricians, plumbers, forgers, milling-machine operators, welders, and turners.

immediately after the end of WWII, Italian government authorities and Italian migrants reacted to the pressing demand for skilled workers in industrialized countries. I ultimately argue that: 1) the requests for skilled and trained migrant workers in the long term benefitted Italian schools and the vocational training system, and 2) the coexistence of skill-based criteria and family reunification in North American immigration policies allowed Italian emigrants who did not have formal training to reach North America and, afterward, to become skilled workers.

The motivations behind the implementation of Italian emigrants' vocational training, the debates surrounding it, and the ways in which individual migrants—through formal or informal channels—became skilled cannot be found in just one dimension. Italian emigrants' training was a multi-faceted, heterogeneous, and complex process. To capture this process, I situate post-WWII Italian migrations in global, national, and local contexts.<sup>3</sup> My analysis utilizes a three-tiered framework. At the *international level*, I look at the ways in which post-WWII migration policies, Cold War ideology, and the process of European integration shaped and encouraged the discourse regarding the necessity to train migrants. At the *national level*, I examine the Italian government's request for international funding and for receiving countries' expertise in the establishment of vocational courses. At the *local level*, I describe the migratory and training experiences of the immigrants from the town of Casalvieri, Italy, to the United States and Canada.

This tri-level analysis—international, national, and local—allows me to examine transnational training from above and below. On the one hand, Italian authorities engaged with receiving countries and international organizations for the improvement of the Italian labor force (i.e. transnational training from above). On the other hand, Casalvierani drew on their own

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<sup>3</sup> Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Page Moch, eds., *European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 3.

informal training and/or networks of relatives abroad to pursue a vocational training which took place in both their hometown and their North American destinations (i.e. transnational training from below).

My focus on skills, Italian emigrants' vocational training, and the adoption of the sending country's viewpoint allows me to redefine the previous narrative concerning immigrant laborers. Scholars have analyzed the impact of the growing interference of governments—especially receiving ones—on the postwar migration flow. They also have emphasized the tendency of European and North American industrialized countries to treat immigrant laborers—both unskilled and skilled—as a cheap "reservoir" from which to fill in labor shortages or to fill occupations deserted by the indigenous population.<sup>4</sup> These works uncovered significant aspects of post-WWII migration history but they employed a uni-lateral vision of migration. Their focus on the receiving countries and the repercussions, both positive and negative, immigrants experienced, ignored emigrants and sending countries' *reactions* and *responses* to these new selection criteria.

The interpretation of migration as an epiphenomenon of the broader capitalist economic development drew attention to significant structural dynamics and put in perspective theories based solely on individual immigrants' decision-making. However, it perpetrated the idea that economic power is always synonymous with cultural and political power. Post-WWII human mobility was much more than an unequal relation between receiving and sending countries.

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Piore, *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Annie Phizacklea and Robert Miles, *Labour and Racism*. (London and Boston: Routledge, 1980); Oded Stark, *The Migration of Labour* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Jon Goss and Bruce Lindquist, "Conceptualizing International Labor Migration: A Structuration Perspective," *International Migration Review* 29, No.2 (1995): 317-351. Leo Lucassen, *The Immigrant Threat: The Integration of Old and New Migrants in Western Europe since 1850* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

Immigration was not only in the economic self-interest of the United States, Canada, and Europe, but benefitted Italian economy as well.

Inspired by Barbara Schmitter Heisler's article on the sending countries' policies in the post-WWII European migration experience, my dissertation shows that Italy, regardless of its difficult economic conditions and its need to send its surplus of workers abroad, actively participated in the Cold War international arenas, adopted ideological narratives for its own benefit and made emigration a substantial part of its own post-WWII reconstruction.<sup>5</sup> Often jointly with receiving countries and international organizations, Italian governmental authorities established vocational schools and courses specifically tailored to the training needs of prospective emigrants. In sum, Italy did not accept these changes passively but chose an active response for the benefit of its citizens and the state.

Simultaneously, the analysis of the local level permits me to put in perspective the Italian states' interventions in emigrants' training. The state efforts in this sense were not always consistent. Italian schools and courses were not homogeneously distributed in the peninsula and within regions. Untouched by state interventions and training programs, many young unemployed Italians seemed destined to remain unskilled. Yet rather than giving up their migratory plans, these prospective emigrants compensated for the short-comings of the state's programs by activating networks of relatives abroad. They left on the basis of family reunification and, in the process, sought out informal training opportunities.

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<sup>5</sup> Schmitter Heisler Barbara, "Sending Countries and the Politics of Emigration and Destination," *International Migration Review* 19, no. 3 (Autumn 1985), 470-71.

## *Post-WWII Italian Emigration: A Brief Overview*

At the end of the Second World Conflict, the fast resumption of Italian emigration did not come as a surprise.<sup>6</sup> Post-WWII Italian emigration would never again reach the level of the pre-WWI era, but the three decades following the Second World War showed a significant increase in Italian emigration. Between 1946 and 1970, almost seven million Italians emigrated, of these, three million moved permanently.<sup>7</sup> After the paralysis of emigration by the restrictive Fascist migration policies, post-WWII Italy resuscitated its support for emigration. Scholars agree that Italian democratic governmental authorities believed emigration to be the only way to relieve the staggering unemployment that was Italy's inheritance from its inconsistent and discontinuous industrial development.<sup>8</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, a few northern cities industrialized, while the rest of the peninsula, particularly the southern regions, lagged behind. During the 1920s and 30s, the Fascist laws, by opposing both movement from the countryside to the cities and international emigration, inflated the numbers of unemployed. At the end of WWII, statistics counted two million unemployed Italians that the national economy (partially destroyed by the war) had no way to absorb.<sup>9</sup>

A report compiled in March 1949 by the General Directorate of Emigration (DGE)—a special branch of the Italian Department of Foreign Affairs—illustrates the Italian government's enthusiastic approach to emigration. This 1949 report listed the positive effects that emigration could have on the Italian economy. First, it would relieve the state from the four hundred billion

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<sup>6</sup> Gianfausto Rosoli, "Un Quadro Globale Della Diaspora Italiana Nelle Americhe," *Altretalia*, no. 8 (December 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Giuseppe M. Lucrezio and Luigi Favero, "Un Quarto Di Secolo Di Emigrazione Italiana," *Studi Emigrazione* 9 (June 1972), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Gian Battista Sacchetti, "Cento Anni Di Politica dell'Emigrazione," in *Un Secolo Di Emigrazione Italiana, 1876-1976*, ed. Gianfranco Rosoli (Rome: Centro Studi Emigrazione, 1978), 260.

<sup>9</sup> Archivio Storico Ministero degli Affari Esteri (hereafter AS-MAE), Ambasciata d'Italia in Washington (1947-1950), Box 56, Folder (hereafter F.) 1609 "Memorandum Emigrazione, 1950."

lire allocated for annually for the unemployed. Second, emigrants' remittances would ease Italy's debt burden.<sup>10</sup> The DGE emphasized that in 1939 emigrant remittances helped cover more than 50 percent of the Italian deficit. Third, emigration would act as a safety valve for social tensions. A better standard of living and higher incomes would prevent public disorders.<sup>11</sup>

The Christian Democratic Italian Prime Minister, Alcide de Gasperi, relentlessly made emigration a pivot of the Italian Democratic Republic's foreign relations, particularly its European policy. During the 1950s, Italian authorities strove to place the surplus workers in foreign labor markets. The growing economies of some European and overseas countries seemed very promising. Besides traditional pre-WWI destinations (the United States, Brazil, and Argentina) new ones appeared on the Italian migratory horizons (Australia, Canada, and Venezuela). Overall, most post-WWII Italian emigrants took the path to European countries. European destinations received the 3/4 of this new Italian migratory flow. France and Belgium topped the list among the receiving European Economic Community (EEC) countries. Although Italian interest in Belgium progressively declined in the 1950s, Italian immigration to France continued steadily until 1958 and slowly reduced afterwards. During the second half of the 1950s, thanks to its booming industry, West Germany replaced France as Italians' most important destination. Outside the EEC, Switzerland played a very important role for Italian emigrants. Notwithstanding the marked Europeanization of the post-WWII immigrant flow, North American destinations continued to play an important role. In the years between 1952 and 1957, the

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<sup>10</sup> On the importance of emigrants' remittances for the sending country's balance of payments see, Confalonieri Maria Antonietta, "Le Rimesse Degli Emigranti E l'Economia Delle Zone Di Partenza," *Studi Emigrazione* 16 (1979): 5–40.

<sup>11</sup> Lucrezio and Favero, "Un Quarto Di Secolo Di Emigrazione Italiana," 38-39

percentage of Italians expatriated to the United States and Canada almost doubled from 18 to 35 percent since the end of the war.<sup>12</sup> (Figure 1.)

The growing interventions of nation-states in the regulation and control of human mobility differentiated the post-WWII migration practices from those of the past. Assisted emigration, the product of intergovernmental agreements, began to aid emigration undertaken through the volition of individuals. These intergovernmental agreements were also primarily responsible for shaping the immigration countries' requests for manpower. Additionally, these two typologies (assisted and individual emigration) lay at the heart of the difference between post-WWII European and overseas emigration. Assisted emigration characterized European immigration, whereas individual immigration dominated the movement to North America and overseas destinations in general.<sup>13</sup>

More specifically, Italian immigration to industrialized and more developed European countries passed through a series of bilateral agreements stipulated between 1946 and 1955.<sup>14</sup> In a few cases, these agreements—signed between Italy and the receiving countries—required the exchange of laborers for goods. The fact that Italy lacked raw materials and urgently needed to send its workers abroad put the peninsula in a weak contractual position.<sup>15</sup> The tap on/tap off approach to foreign labor adopted by the receiving countries satisfied their temporary and contingent needs for manpower, while leaving Italy's structural problems unchanged. Italian authorities' ceaseless requests for multilateral agreements and for the intervention of supranational entities in the management of migratory problems were a response to the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>13</sup> Andreina De Clementi, *Il Prezzo Della Ricostruzione. L'emigrazione Italiana Nel Secondo Dopoguerra* (Roma: Laterza, 2010), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Romero, *Emigrazione e integrazione europea, 1945-1973*, 37-38.

<sup>15</sup> Luciano Tosi, "La Tutela Internazionale dell'Emigrazione," in *Storia dell'Emigrazione Italiana*, ed. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina, vol. 2, Arrivi (Rome: Donzelli Editore, 2002), 450.

inadequacies of these bilateral agreements.<sup>16</sup> The fluctuating economies and manpower needs of the receiving countries influenced the nature and character of Italian emigration. For instance, Italian immigration to Switzerland was markedly seasonal and temporary. The data regarding Italian post-WWII return migration reveal that, in general, Italian immigration to Europe was more temporary than that to overseas destinations. (Table 3 and Table 4)

In the United States and Canada, which are the focus of this dissertation, Italian immigration happened mostly by sponsorship. This system allowed Italians who were permanent residents or citizens of the United States or Canada to sponsor both immediate and distant relatives by guaranteeing their stay financially. As I demonstrate in the first chapter, parallels existed between the migration policies and motivations of the United States and Canada. For example, both countries experienced an increasing demand for skilled workers to employ in booming post-war industries and construction. However, these countries also expressed policies and attitudes toward Italians that were at odds with each other. The United States had been a destination for mass Italian emigration at the turn of the twentieth century. After WWII, Italians willing to move to the United States had to navigate the discriminatory quotas imposed during the 1920s that limited the legal immigration of Southern and Eastern Europeans. In Canada, notwithstanding the Canadian establishment's preference for British subjects, in the immediate postwar years the booming economy encouraged Canadian authorities to stipulate special agreements—very similar to those signed with European countries—for the recruitment of agriculturalists, lumberjacks, and miners. In a few years the unexpected expansion of the manufacturing sector and of the infrastructure persuaded Canadian authorities to open the borders even more. The need for workers and the policies' emphasis on family reunification

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<sup>16</sup> Romero, *Emigrazione e integrazione europea, 1945-1973*, 46-47.

enormously benefitted Italians. Between 1948 and 1967, 90 percent of the Italians in Canada arrived as sponsored relatives and primarily relied on family networks.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Contingent Nature of Skills*

Since the end of WWII, the connection between skills and migration has become central to policies and discourses related to human mobility. The contemporary *brain circulation* and *brain drain* phenomena epitomize this trend. Today as in the past, immigrant workers move because they are equipped with specific manual, technical, or intellectual skills. The skills preferred by the countries of destination were and continue to be contingent on economic, labor, and political circumstances. The relation between human mobility and skills—a topic of interest in sociological works—has received little attention from historians. Scholars have written about the adoption of skill-based criteria at the migration policy level or addressed the topic in long and detailed historical overviews concerning post-WWII immigration history.<sup>18</sup> However, they have not delved into the dynamics of the vocational training that prospective emigrants went through to become skilled. Only very recently has the narrative of transnational emigrants' vocational training in the post-WWII period attracted scholars' attention.<sup>19</sup>

Scholarly interest in the connection between human mobility and training seems to be limited to receiving states' contingent concerns. For instance, the centrality of high-skilled individuals (i.e. formally trained and holders of Masters or Ph.D. degrees) in contemporary

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<sup>17</sup> Bruno Ramirez, "In Canada," in *Storia dell'Emigrazione Italiana*, ed. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina, vol. 2, Arrivi (Rome: Donzelli Editore, 2002), 93.

<sup>18</sup> Roger Daniels and Otis L. Graham, *Debating American Immigration, 1882--Present* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001); Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern*, (Kingston, Ont: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Ninette Kelley and M. J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Lina Venturas, Tourgeli Panagiota, and Yiannis Papadopoulos, "A Transnational History of ICEM" (presented at the European Social Science History Conference, Vienna, April 23, 2014).

migration flows has generated a plethora of studies. If one types "skills and migration" into any library research engine, s/he will soon discover that the last decade has witnessed a burgeoning literature about this topic. The majority of these articles and monographs focus on the contemporary emigration of highly-skilled professionals from developing countries. Usually written by sociologists and, in some cases, for the use of destination countries' state authorities, these works rarely historicize this phenomenon.<sup>20</sup> Yet, the concept of skills is a contingent one; one is considered skilled or unskilled according to the sometimes discordant parameters established by the receiving and the sending countries.

On the American side, the investigation of immigrants' skill level has received increasing attention from economists since the 1970s. The studies of Barry Chiswick and George Borjas are exemplary of this trend.<sup>21</sup> These two economists, like sociologists interested in the experiences of contemporary high-skilled immigrants, responded to growing American concerns over the post-1960s arrival *en masse* of unskilled Latin Americans and Asians to the United States. These authors criticized the 1965 US Immigration and Naturalization Act. This act

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<sup>20</sup> Demetrios G. Papademetriou, *Balancing Interests: Rethinking U.S. Selection of Skilled Immigrants*, International Migration Policy Program 4 (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996); Pia M. Orrenius, *Beside the Golden Door: U.S. Immigration Reform in a New Era of Globalization* (Washington, D.C: AEI Press, 2010); Vijay Agnew, ed., *Diaspora, Memory and Identity a Search for Home* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Yevgeny Kuznetsov, ed., *Diaspora Networks and the International Migration of Skills How Countries Can Draw On their Talent Abroad*, WBI Development Studies (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2006); Bela Galgoczi, *EU Labour Migration in Troubled Times Skills Mismatch, Return, and Policy Responses* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012); Harriet Orcutt Duleep and Phanindra V. Wunnava, eds., *Immigrants and Immigration Policy: Individual Skills, Family Ties, and Group Identities*, (Greenwich, Conn: JAI Press, 1996); Holger Kolb and Henrik Egbert, eds., *Migrants and Markets: Perspectives from Economics and the Other Social Sciences*, IMISCOE Research (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008); Jesús Alquézar Sabadie, ed., *Migration and Skills the Experience of Migrant Workers from Albania, Egypt, Moldova, and Tunisia*, Directions in Development. Human Development (Washington, DC: World Bank; ETF, 2010). Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, *Wanted and Welcome? Policies for Highly Skilled Immigrants in Comparative Perspective* (New York, NY: Springer, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Barry R. Chiswick, "Is the New Immigration Less Skilled Than the Old?," *Journal of Labor Economics* 4, no. 2 (April 1986): 168–92; George J. Borjas, "National Origin and the Skills of Immigrants in the Postwar Period," in *Immigration and the Workforce: Economic Consequences for the United States and Source Areas*, ed. George J. Borjas and Richard B. Freeman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 17–48; Barry R. Chiswick, "High Skilled Immigration in the International Arena," *Iza Discussion Papers*, no. No. 1782 (2005): 1–8; Barry R. Chiswick, *The Economics of Immigration: Selected Papers of Barry R. Chiswick* (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2005); George J. Borjas and Richard B. Freeman, *Immigration and the Work Force: Economic Consequences for the United States and Source Areas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

removed the discriminatory national origins quotas in force since 1924. Simultaneously, by overturning the emphasis on skills and education of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, it made family reunification the central objective of US immigration policy.<sup>22</sup>

Like Borjas, Chiswick includes family reunification among the factors that profoundly altered the skills' composition of the post-1965 immigrant body to the United States. For instance, this economist points out that soon after the issue of the act, Asian immigrants started coming to the US as skilled workers. The anti-Asian US immigration policies had curtailed the arrival of a consistent number of Asian immigrants in the period before 1965. As a consequence, post-1965 Asian immigrants could not count on kinship networks or on sponsorship. However, as soon as these skilled Asian workers started sponsoring their relatives and gave birth to a significant chain migration, the qualifications of this immigrant group declined.<sup>23</sup> Data and statistics indicating the inexorable waning of immigrants' skill level—Borjas and Chiswick ultimately argued—required the distribution of more visas based on immigrants' skills and education.

Similarly to the American case, Canadian experts and scholars—mostly political scientists and economists—wrote about post-WWII skills and migration from an institutional point of view, and with the purpose of understanding the impact of immigration on the stock of professional and skilled manpower in Canada.<sup>24</sup> The focus on migration policies and the data

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<sup>22</sup> George J. Borjas, "National Origin and the Skills of Immigrants in the Postwar Period," in *Immigration and the Workforce: Economic Consequences for the United States and Source Areas*, ed. George J. Borjas and Richard B. Freeman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 20.

<sup>23</sup> Barry R. Chiswick, "Is the New Immigration Less Skilled Than the Old?," *Journal of Labor Economics* 4, no. 2 (April 1986), 174-177. Both Borjas and Chiswick included illegal immigration, usually unskilled, and low educational level of the post-1960s immigrants as significant factors in the declining of the skill characteristics of the immigrant group under study.

<sup>24</sup> David Corbett, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1957-1962," *International Journal* 18, no. 2 (April 1, 1963): 166-80; Parai, Louis, "Immigration and Emigration of Professional and Skilled Manpower During the Post-War Period" (Ottawa, Canada, June 1965), Special Study No.1 Economic Council of Canada; Alan G. Green, *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy* (Toronto, Ontario: Macmillan of Canada, 1976); Freda Hawkins, *Canada and*

provided are invaluable resources for the contextualization of the milieu in which Italian emigrants' vocational training happened. Yet in both cases, the American and the Canadian, the attention to the impact of unskilled immigrants on the receiving economies and societies overshadowed two other significant aspects: 1) class, racial, gender, and ethnic prejudices encountered by immigrants in the receiving societies, and 2) the effects of these migration policies on the migrants themselves and their sending countries. Additionally, the predominant attention to the institutional and policy side of immigration did not allow these scholars and experts to look beyond the rigid dichotomy of skilled and unskilled.

During the 1990s, US scholars treated the dichotomy 'kinship based' versus 'occupational skill based' screening with greater flexibility. By doing so, they put in perspective the excessive trust placed by receiving countries in skill-based criteria as factors which improved the quality of immigrants and their integration into the American labor market. In 1995, Guillermina Jasso and Mark Rosenzweig (respectively a sociologist and an economist), in their analysis of the US immigrant cohort and their naturalization records between 1977 and 1990, offered an alternative interpretation of post-WWII immigration to the United States. These two scholars emphasized that, in the long term, immigrants screened for their occupational skills do not always perform better than those screened for family reunification. The differential between these two immigrant categories is almost non-existent because kinship immigrants have access to family networks and are not a burden to the system, whereas employers screen for short-term productivity, sponsoring

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*Immigration*. Harold Troper, "Canada's Immigration Policy since 1945," *International Journal* 48, no. 2 (April 1, 1993): 255–81; Alan G. Green and David A. Green, "The Economic Goals of Canada's Immigration Policy: Past and Present," *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques* 25, no. 4 (December 1, 1999): 425–51.

relatives may screen for long-term adaptability and productivity, and native-born U.S. citizens who sponsor their spouse may be particularly good at selecting for long-term success.<sup>25</sup>

The attention given to social capital (i.e. networks and family ties) in the shaping of immigrants' experiences ushered in a series of studies that ultimately looked at kinship-based screening as a very effective tool for success in America. Harriet Duleep and Mark Regets proved that "family-based immigrants have lower entry earnings but higher growth than employment-based immigrants."<sup>26</sup> In their study of the impact of social networks on Mexican migrants, Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes and Kusum Mundra showed that networks (both friendship and family ties) promote the rise of both unauthorized and legal migrants' hourly wages.<sup>27</sup> More recently, Kerry Abrams, a Professor of Law, underlined family members' greater ability to screen relatives and the more secure base of family-sponsored immigration when compared to that which is employment-based.<sup>28</sup> I am in debt to the scholarship that included social capital and emphasized the hiring qualities of family-based immigration. It provided me with a theoretical framework for my investigation of the Casavieira's informal training and entrepreneurship (chapters 4 and 5). Yet, even in this scholarship, the focus on immigrants' performance in America tended to neglect migrants' pre-migration characteristics.

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<sup>25</sup> Guillermina Jasso and Mark Rosenzweig, "Do Immigrants Screened for Skills Do Better than Family Reunification Immigrants?," *International Migration Review* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 85.

<sup>26</sup> Harriet Orcutt Duleep and Mark Regets, "Admission Criteria and Immigrant Earnings Prof. s," *International Migration Review* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1996), 571.

<sup>27</sup> Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes and Kusum Mundra, "Social Networks and Their Impact On the Earnings of Mexican Migrants," *Demography* 44, no. 4 (November 2007), 859.

<sup>28</sup> Kerry Abrams, "What Makes the Family Special?," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 80, no. 1 (January 1, 2013), 20.

## *The Transnational Training Paradigm*

The elaboration of the transnational emigrants' vocational training paradigm enormously benefitted from the work that elaborated on the transnational trend, and also from their attention to the sending country. An increasing interest in emigration countries developed between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s when migration scholars started framing their work in a transnational perspective.<sup>29</sup> This has been particularly true of scholars investigating Italian immigrants. Given the high percentage of Italians who returned home, Nancy Foner argued that Italians were the quintessential transnational New Yorkers of the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century.<sup>30</sup> In *Italy's Many Diasporas*, Donna Gabaccia defines transnationalism as "a way of life that connects family, work and consciousness in more than one national territory. Migration made transnationalism a normal dimension of life for many."<sup>31</sup> It is by now common wisdom that migrants transcended national boundaries in establishing family disciplines, reproduction, romance, inheritance, and economic security.

In 1996, Dirk Hoerder argued that the study of migration needs to acknowledge immigrants' conditions in the sending societies, during the actual movement and in the receiving countries. First, Hoerder states, it is necessary to investigate immigrants' pre-migration mentalities: social relationships and self-selection based on class, status and gender. Second, it is important to look at their experience during the voyage and their admission into the new society. Finally, we cannot neglect analysis of the significance of job opportunities, political structures

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<sup>29</sup> For "transnationalism" as a new analytical model to investigate immigration from both a macro and a micro perspective see, Steven J. Gold, "Transnationalism and Vocabularies of Motive in International Migration: The Case of Israelis in the United States," *Sociological Perspectives* 40, no. 3 (January 1, 1997): 409–27.

<sup>30</sup> Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration* (New Haven [Conn.]: New York: Yale University Press ; Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), 173.

<sup>31</sup> Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, Global Diasporas (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 11.

and other social factors—such as leisure, childbearing, and opportunities to exercise citizens' rights—offered to immigrants in the countries of destination.<sup>32</sup>

Hoerder's insights were the result of the progress made by migration scholarship, which occurred at the end of the 1980s. John Bodnar's *The Transplanted* redefined once and for all the image of the alienated and estranged rural immigrants in an urban and industrialized America. This image had been powerful in migration scholarship since 1951 when Oscar Handlin published *The Uprooted*.<sup>33</sup> Immigrants' cultural and social background became the key elements in explaining their adaptation to the unknown environment of the receiving countries. Special attention to immigrant networks, socio-cultural baggage, and the progressive realization that immigrants were not "uprooted" but if anything "transplanted," encouraged migration scholars to sneak a peek at the sending country. This latter remained in some cases just a "peek," usually relegated to a few pages in monographs' introductory chapter.

The acknowledgement of immigrants as transnational individuals and, I would add, of migration as a transnational project favored the inclusion in the "migratory tale" of those traditionally excluded, especially, women who stayed behind. In the 2001 collection of essays, *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives*, Linda Reeder and Andreina De Clementi investigated how the emigration of large number of men from southern Italy at the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century redefined and altered southern Italian gender roles.<sup>34</sup> More specifically, in *Widows in White*, Reeder dealt with the consequences that migration had in the homeland, in this particular case in the small village of Sutera, Sicily, in the period between 1880 and 1920. Here, women left

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<sup>32</sup> Dirk Hoerder, "From Migrants to Ethnics: Acculturation in a Societal Framework" in *European Migrants*, 211-262.

<sup>33</sup> John E. Bodnar, *The Transplanted A History of Immigrants in Urban America*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted; the Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951).

<sup>34</sup> Donna R. Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, eds., *Women, Gender and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

behind by their immigrant husbands were temporarily responsible for registering children at school and paying taxes. They were also forced to deal with the newly-born Italian state bureaucracy. In the long run, the absence of men motivated the Italian government to encourage girls' literacy. Looking at the emigration country—or still better at the emigration village—allowed Reeder to investigate variable gender roles and relations.<sup>35</sup>

Women were essential in the migratory project not only as those who were "left behind." In 2005, Luz María Gordillo mapped out the history of Mexican immigration to and from San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, in Western Mexico, and Detroit between 1942 and 2000.<sup>36</sup> By adopting gender and sexuality as analytical lenses, Gordillo contends that Mexican women were central in the creation and support of the transnational communities created between the realities of San Ignacio and Detroit. When entering the flow of immigration and the labor force (both in Mexico and in the United States), Mexicanas challenged traditional gender roles as well as their Catholic beliefs. They proposed new notions of femininity, masculinity, parenthood, and labor in order to adapt and create a whole new set of understanding.<sup>37</sup> Similar to the Casavvierani living and working in North America, Mexican immigrants discarded or readapted old cultural customs according to the new circumstances. For instance, despite their Catholic creed, Mexicanas started using contraceptives because they learned that providing for many children in Detroit was a difficult task. As a consequence, they reinvented the concept of femininity—traditionally based on motherhood—to adapt it to the new circumstances.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Linda Reeder, *Widows in White: Migration and the Transformation of Rural Italian Women, Sicily, 1880-1920*, (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Gordillo Luz Maria, "Engendering Transnational Ties: Mexicans and the Other Sides of Immigration, 1942-2000," Ph.D. Dissertation (Michigan State University, 2005), 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

At the beginning of the 2000s, increased scholarly investigation of permanent and periodical returns home put Italy at the center stage of migration literature. In 2001, Francesco Paolo Cerase called attention to a long neglected aspect: Italian repatriations. Besides their numerical consistency, Italian returnees had an impact on the socio-economic structure of their town of origin. Returnees brought back with them expertise, skills, and knowledge acquired abroad. The majority of them came back to Italy to enjoy their retirement, and just a minority actually reinvested money and skills in Italy. The latter were not always successful in using their experiences abroad to prosper in Italy. The failure of many of these returnees, Cerase argued, tells a lot about the incomprehension and hostility experienced at the local level and the general indifference at the national level.<sup>39</sup>

Another contribution to the investigation of Italian transnational identities, with a focus on Italy, is the work of Loretta Baldassar on Italian immigrants' visits home. Through an engaging anthropological analysis on space and identity, Baldassar studied the visits home of Italian immigrants settled in Perth, Australia, to the Northern Italian town of San Fior. Baldassar concluded that the lives of Italian immigrants as well as of their second generation immigrant children were shaped by the myth of return. For Italian immigrants in Australia being a San Fiorese means coming back to Italy for summer visits. The San Fiorese in Perth live their lives across national borders and their identities are embedded in networks of relationships that connect simultaneously nation-states.<sup>40</sup>

By adopting Italy's viewpoint in the Italian diaspora, the above-mentioned works focused primarily on the transnational connections woven by the emigrants themselves, transnationalism

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<sup>39</sup> Francesco Paolo Cerase, "L'Onda Di Ritorno: I Rimpatri," in *Storia dell'Emigrazione Italiana*, ed. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina, vol. 1, Partenze (Roma: Donzelli, 2002), 113–25.

<sup>40</sup> Loretta Baldassar, *Visits Home: Migration Experiences between Italy and Australia* (Carlton South, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 6-7 and 183-184.

from below. At the end of the 2000s, Mark Choate offered another interpretation of Italian immigration history from the Italian point of view. Choate investigated how the Italian state and the Catholic Church tried to create an Italian nation abroad during the period of mass migration, 1880-1914. Their main goal was to prevent emigrants' loss of belonging to the still young Italian nation. Most importantly, amidst the Scramble for Africa, the Italian state, poor in financial capital but rich in human capital, strategically used its emigrants as pawns in the colonization of Libya and Eastern Africa.<sup>41</sup> Choate's attention to state authorities' strategic use of emigration in foreign policy does not include the viewpoints and the decision-making abilities of the subjects at the heart of this investigation, the emigrants themselves.

Migration scholarship emerged at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century matured by its awareness of migrants as quintessentially transnational individuals. The adoption of this new perspective enriched and nuanced the study of migration. It demanded and catalyzed scholars' consideration of the emigrant country. The shift from the uprooted and alienated immigrants whose lives were circumscribed upon their arrival in the receiving countries was, within fifty years, replaced by the concept of migrants as individuals capable of living simultaneously (a simultaneity that technological advancements in transportation and communication have enhanced but not “invented”) in more than one place.

If I am in debt to the aforementioned scholarship for the adoption of a transnational point of view, Franca Iacovetta's groundbreaking *Such Hardworking People* (1992) holds a special place in my thinking on the relations between emigrants' formal and informal training. In this historical investigation of the postwar Italian ethnic community in Toronto, Iacovetta provides a

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<sup>41</sup> Mark I. Choate, “Sending States’ Transnational Interventions in Politics, Culture, and Economics: The Historical Example of Italy,” *International Migration Review* 41, no. 3 (October 1, 2007): 728–768; Mark I. Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 33-34.

brief and effective description of the structural reasons which ushered in the concentration of Italians in the expanding residential construction sector of post-WWII Toronto. The absence of union dues and of the requirement for formal training programs allowed the entry of Italians in this field. Iacovetta briefly describes how the newly arrived and less experienced Italians "eagerly sought to gain an informal training in a trade while serving as apprentices or helpers to skilled tradesmen."<sup>42</sup> Her interviewees recalled informal training received from relatives in the basement of their homes. Iacovetta's hints about Italians' vocational training in the building sector became a central argument of my study, and principally of the last two chapters of this dissertation.<sup>43</sup>

Here, I show that Casavvierani's informal training, mostly in construction, started even before their departure, and was shaped by both historical circumstances, both national and regional. I believe it is essential for migration scholars, especially those working and researching in the receiving countries, to take into account the fact that mobility—permanent as well as temporary—affects and changes the lives of both the immigrants and of those left behind. In addition, the strategies Casavvierani migrants employed in their migratory and training projects exemplify the importance of human and social capital in adapting their Old World's cultural background to new circumstances in the sending countries.

On American shores, scholars of migration have already emphasized the significance of racial, gender, and class dynamics in shaping migrants' integration, or lack thereof, in receiving countries. They produced an abundant literature on Italians' ethnicity and whiteness, on the adaptations and renegotiations of gender roles, religious practices, and political ideals for new exigencies. However, even when acknowledging the importance of the sending country and its

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<sup>42</sup>Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 158.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 156-159.

effects on Italian migratory experiences, they limited the description of this elusive set of shared common values and traditions to the introductory chapter. They utilized terms like familism, and parochialism without actually delving into the local Italian experiences of the migrants under study. On the Italian side, scholars have produced two completely different historiographical trends: large overviews of Italian emigration history from the institutional point of view or micro-regional and community-based historical analysis.

The attention to emigrants' vocational training and the narratives generated around this topic allowed me to combine migration history with Italian national history and to go beyond an ethnic history of Italians in North America. Pre-migration characteristics, Italian states' intervention, return migration, gender relations, and visits home are all addressed in the pages of this dissertation. This project is, in a way, a reply to pleas by Italian migration scholars to perceive migration as intimately bound to Italian national history. In the introduction of the groundbreaking collection of essays, *Emigrazione e Storia d'Italia*, migration historian Matteo Sanfilippo encouraged national historians to incorporate monographs produced by migration scholars in their national histories. At the same time, he urged migration historians to produce more historical syntheses capable of incorporating the many insightful and yet overly fragmented regional or local case-studies.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, by putting skills at the center of my investigation, I demonstrate how the international foreign markets' privileging of skilled workers significantly shaped sending countries' interventions as well as non-emigrant workers' training, and altered the composition of the national labor force. More specifically, I show how an increase in requests for immigrants with desirable skills by American and European authorities forced the Italian government to keep

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<sup>44</sup> Matteo Sanfilippo, ed., *Emigrazione e Storia d'Italia* (Cosenza, Italy: Pellegrini Editore, 2003), 11.

up with demand. The desire of the industrialized and developed countries for trained workers challenged Italian authorities to build, reconstruct, and implement the peninsula's training courses and vocational schools' structure. These changes benefitted prospective emigrants and non-emigrants equally.

The imposition of new selective criteria brought about tangible structural changes in the Italian scenario: proliferation of vocational training courses, construction of schools, and acquisition of modern machinery for training purposes. Simultaneously, it played a huge role in the genesis of non-tangible, yet long-term theoretical discourses about modernization of training, and Italian citizens' education. Those were discourses capable of generating intense debates and exchanges of opinion. The participants in these debates—governmental authorities, migration experts, and trade unions' spokesmen—agreed about the necessity of transforming unskilled and unwanted workers into skilled and desirable immigrants. Yet, they did not always agree about what steps to take and what path to follow.

Italian governmental authorities' commitment to making Italian emigrants skilled sheds light on the proliferation of schools and courses for emigrants. Experts' critiques can elucidate inconsistencies in Italian state interventions and the variegated ideological panorama in which this training took place. Yet only a closer examination of the dynamics and networks developed at the local level allows us to move the spotlight away from formal, state-implemented training to the informal channels and networks many Italians utilized to land better paid jobs abroad. Many areas of Italy remained without training schools. Many prospective Italian emigrants left because they were sponsored by their relatives already abroad and not because they were equipped with skills. At a first glance, these immigrants would fall in the category of "unskilled"

immigrants. Only by reporting their firsthand testimonies is it possible to tell a story about skills and migration where there was previously no indication of formal training.

### *Chronological Framework*

The emigrants' formal and informal vocational training trajectory discussed in this dissertation encompasses roughly the period between the end of WWII and the end of the 1960s. Aware of the difficulty of artificially imposing "watersheds" on the continuum of time, I treat these two demarcation points flexibly. Occasionally, analyses of pre-WWII and post-1960s events provide *ad hoc* historical background and projections for the future for the main themes under analysis. The malleability of this chronological framework is particularly evident in the fourth chapter's excursion into the 1920s governmental management of emigrants' training. The numerous references to the contemporary brain drain phenomenon—which is treated in depth in the conclusion—are another example of my attempt to peek over the chronological fence.

While not original, the selection of these two chronological poles demarcates a temporal division well established in migration history. The choice of these "watersheds" is quintessentially numerically based. On the one hand, the end of the Second World Conflict and the consequent suspension of hostilities revived Italian immigration, frozen by two decades of Fascist dictatorship. On the other hand, the late 1960s are widely accepted as the end of the second Italian mass migration, the first taking place at the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century. Since the second half of the 1960s, immigrants increasingly have come to Italy from developing areas of the world, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This had been a predominately non-European immigrant wave until the beginning of the 1990s when, following the collapse of Soviet Russia, Eastern Europeans took to emigration.

Italian postwar immigration is probably the least known part of the historical Italian epic diaspora. This is true for two reasons, one broader and related to the traditional post-WWII history of immigration and another limited to the Italian case. As noticed by Marina Maccari, scholars' attention to the eighteen million post-WWII refugees and refugee policies grew to the detriment of the analysis of labor migration.<sup>45</sup> My focus on the request for skilled workers and on the various strategies adopted by immigrants to get skilled is a fundamental aspect of labor migration. A closer analysis of this facet will contribute to this underdeveloped historiographical literature.

If the focus on refugee policies monopolized the discourse of postwar migration history on a larger scale, postwar Italian immigration to the United States suffered from the special attention given to the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century Italian mass migration. Whereas it is possible to find monographs on post-WWII Italian immigration to Canada, Australia, and, especially among European scholars, to Northern and Western Europe, works on postwar Italian immigration to the United States are rare. Their number is almost negligible when compared with books and articles written on Italians moving to the US during the mass migrations around 1900. It seemed that the restrictive 1924 National Origins Act had negative effects on both the immigrants themselves and generations of migration scholars after them. Additionally, apart from a few insightful works, the majority of the scholarly work on postwar Italians in the United States focuses more on ethnicity, whiteness, and/or second-generation Italians.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Marina Maccari, "'Communists of the Stomach.' Italian Migration and International Relations in the Cold War Era.," *Studi Emigrazione* XLI, no. 155 (2004): 577; Dirk Hoerder, "Migration in the Atlantic Economies," in Hoerder and Moch, *European Migrants*, 44. Refugees and DPs ended up entering the labor markets of the destination countries anyway, so by labor migration, I mean those who did not moved as refugees but because of and in search of a job.

<sup>46</sup> On post-WWII Italian immigration history see: Danielle Battisti, "The American Committee on Italian Migration, Anti-Communism, and Immigration Reform," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2012); Maccari, Marina, "Communists of the Stomach." On the concept of whiteness and Italian immigrants to the US see: Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford

The period between the end of WWII and the end of the 1960s is of special importance for the connection between skills and human mobility. In the Cold War international scenario and during the embryonic stages of European integration, immigrants' skills and abilities played, at least in theory, a major role in setting what Aristide Zolberg defined as the criteria for the acquisition of membership in the receiving community.<sup>47</sup> Skilled and unskilled became on paper seemingly rigid categories defining wanted and unwanted migrants. These new categories swept away ethnicity, race, and national origins as selective parameters. Most importantly, the decades under examination stand as a bridge connecting the period before 1945, in which skills did not play an excessively important role, and the present state of affairs dominated by the prizing of high skilled immigrants, usually specialized in the health and IT sectors.

Cold War ideology and the US aspiration to become the democratic bastion of the postwar order explain progressive abolition in the 1950s and 1960s of the nativist 1924 National Origins Act. Especially in the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, skills, abilities, and education replaced ethnicity and race as selective criteria. Similarly but significantly later, the 1962 Canadian Immigration Regulations swept away the 1910 migration policy's privileges conferred to white, protestant British subjects to the detriment of all the other European and non European immigrants. Also in the Canadian case, immigrants' skills and training became essential parameters of selection.

Yet, beyond the ideological horizon of the Cold War era, only by taking into account the characteristics of postwar industrial and technological developments of the receiving countries' economies, can we give meaning to what "being skilled" actually entailed. The expanding North

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University Press, 2003); Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, eds., *Are Italians White?: How Race Is Made in America* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Aristide R. Zolberg, "Wanted but Not Welcome: Alien Labor in Western Development," in *Population in an Interacting World*, ed. William Alonso (Harvard University Press, 1987), 36-73.

American steel, car, and chemical industries required specialized industrial workers (*i.e.* machine operators, welders, and lathe turners), scientific managers, and an army of engineers and chemists. In the case of the US, and partially of Canada, ideological and pragmatic reasons shaped the contours of the connection between movement and skills.

Labor demands did not always obey international politics; this was the case with Italian immigration to Western and Northern Europe.<sup>48</sup> Notwithstanding the international moves toward European integration originating in the 1948 Hague Congress and strongly supported by the United States, European receiving countries continued to regulate in-movement with a very old-fashioned nationalist-oriented mentality. Interested in disposing of foreign workers as needed, Western and Northern European countries stipulated a series of bilateral agreements with Italy, which had a rich surplus of workers. The terms of these agreements were bilateral but substantially advantageous for the receiving countries. As noted by Maccari, these latter "established in advance the number of workers, the length of their stay, and the type of professions needed."<sup>49</sup>

Clearly, the developed European countries—France, Switzerland, Belgium, Great Britain, and in the second half of the 1950s, Germany—were not really interested in the achievement of a truly free circulation of workers. On the contrary, these European immigrant countries strategically used abilities and training as screening parameters and, I would add, as a justification for the rejection of Italian workers. In both contexts, the North American and the European, the request for skilled workers effectively served the receiving countries' needs. It

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<sup>48</sup> I am not implying that the Italian immigration to North America travelled along equal terms. On the contrary, as noted by Franca Iacovetta, the Canadian government ordered Italian workers in bulk, mostly leaving Italian authorities without any decisional power. See, Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*. Here, I am just pointing out that, at the ideological level, the replacement of pre-WWII racist criteria with merits and skills served North American communist paranoia better than the never-achieved European integration.

<sup>49</sup> Maccari, "Communists of the Stomach," 585.

definitely advantaged destination countries. Yet it also profoundly changed the sending country, Italy.

*Blurring Lines between the Categories of Skilled and Unskilled Migrants*

A three-tiered framework allows me to provide a much more nuanced rendition of post-WWII Italian migration history, and it helps me put in perspective the rigid categories of "unskilled" and "skilled." Recently, Marlou Scrover and Deirdre Moloney showed that "Categories of migrants are like communicating vessels: migrants can and do change categories."<sup>50</sup> Casavvierani moved between the categories of family migrants and labor migrants. Most of them, a short time after their arrival, started working, acquiring the necessary skills, and learning the language. Regarded in very narrow terms by the receiving nations, these two categories—family and labor migrants—were actually very malleable on the ground. Many Casavvierani not only learned a craft but they even became somewhat successful entrepreneurs, mostly concentrated in the construction sector.

Through Casavvierani's oral accounts, I retrace mechanisms usually overlooked in the statistics and sources produced at the state level. To understand migrants' migratory trajectories *in toto*, I investigate their pre-migration characteristics, and their informal non-state implemented training, in sum the characteristics that state authorities did not take into account. Casavvierani responded to receiving countries' restrictive in-migration regulations, and to Italy's inconsistent out-migration policies by drawing on what Leslie Page Moch and Lewis Siegelbaum defined as

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<sup>50</sup> Marlou Schrover and Deirdre M. Moloney, eds., *Gender, Migration and Categorisation* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 255.

migrants' repertoires.<sup>51</sup> Migrant networks were undoubtedly the stronghold of Casavvierani's repertoires.

Ongoing relationships with their relatives and friends abroad afforded them mobility, absorbed possible shocks, provided valuable information, and fostered their skilling process. They helped Casavvierani to *legally* transgress migrants' categories. They were sponsored as family migrants, but, in North America, they wanted to be more than sons, wives, and siblings. Casavvierani's stories allowed me to do more than write about migration history "from the bottom up." They also exposed the rigid side of their repertoires. If state in-movement regulations were in reality softer than they appeared in bureaucrats' minds, Casavvierani's strategies were, after all, strictly regulated. Gender, generation, and more generally social conformity, controlled the access to and the use, and the reproduction of these migrant networks.

In this dissertation, emigrants' vocational training is the red line that runs through and connects three levels of analysis: international, national, and local. Every level reveals several aspects and perspectives. The focus on skills allows me to embrace a variety of messages, many contexts, and multiple aspirations. I wanted to write a story about postwar Italian emigrants' vocational training and I discovered that this story is much more than movement and Italy. It is a story steeped into international relations. It is the story of postwar Italy's efforts to deal with reconstruction, and with the challenges its new international role entailed. It is the account of the progress Italy acquired in the field of training and education. It is the story of families, separations, and personal adaptations to international changes.

The attention to postwar destination countries' requests for skilled workers, and its resonance with contemporary migratory phenomena gives me the opportunity to save history

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<sup>51</sup> Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch, "Broad Is My Native Land: Repertoires and Regimes of Migration in Russia's Twentieth Century" (Ithaca, NY, 2014), 10.

from its own past. The increasing emigration of highly educated underemployed individuals from Southern Europe in search of better careers is nothing more than the evolution of the relationship between skills and human mobility. More specifically in the Italian case, there are fundamental elements of continuity between the postwar exoduses of skilled or skilled-to-be workers, and the contemporary brain drain. In both cases, immigrants do not leave out of poverty, but rather because they are tired of waiting for a fulfilling career. Quite interestingly, today as in the past, movement entails a skill building process. Many, discouraged by nepotistic attitudes and political corruption, carry on their graduate studies in academic institutions abroad. The inconsistencies of state interventions toward research, youth employment, and professional development continue to make the above-mentioned deplorable practices normal, and almost routinely accepted. For many, emigration is still the answer.

### *A Three-Tiered Structure*

The structure of this study mirrors the three-tiered analysis. Mostly drawing on institutional sources, the first part (chapter 1 and 2) analyzes the international forces and narratives that shaped receiving countries' migratory policies and allowed Italy to engage in the postwar debates regarding mobility and emigrants' vocational training. By drawing on sources produced by diplomats, chapter 1 contextualizes the increasing request of the United States and Canada for skilled immigrant workers. During the 1950s and 1960s, these two North American countries issued migratory policies that overturned the ethnic-based criteria of the pre-WWII era, and replaced them with skill and family screening criteria. Political motivations—principally NATO members' fight against Communism—and economic push and pull factors inspired and shaped more than twenty years (1945-67) of American and Canadian migratory policies, as well

as congressional and parliamentary debates. Italy—as an emigrant country—actively participated in these debates, used NATO and anti-Communist discourses to promote emigration, and started paying attention to the training of its emigrants.

Chapter 2 moves away from the receiving countries' migration policies and Italy's responses to the new selective criteria for migrants. It examines instead the international dialogues through which Italian authorities—in concert with other Western countries—suggested, planned, and shaped Italian emigrants' vocational training. The use of the correspondence and reports drafted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (major agents in the management of post-WWII emigration) puts Italian institutional decisions at the center stage of the post-WWII international arena. Here, I delineate the stages of the Italian appropriation of the transnational discourses, examined in chapter 1, to the benefit of Italian workers' training and their fast placement in the receiving countries' labor market.

The second part (Chapter 3) moves away from the international scenario to look closely at the Italian national case. If the previous chapters are based on state authorities' viewpoint, this chapter also takes into consideration non-governmental voices. Here, I analyze the discourse that migration experts and trade union representatives generated around skills and emigration. Far from being homogeneous, these voices included a wide spectrum of opinions and perspectives. Among the post-WWII Italian political divisions, I examine the positions of the Socialist, Catholic, and Communist representatives.

In order to understand the manifold interpretation regarding emigrants' training I drew on three exemplary sources: the *Bollettino Quindicinale dell'Emigrazione Italiana*, a bimonthly specialized magazine addressed to Italian emigrants and published from 1947 to 1970, the

interventions of migration experts at the 1954 International Catholic Migration Congress of Castle Bouvigne, Netherlands, and the 1967 special issue of the magazine *Formazione e Lavoro*, completely dedicated to emigrants' vocational training. The heterogeneous nature of these voices found common ground in the shared criticism of the inconsistency of Italian state interventions regarding emigrants' training.

The third part (Chapter 4 and 5) draws on the provincial archives of Frosinone (Italy) and oral interviews (Table 1). These last two chapters put the migrants' experiences at center stage, and by doing so address the informal training of Italian emigrants. Chapter 4 focuses on the southern part of the region of Lazio, and more specifically on the province of Frosinone. After providing a brief historical overview of the migration history of this region, this chapter examines the experiences of the migrants from the town of Casalvieri, south east of Rome, to Detroit, to the area between Los Angeles and San Diego, and to Toronto and Windsor, Canada. Fifty oral interviews with immigrants and former immigrants that I personally collected in Casalvieri, in Toronto, in Windsor, and via phone with Casalvierani in California between July 2011 and July 2013, are the main primary sources of this third part. These interviews provided me with a more exhaustive overview of family and migration dynamics at the local level. The presence of three major Casalvierani's clubs in North America—Toronto, Windsor, and Vista, California— facilitated the collection of interviews and the investigation of Casalvierani's migratory patterns.<sup>52</sup>

In chapter 5, these interviews allowed me to insert in the narrative about skills and migration the voices of those who were untouched by the state implemented vocational training

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<sup>52</sup> The Club in Windsor—called the Ciociaro Club—includes emigrants coming from the other towns of the region of Ciociaria, the name given to just a portion of the territory under the district of the province of Frosinone. This club, through the years, also became a center of encounters for Casalvierani living in Detroit, or in the Detroit Metro area.

schools, and rather were unskilled or informally trained at their departure. Here, I examine Casalvierani's transnational informal vocational training and entrepreneurial experiences in North America. The interviewees immigrated as sponsored relatives to the US and to Canada. Unskilled in the eyes of the North American authorities, a few Casalvierani had already undergone formal training in Casalvieri. They re-trained or learned new trades from scratch. In every case, they adapted to new circumstances. The acquisition of skills encouraged (as for many other post-WWII Italians in North America) the establishment of micro-entrepreneurial activities, mostly concentrated in the building industry or connected to this sector.

## CHAPTER 1

### *Cold War Immigration Policies and Italian Negotiations*

The Parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them.<sup>1</sup>  
North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1949

Our migration policy is equally, if not more important to the conduct of foreign relations and to our responsibilities of moral leadership in the struggle for world peace.<sup>2</sup>  
Harry S. Truman, 1952

In the years after WWII, longstanding and new receiving countries increasingly asked for specialized and trained migrant workers. The need for skilled immigrant labor was evident in US and Canadian migration policies of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> Under the US McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, fifty percent of the allotted quota for each nation was reserved for:

qualified quota immigrants whose services are determined by the Attorney General to be needed in the United States because of the *high education, technical training, specialized experience, or exceptional ability* of such immigrants and to be substantially beneficial prospectively to the national economy, cultural interests, or welfare of the United States.<sup>4</sup>

The 1962 section of the Canadian Immigration Regulations echoed the US request and opened the doors to "a person who, by reason of his *education, training skills* or other *special*

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<sup>1</sup>North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The North Atlantic Treaty," April 4, 1949, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Veto of Bill To Revise the Laws Relating to Immigration, Naturalization, and Nationality. June 25, 1952," *Harry S. Truman 1952-53 : Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1, 1952, to January 20, 1953* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1966), 441.

<sup>3</sup> \*I will investigate the European requests for skilled and trained workers in the next chapter.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Daniels and Otis L. Graham, *Debating American Immigration, 1882--present* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 42. Italics added.

*qualifications* is likely to be able to establish himself successfully in Canada, and who has sufficient means of support to maintain himself in Canada until he has so established himself."<sup>5</sup>

The message sent to prospective migrants and to their nations was clear: send us the best and the brightest, send us only those we need and those who will not become wards of the public. It was a very practical warning shaped by labor needs. Yet, this message was also strictly ideological. Scholars of both American and Canadian migration history concur that these two immigration policies' emphasis on skills and merits—which preceded the 1965 US Immigration and Naturalization Act and the 1967 Canadian Points System—served to transmit a clear democratic and anti-communist message. The US, and in part Canada, could not afford a blatant discriminatory immigration policy anymore. These policies' emphasis on skills and training—I ultimately argue in this chapter—embodied this twofold message.

The request for skilled and trained migrant workers marks a fundamental aspect of post-WWII migration relations between Italy, on one hand, and the United States and Canada, on the other hand. While I am aware that the McCarran-Walter Act and the 1962 Canadian Regulations were issued in two different historical contexts and for the interests of two different nations. Yet, they were products of very similar international economic and political circumstances. In addition, they both embodied a transitory stage between pre-WWII discriminatory policies and those more liberal policies of the second half of the 1960s. Because these laws were not created in a vacuum, but rather were several years in the making, this chapter begins exploring the historical background that allowed and shaped their existence.

Booming economies in post-WWII United States and Canada and their expansion of industrial technologies attracted the populations of countries suffering from unemployment. This

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<sup>5</sup> Corbett, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1957-1962."

was the case for Italy—the largest emigration country of the post-WWII years. In 1945, Italy faced the consequences of a long-fought war—fought almost entirely on its peninsula—and the ineffective economic policies of twenty years of Fascism that bound to the land a surplus of young and unskilled workers. (Table 2) Unemployment, lack of infrastructure, technological and industrial backwardness and, most importantly, a staggering increase in the price of land made emigration—as already had happened at the end of the nineteenth century—a necessary evil.<sup>6</sup>

Traditional economic push and pull factors characterized international relations between Italy and the two North American countries under study. Yet, focusing solely on the economic facet of these relations would be highly reductive. Post-WWII political circumstances shaped them as well. As noted by Donna Gabaccia in the specific case of the United States, migration is one of the many connections between countries. The exchange of people is crucial for understanding the foreign policies and alliances adopted during the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> Marina Maccari warns us that the mobility of labor migrants is as important as the issue of refugees and displaced persons in analyzing the post-WWII international relations. More specifically, "Cold War circumstances transformed the issue of migration from a purely economic concern to a predominantly political one."<sup>8</sup> Basically, the demographic pressure of some European countries—Greece, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands—increasingly became a cause for concern. Fear of Soviet Russia and the stipulation of the North Atlantic alliance for military defense and for the promotion of "conditions of stability and well-being" of the members of the North Atlantic community also affected postwar migration policies.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Enrico Pugliese, "Gli Squilibri del Mercato del lavoro," *Storia dell'Italia Repubblicana: Sviluppo ed Equilibri*, Francesco Barbagallo, ed., Vol. 2, (Torino: Einaudi, 1995): 421-475.

<sup>7</sup> Donna R. Gabaccia, *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective*, America in the World (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Maccari, Marina, "Communists of the Stomach."

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

In the postwar period, migration narratives and policies were created and used in response to both labor and political needs. The United States and Canada wanted skilled non-Communist workers capable of filling the void of skilled laborers, predominantly in trades related to industries and construction. These narratives, informed by contemporary political concerns, were quintessentially transnational. The interwar isolationism faded in favor of international co-operation and alliances. Issues related to human mobility became central to official conferences, attracted the attention of experts, unleashed *ad hoc* committees, and generated innumerable studies. International cooperation—I want to be clear—did not mark the end of specific national interests. Scholars agree that post-WWII immigration and naturalization policies were, after all, instruments for shaping foreign alliances and meant to further receiving countries' self-interests.<sup>10</sup> In analyzing the crucial elements of the discourse created *by* and *for* migration relations, this chapter contributes to the combination of immigration and Cold War ideology. The sources used—primarily reports, speeches, and private correspondence between diplomats—provide an insight into the international political backstage that influenced the drafting of the post-WWII migration policies. Here, I describe how, at the institutional level, Italy—similarly to the developed countries it dealt with—used, transformed, and adapted the discourse of anti-Communist interventions and its membership in the North Atlantic Community to suit its needs in the matter of emigration.

### 1.1 *Italy and U.S. Relations after World War II: The Unequal but Lasting Alliance*

With the Armistice of 1943, Italy was left defeated, poor, and too weak to solve her institutional, political and economic crises, and so she looked to the United States as an anchor of

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<sup>10</sup> Reed Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America: A Social History* (Boston, New York: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1994), 42.

hope. Many members of the brand new Italian Republic—excluding the Italian Communist Party—invoked American help and support for the start of Italian reconstruction, economic recovery, and for the establishment of a genuine pluralist democracy. Italian invocations of help and the progressive but slow attention of the United States toward Italy laid the groundwork for what the Cold War historian Ennio Di Nolfo defined as the unequal alliance between the United States and Italy.<sup>11</sup> It was unequal because the United States' attention to Italy was at times slow and distracted and, most importantly, was based on a precise hierarchy. The United States was the charitable, generous savior, whereas Italy was the receiver of the United States' economic help.

Yet, I argue it was also a lasting alliance. It started when Italy transitioned over to the Allies' side, and was reinforced by the United States' benevolent attitude toward Italy during the Paris Peace Conference, thus sealing Italian participation in the Capitalist Western Bloc. Nothing better epitomizes this lasting and unequal alliance than post-WWII migration relations between the new colossus and the poor peninsula epitomizes this lasting and unequal alliance.

Postwar immigration policy was drafted in a complex and controversial arena where Cold War alliances were taking shape. More specifically for Italian and American relations, postwar migration meant dealing with the burning issue of the national origins quota system, and so required a continuous negotiation between Italian desires to send abroad its refugees and surplus workers and American necessities in their selection of migrants. Yet, postwar migration relations between the United States and Italy were much more than a mild fight over the quotas. In the official encounters concerning postwar and Cold War public matters between American and Italian representatives, immigration served as terrain for the creation of powerful discourses. The

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<sup>11</sup> Ennio Di Nolfo, *La Guerra Fredda e l'Italia: 1941-1989* (Firenze: Edizioni Polistampa, 2010), 230.

United States bestowed help to worthy friends, and the Italian coalition with the Allied forces after 1943, the pro-American attitudes of the Italian Christian Democratic Party, and the open opposition of Italian authorities to communist propaganda all served to make Italians "worthy" recipients of American aid. More specifically, this help took the form of the European Recovery Program (ERP)—also known as the Marshall Plan. Yet, although it emerged after the beginning of the alliance between Italy and the United States, financial aid without policies favorable to Italian emigration could not do enough for Italian recovery.

In March 1946, Alberto Tarchiani served as the Italian ambassador in Washington, D.C. and he became a key figure in the development of Italian-US international relations. At that time, he sent a copy of the migratory statistics issued by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service for the period between 1941 and 1945 to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>12</sup> According to the data the US admitted only 935 Italian immigrants, mostly concentrated between 1941 and 1945. These migratory statistics mirror the war events and alliances, especially if one compares the number of Italians admitted with the numbers of other European immigrants.<sup>13</sup>

After 1941 every country experienced a significant drop in the number of immigrants admitted due to the war. Yet, American allies like France and Great Britain enjoyed higher quotas in the prewar period, and so continued to send thousands of immigrants across the Atlantic. Other Northern European countries, especially the Low Countries saw more immigrants accepted than Italy did. Additionally, despite its status as America's primary enemy, more than 6000

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<sup>12</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici (1946-1950), Box 10, F. 7 "Emigrazioni negli USA," file (hereafter f.) "Movimento Immigratorio ed Emigratorio negli Stati Uniti, March 22, 1946." Alberto Tarchiani, *Dieci Anni Tra Roma e Washington* (Milano: Mondadori, 1955).

<sup>13</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici (1946-1950), Box 10, F. 7 "Emigrazioni negli USA," f. "Movimento Immigratorio ed Emigratorio negli Stati Uniti, March 22, 1946."

immigrants were accepted from Germany. Most of these, Tarchiani explained in the accompanying telegram, were German Jews.<sup>14</sup>

These migratory statistics are emblematic of Italy's weak position in the international scenario. Her late alliance with the Allied Forces and her unstable socio-economic conditions put Italy in a difficult situation. The negotiations leading to the Paris Peace Conference of 1946 clearly illustrated the problems inherent in Italy's bid at acceptance as a valid international interlocutor, as well as her attempts to eschew overly harsh punitive decisions. This disadvantaged position seriously jeopardized Italian postwar reconstruction. Soon after the war, Italians paid the price for their past political choices. The Italian resistance to Nazi occupation and her status as a co-belligerent, acquired after 1943, did not quell French nor English resentment toward Mussolini's expansionism in the Mediterranean. Unpopular among the allied European powers, the United States was Italy's last remaining hope.<sup>15</sup>

American attention to Italian socio-economic conditions grew within the Cold War scenario. Italy's strategic geo-political position was crucial for attracting American intervention in its internal problems. Notwithstanding her political and economic weaknesses, Italy represented for the United States the key to controlling Western Europe and stemming Great Britain and Russia's expansionist aims.<sup>16</sup> Particularly, the United States was concerned that Italy would fall to the English and its imperial aspirations in the Mediterranean, and, most importantly, especially after Stalin's project to control Eastern Europe, the United States saw in the Italian peninsula a strategic buffer nation to block Communism.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Nolfo, *La Guerra Fredda E l'Italia*, 234.

<sup>16</sup> For Italy's key position in the Mediterranean see Di Nolfo, *La Guerra Fredda e l'Italia*, 227 and 241-242.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 241-242

The months leading up to the Paris Peace Conference revealed both the pro-Italian attitudes of the United States and Great Britain's acute acrimony toward Italy. Unwilling to let belligerent feelings go and still threatened by possible Italian advancement in the Mediterranean, English diplomats asked for punitive peace conditions for Italy.<sup>18</sup> The United States defended the Italian position and, in several diplomatic situations, called for material and moral help for the reconstruction of Italy. As early as June 1945, the Acting Secretary of State, Joseph C. Grew, wrote to the US Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, regarding the peace treaty with Italy and proposed "to assist and encourage the conversion of Italy into a stable, peaceful, and constructive element among the nations of Europe."<sup>19</sup> A few days later, Grew wrote to President Truman: "In accordance with your and President Roosevelt's directives with regard to Italy, our objective is to strengthen Italy economically and politically so that the truly democratic elements of the country can withstand the forces that threaten to sweep them into a new totalitarianism."<sup>20</sup>

Stability, economic support, and democracy were the ingredients that the United States offered Italy. Italian authorities liked the American recipe and immediately looked to the American colossus as their main interlocutor or, in Tarchiani's words as "Italy's best friend." In the summer of 1945, days before the Potsdam Conference, the same Tarchiani contacted Grew to express Italian concerns about British and Russian inclinations toward harsh terms for Italy. Grew, who had already expressed to Truman that it was time to raise Italian morale and to make

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., More in general see Agostino Giovagnoli and Silvio Pons, eds. *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta: Tra guerra fredda e distensione* (Rubbettino Editore, 2003); Elena Calandri, *Il Mediterraneo e la difesa dell'Occidente, 1947-1956: eredità imperiali e logiche di guerra fredda* (Manent, 1997); Alessandro Brogi, *L'Italia E L'Egemonia Americana Nel Mediterraneo* (La Nuova Italia, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Joseph C. Grew to the Acting Secretary of State, June 15 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), IV, Pt. I, 1009 (hereafter *FRUS*, with appropriate year, volume, and page numbers).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1009-1010

of Italy a responsible participant in international affairs, reassured Tarchiani of the American commitment to Italian interests.<sup>21</sup>

In November 1945 the American Embassy in Rome received a *note verbale* from the Foreign Office in Italy.<sup>22</sup> This *note verbale*—the Chargé d'Affaires Key reported to the Secretary of State—warned about "numerous newspaper reports" [question marks in the original document] that had reported that the US Government allegedly decided: 1) to authorize the allied nations to take possession of the Italian properties located within their jurisdiction up to the amount to be demanded eventually from Italy as reparations, and that 2) industrial plants for war production, which were not readily convertible into plants for peace production, would have to be delivered by Italy to the Four Great Powers. The Foreign Office considered the information to be of extreme importance and sent its observations to the US Secretary of State. The confiscation of Italian properties abroad worried the Foreign Office much more than the dispossession of industrial plants. It is not a coincidence that seven out of the ten possible consequences of these harsh measures, reported in the note, concerned Italian properties abroad.

The *note verbale* reports on the difficulty for Italy to indemnify in *lire* "Italians abroad who without connection with Fascist regime have attained their economic position by *hard work* and have made a *valuable contribution* to the economy of countries giving them hospitality." In addition, the impoverishment of Italians abroad would have dried up emigrants' remittances. These latter, the note reported, represented 10 percent of positive items in Italy's balance of payments in the prewar years. The confiscation of Italian emigrants' goods and properties surely meant serious economic damage for Italy, and much more. The note emphasized the connection

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1011

<sup>22</sup> The document reported remain ambiguous on some points: it does not specify to which Foreign Office is referring. It does not even clarify if the news reported were eventually grounded or not. It does not reveal further about the foreign sources. Yet, it clearly indicates that the Italian government did not receive any communication about the subject.

between the properties' expropriation and the future outcome of Italian emigration. The fifth point made this relation even more evident:

The alleged project [confiscation of properties of Italians abroad] would provide grave *psychological* and other obstacles to the emigration of Italian labor to foreign countries, a movement the resumption of which will benefit the world economy and will be essential to prevent lowering of *Italian standard of living*. Almost certainly a reverse movement would set in, thus augmenting *unemployment* in Italy if Italians abroad find the fruit of their labor nullified at one stroke.<sup>23</sup>

This *note verbale* is the quintessential proof of the indivisible connection between post-WWII peace negotiations and migratory issues. Additionally, it revealed crucial points for Italian postwar migration. Emigration was intrinsic to Italian economic recovery; it was strongly connected to unemployment and the standard of living and therefore a potential seizure of this resource would have national and international repercussions. The *note verbale* seemed to answer Italian prayers in that it implied that the United States would support the immigration of Italian workers. Nevertheless, while the words flowed, old barriers stayed firmly in place.

The United States' lack of practical intervention on behalf of Italian migratory interests soon became the subject of Italian and Italian-American public interest. In August 1949, the journalist Ugo D'Andrea in the Philadelphia-based Italian newspaper *Il Popolo D'Italia* railed against the barriers created postwar by receiving countries to the detriment of Italian emigrants. D'Andrea attacked the Labor Unions which, rather than realizing the socialist cooperation of the workers of the world, sturdily opposed the immigration of foreign workers. This obstruction to international socialism was just one of D'Andrea's targets, as he did not mince words when critiquing the United States. International collaboration was the solution to Italy's high unemployment rate. For this reason, Truman's policy toward the valorization of depressed areas

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<sup>23</sup> The Chargé in Italy to the Secretary of State, 16 November 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, IV, 1085.

(D'Andrea was referring to Truman's 1949 inaugural speech) sounded like music to two million Italian unemployed. Yet Truman's commitments, D'Andrea wrote, disappointed in the most decisive moments. He ended the article with an explicit admonition: "If the Americans aspire to world political leadership they cannot neglect moral factors in the relations with such a sensitive people as the Italians."<sup>24</sup>

### 1.2 *Quotas and Disappointments.*

Italian institutional authorities were, indeed, very sensitive to the United States' restrictive immigration policies: the national origins quota system. The 1924 Immigration Act was born amidst rampant American nativism and limited the admission of immigrants from any nation to two percent of the people of that specific nationality present in the 1890 US census. Besides excluding Asians, the 1924 act was deliberately discriminatory against Southern and Eastern European. Italians, for instance, were allowed a bit more than 5,000 visas per year. The 1924 Immigration Act introduced a preference system for the distribution of visa admissions under the quota system (Table 5). More than the explicit request to abrogate the entire system, Italian representatives tried to mold the quotas according to the exigencies of the time. At the end of the war and throughout the 1950s, Italian requests to enlarge the quotas to admit "special" immigrants, or to recover a substantial part of the quotas lost during the war years, characterized the diplomatic exchanges between these two countries. These persistent Italian requests to the

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<sup>24</sup>AS-MAE, Ambasciata d'Italia in Washington (1947-1950), Box 56, Position B 48, F. 1613, "Emigrazione Italiana Negli Stati Uniti." f. "Il Popolo Italiano di Philadelphia, August 25, 1949."

