

Land Reform in Italy in 1955

The bases of the land reform in Italy, the laws, the plans for carrying them out, and the initial phases of the work itself have been thoroughly and thoughtfully analyzed in an article by Professor Mario Bandini in this Review in 1952 (1). Since then, the whole face of the landscape in the reform areas has changed with the remarkable progress of the program. Of the three stages through which the reform must pass, the first, that of expropriation, is practically complete, while the second, that of allocation of the land to the new peasant owners, is well under way, and the third, that of organization of cooperatives and development of the holdings, is still in its early stages. Conservative estimates indicate that the reform is approximately 60 percent completed (2), while more optimistic ones rise as high as 85 percent (3). The interpretation of such statistics depends on what factors they include, but in any event they show that marked strides forward have been made within the short space of time since the reform was begun in 1950. By September 1, 1955, 646,675 hectares had been expropriated, and of these, 500,185 had been allotted to 94,264 families. In the case of the Sila, 90 percent of the whole amount of land available for redistribution under the program had been assigned by the beginning of 1955 (4). In no case, however, can statistics give the complete picture of the living reform as it spreads over lands which before were barren pastures, areas of cultivation of only cereals or broad beans, or even hunting preserves, and where now small farms are growing various kinds of produce, and where neat

houses have risen and, at least in part, are already occupied by new peasant proprietors.

Land reform, in the limited sense of redistribution of land ownership among the tillers of the soil (5), is not new in Italy. A slow division of landed property has been going on for centuries (6) and after the first World War, some one million hectares of the best agricultural lands were transferred to the peasants (7), — a transfer, however, not destined to last as nothing more was done than hand over the land, build isolated houses, especially for the settlement of war veterans through the O.N.C. (*Opera Nazionale Combattenti*) and leave the new owners to sink or swim. Most of them sank and lost the properties, which frequently eventually returned to their original owners (8). Land reform defined as it sometimes is to include land reclamation projects, such as swamp drainage, irrigation and reforestation, has also long been known in Italy. Land reform in the sense in which the words are now used there, to include transformation of the peasant and his habits as well as of the land, is a new and far-reaching concept.

At the risk of repeating some of the points already clearly explained by Professor Bandini, the legal and administrative background of land reform must be explained for an understanding of the present developments. Of the three laws now governing the reform, the first, that for the Sila mountains of North Calabria and the eastern parts of Calabria

(5) For definitions of various types of land reform, cf. *Progress in Land reform*, UN Department of Economic Affairs (Geneva), 1954, p. 49.

(6) GIUSEPPE MEDICI, *L'Agricoltura e la riforma agraria* (Milan), 1948, *passim*, esp. p. 67 ff.; *ibid.*, *The E.R.P. and the Problems of Italian Agriculture*, this Review, No. 7, Oct.-Dec. 1948, pp. 418-419.

(7) MARIO EINAUDI, *The Italian Land: Men, Nature and Government*, « Social Research », Mar. 1950, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 8.

(8) BANDINI, *op. cit.*, 1952, p. 26.

(1) *Land Reform in Italy*, this Review, No. 20, Jan.-Mar. 1952.

(2) Statement of Professor Manlio Rossi-Doria, Mar. 8, 1955.

(3) Estimate of Sen. Carelli, 287^o *Resoconto Sommario*, Senato della Repubblica, May 27, 1955, p. 3.

(4) *Annuario dell'Agricoltura*, 1955, Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria, Vol. VIII, p. 510.

adjoining the Ionian Sea (9), was enacted May 12, 1950. Slightly over five months later, the « Stralcio » or « Extract » law was passed (10), so-called from the fact that it was planned as a mere part of a general law to be forthcoming at a later date, but which has not yet been enacted by Parliament. Five days before the end of 1950, the Sicilian regional legislative assembly passed its own law for that island (11).

(a) Reform got under way rapidly under the *Sila law*, as the Organization for the Improvement of the Sila, established in 1948 as a land reclamation agency for the wooded high Sila plateau in Calabria, set up a special section to deal with land reform in the areas covered by that legislation (12).

(b) By virtue of the « *Stralcio* » law, areas considered by the government to be in the greatest need of reform were set apart by decrees of the President (13). The areas chosen were the agriculturally backward, extensively farmed parts of the country where *latifundia* and large estates predominated and the land-hungry peasants were day laborers, tenants or share-croppers or at the most held tiny strips of land, too small to give them a living. These reform areas, covering the large amount of more than 8 million hectares or a little less than a third (14) of the whole agricultural and forest lands of Italy, included the Po Delta; the Maremma of Tuscany and Latium; Lake Fucino in the Abruzzi; the coastal plains of the Sele and Volturna in Campania; the extensively farmed areas of Apulia and Lucania (Basilicata); Sardinia; the areas of Calabria covered by the Sila law; and Sicily, which is covered by its own law and administration. For each of the areas a

(9) Law No. 230. For texts of this and the following two laws, cf. *Leggi di Riforma Fondiaria*, Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle Foreste (Rome), 1953.

(10) Law No. 841, Oct. 21, 1950.

(11) Law of the Sicilian Region, No. 104, Dec. 27, 1950.

(12) This organization also administers the work of land reform in the small area of Caulonia which is covered by the « Stralcio » Law.

(13) For decrees, cf. *Le Leggi di Riforma Fondiaria*, op. cit., pp. 85-189.

