

## Land reform in the 1950s in Italy and the United States: the thinking of Mario Einaudi

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The article discusses the thinking of Mario Einaudi in relation to the ambitious measures with which the Italian government sought to move towards land reform in the immediate post-war period. Einaudi, an intellectual and academic, was by birth Italian but moved to the United States during the Fascist period. Like his father Luigi, the noted economist, he was convinced of the need to stimulate the free market in land in order to increase productivity and modernise cultivation methods; in his writings he repeatedly sought to develop a plan of action that would facilitate collaboration between Rome and Washington in this field, identifying the Tennessee Valley Authority approach as especially suited to the Italian case. However, while his ideas achieved a good public airing, they had a limited impact: on the political front, Cold War priorities pushed Italian and US Marshall Plan experts more towards the redistribution of landownership than towards stimulating the productivity of agricultural businesses, in the attempt to rapidly build a consensus behind the government; and on the cultural front, at the end of the 1950s the issue of backwardness in the rural South started to be interpreted in terms of cultural and social anthropology, an approach which did not directly relate to the development of political programmes.

**Keywords:** Mario Einaudi (1904–1994); Italian land reform; agriculture; Tennessee Valley Authority; Republican Italy

### Introduction

Studies on Italian intellectual emigration in the years that span Fascism and the Cold War have recently rediscovered the figure of Mario Einaudi, who was engaged in the study of European politics for more than 40 years in the USA, from 1934, with his career linked to the development of Cornell's Department of Government from 1945.<sup>1</sup> He is known in particular for his *French–Italian Inquiry*, a comparative study of the political, institutional and social situations in post-war France and Italy which was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and aimed at an educated American readership. In this project's volumes Einaudi gathered together contributions by Italian and French academics to present a cutting-edge analysis of the main social and political forces that characterised life in these two countries, and in the process became a prominent figure in European–American intellectual relations (Mariuzzo 2011). It is less well known that, from the war years onwards, Einaudi regularly considered the problem of Italian land reform, performing a linking role on this issue: he became a reference point for educated

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American opinion, and offered material on the US experience to his contacts in Italy for their reflection.

An understanding of Einaudi's thinking in this area throws light on some key issues of interpretation highlighted by the most recent work on the land reform policies of Italian centrist administrations.

The study of the process of reform of landownership in post-war Italy has benefited from the publication in 2006 of Emanuele Bernardi's *La riforma agraria in Italia e gli Stati Uniti*. The author adopts the most convincing aspects of previous work, which had analysed issues related to Italian land reform in the 1950s mainly by focusing on the discrepancy between the call for fundamental social reforms, developed in the years of anti-Fascist Resistance, and the 'normalisation' of these demands by moderate pro-American governments, which responded by offering partial modernisation within advanced capitalism (Ginsborg 1992, 1998, 142–166). Bernardi thus places the proposals for agriculture, from the varying schools of thought brought together within the centrist government, in the context of the political and economic dynamics of the early Cold War. However, he also locates the various practical proposals under discussion within international debate on the economic development of rural areas, showing how the hard-fought 'hybrid' solution (Bernardi 2006, 349), between land-improving reform and redistributive action on landownership, resulted from balancing structural and circumstantial demands. These included recognition of the unstoppable decline of the great southern estates (the *latifondi*) (Barone 1994, 335–336), the urgency – already identified soon after the First World War – of resuming infrastructural work to improve many of the country's underdeveloped areas (Barone 1986, 45–84), the mediating role that the Christian Democrats played between the interests of the property-owning classes and those of small-scale farmers (Bevilacqua 2001), and the need to contain communism by undermining its social foundations.

By focusing on the writings of Mario Einaudi, my intention is to contribute to the theme of the 'internationalisation' of Italy's debate on land reform. I will be highlighting the following issues:

1. The development of the thinking of Einaudi, a close observer of Italy's agrarian situation from the struggle against Fascism to the Cold War, illustrates particularly well the continuity of debate regarding the improvement of living conditions for the peasant masses in order to ensure their full involvement in the life of the nation-state, a debate present in Italy from the Risorgimento onwards, but especially after the Great War. The transatlantic passage of some of the traditional thinking regarding Italian rural life, through 'cultural mediators' like the anti-Fascist émigrés, is an important and often neglected factor that provides context for the exchanges between the USA and Italy over rural development after 1945.
2. In his comments on the legislation of the 1950s, although these included some debatable generalisations, Mario Einaudi deployed his experience from the study of political systems to make original observations on the links between choices of economic policy and the dynamics of party representation among the populations of the Italian countryside; he identified, in the management of reform, the developing characteristics of a 'southern' approach towards the representation and integration of the masses, marked by parties and personal links displacing formal state responsibilities (Bevilacqua 1993, 97–100; Forlenza 2010).
3. On the level of immediate political application, Einaudi's thinking had little impact. However, over time his analysis of the political identity of traditional Italian communities

was to meet with enduring interest, even if in a different methodological and political context from that wherein he had asked how the defence of the 'free world' might be assisted. In this area, the later generation of American social scientists who addressed the Italian case found that the Cornell academic had almost anticipated their interests.