American Congress often found support among the American and Italian-American communities.<sup>25</sup>

In July 1947, the Italian Welfare League of New York contacted the Italian *Opera Nazionale per la Protezione della Maternità e dell'Infanzia*<sup>26</sup> (ONMI) to propose sponsorship of 100 abandoned or orphaned Italian children. These children, the Italian Welfare League explained to the ONMI, would be welcomed by foster families and, afterwards, formally adopted. The ONMI, knowing that the main difficulty would be to overcome the annual quotas and to obtain visas for these orphans as extra-quota, contacted the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs a month later. In turn, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs involved the Italian Ambassador in Washington, Tarchiani. Tarchiani's response to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the Italian orphans expressed disappointment and hopelessness.

From his privileged observation point, Tarchiani explained to the Italian authorities that, even though there were many good persons in America willing to adopt these war orphans, the American public and, especially, the American Congress were not inclined to accept the admission of "displaced persons." Tarchiani's pessimism found validation in the succeeding political events. In 1947, the US Congressman William G. Stratton introduced a bill which called for the admission of 100,000 refugees annually, over the quota numbers, for four successive years. While stimulating intense discussion in Congress, nothing immediately practical followed the proposal.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, in March of the same year Congressman Javits and Senator Ives

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<sup>25</sup> For an overview of the support given by Italian Americans to Italian Immigrants see Danielle Battisti, "Relatives, Refugees, and Reform: Italian Americans and Italian Immigration During the Cold War, 1945-1965" (PhD diss., University of Buffalo, State University of New York, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> National Charity for the Protection of the Motherhood and of the Childhood.

<sup>27</sup> The bill was actually a brainchild of the Citizens Committee and of David K. Niles, Truman's special assistant on minority affairs. Yet, for strategic reasons, the Committee used the Protestant conservative Republican Stratton from Illinois to introduce the bill. See Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 105.

were designing projects to obtain admission into the United States for orphans younger than fourteen. Tarchiani, who at the time could not have imagined that Stratton's bill was an essential trigger for the 1948 Displaced Persons Act, expressed discouragement: "Those proposals have not been discussed yet, but even if they are, the probabilities of succeeding are minimal."<sup>28</sup> Regarding the ONMI's inquiry he noted that: "this Embassy does not consider it well-timed for now to involve in this question these [American] authorities in order to avoid an almost sure refusal [...] every modification to increase the quotas seem to be destined to failure."<sup>29</sup>

Tarchiani's blunt realism was echoed in the attitude of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When in 1947 an Italian member of Parliament, Bubbio, interrogated the Ministry to find out what type of negotiations were in progress between Italy and the United States for the concession of visas and extra quotas, the Ministry answered that a bill for the recovery of the quotas lost during the war years was presented in March 1947 to the American Congress. Little changed, however. The difficult situation in which post-WWII Italy languished justified the Italian parliament's pressure on the Ministry. Bubbio naively emphasized that the extra quotas would have helped Italy "deal with the postwar period and with the very exceptional cases for which humane considerations required allowing the authorization of expatriation."<sup>30</sup> The immigration of a larger number of Italians to the United States would have helped Italy's reconstruction, but, Tarchiani was correct—the time had not yet come when America would accept greater numbers of Italians.

It is also important to remember that Italians had been American enemies between 1941 and 1943 and that this war inheritance strongly influenced the United States' decisions to accept

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<sup>28</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici (1946-1950), Box 16, F. 10 "Emigrazione" F. "Affidamento Minori U.S.A., 1947" and "Sistemazione negli Stati Uniti di Bambini Italiani Orfani, August 6, 1947."

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici (1946-1950), Box 16, F. 10 "Emigrazione." f. "Riferimento all'Appunto a. 1/9186 del 4 Corrente, November 1847."

only specific categories of immigrants. In March 1948, the Italian Ministry of Defense received a newsletter from the US consular authorities concerning the immigration to the US of Italian soldiers. Whoever wanted to immigrate to North America, the newsletter indicated, must have obtained from his military district a declaration testifying to the soldier's non-voluntary participation in the war in the period between June 10, 1940 and September 8, 1943. The logic was clear: if drafted in the Italian army rather than serving voluntarily, the privates would have been justified in their participation and might at least maintain the hope of migrating to America.<sup>31</sup>

War alliances shaped US legislation as well as public opinion concerning migration policies. In December 1946, the Italian newspaper, *il Buonsenso*, reported that during its annual meeting in Rome, the American Legion—an association of American veterans abroad—approved a motion to persuade the American authorities to facilitate the re-acquisition of American citizenship for the Italians who did not explicitly renounce it but realized that the American government deprived them of their status.<sup>32</sup> In addition, they asked for extra quota visas for all the Italians who fought alongside the United States for a period longer than six months.<sup>33</sup> The American Legion's requests contained two important messages: the preservation of acquired and inalienable rights (*i.e.* the right to citizenship), and recognition from the US Congress's for loyal Italian soldiers.

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<sup>31</sup> Archivio Centrale dello Stato (hereafter ACS), Ministero del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale (hereafter MLPS), Direzione Generale Collocamento Manodopera (hereafter DGCM,) Div. IX Accordi Emigrazione verso Paesi Extracomunitari (hereafter Div. IX), Box 482, F. "Dichiarazione per i Militari che Espatriano negli Stati Uniti d'America, March 21, 1948.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., F. "Facilitazioni per gli Emigranti Italiani negli Stati Uniti," December 12, 1946. Ibid., F. "Migrazioni negli Stati Uniti, December 28, 1946." The American Legion was referring to the Italians who acquired the US citizenship because they were born in the US. I discuss the cause of this loss of citizenship later in this chapter.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

The twenty-month period in which the Italian army fought as a US ally was a constant theme in postwar US-Italian relations. After all, American representatives such as Joseph Crew unequivocally wrote to President Truman about the revision of the Italian armistice: "[...] the Italian internal situation and our own efforts would be greatly facilitated by some interim arrangement whereby [...] the Italian Government would be accorded tangible recognition of Italy's substantial contribution towards the defeat of Germany."<sup>34</sup> Grew referred to tangible recognitions, which was precisely what the Italian government was looking for. After all, in the *note verbale* sent to the American Embassy in Rome in November 1945, the Foreign Office clearly stated that the war damages Italy suffered during the twenty months fought alongside the Allies greatly exceeded those of the pre-armistice period. Thus, Italy's cobelligerent status justified Italy's request for compensation from Germany and Japan, and trumped the Allies' requests for reparations from Italy.<sup>35</sup>

Along with the material compensations, the concession of extra quota visas was a crucial element of tangible recognition for Italy. The question was, how the US authorities would repay Italian war efforts on the migratory level? The correspondence between Italian echelons of the Embassy in Washington, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labor portrayed the quotas affair in hopeless terms; there was little that could be done. Yet, the use of United States citizenship by the many Italians who were born in America during their parents' immigration and then returned to Italy, seemed to be an excellent way to send Italians to America. Soon, this feeble alternative also faded away.

In 1947, the Italian embassy in Washington notified the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the many cases of Italian individuals denied extra quota visas, even if they were born

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<sup>34</sup> Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State to President Truman, June 30, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, IV, 1010.

<sup>35</sup> The Chargé in Italy to the Secretary of State, 16 November 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, IV, 1085.

in the United States and possessed American citizenship. Two reasons were offered for this denial: (1) they had been drafted in the Italian army and/or (2) they participated in the Italian elections of June 1946. The embassy explained that, according to US Naturalization laws, the two above-mentioned circumstances accounted for the loss of citizenship. While claiming to strengthen Italian democratic elements and praising Italian natural sympathies for America and Western democracies, US laws mandated revoking American citizenship for Italians born in the US who participated in the June 1946 elections, which, quite symbolically, ushered the birth of the very democratic republic that America wanted for the stability of the Western world.<sup>36</sup>

Italian emigration, so crucial for Italian Reconstruction, was at a stalemate. What really strikes the observer is that Italy's most significant postwar ally seemed to hinder rather than re-launch the formerly "good" pre-Fascist immigrant streams. With no substantial political and economic leverage—if we exclude the Italian post-Armistice alliance with the Allies—Italian representatives in key positions to establish US-Italy relations tried to circumvent restrictions. The following is the advice that the Italian Embassy in Washington, probably in the person of Alberto Tarchiani, gave to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the denial of extra quotas to Italians equipped with American citizenship.<sup>37</sup>

Given what is happening, we call the attention of this Ministry to the opportunity to *suggest or not*—in the way you hold more opportune to the ones interested [*i.e.* interested in immigrating]—the ways to proceed in their declarations to the US consular authorities, so to avoid that these same ones might be deprived of the possibility of immigrating to the Confederation [*i.e.* the United States].<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici (1946-1950), Box 16, F. 10, "Emigrazione."

<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately this document does not show a signature. It is, however, contained in the same folder with documents signed by Tarchiani, Ambassador in Washington from 1945-1955, who was a pre-eminent director of the relations between the United States and Italy during the years of his diplomatic appointment.

<sup>38</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici (1946-1950), Box 16, F. 10, "Emigrazione." F. "Emigrazione: Perdita di Cittadinanza, February 18, 1947."

The document ends with this ambiguous advice. I chose to report the entire passage *verbatim* because, without elaboration, it seems that the Italian Embassy encouraged migrants to silence or downsize their involvement in WWII as soldiers in the Fascist army, and their participation in the elections for the Italian Republic.

The ongoing attempt of the Italian authorities to work out the quotas is also evident in the affair related to the redistribution of the quotas assigned to Italian parents of American citizens. The National Origins Act of 1924 established the preferential categories within the visa quota. Unmarried children under twenty-one years of age, parents, and spouses of a US citizen were part of this category. The intent of the law was clear: promoting family reunification between naturalized American citizens and the family left behind. After WWII, many Italian-American citizens in the United States took advantage of this opportunity and called their relatives to join them in the New World. Yet, between 1949 and 1950, Italian consulates registered a high number of returns to Italy by aged parents incapable of adapting to the new American environment. Soon, this high rate of return triggered an interesting correspondence between the *Direzione Generale dell'Emigrazione* (DGE) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the various Italian consulates in the United States.

Concerns, disappointment, and a series of remedies for this waste of quotas were at the core of this correspondence. The ideal solution would have been to redistribute the unused quotas among other aspiring Italian migrants but, given American repulsion toward any change in the quota system, this was not possible. The issuance of the quota visas to preferential categories was an exclusively US business: the Department of State directly assigned the numbers of the quotas. The role of Italian consulates in the US was limited to the application of visas on the released passports. There was not much the Italian authorities could do but to suggest solutions; in a note

written to the Italian Embassy in Washington, the DGE listed a few. In 1949, the Italian Consulate of New York proposed the release of a temporary visa for aged parents which might have been, eventually, transformed into a permanent one. Given the impossibility of applying simultaneously for a temporary visa and a permanent one, this suggestion foundered.

In the above mentioned note, the DGE also revealed the imposition of more restrictive policies regarding the release of passports to aspiring emigrants than had been calculated: restrictions based on emigrants' advanced age. The DGE immediately understood the difficult application of these restrictive measures and explained:

[...] apart from the difficulty of establishing fair selective criteria and from the resentments that would show both in Italy and in the United States [...] the American authorities would consider this action a violation of the agreements, *actually really imprecise*, which regulate the definitive immigration to the U.S. of Italian citizens.<sup>39</sup> A sense of frustration at the *imprecise agreements* emerges from this quote. It is also clear that the Italian authorities were in a very difficult situation: they could not augment the quotas and, at the same time, they could not avoid their waste.

Notwithstanding the obvious weak and uncomfortable position of the Italian governmental authorities, Italy could exercise leverage for the non-preferential quota visas. Indeed, the non-preferential quota immigrants could register on the emigrants' waiting lists of the American consulates in Italy only under authorization of the DGE. The Italian resolution was to avoid releasing authorization for migrants of advanced age, especially because between the authorization and the real departure more than five years could elapse.<sup>40</sup> The position of the DGE is extremely interesting and needs further investigation. The disappointment with the quotas wasted by elderly parents and the establishment of age as a discriminatory factor in the authorization of non-preferential immigrants sent a clear signal: Italy wanted to send abroad

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<sup>39</sup> AS-MAE, Ambasciata Washington (1947-1950), Box 56, F. 1607 "Emigrazione Quote Preferenziali." f. "Emigrazione in Quota Preferenziale, November 15, 1949." The emphasis is the author's.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

young laborers willing to remain permanently in the US. In the DGE note there is no further investigation into the decisions of parents to return to Italy; there is no interest in delving into the possibly difficult situations encountered abroad by these migrants. What really interested the Italian authorities was, once again, taking the most advantage possible from the quotas.

In May 1950, the ambassador Tarchiani updated the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the "difficulty and the red tape accompanying the projects for the provisions proposed to Congress." Tarchiani was referring to the efforts to recover the visas wasted by returning parents. During a "friendly conversation" with Watson Miller, US Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, a few American congressmen and Judge Forte of Philadelphia, Tarchiani called attention to this burning issue. The response of Miller was sympathetic. According to Tarchiani, Miller affirmed that the high number of returnees was an "unexpected surprise" and that he would make the issue known to Congress. Nevertheless, the proposal to add the quota visas left unused by returning parents to the quotas of the following year sounded "intricate and of dubious success" to one of the congressmen present at the informal conversation.<sup>41</sup>

Tarchiani countered astutely by providing a legal precedent. The American Senate indeed had approved an analogous procedure in one of the amendments to the Displaced Person Act of 1948. The amendment was in favor of ethnic Germans who could have used the visas that remained unused the following year. It was a different procedure, Tarchiani admitted, but similar in its bureaucratic application.<sup>42</sup> Why did Tarchiani abandon his stance of hopelessness and show a more aggressive attitude? What had changed since 1947? Was Tarchiani's comparison with ethnic German refugees valid? The United States' attempt to become the leader of the new post-

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<sup>41</sup> AS-MAE, Ambasciata Washington (1947-1950), Box 56, F. 1607 "Emigrazione Quote Preferenziali." f. "Emigrazione in Quota Preferenziale, May 26, 1950." In the telegram, Tarchiani did not reveal the names of the congressmen present.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

WWII order is the answer to all the above questions. President Truman recognized that the 5000 refugees admitted to the US since 1946 were a drop in the bucket compared to the almost ten million displaced persons in Europe. In his 1947 message on the State of the Union he had already urged Congress: "to turn its attention to this world problem, in an effort to find ways whereby we can fulfill our responsibilities to these thousands of homeless and suffering refugees of all faiths."<sup>43</sup>

The introduction of Congressman Stratton's bill for the admission of 400,000 refugees over the course of four years followed Truman's hopeful words. The acme of this pro-European refugee policy arrived with the passage of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948. The latter, destined to expire in 1950, was eventually renewed for two extra years. Between 1948 and 1952, the DP Acts allowed immigration to the US of a bit more than the originally proposed 400,000 refugees.<sup>44</sup> A symbol of US interest in a European population in difficulty, the DP Acts and their amendments, surely, opened a breach in the quota system wall. It was a chance that the Italian-American community, along with the Italian authorities, did not hesitate to capitalize on. Recalcitrant in 1947, Tarchiani, and with him many Italian government representatives and Italian-American personalities, was now ready to dare for more.

The Displaced Persons Act and its amendment in 1950 created an opportunity to provide the "little orphans of Italy, victims of an immense scourge, with the affection of a family and security for their future." With these words, Dr. Pollari, Italian-American President of the private association National Council for Relations between United States and Italy, informed Leopoldo Rubinacci, Italian Minister of Labor, that the Displaced Persons Act allowed an annual immigration (extra quotas) of 10,000 war orphans. If the Act opened new opportunities, the

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<sup>43</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1947*, accessed May 10, 2014, [www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2041&st=&st1](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2041&st=&st1).

<sup>44</sup> Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 109.

National Council, Pollari emphasized, would be there to obtain the most visas possible for Italian orphans. Pollari was very confident in the support of many Italian-American families eager to adopt an Italian child.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the efforts of the National Council should have found immediate response in the Italian Government's commitment to this project. Italian private authorities, chosen by the Italian government, were responsible for selecting and sending the children overseas.

Pollari's message was full of hope and optimism. It really embodied the principles expressed in Truman's claim to support and help Europe. Most importantly, by putting abandoned Italian children at center stage, it touched at the core of a very delicate situation and strengthened the US role as Europe's savior. Yet, Pollari's rescuing message presented a caveat. The Italian government, indeed, was asked to deposit a bond of 50,000 lire for each child. Upon the child's arrival, a US court would judge his/her eligibility for adoption. In the case of positive response, the Italian government would have been returned the 50,000 lire. In the opposite scenario, the US Government would have used the money to deport the "unfitted or refused orphans" [*sic.*].<sup>46</sup>

### 1.3 *The Selective (Re)Opening of the Golden Door.*

Italian authorities' institutional efforts to augment or redistribute the quotas were not always successful. National origins quotas were eventually abolished in 1965 when the US Congress issued a new Immigration and Naturalization Act, also known as the Hart-Celler Act. While abolishing once and forever the discriminatory national origins quotas, the Hart-Celler Act retained selective admission under a preference system. Significantly, for the first time in history,

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<sup>45</sup> Orphans of both or just one parent under the age of 16 were eligible.

<sup>46</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX, Box 482, F. "National Council for Relations between United States of America and Italy," June 9, 1950.

the 1965 Act bestowed higher preference on immediate relatives rather than on skilled workers (Table 5).<sup>47</sup> Recognized as a watershed in the history of immigration to the US, the Hart-Celler Act has often diminished the importance of the McCarran-Walter Act, especially for the Cold War era. According to Roger Daniels, "The 1924 act was partly a product of the post-WWI isolationism and disillusionment with Wilsonian universalism, while the 1952 act was partly a product of the Cold War with its thrust for American hegemony and leadership of the free world."<sup>48</sup>

The 1952 Act's emphasis on skills and family reunification marked an important institutional step toward the rejection of the pre-WWII racial discriminatory policies. After the end of WWII, the American Congress—Reed Ueda states—slowly replaced the system of "ethnic screening" in force from 1924 to 1965 with the selective system of "family and skill screening."<sup>49</sup> The McCarran-Walter Act was very ambiguous, and it contained simultaneously liberal and conservative elements. For instance, it validated the Acts ending the Chinese exclusion (1943) and Asian Indian exclusion (1946), and, by expanding family reunification conditions, it allowed American women to bring alien husbands as non-quota immigrants.<sup>50</sup> However, the 1952 Act did not break completely with the principles expressed in the 1924 act. It maintained the national origins as criteria for the assignment of quotas and reaffirmed the value of a preference system for visa assignment.<sup>51</sup>

The McCarran-Walter Act opened American gates, but it did so selectively. As shown in Table 5, the 1952 act was not the first policy to introduce skills as selective criteria. However, by

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<sup>47</sup> Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America: A Social History*, 44-45.

<sup>48</sup> Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 113.

<sup>49</sup> Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America*, 42.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 43 and Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York, NY: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1990), 332.

<sup>51</sup> Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America*, 43.

assigning the highest preference to *highly skilled* immigrants useful to the American economy, it tried to reconcile two contradictory principles. On the one hand, immigrants' skills and merits obfuscated long-standing ethnic prejudices and, on the other hand, skilled immigrants useful to American self-interests no longer appeared to threaten the US absorptive capacity. Most importantly, the McCarran-Walter Act translated into policies the conversations and ideas that had been circulating among American experts and authorities since the second half of the 1940s.

In 1946 the Italian ambassador in Washington sent to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs a description of a radio conversation on The New York Times Forum concerning America's migratory future. Earl G. Harrison, Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, proposed in this conversation that the rules of entrance into the United States should be modified on the basis of the aspiring immigrants' personal qualities, profession and previous employment.<sup>52</sup> In October 1946, a few months after The New York Times Forum, Ernest Dale published an article in the *Foreign Policy Reports* titled "Economic Reconstruction of Italy." Here, Dale emphasized that foreign countries were likely to demand highly skilled workers and "many of the Italians seeking admission to other countries will be without these qualifications." The lack of skilled labor was listed by Dale as one of Italy's main deficiencies. Dale's description is a clear and forceful snapshot of Italy's major post-WWII lacunae:

The need for much extended education is of special importance in Southern and Central Italy, where the peasants require at least some elementary training or reading ability to work satisfactorily in industry. Even the Northern workers with their traditional skill and application would benefit from further education. But there may not be enough good teachers to educate a large number of people. Hence education may have to be confined to the most talented who can be adequately instructed by good teachers available at each stage.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici (1946-1950), USA, Box 10, F. 7 "Emigrazioni negli USA." f. "Political Immigratoria degli Stati Uniti, January 21, 1946."

<sup>53</sup> Ernest Dale, "Economic Reconstruction of Italy," *Foreign Policy Reports*, Vol. XXII, n.16 (November 1, 1946) in AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici (1946-1950), USA, Box10, F. 4, "Penetrazioni Commerciali, Concessioni e Accordi Vari."

Dale's observations touch at the core of American perception of the postwar Italian workforce: lack of adequate training for an increasingly industrial world and an evident backwardness in the Central and Southern regions in comparison to Northern Italy. Italian workers were not skilled enough in the immediate post-WWII period, but, as I already emphasized, the US had both an ideological commitment to help Italy and a more pragmatic need for workers.

In December 1949, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' General Directorate of the Emigration (DGE) received a telegram from the Italian Embassy in Washington asking for precise statistics concerning the number of professionals, technicians and specialized workers in the sectors of health, industry, and agriculture. These statistics, the telegram indicated, would be useful for the realization of Truman's Fourth Point aimed at the improvement of developing areas.<sup>54</sup> In January 1950, the DGE replied, arguing that "any statistical indication would necessarily be approximate and providing Americans with this statistics would be counterproductive."<sup>55</sup> The DGE, in the same telegram, encouraged the Italian embassy to insist that there were many more categories of workers ready to leave. The difficulty in tracking statistics and the ambiguous reference to the "many working categories ready to emigrate"—the DGE did not specify if they were skilled or unskilled workers—were a signal of Italian authorities' weak statistical means as well as their eagerness to send abroad people in *all* the working categories, and not only in those requested.

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<sup>54</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div IX Accordi Emigrazione, Box 482, F. 155 "Emigrazione in USA." f. "L'Ambasciata in Washington ha Telegrafato in data 18/12, December 27, 1949". Roger Daniels, ed., *Immigration and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman*, Truman Legacy Series, v. 6 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

In 1951 the United States' plans regarding the Italian workforce became clearer. In February Robert West, the new US Department of State's Special Consultant for Migration Policies, addressed specific questions to the Italian embassy concerning the professional preparation of Italian workers in light of the necessity for more workers for rearmament, about the number and the quality of vocational schools, and the number of students attending these schools.<sup>56</sup> This time, unlike the previous 1949 request, the DGE proactively suggested the creation of an inter-departmental organism in charge of collecting data and information. A few months later the DGE informed the General Directorate of the Migrations of the Italian Department of Labor about the request from the US Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization, Charles Wilson, regarding skilled workers in the defense industry.<sup>57</sup>

The level of specialization requested by US employers was also high. During the first half of the 1950s, US entrepreneurs and companies asked primarily for workers equipped with specific technical knowledge: photographic technicians, industrial designers, diamond setters, woodcarvers, and workers specialized in the production of surgical instruments.<sup>58</sup> In September 1954, an employer from Utah asked for five farmers with expertise in field irrigation systems, specifically from the Northern Valley of Po because "the methods in use in the farm of the employer are very similar to the ones used in the Marzotto farms close to Ventimiglia between Venice and Trieste."<sup>59</sup> In sum, there was no room for unskilled workers in the expanding building

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., f. "Washington, February 2, 1951."

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., f. "Situazione Mandopera negli Stati Uniti, October 29, 1951." In the same telegram, the DGE underlines that the United States had already tapped the necessity of human resources in agriculture through the *Bracero* Program by importing agricultural workers from Mexico.

<sup>58</sup> ACS-MLPS, DGCM, Div. IX, Box 482, F. 155: Emigrazione in USA." f. "Richiesta Fotografi, October 17, 1953." "U.S.A. Reclutamento Disegnatori Industriali, May 14, 1955." "Richiesta Due Operai Specializzati per gli U.S.A., May 26, 1956. "Codman & Shurtleff di Boston—Richiesta di Operai Specializzati nella Fabbricazione dei Ferri Chirurgici, Forbici, Serrature, ecc., April 30, 1956.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., f. "Stati Uniti D'America—Lavoratori Agricoli, February 25, 1955."

and industrial sectors, whose growth was being spurred by the Cold War rearmament of the North American economies.

Cunning as it was, the McCarran-Walter Act did not find supporters among American Presidents, from Truman to Johnson. Truman, in vain, vetoed the Act and, afterwards established a Special Commission on Immigration and Naturalization in charge of proposing an alternative to the McCarran-Walter quota-based principles. In his June 25, 1952 speech, Truman criticized the national origins quota as the greatest vice of the quota system. The quota system was not only discriminatory, according to Truman, but also counterproductive to US international relations. Americans were helping some nations—Italy, Greece, and Turkey—to build their defenses, to train their men in the common cause of protecting world peace, yet Truman underscored, the 1952 Act sent them the following message:

You are less worthy to come to this country than Englishmen or Irishmen; you Italians, who need to find homes abroad in the hundreds of thousands—you shall have a quota of 5,645; you Greeks, struggling to assist the helpless victims of a communist civil war—you shall have a quota of 308; and you Turks, you are brave defenders of the Eastern flank, but you shall have a quota of only 225!<sup>60</sup>

It is interesting to note that, if for Greece and Turkey, the President used specific military defense issues, for Italy he underscored overpopulation. Truman's message seemed to answer the hopes of the Italian authorities, welcoming to the US more than a few thousand Italians per year. Even though it was less restrictive than the McCarran-Walter Act, Truman's message needs further analysis. Shortly before his call for an Atlantic brotherhood and larger quotas, the President added: "With the ideas of the quotas in general there is no quarrel. Some numerical

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<sup>60</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Veto of Bill To Revise the Laws Relating to Immigration, Naturalization, and Nationality. June 25, 1952," *Harry S. Truman 1952-53 : Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1, 1952, to January 20, 1953* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1966), 443.

limitation must be set, so that immigration will be within our capacity to absorb."<sup>61</sup> The United States had to abolish the national origins quotas but be very attentive to establish quotas based on American economic self-interest.

It goes without saying that Italy hoped to see in the McCarran-Walter Act the answer to its requests to send abroad a larger quantity of emigrants. It did not happen. In 1954, Tarchiani from Washington clarified that this new Act—even if using the 1950 census as basis for the establishment of the national quotas—continued to perpetuate discrimination against migratory flows from southern and eastern Europe. By contrast, it advantaged the English, Irish, and Germans who did not even use the quotas assigned to them. The "injustices" of the McCarran-Walter Act already condemned by both Truman and Eisenhower—continued Tarchiani—were not limited to the quotas. Indeed, the Act gave too much power to American consuls and immigration officials. The latter, on the basis of precautionary selection, could decide if prospective emigrants were going to participate in subversive actions once abroad. The Act also provided for the loss of American citizenship for American-born individuals who resided abroad for a long period of time.<sup>62</sup> This last provision particularly damaged Italians who, born to immigrant parents in the USA, were more than willing to use their citizenship to immigrate and sponsor relatives.

The Italian authorities along with American pro-immigration representatives fought for the amendment of what they perceived as injustices. The Italian ambassador particularly relied on the passage of a bill that would allow Italians to use the pool of quotas left unused by other countries.<sup>63</sup> He was also hopeful of the passage of a proposal regarding the Refugee Relief Act.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> AS-MAE, Affari Politici USA, (hereafter, AP USA) (1950-1957), Box 295, F. "Legge McCarran, Parte Generale." f. "Public Law 414—Attività Parlamentare per la Revisione," April 23, 1954.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

According to this proposal, Italian relatives could have used the quotas allocated for refugees. This bill was also signed by the same Francis Walter.<sup>64</sup> After the McCarran-Walter Act, Italy continued to ask for the augmentation of the quotas and to point out the prejudicial nature of the Act. Certainly the 1952 Act, as we will see in the next chapters, encouraged Italy to stipulate international agreements for emigrants' training and to find internal solutions to the training of its unskilled population.

#### 1.4 *Too Many, Too Unskilled, Too Communist: Ideological Justifications*

Increasingly after 1952, a growing interest in the Italian Communist party and Italian participation in NATO were strategically used by both Italian and American representatives for the promotion and assistance of emigration. America's biggest fear and disappointment (Communism) catalyzed attention to Italian emigration issues. In the 1953 national election, the Christian Democratic Party lost two million votes, whereas the Left Front (Communist and left Socialist alliance) gained more than one million votes. The increase of the leftist forces from 19 percent to 22.6 percent of the electorate was a clear sign of danger.<sup>65</sup> Soon, Italian overpopulation, a high unemployment rate, Communist upsurge, and emigration all became facets of the same dialogue.

American concerns about a potentially red Italy found traction in the attitudes of the newly-appointed US Ambassador in Rome, Clare Booth Luce. On September 1953, this "fervent Catholic and anti-communist fanatic"<sup>66</sup> ambassador consented to an interview with *US and News*

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> The article has been translated in Italian and reported by the Italian Embassy of Washington to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici USA (1950-1957), Box 294, F. 3901 "Stampa Americana Nei Confronti dell' Italia." f. "Saturday Evening Post: Articolo di Ernest O. Hauser, dal titolo "Deve l'Italia Diventare Comunista?", July 27, 1954.

<sup>66</sup> This is how Di Nolfo describes Luce, see Nolfo, *La Guerra Fredda e l'Italia*, 239.

& *World Report* about Italian attitudes toward the United States. The questions addressed to Luce sought to ascertain Italians' position toward the US, and to confirm that American aid had created more wealth (i.e. that the standard of living had risen since the end of the war). The impossibility of the Italian economy absorbing the 400,000 new workers who annually appeared on the job market still profoundly shaped that economy, and the Italian electorate's decisions.

The *US News & World Report* journalist did not hesitate to question Luce regarding the cause of the very large Communist vote in Italy. Luce firmly answered that overpopulation accounted for this support, and that this was at the heart of Italy's economic problems. More precisely, the reporter asked: "Do you think that emigration would be the solution to overpopulation in Italy?" Luce answered positively and urged the United States to open its doors to Italians as many other countries—such as Canada and Australia—were currently doing. The duty of the US, according to Luce, did not have to be limited to a simple opening of its gates. The United States had to finance the transportation, arrival, and settlement of Italian immigrants to other possible receiving nations that lacked the necessary capital.<sup>67</sup>

Within the American community, Luce was not the first, nor was she alone in believing in the profound connection between a surplus workforce, unemployment, and a growing Italian favoritism toward communist forces. Luce, like James Dunn before her, was very specific in calling US attention to intervention in Italian emigration. The American media echoed Luce. An article by Ernest Hughes published in *Life* in 1954 raised the same questions regarding the appeal of Communism. Hughes approached the issue by providing an historical explanation. The feudal economy and the mistakes of the Italian managerial class were part of the problem. To aggravate

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<sup>67</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici USA (1950-1957), Box 294, F. 3901 "Stampa Americana Nei Confronti dell'Italia." f. "Interview with Clare Boothe Luce, Ambassador to Italy, September 15, 1953."

the problem of Italian incomplete industrialization, there was the poor mass of unemployed who did not find a safety valve in emigration.<sup>68</sup>

For these worried American observers, emigration might have been the antidote to Communism. In January 1954, an article published in *The New York Times*, which focused on the success of the left in Italy emphasized the skillful Communist leaders' tactics in using the surplus of workers against the US and the Marshall Plan. According to this article, Communist leaders described unemployment as the result of the US capitalist mission to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.<sup>69</sup> If Communist leaders were skillful, the Italian electorate was ignorant. "Italians are Communists because of the poverty [...] misery, and poverty remains Togliatti's allies" wrote Ernest Hauser in 1954 in the *Saturday Evening Post*.<sup>70</sup>

The connection between Italian unemployment and Communism was also quite widespread among scholars. In 1955, Thomas G. Bergin, chair of the Department of Spanish and Italian Studies at Yale, published an article on *Current History* concerning Italian socio-economic circumstances and the contribution that Italy could make to the US in case of war against Soviet Russia. Bergin did not have doubts:

[...] the raising of immigration barriers on the part of the United States (which the apparent intransigence on this matter dramatized by the McCarran Act) is one aspect of the American policy which Italians cannot understand and which, in many sectors of the populace, nullifies the good will created by various kinds of American aid, from the UNRRA to the Marshall Plan.<sup>71</sup>

Recalling personal experiences, Bergin affirmed that Italians of all parties were much more concerned with American policy on immigration than on aid for reconstruction. He also

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici USA (1950-1957), Box 375, F. USA 3901 "Stampa Americana Nei Confronti dell'Italia." f. "Situazione Politica dell'Italia—Articolo della Rivista Current History, August 4, 1955."

noted a crucial aspect, an aspect that was fundamental in the transnational emigrants' vocational training paradigm analyzed in the next chapter. Bergin pointed out that the Italian unemployment problem was not entirely demographic. Italians' employment was indeed seasonal and connected to agriculture. Much of the Italian labor force was "unskilled and much of it shows a lack of adaptability in shifting from one kind to another [...] partly through lack of sufficient education to achieve any kind of versatility."<sup>72</sup>

### 1.5 *We Are Fighting for a Common Cause*

While some of the "non-versatile and ungrateful Italian workers" voted for the Communist party, Italian Christian Democratic representatives did not miss the opportunity to remind US authorities of their endorsement of Atlantic and Europeanist political lines. In his 1955 official visit to the US, the Italian Prime Minister Mario Scelba drew on the connection between unemployment/Communism and the Atlantic Pact to draw the attention of US authorities to Italians' need for emigration. On the occasion of his talk to the Council on Foreign Relations, Scelba debunked the myth of the Italian "extraordinary prolific nature." After all, Scelba reminded his audience, the Italian birthrate was inferior to that of North American and Northern European countries. Unemployment, an Italian chronic disease, could be cured only through international financial aid. In the Northern regions of Italy, where industrialization took off—Scelba recalled—the Communist labor unions were experiencing loss of support.<sup>73</sup>

Besides funds and aid, Italy needed to send its workers abroad and, according to Scelba, NATO country members should help this out-migration. Scelba was interpreting article 2 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty in favor of the free circulation of manpower. There was no doubt for

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici USA (1950-1957), Box 369, F. "Visita Scelba negli USA," n.d.

Scelba that the redistribution of quotas to Italy left unused by the other NATO countries and the other countries in need was essential to promoting stability and well-being (see North Atlantic Treaty's article 2).<sup>74</sup> Scelba did not count solely on the North Atlantic alliance but also on the historical migratory connection between the US and Italy. For the occasion, the Prime Minister did not spare rhetoric:

[...] the relations between Italy and America have been very intimate for decades; they are alive in the blood of millions of American citizens of Italian origin [...] we all know about the contribution of Italian culture in the world; everybody know that Italian civilization is matrix of the civilization of every Christian populations.<sup>75</sup>

With similar myth-making rhetoric the President of the Republic, Giovanni Gronchi, addressed the American audience during his 1956 visit. According to Gronchi, Italy more than any other nation could understand and share the democratic ideals defended by the US:

Here, in your country, it blooms again with renovated energy the civilization that Rome made universal and that has its origins in the Eternal City. Millions of individuals, their children and grand-children, left Italy and poured labor and intelligence over the majestic riverbed of American society, over the shores that many Italian navigators discovered and explored.<sup>76</sup>

Unfortunately, the contribution of Italian culture and civilization was not a valuable commodity in the post-WWII international scene. Gronchi knew it too well and spared the rhetoric in his speech in front of the American Congress. He reminded the American representatives that Italy took seriously the American Atlantic project and the military defense of the democratic values of western countries. Gronchi underlined that Italy, despite being in economic distress, continued to support expenses for defense and rearmament. In fact, Italy did much more than this. It invested

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<sup>74</sup>North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The North Atlantic Treaty," April 4, 1949, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm).

<sup>75</sup>AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici USA (1950-1957), Box 369, F. "Visita Scelba negli USA."

<sup>76</sup>AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici USA (1950-1957), Box 440, F. " Viaggio di Gronchi e del Ministro Martino nel 1956, " f. C "Visita di S.E. il Presidente della Repubblica negli Stati Uniti: Colloqui Politici," "Discorso per New York (Banchetto America-Italy Society—Gruppi Italo-Americani), March 11, 1956.

in the technical training and education of Italian citizens. The results of technical training—Gronchi stated—were visible when comparing the "simple and rough men of the first immigration (pre-WWII) with the recent more qualified and trained wave of Italian immigration."<sup>77</sup>

Cold War ideology and Atlantic Pact Alliances also shaped relations between Canada and Italy regarding migration. Interestingly, Canada instrumentally used its participation in NATO as a justification for its tepid reception of Italian migrant workers. On the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the Atlantic Council held in Rome in 1951, Lester Pearson, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, explained that:

Of our present budget, about 45 to 47 percent will be for the defense. That is a tragic figure for a country like Canada—a young country which is still almost on the threshold of its development. We have most amazing prospects before us, with big things to be done; the opening of oil fields, of iron fields, of seaways and power plants; of development which should make it possible to get more people into Canada, more people from Italy [...]. Instead of using our resources for such development, however, we spend about 45 percent of our budget on defense, about 2,000million dollars.<sup>78</sup>

Pearsons' message was clear: Canada could not support military defense and simultaneously undertake the infrastructural development which would have, in turn, attracted immigrant workers. Yet, during the first half of the 1950s, Italian authorities did not miss the opportunity to remind Canadians that Italian immigration to Canada should be facilitated. Coded as the "Atlantic pretexts" (*argomenti atlantici*), Italian representatives drew on their common alliance in NATO and their shared interest in democratic ideals as a base to negotiate the matter of emigration. The "Atlantic pretexts" were used in 1952 by the Italian Ambassador to Canada,

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<sup>77</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici USA (1950-1957), Box 440, F. " Viaggio di Gronchi e del Ministro Martino nel 1956, " f. C "Visita di S.E. il Presidente della Repubblica negli Stati Uniti: Colloqui Politici," February 7, 1956.

<sup>78</sup> AS-MAE, Direzione Generale Affari Politici Canada (hereafter DGAP Canada), 1947-1960, Box 74, F. "Politica Estera in Generale." f. "Canada and the North Atlantic Treaty, November 30, 1951."

Corrado Baldoni, during his meetings with the Canadian Prime Minister about Italian emigration.<sup>79</sup>

The Atlantic pretexts shaped the content of the conversations between the Italian Prime Minister, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Canadian Prime Minister, Louis St. Laurent. During their 1955 official visit to Canada, both Prime Minister Scelba, and Foreign Affairs Minister Martino, called attention to good diplomatic relations between the two countries and the shared efforts for rearmament to ask for: 1) the extension of emigration by sponsorship to include the category of distant relatives, and 2) augmentation of the number of individual workers.<sup>80</sup>

When proposing the Atlantic pretexts as justification for the expansion of the categories of emigrants that could be admitted to Canada, Scelba and Martino were neither naïve nor delusional. They knew that this idea had supporters among the Canadian establishment. In February 1953 the Italian Ambassador to Canada, Alessandro Farace, sent to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs a note regarding a Canadian parliamentary intervention concerning immigration policies. Farace's summary of the debate reported that the then Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, Edward Harris, confirmed a long-standing political line: immigrants could be accepted only in relation to Canadian absorptive capacity. According to this attitude, the visas had to be established semester by semester and take into account Canadian contingent labor needs. Farace, like all of the other Italian authorities, was accustomed to Canadian attitudes in matters of immigration. Indeed, the Italian ambassador judged the debate

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<sup>79</sup> AS-MAE, Affari Politici Canada, 1950-1957, Box 161, F. "Emigrazione e Mano d'Opera." F. "Emigrazione Italiana in Canada, November 3, 1952."

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, Box 398, F. "Relazioni Politiche tra il Canada e L'Italia. Parte Generale." f. "Visita del Presidente del Consiglio e del Minsitro degli Affari Esteri in Canada, March 24-27, 1955."

dull and deprived of any actual novelty. Yet, he added that the intervention of the social-democratic McGillis was noteworthy. According to this member of the opposition:

There could be humanitarian motivations behind the decision to accept in our country workers for whom we cannot provide decent employment and housing. There could also be motivations of international politics, as the relief of the Italian terrible demographic pressure. Immigration may even be part of our contribution to the economic sector of the NATO, and therefore to the world peace.<sup>81</sup>

Toward the end of his intervention, by calling for "precautionary studies" before allowing for increased immigration, McGillis put in perspective his bold invitation to consider migration as an effective tool for Canada to contribute to the NATO project and, consequently, to accept immigrants regardless of its absorptive capacity. Yet, McGillis's use of the Atlantic and humanitarian pretexts for the acceptance of Italian migrants strongly resonated with the Italian institutional discourse analyzed thus far. The fact that Italian authorities could rejoice in the possibility of Canada accepting Italian citizens even "without a *decent* employment and housing" says a lot about the Italian state authorities' desire to send abroad the unemployed.

### 1.6 *Receiving Countries' Absorptive Capacity*

Like the United States, Canada—active participant in the reconstruction of European countries devastated by the war—redefined its post-WWII immigration policies according to its pre-WWII ethnic and racial prejudices, around the common cause of opposition to totalitarian Communism, and relative to domestic absorptive capacity. The Canadian government selectively opened the doors and acted as a gatekeeper. Soon after the war, immigrants to Canada were screened and selected according to long-standing white Canada policy and their association with

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., Box 250, F. "Emigrazione e Mano D'opera in Canada." f. "Dibattito alla Camera Canadese sull'Immigrazione, April 30, 1953."

Communism.<sup>82</sup> The slow and selective opening to immigrants was due to Canada's unexpected postwar boom. Whereas many thought that Canada—like other Western countries—would slip back into the depression of the 1930s, the Canadian economy expanded. American dollars invested through the Marshall Plan in the reconstruction of European economic infrastructure created an increasing demand for raw materials and manufactured goods. Soon, Canada led the way as a primary exporter. At the end of 1946, the three thriving labor-intensive and natural resource-based industries—agriculture, mining, and lumbering—were lobbying Ottawa for a change in restrictive immigration policies. The Canadian economy, unlike the economies of European countries under reconstruction, needed labor and boomed with jobs.<sup>83</sup>

A response to the Canadian shortage of labor came in 1947 from the then Prime Minister, Mackenzie King. In his often quoted 1947 speech, King set the tone of late-1940s and early-1950s Canadian immigration policies and attitudes toward immigrants. King reasserted the Government's goal to foster demographic growth through immigration while simultaneously retaining the basic principle that immigration to Canada was a privilege and not a fundamental human right. The Prime Minister warned that "Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. It is not a fundamental human right of any alien to enter Canada. It is a privilege."<sup>84</sup>

The contract-labor scheme adopted in 1947 was the quintessential compromise between international help for displaced persons, domestic economic development, and absorptive capacity. According to this scheme, the European DPs committed themselves to a specific Canadian employer for the duration of two years, and in exchange received employment, free

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<sup>82</sup> Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*.

<sup>83</sup> Green and Green, "The Economic Goals of Canada's Immigration Policy."

<sup>84</sup> Prime Minister Mackenzie King, in House of Commons *Debates*, 1 May 1947, quoted in Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*.

transportation—paid by the employer and the International Refugee Organization (IRO)—the opportunity to become permanent citizens, and to sponsor relatives.<sup>85</sup> Those were the "bulk orders" described by Franca Iacovetta.<sup>86</sup> The 1947 "labour-scheme" gave birth to a series of regulations and orders-in-council that slowly allowed the arrival of non-traditional immigrant groups from Southern and Eastern Europe. The 1947 removal of Italy from the enemy alien list, and the order-in-council of June 9, 1950, which enlarged the admissible classes of European immigrants to southern and eastern Europeans, greatly benefitted Italians. By 1957, Italians were the largest ethnic group in Canada, and almost 52,000 requests for sponsorship by potential Italian emigrants rested in the Rome's office of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.<sup>87</sup> For Italy, Canada had become the new America.

The migratory relations between Italy and Canada regarding the "labour-contract scheme" are documented in the correspondence between Italian DGE authorities and the Canadian representatives in charge of the recruitment of workers. In October 1950 at the Italian Department of Foreign Affairs, Italian and Canadian representatives stipulated an informal agreement regarding specific categories of workers: farmers, miners, domestic servants, loggers, and railway workers. Among the points discussed in this Italian-Canadian agreement was the suggestion that the Italian authorities would take the responsibility for the pre-selection of Italian candidates for emigration sponsored by Canadian citizens or by legal residents in Canada.<sup>88</sup> During the pre-selection, Italian provincial labor offices were in charge of verifying the technical qualification and professional experiences of the candidates and the actual relations between the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 334-336.

<sup>86</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*, New edition (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993)

<sup>87</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 328-329.

<sup>88</sup> Spouses and minor children of Canadian citizens or residents were except from this selection.

prospective migrants and their sponsors in Canada.<sup>89</sup> Eventually, through the granting of visas, the Canadian authorities would choose from among the pre-selected group.

It is important to underline the way in which the Italian authorities interpreted this opportunity to pre-select the contingent of immigrants. In a telegram addressed to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in January 1951, the Italian Ambassador to Canada, Di Stefano, described the pre-selection process as a chance to prove the virtues of Italian immigrants and as an occasion to persuade Canadians to accept additional professional categories of workers. Di Stefano opened the telegram by stating that Italian immigration to Canada found obstacles in Canadian racial prejudices. Canadians favored the immigration of groups that were culturally and religiously similar to them, namely British and Northern Europeans.<sup>90</sup>

While denouncing Canadian prejudices, Di Stefano invited the Italian authorities in charge of the pre-selection to do a *mea culpa*. He pointed out that the deplorable "carelessness with which agriculturalists, miners and lumberjacks were selected" by the Italian authorities was becoming an easy justification for Canadian skepticism toward Italian workers' potentialities.<sup>91</sup> Notwithstanding the preference for British Protestants, it was clear to the embassy in Ottawa that Italian authorities had to win Canadian trust by demonstrating the good moral and professional qualities of Italian immigrants. These well-selected migrants had, in the long term, an opportunity to benefit from the development of the promising Canadian economy. The attention

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<sup>89</sup> ACS- MLPS, DGCM, Divisione IX, Box 447, F. 2 "Emigrazione nel Canada. Scambio di corrispondenze con organi statali canadesi per la procedura di reclutamento e selezione dei lavoratori italiani, 1949-1953."

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., f. "Intese con il Canada in materia di emigrazione." As already noted by Iacovetta, the 1951-53 "bulk-orders" scheme clarified Canada's labor priorities and perpetrated the idea of Italians' tolerance for hard works and low wages Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 26-28. Iacovetta analyzed the regularity with which Italian workers in Toronto ignored their contracts or jumped their posts. These practices increased Italian immigrants' bad reputation and fueled the Canadian officials' bias toward Southern Italians. Ibid., 41-42.

to the selection process reveals both the short-term economic interests of Canada and the long-term plan of Italian authorities.

Canadian authorities' preference for British subjects, Northern Europeans, and even the more Germanic Northern Italians was not a secret. The longed-for 1952 Immigration Act, rather than proposing a new line, reflected the prejudicial nature of Canadian policies in the early 1950s. Believed to be the act that would exemplify the many regulations and orders issued since the end of WWII, this Act disappointed a large number of Canadian political representatives as well as civil society. Indeed, it gave huge power to the Governor-in-Council to prohibit admission according to "nationality, citizenship, ethnic group" and "unsuitability" to Canadian society.<sup>92</sup>

The critiques levied against the 1952 Canadian Immigration Act inaugurated a new era in Canadian immigration policies. Increasingly during the second half of the 1950s, immigration officials developed positive attitudes toward immigration. This openness to immigration was clear in the issuing of 1956 Privy Council Law 785 that allowed legal residents in Canada (not only citizens) to sponsor the immigration of their immediate relatives (spouses, children, and siblings).<sup>93</sup> The Department of Citizenship and Immigration's positive response occurred in a period characterized by two developments. On the one hand, the Canadian government was trying to reinforce the domestic economy by accommodating passage from a resource-based economy to one based on modern manufacturing structures. On the other hand, given the improvements in their countries of origin, the traditionally preferred ethnic immigrant groups—British, Germans, and Dutch—were not particularly attracted to Canadian labor opportunities.

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<sup>92</sup> Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 102.

<sup>93</sup> Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 328.

The extension of sponsorship rights to residents in Canada brought the dichotomy of skilled versus unskilled laborers to center stage in debates about immigration. Southern Europeans and Italians in particular were more likely to enter Canada as sponsored relatives. This latter category caught the attention of some Canadian authorities and of the Canadian Department of Labour—which had been against permissive immigration policies all along, and had supported the tap-on/tap off approach to immigration.<sup>94</sup> To accommodate changes in the economy, Canada and Canadian employers needed skilled workers and it needed them immediately. For instance, as early as 1947, the Canadian Terrazzo and Mosaic Contractors Association asked for 100 Italian mosaic and terrazzo workers. This request epitomized the advantages for North American employers in hiring skilled Italians. Native-born Canadians had left this hard work for employment in the war industries and did not return to their jobs as terrazzo workers at the end of the war. Additionally, training Canadian terrazzo workers would have required at least four years. Italian skilled workers were an easy and fast solution.<sup>95</sup> Likewise, specialized in the building and excavation sectors, Italian migrants were also employed in the 1954 construction of the Saint Lawrence Seaway and of the 2340 mile-long gas pipeline between Montreal and the province of Alberta.<sup>96</sup>

However, not every Italian immigrant was a specialized terrazzo worker or, more generally, a trained worker, as Italian authorities were well aware. Indeed, as this chapter has already shown, they worked so that Italians could reach Canada predominately as sponsored relatives. In the official report on Italian-Canadian relations—drafted by Italian officials on the

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<sup>94</sup> Green and Green, "The Economic Goals of Canada's Immigration Policy," 330.

<sup>95</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX Accordi Emigrazione verso Paesi Extracomunitari, Box 447, F. 3 "Canada. Richieste di Mano d'Opera Specializzata." f. "Richiesta Mosaicisti e Terrazzieri Italiani, October 6, 1947."

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., f. "Mano d'Opera Italiana per Lavori di Costruzione del Canale del San Lorenzo (Canada), June 28, 1954. In 1955, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent to the labor offices of the northern provinces of Udine and Treviso—maybe knowing the Canadian preferences for these regions—several copies of a text entitled "Useful News for Prospective Immigrants to Canada."

occasion of the 1959 Canadian visit of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mario Segni—  
Italian migration in Canada was described as follows:

It is one of the healthiest emigrations. It occurs almost totally through the sponsorship of the immediate relatives and, therefore, it does not cost either us (Italy) or Canada. This movement has also the privilege of being spontaneous. The Canadian government has also to take into account that our workers (Italians) are requested and appreciated by Canadian employers.<sup>97</sup>

Whereas the Italian authorities counted on family networks and the good reputations of Italians as hard-working individuals, Canadian authorities required formal training. When, in 1958, Ellen Fairclough became Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, she had to deal with an increasing number of sponsored immigrants and with the accumulation of sponsorship requests in Canadian immigration offices in Europe. As a solution to this problem, in 1959 Fairclough and her government passed an order-in-council which restricted the class of sponsored immigrants by eliminating married children and siblings from the list of eligible relatives. Ferociously criticized by ethnic associations in Canada and by other political representatives, Fairclough was forced to revoke this measure. To defend herself from the accusations of wanting to specifically curtail Italian immigration, Fairclough explained that, on the contrary, by limiting the sponsorship system the act would have allowed the emigration of independent Italian immigrants (without sponsorship), and would have eventually diversified the Italian immigrant community in Canada.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> AS-MAE, Direzione Generale Affari Politici, (DGAP) Ufficio I, 1947-1960, Box 30, F. 1 "Documentazione Viaggio S.E. Segni e Pella," f. "Il Canada e le Relazioni Italo-Canadesi, September 27-30, 1959.

<sup>98</sup> Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 121-122; Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 330-331.

### 1.7 *For Business and for Family: Skilled VS. Unskilled*

In 1959 family reunification won over skills. Yet, the justification of immigration as a means to fill Canadian skills gap did not. Three years later, as reported at the beginning of this chapter, the same Fairclough introduced the 1962 Regulations. Ten years after the US McCarran-Walter Act, the Regulations emphasized training, skills, and education as significant criteria for admission. Three years before the US 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, the Canadian Regulations abolished any racial discrimination. The explanation of this important change was given by the same Fairclough with the following words:

The newly-emerging nations of the world will be watching with interest to see how sincere we are in applying our new immigration policy and the reception of the Canadian people give to newcomers, we have there a golden opportunity [...]to demonstrate to these people that Canadians too realize that the winds of change are blowing. The maturity we show today can reap big dividends for future generations.<sup>99</sup>

While revising immigration policies for the promotion of admission on equal and merit-oriented footing, the 1962 Regulations retained the sponsorship system. However, it was in the sponsorship rights' sections of this measure that prejudices re-emerged. Concerned over the influx of non-European—mostly Asian—unskilled relatives, the Regulations reserved the possibility to sponsor distant relatives (married children, siblings, unmarried orphan nieces and nephews) for immigrants from favored areas (Europe, Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, and the Americas).<sup>100</sup> During the 1960s, the debates about the admission of skilled immigrants and the reduction of unskilled relatives continued.

The 1967 Points System seemed to provide a solution. It was an answer to the controversies generated about sponsorship by defining three categories of immigrants: 1)

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<sup>99</sup> Ellen Fairclough's speech of March, 1962 quoted in Corbett, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1957-1962," 167.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

sponsored dependents, 2) nominated (i.e. non dependent) relatives, 3) independent applicants who are neither sponsored nor nominated.<sup>101</sup> Both independent applicants and nominated relatives were assigned a score according to specific categories: education and training, occupational skills in demand, personal qualities, and age. Independent applicants were selected also according to: arranged employment, knowledge of English and/or French, relative in Canada, area of destination.<sup>102</sup>

The Canadian debates generated about orders, regulations, and policies regulating the sponsorship system testify to the importance of family reunification for both the receiving and sending countries. For the sending countries, like Italy, family reunification through sponsorship was the fastest way to send informally trained or unskilled Italian citizens abroad. The presence of residents in Canada capable of guaranteeing for their relatives was—as emphasized by the Italian authorities—a sort of "win win game" for both Canada and emigrant countries. Italians were especially lucky. Even if they were not the favored ethnic immigrant group at the beginning, they became such in the late 1950s. They happened to be white and Europeans in a period in which sponsorship categories favored white Europeans. They happened to be in Canada when the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration embraced demographic growth through immigration. They also found employment amidst the Canadian post-WWII economic boom when the competition of more favored and skilled British and Northern Europeans faded. Lastly, Italian immigration to Canada significantly decreased in the second half of the 1960s, and therefore, the 1967 Points System affected them in a minor way. At the end of the 1960s, Italians

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<sup>101</sup> Sponsored dependents were: spouses; fiancés; unmarried children under twenty-one; parents or grandparents over sixty; widowed parents or grandparents; orphaned brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces; grandchildren under eighteen. "Appendix 2: Canadian Points System 1967," in Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 404-406.

<sup>102</sup> "Table 9.1 Immigration Sections Factors under the Points System, Canada 1967," in Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 359.

had already reached a decent level of training, education, and most importantly, of economic security at home.

The Canadian case shows that the focus on skills and education did not curtail the emigration of sponsored relatives. If the dichotomy of independent skilled immigrants versus sponsored relatives shaped the Canadian post-WWII immigration policies, this same dichotomy was retraceable in the US distinction between quota and nonquota immigrants. As underscored at the beginning of this chapter, the McCarran-Walter Act allocated the majority of the quota visas to highly skilled immigrants needed in the US. However, within the quota system (Table 5) the remaining visas were assigned to relatives. Even more significant was the fact that the spouse and unmarried minor children of US citizens were completely exempted from preference requirements and numerical quotas. Between 1952 and 1965, of the 3.5 million immigrants who entered the United States only a bit more of 35 percent were quota immigrants. Even if much of this extra quota immigration interested Cold War refugees, circa 5,000 immigrants were admitted annually as spouses and other relatives of U.S. citizens.<sup>103</sup>

The US Immigration Act of 1965 brought family reunification to another level, as it became the main selective criteria for the US. Thanks to the 1965 Act "The golden door had swung open much wider."<sup>104</sup> However, the golden door opened to a different mix of people. As the 1965 Immigration Act was issued, immigration from Europe was declining while Latin Americans, Asians, at first, and Middle-Easterners and Africans, afterwards, started taking advantage of the abolition of racial discrimination. Immigration experts, and probably even Lyndon Johnson, who signed the law in the shade of the Statue of Liberty, did not calculate the arrival of immigrants en mass from non-European developing countries. They assumed that the

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<sup>103</sup>Daniels and Graham, *Debating American Immigration, 1882--Present*, 37-38.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

same patterns of immigration (i.e. immigrants from Europe) would have continued for many years. "Clearly these and other experts did not know what they were talking about." These "new" immigrants increasingly practiced chain migration thanks to the emphasis of the act on family reunification.<sup>105</sup>

### *1.8 Unexpected Consequences*

In the twenty years following the end of WWII, American and Canadian immigration bureaucrats worked to engineer immigration measures capable of serving both their international political goals and their domestic labor needs. In this chapter, I showed that the emphasis on skills and training as new selective criteria for the admission of immigrants absorbed these two very different criteria. Both American and Canadian policies went through a "face lift" and came abreast with the times. Training and education slowly replaced the old nativist and discriminatory immigration policies. The new merit-based criteria as well as the exclusion of anybody associated with the Communist party echoed the two North American countries' common fight against Soviet totalitarianism.

In an attempt to avert the Communist menace from infecting the other members of NATO, the two North American countries, especially the United States, bestowed Italy with an irreplaceable opportunity. Participation in NATO and the growing influence of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) called attention to the Italian need to use emigration as a safety valve for its perceived incipient Communist upheaval. Italian authorities and supporters of Italian emigration on the other side of the Atlantic held overpopulation and high unemployment to be the triggering causes of Communist power. Facing the limitation of the quotas and the racial

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 43.

prejudices intrinsic in North American immigration policy, Italian representatives did not waste any official occasions to remind the international audience of the peninsula's time-bomb like social situation, and to recall their common Atlantic brotherhood. On the weak side of the exchange (North American countries imposed new criteria and Italy had to comply) Italy fought back by adopting the same narratives that the United States manufactured as justification of its leadership in the post-WWII world order.

The request for skilled and qualified workers was more than merely ideological. The two North American governments and especially Canada, with its new booming economy, needed workers but wanted them on their own terms. While the US was recruiting mechanists, chemists, or other specialized workers for the Atlantic defense, Canadian transformation from a resource-based economy to a manufacturing economy required more trained workers. Immigration of already trained workers seemed the fastest solution while the Canadian government reinforced its vocational training schools.

The increased demand for skilled workers should not distort our understanding of post-WWII North American immigration policies. As these countries sought out trained immigrants and placed a significant value on their qualifications, they maintained the sponsorship system as another screening tool for incoming migrants. The emphasis on family reunification—even if sometimes threatened and opposed—allowed Italians to reach Canada en masse and to continue to immigrate to the US in spite of restrictive quotas. Scholars have defined the effects of the US 1965 Immigration Act's emphasis on family reunification (*i.e.* arrival of immigrants from non-European countries) as unexpected consequences. The term may be extended to every immigration policy.

The consequences of immigration policies are not foreseen because receiving countries set themselves up for failure when they try to micromanage in-migration, while simultaneously trying to leave enough room to intervene according to their contingent needs. It is usually in the room left open for self-interested maneuvers that immigrants find a way to move against all odds. The emphasis on skills in the post-WWII period is exemplary. The category of education, training, and skills were *per se* ambiguous and ill-defined. Even when—as in the case of the labour-contract program—Canadian authorities imposed numerical limits on immigrants and professions, they also gave to these workers "ordered in bulk" the possibility to become residents and the right to sponsor relatives left behind.

When setting selective criteria for the admission of immigrants, both the United States and Canada could not have predicted the extensive use of sponsorship by Italian migrants. The cunning use of chain migration to bypass American quotas or to land a job in Canada will be the main topic of the last two chapters of this study. Italians, even if formally unskilled, continued to immigrate to both the United States and Canada. However, I want to be clear, I do not think that the request for skilled immigrant workers was a zero-sum game. The emphasis on skills and training ended up reinforcing Italian vocational training systems and attention to education. In the next chapter, I show how Italians answered the pressing requests for skilled workers not only by trying to circumnavigate skills-based criteria, but also by collaborating with the countries of destination and international organizations for the establishment of what I dub transnational formal vocational training.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Emigrants' Transnational Vocational Training*

Considering that the rapid transformation of the economic structure of, and conditions in, various countries, the constant changes in the methods of production, and the widening of the conception of vocational training as a factor in social progress and in the general culture of the workers, have in a number of countries led to a fresh examination of the whole of this question and have given rise to a general desire to reorganize vocational training on the basis of principles better adapted to present requirements.<sup>1</sup>

International Labour Organization, Vocational Training Recommendation, 1939

Emigration has also become an instrument of international co-operation; Italy is willing to supply manpower to those countries that require it for reconstruction work or economic development, and she asks in exchange for adequate safeguards for the welfare and dignity of the workers concerned, as well as economic help.<sup>2</sup>

Attilio Oblath, 1954

The training of a worker who intends to emigrate demands instruction in both the social and technical conditions of the country of immigration and *it is only fair* that the country of immigration should contribute to the cost of training.<sup>3</sup>

Italian Embassy in Washington, Memorandum on Emigration, 1949

In the post-WWII era vocational training was the talk of the town. It became the buzzword in international conferences, meetings concerning migration issues, and in diplomatic relations between receiving and sending countries. On one hand, vocational training responded to the modern pleas for progress and evolution. Well-trained and qualified workers were believed to be the antidote to poverty and—according to the US pro-capitalist propaganda in Western Europe—to Communism. The first quotation, drawn from the International Labor Organization (ILO) 1939 conference, reveals the early origins of the definition of vocational training as a

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<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization R057: *Vocational Training Recommendation* (The General Conference of the International Labor Organization) (25<sup>th</sup> Conference Sessions Geneva 8 June 1939). On the ILO and the recommendations for vocational training see also: International Labour Organization R088: *Vocational Training (Adults) Recommendation* (The General Conference of the International Labor Organization) (33<sup>rd</sup> Conference Sessions Geneva 7 June 1950); International Labour Organization R117: *Vocational Training Recommendation* (The General Conference of the International Labor Organization) (46<sup>th</sup> Conference Sessions Geneva 8 June 1962)

<sup>2</sup> Attilio Oblath, "The Problem of Surplus Manpower in Europe" *International Labour Review* 70 (1954), 302.

<sup>3</sup> AS-MAE, Ambasciata d'Italia in Washington (1947-1950), Box 56, F. 1609 "Memorandum del Problema Emigratorio Italiano, April 13, 1950." Emphasis is the author's.

factor of social progress. This definition emerged well before President Truman called for technical assistance to underdeveloped countries as a path toward peace and prosperity in his often cited January 1949 inaugural address.

On the other hand, emigrants' vocational training bridged migration and manpower policies. The need for pre-selection, as well as the selection and placement of migrant workers abroad required the creation and constant improvement of vocational training services in both the sending and the receiving countries.<sup>4</sup> At first, international co-operation on migration was primarily focused on the relocation of refugees, displaced persons, and expellees. Afterwards, during the first half of the 1950s, as the urgency of refugees' issues waned, international co-operation came to mean providing assistance in moving laborers from underdeveloped areas of Europe to other countries.

Soon after the war, four major emigrant European countries—Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany—required assistance for the placement of their manpower abroad. During the second half of the 1950s, only Greece and Italy faced continual problems that required help.<sup>5</sup> The second quotation from Attilio Oblath, one of the foremost experts on the international problems of postwar emigration, summarizes the position of Italy regarding its postwar emigration. Italian authorities tried to use the emigration of their surplus workers to relieve high unemployment rates and in exchange for raw materials.

In the previous chapter, I described the state of this problem and the migration policies derived by both receiving countries' demand for skilled manpower and by international political circumstances. In this chapter, I investigate the remedies that both Italy and countries receiving Italian emigrants found to train migrant workers. The vocational training of Italian emigrants lay

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<sup>4</sup> "The I.L.O. and Migration Problems," *International Labour Review*, 65 (1952), 165.

<sup>5</sup> Attilio Oblath, "The Problem of Surplus Manpower in Europe," *International Labour Review* 70 (1954), 302.

at the heart of transnational discourse and actions. The ILO, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) played a significant role in promoting the stipulation of bilateral and multilateral agreements for the transfer of workers.

The arguments of this chapter are predominantly based on the official and private correspondence generated by the two Italian institutions in charge of managing post-WWII emigration: the Italian Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Labor and the Social Welfare. For its own nature, the evidence used is partial; it portrays the Italian side and sugarcoats the inconsistencies of the state initiatives regarding emigrants' vocational training.<sup>6</sup> However, the focus on these Italian institutional sources—especially the private correspondence and the drafts written in preparation for the OEEC international meetings—allowed me to investigate Italian position toward international cooperation. They reveal the backstage activity of the Italian representatives, and their adaptation of the international and European narratives to the Italian economy's interests. Eventually, the analysis of these sources helps me mitigate the paradigmatic position of inferiority of emigrants' countries in the post-WWII international agreements and exchanges.

With varying degrees of success, international bodies catalyzed joint transnational projects and studies about migration and workers' training, proposed and encouraged standardized transnational nomenclatures of skills and trades. Most importantly, they had a vital role in the promotion, establishment, and improvement of training schools and courses. International co-operation, the transnational exchange of knowledge, and the compilation of labor market data characterized postwar conferences and meetings focused on the problems of

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<sup>6</sup> I will investigate these inconsistencies in the following three chapters.

migration and the overpopulation of developing countries. Transnational collaboration was a fundamental premise of the full use of emigrant countries' manpower.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1949 Memorandum on Overpopulation and Emigration (see third quotation), the General Directorate of the Emigration (DGE) of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs clearly demonstrated that Italy welcomed international co-operation in matters of emigrants' vocational training. Scholars have recently dedicated increasing attention to the involvement of international organizations in the shaping and promotion of emigrants' vocational training. In this chapter, I investigate the ideological narratives and the economic factors that allowed the establishment of emigrants' training schools and courses in Italy and for Italian emigrants in other countries.

The need to "produce" skilled workers that would be appealing to foreign markets pushed the Italian government to engage in transnational training along with the countries of destination. In the process of fulfilling foreign markets' exigencies and immigration policies, Italy ended up benefitting from this transnational collaboration and attention. Transnational training requires a clear definition. Italian emigrants' state-implemented training was transnational because 1) foreign markets' labor demands dictated the establishment of courses for specific trades, 2) international institutional bodies intervened in the regulation and funding of these training courses and 3) the training happened between Italy and countries of destination.

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<sup>7</sup> During the ILO's Preliminary Conference on Migration, held in Geneva in April 1950, the Permanent Migration Committee members indicated the steps of the ILO's active police in making full use of migrant manpower. Strengthening of the employment services, development of the international definitions of occupations, and improvement of methods of industrial training. US Department of State, "ILO Preliminary Conference On Migration." By Irwin M. Tobin. Washington, DC: GPO, August 1950 (United States Department of State Bulletin 23, no. 580), 270-273.