(14) 29.33 percent or 8,141,658 hectares out of a total of 27,760,459 hectares. *The Agricultural Reform*, in *Banco di Roma*, Quarterly Review, Vol. IX, Jan. 1955.

land reform agency was either established anew or formed from organizations existing for other purposes, such as colonization or land reclamation (15).

Land exceeding 300 hectares held by one owner in the Sila area was made liable to expropriation by the law unless already intensively cultivated (16); expropriation under the « Stralcio » law depended on the size of an owners' property on November 15, 1949, the day when the government announced the outline of its land reform program; expropriation also depended on the intensity with which land was cultivated (17).

(c) The long and complex *Sicilian law*, with 54 articles, based expropriation on the size of property on the date when the law was to become effective, January 1, 1951 (18) and on a progressively assessed income basis on the same date. The plan of this legislation is the reduction of all properties in the extensively cultivated areas of the island to 200 hectares, except the lands which have been reclaimed and developed, and except those estates where the residual property would not be larger than 300 hectares. The landowners

(15) A special section of the War Veterans' Agency (O.N.C.) with offices in Naples covers the coastal area of the Sele and Volturno in Campania; Apulia and Lucania are covered by a special section of the Irrigation and Land Development Agency for Apulia and Lucania, with offices at Bari; another special section of the Organization for the Development of the Sila has been established, with headquarters at Cosenza; a special agency has been set up in Cagliari in Sardinia, E.T.F.A.S., the Sardinian Land Reform Agency, which covers most of the island, though its southern part is covered by the already existing Flumendosa Agency; a special agency, the organization for Colonization of the Po Delta, has been established for that region, with headquarters in Bologna; another special agency has been set up for the Maremma of Tuscany and Latium, the Organization for the colonization of the Maremma with headquarters in Rome. The territory of the Fucino was originally included but now has its own agency centered in Rome but with headquarters in the former administration building of the now expropriated Torlonia estates; the Sicilian law is administered by E.R.A.S., the Sicilian Land Reform Agency with headquarters at Palermo.

All these agencies or sections of agencies are supervised by the Ministry of Agriculture, which appoints the Chairmen, General Managers and members of the Boards of Directors. BANDINI, *op. cit.*

(16) Art. 2.

(17) Art. 4.

(18) Title III, esp. Art. 23; table of percentages of expropriations, *Le leggi di Riforma Fondiaria*, op. cit., p. 221. Certain transactions are not considered valid, however, if carried out after Nov. 15, 1949.

are given a period of grace to sell direct to the peasants, and much property has passed over by such transactions, though not always to the peasants most in need.

All the laws contain numerous provisions for exemptions and corrections of errors; the Sicilian law has various possibilities for appeal from the decisions of the administrative bodies which it establishes. The « Stralcio » law contains one noteworthy provision in relation to expropriation. The « size » of an owners' property (19) refers to his total holdings in all of Italy and not merely in a land reform area, though only in such an area may land be expropriated. Because of its relationship to his total holdings, all of a landholder's property in one reform zone may be taken. This happened, to name but one instance, to Prince Torlonia, who, as the owner of great holdings in the Maremma, Fucino and elsewhere, lost all his Fucino lands (about 16,000 hectares) and part of those in the Maremma. Landowners with productive, carefully farmed property in one area of the country and uncultivated hunting areas or extensively farmed lands in other sections objected particularly to an arrangement which based percentages of expropriation on *all* their lands.

Special exemption are granted by the « Stralcio » law for the so-called « *terzo residuo* » and « *model-farms* » (20).

Under the provisions for the former, if a landed proprietor promises to develop one third of his hitherto unimproved land in accordance with pre-arranged plans of the land reform agency, he is given two and a

(19) The criterion for measuring the size of a given piece of property in all instances is the taxable assessed income, and for the intensity of cultivation, the average assessed income per hectare. The percentages of assessed income for expropriation purposes was fixed in a schedule annexed to the law, but the percentage of actual land taken has been subject to variation in accordance with the principles adopted by the land reform agencies of each area. Thus an agency could expropriate land with a low assessed income or vice versa. Cf. MARIO BANDINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17 and *Land Reform in Italy*, "International Journal of Agrarian Affairs", Vol. II, No. 1, Jan. 1955, p. 53.

(20) Art. 8, 9, 10. By this arrangement, landowners, up to January 1, 1955 retained some 47,000 hectares, of which 24,781 were in the Maremma, 18,808 in Puglia, Lucania and Molise, while the remainder was scattered through the other reform zones.

half years in which to complete the work. At that time half of this area is allotted to the peasants by the land reform agency, and the other half, or one-sixth of the original property remains the property of the landowner, presumably as repayment for what he has spent in improving the whole third. The exemption of well-organized « model farms » has caused much discussion, probably because of the somewhat vague criteria established in the law. A farm is deemed « model » if it fulfills the following requirements: (1) the existence of stable tenure relations between landowner and farm workers; (2) crop yields at least 40 percent above the average for the district; (3) superior sanitary conditions for the workers' or tenants' houses; (4) an average labor use of not under 0.30 men per hectare; (5) superior economic and social conditions for the workers. It is difficult, for example, to determine what « stable tenure » and « superior economic and social conditions » mean. Terms susceptible to various meaning always open the door to numerous requests for inclusion under them. It is not surprising, therefore, that some 50,000 landowners have asked exemption, of which 27,000 have been allowed. Under the Sicilian law, appeal is almost axiomatic, as the law provides that expropriations may be appealed to the Regional Assessors of Agriculture and Forests, to whom most landowners automatically appeal, and also to the lower courts, which, however, have been loath to grant requests. The number of such appeals is indicated by the fact that in August 1955, there were still 40,000 hectares being contested between the Sicilian Reform Agency and the proprietors (21).