### **Einaudi and agriculture from wartime to post-war: democracy and productivity in the 'TVA model'**

Soon after becoming an American citizen at the start of 1941, Einaudi started to assist the government of his new country by advising on Italy's political and economic issues in relation to managing both the war in Europe and post-war developments. In particular, he produced memoranda for the working group on War and Peace Studies, organised by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in order to give the State Department points to reflect on regarding the political implications of the conflict. On 25 May 1943, for example, Einaudi took part in the 44th meeting of the Economic and Financial Group for War and Peace Studies, devoted to Italy, and was commissioned to produce *Postwar Italy: Economic and Political Problems*, a memorandum he delivered the following 10 July.<sup>2</sup>

At this point the question of agriculture was of particular interest to the Allies, who were preparing to occupy Italian territory. The state of agricultural production would have important implications both for the availability of sufficient food for the population and occupying forces, and for the long-term prospects for the new post-Fascist Italy's economic and productive recovery within a framework of multilateral international exchanges, which Washington was preparing to promote after the war.<sup>3</sup> Information, however, was not always adequate or up-to-date.

In the USA of the 1930s, Italian responses to the economic crisis using state intervention had attracted substantial interest (Vaudagna 1981); it had even been thought that the apparently successful effect of the 'battaglia del grano' ('battle for wheat') in increasing cereal production might provide an example worth following. When war broke out, however, the views of Italian émigrés active in the USA, and especially those of the most respected among them, Gaetano Salvemini (Killinger 2002), started to be given greater attention. Salvemini, by then a historian at Harvard, had already aired his views in the international arena on the conservative nature of Mussolinian economic management and the lack of any noticeable results from Fascist economic policy (Salvemini 1936). He had in particular given extensive consideration to the most backward agricultural areas of the Italian South, returning to the ideas he had expressed when a socialist activist: he had regarded moves towards revolution and the immediate redistribution of land to the peasants as unrealistic, and instead placed the problem of efficiency and increased production at the forefront. Salvemini had identified the liberalisation of the market in land and the establishment of substantial autonomy for districts and provinces in determining local financial relationships, such as contracts, as the only ways to break the social control exercised by the owners of the large *latifondi* over the more backward peasant communities, especially in the South; on the other hand, he thought further state involvement in economic life risked strengthening the influence of large landowners, who were the only representatives of the rural classes to participate in political life (Salvemini 1955). In this regard, Salvemini found himself taking positions similar to those popular within reforming liberalism, represented in Italian public debate in the early twentieth century especially by Mario Einaudi's father Luigi. Before the advent of Fascism, Luigi Einaudi had also campaigned for a free market in land and for reforming taxation on agricultural production, primarily to attack a public

administration that, with its protectionist style of economic management, preserved the social structure most favourable to the ruling classes and obstructed the free development of the most advanced and productive economic activities (Vivarelli 2011).

In 1943 Salvemini changed his position, as can be seen in the views expressed in his many lectures on the future for Italy (Salvemini 1969) which then crystallised in *What to Do with Italy*, an ambitious programme for political and economic reconstruction. This was put together by Salvemini and Giorgio La Piana, another Italian intellectual émigré and lecturer at Harvard's Divinity School, and published shortly after the Allied landings in Sicily. In place of reductions in land taxes and improvements in the efficiency of cultivation by encouraging the market in land, the authors placed centre-stage a programme of seizure of the largest estates and redistribution to landless labourers and the poorest tenants. Within the general context of their proposals, this measure had a strategic value: it guaranteed the dispersal of the property-owning classes which had provided the main social support for the Fascist regime, and thus the conclusive disappearance of an entire reactionary ruling class that, if left in power in the name of social harmony and fear of social upheaval, would have obstructed the progress of the less privileged which was a basic requirement for full Italian democratisation (La Piana and Salvemini 1943).

During this period Mario Einaudi was working closely with another exile, Don Luigi Sturzo, and like him rejected such radical solutions for Italy's emergence from the post-war crisis, both because of their unsuitability for the country's problems and because proposals for action such as these were unlikely to be welcomed by US public opinion. Prompted by the Jesuit John LaFarge, editor of the magazine *America*, these two Italian émigrés developed a response in which they expressed their perplexity over the position of Salvemini and La Piana (Malandrino 1998, 262–267). In his review of this in September–October 1943, Einaudi considered the punitive implications for the property-owning classes of the proposals for land reform, and economic policy generally, to be worrying and surprising. Faced with the imminent fall of the regime, even figures from a democratic background were adopting this position. Salvemini, in particular, had generally shown himself to be against potential attacks on the democratic order that were proposed by the Western powers for Italy, and it seemed that he was giving in to temptations of social 'revolution' just at a moment of problematic transition, when the more extremist advocates of the Marxist parties could find significant room for manoeuvre (Einaudi 1943).

In Einaudi's short piece the echo of the documentation on economic issues that he had prepared for the CFR in the previous months can clearly be detected. From the paper delivered in July onwards, based on the data available on the profile of property-ownership in the Italian countryside, Einaudi pointed out that:

... the essence of the agrarian problem of Italy is not primarily that of affecting a redistribution of the land from the few to the many, for this has already been largely achieved ... through voluntary large-scale transfers of land. (1943, 26)<sup>4</sup>

In the decade following the Great War, due to inflation, processes of land reclamation and the movement of agricultural workers into new areas for cultivation, small-scale landownership had spread into all the most productive cultivatable areas, even in southern Italy where large-scale agricultural concerns were still predominant.

The basic issue, Einaudi went on to say, was now 'the creation of all conditions necessary to profitable agricultural operations' (1943, 29): action on landownership could be taken, but as one measure within a bundle of strategies aimed at improving crop production, importing new techniques and in particular selecting the best products for the great variations in terrain and

climate which were characteristic of Italy. Improvements to the land made by the Fascist regime had proved inadequate: above all, Fascist agricultural policies had been marked by the complete lack of involvement of officials with agricultural expertise, and had often turned into directives dictated by the requirements of ideology and propaganda rather than by a proper plan for improving production. The 'battaglia del grano', for example, had taken over areas which were more suitable for other crops in the almost compulsory cultivation of wheat, with serious repercussions for all the production intended for export (1943, 34–39).

On the face of it, the position Einaudi expounded in his memorandum condemned the limitations of Fascist economic management and proposed a fairly straightforward return to approaches to the agrarian economy developed in earlier decades within the thinking of classic liberal reformism. The influence of his father's views on these issues was evident, and it is particularly relevant that between the war and the Constituent Assembly, Luigi Einaudi strongly reasserted his proposals for stimulating unrestricted entrepreneurial initiatives in agriculture (see Einaudi, Luigi [1962] for a general presentation). However, his son Mario had revised his operational frame of reference by examining the most advanced examples of action on agricultural land that his adopted country could offer, and finding therein the way forward for effective improvements in the Italian context. In the view that Mario Einaudi developed during 1944, before he published the results of this early confidential research in an abridged form in *Foreign Affairs* (Einaudi 1944), the USA's Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) provided Italy with a potential model for an appropriate agricultural policy which simultaneously took into account the need for assistance with technical development, involvement of the communities and social classes concerned, and a renewed presence in international markets.

The TVA, created in 1933, had been one of the first government agencies to emerge from the New Deal's rush of initiatives. It was intended to coordinate the development of production, access to new technologies and the delivery of energy to a whole economic region, the valley of the Tennessee River in the south-east of the United States (Colignon 1997). Under the enlightened and imaginative direction of David Lilienthal, the TVA had promoted itself as a working example of the new American economic policy; it had thrown itself into intense promotional activity abroad as well as at home, also interestedly making comparisons with current practices in Italy, Germany and the Soviet Union (Ekbladh 2002).

On the one hand, the outcome of the Second World War favoured the 'internationalisation' of the New Deal's methods of public involvement and state coordination for reconstruction; on the other, a certain distance had to be taken from the models of authoritarian planning that had been tried in Europe and observed with some interest until 1941. *TVA: Democracy on the March*, the book in which Lilienthal presented the results of the TVA's first decade of activity to the general public in 1944, was planned with these objectives in mind. Investment plans, the establishment of the production network and energy supply, and the reorganisation of the productive process within agricultural businesses in the Tennessee river basin, all were presented entirely in relation to the guiding idea of 'grassroots democracy'. The agency's every undertaking apparently took place after full consultation with the communities concerned and with the direct involvement of the whole social fabric, without excluding landowners and in fact with them playing a role of active financial and organisational involvement, putting forward impressive development and improvement projects, under a management which did not expect to dictate from on high or exclude anyone on grounds of class, and which, it was argued, was developing its own aims based on the actual needs of the social and professional sectors that were involved. In this perspective, not only the material results but also the various initiatives

were important: training for farmers and professionals, information on the development of practice and materials, and encouragement for cooperation and investment in new businesses.

Mario Einaudi had been immediately interested in Lilienthal's description, due to the latter's insistence on distancing himself from authoritarian methods and championing an approach to action which could accommodate the flexibility necessary to deal with problems as diverse as those present in the Italian countryside. Presented with the TVA board's wish to give their model of practice international exposure, Einaudi had decided to collaborate, making his contacts in Italy available in order to be the architect of a high-level connection between public opinion in his country of origin and the US body which had the greatest commitment to the development of expertise in land usage. Moreover, the notion of bringing new ideas from the USA to the Italian debate on the post-war period was not new for Einaudi: since the end of 1943 he had been working with the Office of War Information (OWI) on a series of radio programmes in Italian for the peninsula's liberated areas, on current affairs, and in that project he had persistently sought to make crystal clear to the Italian public the great differences between the nature of American state intervention and the Fascist experience. It was in fact while preparing for a broadcast devoted to possible solutions to the problems of Italian agriculture,<sup>5</sup> in early 1944, that Einaudi started to acquaint himself better with the TVA, arranging to join one of the visits to the installations that agency managers organised for journalists, politicians and academics.<sup>6</sup> Thus was born the idea of an Italian translation of the book, which Mario Einaudi himself edited in May 1944; he came to an agreement with his brother Giulio's publishing house over the Italian edition, within a wider agreement with OWI regarding the distribution of Italian editions of American political and cultural works in liberated Italy (Mangoni 1999, 186–189).

The book came out in 1946, and had immediate success with those educated readers most interested in the problems of post-war economic reconstruction. In fact it began circulating in Italy just at the start of the work of the Constituent Assembly, within which the many strands of the long discussion over Italian agriculture needed to be resolved. Interestingly, the book found no favour with Luigi Einaudi. Agreeing with criticism of *Democracy on the March* as being characterised by an over-enthusiastic stance, with descriptions of the TVA's social experiment that may have only partly conformed with reality,<sup>7</sup> the elderly economist made his doubts known as regards state intervention in the economy as developed in the USA in the Roosevelt years, which he believed to be an inadequate alternative to the development of the free market, and even a worrying restriction on economic freedom, with possible authoritarian implications (Turi 1990, 46–60).

In these views we can probably see the greatest disparity between the ideas Mario Einaudi had developed in America and those of his father. For the former, the New Deal of the 1930s had represented the most effective defence of the role of private initiatives in the economy as well as of representative political institutions, in response to the 1929 crisis: an experience that had shown the absolute necessity of the guarantee of access to wealth for all citizens, and of the state's role in ensuring that all workers were engaged in economic development and that their earnings were sufficient. Setting aside the effusiveness of Lilienthal's presentation, Mario Einaudi thus thought it essential that the New Deal experience of 'democratic planning' should be considered within the Italian debate, in terms accessible to a wide public and in a way that distanced it clearly from the previous example of Fascism. Moreover, at a crucial moment when the reconstruction of Italian production within the free world could only happen with the financial and institutional support of the United States, he thought that the TVA model ought to provide a point of reference, perhaps for a large segment of public opinion, and as an alternative to the temptations of radical land seizure which were particularly taking hold in the Italian South.

### In search of the ‘general conditions’ for agrarian development: ‘The Italian Land’

While the work of the Constituent Assembly was going ahead in Italy, in the USA Mario Einaudi chose to abandon his collaboration with the political institutions of both his countries, and to devote himself exclusively to development of his university career and intellectual standing. His next works had the nature more of commentary on the policies being taken forward in his country of origin, and less of advocacy for proposals. However, he maintained his transatlantic contacts for the exchange of information, and continued to follow issues related to state intervention in Italian agriculture with interest. He continued, for example, his particularly frequent exchanges with Don Sturzo, who soon after returning to Italy had become chair of a working group directly concerned with plans for intervention on landed property, the *Comitato permanente per il Mezzogiorno* established by the Christian Democrats (DC) (Zoppi 1998, 13–20). In 1948 Einaudi also started corresponding with Giuseppe Medici, the DC senator with a Liberal background, whose work on crops grown in Italy’s different areas he had frequently consulted (see especially Medici [1946]); he was put in touch by his father Luigi, who had worked with Medici for years at the University of Turin.

In one of his first letters to Medici, Mario Einaudi made clear his desire to continue researching agrarian issues, ‘given the great importance that the USA attributes to the Italian land reform problem’.<sup>8</sup> He believed, in particular, that the Marshall Plan might bring helpful intervention, both through investment on the infrastructural level and through stimulation for improvements in production, as with the schemes tested out by the TVA. With this perspective, across April and May of 1948, based on the information circulating in the USA, Einaudi had interpreted and presented to his Italian correspondents the first survey by American engineers and geologists of Italian territory.<sup>9</sup> This had followed the arrival of George Tomlinson and Max McCall on a mission of supervision, coordination and contact (Bernardi 2010b, 144–168). Moreover, within the political tensions of the time Einaudi was developing the position of the ‘Cold–War Liberal’ (Mariuzzo 2011, 48–50), and identified with the fundamental aims of American investment in help for European reconstruction, especially with the need to contain the danger of communist success by economic, social and political modernisation, and by the consolidation of an open society which through growth in production could guarantee its citizens access to well–being and the full enjoyment of their rights.

Handling of the Italian countryside, however, proved more complex than Einaudi had hoped. In 1948–1949, steps to improve the productive capacity of Italian land certainly seemed to have an ‘absolutely primary role’ (Bernardi 2006, 135–136) in action programmes, both thanks to the support of James D. Zellerbach, the European Economic Administration’s chief officer in Italy, and due to the views most widely held among the experts in agrarian economics involved in the plans. These were well represented by Manlio Rossi–Doria, who had closely studied the profound differences between Italy’s local particularities, and advocated flexible intervention based on creating efficient productive units (Bernardi 2010b; Misiani 2010). However, in the debate within the DC, the main party of government, other positions were also represented, based on land redistribution and giving ownership to agricultural workers. The aims were twofold: first, to neutralise the campaigning weapon wielded by the socialist and communist opposition, which in the wake of Gramsci believed that the ‘hunger for land’ of southern agricultural workers provided a starting point for breaking the political stranglehold of the ruling classes, and offered their own party organisations as channels for the more radical forms of protest (Sereni 1948); second, to turn the traditional aim of social Catholicism, ‘land for the peasants’, into reality.

The uncertainties of respected voices within the DC, such as De Gasperi, who did not want any hasty initiative to alienate landowners and the Liberal Party, and Sturzo, who wanted to avoid any state action that was tainted by economic control and that focused more on changes to landowning structures than on land improvement and infrastructural investment (Zoppi 1998, 27–45), were pushed aside at the end of 1949. On 29 October an attempt to occupy unworked land at Melissa, in Calabria, ended in repression by the police and the death of three peasants. These events had substantial repercussions, highlighting the frustrations that had spread through those areas that were particularly characterised by the presence of great estates in need of radical action.

Room for manoeuvre was thus found by the Agriculture Minister, Antonio Segni, a senior DC member of aristocratic origins with a markedly conservative political and cultural outlook, who nevertheless believed that action to reform landownership, in order to combat communism, was absolutely necessary. He was ready to cooperate with the social left of the DC over this. At his suggestion, the plans for infrastructural improvements and longer-term investment were deferred. For the present, some emergency action was formulated that concentrated on expropriation of land, specifically in the Sila area of Calabria, and in other areas of the South where there had been episodes of tension. This response went alongside the presentation in Parliament of a reform of agricultural contracts which strengthened the position of tenant farmers in relation to large landowners, by introducing restrictions on the termination of contracts, checks on rent levels and preferential rights to acquire land being sold.

In the following months, this redistributive action found favour with the ‘radical New Dealer’ sections within the Truman administration, who were influenced by the possible creation of a class of small rural landowners by joining together developments in production and the construction of an anti-communist social ‘barrier’ (Cottam, Brand and Sullam 1949). Meanwhile, in the Italian context, some of the most committed reformers active in Parliament and in specialist sections, above all Medici and Rossi-Doria, tried to adapt their legal and operational initiatives to a legislative environment that now seemed, with the action to seize land, to be marked by a particular approach (Bernardi 2006, 289–310, 2008, 2010b, 235–241).

Mario Einaudi, influenced by Sturzo, interpreted the complex evolution of the Italian debate as a simple unwarranted replacement of expert opinion in this area by exclusively political considerations,<sup>10</sup> and thus tried to re-establish what he regarded as the correct perspective. It was this approach that informed his best-known contribution on land reform, ‘The Italian Land: Men, Nature and Government’, which appeared in the March 1950 issue of *Social Research*, the journal of the New School of New York. This article, which Einaudi worked on for about a year, during the most unsettled period for post-war Italy’s land reform policy,<sup>11</sup> was effectively a defence of that plan of action, with production its emphasis, that the American bodies and the best Italian experts had proposed that the government follow in order to deal with the land reform issue, and that had been at least partly shelved in those critical months across 1949 and 1950.

The author retained an open mind on the redistribution of land in areas, like Calabria, where a full fresh discussion of the social consequences of leaving the *latifondi* in place was a priority (Einaudi 1950, 33–34). The role of the state in resolving the social problems of the Italian rural world, however, could not be limited to this. Einaudi found proof of the inadequacy of the cautious attempt to redistribute the larger estates, alongside the proposal for ‘de facto expropriation without compensation’ as in the Segni bill on tenancies (1950, 25), in an issue which was of particular concern to the American government and public opinion: the relationship between the class divisions of rural populations in Italy’s various areas, and the



distribution of electoral support to the parties. The data in fact contradicted the positions taken by communist and socialist ‘professional agitators’ on the need to transfer all holdings above 250 acres to the peasants on that land; that even the peasants had limited enthusiasm for a proposal that would solve only some of their problems was shown by the fact that ‘in spite of this generosity, Communist success has been smallest in the areas where agrarian reform is needed most’ (1950, 27).

In brief, Einaudi believed that even the issue of landownership had to be dealt with within the more general effort to increase production, drawing on some of the proposals developed by his father in the past; these included taxation based on the average crop yield per surface unit, and development of ‘enfiteusi’ (emphyteusis), an ancient fixed-rate rental contract with very long terms, to ensure the tenant’s interest in improving the land (Einaudi 1950, 22–23). This effort would be complemented by the organisation of independent local offices, which, based on different areas’ needs, would oversee fertiliser distribution, plans for technological advances and water management: the action for improvement of depressed areas that the American experts had put forward with the Marshall Plan, and that the developments of 1949–1950 were sidelining. On an even more general level, Italy’s whole agrarian sector would benefit from the presence of a trained and motivated class of public officials, and also from the spread of educational establishments, centres for professional development and facilities for retraining the agricultural workforce. With Einaudi’s approach, ‘the narrow walls within which life seems to move must be broken and with them the prejudices and the prevailing lack of political responsibility’, and there would be an end to the attitude whereby ‘the state is considered the enemy, or the fat cow to be milked’ (1950, 25–26).

The generally negative view of the first provisions for reform actually adopted by the Italian government generated the one faint echo in Italy of Mario Einaudi’s essay, which was otherwise scarcely known about, not least because *Social Research* had limited circulation there. In the spring of 1950 Mario Bandini, secretary to the Italian government’s inter-ministerial board for land reform, made a visit to the USA to demonstrate Italy’s progress in this area, and held a conference at Cornell’s College of Agriculture, perhaps the most important institution of its type in the eastern United States. Einaudi distributed copies of ‘The Italian Land’ at this event, in an attempt to raise the profile of his thinking; the only result, however, was that the Italian papers reported this, presenting Einaudi’s criticism of the Segni bill as even more serious and general. They interpreted the author’s position as a hostile stand on the government’s approach, meaningful because taken by the son of Luigi Einaudi, by then Italian Head of State: according to some, he was expounding views that his father could not express, at least in public meetings and debates, for reasons of institutional protocol.<sup>12</sup> When later, between 1951 and 1952, Manlio Rossi-Doria, another protagonist in the land reform arena, visited the USA (Bernardi 2010a), his contact with Einaudi was somewhat brief, as many of the issues discussed in 1949–1950 had been overtaken by events.

As regards the intended public audience, American cultural and diplomatic personnel with their eyes on European affairs, the limited success of *The Italian Land* might be explained by the breadth of the analytical perspectives across which Einaudi moved, floating between assessment of economic interests and study of political consensus, in search of the methodology for ‘the creation of those general political and economic conditions without which no progress would be possible’ (Einaudi 1950, 26). However, the article’s appearance in an important and eclectic scholarly journal, dedicated to the full range of social sciences, guaranteed good circulation for the themes of transformative action for the Italian rural environment, perhaps for the first time. The article thus became a

compulsory reference for every study on contemporary Italy in the years that followed (see for example Hughes [1953]). In particular, a level of interest was generated by Einaudi's effort to deal with a basic aspect of Italian society for liberal intellectuals, that is, the role of land reform policy in support for the parties of the centrist majority, and for the Communist Party in opposition. According to the author, the disappointing results of action on landownership showed that the communist threat could only be confronted with determined structural modernisation which, in the long run, overcame Italian backwardness by engaging the culture and mentality at a profound level.

The wide-ranging nature of this social analysis would have limited the practical impact of Einaudi's ideas in the offices for management of the Marshall Plan's finances, and among the State Department officials responsible for determining the material nature of American policy in Italy. The Cornell academic was for the most part offering a general perspective on his native land's development towards modernity, and his criticism of the general approach that had emerged in 1949 was not followed up with counter-proposals that would ensure noticeable results in the short term. Einaudi himself admitted that his indirect solutions and investment to enhance the human capital and capacity for entrepreneurial management of agricultural land would result in slow changes to the culture and attitudes. In the shorter term emigration was the only immediate remedy for demographic pressure, in Europe's most densely populated rural areas, that the author could envisage. Moreover, he had no further ideas for the practical control of this phenomenon to add to those already considered by the Italian government at the end of the war (Romero 2001), nor did he concern himself with interim responses to the structural problem of the disadvantage of the 'low level of education' of the more backward rural classes, as against the more qualified and sought-after workers coming from northern Italy (Einaudi 1950, 27). In conclusion, Einaudi's perspective could offer little help to the policy-makers who found themselves facing the emergency arising from the outbreak of the Korean War, who needed to achieve immediate successes for anti-communism and had to fund rearmament by diverting a large part of the resources for investment in developing European production (Bernardi 2006, 313–343).

### **Peasants and parties: the Paris conference of 1956**

It was only in 1956 that Einaudi had the opportunity to revisit the issue of the relationship between policy and the Italian peasant world. He was invited to a seminar in Paris on 30 June on 'Les moyens d'expression et la représentation politique du monde paysan', organised by the Association Française de Science Politique, to present a paper entitled 'The Italian Peasant World: An Outline of Some Political Problems'.<sup>13</sup>

The time was ripe for Einaudi to return to direct consideration of this area. In Italy, the issues of infrastructural modernisation and improvement in production from Italy's agricultural areas most in need of action received fresh attention with the law of August 1950 establishing the 'Cassa del Mezzogiorno', the body charged with planning programmes of action for southern Italy and allocating funds for their realisation. The initial focus on the land reform theme, with some technical and financial support programmes for new landowners, had caught the attention of Lilienthal, his right-hand man Gordon Clapp, and their colleagues at the TVA; in 1955 the group had created the Development and Resources Corporation (D&R), a private company for investing in the development of infrastructures and energy distribution networks, for establishing and supporting undertakings similar to the TVA in other areas undergoing development. One of the first programmes considered by the heads of this new company was

participation in the initiatives being taken forward by the *Cassa*; with this in mind, Mario Einaudi had been called in by his old friend Lilienthal in 1955, and had become a D&R consultant on Italian matters. In preparing expert reports on the *Cassa*'s activities for the D&R management, Einaudi had the chance to reflect on the *Cassa* itself, as a project; he viewed it as very different from the results of the TVA and public initiatives that had characterised the United States of the New Deal, and therefore suggested the D&R be extremely cautious.<sup>14</sup> His Paris conference paper best illustrates the theoretical basis for these views.

Einaudi had noticed, in particular, some quite serious problems in the area of electoral identification by the peasant masses. Six years after implementation of the first measures for modifying the social structures of the rural world, the author could state that land reform, in which had rested so much hope, had in reality only partly achieved the desired political outcomes. If Western public opinion had been hoping to see peasants in the poorest areas developing feelings of attachment to democratic institutions as one of the effects of their access to landownership, and a related fall in penetration by the pro-Soviet parties, then these hopes had been dashed: alongside a definite development of the DC presence in the areas most affected by reform of landowning, there had been an unexpected increase in votes for the Communist Party, within a national context of political polarisation which saw the electorate increasingly identifying with the main parties, and which in large part ruled out any identification of the peasant masses, especially in the South, with state institutions.<sup>15</sup> The explanation that Einaudi found for this phenomenon was closely connected to the difficulty that Italian governments faced in effecting the country's exit from the social and political backwardness which characterised it, and which, as previously mentioned, Einaudi had already declared to be a fundamental problem for the existence of the new republic. On the one hand, the action to redistribute land had rightly broken the deep-seated relationship of dependence between landowners and peasants which had distinguished the areas of the *latifondi*; on the other, the lack of any stimulus for the formation of a genuine entrepreneurial class in the most backward areas of rural Italy meant that, in essence, there was no process by which semi-feudal relationships of dependence could be conclusively replaced by a society based on the market in land and on the primacy of private financial initiatives supported by public investment in the infrastructure and essential services. The measures taken during the 1950s had not reduced the profound contrasts between the peasants, who had often come to own land but found themselves in enormous difficulties in the struggle to make their work productive and actually profitable, and the landowning classes, which had not in practice been given the chance to contribute to improving conditions in the Italian South, perhaps by converting their businesses to more efficient production systems, or by voluntarily surrendering their surplus land by selling or leasing it on suitable terms. The great social conflicts which had marked Italy's most backward areas had not been resolved by a reform initiative addressed more at giving peasants ownership of land than at giving them the ways to establish modern agricultural practice. In this situation, the DC only partially harvested the fruits of its commitment to satisfy the desire of many peasants to own land. Although southern peasants were wary of communist collectivism, their rejection of traditional social structures led them to look with interest at a party which knew how to present itself as the heir of every movement of liberation from oppression by the landowning classes, and which to a growing number of electors represented the only organised opposition to a government of the centre that seemed to be defending traditional social and cultural hierarchies, due to its caution over reform and its promotion of inter-class cohesion:

The old ruling class of the South ... politically has meant egoism and intolerance, fascism and contempt of all freedom, manipulation of the rural proletariat for their own interests... As the southern peasant acquires freedom of movement and independence ... a frequent initial reaction will be to vote for the party that stands committed to the total destruction of the old system. Christian Democracy is too tied to the Church and to traditional sources of authority to be an obvious first choice.<sup>16</sup>

In setting out the potential solution Einaudi kept to the position he had spelt out in his previous contributions, which followed in its basic features the key notion of opening up the prospects of social and economic progress by introducing Italy to modern ideas about promoting private enterprise. As the choice had been not to involve the large landowners in the reform of agriculture in backward areas, state intervention needed to add 'assistance in a greatly expanded process of capital investment' to the process of acquiring ownership of the land; the quality of the holdings would be improved through:

... the re-establishment of a proper relationship between water and soil, of forest and grass to arable land, of the break-up of the large concentration of Southern rural population in unhealthy and primitive 'rural cities' which force upon the peasants inhuman conditions of life.<sup>17</sup>

No attempt to pursue the modernisation of Italy's backward areas, Einaudi concluded, could be mediated by party representation. In general terms, in his previous writing in the 1950s, he had already discussed how poorly suited the governments based on mass-membership parties that had developed in post-war continental Europe were for the efficient implementation of public policies (Mariuzzo 2013). In the specific case of Italian land reform policy, the consolidation of highly polarised political identities in the 'repubblica dei partiti' led to exacerbation, rather than resolution, of the old social oppositions, and in the early years of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* the risk of interference by the major political forces in its management, in order to satisfy particular interests, became evident. If until the Second World War the 'defense of peasants' political freedom' was measured by the ability of state bodies to limit the 'privileged position ... of the old semi-feudal landed classes', in future:

... the defense of the authentic political freedom of the peasants will have to consider the role of the stronger mass parties... For they seem ready to use as much determination as the old personal groups in the attempt to become the new masters all across the land. It is vital that the *fresh* choices of the peasant remain *free* choices.<sup>18</sup>

This 'revolutionary process', which was to make the peasant classes the actual protagonists of their social advancement, without any mediation by political players, had to be encouraged by:

... the presence and development of administrators, of collective entities, of reform and planning agencies. They will make it possible – all together – to bring to life and to full flower the sense of community and of the state.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, the experience of the TVA had led, for Einaudi, to the development of public bodies characterised by a widely supported legitimacy, leading agrarian transformation from a perspective of social collaboration and protection for the interests of the individuals and groups involved, through respect for the law and promotion of a sense of the state. For a successful programme in Italy too, a similar result should have been the aim. Instead, land-reform policy always ended up supporting the divisive presence of the large mass-membership political parties, which continually competed for popular support with the aim of increasing their ability to steer public policies to their own advantage. Every support for this latter situation, Einaudi believed, meant further delay for resolution of the real problems of the Italian countryside.

**Epilogue: the peasant issue, from political studies to cultural anthropology**

Einaudi's 1956 contribution should have been published two years later. Initially it was planned to include the paper in a volume of conference proceedings, in the 'Cahiers de la FNSP' series (Fauvet and Mendras 1958), but the editors then decided to limit this to the research that directly addressed the French situation. Jean Touchard, secretary of the FNSP, therefore suggested to Einaudi that he prepare an article for the *Revue Française de Science Politique*.<sup>20</sup>

This article would have been received with great interest by intellectuals concerned with European political and economic issues, both in France and in the United States, where, after the original conclusions put forward in 'The Italian Land' in 1950, Einaudi had been invited several times to revisit consideration of the relationship between the Italian peasant world and political parties. In October 1953, for example, the managers of the Social Sciences section of the Rockefeller Foundation suggested a research project to Einaudi and his colleagues at Cornell's College of Agriculture – an offer not accepted – on the standard of living of Italian peasants and the relationship of this to their political choices.<sup>21</sup> However, the article for Touchard was never written: Einaudi firmly declined the invitation, explaining himself by pleading that 'I have ... discovered that the task of revision is such that I cannot undertake it at this point'.<sup>22</sup>

Apart from other academic commitments (it was in this period that Einaudi started work on plans for Cornell's Center for International Studies, which opened in 1961) and editorial tasks (in 1959 he published *The Roosevelt Revolution*), the experience of an engagement a few weeks after the Paris conference in 1956 may also have influenced the Cornell scholar's decision. Einaudi was invited as a discussant to the annual meeting of the International Political Science Association at La Tour-de-Peilz, in Switzerland, from 10 to 16 September, and specifically to the panel on 'Parliamentary Representation of the Agricultural Community and of Farm Pressure Groups'. Among the presentations was one of special interest to him, given the close match with his own particular study and research interests, a report on 'Ethos and Political Behavior in Southern Italy' by Edward C. Banfield, a lecturer in Political Science at Chicago.<sup>23</sup>

Banfield's paper presented his methodological approach and the early results of his fieldwork, which was leading towards *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Banfield 1958). With the first airing of this work, Einaudi found himself faced with an approach to the problem of the backwardness of rural societies in central-south Italy that was profoundly different from the one he himself had formulated over the years. His analyses had concentrated on economic relationships and on connections between society and political institutions, in an explicit attempt to offer concrete operational proposals to experts and politicians engaged in resolving Italy's agrarian problems; measures developed and successfully applied in other developed societies were adapted for transfer to the Italian context. Banfield's study of the widely held ethos and the cultural and material foundations for collective behaviour, by contrast, employed the tools of cultural anthropology to describe the gulf between the society of Italy's most backward rural areas and that of the developed west of central Europe and North America, even including the Italian North.

Einaudi's comparisons had been aimed at identifying the differences in socio-economic dynamics of different countries essentially to find the way to reduce them, and to lead even the most backward European societies towards common Western socio-cultural configurations. With Banfield, however, comparisons made much of the possible dialectic between development and underdevelopment even within the European continent, and emphasised the dangers of forcing an assimilation between social arrangements that were so deeply and structurally different. This type of approach was to profoundly influence American social scientists studying

Italy from the 1960s to the 1980s, affecting in varying degree scholars with a range of perspectives, from Sidney Tarrow to Robert Putnam (Mastropaolo 2009); it quickly made Einaudi's thinking appear outdated, and linked to problems and their attempted solutions that were firmly situated in the 1940s and 1950s.

This view of Italian rural society as characterised by a profound cultural distance, among other things, had its origin in Italian intellectual production which had enjoyed wide circulation in English-speaking countries, such as the anthropological and cultural thinking seen in the biggest publishing success of the early post-war period, Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1947). In 'The Italian Land' Einaudi had already partly distanced himself from these sorts of description of the Italian countryside, which he held to be only partial and heavily localised (1950, 13). However, Levi's conclusions on the need to conceive the problem of the southern Italian countryside not as a simple issue of a technical and economic gap, but as the contrast between two irreconcilable civilisations, served as the starting point for renewed anthropological and cultural interest in a society whose particular characteristics were much more than just delays in the development of technology and social structures (Carpitella 1993). It is interesting, at least as an ironic anecdote, that in 1945–1946 Mario Einaudi, while assisting his brother Giulio and his publishing house as a reference point for the USA, had personally looked after some aspects of the American distribution of *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (Mangoni 1999, 459–460). Among the most interested readers of this book's first English edition was David Lilienthal, who wanted to know from Einaudi, after such a penetrating cultural analysis by Levi, whether the author had read his *Democracy on the March* (Lilienthal 1946 [1944]).<sup>24</sup>

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## Notes

1. Mario Einaudi (1904–1994), son of the economist Luigi Einaudi, established himself as a scholar of European political thinking while still a university student. Aided by a Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fellowship, he finished his studies at the London School of Economics and Harvard between 1927 and 1929. His beliefs led him to abjure membership of the Fascist Party, obligatory for an Italian university career, and to seek teaching posts in the United States. He was thus an Instructor at Harvard from 1933 to 1937, then a Professor, first at Fordham and then, from 1945, at Cornell. For more information on his career see Katzenstein, Lowi, and Tarrow (1990), and Vaudagna (1995).
2. The record of the meeting and the report are in CFR, 'Studies of American Interests in the War and the Peace', Printed Studies, b. 1 (classified as E–A–44 and E–C–11).
3. See for example the December 1943 issue of *Foreign Agriculture*, the journal of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations of the Department of Agriculture, which is entirely devoted to the state of the Italian countryside (Sullam 1943).
4. CFR, 'Studies of American Interests in the War and the Peace', b. 1, E–C–11. The quotations that follow also refer to this document.
5. This episode of the radio series, entitled *Lavoro e funzionamento della Tennessee Valley Authority*, was broadcast on 22 May 1944. The written version is in a file with the same name in ME, section 1.i.
6. For arrangements for the visit, see correspondence between Einaudi and Marguerite Owen, who worked with Lilienthal on practical and organisational issues, between January and May 1944, in ME, sections 2–3, f. *Owen Marguerite*. Other references to arrangements for the visit are in TVA, b. 5.
7. See ME, sections 2–3, Luigi Einaudi to Mario Einaudi, 25 November 1945.
8. ME, sezz. 2–3, f. *Medici Giuseppe*, M. Einaudi to G. Medici, 30 July 1948.
9. See the exchange of letters in ME, sections 2–3, f. *Sturzo Luigi*: Luigi Sturzo to Mario Einaudi, 19 May 1948, and Mario Einaudi to Luigi Sturzo, 28 May 1948 and 21 June 1948.

10. This interpretation was given by Sturzo in a letter to Mario Einaudi dated 1 June 1950 (reference as above).
11. Mario Einaudi was commissioned to write the paper in February 1949 by an old friend and former fellow student, Erich Hula, a lawyer of Austrian origin and editor of the journal; he finalised it at the end of the year, having spent an autumn in Italy gathering new information. See correspondence in ME, sections 2–3, f. *Hula Erich*, E. Hula to M. Einaudi, 1 February 1949; M. Einaudi to E. Hula, 5 February 1949; E. Hula to M. Einaudi, 17 February 1949.
12. See the correspondence between Mario Einaudi and Don Luigi Sturzo between 29 April and 1 June 1950, in ME, sections 2–3, f. *Sturzo Luigi*. On Luigi Einaudi's behaviour on this matter, see also Bernardi (2008, 420–426).
13. Mario Einaudi, 'The Italian Peasant World: An Outline of Some Political Problems'. This paper, presented at the seminar on 'Les moyens d'expression et la représentation politique du monde paysan', in Paris on 30 June 1956, is in a file of the same name in ME, section 1.i. Subsequent quotations refer to this text.
14. Copies of some of Einaudi's reports to D&R are in ME, sections 2–3, f. *Clapp Gordon R*.
15. Einaudi, 'The Italian Peasant World' (see note 13 above), 8–9.
16. *Ibid.*, 10.
17. *Ibid.*, 10.
18. *Ibid.*, 11.
19. *Ibid.*, 13.
20. ME, sections 2–3, f. *Touchard Jean*, Jean Touchard to Mario Einaudi, 10 September 1958 and 30 September 1958.
21. The correspondence between Joseph H. Willits and the Dean of the College of Agriculture William I. Myers, conducted between 22 and 26 October 1953, is in RF, RG 2–1953, series 751, b. 45, f. 293.
22. ME, sections 2–3, f. *Touchard Jean*, Mario Einaudi to Jean Touchard, 10 December 1958.
23. A copy of the paper is in ME, sections 2–3, f. *Association Internationale de Science Politique*.
24. DL, b. 122, David E. Lilienthal to Mario Einaudi, 25 July 1947.

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### Archival resources

CFR = Council on Foreign Relations Records, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton (NJ).

DL = David E. Lilienthal Records, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton (NJ).

ME = Mario Einaudi Records, Historical Archive of the Luigi Einaudi Foundation, Turin.

RF = Rockefeller Foundation Records, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow (NY).

TVA = Tennessee Valley Authority, Series David E. Lilienthal's Correspondence Files, National Archives and Records Administration's Southeast Region, Atlanta (GA).

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