## 2.1 *This is What We Can Do: Italian Government Solutions, 1946-1950*

The 1948-1950 correspondence between the Italian Ministry of Labor and Social Security and several international organizations regarding the migratory problem highlights Italian authorities' concerns for the training of prospective emigrants.<sup>8</sup> Particularly interesting are the reports that the Italian Ministry of Labor prepared for the American legislators' visit.<sup>9</sup> The Ministry of Labor described the difficult moment facing Italy as follows:

Ten years of interruption of migratory flows and of the normal development and revitalization of the peacetime industries provoked the creation of a large mass of workers that lacks sufficient vocational training and who look for employment in Italy or abroad without the possibility of the [Italian] government taking care of them.<sup>10</sup>

The message sent by the Italian institutional authorities to the American delegates was clear: the unpreparedness of the Italian workers was not the fault of the Italian government but a logical consequence of WWII. The war damaged and destroyed schools, training materials, and technical equipment. In the two years following the war's conclusion, the remaining scholastic and technical equipment only met half of the country's needs.<sup>11</sup>

The Italian Ministry of Labor did what it could. In the immediate aftermath of WWII, Italy reopened the two main institutions (INAPLI and ENALC) in charge of vocational training and issued a series of laws regulating vocational training courses and technical schools.<sup>12</sup> In the memorandum, published in September 1949, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced

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<sup>8</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX, Box 453, F. 43 "Carteggio del Ministero con le Varie Organizzazioni Internazionali Riguardante i Problemi dell'Emigrazione," 1948-1950.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., f. "Visita della Commissione Parlamentare Americana in Italia." The date of this Parliamentary visit is not specified; it surely happened between 1948 and 1950.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, f. "Ampiezza del Problema della Formazione Professionale in Italia e Difficoltà che si Oppongono alla sua Risoluzione." n.d.

<sup>12</sup> The INAPLI (National Institute for the vocational training of industrial workers) and the ENALC (National Institute for the training of commerce workers) were born in 1939 thanks to a series of agreements between contrasting labor unions. They addressed more specifically workers' enhancement rather than elementary training. Ministero del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale, *La Formazione Professionale in Italia* (Roma: Istituto Poigrafico dello Stato, 1963), 16.

that "in view of the need of training workers to meet internal and foreign requirements, steps have been taken to create courses and training centers." The cost of this national training program amounted to 70 billion lire.<sup>13</sup>

Through a series of laws issued between 1947 and 1949, the Italian government ushered in vocational training for the unemployed, courses for surplus workers employed in industries, and financial incentives to the small enterprises and artisanal workshops willing to hire apprentices. The government's effort went beyond meeting the needs of the unemployed and apprentices. It also had to establish courses for categories of workers which were the direct result of WWII: veterans, Italian Resistance fighters (*partigiani*), and refugees.<sup>14</sup>

At the 1950 Conference on Emigration, held in Paris, the Italian delegation enumerated results of Italy's recent efforts to train emigrants: the organization of 3,000 training courses for 100,000 students, the establishment of 70 technical training courses, and the re-starting of over 1,000 reforestation camps and workshops.<sup>15</sup> The expenditure for the training courses amounted to 12 billion lire of which 10 billion were supplied by the ERP funds.

Yet regarding these efforts, the Ministry of Labor underlined: "The Italian government wished it could contribute more to the development of vocational training, believing that—as already stated—this is a necessary premise for creating employment opportunities internally and for the increasing emigration."<sup>16</sup> Italy was caught in a vicious circle. Emigration was one of the remedies for its high unemployment rate. Simultaneously, Italian governmental authorities understood they could not send abroad just *any* workers. If they wanted emigration to serve as an

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<sup>13</sup> AS-MAE, Ambasciata Washington, Box 56, F. 1609 "Memorandum Emigrazione," September 1949.

<sup>14</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX, Box 453, F. 43 "Carteggio del Ministero con le Varie Organizzazioni Internazionali Riguardante i Problemi dell'Emigrazione," 1948-1950, f. "Visita della Commissione Parlamentare in Italia." n.d.

<sup>15</sup> AS-MAE, Ambasciata Washington, Box 56, F. 1612 "Conferenza sull'Emigrazione, September 26, 1950."

<sup>16</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX, Box 453, F. 43 "Carteggio del Ministero con le Varie Organizzazioni Internazionali Riguardante i Problemi dell'Emigrazione," 1948-1950, f. "Visita della Commissione Parlamentare in Italia." n.d.

effective solution to unemployment, they absolutely needed to play an active role in the training of Italian workers and reinforcing the training apparatus. Quite paradoxically, the same factor that encouraged Italians to leave their country—lack of a developed industrial economy—hindered the technical training that would have allowed them to leave in the first place.

It was clear to Italian authorities and labor experts that the necessary step toward the training of Italian workers was the development and production of technical equipment and tools. It was also evident that Italy could not do this by itself. The solution to this conundrum had to be found outside Italy. The Ministry of Labor described this situation:

Given the high unemployment rate, the increasing number of young apprentices, and the ruinous conditions of the Italian economy, it is believed to be necessary to send abroad (to European countries and America) a workforce trained in the homeland [Italy] with *foreign financial support*. For the resolution of the serious problem of vocational training, we believe Italy's aspiration to be helped by developed nations (particularly by the US) valid and understandable.<sup>17</sup>

The stress on American financial help is not surprising. I have already emphasized the reasons for the growing attention of the United States toward Italy and, consequently, the slow but long-lasting relation established between the peninsula and the United States. More specifically, anti-Communism and productivity discourses cemented and describe the post-WWII international relations between the United States and Italian institutional authorities. Italy was a geopolitically strategic puzzle-piece in the American fight against Communism. Post-WWII alliances were based on two premises: the fear that these many Italian unemployed could become Communists, and the necessity to spread the gospel of capitalist productivity. The United States was particularly adamant about promoting productivity methods among European managers and

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<sup>17</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX, Box 453, F. 43 "Carteggio del Ministero con le Varie Organizzazioni Internazionali Riguardante i Problemi dell'Emigrazione," 1948-1950, f. "La Formazione Professionale degli Operai."

non-Communist labor unions. For all these reasons, the United States took on the responsibility of training Italian workers. In turn, Italian authorities felt justified in asking for financial help.

## 2.2 *If Italians Won't Go to America, America Must Go to Italy*

A significant portion of American aid for Italian postwar reconstruction backed the vocational training of Italian workers. For instance, in 1948, the AUSA (Aid from the United States of America) provided the Minister of Labor, the Christian Democrat Amintore Fanfani, 250 million lire as seed money for the establishment of reforestation camps (*cantieri di rimboschimento*) in rural areas of Italy. The reforestation camps became the highlight of postwar Italian public works programs (Table 6). Between 1949 and 1950, 7 billion lire of ERP funds were invested in the establishment of school sites (*cantieri scuola*) and reforestation camps.<sup>18</sup>

It is evident that in the period between 1948 and 1950, the United States played a significant role in supporting the Italian government's initiatives addressed to Italian workers' training, especially those of the Christian Democratic Party. The bond between Italy and the US went beyond monetary transactions. When the Ministry of Labor made clear that the expense for equipment would have amounted to 30 billion lire, it also added:

A portion of the equipment could be produced in Italy giving in this way employment to Italian industry. For what concerns the most urgent equipment which—for quality—requires modern working techniques, these should be bought in the United States or in other industrially developed nations. The cost of the machinery to buy abroad would amount to 12 million dollars.<sup>19</sup>

This last observation is particularly interesting because it reveals two significant factors:

1) equipment modernization not only answered to the exigencies of the Italian emigrants' training

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., f. "Attività dei Cantieri Scuola, n.d."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., "f. Ampiezza del Problema della Formazione Professionale in Italia e Difficoltà che si Oppongono alla sua Risoluzione, n.d."

but it also promoted internal employment, and 2) the United States and other developed countries were appreciated both for their financial support as well as their level of expertise in building industrial infrastructure. By looking beyond its national boundaries for help, Italy inaugurated a *transnational approach* to the Italian workers' training. Employing a transnational framework to understand Italian authorities' search for assistance reveals that they also proposed, asked, and strategized transnationally. The Ministry of Labor's report regarding the nature and the characteristics of the obstacles coming between emigration and workers' training is indicative of the Italian government's transnational mindset:

[...] it is necessary to notice the importance and the current relevance that their [vocational training courses] development acquires because it could allow the training, in a relatively brief period, of numerically sufficient qualified workers for the needs that appear or will appear both internally and in the countries lacking manpower, and in relation to the development of the productivity forecast by the ERP and by the Truman Plan for depressed areas.<sup>20</sup>

Italian bureaucrats presented the vocational training courses as an unavoidable step to the accomplishment of the postwar American politics. Indeed, this framing of vocational training was based on two underlying principles of American intervention in Western Europe: the spreading of the American capitalist productivity in Europe and the integration of the European market. Skilled workers were, as a result, the main premise for the effective functioning of the American plan. The developing countries' financial and technical support was convenient, effective, and justifiable. In sum, this set of postwar international relationships—shaped both by US policy intentions and a discourse of economic modernization through emigrants' training—framed Italy's approach to postwar reconstruction.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

The active participation of the United States in the Italian training programs was justified but it did not always correspond to what Italian authorities really wanted. In fact, the ideal *long-term* solutions proposed by the United States clashed with Italian *short-term* projects and the need to place a major number of workers abroad in the shortest amount of time. The Minister of Labor's emphasis on the so-called fast courses (*corsi rapidi*) for unemployed adults was born out of this immediate need, as well. School sites and reforestation camps also foregrounded the contingent need to improve and reconstruct Italian roads and transportation networks. These public works programs employed workers only temporarily and, in many instances, functioned as a supplement for individuals already receiving unemployment insurance. The Ministry of Labor was adamant about establishing adult workers' training courses. Such courses allowed Italy to train and send abroad in the shortest period possible that generation of Italian workers (born at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s) who were too old to take advantage of the new vocational schools and were already responsible for their families' support. In both cases, Italian authorities focused on short-term and fast solutions. They clearly distinguished between fast courses for unemployed adult and vocational schools and courses for the Italian youth. Italians proposed band-aid solutions whereas Americans looked at long-term solutions. As shown in the previous chapter, Italy asked for the enlargement of quotas but the US proposed scientific management. (Figure 2 and 3).

The American ERP administrators in Italy sought to recreate Italians in their own image as non-communist, productive workers, and avid consumers. According to historian Charles Maier, the US "sought to transform political issues into problems of output, to adjourn class conflict for a consensus on growth."<sup>21</sup> This was what Maier called American "politics of

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<sup>21</sup> Charles S. Maier, "The Politics of Productivity: Foundations of American International Economic Policy After World War II," *International Organization* 32, no. 4 (1977), 607.

productivity." I found this framework useful for understanding the American interventions in Europe after WWII.<sup>22</sup> It was hoped that the transfer of American technical know-how to Western European countries would automatically solve class conflicts, social disorders, and, most importantly, possible communist upsurges. For American strategists, the productive ideology became a fundamental selling point of the Marshall Plan and free market economy to postwar Western European countries.<sup>23</sup>

Scholars agree that economic, social, and political consideration shaped the productivity mission of the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA). According to historian Pier Paolo D'Attore "productivity then became a true political philosophy."<sup>24</sup> More specifically, the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) division of the ECA, started in 1948, embodied the American impulse to modernize both the European managerial and trade unions' relations and behaviors.<sup>25</sup> The funding allocated by the ECA to the TAP significantly rose in the period between 1948 and 1952 from two to twenty million dollars. The money was supposed to be used by the recipient countries to study the increase of productivity, industry, and farming, the improvement of the employer-worker relations, and the reduction of production costs.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 607; Bent Boel, *The European Productivity Agency and Transatlantic Relations, 1953-1961* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2003), 27. On the American productivity programs in postwar Italy see also: Pier Paolo D'Attore, "Erp Aid and the Politics of Productivity in Italy During the 1950s," *EUI Working Paper No. 85/159*, April 1985; Anthony Carew, *Labour Under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Marketing of Management Science* (Manchester U.K: Manchester University Press, 1987).

<sup>23</sup> Boel, 24. For an overview of the connection between the postwar American miracle of production, the building of an American classless society, and the reorientation of American labor unionism from shop floor issues to adequate wages for consumption, see Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Knopf, 2003); Lisa M. Fine, *The Story of Reo Joe Work, Kin, and Community in Autotown, U.S.A.*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> D'Attore, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

However, TAP was not immediately effective. D' Attore emphasizes that most of the funds allocated for the first year (1948) were left unused.<sup>26</sup> President Truman's inaugural address of January 20, 1949, was an important ideological springboard for the revitalization of the American technical assistance to Europe. Truman's fourth point was particularly instrumental for the galvanization of the TAP. In it, he called for American scientific advancement and industrial progress to be employed overseas to facilitate the growth of developing areas.<sup>27</sup>

In the postwar American mentality, backward economies were highly susceptible to Communist overtures. From 1949 onwards, the US bureaucrats and ECA administrators poured social and capital investment mostly into Western European countries considered at risk of succumbing to Communism. France and Italy topped the list of countries in danger. According to D.W. Ellwood, the largest anti-communist campaign of the Marshall Plan emerged in Italy. Here, exhibits, booklets, documentaries, and radio programs became valuable tools of American capitalist propaganda. The main objective of the propaganda in Italy was to create and reinforce trade unions led by principles different from the leftist ideologies resurrected after Fascism.<sup>28</sup>

For the scope of this dissertation, I do not delve into the heart of the dilemma concerning the Marshall Plan's success or lack thereof in winning Europeans to the capitalist cause. On one hand, the political success of the Communist parties and coalitions in the French and Italian 1951 national elections showed that the American productivity missions spread dissatisfaction among

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>27</sup> "Fourth, we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas." Harry S. Truman, "Inaugural Address" (Speech, Washington, D.C., January 20, 1949), <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/calendar/viewpapers.php?pid=1030>, last accessed April 15, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Ellwood D.W., "The Marshall Plan and the Politics of Growth," in *Shaping Postwar Europe. European Unity and Disunity. 1945-1957*, ed. Peter M. R. Stirk and David Willis, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 20.

workers who saw increased benefits only for capitalists.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, conservative regimes, supported by the US, characterized and shaped the postwar Western European countries' political scenes. The presence of the Christian Democratic Party's leadership of the Italian postwar Republican parliament is a case in point.

Rather than promoting one side or the other, scholars have recognized the heterogeneity of Western European countries' economic circumstances as well as the diversity of their reactions to American productivity campaigns. For instance, in countries like Greece and West Germany, where American technical assistance came to signify support for the defense against Soviet attacks early on, productivity funds were more frequently and more effectively used. By contrast, in 1951, Italy used only 16 percent of the funds allocated for the enhancement of productivity. Italian incapacity to use the funds was probably due to two factors. The funds were "significant but hardly overwhelming amounts," and the clear indifference of Italian employers and state authorities to American Productivity Campaign.<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding a few shortcomings and the ineffective management of the Marshall Plan productivity programs, scholars agree that downplaying the role of certain interventions limits our understanding of this period. The "US visits" were among the most effective interventions of the productivity programs.<sup>31</sup> Andrew Carew provides a description of these visits in his analysis of the British Anglo-American Council on Productivity's (AACP) committee for arranging visits to the United States. A dozen European individuals drawn from management, technical grades, and shop-floor workers formed teams destined to go to the United States for short trips of four to six weeks. The main goal of the visit was to become familiar with American

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 16; Boel, *The European Productivity Agency and Transatlantic Relations, 1953-1961*, 30-31; D'Attore, "Erp Aid and the Politics of Productivity in Italy During the 1950s," 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> D'Attore, "Erp Aid and the Politics of Productivity in Italy During the 1950s," 11 and 13.

<sup>31</sup> Anthony Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Marketing of Management Science*, 137 and D'Attore, "Erp Aid and the Politics of Productivity in Italy During the 1950s," 11.

scientific management and models of productivity.<sup>32</sup> The workers chosen for these visits were strategically selected according to their ideological credos; any association with the Communist party was strictly forbidden.

In October 1951, the Italian moderate labor union, Federation of Free Trade Unions (CISL), and the ECA signed an agreement for 100 Italian workers to embark on a year-long study trip to the United States.<sup>33</sup> To be eligible for the trip, workers had to be employed, younger than 33 and, preferably, skilled workers.<sup>34</sup> Apparently the Turin based newspapers—*La Nuova Stampa*, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, and *Il Popolo Nuovo*—reported this news before the Turin local authorities of the office of labor knew the details. Indeed, the director of the Turin regional office of labor, L. Donnet, referred to the above-mentioned newspaper articles and requested more information from the Ministry of Labor regarding this affair.<sup>35</sup> Donnet's ignorance about the precise terms of this agreement and the fact that the ECA stipulated this agreement directly with the CISL are indicative of the ECA's change of direction in its interventions. According to Boel, in 1951 the ECA realized that its efforts to change European governmental policies were not always successful. Therefore, it changed strategy and promoted the "direct action" policy. Rather than relying exclusively on the national governments' support, the ECA administrators sought contacts with individuals directly involved in the productive process. Exchange visits—like those

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<sup>32</sup> Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan*, 138.

<sup>33</sup> ECA (Economic Cooperation Administration) was the administration agency of the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan)

<sup>34</sup> ACS-MLPS, DGCM, Box 482, F. 155 "Emigrazione in USA." f. "Emigrazione Lavoratori Italiani negli Stati Uniti, October 15, 1951." Federico Romero argues that adherence by Italian moderate trade unions to the Marshall Plan's politics of productivity broke up the unity of the Italian trade unions—inherited from the common anti-fascist resistance—and generated a frontal encounter between communist-led unions, on one side, and Christian and Social Democrat-led unions, on the other side. Federico Romero, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944-1951* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 215-216.

<sup>35</sup> I reconstructed the events from the telegram sent by Donnet to the Ministry of Labor.

offered to the Turin CISL workers—were the backbone of the activities promoted by this ECA's change of direction.<sup>36</sup>

A month later, the vice director of the DGE, Piero Guadagnini, wrote to the General Direction of Employment and Migrations of the Ministry of Labor. In the telegram—entitled "Industrial School Locatelli"—Guadagnini suggested that students from Italian vocational training schools should have been selected along with the skilled workers for the US visits. While waiting for a confirmation of the news, the Italian Ministry of Public Education—Guadagnini stated—had already been at work soliciting all the principals of the Italian vocational schools (*scuole industriali*) to submit students' names.<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, there are no documents indicating the actual departure of these students. Yet, two important factors emerge from this initiative: 1) the United States offered the possibility to teach modern technologies to already skilled non-Communist workers who would, afterwards, returned to Italy, and 2) the Italian authorities in charge of the selection of the workers tried to make these opportunities available to the teenage students of the industrial schools.<sup>38</sup> It is evident that these educational visits principally aimed to spread the American way of life and only secondly to propose practical solutions for the training of Italian adult unskilled laborers. Besides these hypotheses, it is evident that the study visits became even more important after the beginning of the 1950s. Between 1952 and 1957, 122 missions with more than one thousand

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<sup>36</sup> Boel, *The European Productivity Agency and Transatlantic Relations, 1953-1961*, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. f. "Scuola Industriale Locatelli, November 3, 1951."

<sup>38</sup> The document indicates as responsible for the selection: a technical assistant of the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Reconstruction (CIR), a representative of the Ministry of Labor, and a representative of the Ministry of Public Education.

members were organized. These exchanges with other countries allowed Italian technical experts to acquire new knowledge in various sectors of productivity.<sup>39</sup>

In the exact same month when the ECA and the CISL were stipulating their agreement, the Italian government authorized the creation of the National Committee for Productivity (*Comitato Nazionale Produttività-C.N.P.*). Brainchild of the Council of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) and the US missions in Italy, National Centers for Productivity became a reality for several European countries beginning in 1950. The main task of these centers was to create specialized bodies for the study, and the increase, of productivity levels. The C.N.P. began its work in Italy in February 1952. In 1953, like other American aid to Europe, the C.N.P. existed under the direction of the European Agency for Productivity.<sup>40</sup> Among the six sub-committees of the C.N.P. there was one on "studies on vocational training and applied research" which was in charge of proposing schemes for improving and widening training programs, solving apprenticeship problems, and for taking care of university education in relation to personnel.<sup>41</sup>

During the 1950s, the EPA's productivity loans were channeled to industries specifically for increasing their productivity. Various on-the-ground activities promoted and controlled by the C.N.P. made Italians familiar with the importance of scientific management, professional and vocational training programs, and schemes for technical productivity. The C.N.P. established a special distribution agency, a news bulletin, and a publication entitled *Selezione Tecnica* to spread technical information. According to the periodical *Italian Affairs*, published by the Italian

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<sup>39</sup> Italy, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, *Italian Affairs*, 7, No.1 (1958), 2187, 2189. Unfortunately *Italian Affairs* does not specify what were the countries interested in these exchanges. The fact that the periodical refers to a generic "other countries" let presume that Italian technical experts did not travel to and exchange information solely with the United States.

<sup>40</sup> Italy, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, *Italian Affairs*, 7, No.1 (1958), 2187, 2189.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 2186.

Presidency of the Council of Ministers, there was "a useful exchange between Italy, the European Nations, and the United States, which permits industry to obtain solutions to technical and organizational problems on the basis of foreign experience."<sup>42</sup>

The transnational exchange of information was crucial to the functioning of the C.N.P. and to the American productivity mission in Italy. Born as an element of the American pro-capitalist propaganda, it would be a mistake to consider the C.N.P. as simply imposed on Italian postwar technical development. In the wake of the productivity centers' initiatives, a significant number of organizations and associations for productivity were established in Italian cities under the auspices of the C.N.P. but also independently.<sup>43</sup> In 1956, the C.N.P. began assisting the establishment of local association for productivity. By June 1957, there were already twenty three Provincial Centers for Productivity.<sup>44</sup>

The Italian authorities' interest in sending industrial school students to the US for study visits and the proliferation of associations for productivity—with and without the direct involvement of the C.N.P.—are clear signs of the postwar Italian governmental authorities, representatives of workers, and employers' growing interest in training and productivity methods and the modernization of the Italian job market. In sum, I argue that American requests for skilled workers and the establishment of training programs were responsible for the long-term modernization of Italian industrialization and for the development of a strong and technical educational system addressed to the younger generation of students. As the US missions in Italy were promoting productivity, Italian bureaucrats increasingly recognized vocational training as beneficial for prospective emigrants as well as for the rest of the population.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 2190.

<sup>43</sup> The list reported in *Italian Affairs* counted 13 associations. The majority were concentrated in Rome and Milan. The only Southern city who hosted two centers was Palermo, Sicily.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 2190.

The message sent by the US to Italy was, after all, tempting. New training methods became synonymous to modernity and prosperity. Technical assistance was among the major goals of the EPA. A small 1960 pamphlet published by the OEEC regarding a pilot experiment of community development in Sardinia provides a clear definition of what technical assistance meant and consisted of:

Technical assistance is the bridge between the under-developed areas and the world of modern progress [...] By demonstration, people can be persuaded to adopt better methods of work and so to increase their earnings. By education they can be brought to realize the advantages of working in groups. The problem is a *long-term*. The aim is to help people, by bringing the modern world closer to them, so that they can help themselves to find their palace in the twentieth century.<sup>45</sup>

Transfer of technical knowledge and, on the ideological side, of the American way of life was the US response to Italian backwardness and unemployment. The key elements of the American aid to postwar Italy were: mass production, scientific management and, most importantly, productivity. There were the principles that gave the United States higher standard of living, and that allowed workers to become consumers. This was what America wanted for Italy.<sup>46</sup> After all, productivity, consumption, interdependence, and security formed the foothold of the leadership in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> OEEC, *Pilot-Area in Sardinia: An International Experiment in Community Development* (Chateau De La Muette, Paris), July 1960.

<sup>46</sup> Ellwood, "The Marshall Plan and the Politics of Growth," 20-21.

<sup>47</sup> D'Attore Pier Paolo, "Americanism and Antiamericanism in Italy," in *Shaping Postwar Europe. European Unity and Disunity. 1945-1957*, ed. Stirk Peter and Willis Davis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 50-51.

of living, and allowed workers to become consumers. This was what America wanted for Italy.<sup>48</sup> After all, productivity, consumption, interdependence, and security formed the foothold of leadership in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>49</sup>

American willingness to transform Europeans into efficient, trained, and modern workers was not invented in the years after WWII, but, if anything, was adapted to the new Cold War circumstances. Indeed, the connection among modernity, skilled workers, and American values stretched to the first decade of the twentieth century, and was an important part of the broader phenomenon of Americanization, started in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Impossible to be reduced to a single definition, Americanization acquired different meanings according to the specific historical events in which it was generated. By the late nineteenth century, the arrival of numerous immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe shook white Native Americans and old immigrants' status quo. Fear and concerns for the future composition of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant America encouraged an army of social workers, mostly Progressives, and bureaucrats to restrict the access of these new immigrants to naturalization and, simultaneously, to teach them the main precepts of American culture. Pushed by different values, both Progressives and Restrictionists recognized that knowledge of the English language, and of the American constitution, were essential preconditions for both the legal (i.e. naturalization process) and the cultural Americanization of these immigrants.<sup>51</sup>

First entrusted to public schools, and to local evening classes located in the cities with major concentration of immigrants, English language and American history classes entered the

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<sup>48</sup> Ellwood, "The Marshall Plan and the Politics of Growth," 20-21.

<sup>49</sup> D'Attore Pier Paolo, "Americanism and Antiamericanism in Italy," 50-51.

<sup>50</sup> John F. McClymer, "The Americanization Movement and the Education of Foreign-Born Adult, 1914-1925," in *American Education and the European Immigrant: 1840-1940*, ed. Bernard J. Weiss (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 96-116.

<sup>51</sup> Dorothee Schneider, *Crossing Borders: Migration and Citizenship in the Twentieth-Century United States* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 152-153.

gates of American factories in the early twentieth century. When the Americanization campaign emanated from within factory gates—Stephen Meyer argues—it not only showed its darker side, but it also added to the differences between national and ethnic cultures and between pre-industrial and industrial cultures.<sup>52</sup> The pre-industrial European immigrant workers had to be transformed into disciplined modern American industrial workers. Americanizers were convinced that, by imposing on the immigrant unskilled peasants their middle-class industrial ethos, they could promote the Thompsonian restructuring of immigrants' working habits, and facilitate immigrants' transition to American mature industrial society.<sup>53</sup> The need to educate first-generation factory workers was not new in American history. Nineteenth-century American-born first-generation factory workers—like the twentieth-century Eastern and Southern Europeans—deserted factories, drifted back to the land, and accumulated high absence rates.<sup>54</sup>

In the first decade of the twentieth century, teaching immigrant workers to become disciplined workers was déjà-vu, but, unlike the past, it was strictly connected to the need to transform them into loyal American citizens. The manufacturing of a model reliable American worker coincided with two important events: 1) the introduction on the shop floor of new methods of industrial management—first and foremost scientific management—which disrupted craftsmen's previous autonomy, and enforced cooperation of employees under management's direction, and 2) the advent of WWI that promoted Americanization (essential to gain

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<sup>52</sup> Meyer Stephen, "Adapting the Immigrant to the Line: Americanization in the Ford Factory, 1914-1921," *Journal of Social History* 14, no. 1 (Autumn 1980), 67.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 68. E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (1967), 57.

<sup>54</sup> Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 22-23; Daniel T. Rodgers, "Tradition, Modernity, and the American Industrial Worker: Reflections and Critique," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7, no. 4 (Spring 1977), 665-666.

immigrants' national loyalty) into an official, state-supported campaign to assimilate immigrants into American society.<sup>55</sup>

Gerd Korman argues that "though they failed to make welfare and safety programs an integral part of the Americanization movement, militant Americanizers helped shape the educational programs large employers of labor were developing for their workers."<sup>56</sup> Some Americanizers were much more persuasive than others. For instance, in 1907, Peter Roberts, new head of the industrial department of the national council of the YMCA, launched the "Y's" program for immigrant workers. "Roberts system," based on a practical approach to English instruction and Americanization, was adopted eventually by both night schools and several large companies—such as the International Harvester Company, the United States Steel Corporation, and the Ford Motor Company. These companies incorporated the "Y's" program with their efforts to enhance workers' safety and, most importantly, discipline.<sup>57</sup>

When in 1910 the International Harvester Company introduced the "Roberts system," the company's social secretaries believed that the English classes could maximize employees' potential and, in general, improve the efficiency of the company's work force.<sup>58</sup> The adoption in 1914 of this system by the Ford Motor Company illustrates even better the connection between Americanization and industrial demands. Through Roberts' lessons, Ford workers learned the value of time in both their personal and working lives. Self-discipline, regularity, cleanliness, and timeliness—considered the capstones of the Roberts' method—mirrored the ideal worker

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<sup>55</sup> David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century," *Labor History* 17, no. 4 (1976), 507; Dorothee Schneider, *Crossing Borders: Migration and Citizenship in the Twentieth-Century United States*, 156.

<sup>56</sup> Gerd Korman, "Americanization at the Factory Gate," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 18, no. 3 (April 1, 1965), 396.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 401; Jeffrey E. Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 70.

<sup>58</sup> Gerd Korman, "Americanization at the Factory Gate," 401.

according to the Ford managers' American middle-class values.<sup>59</sup> The Ford Motor Company Program extended its efforts to both the public and the private spheres of immigrant workers' experiences. It made course attendance mandatory, and sponsored home visits by the agents of the Ford Education Department who, ultimately, checked on the conditions of workers' families and housing.<sup>60</sup>

World War I brought about new energy to the Americanization drive, and reaffirmed the belief among Americanizers that any disruption of American industrial output would threaten national safety. In 1917, the Committee for Immigrants in America organized a special subcommittee on Industrial Engineering. This latter was in charge of handling issues with immigrant laborers and of formulating methods of human engineering work.<sup>61</sup> Among the most influential American crusaders, Frances Kellor—through the Committee on Industrial Engineering and other organizations—advocated for systematizing industrial production and for the reduction of conflicts between labor and capital; these were two important assets for the creation of a loyal and homogeneous nation. Amidst WWI events, Kellor made of American factories the main locus for Americanization. She invited local chambers of commerce, industrial plants, and trade associations to join her in the Americanization crusade. She was convinced that Americanization of workers would increase employees' efficiency, prevent accidents, and help employers understand immigrants' needs.<sup>62</sup>

Large American corporations did not hesitate to adopt Kellor's creed. When in 1916, the Ford School (born as a result of the safety movement in the factories and addressed to the

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<sup>59</sup> Stephen Meyer, "Adapting the Immigrant to the Line: Americanization in the Ford Factory, 1914-1921," 70, and 74-75.

<sup>60</sup> Jeffrey E. Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants*, 80-81.

<sup>61</sup> Edward George Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 165.

<sup>62</sup> Gerd Korman, "Americanization at the Factory Gate," 406-407.

immigrant workers' needs) introduced courses in mathematics, public speaking, and psychology; it became clear that large corporations' considerations out-weighted Americanizers' aims.<sup>63</sup> In the same year, the American Bridge Company reduced the English language courses to a part of a broader educational program which included mathematics, mechanics, and drawing.<sup>64</sup> The correspondence between the "loyal American" and the "disciplined worker" survived WWI. Increasingly, employers emphasized work discipline as capstone of Americanism. Individual material success and corporate paternalism characterized the patriotic ideology omnipresent in the workplace, and required workers to separate themselves from leftist trade unions and to adhere to the anti-Bolshevism campaign of the 1920s.<sup>65</sup>

After WWI, Italian authorities and non-Communist trade unions did not disdain the American formula. Yet, they continued to insist on the necessity to send abroad a surplus of workers. Increasingly, better training began to signify for the Italian government the possibility to place its workers in foreign labor markets. Unlike the American long-term strategy, Italy suggested fast and short-term solutions. In June 1950, the members of the Italian Inter-ministerial Committee for Reconstruction (CIR)—the most important body for the management of Italy's post-WWII Reconstruction—addressed a note to the Ministry of Labor which described the many benefits that the establishment of specific training centers could generate for skill level and functioning of Italian emigration. The CIR held that: "[...] these *centers* are believed to be necessary in the Italian environment of vocational training also *independent* of the urgent need for emigration."<sup>66</sup> Yet, it is also evident from the analysis of these documents that immediate and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 413.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 414.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 418; Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 173.

<sup>66</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX, Box 485, F. 191, CIR-Comitato Internazionale Riscotruzione. Riunioni riguardanti i problemi emigratori 1950-1953, f. , "Direzione Generale dell'Occupazione Interna e delle Migrazioni," June 1950.

fast training was prioritized: "In the *meantime* we need to respond to the need for emigration by organizing *courses* for emigrants."<sup>67</sup>

That *meantime* was fundamental in the Italian struggle to send abroad its surplus workers. An internal hierarchy based on priorities emerged in both the Minister of Labor's correspondence and reports, and in the drafts of the CIR meetings. Between the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, the training of adult workers in fast courses (*corsi rapidi*) and establishment of courses for emigrants took priority over the long-term, and postponable, reformation of the Italian education system; emigrants' courses had also priority over the establishment of permanent training centers.<sup>68</sup>

### 2.3 *Becoming Skilled in Canada: The Italian-Canadian Compromise*

As discussed in the previous chapter, the 1950s transformation of the Canadian economic situation from a resource base to a modern manufacturing structure required an increasing number of skilled workers. The economists Alan and David Green pointed out that the Canadian government adopted two strategies to accommodate the skill requirement. First, it invested in the expansion of postsecondary education and secondly, it tried to meet the more immediate need for skilled manpower through immigration.<sup>69</sup> The Canadian approach to the changing needs of its post-WWII economy resembled—as I indicate in the next chapter—the Italian government's approach to high unemployment and high level of unskilled workers. Congruent with Canadian policies, Italian authorities attempted to solve the weaknesses of Italy's post-WWII economy by training Italian manpower and by favoring its emigration to more-developed countries. Both

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Italics are mine.

<sup>68</sup> A deeper analysis of these courses and centers is provided in the next chapter.

<sup>69</sup> Green and Green, "The Economic Goals of Canada's Immigration Policy," 426.

Canada and Italy saw in the improvement of vocational training and in migration powerful instruments to accommodate internal demands. Similarly these countries distinguished long and short-term solutions. The establishment of training schools and courses fell in the long-term category. Out-migration for Italy and in-migration for Canada were instead the most immediate short-term remedies.

On one hand, Italy wanted to place the surplus of workers in foreign job markets. On the other hand, Canada engaged in a race with other destination countries—first and foremost Australia—for the admission of white European skilled workers. This situation created a mechanism that favored both Italy and Canada. Not always smooth, this mechanism was the result of *ad hoc* efforts pursued between Italy and Canada. It is not a coincidence that, increasingly in the second half of the 1950s, the *Bollettino Quindicinale dell'Emigrazione Italiana* (a biweekly periodical specialized on emigration issues) closely followed the Canadian initiatives for the training of migrants. As already discussed, the interest of Italian migration experts was also due to the significant number of Italian immigrants to Canada between the late 1950s and the early 1960s.

The arm wrestling between the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Migration—which was favorable to the immigration of workers whether skilled or unskilled—and the Canadian Department of Labor—which believed in the subordination of immigration to the internal business cycles—seemed to find a middle ground in the establishment of training and language courses for immigrants in Canada.<sup>70</sup> The immediate solution was to recover and adapt the skills that immigrants had already acquired in their country of origin. For instance, in 1953, a Montreal technical institute established special training courses. These courses targeted skilled

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<sup>70</sup> Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*. Ninette Kelley and M. J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 329-330.

and professional workers—such as lawyers and physicians—who needed to adapt their training to Canadian circumstances. The institute provided English and French language courses, courses in hygienic regulations, and in systems of measurement. The ultimate goal was to use these already trained workers as supervisors and managers.<sup>71</sup>

The 1953 courses of the Montreal technical institute—mostly designed for professional refugees—were just a prelude of the late-1950s more active politics toward the establishment of courses for immigrants. The political scientist Freda Hawkins pointed out that these courses were not only product of the Canadian authorities' anxiety about the increasing numbers of sponsored and unskilled migrants but also of the sending countries' active assistance of their own emigrants. Italy and the Netherlands were especially energetic in this sense.<sup>72</sup> In particular, the Italian government regularly negotiated with Canadian authorities on a wide range of matters concerning the well-being of Italian migrants. It was also true that a good part of the support for Italian migrants came from voluntary associations.

Catholic organizations surely played a huge role in this assistance. Religious groups were crucial bridges between Italians abroad and state and church authorities in Italy. For instance, in 1954, the Italian newspaper of Montreal, *Il Cittadino Canadese*, published a letter written by the Order of the Friar Servants of Mary in Montreal and addressed to the Italian bishops. The friars asked for the establishment of evening schools in the parochial churches of the places where immigration was more intense. Language and vocational courses would have allowed Italian immigrants to acquire competency and to land better paid jobs. After all, the friars urged, "Dutch and German religious authorities already do this, putting Italian emigrants in an inferior status."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> "Corsi Professionali per Immigranti in Canada," *Bollettino* (April 25, 1953), 124.

<sup>72</sup> Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 5.

<sup>73</sup> AS-MAE, Affari Politici, (1950-1957), Canada, Box 317, F. "Emigrazione e Manodopera in Canada." f. "Emigrazione in Canada—Pubblicazione Lettera Padri Serviti, June 22, 1954."

Notwithstanding the complaints of the Montreal Servite Friars, the initiatives of both Catholic and Italian ethnic organizations seemed to work very effectively in Canada. In November 1955, the Italian-Canadian newspaper, *Il Corriere Canadese*, reported the events of the annual meeting of the Board of the Center for the Assistance of Italian Emigrants (*Centro di Assistenza Emigranti Italiani*). On this occasion, the representatives of fourteen Italian associations—which were the major donors of the Center—met at the Italian consulate in Toronto. The associations embraced a wide range of categories: Catholic, regional, labor, athletic.<sup>74</sup> The Center, mostly funded by these associations, offered several services to the Italian communities in Canada. It provided an employment agency. Most importantly, it organized English courses and schools for bricklayers and seamstresses. The women's section of the Center was in charge of distributing clothes and paying hospital visits to the ill.<sup>75</sup>

Italians and other migrants in Canada not only counted on ethnic and religious associations but also on the efforts that the Canadian government was undertaking for the training of workers. For instance, during the 1950s, representatives of the industries, trade unions, and federal and local authorities collaborated on the establishment of specialization courses on the factories' and companies' work floors. The employers' direct interventions in the preparation and training of their workers revealed an effective short-term solution to Canada's need for trained workers and simultaneously benefitted native and migrant workers.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> The associations were the following: Loggia Ontario, Circolo Maschile Calabrese, Italo-Canadian Recreation Club, Loggia Patronato, Loggia Patronato, Ordine Fratellanza Italiana, Famiglia Friulana, Ordine Italo-Canadese, Loggia Fiorente, C.I.B.A., Società Sportiva Puglia, Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Circolo Monteleronesi, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. In 1955, these associations donated almost \$4,000 to the Center for the Assistance of Italian Emigrants.

<sup>75</sup> AS-MAE, Serie Affari Politici (1950-1957), Box 376 4100/USA, F., "Legge McCarran. Parte Generale." f. "Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Direzione Generale dell'Emigrazione, Rassegna Stampa, December 1, 1955."

<sup>76</sup> Erminio I., interview by author, Casaltvieri, August 14, 2011; Giuseppe R. interview by author, Casaltvieri, August 12, 2011.

In Ontario—a major immigrants' destination—provincial authorities were particularly receptive to the federal authorities' plea for the training of non-native workers. Between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, secondary, professional, and technical schools began providing professional and vocational training courses for adult neo-Canadian citizens. These biweekly evening courses lasted from October to Easter. The enrollment fee ranged from five to ten dollars per year. In addition, the Canadian Ministry of Public Education issued certificates to every neo-Canadian citizen upon the completion of an English test and an exam concerning citizenship's rules.<sup>77</sup> In 1963, the Ontario government benefitted migrant workers even further by abolishing the age limit of 21 for the access to training courses. The *Bollettino* welcomed the Canadian decision as a benefit for two categories of adult migrants. On the one hand, it favored migrants who, even older than 21, were still willing to obtain vocational training. On the other hand, it allowed those already trained in Italy to access these training courses that were mandatory for the obtaining of a license.<sup>78</sup>

Canadian religious associations did their part in helping immigrants' integration into the Canadian environment. In 1963, the Earls court United Church of Toronto offered free English courses for immigrant women. To accommodate immigrants' mothers, the Board of the Earls court United Church provided specialized staff that took care of their children during the courses.<sup>79</sup> It was in this pro-migrant training environment that Italian associations for emigrants flourished. Hawkins explains the proliferation and efficacy of these Italian associations because: "Italians are, by instinct, more politically minded than many other groups, so they have been active and inventive in self-help, and they have had considerable and much needed assistance

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<sup>77</sup> "Istruzione Pubblica per i Neo-Canadesi," *Bollettino Quindicinale dell'Emigrazione*, 1947-1970 (hereafter *Bollettino*)(November 10, 1960), 335.

<sup>78</sup> "L'Iscrizione di Apprendisti in Canada e i Limiti d'Età nel Canada," *Bollettino* (July 10, 1963), 68.

<sup>79</sup> "Corsi Gratuiti di Lingua Inglese organizzati a Toronto per Italiani," *Bollettino* (June 10, 1965), 180.

from the Italian government."<sup>80</sup> Italian inventiveness is surely not quantifiable. Yet, Italian state support is. The Italian consulate in Toronto, for instance, sponsored the Italian Office for Labour and Social Assistance (ULAS) and funded both the Italian Immigrants Aid Society (1952) and the COSTI (Italian Community Education Centre), originally known as Organizational Center for Italian Technical Schools (*Centro Organizzativo Scuole Tecniche Italiane*). This latter was singled out for several reasons. Along with the Italian Community Education Centre, COSTI was among the few immigrant associations equipped with a trained and experienced staff.<sup>81</sup>

Located in Toronto, COSTI was founded in 1962, when the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, Ellen Fairclough, called for more skills-based migration policies. The motto of the COSTI—"integration through education"—summarized the association's belief in education and vocational training as facilitating factors in the newcomers' integration in Canadian society.<sup>82</sup> At the beginning of its activity, COSTI served predominately Italians. Toward the end of the 1960s, the association began serving both Italian and other ethnic groups. Its openness to non-Italian immigrants allowed Canadian federal and provincial governments—which were prohibited from favoring specific ethnic groups—to provide COSTI with funds (*i.e.* United Community Funds).<sup>83</sup> The help offered by the Canadian authorities did not prevent Italy from providing assistance in form of annual grants (between \$ 17,000 and \$ 25,000) and rent-free buildings.<sup>84</sup>

COSTI played a crucial role for the Italian immigrants in the Toronto area. This association was very active in the organization of free daily English courses for the unemployed, Italian courses for immigrant children, English courses specifically addressed to housewives,

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<sup>80</sup> Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 300.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, APPENDIX 7, 417.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>84</sup> For more information about COSTI and its past and contemporary mission see COSTI, "A History in Progress," accessed May 1, 2014, <http://www.costi.org/whoweare/history.php>

courses for electricians and mechanics, and typing and needlework courses.<sup>85</sup> In 1965, COSTI with the help of the Ontario Provincial Minister of Labor inaugurated vocational training courses for carpenters, bricklayers, stonemasons, cement layers, painters, and plasterers. The courses lasted for ten weeks and were taught by bilingual instructors.<sup>86</sup>

Canadian authorities and associations shared with COSTI a common goal: the training of immigrants. For obvious reasons, COSTI, at least during the 1960s, had the Italians' integration and adaptation at heart. This association found itself playing an intermediary role between Canadian institutions and Italian workers who were in disadvantaged conditions. For instance, in 1966, along with the ULAS, the COSTI persuaded the Canadian Workmen's Compensation Board to establish a center specialized in the retraining of Italian injured workers. The center was supposed to rehabilitate both professionally and psychologically these workers and consequently to allow them to return to work.<sup>87</sup>

#### *2.4 Everybody Do Your Share: The OEEC Meetings*

The drive of the Italian government to establish vocational schools and training courses intensified throughout the 1950s as part of the Organization for European Economic Co-Operation (OEEC). This effort functioned under the auspices of the United States as a first step toward the political and economic integration of Western Europe. Alan Milward argues that the OEEC never became what Americans hoped: the first stage toward a United States of Europe. Some country members of the OEEC—those industrialized and advanced—did not promote multinational cooperation; they did not pursue a truly European agenda. On the contrary, the

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<sup>85</sup> "Attività del C.O.S.T.I a Toronto," *Bollettino* (March 10, 1964), 91.

<sup>86</sup> "Il COSTI per la Formazione Professionale degli Italiani in Canada," *Bollettino* (January 10, 1965), 7.

<sup>87</sup> "Istituzione in Canada di un Centro di Riqualificazione Professionale per i Lavoratori di Origine Italiana," *Bollettino* (March 10, 1966), 77.

OEEC, Milward explains, served as forum to make and unmake temporary national alliances according to contingent economic issues.<sup>88</sup>

The lack of international cooperation among the OEEC members crushed the dream of the Italian Christian Democrat Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi—the head of the Italian Government from 1945 to 1953—for the quick absorption of unemployed Italians by the rest of Europe. According to Federico Romero, De Gasperi hoped to transform the Italian surplus of workers into a European problem and, as a result, to carry on multilateral negotiations for the absorption of this surplus.<sup>89</sup> The so long-touted "free European market" collided with the developed European countries' gatekeeper and protectionist attitudes. Ready to use migrant workers as a reservoir in case of a labor shortage, European industrialized countries were less interested in making Italian unemployment the center of their efforts. Yet, Romero reminds us, "the emigration of the Italian unemployed was not only slowed down by protectionist restrictions: the international demand for common workers with no vocational training was, simply, insufficient."<sup>90</sup>

Notwithstanding the lack of enthusiasm of European developed countries toward multilateral agreements, it was in the setting of the OEEC that Italian representatives proposed and supported what I dub a transnational emigrants' training project. It was in this international setting that, during the 1950s, Italian authorities took possession and mastered the terminology, proposals, and narrative developed by the international organizations such as the ILO and the ICEM. On January 1951, the Italian delegation of the OEEC in Paris sent to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Labor, and the Italian Embassies in Washington, London

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<sup>88</sup> Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-51* (London: Methuen, 1984): 168-211. On this point see also Romero, *Emigrazione e integrazione europea, 1945-1973*.

<sup>89</sup> Romero, *Emigrazione e integrazione europea, 1945-1973*, 32.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

and Paris, a telegram entitled "Meeting of the Groups number 4 and 5 of the Manpower Committee." These two groups, formed by expert representatives of the OEEC countries, met with the intention of finding immediate measures to flexibly respond to the shortage of labor, a shortage made more acute by the Cold War rearmament plans. More specifically, group number 4—composed of employment experts—was in charge of finding the most effective ways to exchange periodical information and findings concerning the countries' labor demands. Group number 5—composed of experts of adults' vocational training—had the goal of implementing workers' training courses nationally and internationally.<sup>91</sup>

Cold War rearmament exigencies and European defense plans were the driving factors behind the creation of these two study groups. The ultimate goal of the vocational training experts was to find methods to intensify workers' level of expertise "every time that the shortage of skilled workforce threatened to compromise the development of the OEEC countries' defense plans or their economic and social stability."<sup>92</sup>

These OEEC meetings came to be an irreplaceable opportunity to articulate concrete solutions for better training of its workers. Persuading the other OEEC members of Italian proposals was not an easy task. Italian representatives wanted to find measures for shortage of laborers jointly with the receiving countries. They encouraged the other country members to clearly delineate limits they wanted to pose on the recruitment of foreign workers. The end result of this collaborative effort would have been a statistical-descriptive report which represented a valid tool for countries—like Italy—interested in placing its surplus of workers abroad in a shorter period of time. Knowing the numbers, the categories of workers requested, and any

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<sup>91</sup> ACS-MLPS, DGCM, Divisione Emigrazione verso Paesi Extracomunitari, serie OECE. Box 409, F. "Comitato Mano d'Opera OECE. Gruppo di Lavoro No. 5 and Ibid., F. N.3 "Rapporto della Delegazione Italiana." "Riunione dei Gruppi, n.4 e 5 del Comitato della Mano d'Opera, January 1951.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

possible restrictive measure was an essential prerequisite to build an effective training mechanism for potential emigrants.

Italian attempts to seek out international collaboration regarding the transnational training of emigrants were not smooth at all. Of the initial participants—Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Greece and the Netherlands—only the English, French, and Italian delegations actively participated during every stage of the process. Also, the US delegates and the representative of the ILO energetically participated in these meetings. In light of the absence of many European countries, the Italian delegation emphasized the committee's importance. Indeed, this was the first meeting of the OEEC members concerning the technical problems of manpower issues related to European defense.<sup>93</sup>

Besides the absence of the majority of the members, Italy also dealt with obstructionist maneuvers toward its proposals. The British delegation, supported by France, manifested a clear interest to have one of its delegates at the lead of this manpower committee. British dreams came true with the election of Lloyd Davis as representative of the study group number 4. From the beginning Davis showed an "extreme reluctance to put into effect the statistical-descriptive report."<sup>94</sup> This latter aimed to collect data on the labor markets' situation of European receiving countries; it would indicate categories and trades in need of workers.

Apparently—the Italian delegates argued—the OEEC members applauded and approved Italy's proposal during the unofficial conversations but they ended up opposing it officially. What struck Italian delegates was the lack of support from Germany and the Netherlands—two countries that also had serious problems with unemployment. In the report there is no explanation or conjecture for Germany's and the Netherlands' siding with England's impasse.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Notwithstanding the lack of interest and cold attitude of the other OEEC representatives, the study group number 4 approved and established the periodic publication of statistical-descriptive reports—quarterly or biannual—and the committee of experts in charge of examining these reports.

Likewise, misunderstanding and sabotage characterized the meetings of the study group number 5. Unlike the Italians, the delegates of the other European countries did not actively participate in the committee's ultimate goal, providing practical solutions for the training of emigrants. They limited their interventions to an exposition of the past and present situation of laborers' training. They basically offered a historical account deprived of any essential reference to the actual emergency they had been gathered together to solve.<sup>95</sup>

The meetings of the study group 4 and 5 provided Italy the opportunity to make the other participants aware of the Italian need for instructors, equipment, and workshops. Debates and proposals concerning locations and methods for the training of emigrants were common. For instance, when they had to discuss where the supposed training had to occur, the delegates divided along three possibilities: sending country, receiving country, or in both. By contrast, Italy resisted the notion that just one of the three solutions should predominate. Italian representatives persuaded the other participants to maintain the three options. In sum, according to the type of training, the convenience, the labor contingencies, and the countries involved, one of the three solutions would have been considered each time.<sup>96</sup> Rich with human capital (i.e. surplus of workers), Italy's main interest was to place its manpower very effectively. Flexibility seemed to be the solution.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. We must not forget that this report is essentially a summary of the meeting of the OEEC manpower committee according to Italy and, as a result, a partial account.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

International collaboration and cooperation—terms that frequently recurred during the OEEC meetings—meant much more than training workers between one or more nations. What Italian representatives specifically meant by these terms became increasingly clear during the 1950s. Italian representatives were very careful in emphasizing the connection between emigrants' training and the guaranteed hiring of the newly skilled workers. Two Italian experts—Capanna and Malagodi—made this point very clear in a 1951 note in preparation for the OEEC meetings. After having noted that the Italian government was actively training unemployed adults and youth through courses, schools, and school-sites established thanks to the April 29, 1949 law on vocational training, they underlined: "The weakest part of the system (training courses and schools) consists in the impossibility to assure employment to those who pass the exams and obtain a certification."<sup>97</sup> Additionally, when indicating the challenges that Italy would face in the establishment of vocational training courses specifically addressed to emigrants, the two experts listed 1) estimated knowledge of the receiving countries' shortage of labor and, 2) the need to assure apprentices an employment either in Italy or abroad.<sup>98</sup> Clearly, training without the assurance of future employment did not work.

Increasingly throughout the 1950s, Italian authorities and experts molded the emigrants' vocational training narrative around two pillars: transnational shared training and assurance of employment for training courses and schools' apprentices. Italian experts looked with interest at the model proposed by the other participants to the study group 5. According to this model, the sending country was supposed to provide emigrants with basic vocational training while the receiving country would be in charge of offering specialization courses.

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<sup>97</sup> MLPS-DGCM, Div. Emigrazione verso Paesi Extracomunitari, OECE, Box 409, F., "Comitato Mano d'Opera OECE. Gruppo di Lavoro No.5," f. , "Gruppo Lavoro N5 (materiale per la seconda riunione)."

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. F. "Nota su Alcune Proposte che Potrebbero Essere Fatte dalla delegazione Italiana nella Riunione del Gruppo di Lavoro N.5 del Comitato Mano d'Opera dell'OECE." n.d.

Italy needed to place its surplus of workers, train them, and do it quickly. The main idea was to recruit and select semi-skilled workers. The group 5 experts defined as semi-skilled those workers who possessed around 70 percent and 80 percent of a specific skill.<sup>99</sup> These semi-qualified emigrants were ready to start—in Italy or abroad—specialization training courses. The Italian reasoning was straightforward: rather than focusing on the basic training of unskilled workers, Italy had to focus on the selection of this semi-qualified workforce and, in this way, accelerate their emigration/hiring process.<sup>100</sup>

International collaboration did not solely focus on emigrants' training. In order to select its semi-skilled workers, every country member should have drafted "an accurate account of the practical tasks required" for each category of workers. In sum, a standardized classification of tasks was the first step. The selection of workers according to their skills and physical condition would begin only after having obtained a standard definition of trades and specialized jobs required. The note does not indicate which country—sending or receiving—would be in charge of the selection. Yet, it specified that the selected workers would have started their enhancement training and that "it is obvious that at the end of the course the workers who passed the qualifying exam should have found employment immediately as skilled workers."<sup>101</sup>

## *2. 5 Make Them Exportable: From Theory to Practice*

What did Italy do on the practical level to make its workforce appealing to other countries? As reported in a questionnaire regarding the status of the training level of emigrants in

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. In the document, unfortunately, there is no indication of a measuring system. These values seem, indeed, arbitrary or just indicative.

<sup>100</sup> ACS-MLPS, DGCM, Divisione Emigrazione verso Paesi Extracomunitari, serie OECE. Box 409, F."Comitato Mano d'Opera OECE. Gruppo di Lavoro No. 5. Formazione Professionale," f. "N 1: Gruppo di Lavoro No. 5 (materiale per la seconda riunione), Nota su Alcune Proposte che Potrebbero Essere Fatte dalla Delegazione Italiana nella Riunione del Gruppo di Lavoro N. 5 del Comitato Mano d'Opera dell'Oece." n.d.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

the OEEC countries, Italy had established between 1952 and 1953 more than 7,000 courses in several categories: training courses for young unskilled workers, qualification courses for adult unskilled workers, enhancement courses for workers already skilled but desiring to reach a higher level of specialization, and improvement courses for skilled workers willing to tweak their skills toward new labor exigencies.<sup>102</sup>

The questionnaire, written under the OEEC initiative by the Italian Department of Labor and Social Welfare in August 1953, provides a few insights into the government efforts to establish vocational training courses. Between March 1952 and April 1953, notwithstanding financial strains, the Department of Labor was busy building venues to train the Italian workforce. More specifically, between July 1952 and June 1953, it established 5,682 courses for the unemployed, including 2,430 courses for basic training. Additionally, it promoted the establishment of 150 business courses for requalification, courses for veterans and for disabled workers.<sup>103</sup>

The Italian government's response to the training of its manpower took into account the preparation of two distinct groups: adult laborers who lost their jobs and the portion of the very young Italian population that was still looking for first employment. The training courses for unemployed adults aimed to provide a higher level of specialization. On the other hand, the so-called "normal courses" for young laborers primarily focused on adequate preparation to "launch" them into the job market for the first time. In the two-year period under examination, the Department of Labor established business courses inside industrial plants which employed over one thousand employees. It particularly encouraged industries in need of more specialized and skilled manpower to offer courses to re-train to their employees. Once they obtained an up-

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<sup>102</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, DIV IX, Box 424, F. "OECE." f. "Risposte al Questionario sull'Organizzazione Professionale nei Paesi Membri dell'Oece, August 12, 1953."

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

to-date training, those employees would have been capable of achieving new standards of work technique and production. Additionally, the Italian government invested in reforestation programs and in the establishment of the "school sites" (*cantieri scuola*). These last two expedients allowed the temporary employment of local manpower for the realization of public works. To spur the training of craftsmen, the government even reimbursed part of the taxes to small local manufacturers and artisans willing to hire apprentices.<sup>104</sup>

We cannot measure how effective these training courses actually were, or to what extent they were just temporary and palliative solutions to a chronic issue as was unemployment. Yet, there is no doubt that the Italian government attempted to address its internal, labor-related problems. The lack of funding was a huge hurdle for the establishment of more numerous and better equipped training courses. After all, scarce financial means did not allow the acquisition of modern and sophisticated technical equipment. To collect funding destined for the establishment and improvement of laborers' vocational training, the Italian government decided to impose a tax on employers which amounted 4 percent of their 1952 income. Yet, this was not enough. Without the collaboration of the other member countries of the OEEC, the training of Italian workers was daunting.

Participation in these two OEEC study groups also gave Italy the opportunity to make the other country members aware of the decisions taken in three leading labor sectors: agriculture, the building industry, and the metal's industry. Each sector presented different challenges for workers' training. The training of agricultural workers was the least problematic: it did not require much equipment or expensive locations. Yet Italy needed instructors. As to the building industry, Italian authorities were making arrangements with the institution in charge: the INA-

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., f. "Piano d'Impiego della Manodopera Disoccupata per l'Esercizio 1955-1956, May 24, 1955."

Casa. Born in the immediate postwar and specializing in the construction of council housing, the INA-Casa trained workers and offered its construction fields as training locations. The most challenging sector was that of metallurgy: its equipment was too expensive. To remedy these problems, the Italian government launched a survey to find resources (*i.e.* equipment, tools, and buildings) on Italian territory and ready to be used for training courses, or as training centers. It also stipulated agreements with Italian industries willing to lend their unused equipment for training purposes.<sup>105</sup>

The questionnaire was an opportunity for Italy to ask for the longed-for international collaboration. The data listed in the questionnaire—reporting the numbers of workers admitted and the thousands of lire invested in the courses—was tangible evidence of the Italian government's commitment to modernization and to fighting unemployment, as well as an occasion to show the results of its efforts. In sum, the questionnaire meant another opportunity for Italy to plead its cause. Italy saw in the collaboration with the other OEEC country members and, most specifically, in the establishment of international training for European youth, a "Trojan horse" for the placing of its laborers abroad.

The second part of the 1953 questionnaire is quite indicative of Italian interests in establishing international training centers as a preliminary step for attendees' employment abroad. Transnational vocational training would have helped the young apprentices learn methods and skills of the countries where, eventually, they could have found employment. As a consequence, the Italian government was willing to invest in the organization of courses for the trades requested by immigration countries. Yet, at the end of the courses, the trainees should have

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<sup>105</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Divisione Emigrazione verso Paesi Extracomunitari, serie OECE. Box 409, F." Comitato Mano d'Opera OECE. Gruppo di lavoro No 5. Formazione Professionale." f. "Riunione dei Gruppi dei Gruppi di Lavoro n. 4 e 5 del Comitato della Mano D'opera, January 1951."

guaranteed employment abroad. This was the case of the course established in the northern city of Cattolica.<sup>106</sup>

Under the auspices of the Brazilian government, Italian authorities organized in Cattolica a course offering training in various building trades. The course eventually prepared six hundred emigrants for jobs in Brazil. It clearly emerges from this questionnaire that at the beginning of the 1950s, the Italian government looked at the training of its youth, above all, as an expedient to place workers in a labor market outside national borders. The exchange of know-how of human capital was a catalyst for the promotion of ongoing training. It was also very clear to Italian authorities that the transnational training could make Italian workers more competitive internationally. Nevertheless, although they recognized that exchange of trainees and the establishment of international training courses was a godsend for Italian emigrants, the Italian Department of Labor was quite adamant that, "the situation of the Italian labor market does not allow the employment of foreign young workers in Italian enterprises." Italy was ready to send abroad skilled workers but not to receive skilled individuals from other countries. Similar to contemporary migration, Italy promoted a skills drain rather than skills circulation.<sup>107</sup>

At the beginning of the 1950s, the discourse about the emigrants' international vocational training, more than a preamble for an equal and mutual exchange (human capital for raw materials), sounded like a request of help from Italy. The ideal of European free circulation of workers was very far from the 1950s reality. Yet, Italian efforts to find political weight in the international meetings concerning mobility and training of emigrants were important first steps toward the achievement of a few victories. A closer investigation of the Italian theoretical and

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<sup>106</sup> ACS-MLPS-DGCM, DIV IX, Box 424, F."OECE," f. "Risposte al Questionario sull'Organizzazione Professionale nei Paesi Membri dell'OECE, August 12, 1953."

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

practical migratory maneuvers during the second half of the 1950s helps retrace Italian authorities' gradual empowerment in transnational training narrative and practice.

During the second half of the 1950s, Italy still needed to send out a surplus of workers, mostly from the peninsula's southern regions. To accomplish this goal, Italian authorities drew again on the claim for international cooperation. The supra-national European project and with it the Italian hopes for a smooth absorption of its workforce by the wider job market did not work as desired. The EEC and the Treaty of Rome (1957) did not give birth to a multilateral remedy for the absorption of the Italian surplus of Italian laborers. The presence, in 1957, of 2 million unemployed workers—who the Italian labor market could by no means absorb—was both the symbol of European immigrant countries' persistent protectionism and a reality check for the Italian government.

The problems were roughly the same but Italian authorities had gained much more experience regarding emigrants' vocational training. In July 1957, the Italian Department of Labor drafted an introductory note concerning the emigrants' vocational training to present at the OEEC. Italy, like in 1953, needed to send abroad its surplus workforce, but rather than a call for help, this 1957 note framed Italy's demands as a concrete contribution to the general problems of Europe: the lack of skilled workers. The opening of the note set the tenor: "the European situation is characterized from the growing request for skilled and trained workers from almost every sector and from the relative scarcity of its availability." The message was clear: the shortage of skilled workers was a problem especially for the industrialized immigration countries. It was an issue—destined to worsen—to which the Italian surplus of workers might

have been the answer. Italy could contribute to the solution of this problem. Italian authorities were not asking for charity; they were proposing practical and already tested solutions.<sup>108</sup>

In 1957, Italy had already reached a certain degree of maturity in the management of human mobility. It had already proved various strategies to train emigrants; it had already swallowed the industrialized European countries' lack of enthusiasm toward multilateral agreements, and, it had started looking more systematically at vocational training as beneficial for migrant as well as non-migrant laborers. Italy made its past experience relevant in the dialogue concerning emigrants' training. Past experiments showed that the establishment of accelerated *ad hoc* courses for emigrants was the best solution. Italy was ready to take on this task but it specified:

These types of courses are logical only if based on prearranged employment for the apprentices who obtain the certifications. The prearranged employment evidently represents an essential element for the implementation of the courses; it has the effect to stimulate the students' interest and will in obtaining the desired qualification; it creates essential premises for the success of the training, from both the technical and psychological viewpoints.<sup>109</sup>

In the international diplomatic arena, the Italian government required from the other OEEC members reassurance and full commitment to employ the prepared and trained Italian laborers. The Italian authorities dared ask for even more. The usual establishment and organization of the accelerated *ad hoc* courses required time. Yet, the time elapsing between the request for workers and their actual insertion in the immigrant countries' labor market was not enough. In sum, Italy wanted guarantees, and wanted to manage the establishment of the courses

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<sup>108</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX Emigrazione Verso Paesi Extra-Comunitari, OECE. Box 424, F. "OECE," f. "Nota Introduttiva Italiana sulla Formazione Professionale per l'Emigrazione (19 Luglio 1957)."

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

based on the time necessary to prepare the courses, not according to the time dictated by immigrant countries.<sup>110</sup>

Previous experiences and experiments validated Italian requests. Like in the 1952 OEEC questionnaire, data from past experiments and agreements confirmed Italian demands. It is important at this point to describe what type of experiments and courses the Italian government had been promoting since the beginning of the 1950s. In 1956, thanks to numerous courses established in twenty two Italian provinces, more than six hundred workers received training in different sectors of the building industry—such as carpenters, cement layers, hod carriers—as requested by the French *Office National d'Immigration*.<sup>111</sup> The courses were so successful and the Italian building contractors were so well trained that Italy was capable of dispelling the initial French skepticism.<sup>112</sup>

Not only did Italy overcome the French diffidence but, in 1957, it established 150 courses in 49 provinces which trained 1378 construction workers directed to France. Between 1956 and 1957, the ENALC operating as an employment agency offered in its hotel schools (*alberghi scuola*) six-month-long courses for waiters and hotel managers principally requested by Switzerland and, in minor numbers, by Great Britain and Germany. The types of courses had a few common traits: they prepared in trades specifically requested by the countries of immigration; they provided for a secure employment contract at the completion of the course; they prepared workers for temporary and seasonal jobs.<sup>113</sup>

The courses organized for workers destined for overseas destinations were a bit different. These were the result of a tripartite collaboration among the Italian Department of Labor and

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> The document does not specify the exact number of these courses.

<sup>112</sup> ASC, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX, OECE. Box 424, F. "OECE," f. "Nota Introduttiva Italiana sulla Formazione Professionale per l'Emigrazione (19 Luglio 1957)."

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Social Welfare, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the ICEM. These courses did not provide secure employment but rather a formal commitment of the ICEM to help the trained laborers find a job upon the completion of the courses' final exam, and to offer financial assistance for their transportation abroad. The five-month-long courses were of two types: training courses composed of 680 hours per week and courses of specialization of 900 hours per week. In 1957, the Italian Department of Labor planned the establishment of 35 training courses for 675 apprentices and 59 qualification courses for 860 apprentices.<sup>114</sup>

These overseas courses—like those addressed to seasonal jobs in Europe—responded to the requests of foreign labor markets. Yet, they aimed more at the preparation of semi-skilled workers, namely of workers who had already undergone some basic training and were ready for a higher level of specialization. More specifically, the specialization courses engaged repairmen, lathe turners, welders, forgers, milling-machine operators, metalworkers, Diesel and agricultural engineers, car electricians, electricians, windows installers, cabinet-makers, carpenters, and ceramists. Excluding the last three specializations, these were almost entirely addressed to the metal and car industries. The point of strength of these courses for emigrants—both the training and the specialization courses—was the attention given to practical training over theoretical preparation. Theory was more a supplement to the practical training exercise. The formula for these courses was the following: practical, intense, fast, addressed in major part to already experienced and adult laborers and tailored according to extra-national labor shortage exigencies.<sup>115</sup>

The courses offered and the types of jobs requested abroad were addressed to male workers. The increased attention given by both the sending and receiving countries to average

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

migrant male workers' needs and training stemmed from both tangible labor markets' demands and from a set of shared gendered notions of work. On one hand, there was no space for women and their domestic abilities in the post-WWII North American and European heavy industry and construction field. This situation was very similar to what Virginia Yans-McLaughlin pointed out for Italian immigrants in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Buffalo, New York. Here, the concentration upon heavy industrial production created greater demand for unskilled male workers, and curtailed the opportunities for immigrant women to enter the job market.<sup>116</sup>

On the other hand, gender roles and assumptions shaped the boundaries of appropriate male and female labor. A woman was not supposed to become a machine operator or, in general, to work as the primary wage-earner in the family. Mirjana Morokvasic explained that women, immigrant and not, have always worked. Women's work—according to the various stages of their life-cycles—can be recognized or not as an economic activity, and can be paid or not. Yet, unlike men, the role of women in wage employment is not usually considered the primary source of income. Women's role or expected roles as housewives and mothers tended to justify their categorization as subsidiary workers and to acknowledge their wages as complementary.<sup>117</sup> The Italian state's implementation of emigrants' training courses mirrored this breadwinner-housewife dichotomy.