Of the 741,265 hectares originally posted for expropriation throughout Italy, 94,588 hectares had been exempted by the beginning of 1955. So 646,675 hectares may be said to have been expropriated, though the addition of 20,000 more hectares is expected in Sicily by the fall or end of 1955. It is believed that the total amount of land to be expropriated there will finally amount to 120,000 hectares, or about 6 percent of the total extensively cultivated land. On the other hand, it is

(21) Sicilian Law, art. 14, letter from Sicilian Reform Agency, August 12, 1955.

estimated that over 200,000 hectares have been sold to small owners since 1943, and particularly since 1949, as an indirect result of the Sicilian reform.

EXPROPRIATIONS AND ALLOTMENTS UNDER LAND REFORM TO SEPTEMBER 1, 1955.

Area	Expropriations	Allotments	No. Families Receiving Land	Average No. Ha. per Family
Po Delta	45,697	32,810	5,694	5.50
Maremma	191,406	141,299	17,572	8.16
Fucino	16,000	13,927	9,320	4.50
Apulia, Lucania, Molise	199,368	150,093	25,570	5.95
Campania	9,046	6,397	1,934	3.40
Calabria (*) . . .	75,657	76,279	19,013	4.02
Sardinia (**). . .	49,498	23,362	2,408	8.61
Sicily (***) . . .	60,000	56,218	12,753	4.54
<i>Total</i>	646,801	500,185	94,264	

(*) Sila and Caulonia.

(**) Plus 33,465 ha. turned over to E.T.F.A.S. by the Sardinian Colonizers' Association in 1953.

(***) Plus 20,000 to be added before the end of 1955; 40,000 hectares more are still in litigation.

Though, statistically speaking, the amount of land actually expropriated and allotted is a small quantity, the figures above give no idea of the importance of the whole reform in other than arithmetical terms. Land has been taken in practically all the large estates of 2,500 hectares and over and about 54 percent of those from 1,000 to 2,500 hectares. The percentage of land expropriated decreases as the estates become smaller so that just over 7 percent is taken from the properties of 100 hectares (22).

Landowners whose property has been expropriated were promised compensation at a rate equal to the value assessed for the extraordinary property tax of 1947. This means that any land which was given an excessively low valuation at that time now suffers the consequences by providing a proportionately

(22) *The Agricultural Reform*, in "Banco di Roma - Quarterly Review", *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

low remuneration for expropriation. Compensation is paid in 25-year government bonds at 5 percent interest but the machinery for payment has been so slow in getting under way so that reimbursement for expropriation has not yet begun.

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The plan of the land reform is ambitious in that it aims to raise the productivity of hitherto poor or neglected land, as well as to divide it among peasants. As Professor Bandini has pointed out in this Review (23), the reform is not trying to take the best agricultural lands but rather to concentrate on those which can best be improved. Only by seeing great machines breaking up rocks or digging through clay and then watching the peasants removing the pieces of stone and tilling what seems impossibly barren soil, can one appreciate to the full the breadth of vision of the reform program in Italy today, the dedication of its officials and the patient skill of the peasants. Not only are they beginning to get the land they crave but formerly infertile lands are being made productive.

Basic improvements such as deep ploughing, drainage and the first work of breaking up the soil must be done before the land can be assigned and are usually the work of the reform agencies, though in Sicily the lands pass directly to the peasants and are not the property of the land reform agency after expropriation. Although the peasants must do the bulk of the work of making the lands ready for cultivation, the Sicilian land reform agency (E.R.A.S.) guarantees the new owners necessary aid (24). In the course of the year 1953-4, E.R.A.S. loaned 267,700,000 lire for purchase of plows, seeds and fertilizers, while the following year, the amount planned for such loans rose to 678,800,000 lire (25).

Lands where before the reform there were only pastures, hunting preserves or fields of wheat must be opened up by roads before land can be given to the peasants. The re-

(23) *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

(24) *L'attività dell'E.R.A.S. in Sicilia*, "Informazioni SVI-MEZ", anno VII, No. 30, 27 luglio - 3 agosto 1955, p. 711.

(25) *Ibid.*

form therefore is making the country more accessible as well as transforming the land itself. Hundreds of kilometers of roads have been built *de novo* in most of the reform areas. In all such basic activities as preparing the land and building roads, peasant labor is used as far as possible and paid the going rate of wages (26).

Within at most three years from the time when the land is expropriated, it is divided into holdings and turned over to the peasants entitled to receive them (27). The criteria for distribution, in part stated in the law (28), differs somewhat between one reform area and another because of differences in the amount of land available, its potential productivity and the needs of the peasants. In general, landless *braccianti* have been given first preference, then come tenants or sharecroppers who have been working on the land. A factor always taken into consideration is the composition of a peasant family, with the number of workers it includes viewed in relationship to the productivity of the land for which they apply.

Size and potential productivity of the land are both important elements in the determination of the division of all expropriated land. A tract in the arid regions of the South, for example, is not equal in usefulness to the same amount of land in the rich, reclaimed lands of the Po Delta or the fertile fields of Campania. The difficulty in both of these places is not in the quality of the land but in the overcrowding. Wherever there is too large a population in the agricultural areas, not enough land is available to be divided among these eager to receive it. Where there is little population but large *latifundia*, as in Sardinia and the Maremma of Tuscany and Latium, the new owners have averaged somewhat over 8 hectares of land for

(26) *Cf.* below, p. 153.

(27) For important elements in assignation of land to the peasants, *cf.* FRANCESCO PLATZER, *L'assegnazione ai contadini delle terre espropriate*, reprint from "La Riforma Fondiaria" (Palermo), 1951 and MANLIO ROSSI-DORIA, *Considerazioni sulla Riforma Agraria in Italia*, Relazione al VII Congresso degli Economisti Agrari, Stresa (Venice) 1950.

(28) Sila law, Art. 16; "Stralcio" law, Arts. 1, 21; Sicilian law, esp. Arts. 37, 40.

each family (29). Calabria, on the other hand, has a large population, limited irrigable land and neither climate or soil suited to intensive dry forming. The average division is but 4.02 hectares of, for the most part, poor land. Sicily, also with an overcrowded population, has been able to provide slightly more under its land reform plan, or 4.54 hectares of land, for the most part stony and barren.

The attempt to satisfy the peasant yearning for land of their own in all the areas where there is not enough property available has been the most difficult problem of the whole program. Especially in Apulia, Calabria, Campania, the Po Delta and Sicily, there is not enough land for the people. In the disturbed Po Delta and elsewhere, political pressure of the left has prevented a few peasants from applying for land or even taking it when offered (30), but in general the number of those who have refused has been a tiny drop in the great bucket of those anxious to secure a small bit of land. The reform agencies, having an avowed aim of giving every eligible peasant enough land to make him and his family self-sustaining, nevertheless have had to steer between the Scylla of discriminating among the many equally qualified claimants and the Charybdis of cutting the land into tiny bits such as have made peasant ownership so difficult in the Fucino, Sardinia, Sicily and parts of Calabria. The only other possibility has been to buy land for distribution and this the land reform agencies have done, but too many purchases, even where land is available, would be more than the reform budget could bear.

In crowded areas, peasants who already own tiny strips of land or who have the possibility of finding at least some work on estates near their property are given small plots designed to supplement their other income rather than to make them self-supporting. These fractional units, averaging 1.9 hectares each, are regarded by the land re-

(29) Maremma, 8.16; Sardinia, 8.61; *Cf. above* p. 146 Table.

(30) *Tre Anni di Attività*, Ente per la Colonizzazione del Delta Padano, Feb. 1954, p. 22.

form agencies as far from an ideal solution of the reform problems but as better than nothing. The danger of such parcels is that they in turn will form another link in the chain of pulverization of the land (31). It may be, however, that the desire of the Italian peasant for a bit of land is so passionate that for psychological reasons if no other, the granting of even small fractions of land is advisable. In some places in the Maremma, certain *braccianti* have actually chosen the small pieces instead of a larger area so that they might retain the possibility of getting daily wages at least part of the time and continuing their social insurance benefits which are not available to landholders.

Peasants who receive land must pay for it at a price not to exceed two-thirds of its development cost, plus compensation. Thirty years is allowed for payment, and credit is given on favorable terms at interest of 3.5 percent (32). There is no possibility of sale or subdivision among heirs before the expiration of the 30-year period when payments will be completed (33). In the event of death of the property owner, the land goes to one heir who cannot legally subdivide it before the time limit is ended. This wise arrangement prevents division into tiny fragments by inheritance or sale, so common in overcrowded and poor areas in the past. Any attempted break-up of the property before the end of the time necessitates its return to the land reform agency.

All grants of land to the peasants are made on a trial basis for a three-year period. If the peasant owners do not live up to the conditions imposed on them during that time, the land must be forfeited. There have been comparatively few instances of such forced return of the land to the reform agencies, but they have been found, for example, when the peasants insist on growing wheat on land better suited to other crops or when they

(31) Cf. for instance, FELICE MEDDA, *Il frazionamento della proprietà in Sardegna*, reprint from "Realtà Nuova", Feb. 1955, *passim*.

(32) *Progress in Land Reform*, UN, op. cit., p. 72.

(33) Sila law, Art. 18, 19; "Stralcio" law, Art. 21; the Sicilian law, Art. 37, makes the period 2 years for that island.

refuse to join cooperatives. Cases, though few, of removal for political agitation are not unknown.

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The original intention of the reform was to keep the building of houses for the new landowners down to the absolute minimum, at least at the start, for experience with pre-war reforms had « been based almost entirely on the building of peasant house, often on too luxurious lines, without the slightest improvement in farming as a result. It almost seemed sometimes that the chief purpose of these houses was to be inaugurated by high authorities and politicians » (34). In addition to this warning from the past, there has been fear on the part of some authorities today that peasants, used to living crowded in villages remote from the fields, would not like the comparative isolation of living on their own land (35). Furthermore, construction of thousands of separate houses is far more costly and time-consuming than the building of residential settlements which do not have to have numerous separate services for sewers, water supply, electrical connections, etc. Last of all, large-scale farming is apt to be impeded by many small houses dotting the landscape. It is clear, however, that Italy is primarily a country of small peasant-farmers, each one of whom believes that the « limpid oil of his olive garden, the wine, red or white, of his little vineyard, are the trophies of his profound union with an earth with which he has consummated a sort of secret marriage » (36). The tendency has therefore developed, despite any reason to the contrary, to settle the peasant landowners on their own lands wherever it has been possible to give them sufficient property to make them self-supporting.

