

South Italy's Place in the Atlantic Labour Markets (1860-1907)

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1. South Italy began to contribute towards the creation of a labour market to cater for the needs of international economic development after the Unification of Italy, that is to say, after 1860.¹

According to some commentators,² the creation of a national army and the decision to make young enlisted soldiers from south Italy perform national service in northern Italy, sending them to Genoa by sea on a three-day journey, were determinant factors in getting southerners to overcome any doubts they may have harboured about leaving their home country for remote and unknown places. The experience of having undertaken a sea voyage and of spending a few years in a new environment stimulated the imagination and made fears about the journey seem absurd.³

Be this as it may, although there had been individual cases of emigration to America before 1870, it was only after this date that Atlantic emigration began to take place on a more generalised

¹ Emigration began in Calabria in 1860-1865, cf. E. Marengi, *Relazione sulle Calabrie* in "Inchiesta parlamentare sulle condizioni dei contadini nelle provincie meridionali e in Sicilia", Rome, 1909, Vol. V, p. 709; emigration from Basilicata also began around 1860, although it intensified around 1870-1880. Cf., E. Azimonti, *Relazione sulla Basilicata*, *ibid.*, p. 80. The same applies to Sicily, cf. G. Lorenzoni, *Relazione sulla Sicilia*, *ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 30 et seq.

² F. Marincola - S. Floro, *Le forze economiche della provincia di Catanzaro*, Relazione alla Camera di Commercio di Catanzaro per l'anno 1895, Catanzaro, 1896, p. 191 et seq.

³ The digging of the Suez Canal, which was carried out using a large number of southern Italian workers, provided the opportunity for testing out the change in attitude. Cfr. F. Marincola - S. Floro, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

scale, albeit gradually. Yet both the timing and the intensity of such emigration varied from province to province. In Apulia, the rate of emigration was fairly low up to 1894, while in Sicily it increased substantially only after 1893.⁴

Yet while the regions of northern Italy made the biggest contribution to South American emigration, the Southern regions had a substantial role in the migratory movement towards North America.

In South Italy the principal generating centres of emigration were those situated in an area demarcated by the Apennines and Sub-Apennines, stretching from Aquila and Campobasso to Basilicata and Calabria, and taking in the districts of Aquila, Sulmona, Vasto, Lanciano, Campobasso, Isernia, Piedimonte d'Alife, Bovino, Melfi, Campagna, Potenza, Sala Consilina, Lagonegro, Castrovillari and Rossano.⁵ Setting aside Basilicata, where emigration affected the whole region⁶, in Abruzzo and Molise there was no significant flow of emigration to America⁷ from the province of Teramo until 1901, whilst it was only in 1903 that the province of Reggio in Calabria reached a level of migration comparable to levels recorded in the other Calabrian provinces of Catanzaro and Cosenza.⁸ Alongside the aforementioned Apennine and Sub-apennine region came Sicily and the three districts of Sciacca, Corleone and Termini; later, at the beginning of the century, these were joined by the province of Palermo and the district of Messina.⁹

2. With a few exceptions, therefore, it was not the towns situated on the plain, in the hills and in the coastal areas, but rather those lying inland in the mountainous region which generated the largest numbers of emigrants. In Campania, while

⁴ L. De Rosa, *Emigranti, capitali e banche (1896-1906)*, Naples, 1980, p. 7.

⁵ G. Lorenzoni, *Relazione sulla Sicilia op. cit.* Rome, 1909, Vol. VI, p. 39; C.J. Jarach, *Relazione su Abruzzo e Molise, ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 234.

⁶ C. Jarach, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 234.

⁷ E. Azimonti, *Relazione sulla Basilicata, ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 80.

⁸ E. Marengi, *Relazione sulla Calabria, op. cit.*, p. 694.