Apart from these courses, the Italian government, increasingly focused attention on the establishment of permanent training centers equipped with all the necessary tools and

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<sup>116</sup> Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 50. Maddalena Tirabassi contends that in turn-of-the-twentieth century Italian rural community, peasant women performed a wide-ranging array of works—from wage labor to field work. Once in America, women continued to work piecework at home in American ethnic neighborhoods. Tirabassi Maddalena, “Bourgeois Men, Peasant Women: Rethinking Domestic Work and Morality in Italy,” in *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002), 123.

<sup>117</sup> Mirjana Morokvasic, “Birds of Passage Are Also Women...,” *International Migration Review* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1984), 888.

warehouses during the second half of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. The 1963 account of the Ministry of Labor—*La Formazione Professionale in Italia*—reported that there were 1,007 vocational training centers (*Centri di Addestramento Professionale*) distributed on the entire peninsula. Unfortunately, this account does not specify either the location of these centers, or how uniformly distributed they were.<sup>118</sup>

On April 1955, the socialist newspaper "La Giustizia" reported the news of the inauguration of training centers for emigrants funded in the southern Italian city of Avellino by the Italian minister of Labor. In his inaugural speech, the article reports, the Prefect of Avellino emphasized: "with these courses the Italian government wants to train technicians for whom foreign countries' doors would be easily opened and to whom a respectable and stable employment would be assured."<sup>119</sup>

The CIFE (International Center for the Professional Preparation of Emigrants) of the southern city of Salerno, adamantly desired by the then Undersecretary of State, Carmine De Martino, describes these centers very well. Started in 1959, partially funded by the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), supervised by experts of the ILO, the CIFE opened its doors in January 1960. The two big workshops for mechanics and construction workers were equipped to crank out 720 workers annually, of which 350 would be sent overseas and 370 to European countries. The apprentices were trained according to their destinations. Overseas destinations needed lathe turners, milling-machine operators, wood

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<sup>118</sup> Ministero del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale, *La Formazione Professionale in Italia* (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1963), 36.

<sup>119</sup> AS-MAE, serie Affari Politici USA, 1950-57, Box 376, F. "Legge Mcarran Generale." f. "Rassegna Stampa del Giorno 22 Aprile 1955, April 22, 1955."

pattern makers, welders, cementers, and windows installers. European countries needed the same categories of workers and additionally electromechanical workers, plumbers, and tile settlers.<sup>120</sup>

The birth of centers like the CIFE was quintessentially transnational: they developed within and with the help of specific international organisms (OEEC, ICEM, ILO); they were funded by international funding programs; the Italian government dedicated a good part of the Lire Funds of the ERP to the training and qualification of Italian workers; and they responded to the exigencies of foreign labor markets. Actually, the idea of emigrants' training was—in the Italian representatives' vision—transnationally conceived at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, before the proliferation of permanent training centers.

## *2.6 International Arenas for National Profits*

Emigrants' transnational training was not the Italian authorities' brainchild. It was instead the product of negotiations between Italy and receiving countries. Yet, Italian authorities embraced almost immediately transnational training as the most efficient remedy for Italy's unemployment and modernization. The meaning attributed to emigrants' vocational training was both ideological and practical; it fell in line with specific political matters and contingent economies' demands. The transnational vocational training paradigm, elaborated in this chapter, allowed me to provide a more nuanced and varied reading of the post-WWII international relationships between emigrant and immigrant countries.

As many migration scholars argue, it is undeniable that the more industrialized countries, as job providers, could easily dictate the terms regulating the exchange of manpower. Yet, Italian authorities, experts, labor representatives and emigrants' associations actively intervened in

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<sup>120</sup> ACS, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (hereafter PCM), Ufficio del consigliere diplomatico 1949, Box 34, F. I/18 " Salerno. Centro Internazionale Preparazione Professionale Emigranti, 1960"

defining and shaping these terms. They did it in many different ways: by utilizing the US anti-Communist rhetoric to their benefit; by promptly taking advantage of the late-1950s Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration's preference for European migrants; and by adapting terminologies and solutions proposed by postwar international organizations for their own national advantage.

Even if at the end of the 1950s, Italian authorities were still "struggling" to place Italian workers abroad, it is evident that the international pressure for modernization, the increasing demand for skilled workers, and the subsequent race for the establishment of vocational training courses and schools contributed to the so-called Italian economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s. The documents analyzed in this chapter show that international demands encouraged Italy to find several solutions for the horde of Italian unskilled workers. The Italian government enacted laws, invested money, and asked for funds to improve Italian citizens' working skills. In the long run, this investment—as I show in the next chapter—benefitted both migrant and non-migrant workers.

In the three cases analyzed—the United States, Canada, and the international arena of the OEEC—the transnational training of emigrant workers came to define the boundaries between long and short-term expectations. In the relationship between the United States and Italy, the US long-term goals for the modernization of the Italian labor apparatus clashed with the Italian priority to dispose of its surplus of workers in a short period of time. Whereas Italy asked for an enlargement of the quotas, the US responded with scientific management and productivity formulas. Yet, the proliferation of studies regarding vocational training and productivity was partially due to US missions in Italy.

In the Canadian case, Italian desire to place its workers in foreign labor markets coincided with Canada's need for skilled workers in its expanding industrial sector. More specifically, the declining migration of British citizens—Canada's favored immigrant group—and the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration's plea for demographic growth laid down the premise for an effective Italian-Canadian cooperation in the training of Italian emigrants. In sum, the fast training of Italians in Canada satisfied both Canadian long-term goals (demographic growth) and short-term expectations (availability of workers skilled according to the contingencies of the business cycles). By accepting Italian emigrants, Canada facilitated Italy's long-term plan to reduce its high unemployment; at the same time, the Italian-Canadian collaboration for the establishment of *ad hoc* fast vocational training courses provided for Italian deficiencies in training equipment, instructors, and tools.

It is evident that in Canada, Italian immigrants had greater opportunities. There, they found an advantageous political opportunity structure. In her comparison of US and Canadian citizenship systems, sociologist Irene Bloemraad argued that after WWII Canada, unlike the United States, engaged in an active promotion of citizenship and immigrants' political participation. Several factors explain this difference. Bloemraad underscores that after WWII Canadian policy was less concerned with Communism than US policy, and that Canada's need to populate its vast territory superseded wartime paranoia in shaping its postwar immigration policies.<sup>121</sup> For these reasons, Canadian immigration authorities reacted to the possible danger posed by the enemy aliens by encouraging their naturalization, and viewed refugees as permanent immigrants with special needs, rather than recipients of temporary asylum.<sup>122</sup> A local infrastructure (language and training courses for immigrants as well as the public funding for

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<sup>121</sup> Irene Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 111.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

immigrant communities like COSTI) was created by the Canadian government to promote Canadian citizenship while respecting immigrants' ethnicity.<sup>123</sup>

The OEEC meetings gave Italy the irreplaceable opportunity to connect the transnational vocational training narratives, elaborated in the international environment of the post-WWII era, with its desire to find employment for Italian citizens. This transnational paradigm played the intermediary role between immigrant countries' requests and Italy's desires. Most notably, it allowed Italian authorities to garner the attention of the other international representatives. Through a masterful rhetoric, Italy put on the same level its need to relieve high unemployment with the receiving countries' demands for skilled workers. Pre-arranged employment abroad was—OEEC Italian representatives argued—the premise for the success of emigrants' vocational training.

While engaging in bilateral and multilateral agreements with Western European countries, managing the ERP funds, sending workers to the US for study visits, investing money in the establishment of English and training courses in Canada, explaining its stand in the political and economic postwar international scenario, Italy was slowly transforming its unskilled peasant population in a mass of technicians, mechanics, surveyors, and skilled building contractors.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 9 and 112-113.

## CHAPTER 3

### *Beyond Vocational Training. Select & Prepare Them: 1947-1967*

Today, an Italian rural teacher who does not introduce his pupils to the mysteries of emigration steals his stipend and betrays his students.<sup>1</sup>

Luigi Credaro, Italian Minister of Public Education, 1910

To a far greater extent in Italy than in the United States, formal programs of vocational training are the means by which persons prepare for their future employment. Yet as recently as fifteen years ago, vocational education was virtually non-existent in Italy.<sup>2</sup>

Ruth Benjamin, 1967

Credaro's remarks (above) reveal the profound connection between emigration and Italian youth's education, and the need to introduce potential young emigrants to the "mysteries" of this project. In the second quotation, Ruth Benjamin describes the situation of training workers in Italy at a conference on the "training of non-professionals" sponsored by Scientific Resources, Incorporated held in Washington, D.C., in March 1967. In this paper, the expert, Benjamin, encouraged the US government to adopt the Italian model of vocational training and re-training programs to better integrate the southern poor into northern industrial cities. Benjamin's admiration for the Italian vocational training model is quite striking, given the concerns that American officials expressed about the unskilled Italia workforce just a decade before.

Benjamin's additional statements further elucidate her interpretation of the advantages the Italian vocational training system presented.

The rapid expansion of the nation's industry, beginning about 1952, gave rise to a need for great numbers of workers with at least fundamental industrial skills. As labor is a derived demand, I suppose we might call vocational training the second derivative. Educational programs had to be developed *rapidly*. [...]The fundamental difference in the orientation of the vocational education programs of the two countries [Italy and the

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<sup>1</sup> Luigi Credaro, 1910 Minister of the Public Education quoted in "Maestri per Emigranti," *Bollettino* (April 10, 1950), 176.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health, Education, & Welfare Office of Education, Ruth Benjamin, *Training in Italy, Presented at Conference on "Training the Non-Professional,"* March, 15-16, 1967.

United States] is that the Italians tend to disregard the characteristic of the trainees and emphasize what skills *the market demands*.<sup>3</sup>

The perceived success of the Italian workers' vocational training was based on two leading principles: rapidity and the Italian government's decision to give market demands priority to the detriment of Italian youths' personal and professional inclinations and preferences. Credaro's encouragement to disclose the mysteries of emigration to young Italians and Benjamin's praise of the Italian vocational training model mark the extremes of a long trajectory in emigrants' preparation and training.

In this chapter I trace the stages of this trajectory through the voices of Italian migration experts and trade unions' representatives. The experts' arguments balance the previous chapters that were predominately based on the Italian State authorities' perspective. Inspired by the same disappointment in the Italian governmental authorities' interventions in the emigration affairs, the opinions of the groups under study were not at all homogenous. Based on different ideological credos, they depicted a multifaceted scenario.

This chapter is based on three exemplary sources. First are the published interventions of the participants at the 1954 International Catholic Migration Congress (ICMC) held at Castle Bouvigne, Netherlands. My second source here is *Bollettino Quindicinale dell'Emigrazione Italiana*, a bimonthly specialized magazine addressed to Italian emigrants and published from 1947 to 1970 by the *Società Umanitaria* of Milan. With its rubrics, articles, and, statistics the *Bollettino* offers one of the most complete snapshots of the postwar Italian migration—complete but not unbiased. Its director—the antifascist Riccardo Bauer—was very close to the Reformist Italian Socialist Party (PSDI). Finally I draw on the special issue of the 1967 bimonthly

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<sup>3</sup> The Italics are mine.

periodical *Formazione e Lavoro*, an issue completely dedicated to the training and preparation of Italian emigrants.<sup>4</sup> Even if published by the Italian Association of Catholic Laborers' (ACLI) National Institution for the Vocational Training (*Ente Nazionale Acli per l'Istruzione Professionale*, E.N.A.I.P.), this special issue welcomed the interventions of socialist and communist labor unions' representatives and migration experts.

Published at different moments, for different occasions, and with different goals in mind, these sources truly convey the heterogeneity of perspectives that existed outside of the Italian government's regarding Italian emigrants' training and preparation. Nevertheless, the message of each remained the same: Italian authorities had to provide better training, guarantee more protection, and facilitate successful social integration of Italian emigrants abroad. Yet the motivations underlying these calls for interventions varied. For Catholics, emigrants' training and preparation was seen as the means to accelerate family reunification abroad. For Socialists, it meant dignity and respect for the Italian migrant workers' conditions. The socialist voice did not encompass the positions of the entire Italian left, however. Whereas Socialists—especially the reformist current of the Italian Socialist Party—supported emigration as a means of social improvement, Communists interpreted emigration as a dangerous collateral effect of modern capitalism.

In the first part of the chapter, I momentarily leave the focus on transnational vocational training in order to analyze internal national developments regarding the Italian emigrants' preparation. I compare and contrast two opposing discourses concerning postwar Italian emigrants' training and preparation. On the one side, Italian governmental institutions—mostly led by Christian Democrat representatives—promoted what I define as successful training tale.

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<sup>4</sup> Quite interestingly the Italian term *formazione* embraces several types of training: intellectual, practical, psychological etc. etc.

According to the institutional discourses, numbers and quantity fundamentally demonstrated the reliability of Italian efforts to train emigrants' training. The contributors of the socialist-oriented *Bollettino Quindicinale dell'Emigrazione* revealed the inaccuracy of the institutional tale while chastising the government for its too fragmentary and lethargic emigrant training programs.

Demonstrating the superiority of one of these two sides is not this chapter's goal. Rather examining both sides of the internal debate on emigrants' training is crucial to an interrogation of the institutional emphasis on the positive aspects of the emigrant training programs. The contrast between these two discourses also sheds light on the friction between state designs and their practical application at the local level.

By drawing on the interventions of migration experts at the 1954 International Catholic Migration Congress of Castle Bouvigne, Netherlands, I broaden the concept of migrants' training in the second part of this chapter. While continuing to retrace the stages of Italian emigrants' practical vocational training, I investigate another central aspect of emigrants' training: their cultural and psychological preparation. The migratory project involved those who decided to leave as well as those who remained behind. The complexities and uncertainties of what many considered an investment to ameliorate their economic conditions, to build new professional careers, or to fulfill dreams, required expertise. Migration was, after all, a risky business. Saving money for travel as well as room and board abroad was not easy. Leaving behind family, some land, and meager but certain jobs demanded commitment. Potential migrants knew what they left behind but did not know what they would find. They knew that collecting money for travel and being away from their families meant sacrifices, but they did not know, at the moment of their departure, if they would reap the fruits of their labors and loss.

Already at the beginning of the twentieth century and increasingly in the post-WWII period, emigration organizations acknowledged the necessity of maintaining the migratory project. Leaving Italy had to be a profitable investment. The migrants, their families, and Italy itself—thanks to migrants' remittances and the decreased unemployment rate—could benefit from migration. Yet, as discussed in previous chapters, in an economy that increasingly asked for trained workers and/or specialized artisans, migrants had to be prepared to fulfill immigrant countries' labor demands. Cultural and psychological preparation, along with emigrants' vocational training, was an antidote to the potential for disaster; it could prevent the loss of years' of saving and sacrifices.

In the third and final portion of this chapter, I analyze the articles that appeared in the special issue of the 1967 bimonthly periodical *Formazione e Lavoro*. This issue is important not only because it brings together sometimes oppositional opinions from the Catholic and Leftist worlds but also because it puts the American expert's somewhat excessive praise in perspective. From the vantage point of the late 1960s—when the Italian economic boom significantly curtailed international migration flows—I will investigate the seeds of the modern concepts of migration as brain drain or cultural exchange. This latter point will be developed in depth in this dissertation's conclusion. First perceived as a safety-valve for social and economic disorder and then as a channel for personal and professional growth, the changing understanding of emigration corresponded to different formulae for the training and preparation of Italian emigrants.

### 3.1 *Toward a More Systematic Vocational Training*

The investigation of emigrants' vocational training cannot be separated from non-emigrant workers' training for two reasons. First, the CIR (Inter-ministerial Committee for the Reconstruction) members and the Ministry of Labor representatives, while focusing on the emigration problem, never applied a rigid distinction between the two categories, emigrants and non-emigrants. Second, the vocational training course and school apprentices were all "potential" emigrants; even if presented with more opportunities to leave Italy, developing Italian industries eventually absorbed some of these workers.

A more systematic and direct intervention of the Italian State toward the training of its citizens was already present during the Fascist regime. More specifically, the Decree Law (D.L.) number 1380, issued on July 1938, established qualification courses for the workforce. The autarchic economic regime and the imminent participation of Italy in the world conflict—which required rearmament—shaped the contours of this D.L. Its main goal was not to train unskilled and unemployed laborers but to fine tune the skills of workers already established in the productive cycle.<sup>5</sup>

In 1939, through a series of negotiations, the various Italian trade unions gave birth to the establishment of two main institutions that regulated workers' training and defined qualifications: the National Institute for the Professional Training of the Industrial Workers (INAPLI) and the National Institute for the Training of Commercial Workers (ENALC). In the spirit of the time, these two institutions took care of professional development rather than the elementary training of the Italian manpower.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Italy, Ministero del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale, *La Formazione Professionale in Italia*, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1963), 32.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

The Second World War brought about dramatic changes in the socio-economic tissue of Italian society. New concerns and necessities shaped the contours of the Italian vocational training system. Ferdinando Roselli, general director of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security monthly review *La Rassegna del Lavoro*, retrospectively portrayed this shift in the opening essay of the 1963 special issue "La Formazione Professionale":

Completely different was the situation at the end of the war, when a mass of veterans, refugees, and war victims—amounting to several millions, deprived of any professional skill and in conditions of extreme need—experienced the urgent necessity to find employment in Italy or abroad.<sup>7</sup>

The policies and instruments adopted for vocational training during the Fascist regime were inadequate in the face of postwar challenges. The problems of workers' training and qualification needed new and more effective interventions. Out of the necessity of training such a large mass of unskilled workers, the Italian government issued at first the D.L. n. 1264, on November 1947, and, afterwards, the law 29 April 1949, n.264. These two legislative interventions—especially the 1949 law—marked a shift in Italian state attitudes and beliefs toward vocational training. Vocational training became synonymous with of *rapid* preparation, a fast and straightforward training program that would ultimately allow the integration of unskilled adult workers in the productive cycle.<sup>8</sup>

The 1949 Law established a specialized organism of the Italian Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the Central Committee for the Training and for the Assistance of the Unemployed. The committee was in charge of organizing training courses, recruiting trainees,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 32. I italicize "rapid" because this is the adjective that frequently occurs in the documents of the Italian Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

and imposing selective criteria for the recruitment of emigrants.<sup>9</sup> Article 46 of the law clearly described the final goal of the training courses for unemployed:

The courses for the unemployed address training, qualification, and improvement or training and re-education of the workers who—because of unemployment or war events—need to regain, increase or *rapidly* transform their technical abilities, and to adapt these to the necessities of effective production, to the internal labor market exigencies, and to the possibility of emigrating.<sup>10</sup>

These courses were eminently practical and were oriented specifically to assist workers in attaining dexterity in the course's trade objective. The courses' length and schedule exemplified their charitable nature. The courses lasted from two to eight months and followed the normal work schedule: eight hours per day, Monday through Friday.<sup>11</sup>

The trainees under forty were obliged to attend the courses regularly in order to receive the unemployment subsidy. More specifically, the "Fund for the qualification, the improvement, and the re-education of the Italian workers" remunerated the diligent young trainees, already entitled to the employment subsidy, with an addition of 200 lire for every training day.<sup>12</sup> Those not entitled to the unemployment insurance received a daily wage of 100 lire and additional 60 lire for every family member on their charge.<sup>13</sup> A final exam tested the abilities of the trainees. Once they passed the exam, those who attended regularly received a certification and an award of 3000 lire. Most importantly, Article 52 of the 1949 Law state "the mentioned certification [...] confers the right to preference in employment and in emigration."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Italy, Law 29 April 1949, n. 264, title I, Commissione Centrale per l'Avviamento al Lavoro e per l'Assistenza dei Disoccupati, art. 2 quoted in La Formazione Professionale, 95.

<sup>10</sup> Title IV, Addestramento Professionale degli Apprendisti Artigiani, dei Lavoratori in Soprannumero e dei Disoccupati, Ibid., 96. See Figures 2 and 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> This Fund had been established by the D.L. 7 November 1947, n.1264 and constituted the evolution of the "Fund for the training of workers" already established in 1939. Ibid., art. 62.

<sup>13</sup> For an idea of the monetary value of these subsidies see Tables 7 and 8.

<sup>14</sup> Art. 52 quoted in *ibid.*

The training mentality of the end of the 1940s had a short term reach. It was not clearly separated from the subsistence mentality. It did not take into account the cohort of adolescents on the verge of entering the labor market but responded exclusively to the needs of unemployed adult men. In the essay "La Formazione Professionale e l'Attività del Ministero del Lavoro," Remo Pironti recognized in the emergency character of these courses the reasons for their inchoate and fragmentary nature. The postwar politics for unemployed workers, Pironti explained, "[...] characterized the legislative norms [...] on one hand, while pursuing modest training goals, [it] gave birth to an instrument of first aid for the unemployed, on the other hand, it emphasized the financial assistance of these training activities."<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding the accentuated connection between training and subsidies, Pironti considered the small daily remuneration a cunning strategy to "hook" unemployed workers who—without this incentive—would have deserted or irregularly attended the courses.<sup>16</sup>

One year later, the Ministry of Labor issued a newsletter entitled "dispositions regarding the workers' orientation and vocational training."<sup>17</sup> The newsletter reported thirty-nine points regulating courses for unemployed workers. The fifth point, entitled *preeminence of the training aim*, elucidates a significant evolution of the training mentality: "In every case, though not forgetting the charitable goals pursued by the courses, priority must be given to the training goals without which the courses' activities would be distorted. It is rigorously forbidden using these courses to camouflage real work relations."<sup>18</sup> The newsletter's prohibition indicates the incidence of courses' bad management, if not wrongdoing.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 34. Quotes in the original.

<sup>17</sup> Newsletter issued on May 23, 1950, *ibid.*, 117-125.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 118.

The courses—patronized by the Ministry of Labor and subsidized by the above mentioned fund—were promoted by townships, institutions, or associations interested in the improvement of the conditions of the local unemployed manpower. The promoters of these courses were able to obtain authorization from the Minister of Labor and the Minister of Treasury only if they were in possession of adequate equipment and ready to bestow necessary grants and workers' subsidies.<sup>19</sup>

The motivations that gave birth to the 1950 newsletter went beyond the necessity of ascertaining the courses' correct functioning and the promoters' reliability. Point 26, entitled "apprentices' selection," called for a more cautious selection of the candidates. The institutions responsible for promotion were invited to investigate the aspiring trainees' real working abilities and experiences; they could not, the newsletter indicated, base their decisions solely on the aspiring candidates' declarations. To ensure that the selective process functioned as intended, the Agencies of Labor—territorial branches of the Ministry of Labor—participated in this selection and, "*when possible*, took advantage of a precautionary medical visit and of help of vocational training experts."<sup>20</sup>

That *when possible* is an indicator of the still fragmentary and rudimentary organization of the vocational training system. Unfortunately point 26 of the 1950 newsletter does not trace the stages of the trainee's selection. The criteria that promoter institutions, training experts, physicians, and representatives of the Labor Agency followed to select the trainees remained nebulous. Yet, one concept clearly came through:

During the selection, it is opportune to persuade the aspiring candidates that the courses are not established for charitable purposes, but for the essential goal to transform unskilled workforce into good and capable laborers: this [the persuasion] would also

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<sup>19</sup> Law 29 April 1949, n. 264, title IV, Addestramento Professionale degli Apprendisti Artigiani, dei Lavoratori in Soprannumero e dei Disoccupati, art. 47 and 48 quoted in *ibid.*, 97.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

favor respect for discipline and a satisfactory general development of the courses.<sup>21</sup>

The growing attention given to the selection of apprentices signaled the evolution of the vocational training mentality, but it did not always correspond to effective measures. Since the end of the war, workers' training primarily had been considered a tactic to solve the issue of the high rate of unemployment. For the reasons explained in the introductory chapter, Italian authorities relied heavily on emigration and the possibility for the unemployed to expatriate to greatly aid Italian postwar reconstruction. In the documents produced at the institutional level, the connection between discourses about workers' training and those about emigration were ubiquitous. The common denominator between these two sets of discourses was the danger that the mass of unskilled workers posed to the peninsula's social stability and, as I explore later in this chapter, to the Italian economic system's process of modernization.

Started as a first-aid intervention for the unemployed portion of the population, vocational training soon broadened its mission to meet the needs of every category of worker. In May 1951, the April 1949 Law was modified to confer upon the Ministry of Labor the power to promote and administer training for all workers, not only for unemployed.<sup>22</sup> Italian vocational training, for emigrants and non-emigrants, was evolving. It was surely evolving numerically. Between July 1949 and June 1950, the Ministry of Labor established 3,120 vocational training courses for a bit more than 104,000 trainees. Between July 1949 and January 1950, it opened 1,116 courses specifically addressed to the training of 27,900 veterans, partisans, and refugees.<sup>23</sup> Between September 1948 and March 1949, the then Minister of Labor, the Christian Democrat

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> La Formazione Professionale in Italia, 17.

<sup>23</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div.IX. Box 453, F. "Carteggio del Ministero con le varie organizzazioni internazionali riguardanti i problemi dell'emigrazione. Anni 1948-1950," f. "Visita della Commissione Parlamentare Americana in Italia." n.d.

Amintore Fanfani, launched the establishment of reforestation camps in rural and mountainous areas of the peninsula to temporarily occupy the unemployed.<sup>24</sup>(Table 6) Yet, quantity did not always correspond to quality.

### *3.2 Pinpointing the Italian State Authorities' Weaknesses, a Look at the Past*

The new labor circumstances generated by the rapid industrialization and mechanization of the post-WWII Western economies called for a more systematic intervention in training unskilled workers. The focal point of the previous chapters has indeed been Italian institutions' efforts to make Italian workers appealing for foreign labor markets. The international community directed this challenge at the post-WWII sending countries, where it subsequently monopolized governmental attention and discussions within the specialized emigration branches of both the Italian Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Data regarding training schools, courses, and funds allotted to vocational training were the focus of discussions, speeches, and treaties at the international and national institutional level. Yet, this attention to emigrants' training did not always translate into practical results.

Italian authorities praised and promoted their achievements in the field of emigrant training through statistics; they usually listed the numbers of courses inaugurated and numbers of diplomas conferred annually. While institutional representatives were talking numbers, an army of observers questioned the efficacy of the many courses and schools established. They also moved the attention to another significant element: the necessity of assuring Italian migrant workers' smooth integration into the socio-economic realities of the destination countries. In sum, these voices of criticism moved the spotlight from quantity to quality.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Critics of contemporary institutional efforts believed that better technical and cultural preparation would not only transform Italian workers into appealing migrants but also spare these same migrant workers from the deplorable possibility of labor exploitation. The socialist-oriented periodical, *Il Bollettino dell'Emigrazione Italiana*, summarized the problem as follows: "[...] the fruitful employment of the national workforce is intimately connected to the *quality* of this workforce, namely to its capacity to bring a contribution to the receiving country's economy which is not merely and simply limited to physical labor."<sup>25</sup>

At the opening of the Conference of Emigration, held in Paris in 1950, the *Bollettino* returned to the necessity of vocational training for Italian emigrants and pointed out, among the major Italian weaknesses, the lack of schools specifically targeted to the emigrants' exigencies. The training programs for the unemployed were too generic to transform Italians into empowered migrant workers.<sup>26</sup> There seemed to be lacunae in the state-implemented courses, exemplified by: 1) the lack of difference between courses for the unemployed and courses for prospective migrants; 2) poor course organization and poor management and oversight in the selection of the apprentices; 3) the shortage and/or inadequacy of courses for the cultural preparation of the emigrants.

This last point deserves more attention. The migration experts' opinions generated outside the institutional range went beyond discourses centered on technical training and the acquisition of dexterity. While maintaining central vocational training tenets, they also validated cultural preparation as a relevant requirement for prospective emigrants. The *Bollettino's* call for the cultural preparation—intended as preliminary and elementary knowledge of the immigrant countries—exemplifies the transition to a focus on the quality dimension of emigrant training.

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<sup>25</sup> "Maestri per Emigranti," *Bollettino* (April 10, 1950), 173.

<sup>26</sup> "La Qualificazione Professionale," *Ibid.*, (July 25, 1950), 252.

The emigrants' lack of knowledge about the destination country risked transforming the relocation of immigrants and entire family nuclei abroad into disastrous adventures. To avoid catastrophes and create painless transitions and adaptations, the state needed to instruct local elementary teachers in the "abc's" of migration policies and procedures, and about the geo-socio-political conditions of the immigration countries. The *Bollettino* accurately drafted a list of these specialized teachers' learning objectives:

a) sufficient knowledge of the problem of the emigration in its historical, economic and social aspects; b) exact knowledge of the information related to the problems of prospective emigrants and their destinations; c) exact knowledge of the informative and guiding migration notions; d) precise knowledge of the organization of the courses to be established locally.<sup>27</sup>

These teachers were in a position to play a crucial role in the emigrants' cultural preparation. The courses, albeit modest, were well designed. Had they been implemented in every province and/or town where emigration rates were particularly high, they had the potential to ease the transition and cultural shock that emigrants faced.

Unlike vocational training, cultural preparation had to reach every migrant, those who moved because they possessed specific skills, as well as those who moved to join relatives abroad. The belief was that the migratory project of those who left for family reunification (i.e. sponsored immigrants)—notwithstanding the supportive family system waiting for them abroad—was not at all immune to failure. These teachers of emigration (*maestri dell'emigrazione*):

[...] must first and foremost warn the credulous worker, especially in the countryside, against the suggestions provoked by the news sent home from immigrated relatives and friends and widespread by others, because both magnify the possibilities realizable on the foreign labor markets [...]. The emigration of girls and boys is particularly dangerous

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<sup>27</sup> "Maestri per Emigranti," *Ibid.*, (April 10, 1950), 136.

because, often, the former end up entangled in the white slavery system and the latter are subjected to inhumane exploitation.<sup>28</sup>

The *Bollettino* does not offer substantial evidence or statistics regarding the deplorable destiny of young female and male immigrants. The message is notable for its sensationalized tone, but it was the product of a genuine concern about the conditions of the Italians abroad, especially young Italians. When arguing for the necessity of complementing technical/vocational training with cultural preparation, the *Bollettino* was not proposing a novel didactic method. It was actually rehashing past Italian experiences with emigrants' training and preparation. More specifically, the *Bollettino* accentuated the weaknesses of the postwar emigrant training system by comparing it with the courses established by the General Committee of Emigration (*Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione*-CGE) in the interwar period.

Among the CGE's merits there was an awareness that combining technical with cultural preparation and education about migration policies, geo-political, and social conditions of the countries of destination as essential. The CGE—the *Bollettino* informed its readers in a rubric published in December 1949—solved the preparedness problem at its root. In 1922, it established 124 special courses for teachers (*maestri*). The courses provided these teachers with foundational knowledge of receiving countries' migration policies, social legislation, norms regulating the immigrants' admissions, economics, geography, living and working conditions. They graduated more than five thousand teachers ready to serve potential emigrants in courses established across the peninsula.<sup>29</sup>

In the CGE's vision, technical training complemented cultural preparation. The ultimate goal was to transform unskilled day laborers into specialized workers. Higher specialization not

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. with others the *Bollettino* is referring to foreign employers and navigation companies.

<sup>29</sup> The *Bollettino* specified that there were both male and female teachers.

only would have increased the chances of emigrating but also created conditions for the improved treatment and salaries of migrant workers. Since the beginning of this vocational training program in 1921, the CGE looked at the foreign labor markets' requests to achieve tangible results. For instance—given the increasing reliance on reinforced concrete in the building industry—the CGE promptly organized courses for cement layers with attention to techniques for the employment of this new building material. As a pilot region for its courses, the CGE selected one of the areas that boasted a long migratory tradition, the northern region of Veneto. There, twenty-three schools for cement workers conferred diplomas to more than one thousand apprentices.<sup>30</sup>

The *Bollettino* described Veneto's courses, presenting them as examples to emulate. The cement-layers attended evening classes and learned their craft based on practical exercises usually scheduled during the afternoon on non-working days. The duration of these courses ranged from forty days to two months and offered a minimum of fifteen in-class lessons and twenty practical exercises. For each course, the CGE designated one engineer who, along with a technical assistant, managed the course. An elementary teacher was in charge of offering lessons in geometry and mathematics. Agents of the CGE taught prospective migrants geo-political and socio-economic notions regarding the countries of destination. In order to maximize their newly acquired skills, the trainees were employed for public works. When possible, field trips to construction sites offered the trainees the opportunity to observe how reinforced concrete was used in practice.<sup>31</sup>

Given the efficacy of Veneto's courses, the CGE opened courses in the Southern regions of Calabria and Campania, in the central region of Lazio, and in the Northern region of Emilia.

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<sup>30</sup> "Scuola per Emigranti," *Ibid.*, (December 10, 1949), 435-438.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 437.

In the meantime, courses for agricultural workers who needed to learn how to use agricultural machines were established and the courses related to the building industry continued to flourish. Courses for bricklayers, carpenters, stucco decorators, and mosaic workers appeared, in addition to courses for electricians and plumbers.<sup>32</sup>

The new courses principally responded to foreign markets' labor demands. Yet, the local training apparatuses and the regional professional vocations played a crucial role in the establishment and shaping of the courses. For instance, in Calabria, given the region's primarily agricultural character, courses teaching how to assemble and operate threshing and reaping machines predominated. The presence of an agricultural and an industrial school in the city of Catanzaro, one of the Calabria's main urban centers provided these courses with *in situ* instructors. The school for women of Catanzaro supported the establishment of courses for female weavers.<sup>33</sup>

The *Bollettino* particularly praised the CGE's support for local craft traditions that made Italian emigrants international renowned for their fine artisanal skills. The artisanal school of the southern city of Salerno received state funding to develop courses for cabinet-makers and carvers. The artisanal school of the Northern city of Spilimbergo received funding to create courses for mosaic workers.<sup>34</sup> Basically, these 1920s emigrants' vocational training courses fed and were fed by already established working traditions. Most importantly, they made the best use of pre-existing local personnel, instructors, and equipment.

Courses for emigrant cultural training instructors were not completely absent in the post-WWII period, but the few present on the Italian peninsula were far from offering practical

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 438.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

knowledge and application. In January 1948, the Ministry of the Public Education inaugurated specialized courses for teachers at the *Istituto Universitario Orientale* of Naples. The program offered lessons in Spanish, Portuguese, migratory policies, as well as the history and geography of Latin America. An 1883 commercial agreement between the then Kingdom of Naples and Brazil seemed to justify the special attention to South America. Under the payment of 2,000 lire, everybody who had obtained a middle school diploma had access to these courses. The program consisted of evening classes that ran from December to May. In the first year, only 27 out of 106 students passed the final test. In its second year, lessons in industrial engineering and marketing enriched the curriculum.<sup>35</sup>

Coeval with the Neapolitan courses were those proposed by the Italian Institute for Africa and sponsored by the Ministry of the Public Education. The "Superior Didactic Course for Emigration and Colonization" was reminiscent of Italy's past colonization of Africa. The existence itself of the institution, as explained by its general secretary, Mario Dorato, found its justification in the perceived European duty to continue its civilizing mission in Africa. The program opened its doors in 1949 in Catania, Sicily, and Rome. The program for the academic year 1949/1950 envisaged the following courses: history of Italian labor overseas (6 lessons); migratory didactics (8 lessons); emigrant's hygiene (12 lessons); ethnology of the immigration countries (6 lessons); African history and immigration countries (10 lessons); immigration politics (6 lessons).<sup>36</sup>

The specificity and the academic rigor of these programs did not put teachers in a position to respond to the emigrants' practical exigencies. To use one of the *Bollettino's* vitriolic expressions, the Italian government simply promoted mismanaged courses with the arrogance to

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<sup>35</sup> "Maestri per Emigranti," *Ibid.*, (April 10, 1950), 174.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

raise emigration to the level of "academic metaphysical science."<sup>37</sup> The actions of state representatives seemed to confirm the *Bollettino's* sardonic statement. At a conference organized by the Institute of International Politics in Milan in October 1950, the then undersecretary of the department of Foreign Affairs, Domenidó argued:

Italy has duties toward its migrant children that do not end in the establishment of schools for their education and in material assistance. Italy must realize the conditions necessary to create in the various countries of immigration an environment capable of giving resonance to our civilization and of valorizing Italian dignity in every emigrant. This is the objective that the politics of culture, fundamental to the politics of migration, has to take on. To the French formula of the emigration *des cerveaux*, Italy has to respond with a new formula, labor migration accompanied by brain migration.<sup>38</sup>

Yet, in August 1950, from the columns of the newspaper *La Stampa* of Turin, the writer and socialist journalist Giuseppe Prezzolini described the everyday difficulties of postwar Italian immigrants.<sup>39</sup> They, observed Prezzolini, did not know how to manage industrial machines. Usually left alone and without any help, they had to learn everything using gestures, by trial and error. Moved by a direct critique of the courses offered at the Oriental Institute of Naples, Prezzolini suggested a more practical and inexpensive solution: provide migrants with small reference-books with lists of foreign common foreign words and expressions.

While a mass of Italian emigrants was about to leave with very fragmentary, if not completely absent, linguistic preparation, another school of emigration opened in Florence. Here, two university professors offered courses in North American History and the Marshall Plan. Two

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<sup>37</sup> "Gli Emigranti e la Scuola," *Ibid.*, (September 10, 1950), 347-348.

<sup>38</sup> "Avanti gli Esperti del Cervello," *Ibid.*, (December 10, 1950), 481.

<sup>39</sup> In 1926, Giuseppe Prezzolini—an admirer of Benito Mussolini but opponent of the fascist methods—left Italy for Paris. In 1929, from Paris he immigrated to the United States. Here, he lived in New York, taught and became director of the *Casa Italiana* of Columbia University. He continued to collaborate with Italian newspapers and returned to Italy in 1961. Accessed, December 6, 2013 <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-prezzolini/>

subjects that—though very interesting at the academic level—did not meet the pragmatic needs of the average Italian migrant, who generally possessed no more than a third-grade education.<sup>40</sup>

It is natural to wonder why the Italian government persisted in spending taxpayers' money for useless courses. The *Bollettino*'s assumption was that these courses were of greater assistance to the academic and bureaucratic careers of the professors involved and of those who obtained diplomas as emigration instructors. Luciano Magrini—emigration expert, journalist, and representative of the Italian Republican Party—admonished: "we need to return to the teachers for emigrants, to leave the university classrooms for the elementary schools, and to eliminate the suspicion that honorable university professors may be similar to the bills of lading which let pass gone-bad goods through the customs."<sup>41</sup>

Goods went bad because, unlike the pre-fascist interventions in the matter of vocational training, the postwar emigrants' training courses were mismanaged, archaic, and inefficient. In July 1950—two months after the Ministry of Labor issued the Newsletter concerning the workers' orientation and vocational training—Guido Gambardella gave his resignation as inspector of the INAPLI branch of Naples. Gambardella's intention to disassociate himself from the deteriorating development of courses for the unemployed motivated his resignation, according to the *Bollettino* and the Neapolitan newspaper *Il Mattino*.<sup>42</sup>

Not surprisingly, the *Bollettino* supported Gambardella's decision and described the conditions of the courses for the unemployed in this way: "[...] the courses for requalification,

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<sup>40</sup> "Gli Emigranti e La Scuola," *Bollettino* (August 10, 1950), 347-348.

<sup>41</sup> "La Scuola degli Emigranti," *Ibid.* (June 10, 1950), 214.

<sup>42</sup> During De Gasperi's fourth government (1947-1948), Luciano Magrini served as undersecretary for Amintore Fanfani, the then Minister of Labor and Social Security. Magrini focused his political career on the question of emigration; this latter was a theme Magrini had close to his heart since the 1920s. The Italian Republican Party (*Partito Repubblicano Italiano*) was born as a left, laic, social-democratic party. When, in 1951, the PRI allied with the Christian Democratic Party for the administrative elections, Magrini left the party, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luciano-magrini\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luciano-magrini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/) Accessed, Dec 6, 2013. "Corsi di Qualificazione," *Bollettino* (November 25, 1951), 416. It is important to reiterate that behind these critics there was an accentuated ideological acrimony: Socialism versus Christian Democracy.

except for rare and laudable exceptions, are badly organized and are mostly used as supplemental subsidy for the unemployed rather than to learn a craft." What was lacking in these courses was "professionalism and accurate selection of workers."<sup>43</sup> The *Bollettino* clearly called for cutting the number of the courses while improving the selective process, the didactic system, and the quality of the courses' final exams.

### 3.3 Pinpointing the Italian State Authorities' Weaknesses, Possible Alternatives

The critics of the Italian government's ineffective interventions in emigrant training continued during the 1950s. The subsidy character of the postwar training courses and the culpable resistance to applying the past CGE's models remained the targets of criticism, but the *Bollettino*'s collaborators also proposed alternatives and plans. In February 1951, Riccardo Bauer, *Bollettino*'s editor, suggested both long-term and a short-term solutions. The proposed long-term solution was to integrate the entire Italian vocational training system. According to this plan, every single worker would be—in case the opportunity or necessity to emigrate appeared—ready for the foreign labor markets' requests. Yet, as Bauer himself admitted, this plan outpaced the Italians' ability to enact it.<sup>44</sup>

A short-term and less expensive project seemed more attainable. Bauer called for a brief and practical preparation program for workers in the specific trades and skills requested abroad at the moment of the training itself (i.e. mine workers for England, bricklayers for France and Belgium etc.). The establishment of these *ad hoc* courses for workers found their *raison d' être* in the several bilateral agreements that Italy established with immigrant countries during the first half of the 1950s. These proposed courses had a greater chance of success, but they would not

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

have solved the paucity of training for the primary category of Italian emigrants: those who moved individually and outside the norms and rules of state agreements.

Bauer described them as adventurers who "flow into the frontier irregularly." These candidates for emigration posed problems because they came from different Italian regions and their education was so poor that it was impossible to start them off on a specific trade. They often needed to learn elementary work-related competencies. This last category of migrants taxed the Italian social welfare the most:

We could make a calculation if we could know how much it costs to assist this myriad of Italian workers who—hopeful to find economic improvement—left their employment in Italy or even their entire family, attracted by the mirage of a job overseas. These same people now clamor for help while their families are left in Italy, deprived of any income, relying entirely on public charity.<sup>45</sup>

Italian emigrants' lack of skills provoked specific social concerns. The potential social cost of unemployed immigrants—already one of the biggest worries for the receiving countries—was also an issue for Italy. More specifically, it was a burden on the Italian social welfare system, a cost that could have been reduced or eliminated through investments in effective vocational training.

Bauer outlined a set of proposed guidelines for emigrants' training. The Centers for Emigration of Genoa, Milan, and Naples, prearranged for the convocation, selection, and expatriation of the migrants and their families, Bauer argued, should become internship centers for prospective emigrants.<sup>46</sup> The vocational schools already present in the three cities should allocate their educational, personnel, and material resources to assess the potential emigrants'

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<sup>45</sup> "I Problemi dell'Emigrazione: La Preparazione Professionale degli Emigranti," *ibid.*, (February 25, 1951), 66. This article by the *Bollettino*'s director, Bauer, appeared also in November 1950 on the newspaper *Homo Faber*.

<sup>46</sup> For the organization of these centers, created in the second-half of the 1940s, see, Goffredo Pesci, *Politica e Tecnica dell'Emigrazione Italiana ad Uso degli Operatori Tecnici e dei Servizi Sociali dell'Emigrazione*. (Roma: Edizione E.N.S.I.S.S., 1958).

skills and to provide them with fast-paced practical courses that would enable them to start working immediately. Due to the centralization of resources, this system presented numerous economic benefits. The adaptation and maximization of pre-existent schools located in important urban centers would have allowed the Italian government to save money while providing more efficacious skill and immigration preparation instruction.

Advocated affiliated with the *Bollettino* promoted centralization, the establishment of organizations specialized in the training of emigrants, better cultural preparation, and practical teaching tailored to the immigrant countries' exigencies, as the ingredients necessary for success. The Italian government—the *Bollettino* suggested—could find the inspiration from interwar experiences or look outside its national boundaries for models. During the first half of the 1950s, overpopulation in both the Netherlands and Germany created the conditions for these two Northern countries to send abroad their surplus labor. Dutch and Germans workers competed with Italian migrant workers in the international labor market—a competition the Italian authorities greatly feared.

According to the *Bollettino*'s writers, the Dutch and the German governments, supported by religious organizations, carried out a more systematic training and cultural preparation program for their emigrants. At the beginning of the 1950s, the courses for emigrants in the Netherlands seemed to be more flexible and yet more effective than those of their Italian counterparts. Unlike Italian trainees, the Dutch could start training courses when they wanted without having to wait for specific official start dates. The length of the training varied from four to nine months. The nature of the lessons and classes was pragmatic and designed to meet the receiving countries' labor demands. For instance, when destined for Anglo-Saxon countries, English classes allowed the prospective Dutch emigrants to learn English language basics. More

specifically, they familiarized emigrants with technical terms for working tools and material. To maximize the emigrants' working abilities in the foreign labor markets, textbooks and specific classes taught lessons on the Anglo-Saxon units of measurement.<sup>47</sup>

Dutch workers willing to move to Brazil had to acquire skills for trades requested from this South American country and had to be trained at the same level as their native Brazilian competition. Those who received training in trades other than the ones requested by Brazil but still willing to immigrate there were given the possibility of re-training and learning a new specialization. The trainees received a weekly subsidy correspondent to 165 lire; an amount of money that varied according to the trainee's family size.<sup>48</sup>

The comparison with the Dutch model sheds light on some important characteristics of a successful emigrant training system. The payment of subsidies and the investment in training that addressed the trades requested abroad was not unknown to Italy; they were actually the *leitmotifs* of the Italian authorities' discourses. What the *Bollettino* and other detractors reprimanded was the lack of practical realization of these still-abstract ideals, and the many loopholes that appeared when the vocational training plans were put into practice. The comparison with the German system illuminates another common *Bollettino's* critique of Italian authorities: the lack of interest in safeguarding Italian emigrants' social and psychological wellbeing.

In an article that appeared in *Homo Faber* in 1957—when Germany had already transformed itself from a country of emigration to country of immigration—Amalia Fassio Ronanni retraced the story of the zealous German interventions into the assistance and the cultural preparation of prospective emigrants.<sup>49</sup> At the political level, unlike Italy, Germany

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<sup>47</sup> "Formazione Professionale Olandese," *ibid.*, (September 10, 1953), 256.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Fassio-Ronanni's article on *Homo Faber* has been partially reported in "L'Informazione agli Emigranti," *ibid.*, (November 25, 1957), 335-336.

never welcomed emigration favorably. Yet, even before the political unification of Germany, the separate German states always tried to "conciliate their political views with the new social phenomenon [the necessity to emigrate] by means of a prompt safeguard of the emigrants."<sup>50</sup>

Safeguarding them meant first of all protecting emigrants from fraudulent hiring and labor contracts, as well as speculation on the sale of transportation tickets. Through regulations, laws, and deposits the German states made the transportation companies responsible for their passengers. The proliferation of associations in charge of protecting emigrants complemented the actions carried out by these sets of regulations. During the first half of the nineteenth century, a central association for emigration affairs established an information service in Berlin; in Hamburg, the association for emigrant protection specialized in the control of the emigrants' boats; in Bremen, the emigrants' free information office took care of the emigrants' moral assistance.<sup>51</sup>

In Germany, emigrants' assistance continued its strong tradition through the twentieth century. The German government remained unsupportive of migration as a desirable state objective because prospective emigrants could have easily found a job in their late-1950s prosperous homeland. Yet, rather than opposing the loss of this useful labor force, German authorities strove to "channel emigration toward better solutions and greater possibilities of success." To this end, important organizations worked indirectly and yet consistently to redirect potential emigrants: the Sankt Raphael Verrein, and the Charity of the German Evangelic Church, both in Düsseldorf; the Office for Emigrants' Information in Bremen.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Fassio-Ronanni wondered if these forms of assistance were the result of an innate German love for orderliness, if they were dictated by a more developed awareness of state responsibility toward its citizens' care, or if they were product of a distinctive sense of nationality. Apart from these hypothetical explanations, the author also pinpointed a verifiable motivation behind such an admirable state effort. These emigration offices applied and tried to publicize among the German citizens the concept that "emigrating represents a choice of such importance and potentially serious consequences that it should not be made without a careful reflection."<sup>53</sup>

Ultimately, the decision to emigrate was personal, but Fassio-Ronanni contended that it was the duty of state-organized offices to provide advice and updated information regarding the socio-economic situations awaiting the emigrants. The advice given went beyond a simple reckoning of the trades most requested at the moment of the departure. The German offices provided information on future jobs available, on the psychological attitudes of the receiving countries toward immigrants, and a list of all the institutions supporting immigrants.<sup>54</sup>

On the one hand, it is undeniable that the admiration for the "perfect" Dutch and German systems was partially due to the biased judgments of the socialist-oriented voice of the *Bollettino*. On the other hand, data confirmed the concerns expressed about the lack of assistance for Italian emigrants. The absence of state control allowed criminals to take advantage of emigrants. Trading in fake passports, illegal embarkations, irregular labor contracts, and the violation of norms regulating relations between carriers and hotels for emigrants were common practices at the beginning of the 1950s. Unfortunately, southern Italian regions—the more

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

afflicted by unemployment and lack of social mobility—retained the leadership in this sad illegal business.

### 3.4 *Safeguarding Italian Emigrants*

Between March and April 1951, police authorities reported twenty-two individuals guilty of fraud in matters of emigration. Public prosecutors' offices of southern cities reported all of the charges. In reporting the news, the *Notiziario dell'Emigrazione*—another newsletter for emigrants—lingered on fraud in the city of Cassino. Here, an indefinite number of prospective emigrants had been defrauded of four million lire. At the head of the mob was a Viennese man. This detail became the pretext for a venomous observation: "Our country [Italy] offers such favorable conditions to the frauds against emigrants that also foreign criminals flock here."<sup>55</sup>

In October 1953, eighteen southern magistrates' courts of the Italian Republic notified the nucleus of the *Carabinieri* of the *Direzione Generale dell'Emigrazione* (DGE) of the illegalities and frauds emigrants had suffered. The scams were the result of violations of the articles 4, 8, and 10 of the Royal Decree of July 24 1930, n. 1278. The shady operators obtained sponsorships and labor contracts for emigrants without official authorization to cut costs and increase their profit margin. They also interfered in the emigrant authorization process to obtain the quick release of the passports or other documents necessary for expatriation, or to obtain transportation tickets from the carriers.<sup>56</sup>

These criminals were punished with six months in prison and a maximum fine of 200,000 lire. The fine could increase to 600,000 lire for those who, without medical examination,

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<sup>55</sup> "I Predoni degli Emigranti," Ibid. (September 10, 1951), 302.

<sup>56</sup> "Le Truffe degli Emigranti," Ibid. (February 10, 1954), 46-47.

managed to employ underage workers abroad in itinerant work or in unhealthy factories.<sup>57</sup> The risks were worth taking. By acting illegally as subcontractors and depriving emigrants of money for services that they had a legal right to receive for free, these scammers made, for each emigrant, a profit that ranged from 10,000 to 90,000 lire.<sup>58</sup>

The southern region of Campania, followed by the southern region of Abruzzo, kept the leadership in the October 1953 frauds against emigrants. In the fall of 1950, Campania's administrative center, Naples, was the site of serious irregularities in business relations between carrier companies and local hotels authorized to host emigrants. Basically, the carrier companies made under-the-table deals with a few hotels and "invited" the emigrants to stay there in the hours preceding their departures. This practice deprived the emigrants of the freedom of choice. To put an end to this violation, the General Directorate of the Emigration in Rome, through a series of agreements with the carrier companies, decided to give the room and board subsidies directly to the emigrants and not to the licensed hotels. In this way, emigrants were able to freely choose the hotels they preferred.<sup>59</sup>

Yet, by increasing the emigrants' freedom of choice—the *Bollettino* complained—the DGE also increased emigrants' vulnerability. Neapolitan hotels did not need a special authorization to host emigrants anymore. Therefore, they were not subject to state authorities' investigations. What seemed to be a solution was actually a catalyst for "swindlers, with no scruples, ready to despicably exploit the naïve, confident, and unaware emigrants."<sup>60</sup>

Rather, the DGE should have ordered that the fully equipped but abandoned Emigration Center of the city of *Fuori Grotta*—just over than eight miles from Naples—be used instead. The

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<sup>57</sup> Italy, Legge 24 luglio 1930, n. 1278. [http://www.edizionieuropee.it/data/html/0/zn10\\_03\\_006.html](http://www.edizionieuropee.it/data/html/0/zn10_03_006.html), accessed December 13, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> For an idea of these monetary values, see, Tables 7 and 8.

<sup>59</sup> "Coscienze Inquiete," *Ibid.*, (November 25, 1950), 448-449.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

Neapolitan hotel owners, however, welcomed the DGE's decision to continue operations in Naples rather than moving it to the Emigration Center.<sup>61</sup> The abandonment of a fully equipped emigrant center reveals another weakness in the Italian management of emigrant resources. One of the *leitmotifs* of the Italian authorities' discourse regarding emigrants' training was the lack of equipment, tools, machines, and, most importantly funds.

In an article published in the specialized newspaper for emigrants, *Italiani nel Mondo* in May 1951, Goffredo Pesci denounced the situation of the Italian emigrants who "once they leave our country, find themselves alone and beg for the comfort of Italy's social assistance." The inadequacy of Italian emigrant assistance became clear at international meetings, where, Pesci reminded his readers, Italy sent no representatives to discuss how to protect emigrants abroad. Using the Geneva conference held in January 1950 as an example, Pesci pointed out that Italians had no voice in the conversation, which called attention to the lackluster efforts of various emigration associations concerning the protection of Italian abroad.<sup>62</sup>

Among the organizations that Pesci listed as failing Italian emigrants was the *Società Umanitaria* of Milan, the publishing home of the *Bollettino*.<sup>63</sup> The *Bollettino*'s collaborators, rather than being offended, clarified the difficult situations in which theirs and other similar organizations had to continue to operate. State authorities tasked with overseeing emigration—namely the Ministries of Labor and Foreign Affairs—did not lavish funds on it. More specifically, the two ministries did not even have a subscription to the *Bollettino*. Lack of means—Pesci and the *Bollettino* collaborators argued—became state authorities' justification for their carelessness. Pesci maintained:

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 449.

<sup>62</sup> Goffredo Pesci, "Rubare ai Poveri," quoted in *Bollettino* (June 15, 1951), 221-222.

<sup>63</sup> The *Bollettino* was published by the Società Umanitaria.

Yet they find the means—even outside the public budget—only if, rather than talking about emigrants, one talks about Italians abroad (using a different denomination to describe the same individuals). Particularly if, rather than speaking of "assistance," one speaks of political representation.<sup>64</sup>

Pesci criticized the money spent on the various diplomatic/cultural missions of Italian representatives to the pullulating associations of "Italians Abroad" (*Italiani all'Esterio*). The program launched in 1953 by Dr. Saporito—secretary of the National Association of Italians Abroad—reveals the reasons for such hostility toward the promotion of these "cultural" initiatives. While abandoned Italian migrants desperately needed assistance, the National Association for the Italians Abroad obtained funding for:

1) Organization of the Italian Abroad Day to celebrate in Rome with an international conference anticipated by a series of seminars conducted by the representatives of the Italians Abroad Associations. 2) Establishment of high culture courses in Venice, Siena, and Perugia for the children of the Italians abroad. 3) Establishment of a national award for journalists writing articles regarding Italian associations abroad or biographies of distinguished Italians abroad. 4) Organization of the "Italian Week" in the nations hosting important Italian communities crowned by the production of artistic documentaries, arts exhibits, concerts. 5) Special discounts for the members of the Italian associations abroad for cultural-touristic trips to Italy. 6) Editing of an almanac to give as Christmas gift.<sup>65</sup>

These types of initiatives as well as the Italian consular agencies' lack of productivity were similar to the illegal activities and the irregularities mentioned above. The limitation of the Italian consulates' office hours to three hours per day, the imposition of the highest taxes in Europe for the release and renewal of passports, and the exorbitant prices of Italian shipping

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>65</sup> "All'Insegna dei Roditori," *ibid.*, (September 10, 1953), 309-310.

companies robbed "Italian immigrant workers—socially poorer than all the other emigrants—and deprived [them] of their rights for the fact that they left behind a homeland and a labor market glad to have gotten rid of them."<sup>66</sup>

And yet, even if the state was guilty of acting as "a hidden power that tenaciously interfered by tearing apart initiatives, sterilizing generous programs, instigating perplexities and difficulties [...] to paralyze everything in a situation of mortifying want," according to Pesci, a few projects born at the local level served as alternatives and to brought about successful results.<sup>67</sup>

For example, in 1951, the *Società Umanitaria*, with northern Lombardy provincial Credit Union funding, opened courses for emigration advisers in the city of Sirmione, Lombardy.<sup>68</sup> These advisers embodied the expertise of the lauded teachers of emigration. The Sirmione adviser-training courses opened their doors to twenty-six male and twelve female elementary teachers between the ages of 25 and 35. Preference was given to those coming from nearby townships with no more than 3500 inhabitants and lacking institutions for the assistance of emigrants. The candidates had to write essays or provide proof documenting their past social activities. The ultimate goal of these courses was to provide these small towns with a migration expert. Where the state authorities were absent, these well-trained teachers led people through the several stages of the migratory process on the basis of grounded knowledge and not of "deceptive hopes and illusions, often artificially cultivated."<sup>69</sup>

Advisers' preparation was very pragmatic. Besides providing education in the history and geography of the receiving countries especially of the new immigration frontiers (i.e. Canada,

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<sup>66</sup> "Rubare ai Poveri," *ibid.*, (June 25, 1951), 323.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>68</sup> I Corsi di Sirmione per l'Assistenza e l'Informazione degli Emigranti," *ibid.*, (September 10, 1951), 295.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

Australia, and Brazil), they warned prospective emigrants about the weaknesses of the Italian consular offices and informed them of the travel expenses. Most importantly, they specialized in helping emigrants to handle money transfers from destinations countries to Italy.<sup>70</sup>

In 1953, the Chamber of Commerce of Ravenna, in the northern region of Emilia-Romagna—mindful of the success of the workshops for young artisans it had established since 1949—looked at a possible solution for the vocational training of emigrants. Along with the local technical-vocation school, this chamber of commerce launched a series of courses for emigrants. The subjects taught mirrored the pragmatism promoted in the above-cited literature: basic notions of arithmetic, elementary notions of the receiving country's language, etc. Local initiatives seemed to respond better to the practical exigencies of prospective emigrants. The *Bollettino*, indeed, concluded: "After many useless conversations widespread in congresses and seminars about emigration, here finally [is] a practical and informed initiative."<sup>71</sup>

Ravenna was not the only province that started "doing something really important for emigrants' orientation courses." Aware of the local workforce's migratory aspirations, the Chamber of Commerce of Treviso—in the northern region of Veneto—supported and financed orientation courses for prospective emigrants, beginning in 1952. In 1954, these courses opened their doors only for those who wanted to immigrate to the more requested destinations: Australia, Canada, United States, England, and South Africa. The three-month-long courses were held in local technical or artisanal schools. The lessons—concentrated in six hours per week—taught elementary English with a special focus on the nomenclature of the tools. The emigrants were familiarized with the main characteristics of the countries of destination: physical and economic

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>71</sup> "La Preparazione degli Emigranti," *ibid.*, (January 25, 1953), 23-24.

geography, labor laws, social security, health services, and rules regulating job injuries.<sup>72</sup> Yet, the example of Treviso was:

[...] a drop of water on the dry, barren, and abandoned field of our [Italian] emigration. A laudable initiative whose benefit is limited to the few privileged inhabitants of the Treviso area (*Marca Trevigiana*) but totally ignored by the other regions and by the tens of thousands of emigrants who every year, unaware and unprepared for the adventure, cross the ocean.<sup>73</sup>

Local initiatives, like those of Ravenna and Treviso, were not always successful and worthy of emulation. For instance, the *Bollettino* was highly critical of the courses organized by the Chamber of Commerce of Milan in the city of Bergamo, Lombardy. The courses in Bergamo provided English classes, whereas, the local population needed to learn French and German. Indeed, in 1954 seven thousand migrants from the province of Bergamo left for Switzerland. The number was quite impressive; it was three times the number of emigrants who left for overseas destinations in the entire region of Lombardy.<sup>74</sup>

The closure of the Bergamo courses a few months later fulfilled the critics' prophecies. The courses—based on the Treviso model—did not actually cater to the local migrant population. Bergamo was difficult to reach for the inhabitants of the surrounding valleys, where the migrant workers were concentrated. Beside the logistical handicap, the courses prepared emigrants for permanent immigration to North America, which was not the destination chosen by the local workers who used to migrate seasonally to nearby European countries.<sup>75</sup> This failure demonstrated that copying successful models was not always the solution. Practical responses shaped by the regions and provinces' migratory and working vocations were the key to success.

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<sup>72</sup> "Corsi per Emigranti," *ibid.*, (April 10, 1954), 197-198.

<sup>73</sup> "Corsi per Emigranti," *ibid.*, (February 25, 1955), 50.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> "Corso che non si Farà," *ibid.*, (April 25, 1955), 126-127.

### 3.5 A Closer Look at the "Quality Migration"

The expression "quality migration" embraces a larger concept and has broader implications than simple vocational training. The report by Ferdinando Storchi, president of the ACLI (Christian Associations of Italian Laborers), drafted for the second working group of the 1954 International Catholic Migration Congress reiterates many of the fundamental issues analyzed thus far.<sup>76</sup> Storchi begins his report with a concise assessment of the state of Italian emigration: "Mass emigration has been replaced by quality emigration."<sup>77</sup> Mass emigration referred to emigration in the pre-fascist period. Before the 1920s, Storchi stated, the Americas opened their very large doors to that mass of emigrants who left without protection and without any restrictions. Quality emigration, in contrast, referred to the emigration Italy witnessed in the 1950s, in which migrants found, not open doors, but "doors that could be opened only under specific conditions."<sup>78</sup>

Storchi reiterates the general understanding of the early 1950s migratory policies: the immigrant countries were requesting—according to their own labor needs—specific categories of workers. The selective opening of some immigrant countries' gates, he argued, coalesced around three features: selection, information, and training. These three stages were essential to the achievement of "quality emigration." The education and training of prospective emigrants would have enormously expanded the migratory possibilities. Who was in charge of this training? The sending country. Storchi did not have any doubts in this regard and even added "undoubtedly the emigrants' vocational training has to be a particular aspect of the vocational training of the youth and of the re-qualification of adults, an aspect that every civilized and

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<sup>76</sup> The Second Working Group addressed more specifically the principal tasks that emigration countries had to face: preparation, information, and selection of emigrants.

<sup>77</sup> Storchi Ferdinando, "Selezione-Informazione-Preparazione Professionale Degli Emigranti" (presented at the International Catholic Migration Congress, Castle Bouvigne, Breda, Netherlands, 1954), 186.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 187.

modern country has to consider today."<sup>79</sup> The message was clear: schools, training, and re-qualification measured the level of modernity and of civilization of any country. To be competitive in the modern world, Italy had to invest in the betterment of its workforce—migrant or not. In sum, the preparation of emigrants did not have to be additive, or in addition to the education the state already needed to provide; ideally, a country capable of offering competitive training was also a country that would have sent abroad the requested skilled workers.

Emigrant training had to fall under the umbrella of the national vocational training projects and interventions. Yet, there were also specific measures to adopt for the circulation of the skilled and trained workforce. Similar to the OEEC's manpower committee proposals examined in the previous chapter, Storchi suggested that *both* sending and receiving countries had to work out a standard international code. This latter suggestion would have established a more precise set of standards for trades, the abilities, and the skills required for each trade. In addition, the sending and receiving countries should have collaborated to train workers in trades which, given the different materials and conditions, required specific abilities. This specialized training, tailored to the receiving countries' own characteristics, could have taken place in the sending country with the help of receiving countries' technicians or just in the sending country. The establishment of constant migratory flows of workers specialized in a given trade directed at the same country would have facilitated emigrants' training. Flows of information, standardization of trades and skills required, programming, training modeled on the receiving countries' requests, and conditions were all the basic requirements for the attainment of quality migration.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Uniform rules and descriptions for trades' training and skills, as well as international training were the main prerequisites making emigrant workers competitive for European labor markets. J.F. Van Campen, another expert participating in the same working group, even if referring to the Dutch youth, effectively synthesized emigrant countries and organizations' duty to prepare emigrants according to receiving countries' labor shortages:

When leaving school the question of the selection of a profession or trade is often an important factor for youth. We hope that in the future when advice is given on the selection of trade or of a profession, not only the trades and professions in the emigration countries are taken into account, but that also the possibilities in immigration countries [should] serve as a guide.<sup>81</sup>

Youth had to select their desired futures and acquire the corresponding training with an eye to foreign labor requests. Once again, Van Campen crystallized in a few words this very pragmatic consideration: "I finally mention that is advisable that the existing professional knowledge is rounded off as much as possible and adapted to the actual labour circumstances in immigration countries."<sup>82</sup>

The participants in this 1954 migration conference did not limit themselves to teaching lessons on how to make the receiving countries' satisfied with the foreign labor force. In the first half of the 1950s, more complex and sophisticated messages accompanied discourses about emigration and emigrants' training. Monsignor Albino Mensa, expert in immigration to Argentina and participant in the second working group, argued that in the entire migration project, the preliminary operations—information, selection, and training—were the most important:

[They] fill specific determining conditions for the purpose of every rational migration, which does not have to be a movement simply provoked by the circumstances, but a sure

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<sup>81</sup> Van Campen, "Information, Preparation, Selection" (presented at the International Catholic Migration Congress, Castle Bouvigne, Breda, Netherlands, 1954), 132.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 136.

step which marks a progress for every part interested party: the emigrants, the country that sends them and the one that receive them."<sup>83</sup>

Emigration, Monsignor Mensa argued, had to be a step toward better opportunities; it had to be progress and not the mere escape from existing conditions. This step had to be "sure" and had to be part of a project. The idea of emigration as a rational, and therefore effective, project emerged in Van Campen's words as well. The Dutch expert used the term "direct preparation" to connect the planning and rational nature of emigration to training.

The direct preparation for emigration is to begin at the moment that the resolution to emigrate is practically taken. The seriousness with which the emigrant has to start with the preparation; it has to be equal to the seriousness which he shows in acquiring technical knowledge needed for his trade or profession [...] Emigrating is to be looked upon as a profession which is executed with love and devotion.<sup>84</sup>

The association of emigration with rationality, its portrayal as a planned project, and the conflagration of emigration with acquisition of technical skills are elements that, regardless of the receiving countries' requests, shifted attention to individual emigrants' potential and tenacity. Mensa was adamant on this point: "It is necessary that [emigrant families] fill themselves with spirit of initiative, they have to understand that success will depend on their efforts and on the sacrifices they are ready to take on to acquire a good position in an entirely new region."<sup>85</sup> Oblivious to the structural difficulties encountered in the receiving countries and to the impediments of the sending countries, Mensa was describing an ideal situation: prepared and trained emigrants ready to reap the benefits of the receiving countries' progress and advancement. The reality was different.

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<sup>83</sup> Monseigneur Albino Mensa, "L'Emigration Vue du Pays de l'Immigration" (presented at the International Catholic Migration Congress, Castle Bouvigne, Breda, Netherlands, 1954), 125.

<sup>84</sup> Van Campen, "Information, Preparation, Selection," 134.

<sup>85</sup> Monseigneur Albino Mensa, "L'Emigration Vue du Pays de l'Immigration," 129.

While reiterating solutions already evaluated by authorities and experts during the first half of the 1950s, the participants at the Catholic Migration Congress were also posing salient questions that predominated experts' discourse about emigration and emigrants' training in the second half of the 1950s and 1960s. Storchi, like the other European participants in the congress, continued to look at past solutions with an eye toward the future. His suggestions for a standardized and uniform international code as well as shared vocational training for emigrants did not sound new. He was basically restating the positions already taken by the OEEC study-group number 5.

What appears new in Storchi's recommendations are two elements that became increasingly common in Italian experts' discourse: the connection between the training of the migrant and the non-migrant portions of the Italian population and the acknowledgement of training as a vital aspect of a modern and civilized country. Indeed, between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, a more complex concept of Italian emigrants' preparation found expression in the experts' discourse and public interventions: in a modern country, the emigrants would be equally as prepared as the non-migrant and, most importantly, as the indigenous workers of receiving countries.

In both the Catholic and the socialist discourses the practical (i.e. vocational training) as well as the cultural aspects of the potential emigrants' preparation acquired a broader social meaning. They became premises for a successful permanent emigration and for a complete integration of the Italian emigrants in the socio-economic context found abroad. Yet, the meaning of "successful emigration" found different interpretations based on the ideological and political views of the migration experts defining it.

Whereas socialist experts considered emigrants' preparation as a precondition for emigrants' acquisition of equal opportunities and rights as workers, Catholic representatives lauded the emigrants' cultural preparation as grounds for the integration of the entire family nuclei in foreign countries and as a way to preserve the moral integrity of the family itself. In the Castle Bouvigne Congress's welcoming address, James J. Norris, chairman of the International Catholic Migration Commission, justified the congress itself as a step forward for the education and interpretation of Christian principles.<sup>86</sup> Not surprisingly, the majority of the interventions put Christian principles at the base of the migration project, and family unity became the buzzword.

According to Monsignor Albino Mensa, the emigrant should be informed about the availability "de écoles, d'églises, de facilities d'associations avec d'autres familles, de divertissements."<sup>87</sup> These aspects of social life would have indeed facilitated a better integration of the family members in the new environment. Families were considered central during the entire migration process. The information provided, Mensa was adamant, had to focus on the addressed to the preservation of the family bonds. The separation of family members had to happen only and solely in case of absolute necessity.<sup>88</sup> The emphasis on family unity even encouraged the congress's participants to revisit common tropes regarding emigration. For instance, the overpopulation in countries with unsteady economies—like Italy—was usually presented as a negative catalyst of emigration. Van Campen, on the contrary, urged his listeners to welcome this "healthy growth of the population as a gift of the Divine Providence, and as an

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<sup>86</sup> Giunta Cattolica Italiana per l'Emigrazione, "Notes Schématiques sur l'Organisation de l'Assistance aux Emigrants en Italie," (presented at the International Catholic Migration Congress, Castle Bouvigne, Breda, Netherlands, 1954), 119.

<sup>87</sup> Monseigneur Albino Mensa, "L'Emigration Vue du Pays de l'Immigration," 126.

<sup>88</sup> Van Campen, "Information, Preparation, Selection," 130.

aid for the Church in other parts of the world where economic possibilities are present in abundance."<sup>89</sup>

Knowledge of the destination countries' migratory laws and characteristics of foreign job markets was indispensable for the non-traumatic and smooth relocation of family members. Van Campen even called for the training programs for both adult men and women. Only by educating both men and women, would it be possible to achieve "the desired mobility of the family [...]" it is not to be denied that family-emigration is preferable by far to any other form of emigration."<sup>90</sup>

One of the conferences' primary focus areas was the "human" aspect of emigration. Respect for the moral integrity and unity of the migrant families, and not only economic advantages, had to lead every stage of the emigration process. This exhortation was undoubtedly addressed to the countries of destination. For instance, Storchi reminded the authorities in charge to exercise care in the selection of emigrants. He emphasized that being rejected—especially during the medical inspections—could have moral repercussions on both the emigrant and his/her family. For this reason, Storchi argued, selections had to be based on "objective" decisions.<sup>91</sup>

By "objectivity" Storchi most likely referred to the destination countries' strategic use of selective criteria to exclude unwanted ethnic groups. Beyond the prejudices at the base of emigrant workers' selection, the application of too rigid criteria during medical visits could dramatically rupture family nuclei and have even deeper social repercussions. Unsuccessful medical visits significantly delayed wives and children's trips to America, and being considered

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>91</sup> Ferdinando Storchi, "Selezione-Informazione-Preparazione Professionale Degli Emigranti," 187.

physically unsuitable could compromise young men's social status in their towns of origin.<sup>92</sup> Family unity and the reverence for personal relations were crucial in the Catholic discourse on migration. Assisting emigrants through the legal process of family reunification, after all, was a major activity of the *Giunta Cattolica Italiana*—one of the most important Italian Catholic organizations specialized in the safeguard of the Italians abroad.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.6 *Changing Scenarios*

The increasing attention given to cultural education for prospective emigrants did not supersede experts' concerns about the attainment of a better vocational training program. In the second half of the 1950s and through the 1960s, the *Bollettino* continued to call for the improvement of both vocational training schools and courses. Yet, the motivations behind the usual argumentation were more multifaceted than in the past. The *Bollettino*'s contributors were now asking for long-term solutions in the field of emigrants' vocational training. Solutions had to go beyond the simple technical preparation and had to involve both emigrants as well as the rest of the Italian youth.

In a 1958 article, the *Bollettino* deprecated the superficial training given to Italian migrant workers in the rushed vocational training courses organized by the Italian authorities. This superficiality—which did not elude foreign employers—created obstacles for the Italian immigrants' career advancement. Without a thorough and systematic training, Italian emigrants left already disadvantaged. Usually, the *Bollettino* added, Italian migrant workers achieved promotions and acquired higher levels of specialization thanks to their shrewdness and the

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<sup>92</sup> Annamaria C., phone interview by author, June 4, 2013; Rocco G., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 6, 2011.

<sup>93</sup> *Giunta Cattolica Italiana per l'Emigrazione*, "Notes Schématiques sur l'Organisation de l'Assistance aux Emigrants en Italie," 119.

possibilities found abroad. Actually, "[...] many of our emigrants who acquire qualifications willingly consider the possibility of returning to Italy because they feel confident of finding specialized employment."<sup>94</sup> Two crucial points emerge from this 1958 article: 1) unlike the past, emigrants' training had to go beyond a basic and hurried preparation; and 2) trained workers were also useful also in the growing Italian labor market.

For Italy, the end of the 1950s meant participation in the European Economic Community, the integration of the six country members' economies and markets ratified by the 1957 treaty of Rome. The European economic integration brought about new life to the debates concerning vocational training. In an article published on the Italian Republican Party's *La Voce Repubblicana* in February 1958, the journalist Tramarollo argued that Italy had to start a process of re-organizing technical-vocational training to adapt it to the new exigencies of the European Common Market. The concerns regarding the ability of Italian workers to be as competitive as their European neighbors grew in light of a recent Italian parliamentary investigation. Data showed that only 10 percent of the Italians employed in Italy completed elementary school. These were shocking numbers when compared with those of Switzerland, Denmark, and Norway, where the majority of workers completed at least eight years of education.<sup>95</sup>

On the threshold of the 1960s, the dearth of trained workers meant a lack of productivity and development: "Italian industries feel the effect of the lack of a workforce and this weakness is translated in the slowdown of economic expansion with the consequent decline of entrepreneurial initiatives and decline in new jobs."<sup>96</sup> There was no doubt that unskilled laborers were on the verge of causing a disastrous domino effect.

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<sup>94</sup> "L'Assistenza all'Emigrante Compito Esclusivo dello Stato," *Bollettino* (October 10, 1963), 150.

<sup>95</sup> "Qualificazione Professionale e Mercato Comune," *ibid.*, (February 25, 1958), 67.

<sup>96</sup> "Manodopera Qualificata o Recessione," *ibid.*, (July 15, 1962), 230.

The connection between skilled laborers and productivity, as already shown in chapter 2, had been amply discussed in the past. Yet, what was particularly interesting in the 1960s was the necessity of training Italian workers for Italian economic expansion. Trained workers were appealing not only for foreign markets but also for the developing industrial economy of Northern Italy. The many factories emerging in the area between Genoa, Turin, and Milan—known as the industrial triangle—drew in many southern Italian workers. Imprisoned in a still agricultural and backward economy, many young workers left the South to find better opportunities in the expanding economies of northern urban centers. In sum, internal migration progressively attracted the spotlight in the debate surrounding vocational training.

Italian industrialized areas seemed to need trained workers even more than foreign receiving countries. In 1962, the *Bollettino* noticed:

[...] often foreign countries welcomed our unskilled laborers with the specific intention to employ them in activities requiring low specialization and more physical labor (masons, terrazzo workers, and agriculturalists). Industrial jobs which required less physical endurance were, indeed, destined to indigenous workers. Behind this logic there was discrimination [...]. Well, we cannot adopt the same logic [...] to employ workers in the new jobs available in Italy. [...] Given the rhythm itself of expansion of these various activities, the new elements to hire must be equipped [before being employed] with a specific vocational training.<sup>97</sup>

The ISTAT (Italian Institute of Statistics) projections for the years following 1964 revealed the necessity creating a pool of highly specialized workers with college degrees in scientific disciplines (i.e. mathematics, chemistry, biology, physics and the various branches of engineering) as well as specialized laborers with vocational training school diplomas. Manufacturing and mechanical industries were the sectors that felt the greatest need for a

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

specialized workforce. The situation was so serious that more than 11,000 jobs for specialized workers and almost 2,000 jobs for apprentices remained vacant in 1962.<sup>98</sup>

The *Bollettino*'s interpretation of the data published in 1966 by the Agency of Labor of Milan—immigrant city par excellence—provides a clear understanding of the dynamics behind this persistent lack of emigrants' vocational training. During this year, the employed workforce took on 900,000 hours of overtime, a threshold never crossed before. The economic recovery and the difficulty to find specialists were the catalysts for this phenomenon. More specifically, out of the 2,242 artisan apprentices hired in the Milan area in 1966, 18 percent were illiterate, 46 percent completed only an elementary education, and only 1.8 percent held a vocational school diploma. In the spring of 1966, more than 1,000 jobs remained vacant in the Milanese mechanical industries, as did more than 500 jobs available in the Milanese printing, textile, and shoe factories.<sup>99</sup>

The root problem, the *Bollettino* explained, was not only the lack of schools and the superficial preparation provided. The Italian vocational training schools persisted in preparing its students for trades and crafts that were no longer in demand by the 1960s. For instance, they continued to crank out draughtsman when the market instead required lathe turners, metalworkers, welders and, overall, industrial machine operators in general.<sup>100</sup> Besides superficial and inappropriate preparation, there was another aspect that Italian authorities had to take into account: the numerous southern Italians who continued to migrate out of the country.

In 1963, a study on the "psychology of the escape from the South" published in *Formazione e Lavoro* took into account some statistics made public by the ISTAT. Between 1955

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<sup>98</sup> "Anche in Italia Aumenta la Richiesta di Specializzati," *ibid.*, (July 10, 1964), 242-243.

<sup>99</sup> "Le Scuole Professionali Italiane Sforzano Pochi Specialisti e con Qualifiche Sbagliate," *ibid.*, (March 10, 1967), 66.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

and 1960, more than 360,000 Italians attended vocational training courses established in the South of Italy. Many of these vocational training courses were organized and financed for migratory purposes. At the end of the courses the qualified emigrants obtained monetary awards which ranged from 25,000 lire for Brazil and Argentina to 30,000 lire for Germany.<sup>101</sup> On their own, these data do not tell us much; they just confirm a trend already established during the 1950s.

Yet, Umberto Cassinins, author of this study, compared the 360,000 qualified migrant workers with the 150,000 Italians who left to find stable jobs abroad (European and overseas countries) in the same period. Significantly, he suggested that most of the qualified workers from southern Italy joined the international Italian diaspora, leaving the less skilled workers in Italy. Cassinins's findings explain the lack of trained workers for the Milanese industrial complexes. Yet, the industrialized North was not the only part of Italy now needing qualified workers. This 1963 study revealed a rather surprising scenario regarding the Italian South:

We should not be astonished if big industrial complexes recently installed in the *Mezzogiorno*, Bari, Brindisi, Taranto, Ferrandina, and Gela had to arrange more or less directly and more or less rapidly to the formation of the necessary workforce using exceptional means and tools.<sup>102</sup>

In the first half of the 1960s, Italy was competing with more developed countries for trained manpower. Italian economic recovery soon had repercussions on the migratory flows. Between 1961 and 1963, the emigration dropped by 17 percent.<sup>103</sup> This positive trend warrants further consideration. Out of the 514,300 individuals who emigrated in 1963, 7 percent came from the northwestern regions, 27 percent from the northeastern and central regions, and,

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<sup>101</sup> Study on the psychology of the escape from the South quoted in "La Fuga del Mezzogiorno e la Qualificazione Umana," *ibid.*, (June 25, 1963), 118.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

eventually, 66 percent from the southern regions and the islands. By comparing the 1963 data with the 1961, it became clear that, whereas the emigration rate of the northern and central regions decreased by 17 percent, the southern regions' emigration rate actually increased by 7.3 percent.<sup>104</sup>

The decrease of the Southern unemployment rate by 41 percent—a miraculous decline if compared with the 35 percent national average decline—was due mostly to international migration. At the beginning of the 1950s, these statistics would have been praised by Italian experts and observers, but in 1964 they started creating problems:"[...] the new southern factories now, more than ever, feel the urgency to have qualified ranks [of workers] available ranging from the blue collar to the white collar level—those who, unfortunately, the migratory "drainage" carries away."<sup>105</sup> The concerns expressed by the *Bollettino's* collaborators went beyond the mere lack of skilled workers and economic considerations.

At the outset of the exodus from the southern regions, Cassinis emphasized in 1963, there was not only poverty "but thirst and desire of justice." More specifically:

Southern emigrants "are in a rush of improving, of feeling like everybody else, of benefitting from the same rights and remunerations that the modern civilization of the rapidly expanding townships can offer. They do not know and do not want to wait anymore for the economic miracle to reach their houses."<sup>106</sup>

Thanks to Cassinis and the *Bollettino's* proverbial sensitivity toward migration flows' changing characteristics, psychological motivations entered the discourse of emigration. The rapid industrialization of Italy—Cassinis reiterated—was not enough to stop the migratory drain from the South. Italians—especially the postwar generation—demanded recreational activities,

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<sup>104</sup> "Esportiamo Ancora Troppe Braccia," Ibid. (August 25, 1964), 277. This *Bollettino's* rubric was based on the data produced by the SVIMEZ (Associazione per lo Sviluppo dell'Industria del Mezzogiorno)

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> "La Fuga del Mezzogiorno e la Qualificazione Umana," *ibid.*, (June 25, 1963), 119.

urbanization, modernization of their houses and villages, and local tourism. In sum, they left the South for the opportunities that foreign, as well as Northern Italian cities, offered—to finally realize the so-long-promised miracle of modernity. The motivations behind Italian migration in the mid-1960s were clear to contemporary as well. A 1963 article reported that Italian emigrants left because of "the perception of living in an overpopulated country, of being among too many. And in this circumstance, even when one is fine, there is not enough room to change jobs or to benefit from a different environment."<sup>107</sup>

The emigrants' psychological attitudes before and during their time abroad became a central focus of the *Bollettino's* articles at the end of the 1950s and in the 1960s. In the summer of 1958, the *Bollettino* stated that the role of permanent emigration as a safety valve for demographic pressure could only remain positive and productive if the Italian workforce easily adapted to the socio-economic circumstances found abroad. The Italian government—the *Bollettino* emphasized—had a responsibility to manage workforce movements and guarantee that potential emigrants were actually ready for such an important decision: "What we called emigrant's preparation does not pertain to vocational training aspects (also essential) of the problem, but the emigrant's full awareness of the decision that he is making; we believe this is the primary condition for a permanent move."<sup>108</sup>

There was no doubt for the *Bollettino's* contributors that care of the migrant laborers had to be entrusted to the governmental authorities. Informed by the many frauds of the past, the *Bollettino* viewed private initiatives suspiciously. Still, at the beginning of the 1960s, the Italian

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<sup>107</sup> "Emigrazione e Sviluppo Demografico", *Ibid.* (December, 25, 1963), 258-260. To corroborate its thesis, the *Bollettino* reported the results of a survey carried out by the *Reader's Digest*. The data published in this survey revealed that 32 percent of the British would have been willing to leave the UK for other countries in the Commonwealth. The good economic conditions of the UK (English workers' per capita income was twice the Italians) could not explain the English citizens' desire to leave their country. Better paid job abroad could not be the only explanation. The *Bollettino* concluded "Undoubtedly, there is also the desire to escape from the rigid routine.

<sup>108</sup> "Scelta e Preparazione dell'Emigrante," *ibid.*, (July 25, 1958), 246.

consular offices—the main institutions of reference for Italian abroad—worked inefficiently and fragmentarily. Rather than serving the needs of the Italians abroad, these offices burdened them with extra bureaucracy and high taxes.<sup>109</sup>

The Italian consular offices had to be established according to the Italian migrant laborers' presence and not according to the locations' prestige. Most notably, Italian laborers abroad should have had the opportunity to count on solid networks of social workers. The reality contrasted greatly with the *Bollettino's* proposal and its authors' hopes. Some numbers help elucidate the profound difficulty that Italians abroad encountered when in need of assistance. For instance, in 1963 Switzerland there were only five social workers for the 600,000 Italians present in the state. The Italian consulate in Zurich—the consular district with the highest number of Italian (205,000)—had only one social worker available.<sup>110</sup>

What the *Bollettino* wished the Italian authorities could form was a new type of Italian emigrant: trained, respected abroad for his skills, ready to integrate into every sector of the hosting societies, linguistically and culturally prepared for both professional advancement and participation in trade union activity. The goal was to promote permanent immigration as well as to enhance the social conditions of laborers abroad. The Italian emigrant's mentality could not be immune to changes in this sense. Many times, the *Bollettino* noticed, Italian emigrants' proverbial frugality jeopardized this integration: "[...] it is for this willingness to save that, afterwards, the emigrant gets used to standards of life that completely contrast every process of

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<sup>109</sup> "L'assistenza all'Emigrante, Compito Esclusivo dello Stato," *ibid.*, (October 10, 1963), 149-153. The *Bollettino* notices the paradox of the fee on the physical exam for the military draft. Rather than begin helped, Italian immigrants—always trying to save money—had to spend extra money to comply with a mandatory request. *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

integration in the hosting collectivity. In many cases this necessity of saving also compromises the possibility of career advancement, and consequently the income."<sup>111</sup>

Italian emigration in the 1960s was very different from the circumstances of past emigration. Italian migrants not only had to be technically prepared for jobs abroad, but they also had to be able to integrate into the fabric of their host country's everyday life. At the 1967 Conference of the social democratic and reformist UIL (*Unione Lavoratori Italiani*) labor union concerning the problems of Italian emigration in the EEC, the UIL Sardinia's secretary, Gianni Motzo, made this point about the situation:

The prejudices, the myths, the obsolete political and ideological ideas hardly die in our country, even when the world evolves [...]. Today's emigration shows a different face; it is no more the emigration of those who leave in tears, neither, sometimes, of those unprepared professionally and psychologically. Yet, it is often the emigration of the youngsters who just completed the vocational training courses, full of willingness and life. They do not want to face the future as eternally unemployed or under-employed but as participants of the ever progressing world and integration.<sup>112</sup>

In a changing socio-economic environment in which Italy was part of the European Common Market and in which, even if slowly, the national economy was improving, Italian emigrants had to become participants of the progress and not its poor victims. The Catholic migration experts of 1954 and the socialist representatives similarly asked for vocational training and cultural preparation as prerequisites for emigrants' integration and as sign of modernity. Yet, unlike the participants at the conference of Castle Bouvigne who focused on family unity and ethical elevation, Italian socialist reformists emphasized the class dimension of emigration. At the 1967 UIL conference, the participants clearly asked for social equality between the indigenous workers and the Italian emigrants.

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<sup>111</sup> "L'Emigrazione Diventa un Problema?," *ibid.*, (September 10, 1963), 115.

<sup>112</sup> "Emigrazione non come necessità ma come scelta di un futuro migliore," *ibid.*, (April 25, 1967), 136.

In the new European context, the defense of the job and the assistance to emigrants was no longer sufficient. The Italian authorities, along with the other European country members and thanks to the EEC funding, had to do much more than this. They had to guarantee that "the Italian emigrant's position is completely equal to that of the hosting country's laborers, for social security and human dignity."<sup>113</sup> In sum, Italian authorities had to transform Italian emigrants into modern citizens, aware of their surroundings.

### 3.7 Emigration: Mission of Moral and Cultural Elevation

Among the various problems, that of a broad and upright preparation—and not only training—of our emigrants becomes increasingly important and in many cases predominant if we want that the migratory movement loses, for what possible, its pathological characteristics and marches toward a radical and indispensable transformation: no more escape and exile, but a mission of reciprocal moral, cultural, social, and economic elevation.<sup>114</sup>

Italian emigrants' vocational training was essential to realize the free circulation of laborers in the European Economic Community and therefore received the lion's share of the attention from both technocrats and migration experts during the 1960s. A 1967 special issue of the review *Formazione e Lavoro*, entirely dedicated to emigrants' vocational training, delineates in retrospect the inadequacies of the previous lack of training system. Even if focused on the European migratory context, which was Italian authorities' primary interest at the end of the 1960s, the *Formazione e Lavoro*'s contributors' interventions help us avoid looking at postwar Italian emigration in rigid categories. Instead, it provides a lens through which to view Italian emigration within a transnational context. Whether they were headed for Germany or Michigan, prospective Italian migrants were products of the same social, political, and economic milieu.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>114</sup> Giuseppe Lucrezio Monticelli, "Sintesi Storica dell'Emigrazione Italiana," *Formazione e Lavoro* 25-26 (May August 1967), 10.

Livio Labor, director of *Formazione e Lavoro*, opened the issue by emphasizing how little the Italian government did for the vocational training and cultural preparation of Italian emigrants. Even though Labor recognized then minister of foreign affairs' Amintore Fanfani' renewed attention to emigration issues, he argued that Italy still needed a precise political project, focused public action, and a consistent intervention into the preparation of emigrants. Italian state interventions were weak and fragmentary, at best, in providing for the emigrants' basic needs (*i.e.* lodgings) and completely absent from their training. Everything in this sector, Labor wrote, was left to the individual good will of consular authorities or institutional representatives. The rule was often "that of the extemporaneous and [one] of carelessness."<sup>115</sup>

Ruggero Ravenna, national secretary of the socialist-reformist UIL (Italian Union of Labor) and also president of the ENFAP (National Institution of Formation and Vocational Training), reiterated the points present in Monticelli's quote at the opening of this section. In his contribution to the roundtable published in this same issue, Ravenna wrote, emigration should have ceased to be an alternative to economic and social underdevelopment. It was now time to overcome the old paternalistic and pietistic conception of emigration. In lieu of these outdated notions, Ravenna offered the following solution:

We need an organic and global policy aimed at creating the premises so that [emigration] becomes a free choice. We need to overcome the old pitiful, charitable, and paternalistic conception of emigration through concrete political discourse that invests directly in the immigrant worker, sensitizes him and deals with his problems from the perspective of social advancement [...]<sup>116</sup>

Training and a solid system of information were the fundamental socio-economic instruments for the social promotion of the migrant worker. Care and attention to emigrants'

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<sup>115</sup> Livio Labor, "La Condizione è la Libertà di Scelta per i Lavoratori," *ibid.*, II.

<sup>116</sup> Ruggero Ravenna, "Tavola Rotonda: Emigrazione e Preparazione Professionale," *Ibid.*, 64.

wellbeing and training seemed to be an irreplaceable foundation for a more egalitarian relation between sending and receiving countries. Ravenna specifically refers to article 128 of the Treaty of Rome (1957) which solicited a common European politics of vocational training. This communitarian contribution would have allowed the unskilled workers of the unstable markets—like Italy's—to reach the same level of preparation as the workers of developed European countries.

The idea of a common market and free circulation of manpower among European country member states—the signatories of the Treaty of Rome—is crucial to understanding the larger implications of a systematic and state-sponsored vocational training system. The mobility of skilled workers who could find equal opportunities in their homeland would have finally transformed emigration into a free choice rather than a constrained one. The European Common Market, Ravenna argued, must be more than trade, commerce, and the unification of customs regulations. The free movement of workers had to correspond to the free movement of goods and capital.<sup>117</sup>

Marcello Santoloni—member of the communist CGIL (General Confederation of the Italian Laborers)—took Ravenna's critique to another level. Santoloni did not attack the absence of a free movement of workforce but the misleading conception of free circulation per se. A truly "free" circulation of the workforce, Santoloni emphasized, would result in the free movement of workers and it would be characterized by requests for all categories of workers. Yet, the 1960s workforce traffic, even within the boundaries of the EEC, continued to be mono-directional, that is from the less-developed countries to the more industrialized, shaped by requests for specific

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

categories of workers. The explanation, Santoloni wrote, was simple "The migratory streams are placed in the occupational structure of the receiving country."<sup>118</sup>

Santoloni bluntly reminds us that the free circulation of workers across equally developed European countries may remain an unrealizable ideal. He saw that the industrialized countries could continue to exploit Italian industrial underdevelopment and unemployment. Yet, it is important to highlight that the discourse concerning emigrants' training, as already noted from the 1954 Catholic Migration Congress, was much more than a practical response to the hosting countries' exigencies. Sending abroad better prepared and trained workers meant becoming and being a part of the modernity. Skilled emigrants, already schooled in Italy, and capable of communicating in the language of the host country embodied the ideal of the new, modern type emigrants.

During the second half of the 1960s, Italian authorities did not stop collaborating with the destination countries for the establishment of emigrants' training courses. A few data can elucidate the practical interventions of the Italian authorities in the establishment of emigrants' training course both in Europe and overseas. In 1966, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs established 709 courses. Divided between courses offering basic and initial preparation and courses providing specialization in various trades, they enrolled 12,000 students/apprentices. Of these courses, 139 were offered in European Union member countries, 161 overseas, and 408 in Switzerland. The number of courses in each geographical area tells us a great deal about the chosen destinations of Italian emigrants. Apart from Switzerland which had the highest numbers of courses in Europe but was not part of the European Economic Cooperation, the Federal

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<sup>118</sup> Marcello Santoloni, "L'Integrazione dell'Emigrante all'Estero," 49.

Republic of Germany followed with 108 courses. Among the overseas destinations, Canada hosted the most courses at 148.<sup>119</sup>

In his contribution to the roundtable, Marino Carboni—national secretary of the ACLI—did not hesitate to label Italian emigration as a bad investment. Quite simply, experience had shown that encouraging emigration did not provide a permanent solution to Italian unemployment. On the contrary, Carboni observed, emigration meant impoverishment for Italy's active population and the impoverishment of the energies necessary for the generational renewal. Carboni did not even temper his criticism with the benefits of remittances.<sup>120</sup>

The concept of emigration as a pure balance between demographic dynamics, the absorption capacity of the national labor market and the treatment of remittances as a parameter of economic theory, Carboni indicated, was outdated. The ACLI national president pushed his critics toward the old migratory mentality even further and, eventually, uncovered the myriad problems still felt in contemporary Italian society. He wrote:

The cost of emigration, in relation to the higher levels of qualification requested, is currently superior to the quantity of currency that comes to Italy as a consequence of emigration itself. It suffices to mention, for instance, the cost of the support [for each Italian] until working age, or the cost of the training and qualification of thousands of workers who will not be employed in productive activities in [our] country.<sup>121</sup>

Emigration encouraged as "safety valve" and the simplistic transformation of a necessarily short-term solution into a crystallized permanent one were the Italian government's main lacunae. This defective concept of emigration was the target of *Formazione e Lavoro*'s contributors. Emigration would be beneficial, effective, and free only when the circulation of the workforce would move out of the receiving countries' control.

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<sup>119</sup> Antonio Valle, "L'Azione dello Stato nel Settore della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori Emigranti," Ibid., 101.

<sup>120</sup> Marino Carboni, "Tavola Rotonda: Emigrazione e Preparazione Professionale," 66-70.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 67.

Insofar as the unequal distribution of resources and the uneven socio-economic development of the European countries continued to exist, Italian workers would have chosen emigration out of necessity and structural constraints. Only full employment in Italy would have allowed the "removal from the worker's expatriation every element of necessity, leaving to him only a free choice which translates the worker's right to employ his capacities where he better prefers."<sup>122</sup> This quote deserves further analysis. If the worker can move as freely as he wants and where he wants, it is taken for granted that he has been already prepared at home to deal with the increasing mechanization and complexity of the industrial job market and that, free of constraints, he moves for private reasons and/or ambitions.

It is necessary at this point to retrace what appear to be the major phases of the conceptual trajectory of Italian emigration. By conceptual trajectory, I mean different stages—not strictly chronological—that defined and shaped the practical and intellectual values given to emigration. Socio-economic structural changes and their repercussions encouraged Italian institutions to elaborate different migratory paradigms. Born out of contingent events, these paradigms were not exclusionary, but rather, co-existent. In its first phase—that is in the years immediately following WWII—authorities treated emigration as a necessary and temporarily band aid. Reminiscent of the pre-fascist mass migration of unskilled workers, Italian authorities did not invest immediately in the training of potential migrant workers.

In its second phase—more or less starting from the beginning of the 1950s— it became clearer to Italian authorities that post-WWII industrialized countries would not accept unskilled workers. Emigration was still the panacea for Italy's high rate of unemployment and optimal source for remittances, but it required more direct Italian state intervention. Emigrants'

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 68.

vocational training became crucial for the effective placement of workers in foreign competitive and industrialized labor markets. Investing in the establishment of courses and schools capable of providing training in the trades requested abroad became the main goal.

At the end of the 1960s, experts understood that, if not paired with other organic interventions for Italy's economic improvements and full employment, emigration was destined to become a "bad investment." I have already mentioned Carboni's criticisms of poor emigration "management." Antonio Motta, expert of emigrants' social security and chief of the INCA (National Institute of Co-federal Assistance) was even more adamant that the management of emigration preparation must be reformed.<sup>123</sup> Motta, like other contributors to this special issue, recognized the impossibility of creating more than one million jobs between 1966 and 1970 and, consequently, reducing the Italian unemployment rate to 3 percent.

Emigration continued to be a reality for unemployed Italians at the end of the 1960s, and Italy was still far from realizing the ideal of freely-chosen emigration. While waiting for full employment and the leveling of inequalities related to wealth distribution among European countries and among Italian regions, it was necessary to equip emigrants with the training necessary for their integration and success abroad. Yet, the efforts to train and make Italian migrants better workers needed to be part of the whole national educational system. Motta argued:

[...] the vocational training with all its implications, including the problem of the qualification and re-qualification of the workers destined to leave, does not have to be considered separately, but inserted in the broader context of a general politics of vocational training in Italy [...] The modern tendencies of vocational training presume, indeed, a type of learning rich with polyvalent basic information"<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> The INCA was sponsored by the CGIL trade union. This latter was politically connected to the Italian left political parties.

<sup>124</sup> Antonio Motta, "Tavola Rotonda: Emigrazione e Preparazione Professionale," *ibid.*, 74.

Motta's plea for a better polyvalent, multi-purpose basic education was in sync with the changes in the 1960s job market and owed a debt to recent studies on the matter. From the reports presented by Luigi Granelli, president of the INAPLI (National Institute for the Training and Improvement of the Industry Laborers), it emerges that the Italian vocational training experts' concerns changed significantly at the beginning of the 1960s. In his various interventions, interviews as well as reports produced between 1961 and 1962, Granelli synthetically explained the type of training that the new industrial developments required. The evolution of technical progress drastically reduced requirements for manual ability and, simultaneously, produced new activities requiring a better theoretical preparation. It is possible to affirm that the 1950s efforts to train workers in specific trades left room for a new goal: to strengthen the Italian youth's "multi-purpose education" (*formazione polivalente*).<sup>125</sup>

The proposed multi-purpose education went beyond manual and sector-based training and would have prepared the worker for the challenging requests of modern labor markets, which included the re-qualification requirements, continuing education, and the capacity to manage an entire group of machines and multiple phases of the production process. In sum, flexibility, coordination, and promptness in learning new methods were absolutely crucial to be competitive in the increasingly rationalized and mechanized industrial world.<sup>126</sup>

The acquisition of these new skills was integrally intertwined with the Italian public educational system. Granelli advocated for more theoretical apprentice instruction. Yet, the introduction of theory-driven courses into the system of vocational training could not subsist without a reform of the quintessence of the archaic Italian system: the school. In a 1963

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<sup>125</sup> Luigi Granelli, "Formazione Professionale e Politica di Piano," (presented at Convegno di Studio di San Pellegrino, 1962), in *La Formazione Professionale in Italia* (Inapli: Rome, 1966), 58.

<sup>126</sup> Luigi Granelli, "Scuola e Formazione Professionale in una Prospettiva di Evoluzione," in *La Formazione Professionale in Italia* (Inapli: Rome, 1966), 132.

interview given to the Investigation Committee on Italian school, Granelli indicated the most important action that must be taken: mandatory school participation until the age of 14. This policy was present in the Italian constitution but remained, essentially, a dead letter. Granelli insisted that it had to become reality for Italian pupils. The call for longer schooling—embodied in the 1962 middle school reform—was born out of the discouraging data coming from the southern Italy's educational situation. As late as 1962, in some southern areas, illiteracy was still at 34 percent and, out of 100 school-age students, only 75 were attending schools at all. Only 10 percent of students decided to attend high schools.

As shown by *Formazione e Lavoro*, the discourse surrounding emigration vocational training, and the Italian education system crossed paths many times during the 1960s. The common denominator was the creation of a modern society. In 1966, at the inauguration of qualification courses at the Milanese "Rinascita" school, the then undersecretary of Labor and socialist senator, Giorgio Fenoaltea, explicitly connected the ideals of modernity and democracy. At first, the senator called for the management of three different career stages—basic education, vocational training, and employment placement—as one big organism. Then, he expounded on the equation of modernity with democracy:

Affirming that technological progress requires vocational training it is an obvious statement. We look beyond this; we look at the vocational training as an irreplaceable aspect of a democratic society. [...] a democratic society is that in which everybody participates in the decisions. There is no participation in decisions if one does not acquire a level of technical, cultural, and moral preparation suitable to the increasingly demanding duties of modern citizens.<sup>127</sup>

According to the statistics, Italians were still far from becoming modern citizens. In 1966, 27 percent of the school age Italian youth did not attend middle schools; 5 percent did not even

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<sup>127</sup> "La Formazione Professionale, Elemento Indispensabile in una Società Moderna," Ibid. (January 25, 1966), 24.

complete the elementary school. What was alarming was that there was not a big discrepancy between the industrialized northern and rural southern regions.<sup>128</sup> If compared with other EEC countries, the low school attendance in Italy was even more troubling. The level of education of employed workers in 1968 still indicates very low levels of educational attainment.<sup>129</sup>

### 3.8 *Modernization without Development*

This digression on the Italian school system helped me show how during the 1960s emigrants' training acquired another meaning. Experts, unlike in the past, called for more theory and less practice, as well as long-term investments in the education of the entire Italian youth, regardless of their decision to migrate. If postwar Italy lived in a state of emergency, 1960s Italy needed to invest in long-term projects. "In the first very difficult years of the postwar period it seemed, indeed, more important to survive with what we had, rather than make bigger sacrifices to prepare for a decisively better future."<sup>130</sup> This emergency and short-term mentality—necessary in time of crisis and reconstruction—was, at the beginning of the 1960s, paralyzing Italy's development as a modern nation and hindering the assumption of an up-to-date training preparation system. Migration and education experts of the 1960s, along with union representatives, started putting emigration's benefits for the Italian peninsula into perspective.

The reservations about emigration as a solution for Italy's evils were rooted in the complex and transitory period between the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1960s. The Italian economic boom provoked a contraction of emigration and, simultaneously, a rise of intra-regional and inter-regional movements. The decrease of agricultural jobs—mostly due to the

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<sup>128</sup> "Obbligo Scolastico: Evasori," *ibid.*, (October 25, 1966), 308-309.

<sup>129</sup> "Le Percentuali di Istruzione in Italia," *ibid.*, (November 10, 1969), 326-327.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

mechanization of this sector—and the availability of jobs in the industrial and service-oriented sectors acted as catalyzing factors for these internal migrations. The routes followed by internal migrants were from the countryside to the city and from the southern regions to northern cities.<sup>131</sup>

During the same decade, Italian participation in the EEC called for a modernization of the country itself. Migration experts and observers—regardless of their ideological stances—called for a more systematic and nationally homogeneous education of Italian citizens and manpower. At home or abroad, Italian workers had to become culturally aware and prepared citizens. On the migratory side, the experts agreed upon the necessity of transforming emigration into an informed decision for career advancement. Desperation to find a job could no longer remain the main motivation behind migration, as it was in the past.

While this new view of emigration made inroads, new factors were rapidly changing the socio-economic circumstances of Italy. The rapid industrialization of the North attracted southern workers and launched the so-called "exodus" from the countryside. Yet, the creation of new jobs in the northern industries and the service sector—which did not completely absorb unemployment—did not stop Italian workers from going abroad. European and overseas countries still lured Italian workers searching for faster career advancement, more desirable incomes, and better standards of living. The promise of better and faster achievements abroad did not always correspond to reality.

Additionally, several economic conjunctures during the second half of the 1960s continued to feed concerns for the future of Italian employment. Between 1967 and 1968, Italy still had an unemployment rate of more than 3 percent: a derisory cipher when compared to the

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<sup>131</sup> More specifically, jobs in agriculture diminished by 10%, jobs in the industries increased by 5, 3%.

past.<sup>132</sup> Yet, this is a worrisome figure if we take into account that this percentage was achievable thanks to the numerous Italian workers who continued to emigrate.

The emigration of workers, usually more skilled than the national average, caused particular changes in the peninsula's demography. Notwithstanding the demographic growth of the 1950s and 60s, the prolonged schooling and immigration of working-age individuals negatively weighed heavily on the economically productive portion of the population. Between 1958 and 1969, Italy experienced a decrease of more than 1,500,000 economically active individuals. Even more alarming, in the first four months of the 1969, the active portion of the population decreased by more than 800,000 individuals.<sup>133</sup> Italy not only lost its active population, but it also experienced an unbalanced demographic redistribution among its regions. If in the period between 1955 and 1967, the population of the central and northern regions increased by 11.7 percent, the southern regions registered an increase of only 4.6 percent.<sup>134</sup>

The fact that the exodus of young Italian workers changed Italian demography was not new. The perception of this exodus, however, was new. It was now viewed as a "problem." After all, the emigration of individuals was not benefitting Italy but depriving it of tax-payers and producers. At the same time, the ongoing phenomenon of emigration was a sign of Italy's failure to realize the longed-awaited mass employment. The concentration of the industrialization in some key regions of the North disappointed an entire generation who committed to education and training. At the end of the 1960s, many young laborers on the job market were experiencing under-employment for the first time.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> "LEmigrazione non Basta," *ibid.*, (September 25, 1968), 266.

<sup>133</sup> "La Popolazione Attiva Italiana Continua a Diminuire," *ibid.*, (July 25, 1969), 177.

<sup>134</sup> "A Causa delle Migrazioni, 7 Regioni Italiane Hanno Perso 3 Milioni e Mezzo di Abitanti in 12 Anni," *ibid.*, (December 10, 1968), 262.

<sup>135</sup> "I Giovani che non Trovano Posto," *ibid.*, (December 25, 1968), 379.

The low employment rate among the young high school and/or vocational schools' graduates revealed a new and interesting phenomenon in the late 1960s Italy. "[...] part of the youngsters who went through post-elementary education and who obtained a diploma [...] suitable for white-collar, qualified, and prestigious jobs [...] remain at home waiting."<sup>136</sup> Told to specialize and attain a higher level of education, these 1960s young adults did not find occupations corresponding to their preparation. The unemployment of educated Italians was a new phenomenon for Italy. The process of schooling allowed greater access to post-elementary education, access that became increasingly disentangled from socio-economic class. The creation of new jobs in Italy during the economic boom prompted the training of technicians, land surveyors, and accountants. Yet, when new generations of students finally acquired touted specializations, Italy was not capable of absorbing them.

In an article about the socio-economic conditions of the southern region of Basilicata published on the *Corriere della Sera* in 1970, the journalist—Alfonso Madeo—argued that if national schooling ameliorated the population's socio-cultural disparities, it enlarged the so-called intellectual unemployment. Unlike the peasant southern man—Madeo emphasized—the young 1960s graduate opposed the "escape" and "detachment" from his family and loved ones. Therefore "he is forced to hope beyond the reasonable limits. He does not move. He stays. He surrenders to waiting for a miracle, help, connections, influential protection." With an attitude between scolding and empathy, Madeo listed the reasons why emigration was not part of this educated workforce's horizons. Emigration meant for them challenges in foreign environments,

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<sup>136</sup> "Sempre Punto Dolente l'Emigrazione," *ibid.*, (October 10, 1969), 171.

imposition of new social norms, loss of hope for better social conditions at home, and the realization that, after all, a diploma was not a passport to a good job.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> "L'Emigrante in Colletto Bianco," *ibid.*, (December 25, 1970), 359.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Old Remedies and New Aspirations*

Archival documents as well as migration experts' proposals regarding emigrants' vocational training, and emigration in general, provide important insights into the connection between mobility and skills. They uncover the socio-political circumstances in which Italian emigrants decided to leave, planned their emigration, and utilized pre-WWII existing contacts abroad. Yet, these documents do not give voice to the individuals who were directly involved, the migrants themselves. In this chapter, I leave the international and national contexts to focus almost exclusively on the migratory experiences of the inhabitants of the town of Casalvieri, southeast of Rome.

The high post-WWII emigration rate of this town and the availability of qualitative sources—in this specific case, oral interviews—led me to Casalvieri. Located between Rome and Naples, included in the administrative province of Frosinone, and part of the Comino Valley, Casalvieri boasts a long migration history. Within the province of Frosinone, the Comino Valley is arguably the area that has been the most strongly affected by migration. The town of Casalvieri also stands out. The historian Lidia Colafrancesco observed that in Casalvieri: "the tendency to emigrate did not register interruptions even during Fascism, notwithstanding the laws introduced by the regime."<sup>1</sup> Additionally, whereas after WWII it is possible to register a decrease in the valley's migratory flow, this did not happen for Casalvieri. Colafrancesco continues: "[in Casalvieri] emigration did not even reach a halt during the 1970s, amidst the late economic resurgence of the province."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lidia Colafrancesco, "L'Emigrazione Dal Lazio Meridionale Nel Secondo Dopoguerra," *Archivio Storico dell'Emigrazione Italiana (ASEI)*, November 3, 2008, <http://www.asei.eu/it/2008/11/lemigrazione-dal-lazio-meridionale-nel-secondo-dopoguerra/>. Accessed, March 6, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Migration historians Matteo Sanfilippo and Michele Colucci view the situation of Casalvieri as paradigmatic for the periodization of the emigration originating in the province of Frosinone. The traditional periodization of Italian migration history accepts WWII and the first half of the 1970s as hiatuses. According to this accepted temporal division, the WWII conflict brought about a break with the migrations of the past; whereas the first half of the 1970s put an end to mass migration from Italy.<sup>3</sup> The out-movements from the province of Frosinone—and particularly in the case of Casalvieri—blurred these chronological borders. After WWII, Casalvierani resumed their past migration trajectories. They immigrated to France, particularly to the areas around Lyon and Paris, and to Detroit, Michigan. Simultaneously, they explored new North American destinations. A few Casalvierani moved from Detroit to California, the area between Los Angeles and San Diego. Mainly as a result of the US 1924 quotas, others considered Canada, specifically Toronto and Windsor, as an "alternative America."

The absence of archival sources and statistics specifically addressed to Casalvieri's emigration flows makes the task of providing exact data especially challenging. Additionally, this archival lacuna does not allow researchers to report an accurate overview of Casalvierani's destinations. Yet, the census data indicating the resident population help to reconstruct Casalvierani movements. (Figure 4). With its interesting migratory patterns, Casalvieri has captured the attention of other scholars. Casalvierani's diaspora had been at the center of articles and monographs dedicated to the emigration from the Southern part of the region of Lazio as well as from the Comino Valley.<sup>4</sup> In some cases, entire monographs have been dedicated to the

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<sup>3</sup> Michele Colucci and Matteo Sanfilippo, "L'Emigrazione Dal Lazio: Il Dibattito Storiografico," *ASEI*, November 29, 2006, <http://www.asei.eu/it/2006/11/lemigrazione-dal-lazioil-dibattito-storiografico/> Accessed march 6, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Gino Serafino Zincone, *Nel Mondo dall'Europa Alle Rotte Di Colombo. I Casalvierani in Viaggio. Emigrati E Uomini Illustri*. (Castelliri: Pasquarelli, 1992); IRPEOS, *Possibilita' E Modalita' Di Sviluppo Dei Rapporti Tra Zona d'Origine E Zona Di Emigrazione Con Riferimento Alle Esperienze Degli Emigrati Di Casalvieri a Parigi* (Roma: Regione Lazio, 1989); Marie-Helene Meloni and Denise Mollicone, "Chi Va E Chi Torna: Alcune Storie Di

case of Casalvieri. In 1992, the local historian, Serafino Gino Zincone, meticulously transcribed a few data sheets reporting names of emigrants, destination countries, and dates of departures.<sup>5</sup> The records collected refer to the period between the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and 1943. However, for the reconstruction of the post-WWII migratory movements, scholars have largely relied on oral histories. At the end of the 1980s, Casalvierani became the focus of Marie-Hélène Meloni's and Denise Mollicone's co-authored dissertation written for the department of contemporary Italian literature at the University of Paris. This work examines the experiences of the Casalvierani immigrants to Villejuif within the context of the Italian immigration to France.<sup>6</sup>

Most of what we know about Casalvierani migrants and former migrants' relationship with their home town is thanks to the work of anthropologist Adelina Miranda. In *Pendolari di Ieri e Pendolari di Oggi*, Miranda focuses on Casalvierani families who immigrated to France. In her work, she redefines the stereotypical image of the uprooted emigrants, without memory, and always at the mercy of nostalgia. Here, the interviews of Casalvierani underscore the concept of bilocalism, as defined by Miranda. Casalvierani abroad—thanks to the relatives left behind who allowed their anchoring to Casalvieri—were capable of living between places.<sup>7</sup> By experiencing bi-or multi-local lives, many Casalvierani did not lose their local identity. On the contrary, they

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Casalvierani” (University of Paris, Sorbonne-Nouvelle, 1987); Lucio Maciocia, *Sviluppo Dei Rapporti Tra Gli Emigrati E La Loro Terra Di Origine Con Lo Studio Della Situazione Dei Nostri Emigranti in Canada e Negli Stati Uniti* (Comune di San Donato Val di Comino, n.d.); Charles Forte, *The Autobiography of Charles Forte* (London: Sifgwich & Jackson, 1986); Augusto Ascolani, “L’Area Cassino-Sora,” in *Ricerche Sullo Spopolamento in Italia*, ed. Eugenio Sonnino (Rome: Comitato Italiano per lo Studio dei Problemi della Popolazione, 1982); Fausto Orsini, “Emigrazione in Australia: Un’indagine Condotta in Due Centri Del Lazio Meridionale, Sezze E Sonnino,” in *Italia-Australia 1788-1988*, ed. Romano Ugolini (Rome: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1988), 487–90. Gerardo Gallo and Luisa Natale, “Il Rimpatrio in Alcune Zone dell’Italia Centro-Meridionale Nell’ultimo Periodo: Caratteristiche Strutturali e Processi Di Mobilità,” in *Memorie Migranti*, ed. Gianfranco Pecchinenda (Certosa di Padula: Ipermedium, 1995), 121–42; Russell King and Brian Reynolds, “Casalattico, Dublin and the Fish and Chip Connection: A Classic Example of Chain Migration,” *Studi Emigrazione* 115 (1994): 398–425.

<sup>5</sup> Gino Serafino Zincone, *Nel Mondo dall’Europa Alle Rotte Di Colombo. I Casalvierani in Viaggio. Emigrati e Uomini Illustri*.

<sup>6</sup> Marie-Helene Meloni and Denise Mollicone, “Chi Va E Chi Torna: Alcune Storie Di Casalvierani.”

<sup>7</sup> Adelina Miranda, *Pendolari di ieri e pendolari di oggi. Storia di un paese di migranti* (L’Harmattan Italia, 1997), 117.

ignored the geographical space between the city to which they immigrated and Casalvieri. The annihilation of this in-between space permitted migrant Casalvierani to incorporate their local identity into the larger identities they developed while living abroad.<sup>8</sup>

Before analyzing the individual stories of the emigrants from Casalvieri to North America, I contextualize these accounts within the post-WWII socio-economic conditions of the province of Frosinone. The province recorded a marked emigration rate when compared to the other four provinces of the area: Rome, Rieti, Viterbo, and Latina.<sup>9</sup> In 1927, the province, Protasi and Colafrancesco indicate, was created by combining of the districts of Frosinone and of Sora. Until then, the district of Frosinone belonged to the province of Rome, part of the Papal States. The district of Sora was part of the historic province of *Terra e Lavoro*, an administrative remnant of the pre-Unification southern Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.<sup>10</sup>

The two districts had a very different migratory tradition. The Papal States' government had never tolerated emigration. As a result, it had always made obtaining passports very difficult for the inhabitants of Frosinone. Additionally, agricultural labor in the area of the Campagna Romana attracted the district population and created a seasonal intra-territorial movement (*i.e.* within the boundaries of the Lazio region) which made international migration obsolete. On the contrary, the district of Sora—where Casalvieri is located—had a marked migratory tradition dating back to the *Ancien Régime*; and it had been almost exclusively directed toward European

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 132-133.

<sup>9</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGAP, Div. VI Uffici del Lavoro e Massima Occupazione. Box 24, F. 15 a (Frosinone), 15 b (Latina), 15 c (Rieti), 15 d (Viterbo).

In this dissertation I do not explore in detail the migratory characteristics of the province of Frosinone and, least of all, of the region of Lazio. For a specific overview of these regional migratory phenomena, I refer to the works of one of the most important migration scholars of the region of Lazio, Maria Rosaria Protasi.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Rosa Protasi, *Emigrazione ed Immigrazione Nella Storia Del Lazio dall'Ottocento Ai Giorni Nostri*. (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2010); Colafrancesco, "L'Emigrazione Dal Lazio Meridionale Nel Secondo Dopoguerra."

countries until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century when the American economy and job market and its job opportunities increasingly attracted young workers from the area.

It is not my ambition to retrace the entire historical background of the province. What it is important to notice is that Frosinone and in particular the Comino Valley, even if part of the central regions of the peninsula, shared and continues to share many socio-economic characteristics with the Italian south. It is no coincidence that since 1950 the province received state aid as part of the *Cassa del Mezzogiorno*, a state fund established for the development of the less industrialized southern regions. The pre-WWII migratory patterns of this area, as rightly emphasized by Colafrancesco, cannot be overlooked. They were, as she suggests, trendsetters for all the migration movements that followed. More specifically, the century-long migratory tradition of the area turned out to be a good alternative when the province's population was faced with economic challenges in the aftermath of WWII.<sup>11</sup>

The reports collected by the provincial employment agency, an institutional body of the Ministry of Labor, between 1950 and 1954 clearly indicate a set of push factors that were at the base of the postwar Casalvieri diaspora.<sup>12</sup> Extreme parceling out of the cultivable land and the absence of an industrial system capable of absorbing surplus workers recur as leitmotifs in the investigation of the province's high unemployment rate. Similarly to other mountainous regions of Italy, the farms' cultivable land was highly fractioned. In 1950, out of 60,000 farms, only 509 covered more than 49 acres. Yet, agriculture continued to be the main resource. The active population, which amounted to 42 percent, concentrated mainly in agriculture, fishing, and hunting (75.9 percent). Industry, the second largest sector of activity, employed a bit more than 14% of the population. Commerce, professional activities and, in general, white collar jobs

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<sup>11</sup> Maria Rosa Protasi, *Emigrazione ed Immigrazione Nella Storia Del Lazio dall'Ottocento Ai Giorni Nostri*.

<sup>12</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGAP, Div. VI Uffici del Lavoro e Massima Occupazione, Box 24, F. 15 a, "Frosinone, 1950-1954."

recorded scant numbers of workers. The employment agency seemed adamant in emphasizing the gap between agriculture and industry. Tillage, leveling, and planting of vineyards, olive groves, and orchards—mostly funded by the European Recovery Program (E.R.P.)—ameliorated the employment conditions of the area slightly. Nevertheless, these improvements did not put an end to the region's plague: unemployment.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of 1950, more than 13,000 were unemployed, circa 5 percent of the population. The unemployment rate was destined to grow during the first half of the 1950s. By the end of 1954, 26,000 individuals were enrolled in the unemployment list. This numerical doubling requires an explanation. The unemployment agent who completed the reports under study warned that many unemployed workers started enrolling only when they discovered that they could receive a winter subsidy. Therefore, it is possible that the 1950 data did not portray an accurate scenario. Statistical interpretations apart, Frosinone, like the rest of the peninsula, suffered from high unemployment. As the reports show, the Minister of Labor made efforts to convert unemployed agricultural labor force into industrial human manpower. On their part, local workers longed for industrial employment. It offered more stable and better paid wages when compared to agriculture.

The conversion of croppers and farm hands into industrial workers required industrial complexes and qualified industrial workers. At the beginning of the 1950s, the province of Frosinone had neither. In the next chapter, I analyze the efforts exercised by province of Frosinone's and the town of Casalvieri to train their residents. Here I want to provide a concise overview of the industrial context of the area during the first half of the 1950s. Small businesses with a limited number of workers characterized the province's economic activity even before the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., F. "1950 Frosinone."

outbreak of WWII. The end of the war surely brought peace but also more unemployment. War-related industries experienced a significant halt in their production. In Anagni and Ceccano, the two complexes of Bombrini Parodi Delfino (B.D.P.), a chemical company specializing in the production of gunpowder and explosives remained inactive. The B.D.P.'s headquarters in Colleferro, which had employed thousands of workers from the two provinces of Rome and Frosinone before the war, limited the hiring to the province of Rome after the war. Likewise, the backbone of industrial activities, Polverificio Esercito in Fontana Liri, which specialized in gunpowder production, had considerably reduced its activity by then.<sup>14</sup>

War-related industries were not the only economic activities in the area. The main industrial centers of the province—Isolaliri, Ceprano, and Ceccano—hosted paper factories, soap factories, pasta factories, kilns, and wool industries. Notwithstanding a slender postwar recovery, these industries faced huge obstacles: difficulty of exporting goods, fiscal pressure, excessive price of raw materials, and low standards of workforce productivity. In sum, the province's unemployed did not have many alternatives. The presence in the province of construction field schools and reforestation camps, a topic I discuss in the next chapter, only partially and temporarily absorbed the surplus of workers. On balance, the employment agency reported, "it would be desirable to be able to have more visas available for Argentina, Canada, and England, places that in the past received excellent workers from this province."<sup>15</sup> In April 1948, the provincial magistrate, Roberto Siragusa, when analyzing the demographic pressure and the high unemployment rate of the area, observed that the population once again was turning to the tested outlet of emigration.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> "Situazione Provinciale mese di marzo 1948, 3 aprile 1948" quoted in Colafrancesco, "L'Emigrazione Dal Lazio Meridionale Nel Secondo Dopoguerra."

Emigration was a desirable alternative for the area's inhabitants. Thousands were the requests presented to the local employment agencies. Most of them, as already shown in the second chapter, remained unanswered. Table 9, which refers to the first semester of the 1952, exemplifies the province's migratory situation. Clearly, the local population showed high propensity toward emigration. Overseas destinations—particularly Canada—were privileged. The absence of the United States in the list is probably due to the very selective immigration policies in the US at the time. The numerical discrepancy between requests and actual expatriations underscores the challenges Italian emigrants faced once they had decided to leave their homeland.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I also focus on the gap between the number of workers selected by the local employment agencies and the number of those sent, for further selection, to the national emigration centers: Milan, Naples, and Genoa. Overall, only 23% of the 1952 prospective emigrants made it to the emigration centers. Of the few selected ones, only half could actually leave. Among the countries listed, Canada seems to be the most selective. Only a few more than the 1 percent of individuals willing to immigrate to Canada could pass the first selection at the local level and the second selection at the emigration centers. (Table 9).

The data reported provide just a snapshot of the decades-long postwar migratory flows of the province. While this snapshot is incomplete, it nonetheless allows me to emphasize the restricted selection of emigrants.<sup>17</sup> Between 1951 and 1971, a total of 137,000 individuals emigrated from the province of Frosinone as follows: 85,100 between 1951 and 1961 and 51,900

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<sup>17</sup> For instance, in the table there are no data concerning the numbers of family members immigrated by sponsorship.

between 1961 and 1971. The annual average was around 18,000. The period between 1957 and 1958 recorded a peak of 23,000 emigrants.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.1 *Migration has always been there: The Culture of Mobility*

The difficult postwar economic situation of the province is not an element to be neglected and, indeed, it deserves full attention. At the same time, it is important to highlight that the story of Casalvierani's peregrinations and movements did not start *d'emblée* after WWII. Since the eighth century A.D., Casalvieri, like all the other towns of the Comino Valley, gravitated to the orbit of the Benedictine Abbey of Montecassino. In this feudal system, the inhabitants of the valley worked on the lands which were owned by the monks of the Abbey. Even though the unification of Italy (completed in 1870) liberated the peasants from feudalism and the systems of *corvées*, it did not present a valid economic alternative for the valley's population.<sup>19</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century eighty percent of the land was in the hands of handful of notables who were not interested in the modernization of agricultural techniques. Rather than investing in agriculture, they preferred to continue with the sharecropping system. The lack of a stable state as well as a sterile agricultural economy was at the base of the Casalvierani's constant emigration. The post-unification migrations perpetuated a system that started in the eighteenth century, when the inhabitants of the valley became seasonal workers in the neighboring Pontifical State and in the region of Apulia. By combining the work on their

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<sup>18</sup> Maria Rosaria Protasi, *Emigrazione ed Immigrazione Nella Storia Del Lazio dall'Ottocento Ai Giorni Nostri* (Viterbo: Sette Città', 2010), 71.

<sup>19</sup> Miranda, *Pendolari di ieri e pendolari di oggi. Storia di un paese di migranti*, 23-26.

lands as sharecroppers with seasonal migrations, the peasants absorbed crises and survived, cushioned by the dynamic of a mobile and flexible family.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, Casalvierani's decision to follow their ancestors' migratory routes was not exceptional at all. While it certainly marked an important stage in the lives of emigrants and their families, emigration was not an anomaly. In describing the Casalvierani's migratory patterns, acquisition of skills, and pronounced entrepreneurial spirit, I am inspired by the scholarship that focuses on the migration patterns of the Italian Alpine regions. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, Italian scholars of migration began to closely examine the continuity between 19<sup>th</sup>-century and 20<sup>th</sup>-century migratory patterns through a series of case-studies on the seasonal migration of Alpine populations. Even though the studies are based on an area geographically distant from the Comino Valley, itself situated on the Apennines, they provide useful insights for me to foreground Casalvierani's propensity to emigrate.

In her 1992 work on the Alpine villages from the Valsesia district, Patrizia Audenino introduced and described the "Alpine paradox." A closer examination of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century labor and migration patterns of the inhabitants of the Andorno Valley revealed that the poor mountain agriculture and the meager profits from stock-raising had pushed the valley men to draw on seasonal emigration very early in history. Paradoxically the mountain geographical reclusion rather than generating cultural and economic isolation transformed the inhabitants of the Alpine valleys into geographically highly mobile individuals.<sup>21</sup>

The mobility of the Alpine population has been central to a collection of essays published in 1998. The essays collected in *Mobilità Imprenditoriale e del Lavoro nelle Alpi in Età Moderna*

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. The coexistence of seasonal and internal migrations with emigration and immigration as well as the natural expectation for peasants to leave, temporarily, their homes was already pointed out by Leslie Page Moch in *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe Since 1650* (Indiana University Press, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Patrizia Audenino, "The 'Alpine Paradox:' Exporting Builders to the World," in *The Italian Diaspora: Migration Across Globe*, eds., George E. Pozzetta and Bruno Ramirez (Multicultural Society of Ontario, 1992), 8-9.

*e Contemporanea* unanimously stated that between the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup>-centuries the Alpine n economies and societies had been based on the exploitation of diverse resources not including agriculture. The scarcity of land and/or its extreme parceling out played a catalyzing role in the inhabitants' involvement in other activities, mostly manufacturing and commerce. These activities that flourished, alongside agriculture, were exercised in a broader geographical space, that is, outside the borders of the Alpine village. The opening and access to nearby markets promoted movement, often seasonal and temporary. This mobility became harbinger of specialization and entrepreneurship. Increasing specialization created demands and, in turn, enhanced mobility.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, mobility, Luigi Trezzi argues, "should be interpreted as the result of the intention to improve the use of working capacities [...] rather than as an extreme solution imposed by a crisis."<sup>23</sup>

In his study on the migration patterns of the Alpine valleys in the region of Trentino, Renzo Grosselli validates Audenino's paradox and connects the Alpine populations' distinct seasonal mobility with their propensity to change typologies of jobs according to the labor market's requests. At the core of Grosselli's argument rests the acknowledgment that no mythical "pure peasant" figure exists. Grosselli argues that since the 18<sup>th</sup>-century the scarcity of cultivable or fertile land did not constitute agriculture and livestock as the singular activities for inhabitant of the Trentino valleys. Even before the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, money circulated in the valleys from activities that did not include agriculture.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For a summary of the collection main themes see Luigi Trezzi, introduction, in *Mobilità Imprenditoriale e del Lavoro nelle Alpi in Età Moderna e Contemporanea*, eds. Giovanni L. Fontana, Andrea Leonardi, and Luigi Trezzi (Milan: CUESP, 1998), 3-4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>24</sup> Renzo M. Grosselli, "Quando la Mobilità del Lavoro si Trasforma in Impresa; il Caso Trentino XVII-XX Secolo," in *Mobilità Imprenditoriale e del Lavoro nelle Alpi in Età Moderna e Contemporanea*, eds., Giovanni L. Fontana, Andrea Leonardi, and Luigi Trezzi (Milan: CUESP, 1998), 147-148.

Grosselli's closer investigation of labor patterns of the inhabitants of the Tesino Plateau highlights the connection between the inclination to mobility and malleability on the job market. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, for instance, the Tesino's inhabitants flourished as peddlers. Progressively they managed to open antique stores and specialized in the sale of frames, prints, and painting products in general. As the print market became exhausted in the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century, the Tesini looked elsewhere for markets and revenues. They then became specialized in the sale of optical products. This fast successful conversion proved, Grosselli notes, that the Tesini's luck did not reside in the goods traded but in "...their mobile habit, in their innate ability to move toward the markets, toward the buyers, and the possibility of income."<sup>25</sup>

In the essay on the entrepreneurial activities of the inhabitants of the Western Alps between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Laurence Fontaine shows that the activities of the Alpine entrepreneurs were highly diversified. They emigrated as peddlers or as traders of dairy products and farm animals. Yet, these activities shared several common elements: flexibility, adaptation ability, commercialization based on broader geographical horizons, and a solid control exercised by elite merchants. Besides these common characteristics, Fontaine proposes an insightful discourse concerning Alpine migrants' specialization; their specialization was not total. It was very mutable. Specialization co-existed with proto-industrial activities. The specialization in a given business did not preclude pre-existing commercial activities.<sup>26</sup>

The description of Casavvierani's attitudes toward emigration closely resembles the typologies of migration that Paola Corti brings to light in her study of the Alpine regions of Piedmont in Northern Italy. The striking similarities among Italian mountain communities—and between Casavvieri and the Alpine areas—help me to define the premigration characteristics

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 258

<sup>26</sup> Laurence Fontaine, "Evoluzione del Ruolo degli Imprenditori delle Alpi Occidentali tra XVII e XIX Secolo," in *Mobilità Imprenditoriale e del Lavoro nelle Alpi in Età Moderna e Contemporanea*, 119-120.

which helped shape the migratory and entrepreneurial projects of Casalsvierani.<sup>27</sup> Corti reports that: "the inhabitants of the mountain areas did not escape a poor and hostile environment; rather they acted on the economic resources which were distributed in a broader territorial horizon."<sup>28</sup> Hence, as Corti writes, the populations of these communities were able to select countries of destinations and to sift through diverse economic opportunities. The propensity to move in response to crises is defined by Corti as 'culture of mobility.' Casalsvierani drew on this cultural resource in the past as well as in the postwar period.

#### 4.2 Networks: Material and Immaterial Heritage

The familiarity with emigration as a resource clearly emerges from my interviews with migrants. Emigration was a well-known and tested resource on which Casalsvierani drew without hesitation and without much difficulty. Ulderico, who immigrated to Windsor, Canada, in 1954, affirmed that the idea of leaving (*uscire*) was a normal practice and that, after all, it was within everybody's reach. Rocco, who immigrated to Windsor and then to Detroit in the same year, admitted that "everybody left, everybody tried" and he did not want to be less than the others.<sup>29</sup> Onorio, who immigrated to Toronto at the age of 16 in 1955, revealed to me that in Casalsvieri "there was the fever of emigration." Every young man wanted to leave like their young male friends and relatives did. The recurring theme on the need to leave is a clear sign that Casalsvierani perceived migration as a tradition, as a sort of expectation. Migration was an

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<sup>27</sup> Dionigi Albera, *La montagna mediterranea: una fabbrica d'uomini? : mobilità e migrazioni in una prospettiva comparata (secoli XV-XX)* (Cavallermaggiore: Gribaudo, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Paola Corti, "Emigrazione Piemontese: Un Modello Regionale?," in *Emigrazione E Storia d'Italia*, ed. Matteo Sanfilippo (Cosenza: Pellegrini Editore, 2003), 36.

<sup>29</sup> Ulderico V., interview by author, Casalsvieri, August 5, 2011. Rocco G., interview by author, Casalsvieri, August 6, 2011.

integral part of Casalvierani's lives, rather than an extraneous practice pursued only in extreme conditions of desperation, as mainstream Italian history dictates.

The familiarity with emigration as an alternative to agrarian life in Casalvieri was inscribed in the town's history and it was a common practice in just about every family. The investigation of the continuity between *ancien régime* and contemporary migratory practices inspired Giovanni Pizzorusso to define emigration as "a resource that is transmissible across generations and social classes like an immaterial heritage."<sup>30</sup> In Casalvieri, emigration acquired all the characteristics of an inheritance, a patrimony, a resource that could be transmitted among family members and across generations.

For Casalvierani the migratory inheritance was both immaterial and material. The normalcy of having relatives abroad, of living decades separated from their parents, of being able to hug friends and relatives only during summer visits home encouraged potential emigrants to view migration as a common practice. It allowed them to consider migration not just as a tolerable activity, but rather as one that is just about expected from many young Casalvierani. Yet, I argue, the migratory inheritance was also very material, practical, and tangible. This inheritance permitted willing emigrants to be mobile in a time and place in which North American policies were becoming restrictive.

Family reunification, a substantial part of the post-WWII immigration policies of both the United States and Canada, was a resource for the Casalvierani who were capable of immigrating to the United States at the end of WWII. The 1924 National Origins Quota and the McCarran-Walter Act (1952) were still based on the quotas system and made immigration to America more difficult than in the 1920s. Casalvierani fathers, who immigrated to the United States before

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<sup>30</sup> Giovanni Pizzorusso, "Le Radici d'*Ancien Régime* delle Migrazioni Contemporanee: Un Quadro Regionale," in *Emigrazione e storia d'Italia*, ed. Mattero Sanfilippo (Cosenza: Pellegrini Editore, 2003), 291.

WWII, held the keys to the American golden door. This was the case of the siblings Annamaria and Vincenzo C. Their father, Benedetto C., born in Casalvieri in 1898, left Italy in 1921. Benedetto came from a family with a marked migratory tradition. Benedetto's parents lived in France and Casalvieri for their entire lives. Benedetto's older brother decided to immigrate to the United States, supposedly at the beginning of the 1920s. Benedetto soon joined his brother. Once in the US, he managed to find several different temporary jobs. Annamaria does not remember where he lived but she is certain that he had traveled a lot, worked in factories, foundries, and ended up specializing as a cement finisher.<sup>31</sup>

In 1925, now in possession of the green card, Benedetto went back to Casalvieri and married Giuseppa. Benedetto's visit was very brief. Careful not to let his green card expire and willing to return to the US to accumulate more money, Benedetto left his young wife in Casalvieri and again left for the US. He briefly returned to Casalvieri again in 1928, visiting long enough for Giuseppa to become pregnant with their first daughter, Annamaria. Soon after, Benedetto went back again to the US and, once he had obtained his American citizenship, he returned to live in Casalvieri permanently.

Between 1931 and 1937, Benedetto, by now a specialized cement finisher, went back to his pre-migration occupation: farming. During this period, Benedetto and Giuseppa worked their land and expanded their family. One after the other, Vincenzo, Elena, Tomaso, and Onoria were born. Soon, the idea of remaining permanently in Casalvieri began to dissipate. The family was becoming bigger and the socio-economic situation of Italy was not improving. Benedetto

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<sup>31</sup> Annamaria C., telephone interview by author, June 4, 2013.

reactivated his old networks and made plans for the permanent transfer of his entire family to America. He left in 1939. His wife and children, after a few bumps, emigrated in 1947.<sup>32</sup>

Family reunification played an important role also for Rosa C.'s family. Rosa C. and her family immigrated to Detroit in 1952 thanks to her grandfather's, Onorio C.'s, previous migratory experiences. In 1915 or 1916, after a fight with his wife, Onorio, rather than seeking marriage counseling, left for France as an illegal immigrant. Crossing the French border on foot was not uncommon for Casavvierani in the 1910s and 1920s. After a period in France, Onorio, still illegal, boarded on a boat heading to the United States. Rosa believes that he was able to board and probably to pay his trip by working as a stocker on the ship. The first phases of Onorio's immigration are rather nebulous. Yet, Rosa knows that he was eventually capable of regularizing his immigrant and resident status. Onorio lived in the United States almost his entire adult life. He returned twice to Casavvieri: first to buy one of the biggest properties and, afterwards, to sell it when his only son and grandchildren permanently moved to Detroit in 1952.<sup>33</sup>

Both Mario I.'s and Rosa's family reached Detroit in 1952. However they got there taking very different paths. Mario's father, like Benedetto and Onorio, left Casavvieri for Detroit before the 1920s. In 1925, he returned to Casavvieri to get married. Unlike Benedetto, Mario's father brought his wife with him back to Detroit where their first daughter was born shortly after. In 1929, in the middle of the Great Depression, Mario's parents decided to return to Casavvieri.<sup>34</sup>

As in the case of Benedetto, the decision to remain permanently in Casavvieri soon became unbearable. The economic depression reached Europe and the I. family started to expand. Mario's parents understood that the money saved in America was not going to last

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Rosa C., interview by author, Casavvieri, August 6, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Elsa I., phone interview by author, June 4, 2013.

forever. However, fascist legislations followed by a world war made emigration impossible. At the end of the war, Mario's family's wish to return to America was only achievable via their first daughter's American citizenship. Their American-born daughter did not spoil the family's migratory plan. After WWII, she reached Detroit along with her Casavvierano husband. In 1950, she sponsored her father. The rest of the family joined them two years later.<sup>35</sup>

Having a close relative with an American citizenship was undoubtedly an unmatched resource. Yet, it was not the only one. Pre-war migratory experiences shaped Casavvierani's immigration to America in other ways. For instance, pre-WWII immigration to France, another destination of the Casavvierana diaspora, made the American dream more achievable. Many of my interviewees had been born or raised in France where their families had moved in the 1910s and the 1920s. Consequently, they obtained French citizenship. Most of the time, these French Casavvierani divided their lives between Villejuif, south of Paris, or Lyon—the cities with the highest concentration of Casavvierani—and their hometown. In sum, they built careers, went to school, and established working relations in France without completely abandoning Casavvieri. This attitude and the attachment to Casavvieri, I want to be clear, did not differentiate French Casavvierani from the American and Canadian Casavvierani.<sup>36</sup> Yet, the geographic proximity allowed more frequent and less expensive visits for French Casavvierani. In many cases, it allowed Casavvierani couples to leave their children behind with grandparents and aunts without risking not seeing them for years. In sum, it helped their immigration to be temporary and/or seasonal.

Many young male French Casavvierani—who were born and raised in France, and visited frequently Casavvieri during their childhood—dreamed like all other Casavvierani friends, of

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> With French, American, and Canadian Casavvierani I indicate the Casavvierani who respectively immigrated to France, United States, and Canada. It is the term used by Casavvierani.

going to America. Unlike their friends whose families did not emigrate before the war or failed to obtain French citizenship, these Casalvierani were privileged. When the American Congress imposed quotas to reduce the numbers of "undesirable" Southern Italians could not imagine that, decades later, the American doors would have opened for Italians "disguised as French." They could use the quotas that French citizens, born and raised in France by French parents, left vacant. Most of my interviewees, at the moment of their departure, were more likely unaware of the nativist eugenic-oriented philosophy behind the 1924 National Origins Quota Act. Yet, what mattered was not their bookish intelligence but their practical knowledge of the opportunities available. They knew very well that the quotas available for French citizens were usually left unfilled. They also knew that the United States continued to accept immigrants for family reunification.

In 1932 Rolando's father immigrated to Paris to work as a mason. In 1938, he returned to Casalvieri, got married, and moved to Lyon with his wife. Rolando was born after his parents' arrival in Lyon. At the outbreak of WWII, Rolando's parents, worried about the war, left everything they had in France and returned to Italy. At the time of their return, Rolando was just a toddler. A French citizen by birth and raised in Casalvieri, Rolando made good use of his advantageous position. At the age of 17, as he intended to avoid the military draft, Rolando left for Paris. There, he attended French school, learned the language, worked as a mason and integrated seamlessly in a French social life. At the age of 21, notwithstanding his appreciation of French customs, Rolando decided to go to America. In Detroit, Roland had connections: cousins twice removed from his father's side.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Rolando D., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 3, 2011.

The decision to leave for Detroit, a difficult decision no doubt, had been ripening to some extent because of the positive descriptions of America and the countless opportunities it offered. "America was the place to go back then," Rolando explained to me. After all, the American Casavvierani showed their money and bought houses in Casavvieri. America was the place to go—I add—but not everybody could go there. Rolando strategically applied for an American visa as a French citizen. Thanks to the availability of quotas for French citizens, Rolando did not have to wait years and he could be sponsored by distant cousins.<sup>38</sup>

Onorio T., who immigrated to New York in 1953 at the age of seventeen, vividly remembers that it took only three months for him, his father and his brothers to obtain a visa for America. A little older than Rolando, Onorio was born in Orly in 1939. His family migration patterns followed paths very similar to Rolando's family. His father immigrated first to France, married in Casavvieri, went back to France with his wife, and started a family there. WWII, also in this case, exhorted Onorio's parents to return to their hometown. Yet, as soon as the borders opened again at the end of the war, sure of their French citizenship, Onorio's family took the route to America to join a maternal uncle—a successful night club owner in New York. The men of the family left following a sort of age and gender hierarchy. Onorio's father immigrated in 1949, his older brother in 1952, and eventually Onorio himself left in 1953. His older sisters followed once the men of the family had left. Onorio's mother and his youngest sister were the last ones to leave Casavvieri in 1961.<sup>39</sup>

Emilio was born in Lyon one year after Rolando, in 1940. His parents had immigrated to the French city in the 1920s. The decision to leave Lyon for the United States was very different for them. Emilio's father died because of a work incident in the refinery where he was employed.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Onorio T., interview by author, Casavvieri, August 6, 2012.

The family, now without the main breadwinner, required other resources. The most natural thing to do was to move to Newark, NJ, to join Emilio's maternal uncle. The relocation of the entire family from Lyon to Newark did not happen immediately. Rather it occurred in stages. The first to join uncle Raffaele in Newark was Emilio's oldest brother. After having been trained as a tailor in France, Emilio's brother was by gender, age, and skills the designated one to leave. In 1955, the fifteen-year-old Emilio, along with the rest of his family in Lyon, joined his brother in Newark. The family waited in Lyon the time necessary for Emilio's brother to secure a more stable position for the entire family and to allow every family member to acquire his and her French citizenship. This allowed them to immigrate to America much faster.<sup>40</sup>

It was clear to post-war Casavvierani immigrants that the opening of the borders, following the end of fascism and WWII did not mean complete freedom of mobility. They could move but they needed to have the right documents. Having someone in America capable of sponsoring them was a huge advantage but it was not enough. With Italian citizenship alone, Casavvierani sponsored by very close relatives—parents and spouses—could wait even more than seven years to obtain a visa. Having American or French citizenship surely accelerated migration projects. With American citizenship, even without speaking a word of English, Casavvierani could, at least, dream of making it in America. French Casavvierani did not have to put their lives on hold waiting too long for a visa and, as in the case of Rolando; they could even be sponsored by distant relatives.

Immigrating to the United States was much more difficult than immigrating to Canada. So, it is not surprising that many Casavvierani, via sponsorship, made Canada their "alternative" American dream or at least an initial required stop. They mainly settled in Windsor and Toronto.

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<sup>40</sup> Aida D., telephone interview, August 30, 2013.

Their concentration between these two Canadian cities can be explained by their proximity to Casalvierani's destination par excellence, Detroit. The rigidity of the National Origins quotas did not completely discourage Casalvierani. They easily adapted. Canada became, as it emerges from their accounts, a sort of intermediary stop between Casalvieri and the United States. Even when sponsored by relatives in the United States, Casalvierani were, given the scarcity of the quotas, condemned to wait for years. Many did not want or, more simply, could not wait. Canada seemed to be a good starting point for their American adventure.

"Canada was nothing special," Giuseppe R. revealed to me. In 1954, after a few peregrinations between Brazil and eastern Canada, he finally found a very good job in Vancouver. Giuseppe had been waiting since his departure from Casalvieri in 1949 to join his brother in the United States. When he was finally in a legal conditions to join his brother, at the time in Los Angeles, Giuseppe and his wife, Maria, did not feel like leaving Vancouver. While waiting for the American dream, Giuseppe and Maria had built a house and a family in Canada.<sup>41</sup> Guido R., immigrated to Toronto in 1953, agreed with Giuseppe R. regarding Canada: "Canada was backward. They were still using horses and coaches. It was almost like Italy. The first refrigerators with an engine came from Northern Italy."<sup>42</sup> Guido's words transmit the idea of Canadian inferior infrastructural development when compared to the United States.

Guido and his wife, Benedetta, had the possibility of moving to Detroit because Benedetta's parents and her two brothers had settled there in 1956. Yet, the two, especially Guido, did not want to move to the US. Even if Windsor was perceived as backward, it was viewed as less chaotic city. Guido believed that Detroit was too large and he felt that daily life would be more difficult. Giuseppe, Maria, Guido, and Benedetta for different reasons, did not

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<sup>41</sup> Giuseppe R., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 12, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Guido R., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 12, 2011.

move to the United States. The two couples and their children, after all, did not stay in Canada for ever. Guido and Benedetta returned to Casalvieri in 1969. Giuseppe and Maria returned in 1977.<sup>43</sup>

Other Casalvierani waited and, eventually, left Canada for the United States. Adelia's parents moved to Detroit in 1959, after having lived ten years in Windsor. Adelia's father, Nicodemo, a prisoner of war in Germany and a farmer in Casalvieri, immigrated to Windsor in 1949 thanks to the sponsorship of his brother. In 1950, Adelia, her younger sister, and her mother—sponsored by their uncle in Windsor—joined Nicodemo. The years between the arrival in Windsor and the move to Detroit allowed Nicodemo to learn a trade in the construction industry. These years also provided the time for Adelia's mother to learn English, and Adelia and her sister to complete their education. While they all became Canadian citizens, they always kept an eye on the very close US/Canada border just a few miles away.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, in 1959 the entire family—except for Adelia who was by then married and living in Los Angeles—joined Nicodemo's younger sister in Detroit. Quite surprisingly they did not move thanks to their Canadian citizenship—one needed to be born in Canada to use the American quotas available for Canada. The reason for this internal movement was mixed. Wages in Detroit were higher. In addition, Adelia's uncle in Detroit was a contractor and he was hiring all the relatives in Canada, one by one. Adelia's parents did not want to remain alone, that is without their extended family. They too crossed the border to the US. Both financial and personal motivations encouraged Adelia's family to immigrate.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Guido R. and Benedetta D., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 12, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Adelia I., phone interview by author, May 28, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Linda V.'s family's story is very similar to Adelia's. Her father, sponsored by a cousin, reached Windsor in 1950. In 1951, Linda, her mother, and her siblings arrived in Windsor from Casalvieri. The initial project, similar to other Casalvierani, was not to settle in Windsor. Linda had an uncle in Detroit, a contractor who could sponsor Linda's entire family. Unfortunately a family's desire for reunification could do nothing in the face of the long US bureaucratic waiting period. Finally, Linda's family moved to Detroit in 1960. Yet, not every Casalvierano was ready and willing to wait so long.<sup>46</sup>

As demonstrated so far, local and family ties among Casalvierani were essential for the success of the migratory project. Casalvierani responded to Italy's lacunae in the matter of emigration policies and interventions as well as to the US and Canada restrictive migration policies by activating a dense network of friends and relatives. Their postwar migration stands out as particularly interesting because it shows how Casalvierani negotiated between Italian government's implicit encouragement of emigration and North American restrictive and selective migration policies. Casalvierani's choice of Toronto and Windsor as en route stops to Detroit, their acceptance of putting their lives on hold for a few years, and starting a new life when the visas for America eventually arrived are all epiphenomena of their adaptability and tenacity. Casalvierani's attitudes toward the achievement of the American dream reminded me of what historian Hoerder has called the secularization of hope.<sup>47</sup> With this term Hoerder indicated nineteenth-century migrants' desire to achieve a better life in a far-off country rather than in a world after death.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Linda V., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 4, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Hoerder and Moch, *European Migrants*.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 218-219.

Secularization of hope apart, nothing and nobody discouraged Casalvierani from pursuing their migratory project, governments included. It is precisely when Casalvierani violated or ‘circumnavigated’ more or less repressive migration laws that their emigration became a site of negotiation between international forces and local aspirations. From Casalvierani's accounts, it becomes clear that, across history, they migrated via legal and illegal channels. During the interwar period, many young men hiked through the Alps to reach France illegally. As already shown in the case of Onorio C., illegal immigration was not limited to the more accessible France. Onorio was indeed capable of reaching the United States without any visa. By Casalvierani's standards, he was not an exception.<sup>49</sup>

Ulderico V.'s father's seven trips to the US before WWI and in the interwar period further elucidate my point. As Ulderico recalls, his father was granted an American identity card before WWI.<sup>50</sup> Yet, during the Fascist period, the borders closed. Notwithstanding these legal impediments, he managed to reach France illegally. From France, he travelled to Windsor. Eventually, thanks to the help of Italian ‘fixers’ (*impiccioni*)—who through a system of bribes allowed their illegal alien customers to avoid police search warrants—he crossed the Detroit river to reach Detroit. Once in the U.S., his father could use his identity card and work as a legal immigrant. Ulderico remarks that Italians were lucky to have this expedient. Asian immigrants on the contrary hid themselves in potato sacks and, sometimes, the police threw them into the water.<sup>51</sup>

Illegal immigration did not always require hiking mountains, or hiding in potato sacks. In 1936, Anna I. and her toddler son finally joined Giuseppe, Anna's husband, in Windsor. A few

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<sup>49</sup> Rosa C., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 6, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Ulderico does not remember well what this identity card was. I hypothesize that Ulderico's father obtained a green card.

<sup>51</sup> Ulderico V., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 5, 2011.

months after their long-awaited reunification in Canada, the three "took the car, crossed the border, and remained in Detroit." It was as simple as that, Maria F., Anna and Giuseppe's second child, told me. In Detroit there were more job opportunities and a long-established Casalvierani network. Maria F.'s family did what is actually common practice among contemporary illegal Mexican immigrants: they simply overstayed their visa.<sup>52</sup> In the case of Maria's family, it was probably a touristic visa. The crossing of the borders between Canada and the United States was not limited to the Casalvierana diaspora.

Many of contemporary Italian-American citizens—justly proud of their great-grandfathers and grandfathers' achievement of the American dream—are what the New York Times journalist Frank Bruni defines as "flowers of illegal immigration." In his recent New York Times article, Bruni took the immigration experience of his grandfather as an example of illegal immigration of the past. In 1929, grandpa Mauro Bruni, similarly to the Casalvierani I interviewed, crossed the Italy-France border. From France, he boarded a ship to Canada. He then left Canada, and worked and stayed illegally in the US for ten years.<sup>53</sup> Afterwards, much like Onorio C., Mauro Bruni was able to regularize his legal conditions and eventually acquired his American citizenship.

The practice of illegal immigration was not limited to the pre-WWII period. At the beginning of the 1950s, US immigration authorities' roundups to arrest illegal immigrants were not uncommon. Illegal immigration from Canada to the United States was so widespread that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs hired police commissioners to travel on board emigrants' ships

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<sup>52</sup> Ulderico does not remember well the exact details of his father's identity card, I hypothesize that Ulderico's father obtained a green card. Rumbaut Ruben G and Erwing Walter A., "The Myth of Immigrant Criminality," *Border Battles: The U.S. Immigration Debates*, accessed May 30, 2014, [http://borderbattles.ssrc.org/Rumbaut\\_Ewing/printable.html](http://borderbattles.ssrc.org/Rumbaut_Ewing/printable.html).

<sup>53</sup> Bruni Frank, "My Grandfather the Outlaw," *The New York Time*, accessed March 20, 2014, [nytimes.com/2013/02/03/opinion/sunday/bruni-my-grandfather-the-outlaw.html?\\_r=0](http://nytimes.com/2013/02/03/opinion/sunday/bruni-my-grandfather-the-outlaw.html?_r=0).

heading to Canada. In this way, the commissioners could inform Italian emigrants of the legal risks they would have to go through in case of illegal immigration to the United States. The Ministry also used its newsletter—*Notiziario dell'Emigrazione*—to warn prospective emigrants considering Canada as a destination. The *Notiziario* stated that illegal immigrants to the United States were often recent arrivals in Canada. The small lapse of time between arriving in Canada and crossing illegally to the US presumed a clearly premeditated plan on the migrants' part.<sup>54</sup> The legal risks, that is, the loss of the right to enter Canada and expulsion from the United States did not prevent Italian immigrants from attempting it. Illegal immigration continued to be a reality in the 1950s and 1960s. Italians continued to pass over the Alps into France and to reach the United States through the Mexican or Canadian borders.<sup>55</sup>

In 1964, the *Bollettino* reported an article published in the Rome's monthly magazine, *Lavoro Italiano nel Mondo*. Here, Italian police and immigration authorities were accounted as responsible for not providing enough guidance to Italian emigrants and, in turn, for fueling their illegal emigration. Illegal immigration meant also a lack of rights for the immigrant workers and exploitation, the article stated. Italians continued to feed the flourishing illegal business developed around Italian migrants' desire to make it in America. They paid up to 2,000 dollars to be able to reach the United States. The major immigrant smuggling organizations were based in Sicily and Sardinia.<sup>56</sup>

Illegal immigrants of the past and present had very similar experiences. In his attempt to put in perspective the contemporary political debate regarding the contemporary 11 million

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<sup>54</sup> "Clandestini negli Stati Uniti," *Bollettino* (October 25, 1951), 341.

<sup>55</sup> When caught by the French gendarmerie, Italians could choose between being expatriated, after a sojourn in prison, and enrolling in the French foreign legion. The *Bollettino* reported that the majority of Italian illegal immigrants chose the second option. They were sent to Marseille and, from there, to Northern Africa or to Indochina. "L'Emigrazione Clandestina," *Ibid.* (June 15, 1954), 177.

<sup>56</sup> "Emigrazione Clandestina verso gli Stati Uniti," *Ibid.*, (April 25, 19), 152.

illegal immigrants in America, Bruni emphasizes that his grandfather also "[...] spoke no English [...]He had no safety net — and wasn't looking to the government for one, because he couldn't have the government looking his way. His health, his trade, his determination: these were his only assets."<sup>57</sup> Health, trade, and determination—pillars of the white ethnic bootstrap myth—do not completely encompass the stories of Casalvierani between Canada and the United States.

Networks and contacts with other Casalvierani encouraged both legal and illegal immigration and, for this reason, had to be taken into account. Giuseppe, Anna, and their child, drove over the Canada/US border and stayed because they had friends and relatives in Detroit. These were friend and relatives who assured Giuseppe that there were more opportunities in the US motor city than in Windsor. These opportunities, Maria F. clarified, resided in both the economic conditions of the city and in the numerous networks that Casalvierani had established in Detroit since the 1920s.<sup>58</sup>

A friendly environment and the presence of other Casalvierani cushioned Maria F.'s undocumented family's integration in Detroit. Giuseppe, as an illegal immigrant, could not ask for a loan or help in finding a job. Yet, Giuseppe obtained a loan of 200 dollars from a Casalvierano friend in Detroit. Anna enrolled in an evening English course offered to immigrants. Maria F. admitted to me that "the school administrators knew that she (Anna) was not a legal migrant" but this did not make any difference. Anna went to school and learned English. Giuseppe, Anna, and their four-year-old son were illegal for the federal authorities, but they were treated as legal by everybody else around them. Friendship and trust explain the

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<sup>57</sup> Bruni, "My Grandfather the Outlaw."

<sup>58</sup> Maria F., phone interview by author, May 21, 2013.

possibility of obtaining a loan even for those in a very vulnerable position. Explaining the school administrators' sort of complicity is a bit more difficult.<sup>59</sup>

At any rate, Giuseppe and Anna tried their luck because it was worthwhile and it was possible. In Detroit, hard work and sacrifices awaited them. This is, after all, a path common for many immigrants. Yet, in Detroit there was also a safety net waiting for them. Maria does not remember precisely when her parents were regularized. It happened not very long after their arrival. Through a Casavvierano friend who was a supervisor at the Ford Motor Company Giuseppe found a stable industrial job. While in Detroit, the entire family obtained the green card. They became American citizens after 1947, just a few years following their internal migration to Los Angeles.<sup>60</sup>

#### *4.3 Beyond Money, New Aspirations*

Interviews show that pragmatic responses to contingent challenges along with personal and intimate aspirations shaped the choice to migrate and, once abroad, the initiative to become independent workers. Gender norms, generational conflicts, and parental authorities influenced and shaped the decisions to leave Casavvieri and, most importantly, granted the permission to do so. In case of extreme financial problems emigration became a necessity for many young Casavvierani men. There were also family situations in which the decisions to leave did not find justification solely in financial need.

Ulderico emigrated because his salary as a worker in one of the local balloon industries was not enough. That was not his only motivation. He also felt he was missing the gratification that comes with spending his paycheck as he wished to. Back at home, he was required to turn

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

in his entire stipend over his mother. Rocco's father was not happy about Rocco's decision to emigrate. He often repeated to his son that he could live on the family property as both he and his mother had done before. Yet, Rocco wanted something more. He understood that the family property was not enough for him, his brothers, and their families.<sup>61</sup>

By using generation as a category of analysis, I can provide a more objective explanation of young Casavvierani's desire to leave. Rocco's opposition to his father and Ulderico's realization that his paycheck was not enough for him are symptoms of a different generational take on life expectations. These young men wanted more than their fathers and mothers. They wanted to be independent, and they wanted to do something different.

Looking at Casavvierani's experiences through the generational lens allows the study of migration, and more generally Italian migration, from a long-term perspective. As I noted earlier, emigration was not a new phenomenon to Casavvierani's lives. Yet, the individuals I interviewed make the distinction between their type of migration and the migration of their parents' generation. A few of the interviewees pointed out that the pre-war and interwar cohort of migrants left with the idea of returning, of buying land, and of improving family finances at home in Italy.

Gregorio I. epitomized what migrant scholars defined as birds of passage.<sup>62</sup> As many other turn-of-the-twentieth century Eastern and Southern European immigrants, Gregorio spent most of his working age life away from Casavvieri. Yet, similarly to many birds of passage, he frequently returned home. Basically, he was an overseas immigrant commuter. Migration was part of his family's traditions. His father Berardino—probably the pioneer of the Casavvierana

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<sup>61</sup> Ulderico V., interview by author, Casavvieri, August 5, 2011. Rocco G., interview by author, Casavvieri, August 6, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Michael J. Piore, *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

diaspora in Detroit—had already immigrated to America in June 1910. Ten years later, at the age of seventeen, Gregorio—Berardino's oldest son—landed with his father to Ellis Island. Once in Detroit, the young Gregorio started working in the city's sewage systems.<sup>63</sup>

In 1927, Gregorio returned to Casalvieri to marry Caterina. In 1928, after the birth of his first son, Gregorio returned to his American life. In 1930, he travelled back to Casalvieri again. This time, he would witness the birth of his daughter. The baby girl fell seriously ill. Gregorio could not abandon his family in such a tragic moment. The planned brief return visit turned into a prolonged stay back home. During this time, Gregorio's green card expired. The American gates were closed. Yet, his desire to emigrate again never died. During the 1930s, Gregorio continued to be a commuter immigrant between Belgium, France, and Casalvieri. In these European countries, he worked in several coal mines.<sup>64</sup>

At the end of the 1940s, news of prosperity in Venezuela arrived in Casalvieri. This developing Latin American country offered many jobs in the building sector. Gregorio and other men from his Casalver's district (*contrada*) left to become bricklayers and masons. Gregorio's three sons joined him in Venezuela one after the other. While working as a construction worker, Gregorio's first son, Rodolfo, started having problems with his knees. Useless in the construction field, Rodolfo returned to Casalvieri to heal. While recovering in Italy, he met and fell in love with the daughter of a Casalvierani couple living in Detroit. This American Casalvierana was visiting relatives at the time. The two married in about 1951. Rodolfo moved to America. His father-in-law was the owner of a construction firm that specialized in the installation of sewer pipes.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Aida D., phone interview by author, August 30, 2013.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Rodolfo's immigration to America gave Gregorio the possibility of returning to work in Detroit in the sewer pipes business. At the beginning of the 1950s, Rodolfo's wife sponsored Gregorio. After thirty years, now in his fifties, Gregorio left again for America to work with his son. Gregorio's migratory experiences are not only impressive for his frequent travelling between the US and Italy, but also for his numerous destinations. What may be striking for contemporary observers is Gregorio's willingness to live his entire life as an international commuter. He did not want his wife to move with him. His project was to return permanently to Casalvieri for his retirement. Gregorio's dream was just to accumulate as much land as possible. He was so stubborn—his daughter Aida told me—that he did not send any money back home while abroad. All the money earned had to be invested in buying land. Gregorio's old immigrant mentality compelled his wife and children in Casalvieri to get by on what they had. He did not even want his children to go to school. Their main occupation—Gregorio believed—had to be to tend the properties that were acquired with his sacrifices abroad.<sup>66</sup>

By contrast, the postwar cohort of Casalvierani emigrants expressed a very specific and sharp disillusionment about the possibility of 'doing something good' in Casalvieri. This generational comparison highlights the mechanisms at the root of the choice to migrate. In addition, it promotes a more variegated and multi-layered examination of postwar Italian immigration; an examination that does not rely solely and uniquely on economic explanations and rigid push-pull factors.

Very intimate and personal motivations, other than financial, encouraged post-WWII Casalvierani to leave and start a new life abroad. The story of Giuseppe is paradigmatic. The fifth of five brothers, Giuseppe emigrated in 1949 at the age of 21, along with three brothers, a

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

number of friends from Casalvieri and the neighboring town of Fontichiari, to San Paulo, Brazil. The desire to leave Casalvieri was so rooted in Giuseppe that he decided to go to Brazil because the call from his third brother, who had immigrated to Canada, arrived too late. Actually, Giuseppe was so inclined to emigrate that, while very young, he enrolled to work in the Belgian mines. Fortunately, as Giuseppe recalls with the wisdom of hindsight, he was younger than 21 and could not go. His decision to leave—unlike previous push-pull explanations—was not dictated by financial reasons.<sup>67</sup>

Giuseppe candidly revealed that his family owned enough land for all the brothers in the family. He also confessed that his own father did not have the need—as many other Casalvierani of his father’s generation had—to emigrate because he owned a lot of land. What is even more astonishing is that, unlike many other Casalvierani, the Second World War and the nine-month Nazi-German occupation of the town did not permanently ruin Giuseppe’s family’s economic situation. Indeed, the Gestapo occupied half of his family house, and provided Giuseppe’s older brothers with a special card that allowed them to have food and also a small salary.<sup>68</sup>

Neither lack of land nor war-related territorial and economic fractures explained the marked mobility of Giuseppe’s siblings: his first two brothers went to Brazil and then returned to Casalvieri; the third brother went to Canada; the fourth reached Newark, then Detroit, and finally settled in Los Angeles. Diaspora in Giuseppe’s family did not spare his sister who, after her marriage, went to live close to New York. After all, Giuseppe himself did not stop in Brazil. He moved to Vancouver in 1954. As Giuseppe revealed, he and his brothers did not want to work the

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<sup>67</sup> Giuseppe R., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 14, 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

land. It is possible to conclude that Giuseppe and his brothers' motivations were in part generational and in part personal.<sup>69</sup>

Very personal were Rolando's motivations. He arrived in Detroit in 1962 following a few years in Paris. Rolando confided that the death of his paternal uncle during WWII shocked him so much (at the time Rolando was just five) that he promised himself that he would never serve in the army. Thus, as the age to be drafted in the Italian military approached Rolando left for France and, then, for the United States. It is essential to underscore that the men and women I interviewed did not give me just one explanation for their decision to migrate. For instance, Rolando discussed not only his childhood trauma, but also his desire to know other countries as his motivations for leaving Casalvieri. Rolando emphasized that he did not need money.<sup>70</sup> Rocco, along with his willingness to improve his life, mentioned also his desire to reconnect with his future wife Rosa; her father's decision to leave Casalvieri for Detroit had seriously challenged their romantic relationship.<sup>71</sup>

Casalvierani's postwar migrations demonstrate that it would be one-dimensional to explain these movements as only a consequence of the Malthusian unbalance between scarce resources and increasing population. Elaborated gender and generational strategies, personal aspirations, and the desire to improve one's material and social conditions—especially given the Italian postwar very poor standard of living—fueled a high level of emigration in Casalvieri. The fact that Casalvierani, once abroad, presented a high level of immigrant entrepreneurship opens new perspectives on postwar Italian immigration as a means to achieve 'social status.' In sum, it

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Rolando D., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 3, 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Rocco G., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 6, 2011.

emphasizes the proactive and dynamic nature of migration and puts in perspective the negative and too simplistic explanation of emigration as mere escape from poverty.

#### 4.4 Access to Migration Networks

The decision to take advantage of the possibility of leaving stemmed from the encouraging presence of relatives and friends abroad, the support of family members who stayed behind, and the personal propensity of the prospective emigrants. Yet—I want to be clear—emigration loomed as a potential alternative especially in the heads of young men. This meant that what Loretta Baldassar defines as ‘license to leave’ in her study on Italians in Western Australia was granted primarily to men.<sup>72</sup> Men, usually in their twenties and thirties, started what can be considered a migration cycle through which they, once abroad, called siblings, fiancées, wives, and, more rarely, parents. It is not a coincidence that, among the individuals I interviewed, there is no woman who emigrated without her family and/or before her marriage. For my female interviewees, the idea of emigrating by themselves was not even conceivable. They left Casalvieri as daughters or wives. These women reached America, by boat or by airplane, always chaperoned by other relatives or, usually in the case of young wives, by other Casalvierani.

Gender norms in both receiving and sending countries as well as personal prejudices dictated migratory patterns. The case of one of Ulderico’s sisters is quite enlightening. She wanted to leave Casalvieri and asked her siblings in Canada to sponsor her immigration. Yet, Ulderico admitted, they did not encourage her because: “such a young and unmarried woman, who was going to look after her?” As an alternative, they encouraged her to get married and then proceed with immigrating to Canada. Unfortunately, she married in 1962 when Canada, Ulderico

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<sup>72</sup> Loretta Baldassar, “Transnational Families and Aged Care: The Mobility of Care and the Migrancy of Aging,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Vol. 33, No.2, March 2007), 275-297.

said, was going through an economic recession. She never left Casalvieri.<sup>73</sup> The presence of men in the family was almost synonymous with mobility.

The fact that usually men initiated migration does not have to obscure the active presence of women in Casalvierani's migratory experiences. In the permanent migration of post-WWII Casalvierani to America, fiancées and wives were expected to join their husbands, to start a family abroad, to contribute to domestic finances with a supplemental income, and, when necessary, to manage the family business. Women above all were expected to be frugal and parsimonious. Clever mothers, resourceful and industrious wives, and an army of grandmother baby sitters were among the most important assets in the creation, maintenance, and success of Casalvierani's migratory projects.

To grasp the role that women played in their family's migratory projects, I examine the personal circumstances of the women I interviewed. In some cases, leaving Casalvieri placed a heavy burden on husband-wife relations. It required that family members adapt and negotiate their former roles in Casalvieri—which they were well acquainted with—and their new roles adopted once in America. Women, more than men, were expected to be the binding agents. Vincenzo's and Annamaria's mother, Giuseppa, is an example of a woman who drew on courage and intelligence in what was perceived as an "abnormal" situation.

Giuseppa not only was compelled to move to Los Angeles in her late forties but she also had to deal with an unfaithful husband who tried to hide in California. Giuseppa's pragmatic nature and moral superiority become especially evident in her children's descriptions of her. Once in California, Giuseppa did not hold a grudge against her husband, Benedetto. "It does not matter what he did in the past, the important thing is that he allowed us to come to America" she

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<sup>73</sup> Ulderico V., Interview by author, Casalvieri, August 5, 2011.

would often say when talking about Benedetto, her husband. After all, Benedetto had taken care of their trip from Italy to America, and he even found a house for his family. Yet, the arrival in Los Angeles, as Annamaria recounts, was the beginning of a very difficult moment for the entire family.

Benedetto wanted Giuseppa to work outside the house. Annamaria and Vincenzo, the eldest children, opposed their father's decision. They did not want their mother—who did not know any English—to go to work outside the home. Benedetto ended up leaving the house. He actually wanted his family to return to Casalvieri. Giuseppa, though, immediately understood that her children could thrive in California and let them decide. In the end, while Benedetto and Giuseppa tried to save their marriage, their relation was irremediably ruined.<sup>74</sup> At the beginning of the 1950s, the couple divorced. Giuseppa infamously became the first divorcee from Casalvieri. Benedetto, who never ended his extra-marital relation, remarried and had a daughter. This divorce was, at a closer investigation, strictly connected to emigration. The long separation between Benedetto and Giuseppa could be considered one of the causes of the unhappy marriage. On the positive side, it is also true that this unhappily married couple could file for divorce because they were in the US. Had they remained in Casalvieri, they would have been condemned to continue to living together (for moral and legal reasons), at least until 1970, when divorce was introduced in Italy. For Annamaria, at the time eighteen years old, her parents' divorce was particularly painful. She did not even know that it was actually possible to have one. She remembers lucidly when she had to explain the "weird" situation in a letter to her uncles and aunts in Casalvieri.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Vincenzo C., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 4, 2011; Annamaria C., phone interview by author, June 4, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Giuseppa did not end up living as an inconsolable "widow." On the contrary, as her son Vincenzo told me repeatedly, she was always very industrious. She did not work outside the home but rather took in boarders. She encouraged her children to go to work, including her three daughters, and already in 1952 she had purchased a neighboring plot of land, and had built additional rooms on the original house with the money she saved with the earnings of every family member.<sup>76</sup> In 1953, she managed to build a house on the plot. The family started prospering. Vincenzo became a successful contractor. Giuseppa lived until her late eighties and enjoyed her family. Benedetto, on the other hand, ended up having serious financial problems. The situation was so bad that his children offered Benedetto's second wife money for their father's funeral.<sup>77</sup>

Migration placed a strain on many inter-personal relations, especially on young romantic relations.<sup>78</sup> When Alfredo C. decided to call his family to join him in Detroit, he resolutely prohibited his first daughter Rosa, at the time eighteen, from continuing to date Rocco G. Alfredo did not want to split his family and he knew that Rosa's young love could become an obstacle for the entire family's migration project. At the same time, Alfredo did not want to leave his daughter Rosa, behind. According to the moral customs of the time in Casavieri, Rosa could remain in Italy only if she married Rocco. Alfredo could not allow this. He decided to leave because, as a father of four girls, he understood that America would provide greater educational opportunities for his daughters. Yet, the love between Rocco and Rosa was hard to melt. Rocco was stubborn.

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<sup>76</sup> Vincenzo C., interview by author, Casavieri, August 4, 2011.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Sonia Cancian, *Families, Lovers, and Their Letters Italian Postwar Migration to Canada* (Winnipeg: East Lansing: University of Manitoba Press, 2010); Cancian Sonia, "Love in the Time of Migration" Lovers' Correspondence between Italy and Canada, 1948-1957," *Diversité Urbaine* 10, no. 2 (2011): 91-109; Cancian Sonia, "'My Dearest Love...': Love, Longing, and Desire in International Migration," in *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Messer Michi, Schroder Renée, and Wodack Ruth (Wien: Springer, 2012), 175-86.

As I mentioned earlier, among Rocco's motivations to leave for Windsor, where he had a brother, was his desire to reconnect with Rosa. Rocco's and Rosa's story had a happy ending. Once Alfredo understood the tenacity of the young couple's love story, he approved the relationship. Rocco and Rosa married and continued to live together for many years.

However, there is more to the story here. Alfredo's stubborn opposition to his daughter's relations needs to be better contextualized. While he was undoubtedly concerned about his daughter's future, and he wanted to provide her with the same opportunities that he was giving to his other daughters, Alfredo worried for another reason. Similarly to other Casalvieri's parents, he worried about the then- widespread custom of the bride kidnapping (*fuitina*). Typical of many societies in Mediterranean countries, and dating back to the legend of the Rape of the Sabines, this custom survived until the 1960s in the region of Ciociaria where Casalvieri is located. Here is how *fuitina* worked: at the news of a fiancé's or girlfriends' imminent emigration, many men would strategize their kidnapping with the help of friends and relatives. Usually, the fiancé/girlfriend was compliant. In a society in which marriage was the only accepted love relation, kidnapping was a fast, inexpensive, and effective weapon to win over the parents' opposition. The kidnapping allowed young women to spend a few unchaperoned hours with their boyfriends. Once the girls returned home from the kidnapping episode, their honor was irremediably ruined. And, marriage with the kidnapper became the only solution to save the girl and the family's honor.<sup>79</sup>

Maria Rosaria, a professor of Italian at Nazareth College, New York, and a native of Casalvieri, vividly remembers this tradition. Usually, these young women, she recalls, were "stolen" (*rubate*) on the rare occasions in which they were allowed to be unchaperoned. She

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<sup>79</sup> Daniel G. Bates, Francis Conant, and Ayse Kudat, "Introduction: Kidnapping and Elopement as Alternative Systems of Marriage," *Anthropological Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (July 1, 1974): 233–37.

remembers a young woman from the area of Casalvieri who had been part of a *fruitina* plot. This young woman was one day returning home to her *contrada* after having bought eggs. Along the way, a car sided her, a few young men exited the car and abducted her. The young girl's screams were actually staged.<sup>80</sup>

The practice of the *fruitina* (bride kidnapping) touched also Maria Rosaria's family. Her cousin Maria had fallen in love with another Casalvierano. Given her mother's opposition to this relationship, Maria had to write to him secretly. Maria's mother had other projects for her daughter because she had learned about a wealthy Casalvierano from Toronto who was looking for a wife. Maria fooled her mother by pretending to be interested in this arranged marriage. In the meantime she planned the *fruitina* with her boyfriend. The boyfriend, and future husband, kidnapped her while she was going to get water from the well. When the family learned that Maria was an accomplice to the plot—as Maria Rosaria vividly recalls—the sorrow and tears for the poor girl were transformed into anger and resentment toward the reckless and lost daughter. Maria and her boyfriend married without their family's support. They remained alone. Eventually, they immigrated to France.<sup>81</sup>

Maria Rosaria had also learned about an attempted kidnapping that had been planned for her. Apparently, a young man, who had noticed her during the Sunday church masses, started organizing a *fruitina* when he became aware that she would soon emigrate abroad. Maria Rosaria, unlike her cousin Maria, was not in love with her suitor. Should the abduction happened successfully, Maria Rosaria would have been forced to marry him or she would have been dishonored. And this happened in 1969!<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Maria Rosaria V., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 4, 2011.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

The story of Annamaria C. and Francesco's attempt to steal her could be the plot of a novel. As if Annamaria's mother, Giuseppa, did not have already enough troubles, Francesco's obsession with Annamaria seriously ran the risk of ruining the entire family's migration project. When Annamaria and Francesco started dating, the two were the most envied couple in Casalvieri. Beautiful, elegant, and tall, the two were known as the Romeo & Juliet of the town. Benedetto, Annamaria's father, even tried to obtain a visa for Francesco as an agriculturalist only to have the application rejected. When Francesco realized that he could not immigrate to California with Annamaria, he started to behave in irrational ways. He became suspicious of Annamaria. He feared that she would marry another man. Extremely frustrated, he started to threaten and insult her. Francesco's violent behavior scared Annamaria to the point that she could not wait to leave for America and leave him behind. Yet, leaving Francesco was not so easy.<sup>83</sup>

In the meantime, Benedetto, already in California, launched a categorical imperative: "if Annamaria does not come to America, nobody can come." Benedetto, like Alfredo, guarded his family's unity and he would not allow his daughter to remain behind. Francesco's actions could have serious repercussions for the family's future. The "industrious" Giuseppa anticipated Francesco's moves. She called one of her sisters from France to closely watch Annamaria while she was taking care of the immigration documents in the nearby cities of Sora and Naples. For those days while Giuseppa was away and in the days preceding the family's emigration, Annamaria never left the family household.<sup>84</sup>

In the meantime, rumors about Francesco's plan to kidnap Annamaria started to circulate louder and louder around town. Giuseppa did not waste time. While at the emigration offices in Naples, Giuseppa convinced the authorities that she had to hasten her departure because of her

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<sup>83</sup> Annamaria C., phone interview by author, June 4, 2013.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

husband's fictitious illness. The date of the departure was fortunately brought forward. Even then, Giuseppa did not feel completely out of danger for her family. She had only three or four days to finally make her family's emigration happen. She rented a police car and drivers to drive her children to Naples two days before the actual departure. Giuseppa left the morning after her children. In this way, she thought, Francesco's plans fall apart. Giuseppa was wrong. Francesco—like in a classical *coup de théâtre*—arrived to the port of Naples a few minutes after Annamaria's boarding. Annamaria heard someone screaming her name from the harbor. It was Francesco. Soon after, the boat's siren sound covered his screams.<sup>85</sup>

Love relations were not always so dramatic in Casalvieri; most of my interviewees were married with the blessing of their families and without the staging of a kidnapping. The stages, tempo, and dynamics of young Casalvierani's courtship and marriage during the post-WWII immigration period reveal a people's high degree of adaptability to foreign environments as well as to long distance relations. Casalvierani's flexibility—I argue—depended on their pragmatism and from their propensity—especially for women—to postpone personal aspirations and ambitions in favor of the wellbeing of the family and its members. At least, at the beginning of their migratory experience, Casalvierani sought out a collective socio-economic improvement. They could enjoy the conquest of their subjective American dream only if parents, siblings, and in-laws could also benefit from it, in Casalvieri or abroad.

Turn-of-the-twentieth-century Italian women were accustomed to raising their children and taking care of the land while their emigrant husbands travelled back and forth between Italy and their migratory destinations. In sum, women alone without their husbands—a topic

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

brilliantly explored in recent scholarship—were the norm in sending societies.<sup>86</sup> Yet, post-WWII Italian immigration to North America was for the most part a family movement. Family reunification slowly replaced the "birds of passage" paradigm of the past male Italian migrant commuters.<sup>87</sup> Young Casalvierani, unlike their fathers and grandfathers, were not willing to live their entire lives away from their wives and children. On the contrary, they knew that the presence of a good Casalvieri's wife on their side would make their American experience more sustainable.

As I discussed earlier, many Casalvieri migrants strategically turned to their networks to move abroad. Their ultimate goal was to flourish in America. Their ambitions were not crystallized in the acquisition of land in Casalvieri. Migration shaped, reinforced and adapted old family dynamics. It transformed marriage into a resource and an asset for Casalvierani's migratory and entrepreneurial projects. Simultaneously, these adaptations traveled along different generational paths.

Ulderico and Maria Pia's marriage for love and for pragmatism epitomizes the adaptable nature of these dynamics. In 1962, after the fruit market where he had been working closed, Ulderico opened a small electronic shop and worked as technician for TVs and radios. Yet, Ulderico was not alone in this adventure. In 1961, he returned to Casalvieri to find a good woman. By then, he had already been corresponding with a young woman in Casalvieri whom he had known since elementary school. However, when he proposed marriage to her, she did not seem very excited. Ulderico did not give up his dream of finding a nice Casalvieri woman. He then began courting young Maria Pia whom he vaguely remembered. After three months Ulderico and Maria Pia were married, travelled on their honeymoon to Rome visiting the

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<sup>86</sup> Linda Reeder, *Widows in White: Migration and the Transformation of Rural Italian Women, Sicily, 1880-1920*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

<sup>87</sup> Piore, *Birds of Passage*.

Canadian Embassy where they proceeded to registering Maria Pia as Ulderico's wife and soon after, travelled to Windsor together.<sup>88</sup> Before leaving for Canada, Maria Pia and her mother filled the two woolen mattresses— that they had shipped with them embarked with them on the ocean liner—with Maria Pia's dowry, wedding gifts, and good Italian liquor that, eventually, Maria Pia and Ulderico would have used in exchange for favors. It seems that Maria Pia and her mother resorted to the 'go to the mattresses' strategy long before Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* made the expression famous worldwide.<sup>89</sup>

Maria Pia became essential to the management of Ulderico's business. She sewed her own dresses, darned, took care of the garden, and cooked every family meal every day. Maria Pia was not only equipped with the traditional skills that every Casalvierana possessed but she also knew about business. Indeed, her father was the owner of a small market in Casalvieri and Maria Pia had worked with him during her adolescence. She learned English quickly by watching TV and soon enough she started helping Ulderico with secretarial work. Ulderico managed to connect the shop phone line with the one in their house so that Maria Pia could work, and take appointments from home. In 1967, Maria Pia's widowed mother went to live with them in Windsor. The grandma performed the roles of a babysitter: a huge support, Maria Pia admitted, in raising her three sons.<sup>90</sup>

It is not a coincidence that many of my interviewees established their businesses after they married and employed their wives for secretarial work. The men usually immigrated four or five years before they returned to Casalvieri to find a bride, convinced that only women from Casalvieri could own the expertise and abilities successful for a good marriage and, in the long

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<sup>88</sup> Maria Pia V., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 5, 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

term, for the management of businesses. The relationship usually started with an exchange of letters and was followed by a formal proposal. Time was crucial. The men usually could not stay more than six months in Italy otherwise they would have been drafted in the Italian army (even if they were by then American or Canadian citizenship). Three months, as was the case for Ulderico and Maria Pia, seemed the norm.

Onorio T.—who immigrated to New York in 1953—had an experience similar to Ulderico's. In 1958, he returned to Casalvieri with the idea to marry a young woman he remembered from elementary school. Unfortunately, the two "could not reach an agreement"—Onorio explained. Nonetheless, Onorio persevered. One week before his return to New York, he met his future wife. There was not enough time. One week was such a brief period even for a Casalvieriano! While in America, Onorio T. and his Casalvieri girlfriend continued to write to each other. His mother, still living in Casalvieri along with Onorio's youngest sister, played a crucial role in this transnational engagement. She gathered information about the young woman's family background background. Onorio wanted to be sure that she was not committed to someone else. Two years later, in 1960, Onorio T. was back in Casalvieri again. In just three months, he married and managed to have the documents ready for his new bride.<sup>91</sup>

In sum, finding a bride was a ritualized, time-managed mission, and a rewarding one. The importance of a thrifty wife is considered so essential to Casalvierani men that in their memories often emerges the 'story of the spendthrift wife.' A few Casalvierani men recounted stories about friends who had to return to Casalvieri because their wives were not efficient at managing money and, as a result, risked jeopardizing the entire migration project. In this case, Maria Pia might

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<sup>91</sup> Onorio T., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 6, 2012.

have a point when she says, "you know, Ulderico is good and frugal enough but men without a woman are not so capable..."<sup>92</sup>

#### 4.5 Porous Borders and "Migration Mode"

The term flexibility best describes Casalvierani's attitudes during their migratory experiences. Whereas some Casalvierani moved just once—namely from Casalvieri to their final American destinations—a good portion of them relocated more than once. As shown in the previous examples, they moved from Windsor to Detroit in search of better opportunities and established Casalvierani's strong networks and communities. The two miles dividing Windsor from Detroit were congenial to the creation of trustworthy, flexible, and advantageous networks across the seemingly "porous borders" of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel.

The emigration from Ontario to Michigan, as Nora Faires shows in her study about Anglo-Canadian migration in the nineteenth and early twentieth century "formed an integrated extension of the larger transatlantic migration system, especially during the nineteenth century."<sup>93</sup> Faires's description of this extended migration system fits Casalvierani's attitudes as she notes that, "For these newcomers to America, Ontario represented a "step" in what became a sequence of migrations, planned in advance or improvised once in Canada, that ultimately brought them to the Great Lakes states."<sup>94</sup> Already in 1931, Theodor Christian Blegen observed: "To the Scandinavian immigrants who landed at the port of Quebec in the 1850s and 1860s, Canada was a *corridor*, not a place for permanent settlement. Many of them had friends or

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<sup>92</sup> Maria Pia V., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 5, 2011.

<sup>93</sup> Nora Faires, "Leaving the 'Land of the Second Chance.' Migration from Ontario to the Upper Midwest in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in John J. Bukowczyk, ed., *Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650-1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 95.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

relatives already established in the United States, who had written home of their experiences."<sup>95</sup> In his overview of turn-of-the 20<sup>th</sup>-century transatlantic migrations, Walter T.K. Nugent affirms that the major difference between Canada and the United States as immigrant countries was that Canada was a *sieve* of migrants more than their ultimate destination.<sup>96</sup>

Canada, and more specifically Ontario, was a step, a corridor, and a sieve also for post-WWII Casalvierani migrants. It was a sieve because—as I show in the previous section—only those who obtained a visa or tried their luck could actually leave what Faires defined "the land of the Second Chance." It was a necessary step for many who were forced to wait years before obtaining a US visa. It was not a useless step. After all, in Canada many Casalvierani learned English, a trade and, in general, they became familiar with a North American way of life. It was certainly a corridor and a frequently crossed pathway.

Casalvierani crossed the border between the US and Canada often and for many reasons. Frequent intermarriages between members of Casalvierani communities in Windsor and Detroit created an intense back and forth. Rosa, who had immigrated to Detroit with her family as an adolescent, married Rocco—who had immigrated to Windsor and was incapable of obtaining a visa for the US. Soon after their wedding, while waiting for Rocco's documents, Rosa went to live in Windsor as she continued to work in Detroit.<sup>97</sup> Ulderico V., even while living in Windsor, attended evening classes in Detroit. During his courtship, Linda V.'s husband left Detroit almost every afternoon to go to Windsor to visit Linda at the end of her school day.

Grazio I.'s family seems to epitomize this back and forth. Grazio and his family members immigrated to Windsor in 1956. They had been sponsored by Grazio's paternal uncle, Antonio.

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<sup>95</sup> Theodore Christian Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America* (Northfield, Minn: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1931). The Italics are mine.

<sup>96</sup> Walter T. K. Nugent, *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992). The italic are mine.

<sup>97</sup> Rosa C., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 5, 2011.

Grazio's uncle had previously immigrated to Detroit in the early 1920s. Here he found work as a mechanic. Yet he ended up marrying an Italian-Canadian from Windsor and, a few years after his arrival to the US, very uncommon for Casavvierani, he left Detroit for Windsor. Quite interestingly, in 1963 Grazio I. left Windsor for Detroit when he married an Italian-American woman whose parents came from the Comino Valley.

Today, Windsor, and not Detroit, continues to be a nerve center for Casavvierani's meetings and festivals. Many Casavvierani left Detroit for the Detroit metro area during the 1970s and 1980s, leaving behind the big city and its longstanding "appeal."<sup>98</sup> The route from Windsor to Detroit was not the only one Casavvierani frequented. For instance, they moved from Toronto to Windsor, and vice versa, or from Windsor to Sarnia, an important Canadian refinery center, according to job opportunities and the presence of friends and relatives. Casavvierani also moved longer distances. Since the end of the 1940s and increasingly during the 1970s, many Casavvierani moved westward. A number of Casavvierani families settled in the area between Los Angeles and San Diego. Similarly to the immigration from Casavvieri to Detroit, I could not precisely identify who the first pioneer of this internal migration was. Yet, from the oral accounts I collected it emerges that the movement toward the Golden State started a few years before World War II and increased soon after.

#### *4.6 Casavvierani Dreamin' California*

If contacts with family members and better job opportunities led Casavvierani across the Ambassador Bridge, less tangible and more personal motivations directed their westward migration. The motivations behind Benedetto C.'s move to California remained obscure for many

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<sup>98</sup> Grazio I, interview by author, Ciociaro Club, Windsor, July 6, 2012.

years to his family who remained in Casalvieri for many years. In 1944, Giuseppa, Benedetto's wife, received a letter from her husband in America following five years of silence. Surely, the war did not facilitate contact between immigrants and their families. His wife, children, and relatives had indeed lost track of Benedetto's since his departure from Casalvieri in 1939.<sup>99</sup>

When Benedetto's letter arrived in Casalvieri, the family felt both relief and shock. The address on the letter's envelope was not from Detroit but from Hawthorne, California. The unannounced internal movement seemed to be just one of the curves that the war threw at the C.'s family. As I mentioned earlier, Benedetto was a veteran immigrant, the quintessential 'migrant commuter' between Casalvieri and Detroit. After a brief but uninterrupted stay in Casalvieri, in 1938 Benedetto decided to leave his hometown permanently and to transfer his entire family—his wife Giuseppa and their four children—to the United States. This time, he knew, the move would be much easier, especially since all the children born after 1931 were automatically American citizens.<sup>100</sup>

In 1938, Benedetto started the necessary red tape. Annamaria, Benedetto's first daughter born before Benedetto had acquired his American citizenship, and Giuseppa were not American citizens at the time. They needed to pass a medical exam at the office of emigration in Naples. During the car trip to Naples, the two women travelled with the car windows open. The road dust—at the time Italy did not have many paved roads—made their eyes so red that the two could not pass their medical exam that same day and were rescheduled for a second appointment. What seemed to be a normal case of red eyes ended up being a serious infection that took six long months to heal. Rather than waiting, Benedetto decided to leave immediately by himself. He planned to call the rest of the family once his wife and daughter had passed the medical

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<sup>99</sup> Annamaria C., phone interview by author, June 4, 2013.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

exam. When Annamaria and Giuseppa finally healed, it was 1939. The borders were closed and Italy entered a long and atrocious war.<sup>101</sup>

Similar to many other families, the war curtailed contacts. Yet, in Benedetto's case, something more personal than a world conflict seemed to have played a huge role. Probably—according to his daughter, Annamaria—he was trying to remain in hiding. In Detroit, Benedetto had started a romantic relation with a French-Canadian woman. Detroit was full of Casalvierani and to escape indiscreet eyes, at the beginning of the 1940s the couple moved to California. In Hawthorne, CA, there were not so many Casalvierani as in Detroit but the unlucky Benedetto stumbled upon a friend of the family. The Casalvierano friend tried to persuade Benedetto to write back home and, at least, to give his own children the opportunity to immigrate to America. It was at this point that Benedetto wrote to his family back home.<sup>102</sup>

California was not a hiding place for every Casalvierano. In 1947, years after their illegal crossing of the Canada/US borders, and almost ten years in Detroit, Giuseppe, Anna, and their son moved to Los Angeles. If previously Anna followed Giuseppe to Detroit, this time it was Giuseppe who followed Anna to California. Anna started having health problems. Her arthritis did not seem to heal. Her physician gave her two alternatives: return to live in Italy or move to a warmer and less humid climate. Anna had a close friend from Casalvieri who lived in Los Angeles. With her husband's consent, she travelled to L.A. to visit her friend. So, "Giuseppe put Anna on a train to L.A." and joined her for a visit after a month. He was so positively impressed with the surroundings that he decided to move there permanently. In California, Giuseppe and Anna also had their second child, Maria.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

These pioneering westward movements of the 1940s slowly but relentlessly fostered a chain migration. Once the Casaviera Californian community was well established, networks and connections prepared the way for other American Casavieras to move there. After a little more than five years in Newark, NJ, Emilio D.'s older brother married a Casaviera of Los Angeles. Emilio and the rest of his immediate family travelled to California for the wedding. The Californian landscape and weather impressed Emilio's family so much they made plans to move there permanently. Apparently, relatives' weddings played a huge role in Emilio's migration patterns. In 1972, Emilio and his wife, Aida, went to San Diego to attend the wedding of one of their friends. When on the freeway, they decided to stop for a small side trip in the city of Vista, CA, they stumbled upon a huge discovery. In Vista, much less populated and urbanized than Los Angeles, "the hills and the sun were like in Italy." Emilio and Aida became the pioneers of the Casaviera's relocation from Los Angeles to Vista.<sup>104</sup>

If weddings defined Emilio's migrations, it was a funeral that catalyzed Onorio T.'s family movement to Los Angeles. Onorio's brother, between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, attended the funeral of his wife's uncle in Los Angeles. This sad occasion gave him the opportunity to visit California. Once again the similarities between California and Italy played the lion's share in the decision to move. In 1962, Onorio T. and his wife went to visit the brother in Los Angeles. The Californian landscape had bewitched also Onorio. He and his wife moved to Los Angeles in 1962.<sup>105</sup>

Casaviera's internal migration to California provides a number of insights. This migration was accessible to Casaviera who already were familiar with the American environment and who were already in a favorable legal position; they were all American citizens

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<sup>104</sup> Aida D., phone interview by author, August 30, 2013.

<sup>105</sup> Onorio T., interview by author, Casaviera, August 6, 2012.

when they moved to California. Unlike their international immigration to the Great Lakes area, the reasons Casavvierani embarked on another migration had more acute personal motivations. Infidelity, bad health, or more simply, the desire to live in a warmer place led Casavvierani to change, once again, their lives. The men and women I interviewed described their international immigration as the consequence of theirs and their families' willingness to search for better opportunities and standards of life. This generic expression encompasses both economic and social improvement. Yet, when they indicated the reasons for their westward migration, they underscored the eagerness to make their American experience more enjoyable. The first movement was a migration of sacrifices and material improvement, whereas the second was one of pleasure and personal enhancement.

The Casavvierani who decided to move to California were already in the advantageous position to think in terms of "personal enjoyment." After all, they were already in economic and legally advantaged positions when compared to the early years of their American adventures. As I explored later in this dissertation, they learned the language, and acquired working skills and experience. Even if networks were still at the core of their relocation, they were not used as much for sponsorship, for financial and social safety nets as they were in Casavvierani's previous international immigration. Except for Benedetto, the other interviewees who moved to California did it after brief visits on the occasion of traditional family gatherings. The presence of relatives did not allow internal movement. Rather, it was encouraged by relatives. I am not stating that the decision to move internally was easy. After all, not every Casavvierano who visited California then moved there. Yet the decision to move, even if its consideration remained serious occurred in a more advantaged situation.

#### 4.7 Local Matters

The attention to the local level, and particularly, to the personal stories of Casalvierani migrants allows me to look inside the mechanisms and family dynamics that shaped migration patterns. Casalvierani's accounts shed lights on what Alistair Thompson defined the "unrecorded, ill-documented, and hidden histories of migration."<sup>106</sup> The collection and use of interviews allowed me to do much more than present migration history from the bottom up. On the one hand, Casalvierani's stories complement the anonymous migration statistics, and balance the authorities and experts' views on emigration. On the other hand, they allowed me to write a different history of migration.

Oral history challenges assumptions, provides new evidence, and opens historical investigation to new areas of inquiry. This chapter, by shifting from the international and national level, presented migration under a new light. According to Paul Thompson, by approaching migration history from the inside—namely through oral interviews—migration historians eventually dismantle the picture that the approach from the outside generated.<sup>107</sup> Whereas the sources analyzed in the first three chapters of this dissertation presented migration as an "abstract" problem to solve differently according to the immigrant or emigrant states' perspectives, Casalvierani's insiders' voices presented it as a natural part of their routines not as a problem per se.

A long migratory tradition—typical of the area where Casavieri is located—promoted familiarity with the resources of emigration. Additionally, networks and exchange of information—a byproduct of the town's centuries-long migratory practices—between those who

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<sup>106</sup> Alistair Thomson, "Moving Stories: Oral History and Migration Studies," *Oral History* 27, no. 1 (April 1, 1999), 26.

<sup>107</sup> Paul Richard Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford [England]: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8.

remained behind and those abroad permitted Casalvierani to maximize the opportunities to leave their hometown. Chain migration fed and supported by family reunification characterized emigration from Casalvieri. Sponsorship—the backbone of the family reunification system—gave Casalvierani the opportunity to immigrate extra quota to the United States and, in general, to join their relatives in Canada. The presence of Casalvierani abroad who were in a position to sponsor their relatives left behind permitted individual emigrants to render the rigid selective policies of the immigrant countries more flexible.

An insider's approach allowed me to problematize what at a superficial glance could appear as an "open" access to the migratory networks. Only by carefully looking at the dynamics of individual Casalvierani families, is it possible to detect the rigid rules that governed the access to these networks. Men were generally the ones who were supposed to emigrate temporarily or, increasingly after WWII, to emigrate first and then sponsor their fiancés or wives. If family and gender roles selected who, when, and how would leave Casalvieri, the analytical category of generation provided an interesting insight in the analysis of the changing aspirations of the post-WWII migrants. More specifically, after having listed the continuities between turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century mass migration and post-WWII migration, this generational comparison fleshes out the differences between the pre-WWII and the post-WWII migration waves.

The focus on the local level also calls attention to the differences between Casalvierani's international immigration (i.e. from Casalvieri to the US and to Canada) and intra-national or internal migrations (i.e. from Windsor to Detroit and from Detroit to California). Whereas Casalvierani's international migration was markedly motivated by a general desire to improve migrants' and their families' socio-economic conditions, the motivations behind internal

movement were less broad and more targeted to the attainment of personal comforts and ambitions.

The investigation of the motivations provided by individuals who undertook the project of migration clearly demonstrates that the decision to leave was rooted in both contingent and structural crises—the war and the postwar Italian economic depression—as well as in very intimate aspirations and personal preferences. The local investigation forcefully encourages scholars of migration to treat migration as a project of movement that includes the personal accounts of individuals who physically undertook immigration in concert with their relatives and friends left behind. These latter, indeed, equally contributed to the family's fate and their migration project through financial and psychological support. As clearly emerges from Casavvierani's accounts, rigid economic push and pull factors do not adequately explain their international and internal migrations. Desire for social and economic independence, preference for non-agricultural jobs, ambition to social mobility, skepticism about a future in Italy, willingness to be reunited with family members, and love relations should be included in the list of motivations to leave Casavvieri.

## CHAPTER 5

### "The Unskilled Entrepreneurs"

"They find generic workers, good at doing everything, substantially, good at doing nothing."<sup>1</sup>  
24 Ore, 1951

"We were all peasants but we were all accustomed to do many other jobs."<sup>2</sup>  
Grazio I., 2012.

The two quotations above point out the lack of specialization of post-WWII Italian workers. The first quotation is from a 1951 article of the Milan-based industry owners' newspaper, *24 Ore*. This journalistic piece—after a brief report on the difficulties of finding trained workers in Italy—candidly suggested to unskilled Italians to "emigrate to become skilled."<sup>3</sup> Yet, this imperative was quite paradoxical, given the connection between skills and postwar migration thus far investigated. Of course, one needed a basic set of skills first, *before* one could emigrate. Nonetheless, the *24 Ore* advised, sending apprentices to more industrialized countries would give them the opportunity to fine tune their technical and artisanal skills and, simultaneously, allow them to continue working in the industries of their apprenticeship. In sum, the newspaper article recommended the use of migration as a resource to obtain the necessary skills.

The *Bollettino* considered the *24 Ore*'s proposal absurd because it was the duty of Italian industries to train their workers. The *Bollettino* kept the same polemic attitude toward any similar solution in this sense. In 1952, a reader, Mr. Bruno, proposed to the newspaper *L'Italia Cooperativa* that the mass of Italian unskilled workers "needs to expand and to change

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<sup>1</sup> "Disoccupazione e Qualificazione," *Bollettino* (10 December 1951), 440.

<sup>2</sup> Grazio I., interview by author, Windsor Ciociaro Club, July 6, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> "Disoccupazione e Qualificazione," *Bollettino* (10 December 1951), 440.

environment [...] to get trained."<sup>4</sup> The *Bollettino* labeled Bruno's solution as too simplistic and cheap. Hurling workers abroad so that they could obtain the necessary training, according to the *Bollettino*, was not the correct way to act. In the ideal situation, the Italian governmental solutions would have been quick and effective, but, as examined in the third chapter, this rarely happened. The two contrasting positions mirrored the ideological stands of the two newspapers: the liberal *24 Ore* and the socialist *Bollettino*. In sum, the *24 Ore* saw in emigration itself a channel for Italian workers to improve their professional lives without state intervention and on the basis of individual emigrants' merits. In contrast, the *Bollettino* held the state responsible for training and preparing Italian prospective emigrants.

The second quotation, free of any ideological credos, are the words of Grazio, who immigrated to Windsor in 1956. He explained to me why many Casalvierani in North America were capable of reinventing themselves and obtaining necessary training. Grazio's ability to do many jobs without specialization does not have a negative connotation as the *Bollettino* and many other Italian migration experts vehemently emphasized. For Grazio, as for many other Casalvierani, the lack of specialization did not set him up for failure. At first glance, Grazio's explanation seems to reiterate the *24 Ore*'s laissez-faire doctrine and to echo the Italian authorities' rhetorical references to a quintessential and universal Italian genius. A genius that—almost by divine intervention—would have ultimately helped Italians succeed abroad.<sup>5</sup> Yet, when inserted in the province of Frosinone and Casalvieri local circumstances, Grazio's quote acquires a more original and complex meaning.

Lack of training, first and foremost, did not keep Casalvierani from emigrating. Torn between receiving countries' requests and Italian authorities' tardy remedies, many Italians used

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<sup>4</sup> "Autoqualificazione," Ibid. (10 June 1952), 178.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter 1 of this dissertation.

the sponsorship of relatives abroad to leave their hometowns and make the best of their few resources. By relying on family networks and support, these sponsored immigrants did not contradict Italian authorities' goals. On the contrary, they fed the *spontaneous* emigration—free from the states' interventions—that was welcomed and encouraged by Italian authorities willing to dispose of unemployed citizens. In a memorandum, drafted for the 1950 Paris Conference on Emigration, the Italian Ministry of Labor listed the prospective benefits for spontaneous emigrants:

When at the end of the war, the possibility to immigrate re-opened, there was a flourishing of sponsorship requests from Italians residents abroad in favor of their relatives and friends in Italy. This generated a spontaneous emigration which, in the last four years, reached 457 thousands units. This migratory flow is not only the more inexpensive but also the best because every worker who expatriates already has employment and accommodation waiting for him, furthermore—a very important psychological factor—persons who can assist them during the very delicate phase of the first settlement.<sup>6</sup>

Even more explicit were the words of Vittorio Ronchi—agronomist and then president of the ICLE (Institute of Credit for Emigrant Workers). During a conference on "the problem of emigration" held in the Northern city of Vicenza in January 1951, Ronchi argued:

[...] I classified our Italian immigrants as many employment agencies, but effective employment agencies that, generally, bring concrete results. Thus the main problem is to re-establish migratory flows in order to create nuclei of Italian workers in every receiving country.<sup>7</sup>

Italian state archives do not provide information about what appeared to be unskilled, yet resourceful "employment agencies." Casavvierani's accounts can fill the lacunae/as of the state

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<sup>6</sup> ACS, MLPS-DGCM, Div. IX, Box 453, F. 43 Carteggio del Ministero con le varie organizzazioni internazionali riguardanti i problemi dell'emigrazione. Anni 1948-1950." f."Conferenza Tripartita sull'emigrazione 24 luglio-10 agosto a Parigi (3171-3180), 1950."

<sup>7</sup> ACS, (PCM), Segreteria Particolare del Presidente del Consiglio Alcide De Gasperi (1945-1963), Box 24, "Emigrazione." F. " Il problema dell'Emigrazione. (Conferenza Tenuta a Vicenza il 7 gennaio 1951), January 7, 1951."

archival records. Most of the Casavvierani did not immigrate to North America because they were recognized as skilled workers. On the contrary, they were part of that army of who appeared to be unskilled individuals sponsored by relatives already abroad. They were those who, as shown by political scientist Freda Hawkins, were more likely to need public educational assistance in host countries. They required language programs, training, and assistance with housing.<sup>8</sup> Yet, as I argue in this chapter, Casavvierani's lack of training needs to be put in perspective. Many of my interviewees even became, after a difficult beginning, entrepreneurs. They usually did this in three stages: immigration, acquisition of technical skills, and creation of somewhat successful businesses.

In the previous chapter I emphasized the relative ease with which Casavvierani resorted to migration in response to the Italian postwar structural crises and to individual exigencies. I also pointed out that their response was reflective of a long and established local migratory tradition. This culture of mobility was undoubtedly a substantial part of Casavvierani migrants' toolkit. Casavvierani experienced emigration as children and adolescents. Indeed, many of them were born abroad, predominantly in France. A good percentage knew emigration indirectly by observing their fathers' circular migrations. In the rare cases in which an immigrant was the first of the family to leave Casavvieri, he or she would have collected a substantial baggage of stories and advice from the other Casavvierani. Previous experiences, indirect observations, and informal knowledge of emigration were so essential for prospective migrants that I consider them real skills.

Casavvierani were surely unskilled according to the American standards of training. Most of them lacked formal training—officially sanctioned by certifications and diplomas. For the

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<sup>8</sup> Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 11.

destination countries and, unfortunately, for migration scholars who focused prevalently on immigrants' experience *after* their migration, Casavvierani were backward and unskilled. For immigration authorities, Casavvierani as sponsored migrants did not fall in the category of skilled immigrants. When defining them as completely unskilled at the moment of their departure, only a-historical and universalist theories—such as an innate Italian genius or a natural inclination to hard work—can explain the somewhat entrepreneurial success encountered by the Casavvierani in North America a few years after their arrival.

Even if fortuitous opportunities found abroad allowed both the acquisition of skills and the establishment of business ventures, I argue that we cannot neglect what Roger Waldinger, Howard Aldrich, and Robin Ward define as pre-migration characteristics. These characteristics, the authors underline, include skills, language, business, experiences, and exposure to specific conditions—such as urbanization or industrialization—which enhanced entrepreneurial attitudes in the long run.<sup>9</sup> These pre-migration characteristics and the possibilities offered by both Italy and North America, and, as already noticed in the previous chapter, the informed use of their networks are all factors that shaped, encouraged, and defined Casavvierani's training and entrepreneurial experiences.

In the first part of this chapter, I focus on the training process adopted by the Casavvierani I interviewed. Unskilled, semi-skilled, or skilled in completely different fields, Casavvierani transformed, as Mr. Bruno and the *24 ore* suggested, their migratory project into an asset to attain vocational training principally in trades related to the building sector. Yet, I argue, the predominant choice of construction as a field of specialization was in part dictated by the Italian national government and the Frosinone provincial authorities' postwar incentives toward

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<sup>9</sup> Roger David Waldinger, *Ethnic Entrepreneurs, Immigrant Business in Industrial Societies* (Newbury Park, Calif., Sage Publications, 1990); Richard Swedberg, *Entrepreneurship, The Social Science View* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 377.

vocational training courses and school-sites (*cantieri scuola*) addressed to building trades. Here, I explore the opportunities offered to them at home and, afterwards, I investigate their informal and formal acquisition of skills between Italy, intermediary destinations, and North America.

In the second part of this chapter, I focus on Casalvierani's entrepreneurial experiences. By analyzing the micro-stratagems and the resources that the inhabitants of the town of Casalvieri exploited and capitalized on to become self-employed constructors, suppliers, and shop-owners in postwar Toronto, Windsor, Detroit, and the area between San Diego and Los Angeles, this chapter contributes to the increasing scholarly attention given to Italian immigrant entrepreneurship in two ways.

First, this chapter values pre-migration characteristics as an essential asset for Casalvierani's North American businesses. Previous literature on Italian immigrant entrepreneurship focused on the conditions that the ethnic entrepreneurs found abroad. The sole focus on the job market in the receiving countries—even if very important to evaluate these countries' predisposition toward economic and social integration of foreign subjects—misses many interesting insights. For instance, it does not explain exhaustively the apparent paradox of economic successes of the so-called backward Italian peasants and it continues to describe Italian migrants as detached from the rest of the Italians in Italy.<sup>10</sup>

There are, though, some enlightening exceptions. Virginia Yans-McLaughlin in her pioneering work on Italians in Buffalo, NY, at the end of the century and Judith Smith in her comparison between Italian and Jewish immigrants in Providence Rhode Island between 1990

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<sup>10</sup> On the necessity to integrate Italian migration to Italian national history see Matteo Sanfilippo, ed., *Emigrazione e Storia d'Italia* (Cosenza, Italy, Pellegrini Editore, 2003). One example of sole attention to postmigration characteristics is Samuel L Baily, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise, Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870-1914* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999). In this rich monograph Baily emphasizes the factors that pushed the inhabitants of Agnone, Italy, to choose emigration but he does not discuss what their background was. The main point of this work is to show that Italians became blue-collar workers in New York and white-collar or independent workers in the more hospitable Buenos Aires.

and 1940 emphasize the connections and continuities between old world customs and new world situations.<sup>11</sup> Basically, in their focus on immigrant family economies both authors show the significance of pre-migration ethnic characteristics in the shaping of immigrant families' adaptation to new environments. Yet, except for a few anecdotes, these two works do not look at the entrepreneurial virtues of the immigrant population and do not pay attention to local pre-migration experiences: the generic umbrella term of Southern Italians used by these authors is supposed to embrace the myriad of regional and local diversities that characterized and continue to characterize Italian migrants' cultural background.

Second, this chapter tells the stories of micro-entrepreneurs, namely Casalvierani who—forced by necessity or led by personal aspirations—became self-employed workers but did not fill the ranks of capitalist moguls. By looking closely at the processes and the resources that allowed Casalvierani to become self-employed, I offer a fresh perspective on Italian immigrants' response to the postwar capitalist economy. Casalvierani immigrant entrepreneurs were neither wealthy magnates nor exploited proletarians. The discussion on Casalvierani's 'in-betweenness' as neither capitalist moguls nor exploited laborers revises two incomplete and reductionist discourses on Italian migration: the story of the 'heroic entrepreneurs' who realizes his dreams in the land of dollars and the story of the horde of uninformed unskilled laborers to be 'ordered in bulk' within the miasma of capitalist and industrialized North America.

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<sup>11</sup> Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community, Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (University of Illinois Press, 1977); Judith E Smith, *Family Connections, A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940*, SUNY Series in American Social History (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1985).

## Part I: Getting Skilled

### *5.1 What Casalvieri Offered*

In the third chapter, I amply discussed the role played by Law 29 April 1949, n.264, in the Italian government's fight against unemployment. This law, the expert Agostino Figliozi observed in 1958, attempted to remedy the worsening of the post-WWII national unemployment rate. War-related destruction of industrial activities, imposed reduction of the emigration flow, and the vertiginous evolution of technology—which required increasing qualified manpower—all accounted for the staggering Italian unemployment.<sup>12</sup> For its part, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare promoted the institutions of school sites (*cantieri scuola*) and courses for the unemployed through the above mentioned 1949 law.

These two state initiatives—and especially the establishment of the school sites—principally interested areas of the peninsula with high unemployment and lack of immediate employment opportunities. In 1956, mountainous areas—like Casalvieri and the province of Frosinone in general—were in such terrible conditions that the Italian Parliament decided to allocate 50 percent of the school sites funding to municipalities located on the mountains.<sup>13</sup> School sites were divided in two categories: work sites (*cantieri di lavoro*) and reforestation camps (*cantieri di rimboschimento*).<sup>14</sup> The work sites specialized in the construction of a wide range of public works, such as roads, public buildings, aqueducts, and archeological excavations. The reforestation camps aimed at the reforestation and maintenance of mountains.

As regulated by the Law 19 April 1949, the Ministry of Labor—upon consultation of the Central Committee for the Training and Assistance to the Unemployed—was in charge of

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<sup>12</sup> Agostino Figliozi, “La Formazione Professionale Dei Lavoratori,” *Rassegna Del Lavoro*, no. 4 (1958), 1238.

<sup>13</sup> Agostino Figliozi, “I Cantieri Di Lavoro E Di Rimboschimento,” *Rassegna Del Lavoro*, no. 3 (1957), 204.

<sup>14</sup> The term *cantiere di lavoro* (work site) and *cantieri scuola* (school site) have been also used interchangeably.

allocating the funding for the establishment of school sites in the provinces with high unemployment rates. At the provincial level, the Office of Labor, along with the Prefecture and upon consultation with the Provincial Committee for the Employment, distributed the funds to territorial entities in need. Once the establishment of school sites was approved, the Ministry of Labor—through its local offices—financed the workers' and the instructors' salaries. The managing institutions— mostly municipalities and provincial administrations—that required the establishment of the school sites on their districts were responsible for providing the building material, technical equipment, and, if necessary, qualified manpower.<sup>15</sup>

The term "school" sites—Figliozi argued—was actually misleading. Learning, he argued, was not the priority for the workers employed in the school sites. Their main goal was to provide aid and subsidy for the unemployed of the area where they were established. It was basically social assistance, but an assistance that, rather than being reduced to charity, promoted the creation of employment for "the social valorization of the working energies otherwise condemned to economic sterility."<sup>16</sup> Financial retribution and the possibility to improve their own town's infrastructures were supposed to play as psychological incentives for the men employed in these sites.<sup>17</sup>

The establishment of school sites greatly helped the economy of the province of Frosinone after the end of the war. As shown in Figure 5 and 6, their number grew exponentially during the first half of the 1950s. Their establishment reached its acme in 1953 when the province hosted more than two hundred school sites and reforestation camps. In the period

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<sup>15</sup>Law 19 April 1949 in [http://www.inail.it/internet/default/Normativa/Bancadatinormativa/Normativanazionale/Leggi/p/dettaglioBDN/index.html?wlpnormativa\\_wcmplaceholder\\_1\\_contentDataF=PI014885523&wlpnormativa\\_wcmplaceholder\\_1\\_contentRegionTemplate=RT\\_DETTagLIO\\_NORMATIVA&\\_windowLabel=normativa\\_wcmplaceholder\\_1](http://www.inail.it/internet/default/Normativa/Bancadatinormativa/Normativanazionale/Leggi/p/dettaglioBDN/index.html?wlpnormativa_wcmplaceholder_1_contentDataF=PI014885523&wlpnormativa_wcmplaceholder_1_contentRegionTemplate=RT_DETTagLIO_NORMATIVA&_windowLabel=normativa_wcmplaceholder_1), last accessed April 15, 2014. See also, Figliozi, "I Cantieri Di Lavoro E Di Rimboschimento."206.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 212.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 221.

between 1950 and 1954, these sites and camps employed almost five thousand workers from the area. School sites—as already explained—relieved unemployment only temporarily. Yet, after the war, they were welcomed by local authorities as a real godsend.

The Frosinone provincial agents of the Ministry of Labor were not unique in welcoming these public works as a resource to fight unemployment. In the report regarding the first semester of 1950, they indicated: "the program of the *cantieri scuola* should be intensified, especially because there is no other alternative."<sup>18</sup> The lack of an alternative was particularly felt by the province's townships and by the local workers who saw in these public works income which supplemented their work in the fields. In the second semester of 1950, endorsing the benefits of the Law 29.4.1949 n. 264, the townships asked and obtained the establishment of forty five sites in addition to the twenty-three opened during the first semester.<sup>19</sup>

It is undeniable that school sites' immediate goal was assistance. Yet the descriptions of Casalvieri public works occurred between 1952 and 1962 documented in the Frosinone's Public Works Office Archive uncover a more nuanced scenario. In Casalvieri, the work sites—construction of public buildings and roads—played a vital role. In this small town of the Comino Valley, I argue, these work sites provided three main improvements: they temporarily relieved unemployment; they enhanced the town's infrastructure; they offered a brief and basic vocational training. Public works—mostly requested and managed by the township of Casalvieri—transformed inaccessible mule tracks into roads, connected the center of Casalvieri with its many

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<sup>18</sup> ACS, MLPS, DGAP, Div VI, Uffici del Lavoro e della Massima Occupazione (ULMO), Box 24, F. "15 a Frosinone," f. , "1950 Frosinone."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

country districts (*contrade*), allowed the building of an elementary school and a church, and promoted archeological excavations.<sup>20</sup>

The construction of roads helped Casalvierani, especially those living in the Casalvieri's districts, to escape their isolation; it reinvigorated communications and trade. Indeed, these works were largely welcomed by the districts' inhabitants. In September 1955, at the end of the works for the construction of the road connecting the districts of Olive and Collefossa (or Colle la Fossa) to Casalvieri downtown, the site manager wrote to the provincial Office of Labor, Provincial Administration, and Public Works Office to show his and the district population's gratitude for their technical and administrative guidance. The local inhabitants' gratitude went beyond a simple letter. At the end of the works, they organized a rural festival in honor of the site's workers and their instructors.<sup>21</sup>

The appreciation expressed toward provincial authorities demonstrates that Casalvierani looked at these works as a great occasion for their local economies and general enhancement of the town's activities. Yet, provincial authorities did not always lay a "smooth road" between Casalvieri and its districts. A case in point was the 1959 establishment of the work site for the construction of the road connecting the districts of Pecola, Sorelle, and Ponte Nassetta. The project presented by the Provincial Committee, managing authority of this work site, did not encounter the favor of the majority of the inhabitants of these districts and of the mayor. Apparently—the mayor of Casalvieri explained in a letter to the provincial authorities

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<sup>20</sup> Archivio di Stato di Frosinone (ASF), Genio Civile (GC), Cantieri Scuola (CS), Box 10, Title III, Class CF3, F. 87 "costruzione del museo chiesetta e scavi per ricerche archeologiche, n.d.;" F. 86 "sistemazione strada comunale Chierica-Frittata-Casalvieri, 1951-1954;" F. 88 "strada Casalvieri-Collefosse, 1954-1955;" F. 89 "comune di Casalvieri, prolungamento cantiere lavoro n.043960/L, costruzione Museo Antiquario-Chiesetta-Scavi archeologici, n.d.;" F. 91 "Casalvieri Cantiere n. 054164/L, costruzione strada comunale" and "Grotte dell'Acqua-Roselli, 1958-1959;" F. 92 "Comune di Casalvieri progetto per la costruzione della strada comunale "Sorelle-Pecola-Ponte Nassetta, 1958-1960;" F. 93 "Comune di Casalvieri, sistemazione della "zona limitrofa" alla chiesa madre, n.d."

<sup>21</sup> ASF, GC-CS, Box 10, Title III, Class CF3, F. 88, f. Cantiere di Lavoro n. 021116/4 di Casalvieri. Costruzione Strada Casalvieri—Olive—Collefosse, September 1, 1955."

themselves—the project they presented indulged "the aspiration of a few private citizens who wanted to valorize their family property and it did not take into account the desires and needs of the rest of the population."<sup>22</sup> The level of discontent was so high that the inhabitants of Sorelle collected a petition of two hundred signatures to solicit the Provincial Administration to build a completely different road, one of more use to them.

The direct involvement of the local inhabitants testifies both to their citizens' awareness and their anxiety to see their districts better connected to the city center. In the same letter, the mayor of Casalvieri highlighted that it: "is necessary to take into account that the inhabitants of these districts, during the works of one of the parts of the road, provided *voluntary* and *free* work just to see realized their aspirations to be connected to the provincial road and to Casalvieri downtown."<sup>23</sup> The voluntary and free help validate the fact that these work sites meant much more than financial aid for the local unemployed. It also reflects the Casalvierani's training. It was already 1959 when the works for this road, bone of contention, started. At the time, it is likely that a few Casalvierani had already been employed in the various work sites established during the 1950s. Their previous experiences and the skills acquired, therefore, could have put them in the actual conditions to serve the community.

The work sites benefitted the town infrastructure as well as the local population's skills. As I have stated, they were invaluable opportunities for the area's unemployed to make some money but also to learn something new, something different from agricultural knowledge. Casalvieri's unemployment rate and lack of a trained manpower mirrored, as often mentioned, the general conditions of the peninsula, and in particular, of the Italian south. The workers employed in the public work sites were not specialized or trained in any specific trade. Post-

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., F. 92, f. "Strada Allacciante le Contrade "Sorelle, Pecola, Ponte Nassetta al Centro di Casalvieri, July 31, 1959.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

WWII data and statistics clearly indicate this technological and training gap. A national statistical investigation, commissioned by the Ministry of Labor in 1955 and related to the education level of the enrolled in the unemployment lists, revealed the following scenario: 51.55 percent of the unemployed received a grade school diploma, 35.24 percent attended grade school but, ultimately, did not receive the diploma, 7.95 percent were illiterate.<sup>24</sup> It does not come as a surprise that the national average productivity of the work sites' employed was only 60 percent to 70 percent in comparison with that of regular workers.<sup>25</sup> Casalvierani were not an exception. Deprived of a basic education, these postwar unemployed were far from being skilled workers.

For all the above reasons, I argue that the training opportunities brought to town by the public works' initiatives and the exposure to new building techniques cannot be neglected. I am not denying that the 580 lire per day and the 3,000 lire at the end of the projects were not important for these men who tried to get by. Yet, focusing only on the financial gain would be mono-dimensional. Additionally, the terminology used in the documents concerning these public works seems to validate their *didactic* nature. The local workers employed in the construction of the various road extensions and continuations are listed as *apprentices*. The forty-two weekly hours were divided *in practical exercises* (thirty-nine hours) and *technical teaching* (three hours). The practical exercises probably indicated the hours spent working. Unfortunately, no documents indicate what the technical teaching consisted of.

In his report regarding the 1951 construction of the road connecting the district of Frittata to the larger centers of Sora and Atina, the site manager revealed that "theoretical lessons are taught regularly."<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, though, he did not indicate the nature of these lessons. Yet, the

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<sup>24</sup> Figliozi, "La Formazione Professionale Dei Lavoratori," 1232.

<sup>25</sup> Figliozi, "I Cantieri Di Lavoro E Di Rimboschimento," 221.

<sup>26</sup> ASF, GC-CS, Box 10, Title III, Class CF3, F. 86, f. "Costruzione Strada Allacciamento della Frazione Frittata con la Provinciale Sora-Atina nei Pressi del Bivio per Alvito, June 15, 1951.

1955 public work project on the road connecting Casalvieri to the districts of Olive and Collefossa listed a real didactic program. According to this program, the apprentices would have learned about the 1) importance of the roads as a means of communication, 2) classification of roads, 3) definitions of road axis, road profile, planimetry, and road sections, 4) diggings and fillings 5) materials employed 6) road gradient and use of bubble level 7) works along the road: road bumps, bridges, sewer covers, and wall scarps. The presence of site managers—equipped with specific certification and experience—in charge of the well-functioning of the works and of the apprentices' behaviors corroborates the instructional impulse behind these projects.<sup>27</sup>

In Casalvieri, the public works' rhythms coexisted with the agricultural ones. In 1955, the mayor of Casalvieri wrote to the Ministry of Labor after an altercation with the provincial Office of Labor regarding the construction of the road connecting the districts of Olive and Collefossa to Casalvieri. Briefly, the owners of the properties on which the road was supposed to be built asked to postpone the beginning of the works for fifteen days. These fifteen days—the mayor explained—would have allowed these owners to harvest the ripened grain cultivated on the land to be expropriated.

The mayor endorsed the Casalvierani's requests and strategically used the Ministry of Labor to balance the power of the provincial Office of Labor in matters of school sites. After all, the mayor reminded central authority that: "[...] during harvest time, the unemployed are in the condition to help for a work that the peasants (probably the owners of the land under construction) could not pursue by themselves." The mayor's message was clear; harvesting played the same role that the work sites played by providing employment. Similarly, in 1959 amidst the dispute between Casalvierani and the Provincial Administration for the building of the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., F. 88, f. "Cantiere di lavoro n. 021116/4 di Casalvieri. Costruzione Strada Casalvieri-Olive-Collefossa, September 1, 1955.

road connecting Sorelle, Pecola, and Ponte Nassetta, the mayor asked for financial reimbursement for a few districts' landowners. These latter individuals, the mayor indicated, suffered serious damages. Not only did the Provincial Administration neglect the interests of the local population but it also unlawfully occupied acreage, tore down centuries old oaks, olive trees, and grapevines, and dumped rubble on fertile lands.<sup>28</sup>

The arm wrestling between the municipality of Casalvieri and the provincial authorities shows that Casalvierani welcomed changes to their agricultural economy and status quo only when they actually benefitted the local population. In sum, work sites were divided into the "good" and the "bad." When these work sites put the interest of the few in front of that of the many, they were intrinsically bad. They did not bring about real improvement; they just damaged the area's main resources. Additionally, the safeguard of seasonal rhythms—like the harvesting period—reveals the co-existence in Casalvierani's aspirations for both future improvement and rooted agricultural practices. A few cases of absenteeism on the work sites with consequent withholding of daily paychecks and even layoffs suggest that a few Casalvierani treated the opportunity of public works as a supplemental income. This was an income that Casalvierani could do without when they were needed for work in the fields. Most importantly, for the purpose of this chapter, it uncovers Casalvierani's adaptability to new circumstances and relocation of their skills. After all, those who would have harvested the acreages hosting the new road were the same ones who would have installed sewer covers and road bumps.<sup>29</sup>

On the one hand, the frictions between Casalvieri and the provincial authorities provide insights into Casalvierani's flexibility, that same flexibility that afterwards allowed them to adapt to the North American environments. On the other hand, they help investigate how, even in the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., F. 92, f. "Strada Allacciante le Contrade Sorelle-Pecola-Ponte Nassetta al centro di Casalvieri, July 31, 1959, and f. "Disponibilità Terreno, Cantiere Cheole-Sorelle-Pecola-Ponte Nassetta, August 3, 1959.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

specificity of the work sites, migration operated as a "material heritage."<sup>30</sup> In May 1955, the Prefecture of Frosinone received a grievance from three Casalvierani—Bernardo, Serafino, and Virgilio—regarding the construction of the road connecting Collefossa and Olive to the center of Casalvieri. The three men denounced what they attested to be the illegal hiring of the work site's instructor, Pietro. According to the school sites' regulations, only unemployed residents in the municipality where the public works took place could be hired. Pietro—the three Casalvierani revealed to the Prefecture—was an unmarried resident of the nearby township of Casalattico, owner of a Lancia-Aprilia car, a tractor, and "with parents in England who made an enormous fortune over there." After having provided the picture of the affluent non-Casalvierano Pietro, the three men tried to move the Prefecture with compassion toward Casalvierani who, like them, were actually struggling to manage and to take care of a family.<sup>31</sup>

Surely, compassion did not come from the headquarters of the Italian police. A few months later, in July 1955, the police lieutenant of the nearby unit of Pontecorvo wrote to the Prefecture after investigating the facts. Apparently, the three accusers were "Casalvieri's mayor's men" who tried to impede the building of the road. After a careful reading of the documents, I concluded that it would be plausible that the three men actually aspired to Pietro's position. Pietro, the lieutenant explained, was born in the US in 1912 and was a resident of Casalvieri's district of Macchia. He was a building contractor until he became unemployed. He owned a Lancia-Aprilia car that was "in terrible conditions" and a non-operating American truck from the war. Pietro's parents lived in England but did not make a fortune. Most importantly, the lieutenant affirmed, he met all the criteria requested by the law. He was unemployed, he was a

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<sup>30</sup> See chapter 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>31</sup> ASF, Prefettura Frosinone (PF), II Versamento, series 1, category 25, F. 14 "Casalvieri Cantieri di Lavoro, 1949-1957." f. "Esposto a Firma di Bernardo e Serafino. Cantiere di Lavoro, July 6, 1955."

resident of Casalvieri, and, given his working experiences, he "possessed the specific technical knowledge for road constructions."<sup>32</sup>

The lieutenant also elucidated the accusers' profiles. Bernardo, born in 1927, was a resident of the nearby municipality of Vicalvi. He was actually the owner of more than nine acres of land. Agriculture was, indeed, his main occupation. Serafino, born in 1929, was another inhabitant of Vicalvi. His family owned almost five acres of land. In good financial condition, the unmarried Serafino had recently obtained a diploma in surveying. He could not be hired as the work site's instructor because "he had just received his diploma and lacked of the practical knowledge for the construction of a road." Virgilio was born in 1894, resided in Casalvieri, and was a construction worker. Even if Casalvierano and equipped with practical knowledge, Virgilio could not become an instructor because he owned more than two acres of land and, most importantly, he worked for Casalvieri public cemetery. In addition, he worked as an independent worker. He built burial niches and sold them to private parties for 10,000 lire each.<sup>33</sup>

Without getting to the heart of the matter, this altercation allows me to analyze the two main themes of this research—mobility and training—from a different angle. On one hand, it reiterates the concept of migration as a "material heritage" which I explored in the previous chapter. Pietro—born in the US probably by Casalvierani migrant parents—was already forty-three year old at the time of the events here described. Yet, the accusers and the police considered normal listing his emigrant parents and relatives' financial situation as measurement of this adult man's wealth or lack of it. With relatives in England, Pietro—the accusers assumed—surely did not need state aid. Even more surprisingly, the police—rather than disputing the reference to the emigrant relatives as an actual indicator of Pietro's wealth—felt compelled to underline that these

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

did not actually have financial success in England. In sum, relatives abroad were put at the same level of the other material properties.

Second, the brief biographies that the police provided regarding the subjects involved in this affair provide a few insights on their training. Serafino was capable of becoming a surveyor—a very distinguished level of education at the time. Virgilio—thanks to his skills in the building sector—was capable of obtaining two jobs, as a dependent on the Casalvieri cemetery and as an independent worker. The accused Pietro had a past as building contractor. The fact that the three men—entitled or not—used legal means to oust Pietro from the position of work site instructor suggests that this position was much desired. It would be mono-dimensional to exclude possible social and professional rewards for covering this position. For instance, a brand new graduate—like Serafino—could have used it as an opportunity to exercise his theoretical knowledge.

The province of Frosinone not only offered school sites but also technical schools for the young population and vocational training courses for the unemployed. In 1950, the more industrialized towns of the province hosted a few industrial technology schools and vocational training courses. Frosinone, like the rest of Italy, suffered serious deficiencies in the establishment and functioning of these schools. Adequate equipment was unavailable and, therefore, failed to satisfy the needs of the local population. Tables 10, 11, 12, and 13 show that these schools specifically addressed the necessity to prepare the young population of the province for the new professions requested from the evolving industrial society: mechanics, chemists, commercial employees, commercial accountants, and farm managers. Artisanal schools, even if present on the territory, were much less numerous.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> ACS, MLPS- DGAP, Div VI, ULMO, Box 24, F., "15 a Frosinone", F. "1950, Frosinone."

The province mostly offered courses for the unemployed. Among the many problems related to the province's high unemployment rate and structural deficiencies, the provincial committee for employment had to deal with local workers' requests to switch their qualifications from the agricultural to the industrial sector. The requests were too numerous to be effectively satisfied. The province of Frosinone mirrored the general situation of post-WWII Italy. The war events had brutally interrupted the vocational training and specialization of an entire generation of young men. Long military service, imprisonment, and internment truncated the professional aspiration of those who were school-aged individuals during the 1930s. Adults in the postwar period, these men wanted an opportunity to improve their skills.

The industrial training courses not only had to absorb the cohort of men whom WWII prevented from entering the job market as skilled workers, but also the younger generation who wanted to have better standards of living. After all, the prospect of an industrial job was more attractive. When compared to employment in agriculture, industrial jobs could offer better wages, more family aid, and an unemployment subsidy. The provincial committee members, though, knew very well that attending and successfully completing these courses was not at all a guarantee of employment. Indeed, they had to "adopt rigid selective criteria not to increase the number of unemployed of the industrial sector." The data clearly show this selectivity: only 35 percent of the 1021 applications for the industrial training courses received in the second semester of 1950 had been accepted.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly to the vocational schools, the training courses for the unemployed reaped the consequences of the inconsistent state action and of the lack of funding. The reports of the Ministry of Labor noticed in 1950: "It is necessary to denote that the short duration of these

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

courses and their deficient equipment do not accomplish the goal they were established for."<sup>36</sup> Similarly to the *Bollettino's* critiques to the Italian inefficiencies concerning vocational training, the employment agents of the Ministry of Labor itself pointed out the waste of funding without an actual improvement of the local manpower.

Yet, they also provided a solution to such waste. To obtain the most from the scarce funding available for the establishment of these courses, it was opportune—the agents observed in 1950—to limit these courses and activities to a few sectors. The construction industry and the tourist sector had to be privileged. On the one hand, the complete absence in the area of Frosinone of workers trained or specialized in the building sector requested investment in this field. On the other hand, the proximity of the internationally renowned Fiuggi thermal baths would have been pole of attraction for workers specialized in tourism. Figure 6 shows how, starting in 1952, funding had been allocated for the establishment of vocational courses (*corsi di addestramento professionale*) in the category of "building, road, railroad, and maritime construction." Figure 7 highlights how courses for construction workers—even if established later than those for agriculture and industry—soon got a foothold and absorbed most of the funding and administrative energies.

## 5.2 What They Found In America

Casalvierani lacked formal technical training yet they were very conscious of the necessity of acquiring skills—first and foremost English language skills—and of learning a craft. According to the circumstances encountered in North America, Casalvierani learned from scratch entirely new jobs, adapted and perfected skills previously learned at home or in other countries.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

After immigration, they went to schools, attended evening courses, and were trained on the job. A few of them even went through retraining. In sum, they adopted a variety of strategies to obtain the training and the confidence necessary to make their migration projects successful. Reaching back to Casalvieri but with an attentive eye toward the evolving North American job market, Casalvierani selectively picked the best from the old and the new conditions.

For instance, Ulderico immigrated to Windsor in 1954 and began working for free as an apprentice to a mechanic with the ambition of becoming one. Then, while working in a supermarket as shop assistant, he took evening English courses and, after having saved enough money, he enrolled in a four-year school in Detroit for appliance repair. Putting aside enough money for this tuition was not easy. Ulderico used to walk to work, in fact, to save the cost of bus fare.<sup>37</sup> Similarly Rodolfo, immigrated to Detroit in 1952, spontaneously sought out training. Rodolfo, actually, started preparing for his arrival in America before leaving Casalvieri. He hired the local elementary teacher, Dario, as a private English tutor. Once in Detroit, Rodolfo did not have to struggle to find a job. He had the opportunity to work in his father-in-law's already well-established construction company specialized in sewer pipe installation. Yet, Rodolfo decided to attend some vocational training courses.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly to Ulderico and Rodolfo, moving also meant specialization for Emilio. Born in Lyon to Casalvierani parents, in 1955 the fifteen-year old Emilio, along with the rest of his family, moved to Newark, New Jersey. For Emilio every single migration meant acquisition of new skills. Once in Newark, he went to school until the eighth grade. Then, while attending evening high school courses, he became an apprentice for a Casalvierano electrician in Newark. When at the beginning of the 1960s, Emilio moved to Los Angeles, he went back to school to

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<sup>37</sup> Ulderico V., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 5, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Aida D., telephone interview by author, August 30, 2013.

obtain the licenses and certifications required to open a construction company. A few years later, not satisfied with his level of training, Emilio enrolled in El Camino Community College to attend enhancement courses for carpenters.<sup>39</sup>

Unlike Ulderico, Rodolfo, and Emilio, Giuseppe R. and Erminio became skilled workers thanks to the Canadian government's and the employers' far-sightedness. In 1952, sponsored by one of his friends, Erminio arrived in Windsor with twelve other Casalvierani. He really liked Windsor because there were many Italians but, unfortunately, Erminio could not find a job. So, he moved to Sarnia, one of Canada's most important petrochemical industrial centers. Erminio's goal was indeed to be hired in one of Sarnia's oil refineries. To learn English faster, Erminio followed a friend's advice and stopped hanging out with other Italians. He went to live with a Canadian family while attending English evening courses offered to immigrants by the Canadian government. Erminio not only improved his language skills but he also enrolled in Sarnia's technical institute where he attended courses for plumbing and electrical systems.<sup>40</sup>

Eventually, this formal training allowed him to find a job in an oil refinery where he became an expert machine repairman. There were not many Italians in the refinery; maybe ten out of more than one hundred workers. The work was very hard. Erminio remembers that he even worked fifty-two consecutive hours. The managers used to give workers "wake-up tablets" to stay alert during these long shifts. At the time, factory workers—Erminio recalls—did not have national health insurance and neither was this provided by the employer. In the refinery where he worked, workers deposited five dollars per week in a sort of communal fund. In case of illnesses, workers could use this fund and obtain seventy percent of their pay. Erminio remembers these aspects very well because he was even elected union representative. He was

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Erminio I., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 14, 2011.

elected due to his good character and to his ability to speak both English and Italian. After twelve years in Canada, Erminio returned to Casalvieri.<sup>41</sup>

In 1949, at the age of twenty one, Giuseppe R. finally realized his dream; leaving Casalvieri and work in the fields. It was October when he landed in Rio de Janeiro and took the train toward São Paulo, Brazil. The choice of Brazil as his destination was very pragmatic. It was much easier at the time—Giuseppe told me—to meet the selection and the medical requirements for Brazil than it was for the United States or Canada. Once in the Brazilian metropolis, Giuseppe immediately found a job in a pasta factory owned and managed by Italian-Brazilians. Giuseppe really liked working there but he left this job to work in the better paid construction sector. In 1952, sponsored by one of his brothers, Giuseppe left Brazil for Windsor.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly to Erminio, he did not find many job opportunities in Windsor and temporarily moved to Sarnia. In these Canadian cities Giuseppe continued to work construction. Yet, he revealed to me, he had to learn everything from scratch again. The South American working techniques—much more similar to the Italian—were very different from the North American ones. While in Sarnia, he came to know that in Quebec employers were looking for workers to build electrical power stations. Once again, Giuseppe moved. He was in Quebec only three months because the work was almost completed.

Giuseppe's Canadian peregrinations ended in 1954. He heard rumors that in the northwest there was an abundance of jobs. Unmarried and willing to move again, Giuseppe found a job in a construction company in Vancouver, British Columbia. Giuseppe's training as a bricklayer helped him find this job. Yet, the company needed carpenters. The managers sent him to night schools to learn carpentry. Unlike Windsor and Sarnia, there were not many Italians in Vancouver. The

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Giuseppe R., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 12, 2011.

construction companies were managed and owned by Canadians. Giuseppe had two cousins who previously had moved to Vancouver but, afterwards, they left for California. The lack of an Italian network did not seem to deter Giuseppe's career or further professional advancement. In the twenty-three years spent in Vancouver, Giuseppe was promoted to supervisor and even started recruiting other Italian workers. He traveled all of the British Columbia to supervise the construction of banks, McDonald's, and fuel stations.<sup>43</sup>

Sometimes, Casaltvierani abandoned the trades they knew in Casaltvieri to embrace what were, in North America, more profitable jobs. An adaptation and willingness to change jobs, even going through a retraining process, to follow the demands of the market seemed very common among Casaltvierani. This was the case of Luigi C. In Casaltvieri, Luigi owned his own land. He divided his days between agricultural tasks and sheep farming. What he had—Luigi's son Sabino revealed to me—was enough for the family. Yet, Sabino clarified: "We worked hard, we had enough food, we did not need anything, but we could not become wealthy, there was no possibility to gain something extra." In search of that something extra, Sabino left for Paris in 1957. There, he started working as a bricklayer.<sup>44</sup>

Toward the end of the 1950s, Luigi went back and forth between Casaltvieri and Paris. When in Casaltvieri, he did not stop working in the building sector for it was actually back home that Luigi learned to fine tune his skills. In a small town like Casaltvieri—Sabino told me—the simple bricklayer was forced to become skilled at multiple stages in the building of houses. In sum, the scarcity of other trained construction workers forced workers like Luigi to learn the trick of every trade. Now a skilled construction worker and mostly a specialized tile settler, Luigi—sponsored by his brother—arrived in Toronto in 1961. At first he worked alongside his

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Sabino C. interview by author, Toronto Casaltvierano Club, July 1, 2012.

brother installing drywall. Yet, this work was very unsteady. Drywall installers mainly worked for three or four months when the Canadian weather allowed it. As a result, Luigi left this job to work as a bricklayer for another contractor. As soon as there was an opportunity, he left bricklaying to work as a tile settler—his specialty.<sup>45</sup>

Luigi soon realized, however, that his paycheck as a tile settler was not enough to save money for his family left behind, so he decided to find a job as a factory worker. He started in a Toronto sheet metal company, specializing in the production of heating systems. Life in the factory was really tough for Luigi. Indeed, he decided to leave the factory. As an Italian immigrant he experienced exclusion from the factory unions, generally composed of native or British workers. At the beginning of the 1960s—Sabino explained—the conservative government of John Diefenbaker did not favor non-British migrant workers. "If you were Scottish or English you could obtain unemployment aid," Sabino added. Luigi was so worried about his prospects in Canada that, in 1962, he wrote back home to his wife exhorting her to postpone the purchase of their children's tickets to Canada. Luigi then closely monitored the 1963 Canadian national elections, for if Diefenbaker was elected again, he would leave Canada and return to Italy.<sup>46</sup>

Awareness of the politics of the host country is a rarity among my interviewees. In Luigi's and his family's case, the defeat of Diefenbaker played a crucial role in the continuation of their migratory projects. Eventually, in 1964, the Canadian federal government launched the "winter program." On this program, construction workers willing to work during the winter months received a state incentive of five hundred dollars for each house built. The incentive had a very

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

positive effect on the building sector which started booming again. At this point, Luigi happily returned to work as a drywall installer.<sup>47</sup>

Luigi's transition into the Canadian job market was also characterized by learning the language. Thanks to his past experiences in Paris, Luigi was already fluent in French. Additionally, as a soldier during the WWII Balkan Campaign, Luigi learned to communicate in Croatian with migrant workers from the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In Canada, he learned English at the evening school. Yet, he wanted to actually master the language. A fortuitous encounter with a Protestant minister in a Toronto library provided Luigi with this opportunity. The minister, indeed, started giving him private lessons.<sup>48</sup>

Grazio's story shows the same degree of adaptability. In Casalvieri, Grazio had been trained as a shoemaker. He started his apprenticeship very young while still in grade school. In the morning he went to school and in the afternoon he learned the trade from a master shoemaker. At the age of thirteen, he was already so good that he began making sandals and was paid by the piece. For his young age, Grazio was already making good money. His financial situation was so promising that he did not want to leave with his family to Windsor. He was actually already dreaming about opening his own shoe shop in Casalvieri. He knew he could have made a lot of money during the summer when the emigrants returned to visit. His mother was not at all thrilled about Grazio's idea. She did not want to leave him alone in Casalvieri especially because the young Grazio used to "fall in love with every girl who smiled at him."<sup>49</sup>

Grazio arrived in Windsor in 1956. During the first years in Canada, he did every type of job: pizza delivery boy, worker for a company that built house trailers, and carpenter. In 1963,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Grazio I., interview by the author, Windsor Ciociaro Club, July 6, 2012.

Grazio married a woman from the Comino Valley whose parents had moved to Detroit before the war. There, he started working in construction. In 1964, he opened his first construction company along with his wife's cousin. The two worked for Michigan Bell. This job—Grazio admitted—did not require excessive training. They just had to excavate the tracks for telephone wires.<sup>50</sup>

Afterwards, Grazio realized that plumbing was even more profitable. While still working for Michigan Bell, he started assisting other plumbers and reading specialized books trying to grasp the basics of this trade. This informal training soon became formal. He started an apprenticeship and studied to pass two exams to obtain at first the license to install plumbing systems and, then, the master plumber's license. This latter allowed Grazio to become an independent plumber and to found the Metro Plumbing Company in 1974.<sup>51</sup> Grazio's slow passage to independent work is quite common among Casalvierani in North America. The conditions that allowed Casalvierani to become independent workers and to establish businesses deserve more attention.

## Part II: Entrepreneurship Between Theory and Practice

### *5.3 Common Cultural Patrimony, Trust, and Networks: Theoretical Analysis*

Starting in the 1990s, the path-breaking studies by sociologists Howard E. Aldrich and Roger Waldinger brilliantly shed light on the advantageous conditions that immigrant entrepreneurs usually face compared to native entrepreneurs. Indeed, these scholars argue that the sharing of common tastes—especially for culinary products—and cultural background makes immigrant entrepreneurs more inclined to understand, and to win, co-ethnic consumers. Additionally, the ‘subculture dimension of ethnicity’—that is, the various social structures which

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

link members of a distinct ethnic group to one another—plays the role of support and parachute for neophyte entrepreneurs in the foreign economic and social environment of the receiving countries.<sup>52</sup>

In 2000, Ivan Light and Steven Gold provided overarching, systematic, and precious data and observations regarding the organization and development of ethnic economies and businesses in America. Light and Gold enriched the understanding of ethnic entrepreneurship by emphasizing that, like ethnicity, the family and the gender makeup of an ethnic group shape, not always in positive and beneficial ways, its economic adaptation.<sup>53</sup> The second half of the 2000s saw the publication of essays examining the significance of trade diasporas and their entrepreneurial networks in both early modern and modern societies, and of works which provided theoretical explanations as well as case-studies related to the impact of transnational entrepreneurs on global economic development.<sup>54</sup>

Most of the studies entirely dedicated to immigrant entrepreneurship have been written by sociologists, and a good part of these focus on contemporary immigrant flows to Europe as well as to the Americas. While the sociological literature on immigrant entrepreneurship equipped historians with much needed theoretical framework, it does not emphasize the contingent aspects of the entrepreneurial experiences of historical migrants and does not resonate with broader historical contexts.

In her article about Italians in American food industries, Donna Gabaccia, historian of migration, stated that, quite paradoxically in a country that believes that “the business of America

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<sup>52</sup> Waldinger et Al., "Ethnic Entrepreneurs, in Swedberg, *Entrepreneurship*, 370.

<sup>53</sup> Ivan H. Light and Steven J. Gold, *Ethnic Economies*, (San Diego, CA, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2000), 137 and 155.

<sup>54</sup> Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, and Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou, eds., *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks, Four Centuries of History* (Berg Publishers, 2005); Benson Honig, *Transnational and Immigrant Entrepreneurship in a Globalized World* (University of Toronto Press, 2010).

is business,” studies concerning immigrant entrepreneurship and business did not gain enough attention.<sup>55</sup> Yet, I must emphasize that some historians, even with all the limitations already discussed, did pay attention to immigrant entrepreneurship: Yans-McLaughlin and Smith are cases in point. Furthermore, some other historians—such as Lizabeth Cohen and Kristin Hoganson,—used the practice of consumption to investigate the constructions of ethnicity and gender, to examine the leisure time of the ethnic working class, and to shed light on the politics of consumption.<sup>56</sup> Theirs are enlightening historical works that provide important information on immigrants as consumers, but they did not delve deeply enough into their entrepreneurial strategies.

The lack of attention to Italian entrepreneurial strategies is also common to some works on postwar Italian immigration. Franca Iacovetta in her brilliant and exhaustive monograph concerning postwar Italian immigration to Toronto, affirms, “this book has certain limitations [...] little space is devoted to immigrant entrepreneurs or to the community’s elite structures.”<sup>57</sup> If scholarship on Italian immigrants to Canada neglected immigrant entrepreneurs, the scholarship on Italian immigrants to California overemphasized the stories of Italian bankers and captains of industry.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Donna Gabaccia, “Ethnicity in the Business World, Italians in American Food Industries,” *Italian American Review* (Vol. 1, 1998), 1.

<sup>56</sup> For the connection between ethnicity and consumption see, Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic, The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, 1st ed (New York, Knopf, 2003); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal, Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements, Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Temple University Press, 1986); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium, The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Smith, *Family Connections*; Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community*.

<sup>57</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People, Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*, (Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), xxxviii.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew F Rolle, *The Immigrant Upraised; Italian Adventurers and Colonists in an Expanding America*, 1st ed. (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1968); Paola A. Sensi-Isolani and Phylis C. Martinelli, *Struggle and Success, An Anthology of the Italian Immigrant Experience in California*, (New York, Center for Migration Studies, 1993); Marquis James, *Biography of a Bank; the Story of Bank of America N.T. & S.A.*, (New York, Harper, 1954).

A few years later, the lack of historiographical attention to Italian immigrant entrepreneurial dynamics started to concern scholars of Italian migration on the other side of the Atlantic. In 2005 the journals *Memoria e Ricerca* and *Studi Emigrazione* dedicated articles to self-employed and entrepreneurial Italian immigrants. Particularly crucial was the contribution of Emilio Franzina. In the midst of an increasing and imposing literature concerning Italian capitalist moguls who found success abroad, Franzina argues, the knowledge of Italian immigrants' micro-entrepreneurship remains underdeveloped and isolated.<sup>59</sup> Casavvierani's experiences as small-scale entrepreneurs developed at the same time and beside the better known and analyzed mass of unskilled Italian birds-of-passage.

The case-study offered in this chapter replies to Franzina's plea to show that Italian immigrants to North America found entrepreneurial solutions to the problems that encouraged them to leave Italy. The Casavvierani's case demonstrates that these entrepreneurial solutions were not always the result of a desperate struggle to achieve economic success—as perpetrated by the mythical figures of the self-made-men and of the wealthy “American Uncle” but of the strategic exploitation of the contingent possibilities offered by the new socio-economic *milieu*; new opportunities that Casavvierani did not hesitate to interpret, employ, and adapt from their cultural, social, and personal backgrounds.

For the majority of my interviewees their training went hand in hand with the establishment of independent businesses. Entrepreneurship usually evokes financial capital, skills, and education, but the example of Casavvierani reorients this common image. Most of my

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<sup>59</sup> Emilio Franzina, “Storie d'imprenditori, di emigranti e di qualcuno che li studia,” *Memoria e Ricerca*, 13 no. 8 (June 18, 2005), 9-19. In this same issue see also Stefano Luconi, “Dalla nicchia al mercato, l'imprenditoria italo-americana a Providence, Rhode Island,” *Memoria e Ricerca* 13, no. 18 (June 18, 2005), 21-39. Dominic Candeloro, “Gente che conosce davvero la propria cucina, l'imprenditorialità; tra gli italiani a Chicago dal 1850 a oggi,” *Memoria e Ricerca* 13, no. 18 (June 18, 2005), 41-59. Saverio Battente, “Introduzione,” *Memoria e Ricerca*, 13 no. 18 (June 18, 2005), 5-8. In *Studi Emigrazione* see René Leicht, Marcus Leiss, and Silke Fehrenbach, “Social and Economic Characteristics of Self-Employed Italians in Germany,” *Studi Emigrazione* (XLII, 158, 2005), 285-307.

interviewees were, at the moment of their departure, in possession of a fifth grade education; not all of them attended vocational schools or courses when adolescents; they did not have enough money to establish a business from zero. The investigation of the Italian national and local entrepreneurial *milieu* helps evaluate what Casalvierani saw and knew about business and independent labor before leaving their hometown.

The work of economic historians concerning Italian ‘industrial districts’ explores the economic characteristics of some parts of the Italian peninsula, including the center where Casalvieri is located. Small businesses and firms characterized by a low-cost workforce, diffusion of the putting-out system, and a fragmentation of the domestic market, were and are one of Italy’s main economic elements. What the British economist Alfred Marshall called "Italian industrial districts" were and still are the financial backbone of some areas of the Italian North and Central regions. The economist Giacomo Becattini describes the Italian district as "a territorial system of small and medium-sized firms producing a group of commodities whose manufacturing processes can be split into different phases."<sup>60</sup> The economic historians Franco Amatori and Andrea Colli emphasize the social embeddedness of these districts. Geographical clustering and production process fragmentation—at the root of the single-stage activities linked to each other—also continued to exist in periods of economic crises, Amatori and Colli argue, because "they are embedded in a complex social structure largely dependent on local traditions."<sup>61</sup> The local dimension of the Italian industrial districts protects its characteristic small-scale production from the fluctuations and difficulties to which large corporations are

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<sup>60</sup> Giacomo Becattini, "Riflessioni sul Distretto Industriale Marshalliano come Concetto Socio-Economico," *Stato e Mercato*, XXV (1989), 111-128.

<sup>61</sup> Franco Amatori and Andrea Colli, "Entrepreneurship in Italy," Ioanna Minoglou and Cassis Youssef, eds., *Country Studies in Entrepreneurship, A Historical Perspective* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 139.

subjected. For instance, the Fascist economic policies and the 1970s oil crisis did not affect the performance of Italian small and Italian medium firms.<sup>62</sup>

Present on the Italian peninsula since the nineteenth century, these forms of production—usually specialized in the manufacture of goods requesting light machinery (furniture, household products, textiles)—found their origins in peasantry. Amatori and Colli emphasize that it was in the areas where sharecropping was diffused that these industries flourished. Among the Italian peasants' economic and survival strategies there was emigration—as already analyzed—and also the habit to supplement agricultural profits by producing goods. The province of Frosinone, where Casalvieri is located, presents the characteristics of the industrial districts. The territory of the province is, indeed, famous for furniture making and for paper mills. Most importantly, Casalvieri developed the industry of balloons and is today among the world major producers of balloons.

The correlation between the culture surrounding the Frosinone and Casalvieri's industrial districts does not imply that every Casalvierano was capable of performing independent work, or that he or she was ready to become an entrepreneur abroad. Some Casalvierani in the United States and Canada—I want to be clear—did not become independent workers. Even though some of them had previous experiences in industrial jobs, the majority worked the land. Yet, what is important to single out is that Casalvierani in postwar Italy were not isolated from the realities of small businesses; they were not simply backward peasants without any knowledge of manufacturing jobs. Denying *a priori* that the province and the Comino Valley's small firms did not influence prospective Casalvierani emigrants would be reductive and would not help examine deeply the pre-migration characteristics of the entrepreneurs here analyzed.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 138.

For the purpose of this chapter, I want to call attention to the resources available to the local entrepreneurs of these industrial districts. Once again, the reflections of Amatori and Colli are relevant. In order to be efficient, these entrepreneurs needed *flexibility* and *family*. They had to be flexible enough to shift from one production to another and to count on their own families as a source of both labor and financing. Most importantly, these entrepreneurs had to be very savvy in building networks and relationships with individuals (*i.e.* customers and suppliers) and institutions (*i.e.* banks) rooted in the reality of the local community. In his “Networking the Market: Evidence and Conjectures from the History of the Italian Industrial Districts,” Andrea Colli provides a precious definition of these local entrepreneurial networks:

Ties of residence, kinship, ideology and political affiliations, values and shared mental models were considered not just as indicators of ‘local’ homogeneity, but also as ‘devices’ that can be used to reduce, in a significant measure, uncertainty and transaction costs, while, at the same time, promoting trust and cooperation at various levels.<sup>63</sup>

Personal ties, geographic clustering, and a shared cultural patrimony were tools that Casavvierani knew how to use, optimize, and exploit when ready to migrate and, once emigrated, when ready to establish their businesses. They were knowledgeable about both the possibility of emigrating and—this point is crucial for understanding their skilling process—the local resources that would allow them to efficaciously absorb setbacks along the way.

The concept of “opportunity hoarding,” theorized by Charles Tilly in 1998, best describes Casavvierani's modest success as contractors in the North American building industry. Drawing on oral interviews with Italian immigrants from the town of Roccasecca to Mamaroneck, New York, Tilly describes and explains the high concentration of Roccasecca immigrant entrepreneurs in the landscape gardening sector. The connection between Roccasecca and Mamaroneck was

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<sup>63</sup>Andrea Colli “Networking the Market, Evidence and Conjectures from the History of the Italian Industrial Districts,” *European Yearbook of Business History* (Vo.1, 1998), 82.

established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century and, once the borders opened again, was revitalized by a new round of postwar immigrants.<sup>64</sup>

Casalvierani and Roccaseccani's migratory patterns share many common characteristics. Like Casalvieri, Roccasecca is located in the province of Frosinone. Active family networks explain the post-WWII re forging of the route from Roccasecca to Mamaroneck, like that of the Casalvieri to Detroit. Similar to the Casalvierani, Roccaseccani fashioned an immigrant niche. The similarity between these two immigrant groups, I argue, also encompasses the strategies utilized to create entrepreneurial niches. Like the Roccaseccani, Casalvierani sequestered technical knowledge, established ties to wealthy households, acquired a reputation for good work and accessed to capital within an ethnically defined network.<sup>65</sup>

Networks were determinant for the success of the migratory projects as well as for the start-up of businesses abroad. In his revision of Waldinger, Aldrich, and Ward's model Enrico Pozzi locates networks among what he calls the structural/social resources of the immigrant entrepreneurs. Networks, Pozzi explains, were at the base of the collection of knowledge and information concerning the new job market and the possibilities offered. "The neo-entrepreneur has to be put in the more or less informal position of evaluating the level of protection of specific sectors of the internal market, the levels of competitiveness, the potential niches of the external market, the specific skills required and their effective value."<sup>66</sup> In sum, information was and continues to be a key factor.

It is crucial, at this point, to more closely observe the meaning(s) of information. The Casalvierani's migratory and entrepreneurial behaviors show that the information gathering

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<sup>64</sup> Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality* (Berkeley, Calif, University of California Press, 1998), 91.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 153.

<sup>66</sup> Enrico Pozzi, "Le Camere di Commercio italiane all'Estero nel Secondo Dopoguerra (1946-1998)," in Giulio Sapelli, ed., *Tra Identità Culturale E Sviluppo Di Reti, Storia Delle Camere Di Commercio Italiane All'estero (La Memoria Dell'impresa)* (Milano, Rubbettino, 2000), 253.

process was based on geographical clustering, and on the reliability of the informants based on an intimate knowledge of the informants. Indeed, what really motivated Casalsvierani to leave was not the mere content of the information but the *quality* of the sources that provided that information. An informant was reliable if s/he was part of one's kinship network and/or shared the same cultural and moral norms. Postwar Casalsvieri was a society in which the given word, promises, and personal moral conduct played a significant role. In sum, trust was a key component.

The application of what economists Mark Casson and Andrew Godley define as the 'spatial dimension of culture' helps to investigate the correlation between culture and trust in the entrepreneurial adventures of Casalsvierani. The two scholars argue that "spatial agglomeration is important in the formation of a social group. People who live in the same small town are likely to meet each other regularly, and therefore have plenty of opportunities to influence one another's view."<sup>67</sup> Geographical proximity allows not only a faster and more economic exchange of valuable news but it also permits the participants in the exchange to speak the same cultural language. As noted by Casson and Godley, cultural factors are important in economic growth—in the Casalsvierani's case in the establishment of businesses abroad—because they simplify decisions. Along with simplification and efficiency of information exchange and decision making, reduction of uncertainty in economic investments and in economic relations acted as another significant element.

Bart Nooteboom defines trust as "a governance device [...] that helps to reduce transaction costs and had the advantages of low cost and flexibility due to lesser need of detailed

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<sup>67</sup> Mark Casson and Andrew Godley, "Cultural Factors in Economic Growth," Mark Casson and Andrew Godley, eds., *Cultural Factors in Economic Growth*,. (Berlin, Springer, 2000), 7.

contracts.”<sup>68</sup> Casalvierani immigrant entrepreneurs had known each other since childhood, and their families interacted on a daily basis. Most importantly, Casalvierani immigrant entrepreneurs abroad were go-betweens. Virtually all my interviewees have been cultivating relations with Casalvierani left behind for their entire lives. Frequent visits home, letters, phone calls, remittances, and real estate investments in Casalvieri connected, and continue to connect them to their hometown. Even if on the other side of the Atlantic, Casalvierani immigrants knew very well that the adoption of devious entrepreneurial strategies or, generally, misconduct would have had repercussions both in Casalvieri and, quite probably, in the Casalvierani communities in Canada and in the United States. Therefore, they were less inclined to behave wrongly. In sum, belonging to Casalvieri reduced uncertainty, made transactions faster, and gave birth to a sort of long-distance moral control.

#### *5.4 Common Cultural Patrimony, Trust, and Networks: Practical Use.*

The importance of a promise, of the ‘given word,’ and of personal honor in postwar Casalvieri is detectable in many of my interviewees’ accounts. In 1952 the twenty-six year old schoolteacher Alfonso was dealing with his father’s death from cancer, and with the many debts that he and his family had to contract with relatives and friends to provide his father with medical treatment. The absence of public welfare and the insufficient paycheck of schoolteachers encouraged Alfonso to join his brother and one cousin in Toronto in 1953. As soon as he arrived in Toronto, Alfonso accepted the most humble jobs. He cleared snow from driveways; he worked as a landscaper—sometimes without having permission to do it but hoping that the house owners would reward him in some way; he learned, what in his words was, a ‘stupid job’:

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<sup>68</sup> Bart Nooteboom, “Trust as a Governance Device,” *Ibid.*, 22.

lathing. Alfonso said: "finding a job and extinguishing debts became a mission for honest people who gave their word or a handshake."<sup>69</sup>

To maintain his promise and defend the honor of his word, Alfonso went through what contemporary scholars define as "brain waste."<sup>70</sup> At the moment of his departure, Alfonso had passed the state exam to teach in public schools, and had just received his eldest brother's sponsorship from Toronto. He was at a crossroads. The choice fell on Toronto because he knew he had to pay back his debts as soon as possible. Even the choice of working in a field, a position for what he was not trained, was made with his honor in mind. Alfonso could have returned to school and, after learning English, he could have used his teaching skills. Yet, he was really worried that his accent would cost him his students' respect. Besides his concern for his honor, working in construction would allow him to repay the debt faster. Despite the initial hard time, Alfonso pursued the path of entrepreneurship. After working as a dependent worker for another contractor, he started his own construction company. In the long run, his above-average school education allowed him to become a financial expert. A part of his wealth came from investments in the stock market.<sup>71</sup>

An aspiration to become independent worker was widespread, as in the case of Grazio who wanted to open his own shoe shop in Casalvieri before leaving for Canada. Yet, as it emerged in my interviews, the transition from dependent to independent work was usually dictated by a series of external circumstances. External factors—out of Casalvierani's own control—shaped their entrepreneurial adventure. For example, Ulderico arrived in Windsor in

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<sup>69</sup> Alfonso D., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 3, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Brain waste occurs when migrant specialists are employed in the immigrant countries in functions below their skills and qualifications. See, Marchal Bruno and Kegels Guy, "Health Workforce Imbalances in Times of Globalization: Brain Drain or Professional Mobility?," *International Journal of Health Planning and Management* 18 (2003), 93.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

1954 sponsored by his older sister. In Casalvieri, Ulderico had worked the small balloon industry. The pay, though, provided only enough to eat. To make matters worse, Ulderico had to give 400 lire per day to his mother. A few months after his arrival in Canada, Ulderico found a job as shop assistant in the fresh produce sector of a supermarket. When the Jewish owners sold the business, their son opened a small fruit shop and hired Ulderico.<sup>72</sup>

When this small shop closed in 1961/62, Ulderico was left unemployed and suffering from the Canadian economic downturn that hit also Luigi. By this time, though, Ulderico was a Canadian citizen and received the unemployment aid. Counting on his training as an industrial electrician, in September of 1962, Ulderico called the unemployment office and left his credentials hoping to find a job. He recalled that he was willing to do any job and even to move north. Being an independent worker was not in his plans. In 1957/58, allured by the auto industries' better salaries, he had applied to work at a Chrysler plant and was given good recommendations. Yet, he was never called. After two months of unemployment, Ulderico decided to transform his side job repairing TVs and radios while working as the shop assistant into his main activity. Less than a year after his phone call to the unemployment office, in March 1963, Ulderico called the office again. This time, though, Ulderico called to find employees for his own business.<sup>73</sup>

Ulderico opened a small electronic shop and worked as technician for TVs and radios. Between 1962 and 1963, both the Canadian economy was improving and Udelrico's new business began to pick up. Ulderico was not alone in his entrepreneurial adventure. His wife Maria Pia, married in 1961, was essential to the management of his business.<sup>74</sup> Maria Pia, as

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<sup>72</sup> Ulderico, interview by author, Casalvieri, August 5, 2011.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> See previous chapter.

many other women from Casalvieri, was a good partner inside and outside the house. Wives were often responsible for the management of the family activities and finances. Fiscally savvy women were fundamental in the success of the migratory project. Alfonso related tales of friends who had to return to Italy because their wives spent money so extravagantly in Canada that "it was worth returning to Italy."<sup>75</sup> Ulderico and Maria Pia were careful with their resources, though, and continuously invested in their business. Six years after Maria Pia's arrival, they were able to open a larger shop and began selling appliances. Six years after that, they left the appliance business and opened a furniture store. Consequently, Ulderico and Maria Pia not only changed businesses but also their customer base. They began advertising on the Italian radio station of Windsor but expanded their target audience to include Canadians to increase their clientele.

Once abroad emigrant daughters and wives aspired to play more significant roles in their families and communities. They attended courses, gained skills, and became entrepreneurs themselves. In 1954, at sixteen, Flora joined her father and brother in Toronto. Flora had already been trained as a seamstress in Casalvieri. Once in Toronto, Flora could not work as a self-employed seamstress because she lacked the necessary English skills. Yet, her previous training enabled her to find a job in a garment factory where she tailored pants. She was a factory worker for four years. In the meantime, she married her Casalvierano husband by proxy and had two children. The factory years and a brief but intense two-month long English course helped Flora acquire self-confidence. She also realized that in Canada, unlike in Italy, seamstresses were not in high demand. On the contrary, there was a demand for hairdressers.<sup>76</sup>

In 1959/1960, one of Flora's friends told her about a cosmetic school. Flora—attracted by the idea of learning a new trade and being in close contact with customers—did not waste any

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<sup>75</sup> Alfonso D., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 3, 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Flora P., interview by author, Toronto, Casalvierano Club, July 1, 2012.

time. She had already saved enough money to pay for the five hundred dollar tuition for this evening school. During the first year of school, Flora continued to work in the garment factory. She got up at five in the morning, started working at six, and, at the end of her shift, she took the bus to go to her evening courses. She returned home at night, usually after ten. The presence of Flora's widowed mother-in-law—who joined Flora and her husband in the second half of the 1950s—in her house alleviated Flora's hectic routine. The grandmother helped Flora raise her two children. In 1960, Flora left the factory and dedicated herself full time to the cosmetology course. In three months she completed the hours necessary to pass a test and obtain a diploma.<sup>77</sup>

At the end of her training, Flora started working as a dependent worker for other hairdressers. In 1962, Flora and her husband chose to avoid an excessive mortgage and bought a small house whose mortgage they could pay off quickly. Their "small thinking" paid off in 1964 when Flora was able to open her own salon. Similarly to other Casalvierani who worked in construction, the salon did not require a huge financial investment. She rented a place, bought medium quality material, and did not spend much on fancy interior design. Her business prospered. Unfortunately, the 1960s was the period of towering hairstyles, and Flora ended up having problems with her arms. Unable to withstand the physical demands of hairstyling, she relinquished her full-time practice but continued to alternate housework with occasional outside work as personal hairdresser for favored customers.<sup>78</sup>

Flora's time and financial investment in her retraining were beneficial to the entire family. As an independent worker, she had the freedom to manage her own time. This flexibility enabled her to dedicate time to care for her children and home. In addition, she did not have to commute to the factory anymore, which saved her both energy and time. Her entrepreneurial spirit—

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

subordinated to her family's necessities—stemmed from her pre-migration training. In Casalvieri, as a seamstress, she would have worked at home for her customers while taking care of the family and, probably, also performing occasional field work. Like Grazio and Luigi, she had to retrain herself when she arrived in Canada and learned a trade that was in greater demand in her new homeland. She adapted her original ambitions to new circumstances. The importance of her individual personality—energetic and dynamic—cannot be underestimated. For instance, Flora would have supported her husband (a specialized tile setter) to become an independent worker, but he encouraged her to pursue her own dreams and goals.

