

Promoting a multilateral ‘revolution’ in rural development: Manlio Rossi-Doria from Southern Italy to Latin America

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This essay describes one of the less-studied chapters in the career of the Italian agrarian economist Manlio Rossi-Doria (1905-1988), an expert known for his commitment to underdeveloped regions of southern Italy. After World War II, he seized the opportunities offered by transnational networks of specialized knowledge, promoted by the United States’ cultural and technical diplomacy efforts and the multilateral technical assistance program managed by the United Nations. The article reconstructs the itinerary leading to his appointment as an FAO consultant in Latin America, where he evaluated land tenure systems in 1952–53, with a focus on Mexico. During those years, the UN achieved a more pluralistic, redistributive vision of development. The main objective of the article is to understand how this intense episode in Rossi-Doria’s career and his progressive, reformist approach to rural development interfaced with FAO efforts.

Impulsar una «revolución» multilateral en el desarrollo rural: Manlio Rossi-Doria, del sur de Italia a América Latina

PALABRAS CLAVE: Italia, América Latina, reforma agraria, FAO.

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El presente trabajo recorre uno de los capítulos menos estudiados de la carrera del economista agrario italiano Manlio Rossi-Doria (1905-1988). Este experto, conocido sobre todo por su compromiso con las regiones atrasadas del sur de Italia, después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial aprovechó las oportunidades que ofrecían las redes transnacionales de conocimientos especializados promovidas por la diplomacia cultural y técnica de los Estados Unidos y el programa multilateral de asistencia técnica gestionado por la ONU. El artículo reconstruye el itinerario que llevó a Rossi-Doria a ser nombrado consultor de la FAO en América Latina, evaluando los sistemas de tenencia de la tierra en 1952 y 1953, con especial atención en México. En los mismos años, la agencia de las Naciones Unidas logró una visión más plural y redistributiva del desarrollo. El objetivo principal del artículo es comprender cómo este intenso episodio de la trayectoria del experto italiano, mediante su planteamiento progresista y reformista del desarrollo rural, encajó con los esfuerzos de la FAO.

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1. AN EXPERT CAUGHT BY THE NOVELTY OF THE UN'S TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Networks of knowledge and expertise exchange had their roots in the first decades of the 20th century: in colonial empires (Hodge, 2007), in large public intervention programs such as the New Deal (Patel, 2016) in the United States, and in the international organizations that existed before the 1940s (Plata-Stenger, 2020). A large share of these efforts went into the modernization of the agricultural sector.

The emergence of a multilateral cooperation system after the end of the Second World War gave further relevance to the role of the experts. The beating heart of this multilateralism was the United Nations (UN) and its networks of specialized agencies. Among them, there was the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which, after having failed to become the regulating authority of agricultural commodities, from the 1950s became the most important UN agency in terms of field activities, by enjoying the largest share of funds –almost 30%– coming from the UN Expanded Technical Assistance Program (EPTA) (Jachertz, 2014; Staples, 2006: 64-121). Indeed, EPTA was conceived as the innovative UN mechanism –at that time, the only one– to finance international development assistance to less developed countries through experts and training courses upon yearly request of governments in need (Stokke, 2009: 43-82)¹. This allowed the agricultural experts working with FAO to become key figures in the functioning of the multilateral system of the UN and the implementation of its development programs.

This essay seeks to retrace the itinerary of an undisputed expert, the Italian agricultural economist Manlio Rossi-Doria (1905-88), who, thanks to his collaboration with FAO in 1952-53, from his well-rooted and distinguished national profile, ventured into the field of multilateral cooperation. From studying the problems of agriculture and rural societies in the Italian South, these missions as a consultant of the UN agency led him to assist the Mexican and Brazilian governments tasked with assessing the condition of their agricultural and land tenure systems. He brought his expertise to the study of specific “land questions”, tackling some of the most significant issues for rural development policies: the role of planning, circulation of knowledge and the tensions between greater production output and better living conditions for peasant populations (Frey & Unger, 2017: 12).

1. Member states funded the programme on a voluntary basis. Contributions were mainly from western countries (89.9% in 1950-51; 86.9% in 1955), with a large share coming from the United States (59.8% in 1950-51; 54.2% in 1955).

The UN system and its unique multilateral technical assistance program made this transatlantic journey possible. It is worth noting here that the UN has gained growing interest from historians and insights regarding its lasting role. One of these came from Amy Sayward, who analyzed it as a *borderland* where “nations and peoples came [...] together to influence and put pressures on other countries and people with their words, their ideas, their actions” (Sayward, 2017: 2). However, in focusing on a specialized agency that is part of this complex system one should also consider experts as crucial subjects of this borderland. This scientific effort, due to the relevant role of the Rome-based agency in the UN, has met with a specific interest in investigations focusing on the “many facets of FAO history” forming part of a significant historiographical interest in international organizations and transnational rural development (Pernet & Ribi Forclaz, 2019). Some scholars have recently devoted their efforts to framing the organization’s early history as a global hub of a socially minded and holistic approach to rural development (Guldi, 2022; Ribi Forclaz, 2019). Therefore, this essay aims to analyze the activity of Rossi-Doria within this understanding of FAO as a crucial borderland for experts aiming at a democratic and integrated vision of rural development, linked to the implementation of land reforms in less developed regions of the world.

1.1. The Southern Italian laboratory and the hopes of Latin America

At the same time, the story analyzed is also an encounter between two different spaces: where Rossi-Doria hailed from, and where his missions took him.

On the one hand, there is the context in which Rossi-Doria was educated and trained. Compared to other western countries, Italy did not occupy a crucial place in international expertise and exchange networks. However, the so-called *meridionalista* issue, through a lively political and intellectual debate, attracted analysis and confrontation among experts on the development of the more backward southern regions since the first years after the unification of the peninsula (Attal, 2013: 10-1). Indeed, recent studies have highlighted how, from the first decades of the 20th century, the leading voices in this debate focused on beyond the national boundaries. They began to view the problems of southern Italy’s underdevelopment as a laboratory for far-reaching reflection on modernization processes in other contemporary societies and institutions (Cento, 2017). Because of the prime role of agriculture in these Italian regions, this broad technical, intellectual, and political issue focused on progress in the primary sector and improvement of the conditions of the rural population; it also saw the burgeoning of a specialized network of technical and educational institutions and experts devoted to rural development (D’Antone, 1991). Within these institutions in the first decades

of the 20th century and during the fascist dictatorship, agriculture experts adopted a singular method of modernizing the sector and appeasing the peasantry, the so-called *bonifica integrale* (integral land reclamation). This *bonifica integrale* set out to coordinate efforts of rural development in specific areas, promoting direct small-peasant ownership and framing marsh and other drainage schemes with agronomic aspects, social issues and ways of boosting land productivity. The most influential promoter of the *bonifica integrale* was the agricultural economist and Undersecretary of Agriculture during the dictatorship, Arrigo Serpieri (Bernardi, 2014a; D’Onofrio, 2017). This method underpinned the state-led rural settlement schemes promoted by Mussolini’s regime (Grift, 2018; Misiani, 2011a: 107-17)².

In the years after the Second World War the problems of Italian agriculture remained a central issue. Italy was a farming country, and the southern regions were still the most backward. If they were to ensure the prosperity of the peninsula, the Italian ruling classes knew they had to modernize the agricultural sector and launch a broader economic development program, which included industrialization. Local experts and intellectuals had to pick up the challenge of technology and a top-down modernization process. In a highly politicized discussion, Rossi-Doria chose the militancy in the non-Marxist leftist party of the Partito d’Azione. Even if it didn’t achieve a relevant share of votes, this movement had left a significant legacy in the Italian political field thanks to the competence of its leaders, and the agrarian economist was among them (De Luna, 2006). The model that these politically minded intellectuals and experts followed came from the United States (Alacevich, 2013), something they compared and adapted to their own experience and perspectives³.

Latin America was the destination to which Rossi-Doria’s locally acquired expertise of was lent. His missions to Latin America coincided with a moment when the intellectual and political elites of the region were each arguing their own cause inside the post-war multilateral system: they expected representation for their countries inside those institutions and demanded a fairer redistribution of resources. Rural development, especially agrarian reform policies, was one of the fundamental tools in this struggle, along with international trade and industrialization policies (Fajardo, 2022; Thornton, 2021). The UN and its specialized agencies, with their technical assistance program

2. Liesbeth van de Grift has convincingly shown that schemes for internal colonization and rural settlement were not exclusive to dictatorships during interwar Europe. Very similar programs were developed in various countries of the Old Continent, under quite different political regimes and governments with different political leanings.

3. On the ideas and practices of development in Italy during those decades, see LORENZINI (2017).

largely devoted to agriculture, were the perfect partners for governments interested in dealing with problems related to land distribution and the well-being of farmworker populations.

Mexico set a pioneering example in the region, following the revolutionary period and the innovative Constitution of 1917, and continuing down through the nationwide agrarian reform implemented under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). Mexican policies in those years were marked by the promotion of social rights, increasing empowerment of farmworker communities and the assertion of economic sovereignty (Gonzales, 2002; Grandin, 2012).

His missions in Latin America gave Rossi-Doria an opportunity to study and assess more than the land tenure systems of those two countries. Mexico, in particular, showed him how a country from the Global South managed to conduct its agrarian reform policy in the previous decades, and the potential of such national-level programs in the multilateral context of FAO programs, based on technical cooperation and knowledge exchange. As a consultant to a multilateral organization, he began to realize how his analysis of the efforts of Latin American countries might be of use within a global hub of transnational cooperation and exchange of agricultural know-how such as FAO.

1.2. FAO: a global commitment to agrarian reforms

The role of FAO needs to be delved into further. Stripped by its more powerful member states of any substantial influence in agricultural commodities trade and food aid to the countries in need, the UN agency chose a direct involvement in promoting agrarian reforms at the global level.

At the beginning of the 1950s, a series of decisions was passed unanimously by some of the UN's main bodies, calling for a commitment by the entire UN to improve the agrarian structure and give technical assistance to governments in need. The General Assembly stated this with resolutions 401 of the 5th session in November 1950⁴, 524 of the 6th session of January 1952⁵ and likewise the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with its resolution 370 of the 13th session of September 1951⁶.

4. A/RES/401(V), text available at [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/401\(V\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/401(V)).

5. A/RES/524(VI), text available at [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/524\(VI\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/524(VI)).

6. Resolution 370 (XII), in UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (1951: 10-1).

The Rome-based agency spearheaded this effort, as recognized by the 6th session of its December 1951 conference, which passed a resolution requesting its director-general to give high priority to “Reform of the agrarian structure.” Among the points on the agenda, it was to:

[...] be prepared to assist governments by provision of technical assistance on programs designed to promote desirable reforms including, land tenure, agricultural credit, agricultural cooperatives, and agricultural extension services and rural industries;

[...] seek the co-operation of other international organizations, Member Governments and private bodies on investigations of problems of reform of agrarian structure including the analysis and promotion of methods of external and internal financing of agrarian reform program;

[...] promote the organization of regional conferences or training centers combined with demonstration projects on reform of agrarian structures in co-operation with other national and international organizations and governments of the regions concerned⁷.

The effort benefitted from a shared vision on the part of the experts working with the institution, a reformist perspective that linked technical and economic progress with improved welfare and living conditions of the peasants (Guldi, 2022: 53-129; Ribí Forclaz, 2019).

FAO saw Latin America as a key intervention area. The attention given to this area in the 1950s would lay the groundwork for the next direct involvement of its experts: the Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development (CIDA, Comité Interamericano de Desarrollo Agrícola). The CIDA was established after the Punta del Este Conference in August 1961. This conference launched the US-led Alliance for Progress, a large program of aid for Latin American countries devised by the Kennedy Administration to limit the influence of communism in the region after the Cuban revolution in 1959. One of the program’s main goals, stated in the final conference

7. “Resolution No. 8, Reform of Agrarian Structures”, available at <http://www.fao.org/3/x5577E/x5577e04.htm#reform>; see also paragraphs 53-65, in “Report of the Conference of FAO. Sixth Session”, Rome, 19 November - 6 December, 1951.

declaration, was to “encourage [...] programs of comprehensive agrarian reform”⁸. FAO actively joined the effort, thanks to an approach that –due also to the marginal role of socialist countries in UN technical assistance activities (Stokke, 2009: 71-3)⁹– didn’t foresee the complete overcoming of privately owned farms.

The main sources of this essay are Rossi-Doria’s papers. Within his documents¹⁰ a substantial core relates to his South American missions for FAO in the first half of the 1950s. So far, these papers have not received sufficiently detailed interest from the scholars who have dealt with him. From these records, one may trace the progress of an expert, trained in a European national context during the first half of the 20th century, when confronted with the worldwide networks and institutions of international development that characterized its second half and cast him as a player in a global epistemic community of rural development adepts.

These documents from the Rossi-Doria papers were checked by the author against such publications and reports on Rossi-Doria’s missions and related activities as are available at the FAO library in Rome.

Other surveys have been carried out in the FAO archives, especially in Record Group 10, which contained the papers of the Agriculture Division and its Land and Water Use branch –but without apparently finding any relevant documentation regarding Rossi Doria’s collaboration with the UN agency. To put Rossi Doria’s mission with FAO in a broader context, a further inquiry has been made into the archives of the Rome-based UN agency. The files of the regional office for Latin America, part of Record Group 15, and the records of the Rural Institution and Services Division, part of Record Group 12¹¹, have been analyzed.

8. “Declaration of Punta del Este; August 17, 1961”, from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/intam15.asp#1. Original source: Inter-American relations; collection of documents, legislation, descriptions of inter-American organizations, and other material pertaining to inter-American affairs. Compiled by Barry Sklar and Virginia M. Hagen, Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1972.

9. USSR never joined FAO. The Russian Federation became member of the UN agency in 2006, see <https://www.fao.org/legal-services/membership-of-fao/en/>.

10. They are kept, as the Archivio personale di Manlio Rossi-Doria, at the headquarters of the Associazione nazionale per gli interessi del Mezzogiorno d’Italia (ANIMI, National Association for the Interests of Italy’s Mezzogiorno), in Rome.

11. Note that the FAO archives held the correspondence produced by the institution, while the library had the reports.

2. EDUCATION, ANTIFASCISM AND THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE RURAL MEZZOGIORNO AND ITS ISSUES

Manlio Rossi-Doria was born in Rome in 1905. In 1924, having finished high school, he decided to study at the Portici Scuola Superiore di Agricoltura, in Naples, one of the most important Italian agricultural higher education and research institutes (Misiani, 2011b: 19-48; Rossi-Doria, 1977)¹².

During his years at Naples, Rossi-Doria had various opportunities to gain in-depth knowledge of agriculture in the southern regions and the harsh living conditions there. His interest in the rural Mezzogiorno, term used to indicate southern Italy regions, revealed an existential choice, as he recalled in his memoirs (Rossi-Doria, 1991: 104). He graduated in 1928 and soon became a research fellow at the Osservatorio dell'Istituto di Economia Agraria of Portici, Naples, part of the larger network of the National Institute of Agricultural Economics. During that period, he carried out field research related to land tenure, agricultural enterprise, and the workforce in rural areas of the Campania region. His research followed the methodology of territorial microanalysis developed by Arrigo Serpieri as a preliminary step in the overall strategy to promote the *bonifica integrale* (Musella, 1989; Rossi-Doria, 1991: 166-76)¹³.

Due to his activism within the clandestine Communist Party, Rossi-Doria was arrested by the fascist police in September 1930 (Rossi-Doria, 1991: 185-205), and imprisoned for five years. Under probation after his release from prison, he returned to studying agricultural economics, becoming editor of the scientific journal *Bonifica e colonizzazione*. As editor, he studied publications on agriculture of the different Italian regions and the latest developments. He also became interested in other areas, starting from the Italian colonies in Africa and analyzing other European countries and different colonial empires. Above all, Rossi-Doria was especially interested in the New Deal reforms in the agricultural sector in the United States¹⁴. He was able to carry out extensive research on such different regions, thanks to his time at the library and documentation centre of the IIA in Rome. The collections of this institute were

12. It was only in 1935 that this institution became the Agriculture Faculty of the University of Naples. Before that it was under the Italian Ministry of Agriculture.

13. The results of this wide research were published in 1932 by the director of the Osservatorio dell'Istituto di economia agraria, Alessandro Brizi (BRIZI, 1932).

14. For a complete list of Rossi-Doria's contributions (essays, translations, reviews) as editor of *Bonifica e colonizzazione* between 1937 and 1943, see MISIANI and MONTACUTELLI (2004: 36-75).

recognized worldwide as one of the largest and most up-to-date in agricultural studies and research¹⁵.

In 1939, Rossi-Doria was expelled from the Communist Party, but given his enduring antifascism, in June 1940, following Italy's entry into the war, the fascist authorities banished him to Basilicata. Forced to live in this rural area, he nonetheless was able to return to field exploration of the local agriculture. Moreover, he was in direct contact with some members of the liberal-democratic antifascism opposition, likewise *al confino* in Basilicata (Misiani, 2011b: 231-58).

In the summer of 1943, the collapse of the fascist regime marked his return to active political militancy and, one year later, also his return to academia: he was appointed to the chair of Agricultural Economics and Policy at the University of Naples' Faculty of Agriculture and special administrator of the Italian National Institute of Agricultural Economics.

The endpoint of the previous years of Rossi-Doria's underground political activism and intense broad study of agriculture economics was the address he gave in Bari to the Convegno di Studi sui Problemi del Mezzogiorno (Study Conference on the problems of Southern Italy), organized by the Partito d'Azione in December 1944, Bari, entitled "Struttura e problemi dell'agricoltura meridionale" (Structure and problems of southern Italian agriculture) (Misiani, 2011b: 259-332; Rossi-Doria, 1991: 283-91).

The essential premise of this lecture was the close link between social life and agricultural structure. Rossi-Doria presented a manifold picture of rural areas of southern Italy, characterized by large areas of extensive agriculture, with the farmworkers divided between day laborers and scattered smallholders. He acknowledged the growing number of areas where technical progress and land development schemes had made their appearance. However, such improvements were limited, sparse, and characterized by careless management of the territory's natural resources and slack production organization. As a result, the majority of the rural population lived in poverty, without collective organizations, while the local elites favoured such a *status quo*, because it guaranteed their own wealth and stable status. The way out from this vicious circle was at hand through the modernization of the economy and society in these regions, beginning with profound changes in the structure of agriculture. In his opinion, a change was possible

15. After Second World War, this library was taken up by the FAO. By 1945, it amounted to 370,000 titles, which meant that it was second only to the US National Agricultural Library (MONTES BAFFIER *et al.*, 2017: 38).

not only by employing the most innovative agricultural techniques but through a comprehensive reorganization and transformation of the sector. For Rossi-Doria, a reform process had to be attentive to the characteristics and peculiarities of the different areas involved. Such a process should not be confined to a mere redistribution of property but needed a long-term vision, supported by a strong political will on the part of the Italian government, to be passed into laws. Last but not least, this reform policy should lead to creation of a new institutional structure and be thoroughly established in individual local areas through cooperatives and regional agricultural reform bodies. The analysis shared much of the method of the *bonifica integrale* developed under Fascism by Serpieri, on which Rossi-Doria was trained and brought up. The novelty was, first, his judgement that previous reclamation programs, including the measures taken during the dictatorship, had been inadequate, leaving most of the country's peasant population still hungry for land. Second, the essentially political conception of agrarian reform as a viable democratic change within the agricultural sector. An agrarian reform policy that embraced territorial diversity, farmworker expectations, and technical progress. A policy conceived as part of a larger State-led reform of southern Italian society as a whole, including its middle class, which was seen as an ally of the peasant masses¹⁶.

3. QUITTING POLITICAL ACTIVISM: AN ACADEMIC IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH AMERICAN AGRARIAN EXPERTS

His ensuing failure to get elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1946 and the subsequent crisis of the Partito d'Azione led Rossi-Doria to move away from any active political role for several years. At that time, he preferred to concentrate on academic research—he would become a full professor at the university in 1949—and lend expert support to the policies of agrarian reform being promoted by Italian centrist governments from the beginning of 1948 onward. His socially-sensitive and politically-minded vision of agrarian reform and rural development would remain constant during his work as an expert for governments and multilateral organizations.

Rossi-Doria went on to become one of the key figures in preparing land reclamation works and development plans as foreseen by the government in the Calabria district of Sila following approval of the land reform law in 1950 and its ensuing implementation in which he acted as technical advisor to the Sila land reform agency. Thanks to recognition by the more progressive sector of the governing Christian Democrats, he succeeded in blending the *bonifica integrale* method with the larger blueprint of rural democracy. The idea under-

16. The text of the lecture is available in ROSSI-DORIA (1948: 1-49).

pinning this was to include the landless peasant masses actively in the economy, the institutions, and the political life of the young Italian Republic. This was also designed to limit the influence of the Communist Party in the South and the risk of out-of-control social conflict in the rural areas (Bernardi & Bernardi, 2011: 151-62; Misiani, 2011a: 117-30).

In the previous years, starting from meticulous district-level analysis, he drew up plans for developing agricultural areas in the Basilicata and Calabria regions, a feat much appreciated by the American experts evaluating projects eligible for funding the Marshall Plan. This gave rise to lasting exchanges and relations with American agrarian experts, a dialogue with whom that was facilitated by his previous study of, and appreciation for, the New Deal reforms, especially their agricultural development plans and approach based on planning methods (Bernardi, 2010a, 2010b)¹⁷.

In 1949, he had an opportunity to participate in the 7th International Conference of Agricultural Economists, held at the Italian lakeside resort of Stresa at the end of August, his paper being “Considerations on Agrarian Reform in Italy”. With this lecture Rossi-Doria introduced an internationally qualified audience to the urgent need for agrarian reform in the country, given the widespread “divorce between ownership of the land and the business of agriculture”. In the paper, he pointed out the difficulties inherent in this reform plan caused by particular characteristics in the differing agricultural regimes in the various areas of the peninsula (Rossi-Doria, 1950).

The esteem earned among American experts allowed Rossi-Doria to cross the Atlantic for the first time, being selected for the program “Leaders and specialists” promoted by the US State Department through the Economic Cooperation Administration. This program allowed him to take part, with agricultural experts from various countries¹⁸, in the Conference on World Land Tenure Problems held at the University of Wisconsin in Madison between October and November 1951¹⁹. Rossi-Doria participated with a paper on “Land Reform in Italy”, presenting the state of the art and progress of the pol-

17. See also the ensuing correspondence with some of the US Department of Agriculture officers after their mission in Italy in Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia (ANIMI), Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 3. Corrispondenza, 1. Corrispondenza per mittente e per materia, fasc. 28, “Piano Marshall - Esperti USA”.

18. Invited to the conference were experts from Belgium, Finland, Germany, Haiti, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, Libya, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Taiwan, Thailand and the United Kingdom. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 2. Viaggi in USA, fasc. 1, “Primo viaggio in USA, Comments by Delegates to ‘Land Tenure Conference’”.

19. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 2. Viaggi in USA, fasc. 1, “Primo viaggio in USA, Tentative agen-

icies being implemented in his country²⁰. He managed to extend his stay in the United States until the end of the year. During those weeks he performed intense field research with detailed observations on American agriculture, analyzing the latest advances and the technical, administrative, and research machinery that managed it²¹.

This trip would only be the first in a series of study and research trips. Within a few months, in August 1952 Rossi-Doria was at the Michigan State University of East Lansing to attend the 8th Conference of the International Association of Agricultural Economists. The conference had a rich program, which for the first time paid great attention to the activities of international development aid, with considerable emphasis on the FAO's role (Brandt, 1953), as well as the problems of agricultural development and planning in the less-developed countries (Raeburn, 1953). Rossi-Doria was one of the discussants of the paper presented by future Nobel Prize winner Theodore Schultz on "Agricultural Efficiency and Rural Welfare" (Schultz, 1953).

Undoubtedly, Rossi-Doria's transnational drive benefited from a period characterized by a substantial influx of United States technical and policy innovation coming into the Italian agricultural sector (Bernardi, 2006, 2014b). Modernization and reforms to rural economies and societies had become a central feature in American foreign policy to combat Soviet influence, not only in Europe, but also in other regions of the world (Cullather, 2010: 94-107; Kapstein, 2017: 93-163).

4. AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH THE FAO: THE EXPERT GOES TO MEXICO

Agrarian reform also became the staple field of action of the UN system, offering further scope for experts and professionals keen to commit themselves to combat worldwide poverty and support less developed countries' governments. FAO in particular,

da, Conference on Land Tenure and Related Problems", University of Wisconsin, October 8 to November 17, 1951.

20. Final version and previous drafts of the paper are in ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 2. Viaggi in USA, fasc. 3, "La riforma agraria in Italia".

21. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 2. Viaggi in USA, fasc. 4, "Intervista alla radio e appunti di viaggi, Report on technical assistance mission in the United States by prof. Manlio Rossi-Doria", and, in the same file, the detailed diary "Viaggio negli stati Uniti ottobre - dicembre 1951" now in Rossi-DORIA (2010).

as mentioned, became a key institution for agricultural experts, by being the larger beneficiary of the UN's technical assistance program, EPTA, turning the organization into an operative institution in its own right and not just a custodian of statistics and information.

In this context, Rossi-Doria had what it took to become an associate in the work of the Rome-based agency. A few weeks after the conference at Michigan State University, he received a letter from Thomas Carroll of the Land and Water Use branch of FAO's Agriculture Division. It is possible that Carroll had already met and conversed with him at the conference in Michigan, which he also attended²². Carroll needed to ascertain Rossi-Doria's "preliminary interest and availability to participate in the FAO Expanded Technical Assistance Program in a capacity of expert on land tenure and land reform"²³. Carroll proposed that Rossi-Doria should work with some Latin-American governments that had sought assistance in the field. As Carroll stressed, "Italian experts for reasons of national sympathy and language ability are particularly welcome" in this region. Moreover, Rossi-Doria's "background and vast experience in the field" made him "ideally qualified to take one of these assignments on behalf of FAO"²⁴.

Rossi-Doria was indeed interested in being hired within the EPTA Program, meeting Carroll at the FAO headquarters²⁵. At the end of November, the organization was able to offer him a six-month appointment as Agriculture Officer to "assist the Mexican Advisory Committee [...] to prepare an analytical study of the Mexican land reform experience" for the FAO-Latin American Seminar on Land Problems, scheduled for mid-1953²⁶. The chief of the Expanded Technical Assistance Program within the organization, