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Emigration

ITALIAN EMIGRATION IN EUROPE

The word "emigration" is multivalent. One emigrates for a need to widen social horizons surrounding us, one emigrates to break down those frontiers which citizens in the world today dream of. It is the same story in the Mediterranean basin where there has been a movement and superimposing of people and culture for a hundred or so years. What had been for generations a solid reason for working "at home" no longer applies today from a social point of view: fertile land, always insufficient in the Mediterranean countries, impoverished by continual deforestation, the many devastating invasions and the lack of underground resources extracted in northern countries have caused the Mediterranean area to become a labour reserve for the industrialized north.

We are at a pathological turning point, that where emigration has become a remedy for an economic evil and the excess in the labour demand is only the last link of the chain. As long as this serious social wrong is brought about by difficulty in assimilation because of the custom of the Mediterranean peoples to preserve their own languages and traditions with a consequent isolation into which they tend to shut themselves in separate groups, the therapy comes under a great political moment, the Treaty of Rome which established freedom of movement for Community workers.

In the history of Italy the root of the migratory phenomenon, eminently southern, was localized around the second half of the 19th century in that economic trend where the first industrial improvement was not followed by progress in the field of agriculture. It is the divarication on which the system that Francesco Cerase calls *precarious economy* (1), rests: farming based on only one crop brings about only seasonal employment, in any case not continuative for the labour force which therefore, in the absence of an industrial alternative, falls back on producing something on their own little lots, thus becoming exposed

(1) F. P. CERASE, *Precaire economy and emigration, in A century of Italian emigration: 1876-1976*, CSER, Rome, 1978.

to the trend of the market also because of their ancient methods of production (on the other hand we should consider the transformation of the English and French countrysides following the Industrial Revolution). Cerase in fact blames this precariousness on the attachment this mass of workers has for the "myth of the small independent peasant holdings", never compensated because the market is dominated by big capital, thus it has become the antichamber, as to speak, of emigration as a spur to abandon the land.

This state of things clashes all the more when compared to the variety of cultivations and to the industrialized transformation of the farm product which came about in the northern regions of Italy after 1890. In such conditions emigration becomes a *constant structural fact* for surplus labour. Rather this migratory movement of surplus labour is considered at the most a factor of re-equilibrium while allowing for the recovery of a certain well-being in the areas of exodus. What we want to say is that: while in the northern regions there is a movement of labour from off the farms into the industries going up around the cities — consequently of an emergency nature not excluding a possible return to the land — in the south, as already said, emigration could only go beyond our frontiers and overseas thus acquiring the characteristic of a *stable alternative*. In this latter case neither the emigrants' remittances nor their return home have been able to make much of a difference to this precarious situation.

If we consider more recent times we find that this precariousness has changed in a certain way, but it still brings about emigration. We are referring to the fact, not yet completely systematized, of the industrialization of Southern Italy (il Mezzogiorno) which, while preparing sites for the construction of plants, absorbed a considerable number of the labour force by uprooting it from an uncertain agricultural economy and then partly abandoning it once the industries started operating. These excluded workers had no alternative but to move north or emigrate beyond our frontiers.

In 1978 IREF (Institute for educative and formative research in Rome together with ACLI, the Italian Workers' Christian Association) following up a commission from ECDPT (European Centre for the Development of Professional Training in Berlin) carried out research on "*Conjectures and availability for a process of social and professional mobility within Europe*". The research was born of the ascertainment that the migratory flow between Italy and other Community countries has changed qualitatively in respect of the modified European productive system based on more advanced technology requiring skilled personnel

and therefore excluding labourers, without eliminating traditional production on one hand and speculation and "black economy" labour on the other, something which emigrants have become the victims of with the so-called *second labour market* (as for instance the Tunisians in Sicily, the Turks in Germany). A fact emerging from a survey among students from the provinces of Avellino and Salerno is a new awareness as regards the aims, problems and possibilities which emigration involves when undertaken as a means of subsistence but "with new incentives for a decisive and incisive social, cultural and professional presence in the reality of emigration". Mobility, which prompted people to go beyond the frontiers in the classical epoch, was quite a different thing.

Scholars, by investigating the conjectures and availability to mobility in Cologne and Stuttgart in Germany as well as in Bedford in Great Britain, found how the idea of a return home was still an aspiration while there was a demand for new training "centered on a channel of labour and professionalism". All signs, as will be seen, to be found in the new lines of intervention put into effect by the various governments.

It is possible to follow a statistical history of labour emigration especially for what concerns Europe. It was not possible until 1876 when the phenomenon in its real extent was actually still uncontrollable, because large contingents of migrants left from ports outside Italy, such as Trieste, Le Havre and Marseilles. Rather for a number of years only those going to countries beyond the Straits of Gibraltar (2) were considered emigrants.

Only with the *Consolidation Act of measures on emigration and on the juridical protection of emigrants* was the purpose of the voyage specified: "every citizen who migrates exclusively for manual labour and to carry on small trade is considered an emigrant; or whoever goes to join his or her spouse, ascendants, descendants, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and the like already emigrated for work reasons or those returning to a foreign country where they had emigrated previously" (Article 10). At this point the chapter on emigration in Europe opens officially, while we had to wait until 1947 for emigrants to be finally considered by the Central Statistical Office, all those who "go abroad for work reasons, or following a call, or to establish their residence there".

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 1970s the National Board for Economy and Labour, in effecting a survey on the question which has

(2) Act No. 23 of January 31, 1901.

become fundamental, had to ascertain that an emigrant cannot be singled out in such an univocal manner as one has commonly been led to believe (3).

It must be considered that the major phase of emigration, not only within Europe, runs from the end of the 19th century till the end of the first world war, and also that which took place between 1945 and today is substantial. On the whole in the hundred years 1876-1976 more than half of those who left their homes, almost 13 million 500 thousand workers, have involved European countries of which 56 % within the Community, divided as follows: France 4,317,934 (57 % of the EEC flow), Germany 2,452,585 (33 % of the EEC total), Benelux 530,965 (7 % EEC), Great Britain 263,598 (3.5 %); finally Switzerland took 3,989,813 or 29.5 % of Italian emigrants in Europe.

Generally, without considering countries of destination, a large part of those leaving their homes came from the southern regions of Italy and the islands, almost two fifths of the total or over 10 million workers. Nevertheless the Venetian regions lead in emigrants for the hundred years in question.

The *great exodus* came about between 1876 and 1914 and almost half of the emigrants was on an average absorbed by Europe. Precisely by France (about 33 % in the period 1876-1900, 25 % up until 1915), Austria-Hungary (23.5 % and 20 %), Germany (14 % and 24 %), Switzerland (13 % and 28 %); Belgium, Greece, Holland and Great Britain had lower percentages.

Even for the period 1916-1942 France held first place in the preference of emigrants, numbering one and a half million or 36 % of the total, with a peak period between 1919 and 1926. When the second world war was about to break out three-fifths of all the Italians emigrating in Europe had already done so between 1876 and 1976. The remaining two-fifths or 5 million emigrants forced to go beyond our frontiers for economic reasons, represent one of the most touching social tragedies of our epoch, however only slightly mitigated by the 3 and a half million reimpatriations occurred in the last thirty years, since the balance is still negative with an average rotation of 71 reimpatriations as against 100 expatriations.

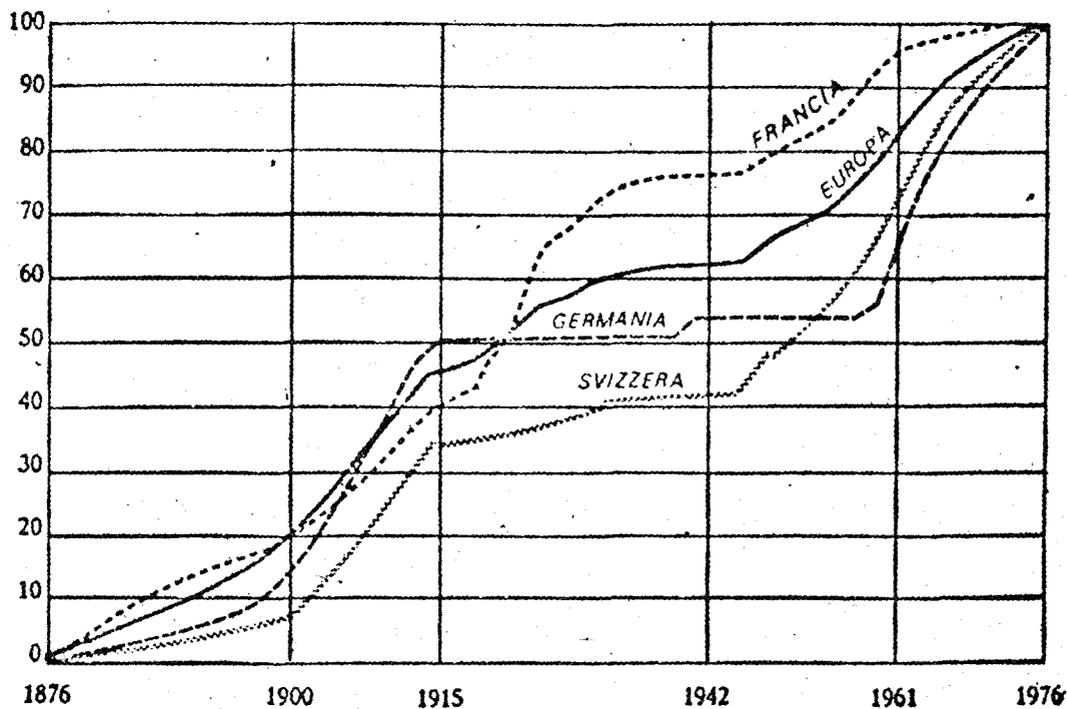
This time Switzerland is in first place, as far as receiving Italian labour is concerned, with 45.5 % of the European flow; in the thirty years 2,300,000 went there as against a million to Germany and the

(3) Compare: CNEL (NATIONAL BOARD FOR ECONOMY AND LABOUR) - Commission for labour, social security and cooperation: *Scheme of comment and proposals on emigration problems - 1970.*

same number to France. The last fifteen years have seen the phenomenon of a more accentuated Europeanization of the flow until it reached four-fifths of the total, and among Community countries Germany alone reached a peak with 71 % of EEC expatriations, far ahead of the 16.5 % recorded in France; while among extra-community countries Switzerland received 47.5 % of expatriations on the Continent.

We have drawn up the following graph to give an overall idea of movement in percentages between 1876 and 1976.

OVERALL PERCENTAGES OF EXPATRIATIONS TO PRINCIPAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: (1876-1976) •



(CSR Data Processing)

According to reliable calculations there are today about two and a half million Italian emigrant workers on the European continent, which would be double if their families were taken into consideration. The official number as of 1978 was as follows:

EEC	1,690,604	Belgium	310,203
Germany	572,522	United Kingdom	220,000
France	521,123	Luxembourg	32,000
Switzerland	442,715	Netherlands	30,493

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We have mentioned the reasons for emigrating from Italy. For what concerns international economy, science has singled out a function common in industrialized European countries importing labour: it is that of satisfying a demand for labour where the supply of local labour is not quantitatively adequate to meet it (4).

According to this interpretation it could be said that highly industrialized companies show a want of symmetry between those who come onto the labour market and the pertinent market organization: on one hand there are those who have cultural exigencies of professionalism and satisfaction from their work and on the other hand there is a demand for labour in degrading and unpleasant sectors remaining substantially unanswered. Hence the danger of social tension which emigration blocks by satisfying such a demand.

Over the last years the policies of European countries have aimed at meeting this requirement. Above all Italy, Spain and Greece have had in this way to meet the demand, while those countries which received many emigrants in the past had to reduce their number of foreign workers, thus recording a heavy drop because those leaving exceeded by far the workers coming in. The figures over the period 1974-1977 showed the following variations in the flow of mobility:

West Germany	— 458,800
Switzerland	— 102,819
France	— 20,242
Italy	— 417,876

Surveys have shown how these countries, which normally imported labour, are now devoting themselves to a policy of family reunion with a gradual introduction onto the labour market of members of emigrant families already resident there. Thus problems of integration and the affording of protection for those working abroad as regards complete parity of rights between emigrants and local communities have come to the fore. This has given rise to a vast range of problems which we will consider later.

It must be pointed out now that after the decline of the great wave of emigration recorded in Europe during the 1960s there has been an increasing flow of people returning to Italy. According to statistics for our country we have passed from an average nett outflow of about 160,000 people in the period 1952-1961, of 88,000 in 1962-

(4) Compare: Communication presented by CENSIS (SOCIAL INVESTMENT STUDY CENTRE) at the study meeting on Italian community problems in Europe, promoted by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and held in Luxembourg in 1978.

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1966 and 41,000 in 1967-1971, to a prevailing of re-entries over expatriations. All this has a certain demographic importance which has already characterized the last ten years, but this straight away raises the question of social and economic repercussions: among these there was a drop in remittances from emigrants which between 1960 and 1969 added 6.4 % to the credit side of our balance of payments, in 1962-1964 rose to 7 % to drop back to around 3 % during this last period.

A further worsening came about with the arrival of many foreign emigrants in Italy, who in turn sent remittances to their respective home countries. A control of this incoming flow has been rendered difficult by a substantially unprepared policy and legislation, nevertheless the very latest estimates place the number of foreign emigrants in Italy at around half a million.

What are the causes, characteristics and consequences of Italian emigration in the areas of exodus, that is to say, in the territory of origin? A survey conducted in this sense in Southern Italy by FORMEZ (5) has induced the sociologist to consider that in some of the poorer zones the exodus of workers, beyond an economic crisis, is something that will never stop. Therefore if in some boroughs whole families have already been involved in it, this exodus has now passed into a phase where the principal motive for emigration is no longer only for economic reasons but also for socio-cultural ones, almost as if the role generally played by the national military service also contributes to emigration, an exterior sign of maturity even a moral qualification for marriage for the emigrant.

In more general terms a developing society, such as that of Southern Italy, presents a vast process of socio-cultural transformation within which the act of going to work abroad is the most visible manifestation, however this cannot be separated from the rest.

And demographic facts show us what a noticeable drop has occurred in the population and in some cases there has been a deterioration in composition by age groups. The censuses of 1961 and 1971 have shown that five thousand Italian boroughs were involved in this drop. Thus it has now been proved that emigration not only involves those who have emigrated but also the Italian economic system and its improvement on the whole, the Democratic State and its ability in making itself heard in international relations, primary civil structures,

(5) *Emigration and the southern regions*, FORMEZ (Study and training centre for Southern Italy), Rome, 1978.

from schools to professional training, from labour conditions to social security, from civil rights to various forms of integration and participation, structures whose perfecting is essential for emigrants both in Italy and abroad. Still the problem of emigration must also be connected with the problem of the socio-economic structure in the areas involved in the migration movement.

After all the emigrants are instrumental in bringing new ideas back into their country. The FORMEZ survey already mentioned shows that in Southern Italy the areas which the emigrants left have undergone progressive deterioration as far as farming and manufacturing are concerned. It must be pointed out that it is part of a continental trend where a concentration of population and employment has been coming about in favour of more advanced regions. That is to say, because of the migration movement the population has been steadily concentrating in central urban areas by abandoning outlying ones. Thus we have had a case of congestion with increased social costs while the rate of activities and occupation in the weaker regions has reduced.

In Italy the outlying areas of the hinterland have become increasingly dependent on outside resources, including also the emigrants' remittances which assure the survival of many families.

During the periods of increasing emigration, we have seen that this has effected a considerable contribution towards survival and generally for a more stable economy. But yet in 1977 in Southern Italy, even if the level of per capita incomes was not high, higher financial incomes were recorded there than in the North because on a family level, the emigrants' remittances as well as returns from investments effected with same, played an important role (a scholar such as Giuseppe De Rita spoke of this as a *mechanism of wealth in these zones*, but others, like Luigi Frey, have contested this definition). Instead the contribution given by social security is more stable and this is always a factor of income redistribution within the economic system.

It is only necessary to think of the problem born of the increasing of pensions for invalidity, an important but not unique cause of the heavy deficit shown by INPS (The National Organization for Social Security), the body responsible in Italy. By way of reference it should be remembered that the Treaty of Rome provided that workers, citizens of any one of EEC member countries, are entitled to work in another member country under the same conditions as citizens of that particular country where they have gone to work. The result is that these workers can avail themselves of the periods of insurance matured in another country where they have worked.

In practice EEC regulations constitute a system of coordination for all national norms in questions of social legislation thus assuring complete insurance coverage for workers of the Community and their families even outside their home countries. As already said these regulations aim for a parity of treatment, for the assimilation of territories (residence in another member country other than that of the debtor social security organization cannot prejudice full enjoyment of said services) and for the summing of all the insurance periods.

The table shows the comparing of several items within the Community countries connected with what we have been saying about social security:

	1977 GNP per capita (million L.)	act. pop. in % of pop. (1977)	unemployed in % of act. pop. (1977)	Migrant workers in % of tot. empl. (1975)	Gen. CLI 1977 (1970=100)
West Germany	8.1	41.6	4.0	10.3	146
France	6.9	41.3	4.9	10.9	183
Italy	3.3	35.0	7.0	0.4	237
Netherlands	7.4	34.6	4.5	3.0	176
Belgium	7.0	40.2	7.8	6.6	175
Luxembourg	7.5	41.3	0.6	35.0	166
United Kingdom	4.2	46.0	5.8	7.3	249
Ireland	2.8	35.7	9.7	0.3	250
Denmark	8.7	49.3	5.9	2.0	189
9 EEC countries	6.0	40.7	5.4	7.3	—

	Social security costs in % of GDP (1975)
West Germany	23.8
France	19.5
Italy	21.4
Netherlands	24.3
Belgium	22.2
Luxembourg	22.5
United Kingdom	16.6
Ireland	16.3
Denmark	29.9

Source: Eurostat and European Community Bulletin

The benefits, which workers and their families are entitled to, no matter the member country they are in, are summarized as follows:

- insurance coverage for illness and maternity;
- old-age pension;
- widowhood benefits;
- disability pension;
- pension for industrial injuries and occupational diseases;
- unemployment benefits;
- family allowances.

On an operational level there is a great number of complaints about the long wait before workers are able to get a pension which includes the periods worked in other EEC countries and this is due to bureaucratic slowness in passing on data and documents among the various national insurance organizations. Another reason for this delay is caused by the lack of a homogeneous legislation among the different countries, thus bringing about a superimposing of regulations and interpretations, even if it must be said that a lot has been done during these last years to equalize benefits and pensions.

As regards this, *charitable and social welfare societies* that have the task of assisting workers in obtaining previdential services (6), can play an important role.

Preoccupation about the difference in pertinent regulations has also prompted the ILO and the Council of Europe to work towards obtaining formal agreements among the governments which nevertheless have not been adequately considered in national legislations. ILO affirmed during its 51st Congress the principle of *safeguarding fundamental civil, social, political and economic rights of the emigrant as he is a citizen going to work in a foreign country.*

The birth of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage certainly represents a turning point even for the story of Italian emigration on the continent. There are people who, when referring to these emigrants and their serious difficulties, have called them the first authentic *European citizens*. At least, and before attempting an analysis, it is without a doubt that these difficulties and the action to solve them have a body in the Parliament ready to do so and it cannot fail to favour the equalizing of regulations in labour matters.

(6) Charitable and social welfare societies, whose assistance is completely free as per law, have been recognized juridically by legislative decree No. 804 by the provisional Head of State on July 29, 1947. Five welfare societies: ACLI, INAS, INCA, IPAS and ITAL are present in the EEC ready to give aid and assistance to Italian workers abroad.

On this level the new community reality has inherited the guiding concepts which already pervaded supernational activities during the 1970s. A resolution of the Council of Europe on January 21, 1974 established the lines of the *social action programme in favour of emigrant workers and their families*, later specified as a scheme for the *migrant worker bylaws*, on which not only the European Parliament but also widely representative associations united within UNAIE (National Union of emigrant and immigrant associations) and within FILEP (Italian Federation of emigrant workers and families) concentrated their attention with pressing petitions for an official enactment.

To be precise early in 1976 the EEC Executive Committee decided not to go ahead with the project, because among other things it would mean discriminating against migrant workers coming from countries outside the EEC. But if we consider that these extracommunity countries are above all Greece, Spain and Portugal, which we hope will soon become member countries of the EEC; or Turkey and Yugoslavia which in any case have a rapport of association with the Community, we feel that there is no reason to fear possible discrimination.

During the last weeks the European People's Party presented a proposal for a resolution calling upon the Committee "to submit without further delay a scheme for the migrant worker bylaws to the Council and Parliament, already solicited in the Califice resolution and by migrant worker association petitions in 1971". The motivation: "the migrant worker is a European citizen by full right, but requires major juridical assurance and more certain social guarantees" (there is no incompatibility with the other *Statute for migrant workers* proposed and approved by the Council of Europe on which Italy abstained because "several of its regulations were considered insufficient in respect of the present conditions of emigration").

Among the considerations put forward by UNAIE there was that underlining the "problem of the conforming of substantive law, within the various national competencies and within international ones, to the natural rights of emigrants by singling out the best and most correct solutions in order to avoid the present gaps, inadequacies, discrepancies and discordances. Moving from this basic necessity the whole problem inherent to labour relations on an international level is centered on four points: free movement of workers, recruiting and hiring, professional training and social security; while the right of an emigrant to "live with his family" and "assure a serene future for his children" is connected with the requirement that the Statute tackles several fundamental aspects of the emigrant's assimilation: housing, schools, civil right, parti-

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icipation in civic and trade-union activities and relations with his homeland.

As can be seen the key problem is participation. The political debate and legislative elaboration are based on two organs: the elective *Council Committees* and the *General Council of workers abroad* which realize this participation on a local level and on a central one respectively; while we are writing, for what concerns the former the Italian Parliament is working on a Text of reform uniting all the proposals presented by the various political parties, while the Government has presented a bill on the Councils which is at present being examined by the Senate. According to these formulations the Committee operates for the safeguarding of civil rights, the respecting of labour agreements, housing conditions, it undertakes initiatives concerning schooling and professional training, legal advice and medical assistance, cultural activities and recreation generally involving the utilization of free time; the Council will have to constitute an authoritative instrument of community participation abroad and also of coordinating associative, political and trade-union forces as well as of institutional organs and the Regions for the laying down of an emigration policy which contributes to the maintaining and strengthening of emigrant connections with the social, cultural, political and economic life of Italy, to assure the most efficient safeguarding of their rights, both where they work and in their homeland, and facilitate their participation in local community life.

This participation has to be considered on another level in those countries where Italian emigration has stabilized. The election of the European Parliament is still a point of reference: this historical event gave rise to the problem of rendering the presence of Italian emigrants more incisive in those countries, in all sectors of social life, in the school and trade-union worlds. The most visible expression is given by the exercising of the so-called *special rights*, especially those concerning voting in municipal elections.

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It means, as is evident, giving emigrants the possibility of getting onto administrative organs which make decisions directly influencing the lives of workers and their families: housing, medical and school structures, social services and free time. As we have seen, the Statute should guarantee all this. Unfortunately there is for the time being a certain amount of opposition, above all in West Germany evidently linked to the worry of political disturbances which could come about with this entry of new electors (and of newly elected persons, owing to the consequent right for emigrants *to be elected*). In any case,

negotiations are underway to overcome this and other hindrances to the enjoyment of civil rights.

Even the chapter on schooling has some negative aspects, which can have far-reaching effects. Schooling for emigrant children must bear in mind today their particular condition or that they are left to themselves because both parents are working outside the home, or the psychic trauma they suffer being put into a school with a different language and didactic system. According to many people, the idea of *Italian schools abroad* has been a failure, therefore it is necessary to avoid the lack of, incomplete or delayed schooling which precedes access to higher studies; as well as favour commencement on the job after this schooling and not in socially declassed positions, as we already see happening with emigration, as we would say, of ready employment.

Intervention is above all possible where there is a static emigration, such as in France and Great Britain and less in Germany and Switzerland where there is greater migratory mobility. But it must be said that even in these two latter countries the actual state of things is changing thanks to the massive re-entries compensated by the departure of families, which also determine a permanent type of emigration. In any case the schooling problem in the aforesaid terms is strictly connected with the basic question of participation and at least for Italian emigrants on the old continent a political solution is favoured by the fact that European emigration is rather politicized compared with the extra-European one therefore much more affected by the attention given it by free associations, political parties and trade-unions.

On the other hand it is one of the sectors where Italian intervention is most active — on its own and in collaboration with local structures — in inserting emigrant children into the school without however overlooking a cultural link with their homeland.

It is also said in another sense that it is a *second generation* problem, not only for the school children but also for the young people coming onto the labour market now and for whom it is essential to have some form of school-profession link-up. The reconsidering of the social problem must now be a pre-eminent commitment for the European Community and there is in the fore the question of guaranteeing employment therefore it is necessary to increase the number of instruments of assistance on a professional training level and on that of employment for the young as well as that of eliminating all forms of clandestine labour. In order to attain this object it is necessary that schooling, teacher training as well as cultural policy and information are coordinated.

The competencies of the Regions in the field of emigration policy were defined by Act 382 and Decree 616 of 1975. After numerous interventions operated by many regional bodies on the matter with different formalities and at different times, the Regions effected an exhaustive reflection which we can only mention briefly because of space.

The loss which emigration causes from a regional point of view becomes much more serious especially in Southern Italy for it means a drop in productive potentiality, certainly not compensated by the contribution of the remittances, without considering the inestimable social and human harm which emigration brings about.

The most difficult aspect of the regional question is certainly that of favouring the re-inserting in the original boroughs and generally in the socio-economic system of those workers returning from abroad. It is absolutely necessary in the first place to arrive at the uniforming of measures for the whole national territory following the spreading of interventions mentioned above.

However the regional solicitation is even projected beyond the Italian frontiers in order to affirm an autonomous initiative in favour of the emigrants. "Even if no one intends to replace the government in foreign policy — said Arcangelo Spaziani, labour assessor for the Latium Region — instead the Regions intend to support and strengthen the emigrant workers' rapport with their homeland and contribute to safeguarding their civil rights as well as their political ones".

Emigration policy has then, on different levels and in various seats, definitely left the straits of a passive attitude towards welfare. So that the sentence which George Bernard Shaw had some emigrants say in *Man and Superman* and that is: "We only want to escape from Ireland... we can be better off in any other country", really belongs to the past even for an Italian worker.