Flora was not the only female entrepreneurs I interviewed. As was the case for many Casalvierani, Onorio T. and his wife's 1962 emigration from New York to Los Angeles marked the beginning of their entrepreneurial activity. Onorio T.'s wife, unlike other women who had migrated from Casalverì to California, was the one who started and made the family business possible. When she joined Onorio in New York, he was a factory worker producing radio boxes and poker chips. Afterwards—thanks to his foreman brother—he obtained a job in a plastics factory. In Los Angeles, Onorio found a job in one of California's then thriving industrial sectors: aircraft manufacturing. His wife, like Flora, adapted her fine skills as seamstress to the US garment industry at first in New York and, after their relocation, in California.<sup>79</sup>

In Los Angeles, a series of fortuitous events offered Onorio's wife the possibility to climb the factory hierarchy. The owner of the garment factory where she was employed was a Mexican woman. The young Casalvierana seamstress soon became a trusted employee and was quickly promoted to serve as the owner's personal assistant. The two non-American women not only developed a productive working relationship, but they also became very good friends. Onorio

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<sup>79</sup> Onorio T. interview by author, Casalvieri, August 6, 2012.

and his wife had even chosen the Mexican employer to be the godmother of their second son, but she died unexpectedly. The man who rented the machines to the deceased owner offered them to Onorio's wife if she was interested in taking over the business. After all, she had learned it inside and out. She knew how to manage the factory and she was also a trained seamstress. In addition, the majority of the employees were Mexicans and Onorio and his wife had learned Spanish quickly and well by working side by side with other Latin American workers. (Onorio had previously learned Spanish when he worked side by side with other Puerto Rican workers in New York.) The ability to communicate with the other workers and Onorio's wife's expertise worked in their favor and positioned them well to consider taking over the garment business.<sup>80</sup>

The couple decided to invest. The financial investment was not particularly exorbitant. They had to continue to rent both the place and the machines and Onorio was able to continue his own job at another factory. At the beginning, his wife managed the entire business by herself. Whereas her activity thrived, the factory where Onorio worked went through several crises. He was even laid off for several months. The instability of his factory job encouraged him to live and dedicate all his energies to the financial management of the garment factory. His wife continued to supervise workers and to handle the artisanal side of the business. Onorio and his wife progressively bought the necessary machines. They started with just fourteen workers and slowly augmented their workforce to more than one hundred at the beginning of the 1970s.<sup>81</sup>

The stories of Flora and Onorio's wife showed that women from Casavieri, like their male counterparts, had the requisite training and willingness to embrace new training and business opportunities to become entrepreneurs. Shared gender norms in both the sending and the receiving countries regulated and shaped these conditions. Like majority of working women,

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

women from Casalvieri were also expected to serve as their children's primary caregivers. Grandmothers and the proximity of relatives played a huge role in helping these women juggle their responsibilities. Their pre-migration training and know-how helped them as much as it helped male Casalvierani. Gender norms shaped the contours of their pre-migration training. Both women (Flora and Onorio's wife) had been trained as seamstresses—one of the very few artisanal crafts to which Italian women had access at the time. Casalvierani, as many other Italians, were accustomed to seeing their women working as seamstresses at home or in local shops.

In both cases, the two women thrived as independent workers in businesses that the sending as well as the receiving countries accepted as women's occupations. Most importantly, their working outside the house did not pose a threat to their family's well-being. On the contrary, it allowed Flora to be flexible and to take better care of her family. The possibility of becoming an independent worker presented itself to Onorio's wife because of her previous training, knowledge of the garment industry, work ethic, and language skills. It was also possible because of the social environment of the garment factory. Onorio's wife's friendship with her female non-American employer cannot be ignored when analyzing her unique opportunity to acquire management skills on the ground.

It is undeniable that a good husband and wife relationship—partially strengthened by the spouses' shared moral norms—contributed greatly to the positive outcome of the couple's entrepreneurial activity. Besides this very intimate relationship, partnerships with other Casalvierani played a crucial role as well. As argued in Waldinger et al., partners "are also to be secured through contacts with co-ethnics. Partnership is a crucial ingredient allowing immigrant owners to pool capital, reduce the need for outside labor, and maintain outside wage-earning

activities, thereby reducing risks.”<sup>82</sup> The story of Rocco is exemplary. In 1966, after six years of work as a dependent contractor in Detroit, Rocco began to realize that he had learned his craft well (building sewers and aqueducts) and that he was capable of becoming an independent worker (*mettersi in proprio*) and making more money. Together with American business partners, Rocco established a construction firm. This first attempt to become an independent worker was not very successful and Rocco lost his investment of 2,000 dollars, but he refused to give up. He needed construction machines. His brother-in-law, Doro another Casaltvierano, became his partner and the two bought a small power shovel. This shared small investment was the first of many others and the beginning of a thirty-five-year-long partnership. Rocco and Doro specialized in the construction of sewers and aqueducts and won many bids for construction projects throughout Michigan. Rocco and Doro’s long-standing and successful business can be attributed to their strong cultural and family ties.<sup>83</sup>

Grazio provided another interesting perspective regarding the advantages of having a partner who shares one's same cultural and social background. In 1964, Grazio established his first construction company with his wife's Italian-American cousin. This latter was born in Detroit to Italian parents who had emigrated from one of the Comino Valley towns. Grazio recalled that there was not enough agreement between them. Grazio was more strong minded and active. The difference between them—Grazio revealed—was due to the fact that his cousin was not from Italy. He was not accustomed to make sacrifices because he had everything ready for him. His Italian-American cousin—Grazio described—was like the mouse that lives in the

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<sup>82</sup> Waldinger et al. *Ethnic Entrepreneurs*, 373.

<sup>83</sup> Rocco G., interview by author, Casaltvieri, August 6, 2011.

granary with all the available hay. In contrast, Grazio and the other migrants from Casalvieri were like the mice that live outside the granary; they must work more to get food.<sup>84</sup>

Hard work in the fields, strategic use of meager resources, flexibility, and productive networks helped Casalvierani succeed. Yet, there are also more tangible and quantifiable factors we need to take into account when examining these successes. The first part of this chapter already emphasized the importance for Casalvierani to acquire the necessary skills. It was only after learning English and a craft that they felt confident enough to start their activities. In the process of becoming independent workers, they also needed financial investment. Quite surprisingly finding money for their start-up business was not as much difficult as acquiring training and skills. According to Onorio M., owner of a Marble and Tile Company in Toronto, the initial investment was not a big problem.<sup>85</sup>

Finding financial capital for start-up businesses was particularly easy for construction companies. What Dennis Clark wrote about Irish immigrants in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Philadelphia—"it was not too far from the truth to say that any man with his own shovel and wheelbarrow could style himself a contractor"—seems valid also for Casalvierani immigrants in postwar North America.<sup>86</sup> City growth, industrial development and the necessity for very meager initial investments made the path toward self-employment smoother. To enter the construction field, Sabino, Grazio and Rocco argued, you only needed two things: some savings to initially pay workers and good will.<sup>87</sup> Casalvierani builders opened credit lines with suppliers and rented

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<sup>84</sup> Grazio I., interview by author, Windsor Ciociaro Club, July 6, 2012.

<sup>85</sup> Onorio M., interview by author, Toronto Casalvierano Club, July 1, 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Dennis Clark "The Expansion of the Public Sector and Irish Economic development" in Scott Cummings, ed. *Self-help in Urban America, Patterns of Minority Business Enterprise* (Port Washington, N.Y, Kennikat Press, 1980), 179.

<sup>87</sup> Sabino C., interview by author, Toronto Casalvierano Club, July 1, 2012.

machinery using the first work contracts as guarantees. In this way, they could avoid big financial investments and could pay their initial debts monthly using the profits of their work.

For Casalvierani construction jobs were more accessible both financially and for the lack of competition with native workers. These backbreaking jobs, especially hard during harsh Canadian and Michigan winters, were eschewed by Canadians and Americans who had easier access to education and better paid jobs. Not coincidentally, today's Casalvierani entrepreneurs employ recent immigrant workers. Sabino—specialized in the construction of luxury houses in Toronto—employs Turkish and Hungarian workers. Onorio M. and his sons principally hire Koreans in their Toronto Marble and Tile Company. Working marble is a "dirty job" and—Onorio M. told me—Koreans more easily adapt to it.

I am aware of the fact that easy access to these jobs does not explain Casalvierani's inclination toward entrepreneurship. Some of them had opportunities to become factory workers in the American auto industry. Yet, accustomed to the work in the fields, they wanted to preserve their autonomy and independence. It is also important to emphasize that construction work, more than in any other sector, allowed immigrants to become independent workers. After all, many construction workers worked piecemeal. This system encouraged many of my interviewees to leave their bosses and try to make it by themselves, and thereby make more money. Besides the possibility of higher salaries, independent work gave them more satisfaction. Sabino, when working for another contractor, could not stand the idea that he was paid the same even if he had idle hands. Furthermore, he wanted to get credit for his own work.<sup>88</sup>

Through their entrepreneurial activities Casalvierani were capable of maintaining business relations with Italy. For instance, Onorio M. imported marble from Italy, especially

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

from Ausonia, a city in the province of Frosinone famous for its marble quarries. At the same time he imported tiles from the Northern city of Modena. Grazio favored bathroom fixtures made in Italy when building luxury houses. The knowledge of the language greatly helped these Casalvierani in America when contacting and dealing with Italian construction material suppliers. Onorio M. and his wife Rosella are very happy that their children learned Italian. Their first son, Marino, now managing the family business with his brother, is so fluent in Italian that, when dealing with marble suppliers, does not need an interpreter as others do.<sup>89</sup>

America encouraged and supported Casalvierani's entrepreneurial spirit even when they decided to return permanently in Italy. This is especially true for Casalvierani who did not become independent workers in North America. Thanks to the money made in Canada, Guido and Benedetta returned to Casalvieri in 1969, bought some cows, a piece of land, built a house and started selling milk. When the owner of the bakery located at the garden level of their house decided to sell her business, Guido and Benedetto bought it. All of this—the two admitted—would have been impossible without their emigration in Canada.<sup>90</sup> North America gave Casalvierani much more than financial capital. When in 1964, Erminio and his wife left Sarnia to return to Casalvieri. Erminio, after two years of unemployment, eventually made the most of his Canadian vocational training and opened a construction company specialized in plumbing and electrical systems. With the money saved, his wife opened a small grocery store.

In 1975, while Giuseppe R. was still working in Vancouver, his wife, Maria C., and their only son returned to Casalvieri. Two years later, Giuseppe joined his family in his hometown. The couple—who could count on the rent from a few properties—returned to Casalvieri to open

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<sup>89</sup> Onorio M., interview by author, Toronto Casalvierano Club, July 1, 2012; Rosella I., interview by author, Toronto Casalvierano Club, July 1, 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Guido R., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 12, 2011; Benedetta D., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 12, 2011.

a business. Giuseppe—who worked for more than twenty years as a dependent worker for a big Vancouver construction company—had always worked independently on the side building and selling houses. Yet, the idea of opening a business in Casalvieri was more specifically Maria's brainchild because she intuitively grasped the opportunity to cater to the emigrants who returned every year for the summer visits. She also realized that to be very successful she needed to specialize in products that nobody else sold in the area. Thanks to her English skills, she connected with a suitcase manufacturer in Great Britain. She ended up opening a small shop that sold a bit of everything: women's accessories, kitchenware, beauty products. Maria proudly reminded me that she was the one who introduced to Casalvieri, and probably to the entire Valley, the American made cookware that she had gotten accustomed to use since the 1950s.<sup>91</sup>

### *5.5 Skilled on Their Own Terms*

Migration scholars would be well advised to investigate the characteristics of the peasant background that is too often used as justification of Italians' unfortunate lack of skills. If there was something to repair in their farms or houses, Casalvierani knew how to manage. Working on a farm meant much more than agricultural tasks. They had to build fences, granaries and the like. Quite paradoxically their lack of formal training and specialization was advantageous. Once in North America, they were malleable and ready to learn the craft that the specific contingencies required. Unlike northern Italian immigrants, Grazio pointed out to me, who were more prepared to find positions in factories as specialized workers, Casalvierani were factotum. They were factotum who, especially at the beginning of their migratory adventures, worked piecework. Accustomed to agricultural work, they were not afraid of the discontinuities of construction

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<sup>91</sup> Giuseppe R., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 12, 2011; Maria C., interview by author, Casalvieri, August 12, 2011.

work—variable according to seasons and according to urban growth. As pieceworkers, they were aware of the necessity of working hard if they wanted to be paid. Most importantly, the construction industry allowed workers to enter the construction industry through a "series of unorganized training devices."<sup>92</sup> In a study commissioned by the Canadian Construction Association in 1968, Canadian labor experts observed that the basis of this unorganized training rested on the "stealing the job" method, an informal training system that relied upon job experiences rather than upon attendance at formal apprenticeship programs.<sup>93</sup> What the labor experts believed to be an antiquated and unreliable method, was Casavvierani's fortune in North America.

Flexibility was Casavvierani's advantage over more specialized workers and factory workers. Flexibility reflected their intelligence. The lack of specialization, in a way, made Casavvierani free to experiment and try. It basically put them in the right conditions to become entrepreneurs. Casavvierani were not only flexible but also very mobile. Their internal movements—analyzed in the previous chapter—enhanced their entrepreneurial attitudes and/or choice. For instance, for many Casavvierani who moved from Detroit to California, relocation substantially marked a passage from dependent factory work to independent works in the building sector. Specific local circumstances—the 1950s and 1960s booming urbanization of the Los Angeles area—allowed them to prosper as contractors.

I am aware of the fact that Casavvierani immigrant entrepreneurs obviously shared and continue to share many characteristics with non-immigrant entrepreneurs. Yet, their migrant status put them in a distinctive position. First, Casavvierani chose the building sector semi-autonomously. After all, construction was left to them by the native population. Second, the

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<sup>92</sup> Ross C. Ford, "Training Requirements and Methods," in *Construction Labour Relations*, ed. Goldenberg Carl H. and Crispo John H. (Canada: Canadian Construction Association, 1968), 204.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

presence of kin networks not only allowed them to find, get information, and specialized in a specific "niche." They also made access to other activities more difficult. This last point—relatively negative—actually helped Casalvierani not to waste precious energies and money. Third, the establishment of their activities was not driven by individual ambitions but by family ambitions. Improvement of their social conditions was not a synonym with what contemporary highly skilled immigrants define as personal fulfillment. Their capacity to place the group's priority before their own allowed them to be much more flexible. Their goal was not to become successful in a specific trade or in the craft they learned at home. Their ambition was to improve their family's standards of living and, only afterwards, their own.

I have interviewed very intelligent, committed, and skillful entrepreneurs. At a first glance their stories may even validate the theory according to which emigration was and still is selective process for the best and the brightest.<sup>94</sup> Yet, my interviews indicate that the success of their micro-entrepreneurial activities was the combination of the mechanisms operating at home and the circumstances encountered in North America. They were, if anything, the best and the brightest in selecting, applying, reinforcing, and sometimes discarding pre-migration characteristics and post-migration opportunities.

The same attitudes toward business ventures molded their formal and informal training between two or more places. The modalities and the settings of Casalvierani's training were

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<sup>94</sup> These scholars are all in debt with Werner Sombart. The following are the words the German economist and sociologist used to prove the quintessential capitalist spirit of the wanderers, "[...] those who resolved to leave home must have been the most active, the strongest-willed, the most enterprising, the coolest, the most calculating, the least sentimental natures; and this quite apart from the particular consideration that forced them to emigrate, whether religious, political, or merely economic. Oppression at home [...] was the best school of capitalist training. [...] The wanderers therefore represented the strongest among the oppressed; for not all the oppressed would decide to leave home." Werner Sombart, *The Quintessence of Capitalism A Study of the History and Psychology of the Modern Businessman* (New York, E. P. Dutton, 1915), 303.

many and different: on the construction site or in courses offered by the Canadian authorities.<sup>95</sup> Some of them had already acquired knowledge of a trade in Italy, some others were trained abroad. Their motivation to select a specific trade was in part pragmatic and in part idealistic. They chose to specialize in specific trades according to their profitability on the labor market and, at the same time, they tried to avoid factory jobs that would have deprived them of working outside as they were used to do in Casalvieri.

The Casalvierani's experiences, even if not encompassing the experiences of every Italian unskilled or low-skilled immigrant in post-WWII United States and Canada, show how their initial lack of formal training or their training in non-needed trades did not block their aspirations, but rather became platforms for the adoption of successful alternatives. Most importantly, even if some strategically used the assistance and help of Canadian schools for emigrants, they did not end up becoming social burden. On the contrary, many Casalvierani established small entrepreneurial activities supporting themselves, their families, and even hiring workers.

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<sup>95</sup> For immigrants' skill acquisition processes see Thomas Bailey and Roger Waldinger, "Primary, Secondary, and Enclave Labor Markets, A Training Systems Approach," *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 4 (August 1991), 432–45. Roger David Waldinger, *How the Other Half Works, Immigration and the Social Organization of Labor* (Berkeley, Calif, University of California Press, 2003).

## CONCLUSION

### *Blurring Lines and New Paradigms*

The three-level analysis (international, national, and local) and the focus on Italian emigrants' vocational training have allowed me to redefine and add a level of complexity to the assumptions that human mobility, migrants' training, labor patterns, and their ultimate success rigidly followed the categories imposed by migration policies. By contrast, this dissertation has shown that post-WWII Italian emigrants' vocational training occurred as a result of the blurring of lines between skilled and unskilled individuals, formal and informal training, and labor and family migrants. By adopting the emigrant country's (Italy's) point of view, this study has proposed the concept of formal and informal transnational emigrants' vocational training as a paradigm for making sense of the complex facets of the connection between skills and movement.

The conceptualization of the umbrella term *emigrants' transnational training* helped me encompass the strategies that two agents—Italian state institutions and Italian individual migrants—employed to meet challenges contingent upon the post-WWII socio-economic situations. Even if these strategies displayed dissimilar rhythms and drew on different resources, they equally grew and developed within a transnational horizon. The formal and state-implemented Italian emigrants' training (*transnationalism from above*) and the informal and relatives-based Casalvierani's training (*transnationalism from below*) were two sides of the same coin. It would be incomplete and unfair to tell just one of these two complex stories.

The broad transnational context channeled the multifaceted dynamics underlining the national efforts to make Italian migrant workers appealing to foreign labor markets and the local emigrants' strategies to become appealing workers, even if they were unskilled upon arrival.

Italian state and individual migrants were transnational because they invested money and energy in the cultivation of specific skills always with an eye to foreign markets' requests. The Ministry of Labor activated courses and centers that prepared workers for specific trades. Casavvierani reinvented themselves, learned new skills, and continued to change occupations according to the dictates of the receiving countries' labor markets.

Both agents needed transnational financial and technical assistance. The Ministry of Labor felt justified in using the American Aid funds to acquire machinery and establish training courses in the peninsula. Casavvierani counted on their relatives and friends in Italy or already in North America for loans, housing, and introduction to professional networks. The proposals of the Italian OEEC (Organization for European Economic Co-operation) delegates for training emigrants between the sending and the receiving countries was the norm for many Casavvierani migrants. The recurrence of *transnational remedies* at the national and at the local level was contingent on and shaped by the Italian post-WWII labor conditions.

Both state authorities and individual migrants needed fast and easy solutions. The high unemployment rate was such a pressing issue at the end of the 1940s and during the 1950s that Italy did not have enough time to reform the entire educational and training system to meet the qualification standards imposed by the receiving countries. In the immediate aftermath of WWII, the socio-economic conditions required rapid and elementary-level training that was addressed to the needs of potential emigrants.

The decision to use ERP (European Recovery Program) funds for the establishment of rapid courses and the group 5 proposals to provide elementary training in Italy and specialized training in the emigrants' countries of destination were short term solutions. Guido, Rocco, Grazio and many other Casavvierani were part of that generation that—in their twenties at the

beginning of the 1950s—had neither time nor financial means to go back to school to learn a trade. They, like the other two million Italian unemployed, needed a short term and easily available solution: joining their relatives in Canada and the United States. For both state authorities and individual migrants, this evolving transnational training system—divided as it was between sending and receiving countries—was faster, easier, more accessible, and cheaper.

### *International Challenges, and National Responses: An Institutional Overview*

The elaboration of the concept of emigrants' transnational training was the result of my historical investigation of post-WWII North American migration policies, Italian authorities' responses to the new policies' selective criteria, the Italian state's inconsistent efforts to establish training courses for emigrants, and Italian prospective emigrants' personal solutions to these inconsistencies. After WWII, the United States and Canada—at different moments—replaced their ethnic-based migration policies with skills and family-based criteria. These new parameters of selection had a twofold goal. On the one hand, they promoted (not always successfully) a more democratic image of these two North American countries. The defense of a post-WWII democratic order particularly weighed on the United States, bastion of the fight against Communism and its possible contamination of Europe. On the other hand, the United States and Canada needed skilled workers for Cold War related industries (especially the US) and for their booming technology-based economies. Additionally, the development of North American urban centers needed construction workers.

Though sharing some common elements (preference for white European immigrants, attention to the absorptive capacity of their economies, and co-existence of skill-based criteria and family reunification at the policy level), the United States and Canada developed different

solutions for the training of migrants, and, in the second half of the 1960s, launched dissimilar migration policies. The United States actively promoted international organizations and presided over international conferences regarding European emigrants' training. While imbuing emigration and emigrants' training with anti-communist ideology, the United States was willing to send Italian workers to South America through the ICEM (Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration), to promote free laborers' circulation within EEC (European Economic Cooperation) countries, and to send American management and productivity experts to Italy. Yet, it was not so ready to welcome Italians within its own borders. Cold War ideology was powerful enough to promote skills as selective criteria (see the McCarran-Walter Act) but not to abolish the national origins quotas. The eventual reduction of ethnic prejudices occurred amidst the Civil Rights Movement, and was embodied in the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act.

While paying close attention to its economy's absorptive capacity, the Canadian government invested more in infrastructures for language and vocational training for immigrants in Canada. These different practices did not come from Canada's innate multicultural mission but from specific contingent economic circumstances. Simultaneously seeking population growth and skilled manpower for its manufacturing industrial boom, Canadian federal and regional institutions happened to be more receptive to the need to train newly arrived immigrants. The pro-white European immigrants' environment and the existence of a sponsorship system ended up benefitting first and foremost Italian emigrants, one of the largest ethnic groups in Canada in the late 50s.

During the 1960s, the United States and Canada took very different approaches to migration policies. Whereas the US 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act gave family reunification (i.e. the sponsorship system) greater importance than ever before, the Canadian

1967 Points System put skills and merit even more at the center of immigrants' selection criteria. The consequences of these two migration policies powerfully affected the new wave of non-European immigrants to North America. In fact, Italian migration (to North America and elsewhere) significantly declined in the late 1960s.

Italian governmental authorities did not passively accept this request for skilled workers. Instead, they participated in international dialogues regarding emigration and transnational vocational training. Italian bureaucrats strategically used anti-communist rhetoric and NATO brotherhood to promote the emigration of the Italian unemployed. On one side, they tried to send abroad unskilled Italian workers. To this end, they worked around the American quotas (not always successfully) by requesting the augmentation of quota limits, the employment of quotas left unused during wartime, and the distribution to Italians of the quotas left unused by the other developed European countries. On the other side, Italian authorities had to respond actively to the need for skilled immigrant workers. Through specific laws, the new Italian Republic developed school sites, implemented training courses for the unemployed, and established vocational schools for Italian youth.

Transforming the Italian workforce from unskilled to skilled was not an easy task, mainly because the peninsula was still unindustrialized, the majority of the population (especially in the South) was still bound to the land, and the level of education was very low. To establish courses, schools, and in the late 1950s, permanent training centers, Italy asked for and welcomed external aid with financial capital and knowledge. In the process of preparing its prospective emigrants for the demands of foreign labor market, Italy built a solid vocational school system that, in the long run, benefitted both migrants and non-migrants. The Marshall Plan (ERP) productivity

missions in Italy ended up spreading the gospel of effective training and management among Italian employers, and catalyzing the establishment of many productivity centers.

Outside national borders, Italian authorities negotiated and proposed alternatives that expedited Italians' vocational training without straining Italian finances. By sharing the financial and technical expenses of its emigrant workers with potential receiving countries, post-WWII Italy set up a short-term solution to its disastrous national economy. The transnational training of Italian emigrants—proposed by Italian experts in the OEEC meetings—significantly helped Italy manufacture appealing workers, and in turn, revitalize out-migration. Emigration—a significant part of post-WWII Italian foreign politics—brought about several benefits. It was an outlet for the two million Italian unemployed; it was a safety valve for possible social upheavals; it guaranteed millions of lire in remittances.

In sum, rather than being beneficial only to the host countries' economies, transnational training was advantageous also for Italy. When the circumstances were favorable, Italian authorities actively promoted this shared transnational training. For instance, Italian diplomatic bureaucrats collaborated with Canadian federal and provincial authorities to establish a vast array of training opportunities for Italians in Canada. Italian government and Italian ethnic associations gathered funding for the implementation of emigrants' organizations like the Italian Immigrant Aid Society and COSTI (Italian Community Education Centre), strongholds of emigrants' vocational training in Canada.

The request for skilled workers—I have argued—was a difficult challenge for Italy to meet, and initially it dampened the post-WWII Italian enthusiasm for the re-opening of the borders. Italian authorities soon discovered that North American and Western European countries opened their doors but selectively. Yet, whereas immigration to Europe was predominately

dictated and shaped by bilateral and multilateral agreements between states, both the United States and Canada promoted individual migration and supported family reunification. The co-existence of skills and family-based criteria allowed many Italians, unskilled on arrival, to reach North America as sponsored relatives. The immigrant experiences of the Casaltvierani—who mostly immigrated as sponsored relatives—allowed me to observe the dynamics of their skilling process. Most importantly, in this dissertation it permitted me to investigate the meaning of “structure” and “agency.”

*Against All Odds: Opportunities and Personal Remedies*

Developed in disparate fields, such as anthropology, linguistics and psychology, structure and agency were and still are critical concepts for historians of migration.<sup>1</sup> More in general, one of the essential issues in history is to define to what extent and to what degree human beings make their own history. Are individuals completely free to act or are they subject to particular constraints? And if they are subject to constraints, what type of constraints are these? These questions are at the base of an ongoing attempt of social theorists to come up with a viable theoretical framework to explain why social actors (or agents) act in a specific way both at the conscious and unconscious levels. The dilemma between free agency and structural constraints is, more or less patently, at the center of any history of migration. This dissertation is not an exception. Neither individuals equipped with special abilities nor passive victims of capitalist-induced poverty, post-WWII Casaltvierani—as many other Italians—were free to move and obtain training within scripted circumstances and available opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the first historical monographs connecting structure and mobility see, William Hamilton Sewell, *Structure and Mobility: The Men and Women of Marseille, 1820-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Casalvierani's behaviors, migration patterns, adaptation, and informal acquisition of skills went against predictions of the experts of the 1940s and 1950s. Italian prospective emigrants—American experts and contemporary observers argued—lacked adaptability and versatility; they were a mass of unskilled workers destined to be exploited by the receiving countries, the *Bollettino* stated; they were liable to become public charge, the receiving countries' migration bureaucrats warned.<sup>2</sup> Casalvierani abroad became neither of these. Experts and bureaucrats were wrong.

The post-WWII migration experts made the same mistake their counterparts make today. They did not take into account the pre-migration characteristics of Italian emigrants and the set of informal skills that were, in the long term, very effective and useful for Italians' adaptation and integration into North American job markets. They judged Italian emigrants upon arrival or even before their departure. Often, the category of sponsored relative became synonymous with unskilled. What experts and bureaucrats failed to observe was the "potential" of these sponsored relatives. Unfortunately, the measurement of this potential is not quantifiable before or upon arrival. Therefore, migration policies continue to employ the rigid dichotomy of sponsored versus skilled immigrants. The assumption was, and continues to be, for the supporters of the skill-based selection that immigrants screened for their occupational values are going to perform better than those screened for family reunification. Casalvierani's stories put this assumption in perspective and validated the approach of a growing body of migration scholarship that acknowledges the working abilities of sponsored relatives and that believes family reunification to be a valid selection criterion for workers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For the *Bollettino*'s standpoint read chapter three.

<sup>3</sup> See introduction, 12-13.

Casalvierani's experiences epitomize those of many other post-WWII Italian emigrants coming from mountainous regions. Vocational training courses and schools were far from their town. The majority of the Casalvierani interviewed for this study did not obtain secondary certificates; many of them just finished grade school. Casalvierani who immigrated to the US and to Canada—in possession of American or Canadian citizenship—were in the position to sponsor relatives left behind. The Casalvierani sponsored by these relatives were in the eyes of the North American authorities unskilled and likely to become a public charge. Yet, the stories I collected portray a much different scenario. By drawing on personal resources inscribed in their town's outstanding migratory past and their solid family networks, Casalvierani became skilled on their own terms. Like other Italians in North America, Casalvierani monopolized building related trades and activities.

Fresh-off-the-boat Casalvierani entered construction because their friends and relatives employed them, and provided initial support and effective information about these types of jobs. Casalvierani did much more than share information and support. They often put together their meager financial resources and opened modest businesses along with other Casalvierani, usually relatives. These partnerships—based on a shared cultural patrimony, a shared moral code, and kinship bonds—proved to be very persistent and effective. Similarly, Casalvierani's training occurred along kin networks' lines. Some Casalvierani learned the secrets of their trades by observing their skilled friends and relatives. My interviewees learned from scratch, re-trained, or fine tuned their abilities according to contingent circumstances.

The prioritization of family well-being over personal ambitions (Casalvierani did not spend energies in pursuing trades that best fitted their personalities) and their multi-faceted informal agricultural training explain Casalvierani's versatility and, partially, their success as

building contractors, or as entrepreneurs in general. Yet—I want to emphasize—their modest success appears as such only in hindsight. When in the late 1940s and during the 1950s Casalvierani decided to leave their town they did not know for sure what would happen. They had received some information but, after all, their personal migratory adventure was unscripted. It was in the uncertainties of their migratory projects and of the circumstances they found that Casalvierani perpetuated, adapted, and discarded their cultural background and sets of skills. It was in these circumstances that their social capital (kinship networks) brought to life their human capital (informal training and versatility).

However, Casalvierani's somewhat successful careers were possible because they were able to reap the fruits of specific structural circumstances. The booming urbanization of 1950s/60s North America, the rejection by native workers of backbreaking construction jobs, and the preference for white European immigrant workers are the *sine qua non* explanations of Casalvierani's concentration in this sector. Simultaneously, we cannot neglect the post-WWII Frosinone provincial authorities' growing interest and financial investment into building trades' vocational training and school-sites. The intervention of provincial authorities created the conditions for the appreciation of the building sector; it showed Casalvierani that industrial skills were not the only one available. Even if those interviewees did not attend these courses, I believe that the milieu in which they grew and matured as adult individuals marked their training experiences.

The possibility of becoming skilled and opening construction businesses was also due to the intrinsic characteristics of the building trade. Casalvierani could access North American construction as handymen without any licenses and work their way up. They started working for other employers but also as dependent workers they were used to being paid by piece and

managing their own time. On the one hand, the acquisition of skills and confidence, and on the other hand, the opportunity to open construction companies with a modest financial capital, made possible Casavvierani's entrepreneurial successes.

Ultimately, Casavvierani immigrated and became skilled entrepreneurs in North America because their personal practices corresponded to the Italian post-WWII emigration regime.<sup>4</sup> Casavvierani wanted to leave because they did not see a possibility for improvement in their hometown. The Italian state authorities did not stop them but supported family reunification, and reminded receiving countries that Italians, even if unskilled, were hard-working people. In the post-WWII international arena, to accommodate more emigration of their citizens, Italian authorities tried to redefine the rigid distinction between refugees versus economic migrants by asserting that the two million Italian unemployed were victims of the war as much as refugees were. In sum, the rhetoric and the international interventions of Italian state authorities echoed Italians' personal migratory ambitions.

### *Train Them and Send Them Away: Old and New Emigrants*

The solutions that Italian state authorities and Italian migrants adopted to obtain training mirrored each other. The correspondence between the state and the individual responses to international challenges was not just a coincidence. Italy and its institutional representatives were in favor of emigration. With the exception of the Fascist period, Italian authorities had been pro-emigration since the unification of the peninsula in 1861. The post-WWII Italian state's pro-emigration attitudes went beyond the acceptance of Italians' freedom of movement across

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<sup>4</sup> For a conceptualization of regimes and repertoires see, Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch, "Broad Is My Native Land: Repertoires and Regimes of Migration in Russia's Twentieth Century" (Ithaca, NY, November 13, 2014), 9-10.

borders—normal in every modern democratic regime. Italy supported directly and indirectly the citizens who wanted to leave their country in a moment of economic crisis.

When explaining and summarizing this project to American colleagues and friends, I have been frequently asked: "Why did Italy invest in the training of its workers and, then, let them leave? What was the purpose?" The immediate answer is remittances, and relief of the social and economic pressure on Italian finances caused by the high unemployment rate. I soon realized that the answers reside solely on financial motivations. Emigration in the post-WWII period was for Italy a great resource to re-establish its balance of payments, to re-build or build from scratch industrial plants, and to promote a higher standard of living. The mass of unskilled or low-skilled underemployed and unemployed was an obstacle between Italy and its longed-for economic improvement. In the post-WWII period, emigration along with the request for skilled workers benefitted Italy in two ways: 1) it relieved unemployment; 2) it promoted a culture of training and specialization. Yet, the exodus of young and skilled or skilled-to-be individuals, especially their permanent migration, could have a few negative consequences.

Among the notes of the members of the Italian delegation for the 1950/51 OEEC group 4 and 5 meetings, there is an essay written by an expert of emigration, Pietro Didonna. In this essay, entitled "Demographic and Sanitary Consequences of the Phenomenon of Emigration," Didonna argued that the very strict medical examinations of emigrants promoted by the post-WWII bilateral and multilateral agreements would have negative consequences on the demographic composition of the Italians left behind. By sifting and picking only the young and the robust (basically the best and the strongest) men, these selections deprived Italy of its best workers, and created a gender imbalance. Besides the strictly demographic problems of state-managed emigration, Didonna underscored other factors that would affect negatively the Italian

demographic and socio-economic structure: 1) the reduction of the active workforce and, as a result, of possible taxpayers, 2) the augmentation of social welfare costs for the inactive population, and 3) the increase of the pathogenic and old population.<sup>5</sup>

The positive attitudes of Italian authorities toward the emigration of its active and young workers have usually dominated the narratives. Concerns like those expressed by Didonna—which were mostly addressed to the biological composition of the post-WWII Italian population—were very rare. After all, the post-WWII generation, Didonna argued, could still count on births as a balancing demographic mechanism. In the 1950s, these concerns were overlooked in favor of the financial benefits of Italian out-migration. However, more than sixty years later, Didonna's apprehension was echoing in the front pages of the main Italian national newspapers.

The recent Italian National Statistics (ISTAT) report on the 2013 demographic patterns portrayed a worrying scenario; according to the major national Italian newspapers, ISTAT provided a snapshot of a country in decline. According to this data, 56 percent of the population, especially the youth, is unemployed, and births are at their historical minimum. Yet, the most surprising data concerns migration. In comparison with the 2012 ISTAT data, in-migration declined 27 percent while 17 percent of the immigrant population left the peninsula. By contrast, out-migration of Italians increased 36 percent in just one year. It is the highest peak of emigration in the last ten years.<sup>6</sup> The Italian newspaper headlines—whose sensationalism has to

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<sup>5</sup> ACS, MLPS Div. IX, OECE, Box 409, F. "OECE. Materiale preparatorio per la riunione del 8/2/1950 e del 17/1/1950." f. "Conseguenze d'Ordine Demografico del Fenomeno Emigratorio, n.d."

<sup>6</sup> Editorial Staff of *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, "Rapporto Istat: Nascite Al Minimo Storico, in 5 Anni 100 Mila Giovani all'Estero," *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, May 28, 2014, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/05/28/rapporto-istat-con-la-crisi-mezzo-milione-di-genitori-disoccupati-in-piu/1003966/>.

be taken into account—recall the country's return to its past emigration.<sup>7</sup> This dissertation has aimed to provide a historical background to these claims. During the 1970s, and increasingly after the 1980s, Italy—similarly to other European countries—transitioned from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. It became a destination for immigrants coming from developing areas. Today, Italy is simultaneously a country of immigration and emigration. Yet, very recently, immigration to Italy is declining while emigration of Italians is skyrocketing.

Italians are emigrating again, and their skills and education are more important than ever before. Since the 1970s, net Italian emigration has been negative and even if the phenomenon is growing, it is very far from the exodus of the past.<sup>8</sup> The worrisome aspect of this recent Italian emigration is its high human capital content and not its dimension. Today's Italian emigration is characterized by the so-called *brain drain*.<sup>9</sup> ISTAT indicates that in the last five years, one hundred thousand students (between 15 and 34) left Italy.<sup>10</sup> The presence of highly-skilled individuals among Italian emigrants is due to the changing characteristics of the global economy. In the last two decades, the knowledge economy supplanted the manufacture-based industries of the past. Knowledge economy experts usually define economies as "based on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technical and scientific advance [...].

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<sup>7</sup> "Istat: L'Italia Torna ad Essere Paese di Emigranti," May 28, 2014 <http://www.direttanews.it/2014/01/27/istat-litalia-torna-ad-essere-paese-di-emigranti-cala-limmigrazione/>; "Gli Italiani Tornano Ad Emigrare; Nel 2012 Persi 9mila Laureati. Crolla l'Immigrazione dall'Estero (-9,1%)," *Il Sole 24 Ore*, May 28, 2015, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2014-01-27/gli-italiani-tornano-emigrare-2012-persi-9mila-laureati-crolla-immigrazione-estero-91percento-205654.shtml?uuid=ABR81es>.

<sup>8</sup> Sascha O. Becker, Andrea Ichino, and Giovanni Peri, "How Large Is The 'Brain Drain' From Italy?," *Giornale Degli Economisti E Annali Di Economia* 63 (Anno 117), no. 1 (April 1, 2004), 3.

<sup>9</sup> In comparison to other parts of the world where the level of brain drain reaches and overcomes the 50% of the emigration rates, the Italian brain drain could seem not so important. Uncoincidentally, the majority of the works on contemporary migration of skilled individuals had been focused on the out-flow of emigrants from developing areas. Millio Simona et al., *Brain Drain, Brain Exchange and Brain Circulation. The Case of Italy Viewed from a Global Perspective*. (Aspen Institute Italia Institutional Purposes, March 2012), 22.

<sup>10</sup> "Rapporto Istat: Nascite Al Minimo Storico."

The key component of a knowledge economy is greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical inputs or natural resources."<sup>11</sup>

The definition of "highly skilled" is very open and sometimes ambiguous. In general, the highly skilled are those with specific intellectual abilities, and post-graduate degrees. Among the highly educated, those specialized in the STEM fields are particularly desired by receiving countries. Among the categories of the highly-skilled persons there are: corporate transferees, technicians, professionals in the healthcare or education sector, project and consultant specialists, academics and researchers (this is the archetypical brain drain category), students in higher education institutions, and also military personnel, priests, missionaries, and entertainers.<sup>12</sup>

The challenge that Italy is currently facing is not completely new. During the post-WWII period the relation between emigration and skills troubled Italian authorities and an army of experts. I have argued that in the 1950s and 1960s there was a coordinated effort of Italian authorities to use emigration as a remedy for national economic problems. However, given the very recent nature of the brain drain phenomenon and the impossibility of accessing contemporary state archival sources, I cannot argue that Italian authorities are using contemporary Italian emigration to get a handle on the economic crisis and downturn. Regardless, the historical background of the connection between skills and mobility (provided in this dissertation) can shed light on the Italian brain drain phenomenon. Formulated in the early 1960s by the Royal Society to indicate the exodus of British researchers and scientists to the US, the concept has grown in usage since then.

Italian "brains" started leaving more steadily in the 1990s. The phenomenon has been at the center stage of public opinion. Until the beginning of the 2000s, the study of the Italian brain

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<sup>11</sup> Walter W. Powell and Kaisa Snellman, "The Knowledge Economy," *Annual Review of Sociology* (30),199.

<sup>12</sup> Millio Simona et al., *Brain Drain, Brain Exchange and Brain Circulation. The Case of Italy Viewed from a Global Perspective*, 3.

drain had been limited to scattered anecdotal evidence. Afterwards, predominately drawing on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) database on immigrants and expatriates, and the dataset of the Register of Italians Abroad (AIRE), scholars tried to provide a more coherent overview of the phenomenon. In light of these data, experts unanimously agree that the issue at stake is not the emigration of qualified individuals. In fact, in an ever increasing technological society the exchange of knowledge and the opportunity to complete one's training abroad is highly desirable. The ideal would be *brain circulation*; for every Italian who leaves, Italian authorities or Italian private employers should create the conditions and the infrastructures capable of encouraging return migration of highly skilled Italians and/or of attracting skilled individuals from other countries. In sum, the problem is that Italy loses human capital but it is not able to compensate for this loss.<sup>13</sup>

The tone used in public discourse (mainly newspapers) to treat the brain drain is very similar to that of the *Bollettino* regarding the Italian government's inconsistencies in the postwar training of emigrants. The brain drain—like the post-WWII emigrants' vocational training—has become a political problem; it is considered the result of the Italian authorities' bad management of its citizens' human capital and incapacity to transform the drain into an exchange of know-how.

The Italian government tried to contain the brain drain through political maneuvers called "brain busters." In 2001, the Minister of the University, Ortensio Zecchino, launched the first ministerial decree that subsidized Italian universities hiring Italians or foreign experts with academic or research experience abroad. The Ministry allocated funds for the experts' stipends while the universities provided the research infrastructure. This same program was adopted again

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 30.

in 2003. Yet, it was not welcomed by the international scientific community with much enthusiasm. Apparently, the funds allocated did not compete with the regular salaries offered abroad.<sup>14</sup> Most importantly, researchers abroad did not want to return or to move to Italy because Italian research institutions do not offer an adequate scientific environment and infrastructures that would allow the returning Italian researchers or the foreign ones to maintain and/or improve their skills.<sup>15</sup> Besides the inconsistencies of the brain buster program (which was canceled in 2006 for lack of funds) as pull factors, Italian society presents significant push factors. For instance, the Italian labor market through its antiquated practices protects individuals already employed and penalizes those who are looking for jobs. The lack of competition and transparent practices in the hiring processes and the heavy reliance on family and personal connections, rather than merits, to find employment are all societal aspects that hurt young graduates and encourage them to leave.<sup>16</sup>

Notwithstanding the similar attacks on the Italian government's inconsistencies, and the same focus on skills and migration, in forty years the characteristics of Italian emigrants changed dramatically. Today the Italian education system makes Italians appealing "exchange commodities." The public and free college education—even if not always competitive at the infrastructure level— graduates very competitive scientists and technology experts.<sup>17</sup> In the postwar period, the Italian government did not have such skilled workers and, in fact, it

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<sup>14</sup> Beltrame Lorenzo, *Realtà E Retorica Del Brain Drain in Italia. Stime Statistiche, Definizioni Pubbliche E Interventi Politici*, vol. 35 (Trento: Università degli Studi di Trento, 2007), 51-53.

<sup>15</sup> Millio Simona et al., *Brain Drain, Brain Exchange and Brain Circulation. The Case of Italy Viewed from a Global Perspective*, 30. Adrian Favell, *Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrating Europe*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Sascha O. Becker, Andrea Ichino, and Giovanni Peri, "How Large Is The 'Brain Drain' From Italy?," *Giornale Degli Economisti E Annali Di Economia* 63 (Anno 117), no. 1 (April 1, 2004), 2.

<sup>17</sup> The statistics published in January 2014 for the Consolidator Grant of the European Research Council (ERC) show that even if Italian academic institutions lag behind as host institutions for other European researchers, Italians are second only to Danish researchers as grantees. European Research Council, ERC consolidator Grants 2013 Outcome: Indicative Statistics, [http://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/f. s/document/f. /erc\\_2013\\_cog\\_statistics.pdf](http://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/f. s/document/f. /erc_2013_cog_statistics.pdf) last accessed May 27, 2014.

intervened in the creation of infrastructures to produce workers capable of contributing to the manufacture and industrial-base foreign economies. The formula "train them and send them away" worked well in the post-WWII period for two reasons: 1) emigrant workers meant less pressure on the welfare system 2) emigrants sent back remittances.

Today, though, human capital per se is an important factor of economic growth. In the issuing of ineffective governmental programs as well as in the lack of other types of interventions, Italian authorities show an archaic, and therefore ineffective, emigrant mentality. This latter is a mentality that accepts the expatriation of its citizens as a fundamental benefit for the national economy. This attitude does not promote long-term solutions aimed to prevent the negative effects of this drain. Italy does not compete with the US, Canada, Australia, and other European countries in the race for talent. In a global economy in which the transnational borrowers of human capital expand their economies, Italy is just the perfect lender.

Unlike in the past, Italian highly-skilled emigrants now obtain their training in formal ways and through the acquisitions of degrees, certificates, and diplomas *before* their departures; theirs is not an informal training; they emigrate thanks to employment-based screening. If the Casalveriani's informal training was not an expense for the post-WWII Italian authorities, although it was for the emigrants themselves, today's training (especially because it is free for Italian students) is an expense for the state; it is just an expense and not a long-term investment. I ultimately argue that post-WWII emigrants left to find employment abroad and, in the process, they obtained training, today's emigrants leave to improve their training and, in the process, find employment abroad. In both cases, Italian emigrants became skilled to leave or left to become skilled. Italians' migratory experiences changed but Italian authorities' attitudes toward emigration did not.

## APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A: TABLES

Table 1. List of Interviewees

Name	Date of Interview	Date of Immigration	Interviewee's country/ies of immigration	Place of Interview	Language
Carlo D.	August 3, 2011	1969	France	Casalvieri	Italian
Rolando D.	August 3, 2011	1956/57	France/United States	Casalvieri	English
Alfonso D.	August 3, 2011	1953	Canada	Casalvieri	Italian
Vincenzo C.	August 4, 2011	1947	Canada	Casalvieri	Italian
Maria Rosaria V.	August 4, 2011	1969	United States	Casalvieri	Italian
Linda V.	August 4, 2011	1951	Canada/United States	Casalvieri	English
Ulderico V.	August 5, 2011	1954	Canada	Casalvieri	Italian
Maria Pia V.	August 5, 2011	1961	Canada	Casalvieri	Italian
Pietro F.	August 5, 2011	1967	United States	Casalvieri	Italian
Felicia F.	August 5, 2011	1970s	United States	Casalvieri	Italian
Michele V.	August 5, 2011	1956	United States	Casalvieri	Italian
Elvira F.	August 5, 2011	1962	United States	Casalvieri	Italian
Rocco G.	August 6, 2011	1954	Canada/United States	Casalvieri	Italian
Rosa C.	August 6, 2011	1952	United States	Casalvieri	Italian
Guido R.	August 12, 2011	1953	Canada	Casalvieri	Italian
Benedetta D.	August 12, 2011	1954	Canada	Casalvieri	Italian
Giuseppe R.	August 12, 2011	1949	Brazil/Canada	Casalvieri	Italian
Maria C.	August 12, 2011	1957	Canada	Casalvieri	Italian
Filomena D.	August 13, 2011	N/A	N/A	Casalvieri	Italian
Erminio I.	Aug.14, 2011	1952	Canada	Casalvieri	Italian

Table 1. (cont'd.)

Name	Date of Interview	Date of immigration	Interviewee's country of immigration	Place of Interview	Language
Sabino C.	July 1, 2012	1963	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Achille C.	July 1, 2012	1950	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Giovanni I.	July 1, 2012	1978	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Francesca I.	July 1, 2012	1958	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Mario M.	July 1, 2012	1968	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Florina D.	July 1, 2012	1978	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Onorio M.	July 1, 2012	1955	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Rosella M.	July 1, 2012	1960	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Flora P.	July 1, 2012	1954	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Gino L.	July 1, 2012	1959	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Enrico D.	July 1, 2012	1960	Canada	Toronto	Italian
Grazio I.	July 6, 2012	1956	Canada/United States	Windsor, Canada	Italian
Anna Maria V.	July 6, 2012	1952	United States	Windsor, Canada	Italian
Onorio T.	August 6, 2012	1953	United States	Casalvieri	Italian
Maria F.	May 21, 2013	Born in the U.S.	_____	phone interview	English
Adelia I.	May 28, 2013	1950	Canada/United States	phone interview	English
Annamaria C.	June 4, 2013	1947	United States	phone interview	Italian
Elsa I.	June 4, 2013	1955	United States	phone interview	Italian
Aida D.	August 30, 2013	1964	United States	phone interview	Italian

All interviews conducted by Laura Cuppone. This project has been deemed as exempt by the Michigan State University Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) on July 12, 2011. (IRB #x11-632)

Table 2. Individuals employed in agriculture per Square Kilometer, 1947-1950

Country	# of agriculturalists per Square Kilometer
Italy	74
Holland	68
Bulgaria	59
Poland	56
Belgium	50
Germany	47
Hungary	38
France	27
United Kingdom	25
U.S.A.	7

*Source:* AS-MAE, Ambasciata d'Italia in Washington (1947-1950), Box 56, Folder 1609 "Memorandum Emigrazione."

Table 3. Percentage of Italian Returnees—1946-1970

Period	European Countries	Overseas Countries	Total
1946/51	45	19	33
1952/57	58	24	43
1958/63	65	38	59
1964/69	88	20	73
1970	98	80	94

*Source:* Giuseppe Lucrezio and Luigi Favero, "Un Quarto Di Secolo Di Emigrazione Italiana," *Studi Emigrazione* 9 (1972), 12.

Table 4. Typologies of Italian Migration, 1946-1956

Typology	Europe/Mediterranean	Overseas	Total
assisted	69.88%	16.78%	35.28%
individual	30.12%	83.22%	64.72%

*Source:* Andreina De Clementi, *Il Prezzo Della Ricostruzione. L'emigrazione Italiana Nel Secondo Dopoguerra* (Roma: Laterza, 2010), 6.

Table 5. Preferences for Immigrants in U.S. Policy, 1924-1965.

<b><i>Preferences under 1924 Immigration Act</i></b>
1. Persons of twenty-one or over who are skilled and their spouses and children
2. Unmarried children under twenty-one, parents, and spouses of U.S. citizens aged twenty-one or over
<b><i>Preferences under the Immigration Act of 1952 (Walter-McCarran Act)</i></b>
*Categories exempted from numerical quotas and preference requirements: Spouses and unmarried minor children of U.S. citizens
1. Highly skilled immigrants whose services are urgently needed in the U.S. and their spouses and children 50%
2. Parents of U.S. citizens over age twenty-one and unmarried adults children of U.S. citizens 30%
3. Spouses and unmarried adult children of permanent resident aliens 20%
*Any visas not allocated above distributed as follows:
4. Brothers, sisters, and married children of U.S. citizens and accompanying spouses and children 50%
*Non preference applicants: any remaining visas.
<b><i>Preferences under the Immigration Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act)</i></b>
Categories exempted from numerical quotas and preference requirements: Spouses and unmarried minor children of U.S. citizens
1. Unmarried adult children of U.S. citizens 20%
2. Spouses and unmarried adult children of permanent resident aliens 20%
3. Members of the professions and scientists and artists of exceptional ability 10%
4. Married children of U.S. citizens 10%
5. Brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens over age twenty-one 24%
6. Skilled and unskilled workers in occupations for which labor is in short supply 10%
7. Refugees from communist or communist-dominated countries, or the Middle East 6%
*Non preference: any remaining visas.

Source: Reed Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America: A Social History* (Boston, New York: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1994); Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005).

Table 6. Reforestation Camps in Italy, September 1948-March 1949

Regions	# Reforestation Camps	
Lombardy	1	Northern Regions
Veneto	4	
Friuli	2	
Emilia	15	
Tuscany	36	Central Regions
Lazio	6	
Umbria	2	
Abruzzi /Molise	12	
Campania	2	Southern Regions
Puglia	7	
Lucania	1	
Calabria	2	
Sicily	3	
Sardinia	11	

Source: ACS-MLPS, Div. IX, Box 453, Folder "Carteggio del Ministero con le Varie Organizzazioni Internazionali Riguardanti I Problemi dell'Emigrazione. Anni 1948-1950, Subfile Visita della Commissione Parlamentare Americana in Italia.

Table 7. Average Hourly Wage in *Lire* (£) for Specialized Construction Workers.

Year	Stipend
1953	187
1954	195
1955	214
1956	223
1957	234
1958	256
1959	258
1960	277
1961	284
1962	336
1963	413
1964	530
1965	577
1966	593
1967	618
1968	683
1969	721
1970	846

*Source:* Italy, Istituto Centrale di Statistica, *Sommario di Statistiche Storiche dell'Italia, 1861-1975*, Rome, 1976, 150.

Table 8. Average Monthly Wage in *Lire* (£) for Specialized Industrial Workers

Year	Stipend
1953	43,640
1954	45,637
1955	49,418
1956	53,457
1957	54,905
1958	63,839
1959	64,129
1960	64,712
1961	69,549
1962	72,666
1963	103,994
1964	109,495
1965	114,076
1966	117,482

Table 8. Average Monthly Wage in *Lire* (£) for Specialized Industrial Workers (cont'd.)

1967	119,078
1968	129,632
1969	132,375
1970	243,516

Source: Italy, Istituto Centrale di Statistica, *Sommario di Statistiche Storiche dell'Italia, 1861-1975*, Rome, 1976, 150.

Table 9. Emigration from the Province of Frosinone, January-June, 1952.

Countries of Destination	Requests Beginning of the Quarter	Requests Added during the Quarter	Selected workers	Workers Sent To National Emigration Centers	Workers Expatriated	Family Members Expatriated
Australia	856	532	984	774	205	
Canada	4198	533	506	275	53	
England	587	320	278	210	210	1
France	637	630	720	222	208	71
Belgium	1069	110	203	128	98	26
Switzerland			62	62	62	
Argentina						13
Total	7347	2225	2753	1671	836	111

Source: ACS, MLPS, Direzione Generale del Personale, Div. VI Uffici del Lavoro e Massima Occupazione, Box 24, Folder 15 a, "Frosinone,"File, 1952 Frosinone, tabella 1° e 2° trimestre 1952."

Table 10. Technical-Industrial Schools and Vocational Training Schools, Frosinone, 1950

Municipality	Category	Number of Students
Isolaliri	Mechanics	350
Arpino	Chemists	150
Alatri	Mechanics	150

Source: ACS, MLPS, Direzione Generale del Personale, Div. VI Uffici del Lavoro e Massima Occupazione, Box 24, Folder 15 a, "Frosinone,"File, 1950 Frosinone."

Table 11. Technical-Commercial Schools, Frosinone, 1950

Municipality	Category	Number of Students
Frosinone	Commercial accountants	180

*Source:* ACS, MLPS, Direzione Generale del Personale, Div. VI Uffici del Lavoro e Massima Occupazione, Box 24, Folder 15 a, "Frosinone,"File, 1950 Frosinone."

Table 12. Vocational Training Schools, Frosinone, 1950

Municipality	Category	Number of Students
Atina	Mechanics	100
Cassino	Commercial Employees	150
Ferentino	Commercial Employees	150
Pontecorvo	Farm Managers	100
Veroli	Commercial Employees	100

*Source:* ACS, MLPS, Direzione Generale del Personale, Div. VI Uffici del Lavoro e Massima Occupazione, Box 24, Folder 15 a, "Frosinone,"File, 1950 Frosinone."

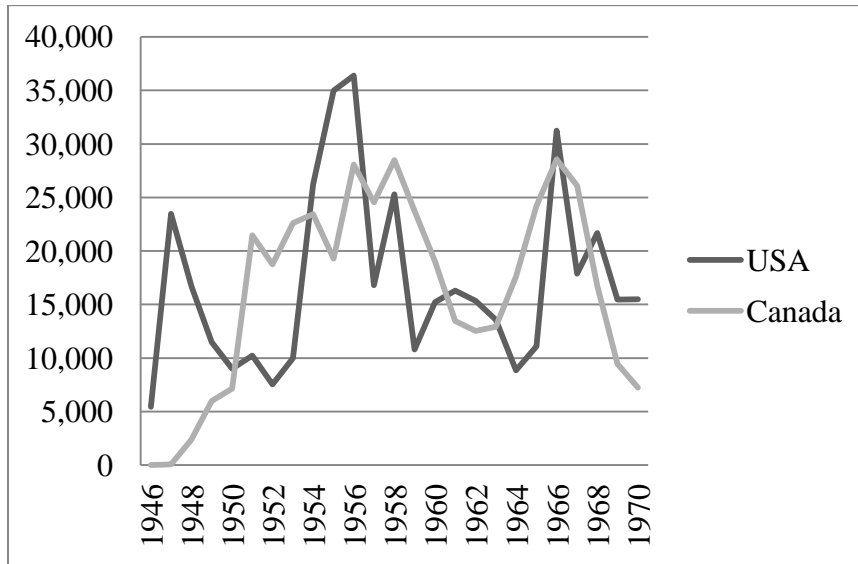
Table 13. Vocational Schools of Arts, Frosinone, 1950

Municipality	Categories	Numbers of Students
Anagni	Cabinet Makers, Carpenters	50

*Source:* ACS, MLPS, Direzione Generale del Personale, Div. VI Uffici del Lavoro e Massima Occupazione, Box 24, Folder 15 a, "Frosinone,"File, 1950 Frosinone."

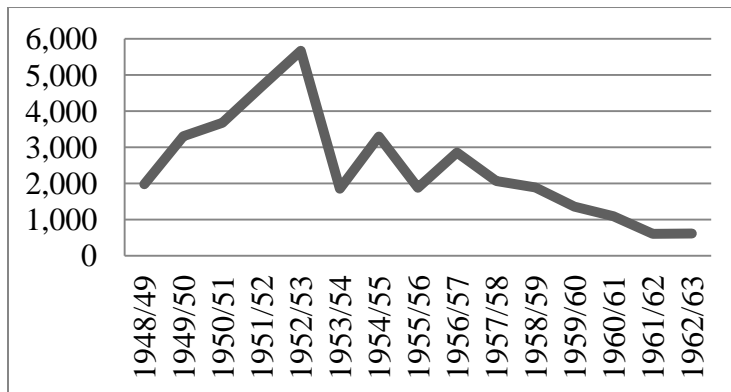
## APPENDIX B: FIGURES

Figure 1. Italian Immigration to the USA and Canada, 1946-70



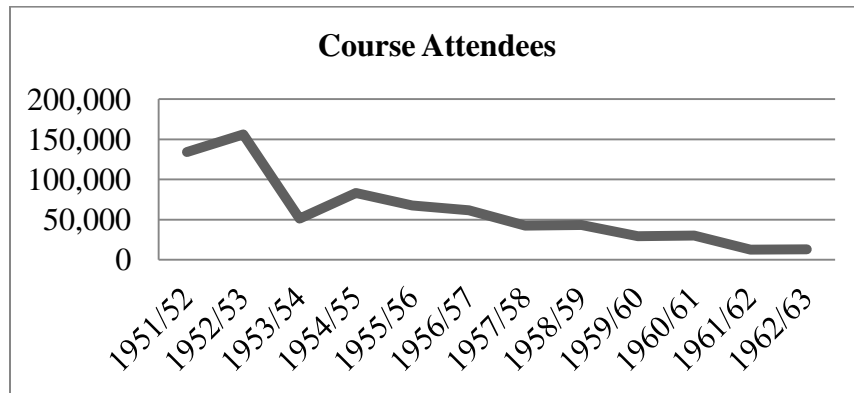
Source: Gianfausto Rosoli, *Un Secolo Di Emigrazione Italiana, 1876-1976* (Roma: Centro studi emigrazione, 1978), 355.

Figure 2. Courses for the Unemployed, 1948-1963



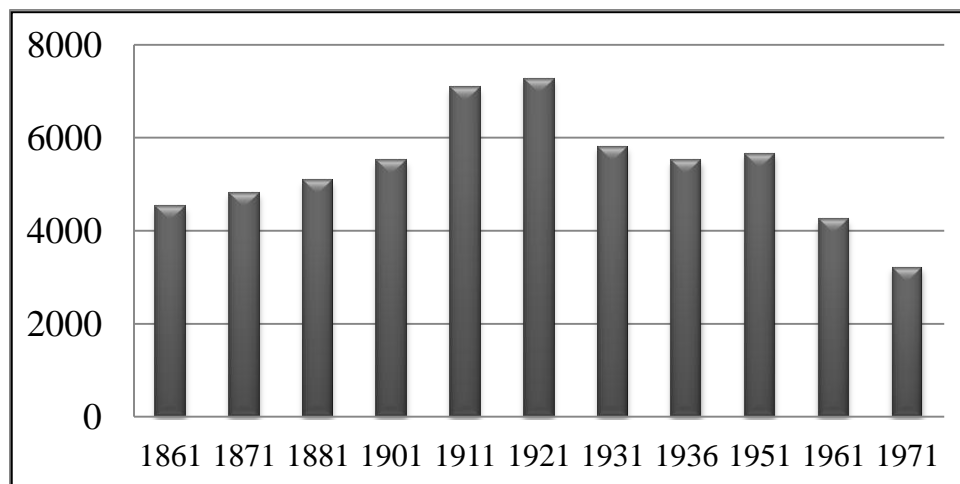
Source: Italy, Ministero del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale, *La Formazione Professionale in Italia*, (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1963), 253.

Figure 3. Attendees of the Courses for the Unemployed, 1948-1963



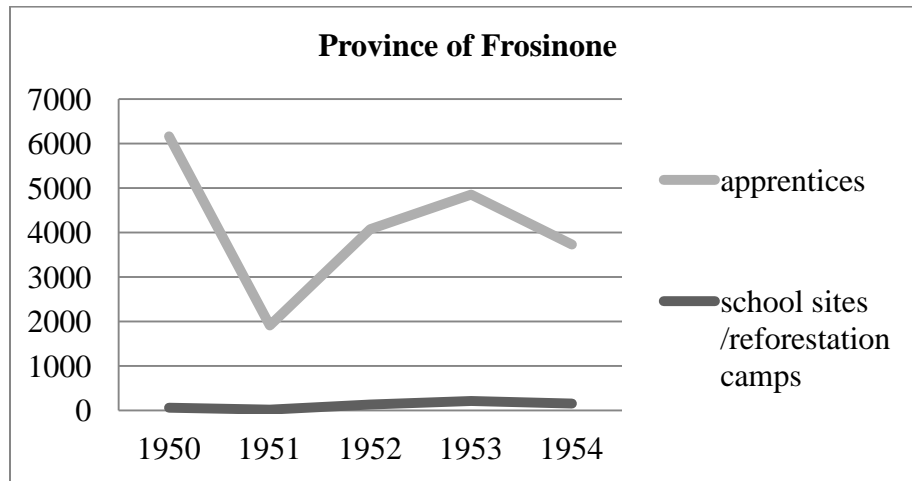
*Source:* Italy, Ministero del Lavoro e della Previdenza Sociale, *La Formazione Professionale in Italia*, (Rome: Isituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1963), 253.

Figure 4. Census of the Population, Municipality of Casalvieri, 1861-1971



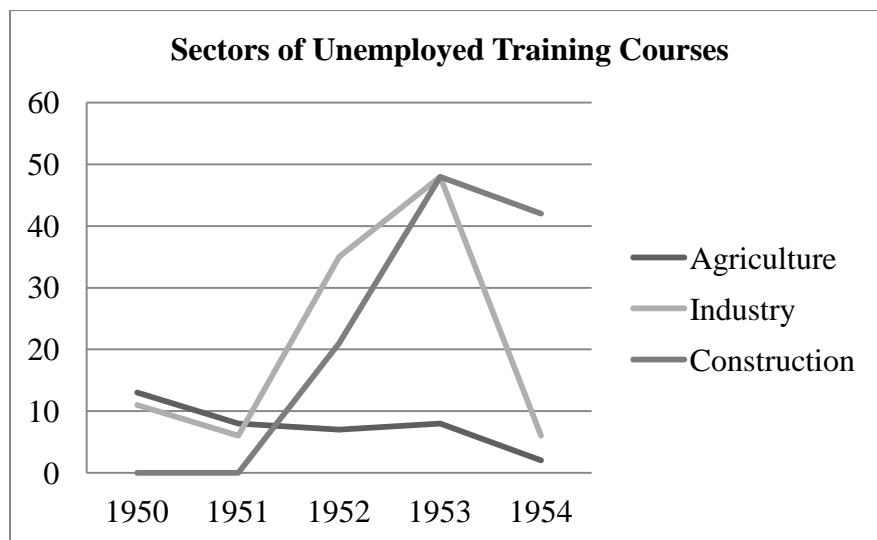
*Source:* Istituto Centrale di Statistica, *Popolazione Residente e Presente dei Comuni, Censimenti dal 1861 al 1971*, Vol. 2 (Rome, 1977), 344-345.

Figure 5. Apprentices, School Sites and Reforestation Camps, 1950-54



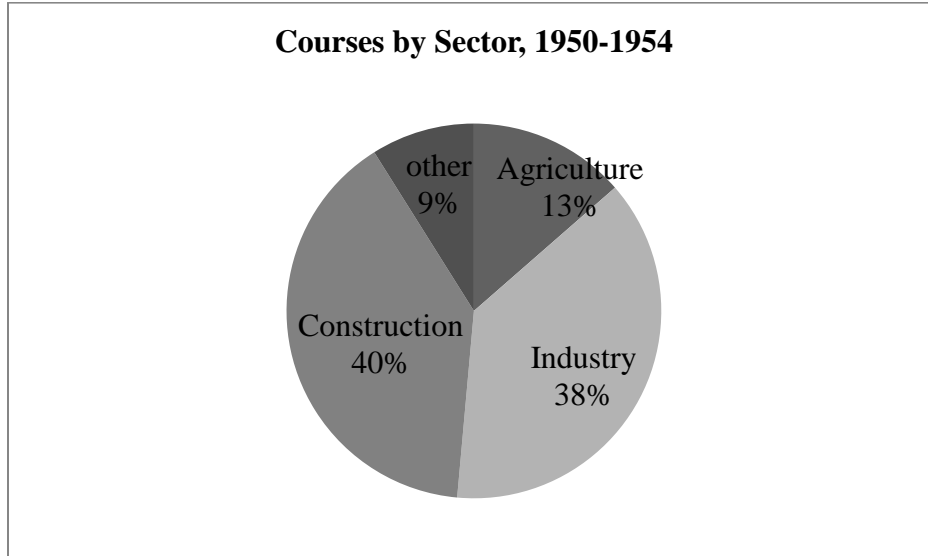
*Source:* ACS, MLPS, Direzione Generale Affari del Personale (DGAP), Div VI, Uffici del Lavoro e della Massima Occupazione (ULMO), Box 24, Folder "15 a Frosinone," File, "1950 Frosinone."

Figure 6. Sectors of Training Courses Offered in the Province of Frosinone, 1950-1954



*Source:* ACS, MLPS, Direzione Generale Affari del Personale (DGAP), Div VI, Uffici del Lavoro e della Massima Occupazione (ULMO), Box 24, Folder "15 a Frosinone," File, "1950 Frosinone."

Figure 7. Training Courses in the Province of Frosinone by Sector, 1950-1954



*Source:* ACS, MLPS, Direzione Generale Affari del Personale (DGAP), Div VI, Uffici del Lavoro e della Massima Occupazione (ULMO), Box 24, Folder "15 a Frosinone," File, "1950 Frosinone."

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