⁹ G. Lorenzoni, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

there were few departures from Naples, a much larger number of emigrants left from the Amalfitan mountains and from the mountains of the Sorrentine Peninsula, from the islands in the Gulf of Naples and from Pozzuoli. The same can be said of Caserta where, as we have already mentioned, there was emigration with the exception of Piedimonte d'Alife.¹⁰ As far as Apulia is concerned, with the exception of Bari which, as in the past, continued to provide large groups of emigrants,¹¹ only the Sub-Apennine area generated a migratory movement. Up to 1882, there was no emigration from the province of Foggia, although after 1882 a migratory movement got underway and affected above all three centres situated in the Sub-Apennine area of the province. On the other hand, no such movement was recorded in the province of Lecce until 1895.¹²

3. Since most of them came from mountainous regions, the majority of emigrants were men. In the Abruzzo and Molise the ratio of women to men began to rise only after the economic crisis which hit South Italy very severely in 1888,¹³ as a result of which the percentage of women emigrants rose to above 50% in some years. This was indicative of the fact that the emigration taking place was of a permanent and radical kind, although the phenomenon has also been linked to the increase in emigration to Argentina and Brazil that occurred during this period.¹⁴ Generally speaking, the proportion of women emigrants kept below 20% or even less.¹⁵ In Calabria and Basilicata the proportion was roughly the same, that is, between 10 to 20%.¹⁶ That is not to say that emigrants were celibate;

¹⁰ O. Bordiga, *Relazione sulla Campania*, in "Inchiesta parlamentare...etc.", *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 646.

¹¹ E. Presutti, *Relazione sulla Puglia*, in "Inchiesta parlamentare... etc.", *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 646.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.635.

¹³ L. De Rosa, *Emigranti, etc.*, *op. cit.* p. 5 *et seq.*

¹⁴ C. Jarach, *Relazione su Abruzzi e Molise*, in "Inchiesta parlamentare... etc.", *op. cit.*, p. 243.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹⁶ E. Azimonti, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 166, 230; E. Marengi, *op. cit.*, p. 733

indeed, it has been observed that many of them married before emigrating in order "to have someone [at home] to look after the savings as they accumulated and to stop them from being too quickly used up by the large paternal family".¹⁷

The emigrants from the extensive Apennine region we have been referring to were mostly peasants (farm-hands, day labourers, salaried workers belonging to families of tenant farmers and crop-sharers, and the sons of small holders) and largely illiterate, although the number of peasants gradually dwindled, dropping from 70 to about 40% of the total number of emigrants.¹⁸ Although agricultural workers, shepherds, gardeners, wood-cutters and workers employed in rural activities made up the biggest part of the labour force in the Apennine region, emigrants also included: workers employed in the building sector and in road and hydraulic constructions, such as bricklayers, labourers, stone-cutters, brick-makers, metal sheet workers, water maintenance and repair workers, plumbers, etc.; workers employed in the mining and textile industries; those working in the service sector, such as hoteliers, restaurant owners, innkeepers, drug-store keepers, grocers, bakers, fruit-sellers, etc.; and finally those employed in domestic service, such as servants, maids, wet-nurses, etc.¹⁹ There were also those who were employed in very specialist sectors like the rowers from Alto Lagonegrese (from Rivello to Nemoli) and the itinerant musicians from Val d'Agri (Viggiano and Marsico Vetere).²⁰

Yet among the emigrants, alongside the various categories of peasants and artisans there were also professional people (lawyers, journalists, engineers, teachers, doctors, pharmacists) as well as artists such as painters, sculptors, sketchers, photographers and engravers²¹ and concert and opera singers and musicians.²²

¹⁷ C. Jarach, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

¹⁸ C. Jarach, *op. cit.*, p.245, E. AZIMONTI, *op. cit.*, pp. 80.82.

¹⁹ E. Marenghi, *op. cit.*, p. 724.

²⁰ E. Azimonti, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

²¹ E. Marenghi, *op. cit.*, p. 724.

²² K.K. Preston, *Opera on the Road*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1993, p. 99 *et seq.*

4. This very large and varied supply of labour which sought employment in the industrialised countries of Europe, including the small Balkan States, Africa, stretching from the Mediterranean to Transvaal, and Asia, stretching from Turkey to China, from the 1880s onward increasingly turned to America's industrial North and to the agricultural Republics of the South.

While the provinces of Teramo and Aquila had generated a fairly significant flow of migrants to European countries up until 1880 and thereafter to America, right from the start emigrants from the Chieti and Campobasso provinces had chosen America as their destination, and in particular, the United States;²³ although Argentina and Brazil also attracted emigrants from Aquila, Teramo and especially Campobasso, the number of such emigrants was always inferior to the number of emigrants to the United States. Only centres in the Chieti province produced a higher rate of migration to Argentina and Brazil than to the United States.²⁴ Emigrants from Basilicata also chose South and North America as their destination, especially the United States.²⁵ As far as Calabrians are concerned, while European countries, Argentina and Brazil were initially favourite destinations, in 1887 the number of Calabrians emigrating to the United States exceeded the number of migrants to other destinations and continued to increase over the years.²⁶ From 1875 to 1897 more than two million people emigrated to America, "a number which exceeded the population in some of the smaller European countries such as Denmark and Greece".²⁷

In Argentina, the majority of Italian emigrants found employment in agriculture, particularly in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Cordoba, Entre Rios, Mendoza and Tucuman, but also in many other provinces and centres. In Buenos Aires the

²³ C. Jarach, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-247.

²⁴ C. Jarach, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

²⁵ E. Azimonti, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

²⁶ E. Marengi, *op. cit.*, pp. 718-719.

²⁷ Atti (A) Parlamentari (P), Camera dei Deputati, legislatura XX, 1 sessione, Documenti n. 206 (1 dicembre 1897).

Italians made up the largest colony of foreign residents, larger than any other European community.

Apart from turning new land over to cultivation, transplanting European and Italian fruit and vegetable crops, Southern immigrants found employment as blacksmiths, carpenters and brick-layers and, in the professional field, as doctors, journalists, etc.. They were also active in industry, opening factories that produced cement, wrapping paper, pasta, liqueurs, jams, hats, furniture, shoes, carts, carriages, agricultural implements and saddlery.

Neither was the commercial sector neglected; while some emigrants set up import businesses for Italian products (wines, oils, medicines, etc.), and opened shops for selling coal, meat, bread, others opened barber shops, inns, goldsmiths, drug stores etc.. Many of them amassed a sizeable fortune and became both urban and rural property owners.²⁸

5. In Brazil, where San Paolo was the largest centre for migrant Southern Italians,²⁹ emigrants performed a range of jobs, working in factories which produced textiles, hats, bricks, cement, pasta as well as in tanneries, saw mills and flour mills etc.. However their main speciality lay in small shops and work-shops for carpenters, blacksmiths, cobblers, tailors, barbers, wine-sellers, haberdashers, fruit sellers, grocers, as well as occupations like that of stone-cutter, brick-mason, carter, coachman, porter, newspaper seller, and pedlar. Nonetheless Southern Italians also worked as doctors, pharmacists, dentists, obstetricians, engineers and architects.³⁰ Moreover, in the Rio Grande do Sol province a large number of emigrants from Cosenza and Salerno were pedlars who went around selling their wares from place to place.³¹ In the Minas Gerais province, other than working as pedlars, other migrants

²⁸ L. De Rosa, *Emigranti.... op. cit.*, pp. 9-25.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 27.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 31.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 36.

from Salerno farmed their own land,³² while in the State of Espirito Santo a small group of Calabrians undertook the cultivation of vegetables in the outskirts of the capital, Victoria.³³ Natives of Abruzzo, Calabria and Apulia opened small businesses in Curitiba, capital of the Parana State.³⁴ Emigrants from Salerno, Cosenza and Basilicata set up businesses in North Brazil: some imported cloths, fabrics, haberdashery, knick-knacks and hardware and sold them retail, while others retailed foodstuffs such as flour, wine and preserves. Some set up factories for producing soap, corsets, liqueurs, and pasta, and Italian clothes shops, shoe shops, jewellers, and bakeries; others worked as boiler workers, gilders, blacksmiths and cobblers.

In Pernambuco the shoe shiners came from Cosenza, half of whom were young children; in the Bahia State only Calabrians settled. In Rio de Janeiro, the Italians nearly all came from Cosenza, Potenza, Salerno and, to a lesser extent, from Naples, Caserta, and Reggio Calabria. They held what was virtually a monopoly over street trade, selling newspapers, fish, poultry, brooms, vegetables and fruit; others worked for the trams, railways, the municipal rubbish disposal service and public lighting, or as factory workers in textile factories. Emigrants from Torre del Greco manufactured coral and those from Castellamare gloves. Conversely, in the state of Rio de Janeiro - although not in the capital itself - emigrants from Central and Northern Italy predominated;³⁵ moreover it is interesting to observe that "while those who lived in the towns and worked as day labourers and streetsellers [were] reasonably well off, the same [could] not be said of farm workers", those, that is to say, who lived in the interior. This explains why Italians tended to leave the countryside and to move to the towns, abandoning farming for more remunerative occupations.³⁶

³² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

6. Setting aside the presence and occupations of other Southern Italians residing in other Latin America States,³⁷ it should be stressed that although the rate of Italian emigration to the United States was fairly low up to 1896 (around 27,000 emigrants in all), henceforth the number of emigrants grew continuously, reaching nearly 88,000 by 1900³⁸ and around 359,000 by 1906, to which we must add 100,000 immigrants in Canada. Thus, from the end of the century onwards, while the conspicuous migratory flow of Italians toward Argentina and Brazil began to slacken, emigration to the United States increased considerably, producing the largest and faster growing number of Italian emigrants. Briefly, the percentage of Italian emigration to the United States out of total emigration was 45.51% in 1906, while emigration to Canada represented 1.27% of the total.³⁹ What is more, when the economic crisis struck, many of those who had emigrated to Argentina and Brazil and to other Latin America countries went directly to live in the United States⁴⁰ instead of returning to Italy.

Although Italian emigration to the United States was to continue to grow up to the first World War, according to the American census undertaken in the period under study, the proportion of Italians out of the total resident population in the United States grew to 10%, of whom the majority were Southerners; moreover, the migratory movement affected every State.

The biggest number of immigrants settled in New York State and in particular in New York city. The latter, with around 220,000 Italians - corresponding to 64% of its entire resident population - became one of the largest Italian cities in the world.⁴¹ When the whole of New York State was considered, however, the percentage

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-61.

³⁸ Commissario Generale dell'emigrazione, *Annuario Statistico dell'emigrazione italiana* - 1876-1925, Rome, 1926, p. 88.

³⁹ Commissario Generale dell'emigrazione, *Annuario Statistico dell'emigrazione italiana*, *op. cit.* p. 91.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁴¹ L. De Rosa, *Emigranti... (1896-1906)*, *op. cit.*, p.69.

dropped to 37.50%; the main centres of Italian immigration were Utica, Buffalo, Yonkers, Rochester, etc..

After New York State, Pennsylvania was the state with the highest number of Italians, followed by New Jersey, California, Massachusetts, Louisiana, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Other fairly large groups of Italians settled in the states bordering the major lakes - Illinois, Ohio, Michigan - as well as in Missouri, Texas, Colorado and Washington State. Nevertheless the majority of Italians settled in the towns along the Atlantic coast, where their relatives had previously settled and because the journey cost less.

A detailed analysis which appears in another work⁴² and is based on the reports of Italian Consuls and Italian Emigration Office Inspectors, shows that Italian emigrants, of whom the overwhelming majority consisted of Southern Italians, were assimilated into the American labour market in different ways:

- 1) in the large capital cities where whole districts populated by Italians came into being and became known as "Little Italies";
- 2) in smaller towns, usually industrial towns;
- 3) in the open countryside, where there were mines or quarries and where public building works and railways were under construction;
- 4) in farming;
- 5) in fishing.

In the large cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, Italians were employed in digging works for the construction of sewers, port facilities and underground railways, in rubbish collection and, especially in the case of young boys, as shoeshiners. Many worked as brick-layers, stone-cutters, carpenters, iron-smiths and in the silk industry and, above all, in retail and wholesale trading. According to an estimate made by the local Italian Chamber of Commerce which was set up in 1887, at the beginning of century there were 2750 barber shops, 2300 shoe and cobblers' shops, 1300 fish shops, 600 fruit shops, 600 bars, 250

⁴² L. De Rosa, *Emigranti... (1896-1906)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-102.

butchers, 250 bakeries, 200 confectioners, 200 restaurants, 200 dressmakers, 125 chemists, 150 tobacconists, 75 jewellers and 1000 shops selling various products. In addition there were around 200 commercial, banking and industrial companies with a capital valued at over 50,000 dollars. These businesses were engaged in the importation of Italian products (citrus fruits, fruit, essences, drugs, medicines, silk, spices, silk articles, gloves, and unprocessed and manufactured marble); in trading bed linen, fabrics and related items, iron-ware, machinery, pharmaceutical products; in manufacturing pasta, cakes, salted pork meats, Italian cigars, furniture, artificial flowers, jewels; and in banking, currency exchange and shipping.⁴³

In Boston, too, Southern Italians were mainly employed in building roads, aqueducts, sewers etc., but there were also a fair number of barbers (half of whom had had no previous experience), small and big traders, dress-makers, shoe-makers, stone-cutters, carpenters, hat-makers etc.. In addition there were "several young painters and sculptors", as well as "excellent musicians" from the South of Italy, who became established in Boston, the musical centre of the United States.

In Chicago, where the majority of emigrants came from the Apennine region of Abruzzo, Calabria and Sicily, many worked in the quarries. Others were employed as dustmen, cobblers, barbers, sewerage workers, brick-layers, musicians, knife-sharpeners, rag and bone men, tailors, shop-keepers and in manufacturing and in mechanical industries. Few were engaged in agriculture, even though about 76% of these immigrants had worked on the land back in Italy.

7. In the large cities, where the constant influx of immigrants had led to the expansion of housing projects and to a large number of public works, Italian labour was used in enhancing, transforming and improving dwellings and city living conditions as well as

⁴³ L. De Rosa, *Emigranti... (1896-1906)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

providing commercial services and artisans'skills. In the industrial towns immigrants also provided these services, as well as performing heavier and more demanding work in factories.

In the small towns of Connecticut, where Southern Italian immigrants made up two thirds of the entire Italian colony, the Italians worked in the Rubber Manufacturing Company, in the Brass Works Factory and in the construction of the New York-New Haven-Hartford Railway. In Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, which was one of America's foremost industrial towns at the beginning of the century, Southern emigrants, some of whom came from the provinces of Aquila, Avellino, Catanzaro, Chieti, Potenza and Reggio Calabria, were mostly employed in the town's numerous coal mines and in industry (steel works, factories producing bricks, food preserves, etc.) and in the state railways.

Although dress-makers, musicians, labourers, brick-layers and stone-cutters also figured in the colony, the great majority of emigrants were miners⁴⁴.

8. The third category of Italians assimilated into the American labour market comprised those who lived far from the capitals and towns and worked as lumber jacks or in mines and quarries. Between Texas and Louisiana, for instance, several hundred Sicilians felled trees in the marsh areas along the border, and worked in saw mills. Hundreds of other Italian immigrants, nearly all from Corleone, Poggio Reale, Cefalù, Alia, Caccamo and Partanna, lived in the rural districts of Bryan, growing cotton; others worked on sugar cane plantations in many parts of Louisiana.⁴⁵

As mines and quarries became exhausted or were no longer competitive, as railway and public building works came to a halt and as industrial activity wound down, the Italians never lost heart but gradually moved westward, away from the Atlantic coast, adapting to the demands of the local market. In Tampa, for example, they worked in the scores of cigar factories

⁴⁴ L. De Rosa, *Emigranti... (1896-1906)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

manufacturing Cuban tobacco;⁴⁶ in Nevada they worked in the mines or in railway construction.⁴⁷ They were always ready to fit into the local labour market and to take up even the humblest of occupations, trading as retailers or as pedlars and doing many other kinds of work.

9. Agriculture, the fourth category we have referred to, was widely practised by Italian immigrants in California, but also in parts of the Middle West and the West, according to necessity. Unlike the other states, in California - as in many states on the Pacific coast - two fifths of Italians were employed in agricultural work, just over a fifth worked in mines and railway construction and repairs while the rest worked in towns.

Fishing, the sixth category of labour, was carried on in ports. In the Bay of San Francisco, where a large colony of Sicilians from the Isola delle Femmine and Lipari had formed, Italians held almost a monopoly; equipped with large boats they went up the coast as far as Alaska fishing for salmon.

It was widely acknowledged that fishing was carried on almost exclusively by Italians, mainly Sicilians, at least along the California coast. Their predominance extended to the various types of fish processing, which gradually became concentrated in their hands.⁴⁸ This tendency to take control of a commercial sector was not confined to fishing. Italians undertook a similar strategy in the fruit and vegetable sector, particularly on the Pacific coast, controlling all stages of the business from harvesting to retailing, which was carried out by itinerant sellers.⁴⁹

10. From what has been said it is evident that the presence of Italians, and in particular South Italians, in the American labour market responded first and foremost to a local need: apart from the

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

desire of Italians to repatriate as soon as they had put enough savings aside to enable them to invest in their own business on returning to Italy, Italian emigration, and Southern emigration above all, was constantly subject to local circumstances and conditions. Thus, when, in 1892 and again in 1907, the American economy was also hit by recession, the number of departures from Italy declined while the number of those who were without work and who returned to Italy rose.

Varied and intense as the movement was, Italian emigration proved to be a stimulus for accelerating the United States' economic development. The local labour market was supplied with an enormous pool of physically fit and, in the majority of cases, highly qualified workers, without having to bear any training expenses. As a result of such immigration - and of the immigration from other countries and continents - local wages were kept down. The trade union conflict which arose in the United States and which degenerated into barbarous attacks against the newcomers, highlighted the price-controlling function of imported labour.

11. If, on the one hand, Italian emigration provided the countries of North and South America with the labour force they needed (and while they needed it), on the other hand, the consequent thinning out of the labour market in Italy was not without repercussions for the Italian economy.

In Italy as in America, labour was the first to be affected. While in America the migration movement helped to keep wages from rising too steeply, in Italy it helped to give wages a boost. As a result of emigration, wages in Abruzzo and Molise "rose to the point of being double and triple the value they were before" and rent prices for peasant dwellings fell by 20% and 50% "almost everywhere"; "profit-sharing farm leases were modified, reducing the burden borne by the tenant and transferring it to the owner once again". As it was less expensive and more readily available, female labour replaced male labour, and, where possible, children and old people took over from male adults. The large farm proprietors

drastically cut down on labour, replacing it, when they had the means to do so, with machinery. It has been acknowledged that “the spread of iron plough on wheels in the countryside around Teramo and Chieti and of mechanical harvesters in the Low Larinese [was] largely due to the changed conditions of the labour market”.⁵⁰

The contraction of labour supplies also affected the structure of agriculture. Old vines were dug out in the areas lying at the foot of mountains to make way for herbaceous crops and less productive land in the mountain area which had previously been used for wheat growing was given over to pasture. To avoid paying taxes and dues, many landowners gave back to the town their share of the commonland, whose cultivation was no longer profitable. Meadow replaced worn-out farm land and legumes were planted in the more fertile areas.

To make agricultural production more competitive the use of chemical fertilisers spread rapidly and the number of cattle increased; cattle breeds improved and cattle sheds that were better equipped for rearing and keeping cattle were built.⁵¹

The same situation could be found in Basilicata. Here, too, as a result of emigration, peasants could “choose for themselves the land they want[ed] to farm, according to conditions that were much less onerous than before...”; in times of need there was a great demand for their labour and so they chose employers who offered the best conditions. In Basilicata, too, women and children worked the land. The area used for cereal growing shrank and crops that required a lot of labour (vines, horticultural products, etc.) were abandoned. Large areas were left as pasture without there being any possibility to rear livestock, in view of the difficulties in finding cowherds who would accept the minimum wages offered by cattle rearers. In short, the value of land kept on depreciating and only the land lying on the outskirts of inhabited areas was kept under cultivation.⁵²

⁵⁰ C. Jarach, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 257-258.

⁵² E. Azimonti, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Similar situations were to be found in the Calabrian towns which had generated a high level of emigration. The scarcity of adult labour had induced a considerable rise in wages and farm leases became much more advantageous for peasants.⁵³

Wage increases, the fall in land rents and the introduction and diffusion of agricultural machinery, made themselves felt in Puglia too, even in areas where there had been no emigration. But in the centres where emigration had been most intense, for example in the Sub-Apennine area and in the small towns around Bari and nearest to the sea, they had an even more incisive impact, affecting the value of property.⁵⁴

Of course, emigration also affected domestic migratory movements, which slowed down considerably, with large repercussions above all in Apulia, Basilicata and Calabria.⁵⁵

12. The other consequence of emigration concerned the flow of remittances which were sent home by emigrants to their families in Italy. How much these amounted to annually it is hard to gauge, for when they were not brought directly by the emigrant on his return, they reached Italy through various channels. Nonetheless the amount must have been considerable.

The peasants from Abruzzo and Molise had calculated that a year's work in North America meant an annual saving of 1,000-1,500 lire. In this way it was estimated that "thousands and thousands of lire reach[ed] the poorest of homes each year". It was also observed that "the women who [went] into town on Sundays to make purchases handl[ed] with great nonchalance banknotes worth large amounts of money".⁵⁶

As a result of this flow of remittances, post-office savings deposits increased from around 17,000 lire (1876) to more than 5 million lire (1906) in the province of Aquila, from about 34,000

⁵³ O. Bordiga, *op.cit.*, p. 612.

⁵⁴ E. Presutti, *op.cit.*, p. 686.

⁵⁵ E. Marengi, *op.cit.*, p. 773.

⁵⁶ C. Jarach, *op.cit.*, p. 265.

lire (1876) to around 16 million lire (1906) in the province of Campobasso, from 16,000 lire (1876) to over 7 million lire (1906) in the province of Chieti and around 6,000 lire (1876) to more than 3 million lire (1906) in the province of Teramo.⁵⁷ Likewise, savings in other types of banking institutions also increased.⁵⁸ Moreover, all this occurred without any devaluation taking place; on the contrary, paper lire were now commanding a premium on gold lire.

Remittance flows to Basilicata and Calabria were just as substantial. This is borne out by the number of deposits in post-offices and in credit institutions of every sort.⁵⁹ At the beginning of this century it was calculated that approximately 300 million lire arrived in the homes of Calabrian emigrants annually and that in some years the sum was even greater. So much so that emigration was considered "the most important industry in Basilicata and Calabria".⁶⁰

The arrival of so much money, which brought about an improvement in the peasants' diet and in their living conditions⁶¹ and consequently a fall in the mortality rate, also sparked an intellectual awakening among peasants, as well as causing an increase in the price of small holdings, especially those situated near to inhabited areas. This tendency was most apparent in Abruzzo,⁶² Basilicata⁶³ and Calabria.⁶⁴ Yet, while it was indicative of the emigrant's wish to free himself from the state of subservience which was implicit in the condition of working other people's land, it did not create the basis for a renewal of southern agriculture.

In conclusion, it is doubtlessly superfluous to stress the

⁵⁷ C. Jarach, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁵⁹ E. Azimonti, *op. cit.*, p. 605.

⁶⁰ E. Marenghi, *op. cit.*, p. 758 *et seq.*

⁶¹ Cf. for example, O. Bordiga, *op. cit.*, p. 626.

⁶² C. Jarach, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁶³ E. Azimonti, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁶⁴ E. Marenghi, *op. cit.*, p. 760.

revolutionary effects that the creation of a transatlantic labour market had, not just on receiving countries, but on generating countries too. South Italy was transformed as a result of emigration and the country as a whole benefited, too. Foreign currency contributed to the balance of payments, a boost was given to the country's modernisation process, exports were indirectly promoted and the country was able to capitalise on the adventurous spirit which had driven so many Italians to seek their fortunes in far-off countries.