(34) BANDINI, *Land Reform in Italy*, this Review, op. cit., p. 22.

(35) Cf. MAZZOCCHI-ALEMANNI, *Inseidamento umano, bonifica e riforma nei territori latifondistici*, "Rivista Italiana di Economia, Demografia e Statistica", 1950, Nos. 3-4, p. 329 and *Dibattiti sulla relazione*, Atti del Convegno di Napoli, Oct. 13-4, 1952 (Rome), 1952, pp. 232-3; BANDINI, this Review, op. cit., p. 22.

(36) CARLO SFORZA, *Italy and the Italians* (New York, 1949), pag. 64.

By the end of July, 1955, in all the land reform areas except Sicily, 9,478 houses had been completed at a cost of 23,993,000 lire, and 11,355 were still in the course of construction, at an estimated cost of 33,756,000 lire (37). Even where the size of the property is small, as in Sicily, the trend to build individual houses has continued. On that island alone, 300 houses had been completed by the same date, 200 more were being finished and 4,000 more were planned and the building contracts let (38). The most difficult problem in that area is that the notably poor Sicilian peasants may have difficulty in meeting their financial obligations even over a period of time, for their lands in general are not only small but poor. In other land supposed to be reform areas, under similar environmental conditions, parcels of land as small as some allotted in Sicily are usually regarded as fractional units of land rather than regular small-farming units each designed to support a family. In no place are fractional pieces of land provided with houses, for the peasants who have received them must also have, or find if possible, other sources of income, possibly remote from their new land.

From one end of the reform area to the other, the experiment of putting the peasants on the land appears to be successful, insofar as one can judge in the short space of time which has elapsed since any number of peasants began to occupy their own homes. But it is too soon to know the final answer to the problems of adjustment. In 1955 the land reform is still in the stage of building houses and of planning for others ahead. It is planned, if further funds are forthcoming, to construct 80,000 more houses, not including Sicily, at a cost of 225,000,000 lire (39).

There was great pressure to turn over the land to the peasants as soon as possible and also to enable them to see with their own eyes the tangible fruits of the reform in the shape of houses, even for future occupancy.

(37) Figures from the Ministry of Agriculture, Sept. 30, 1955.

(38) Letter from the Sicilian Land Reform Agency, (E.R. A.S.), August, 1955.

(39) Information from the Ministry of Agriculture, Sept. 20, 1955.

This pressure meant that houses have sometimes been put on plots too small to support a family and that in other cases building was begun before the difficult problems of obtaining proper water supply, for instance, were solved.

Where there are great distances between the old peasant villages and the lands which have been distributed and where the plots given the peasants are perforce too small for the construction of separate houses, residential settlements near the land are providing a satisfactory solution. If the lands are assigned near inhabited centers, the new landowners continue to dwell in their former homes, unless these are so overcrowded or in such bad condition that moving from them is essential immediately (40).

In the different land reform areas, the houses are constructed somewhat differently and are of slightly different sizes, though all are arranged so they can be easily enlarged as the family grows. Besides the living quarters for the people, attached to the houses are stables, sheds and haylofts for the cows which the land reform authorities are so anxious for the peasants to have, both for their own good and the great cattle shortage of Italy.

It is the construction of the new houses which has changed the whole look of the land in the reform areas. In great stretches of the Maremma, where sheep once pastured, rows and rows of little white houses now cover the landscape (41).

(40) For instance, in the Venice-like town of Comacchio in the Po Delta, and among the rock-dwellers of Matera, bad conditions of overcrowded living made the authorities build new housing developments on the edge of the town. Near Matera there is the lovely new village of *La Martella* but not all the houses are occupied, though the first group of 49 families was moved in as long ago as just before the elections of June, 1953 (see LEONARDO SACCO, *Villaggio Modello*, "Il Mondo", 6 September 1955, p. 5). In this instance, so much publicity has attended the building of this village as a model for others to follow that political and psychological difficulties have become particularly numerous.

(41) On that area alone, there are 4,500 houses built or in the process of construction and 2,500 were already occupied in the spring of 1955. In the Po Delta, beside the great *valli* being reclaimed from their brackish water, 5,000 houses are being constructed, of which, however, only 550 are already complete and occupied. And so the story goes in all the reform areas.

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The land reform today realizes that it will fail if it merely hands over uncultivated land and a new house. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the whole reform is the attempt to transform not only the land but the peasants themselves. They need not only machines and tractors, but technical assistance, agricultural training and above all inculcation of the idea of themselves as part of a community and not as « man alone, face to face with a hostile land » (42). Where the landscape is covered with new houses remote from villages, new rural service centers are springing up and have already begun to provide necessary services and education for the surrounding population (43).

The technical and educational work which these centers carry on is essential to a change in the peasants from individualistic self-centered strugglers for existence into good farmers, understanding the problems of their lands, and living cooperatively with their neighbors.

Progress in thinking in terms of community rather than as individuals can only come slowly to peasants accustomed to a bitter fight for survival. After the coming of the land reform, some of the peasants have occasionally been less willing to work hard than before (44) for they have begun to wonder why they need to carry on back-breaking toil when the reform had arrived to do things for them. Or they have come to think it might be more profitable for them to turn to the public works improvements going on in the neighborhood of the reform and earn more than by working their own small plots of earth. It has been particularly hard for those peasants who have received land furthest away from the residential or service centers to get any feeling of the necessity of working for any but their own ends or of cooperating with neighbors who had formerly been their

(42) EINAUDI, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

(43) The centers have schools, usually kindergartens, churches, living quarters for the parish priests, "carabinieri" stations, infirmaries, shops, etc.

(44) MANLIO ROSSI-DORIA, *La Riforma Agraria*, Speech at "La Consulta", June 10, 1951, p. 51 (reprint).

adversaries in the battle for existence. Gradually, however, the change comes with education and a growing sense of pride in ownership, and often the most selfish peasant sees what can be accomplished even for himself by working together with others for a common goal.

Such results cannot be attained without the educational work which is the foundation of the service centers. The various land reform agencies have organized hundreds of courses for the various categories of peasants throughout all the reform areas. In the South, in collaboration with the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, and the Minister for Public Instruction, eight new central educational institutes, each with various branches, have been established on lands provided by the reform agencies (45). In courses such a civics the peasants may emerge from behind their iron wall of ignorance and begin to learn something of their community, region and country as well as church. Women, more isolated by past experience than men, are often more difficult to orient in new ways of living than the men. So courses in domestic economy have been organized for them which at least have the possibility of making a small beginning of a change in their outlook. It is an inspiring sight to see young peasants in classes of animal husbandry, fruit and vine cultivation. In the Po Delta today the Hall of Justice of the Abbey of Pomposa, used by the monks of the XIII century in their land reclamation work, is now fittingly the agricultural school for the sons of the *braccianti*; in the far-off service center on the western coast of Sardinia, near the Catalan-speaking city of Alghero, there are the same kind of classes.

One or more expert agriculturalists and social workers are assigned to each center to help the new farmers in their farm work and other adjustments. Many centers have demonstration farms and agricultural experiment stations. Thus on the high Sila, for example, one may see great stalls of brown Alpine cattle, which have been found well adapted to that climate and altitude; on the

(45) *Annuario dell'Agricoltura*, 1955, *op. cit.*, p. 517.

Campidano plains of Sardinia an abandoned factory is used as the stable for a large herd of cattle. Elsewhere there is also the same emphasis on teaching the peasants, formerly unused to animals other than sheep, goats, bullocks, the value and importance of cattle and how to raise them. From these demonstration stables come the cows which the peasants are aided in buying by the reform agencies.

As part of the program of cooperative activity, the new proprietors are required by the laws (46) to join and remain as members of a cooperative or *consorzio* for at least 20 years from the time they receive the lands. The cooperatives are designed to provide, for the use of the whole group, large farm machinery and tractors which individual small proprietors cannot, and should not, afford, as these machines can serve more than one person; to secure the advantages of collective purchases, of seeds, fertilizers and other necessary farm supplies; to work out the installation and management of farm industries, such as the processing of wine, cheese, oil and the canning of tomatoes. The cooperatives also have the aim of organizing consumers' stores where peasants are able to buy goods at prices determined by the land reform agency to be fair, usually in return for payment in kind for labor on general improvements in the reform area.

Although the future of the land reform program depends in large part on the successful development of cooperation (47), it is the last stage of the reform program and the one in which little has been accomplished to date. There are several reasons for the extremely slow speed with which cooperatives are developing as compared to the relative speed with which the two earlier stages of the reform forged ahead. The peasants have not as yet produced enough on most of their plots of land to spur them into a desire for the advantages of cooperative processing and sales; most important is the individualism which means that their cooperative interest

(46) Sila law, Art. 23; "Stralcio" law, Art. 1. The Sicilian law in Art. 45 provides technical assistance for the peasants but does not require them to be members of cooperatives.

(47) *Annuario dell'Agricoltura*, 1955, *op. cit.*, p. 516.

can develop only slowly. This has been noted by people with all sorts of political beliefs from the right to the left (48).

* * *

Much criticism has been voiced about the great cost of the land reform program as a whole, and not all of it has come from the enemies of the reform. There is wide agreement that reclaiming poor land, dividing it into small farms and then settling the peasants on them is inevitably an expensive process (49). The cost of the reform to date seems to bear out the truth of this idea (50).

The total amount of money allocated to all sections of continental Italy and Sardinia, but not including Sicily, is 365 billion lire, of which 15 billion was appropriated under the Sila law for the six-year period from 1949-50 to 1954-55 (51) and 350 billion under the « Stralcio » law at the rate of 35 billions annually for ten years ending 1958-59 (52). These amounts will be ultimately increased by the redemption payments to be made by the peasants who have received land. Professor Bandini estimates that in the course of ten years these will add from 20 to 25 percent to the total (53).

By the latter part of 1954, 266 billion lire had already been spent out of the 365 billion, though the time limit for all but the Sila funds had far from run out. There were, furthermore, 75 billion more due the owners of expropriated lands, and some 81 billion of debts had been accumulated or will reach that amount by July, 1956 (54), even including

(48) ALESSANDRO SCHEGGI, *Riforma fondiaria*, "Realtà Nuova", May, 1955, p. 330.

(49) Cf. for instance, MANLIO ROSSI-DORIA, *La Riforma Agraria*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

(50) ALDO PAGANI, *Il bilancio degli enti di riforma*, "Mondo Economico", June 18, 1955, p. 7.

(51) Art. 25.

(52) Art. 24 and note 39. Of the total 35 billions a year, 28 billions are provided by the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* and 7,000 from provisions for aid to the depressed areas of central and northern Italy. Cf. BANDINI, *Land Reform in Italy*, this Review, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

(53) *Ibid.*

(54) The gross debts are divided as follows: Maremma and Fucino, 50 billion; Puglia, Lucania and Molise, 10.5 billion; Campania, 2 billion; Sardinia and Flumendosa, 4.4 billion; Po Delta, 10.5 billion; the *Opera Sila* expects to assume 10.5 billion in 1955-56. Cf. ALDO PAGANI, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

estimated payments. During the year 1954 alone, in addition to the 35 billion lire allocated under the « Stralcio » law, works were under way to the amount of about 53 billions and others to the extent of 74 billions were programmed but not yet carried out (55). Although these figures give an idea of the total cost, they do not indicate the actual expenses per hectare for the work of transformation of the land, to say nothing of the expenses for educating the people. For the Maremma alone it is calculated that the cost is 170,000 lire per hectare in cases where it is necessary only to reconstruct buildings already in use, but 350,000 lire where entirely new buildings are necessary. In other reform zones, this latter amount rises as high as 500,000 lire (56). These figures do not include amounts spent for the acquisition of farm machinery or for technical instruction and education. Professor Rossi-Doria has calculated that it costs from 4 to 5 million lire to settle each family on the land (57). All in all, it is now estimated that approximately 700 billion lire will be needed to finance the complete reform, or about double the amount originally allocated and not including the figures for Sicily: *i.e.* more than one million lire per hectare.

The great cost of the program came in for serious criticism, not all well founded, in Parliament in the spring of 1955 (58). The fact remains, however, that resettlement of peasants on the land in separate individual houses is the most expensive way that land reform could have been carried on, not only because of the cost of building houses and service centers but because the cost of farming individual tracts is greater than large-scale farming where tractors and other farm machinery may be put to their best use over great areas of land. Even though the new small plots are not as efficient as they might be if the land reform had been carried out

(55) *Annuario dell'Agricoltura*, 1955, *op. cit.*, p. 514.

(56) *Ibid.*, and p. 515.

(57) Statement, March 10, 1955.

(58) *Resoconti Sommari*, Nos. 284, 285, 287, Senato della Repubblica, May 24, 25, 27, 1955, pp. 6-11, 2-10, 2-10, respectively.

otherwise, it is important to remember that the reform is more than statistics and efficiency. Nor are political reasons for the reform by its present method to be forgotten.

It is possible that the expenditures of the land reform agencies for personnel and for administration generally have been too high and not sufficiently under control. In a new agency in any country the tendency is always to take on too many employees, particularly when specialists are required to push a new program through rapidly. In Italy this danger is particularly great because of the needs for employment. It is reported that some 9,500 persons are employed by the land reform agencies, not including the Po Delta organization. If this number is correct, the cost of salaries eats a large hole in the appropriations for the reform, for salaries for this number of employees amounts to some 10 billion lire a year, or 120 billion in 12 years. Too great numbers of employees, furthermore, tend to lessen the impact of the total program on the peasants. Yet in many areas these are not enough employees. In Sicily, for example, there is dearth of trained agricultural economists for the program. In any case, the devoted work of large numbers of employees of the land reform agencies throughout the length and breadth of the reform areas is a cause for admiration by all who have seen them.

Much criticism of the costs of the reform is really aimed at its basic principles. Once they are accepted, it is possible to try to have some understanding of why the costs have been so high. The largest amounts of money inevitably went into the early stages of the reform, when the heavy work of transforming barren, uncultivated lands, frequently without water supply, drainage or irrigation was being done, when houses were being constructed and peasants moved in, farm machinery being bought and put into use, and service villages, complete with buildings, made to rise from land which before had been desolate waste.

There are doubtless ways in which the reform program might have saved money. It might have been possible to time some of the work better and not rush houses through to completion to remain idle until water and

electricity were installed and water supplies even brought from a distance. The Minister of Agriculture Senator Medici, in the spring of 1955, in his discussions in Parliament indicated that possibly funds had been spent too rapidly at first (59). But the pressures were very great and there was already criticism that work was progressing too slowly.

Expenditures might have been lessened in ways perhaps as important psychologically as financially. Some small works might have been carried on by the peasants themselves with government aid instead of being done for the peasants by the land reform agencies. One wonders, for instance, whether it might not be better for the new peasant householders if they were taught to build simple furniture themselves instead of securing it from the land reform agencies and paying for it gradually.

This illustration is but one instance of what appears to be a trend to do too much *for* the peasants rather than in cooperation *with* them. In Italy, in contradistinction to various other countries where there are land reform activities, there has been little peasant initiative in the whole reform program. Doing work *for* the peasants means that plans and activities are directed entirely by the land reform agencies without the difficult and slow but sound process of consulting *with* the peasants before decisions are taken. This type of action *for* rather than *with* the peasants is what Professor Rossi-Doria calls « a democratic reform applied in an undemocratic way » (60). An illustration of the point is found in instances of withholding a portion of a peasant worker's wages as a kind of forced saving when he is being paid for work on the first stages of breaking up the land. This arrangement tries to save a peasant from himself by keeping him from squandering money which he will later need but it also prevents the growth of necessary independence and ties him too closely to the land reform agency. Unfortunately people can learn only through their own experience and if

(59) *Resoconto* 287, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

(60) Speech at la Consulta, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

necessary their own mistakes. The method of learning by doing is the essence of democracy.

There is sometimes danger that the peasants will think of the reform agency as a new employer — a danger warned against by Professor Bandini as recently as a speech on June 5, 1955 to the peasant exhibitors at a cattle-raising contest at Orbetello in the Tuscan Maremma. In instances when the entire wages of a peasant are retained in payment for machinery, seeds, or livestock (61), the peasants are apt to attribute even the sins of their former employers to the agency.

* * *

Whether or not there will be an extension of the land reform through legislative channels cannot be foreseen at this time, although the general reform bill, of which the « Stralcio » is only an extract, is still lying untouched on parliamentary desks. The program of Premier Segni, with his long and deeply rooted belief in land reform, may carry the extension of reform further than has yet been politically possible. There are, however, other than legislative methods for the extension of the reform. A small beginning has already been made by turning over certain lands owned by the communes to the reform agencies for development and allotment to individual landless peasants, but this activity has not yet been carried far as only 7,250 hectares had been allotted under it by the beginning of 1955. Such a program can and should be developed further, for the communes are the holders of much unreclaimed land (62). It is possible for the government to provide incentives to landowners to improve their property, though how much this would accomplish for the peasants would depend on other factors. The most direct possibility of immediate further attack on the problem of land reform could be secured by the proper enforcement of the neglected provisions of

(61) BANDINI, *Land Reform in Italy*, "International Journal of Agrarian Affairs", *op. cit.*, p. 57.

(62) For discussion of communal ownership, cf. GIUSEPPE MEDICI, *Land Property and Land Tenure in Italy* (Bologna), 1952, Ch. III, pp. 63-70.

the 1933 land reclamation law which provides not only for compulsory land development but also for expropriation in cases of non-compliance by landowners.

It is impossible to make final judgments now as to the accomplishments of the present land reform. Only ten years or more after its completion will it be possible to examine it thoroughly, for then the orchards, olive trees and vineyards of the new proprietors will be in the full rhythm of production, the peasants themselves will have had a chance to make their adjustments to the new cooperative way of life, and the political passions *pro* and *con* the reform will have had time to subside.

There is already some evidence available as to progress made on the road of accomplishment. In 1954, the productivity of the land incorporated in the land reform districts increased some 66 percent (63) and reached record levels in all but a few scattered areas of the North, as for example near Ferrara where production was lowered, in some measure at least because of the change-over from production on large estates to that of small holdings. The same causes explain the somewhat lessened quantity of wheat and olives to enter the commercial market that year, though this is also due to the fact that the consumption of the peasant owners increases as their living standards begin to rise.

It is also too early to assess final political gains resulting from the land reform. It must not be forgotten that in addition to its economic and social goals, it has the inherent aim of strengthening the stable parts of the Italian peasantry against the onslaughts from the extreme left which try to keep up a constant state of agitated confusion. Although the progress of the reform program varies widely from one land reform area to another, there is evidence that where it has made the most progress, it has not been without its positive political effects (64), even though these may be less than some reform proponents hoped. Among the many instances of

(63) BANDINI, *Land Reform in Italy*, "International Journal of Agrarian Economics", *op. cit.*, p. 21.

(64) ROSSI-DORIA, Speech at La Consulta, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

gain which may be cited, one may take Apulia, Lucania and Lower Molise. In the province of Foggia alone, the Communists gained 6.2 percent in the 1953 elections but only 0.3 percent in the communes where the reform was at work (65). In general, it may be said that whereas the Communists gained 7 percent in the country as a whole in the 1953 elections, they captured an increase of only 2.2 percent in the land reform communities (66).

There is a danger, particularly in the United States, of expecting land reform in Italy to accomplish more than it can. It can increase employment and solve the problems of surplus population only in areas where there is enough expropriated land to provide a new life for the peasants. There is not enough land available in Italy under this or any other possible land reform to absorb all the excess rural population and to solve all the problems of agricultural poverty. Other instruments of modern agricultural economics and politics should accompany the reform *pari passu* to attain that goal. These should include more land reclamation than thus far undertaken by either governmental or private sources; regulation of wages and working conditions in practice as well as in theory for agricultural laborers, especially the *braccianti*; reform of farm tenancy contracts, so long discussed in Parliament without agreement, and so greatly overdue. Industrial development remains the most important means of aiding the various agricultural programs by providing employment in industry for some of the excess people on the land. The creation of small holdings must always be an addition to rather than a substitute for the absorption of the unemployed by industry (67). Nor can land reform alone accomplish political mir-

(65) Cf. *Electoral data*, in "Nord e Sud", anno II, No. 2, p. 67. For a discussion of lessened Communist strength in land reform communities, see F. COMPAGNA and V. DE CAPRARI, *Geografia delle elezioni italiane dal 1946 al 1953*. "Il Mulino" (Bologna), May 1954.

(66) Cf. *ibid.* and VINCENT BARNETT, *Competitive Coexistence in Italy*, June 1955, "Political Science Quarterly", Vol. LXX, No. 2, June 1955, p. 251.

(67) *Economic Survey of Europe Since the War*, United Nations, Department of Economic Affairs (Geneva, 1953), pag. 155.

acles and of its own unaided strength remove the incubus of Communism.

To have increased productivity in a country which needs all possible production; to have extended the cultivation of lands formerly barren and unyielding; to have already secured some positive political effects; to have strengthened the Italian peasantry at least in parts of the country — these alone make the

reform worth while, despite its great financial cost. The most important achievement of the whole land reform program to date cannot be measured in milliards of lire, for it is, as it must inevitably remain, in psychological and especially human terms.

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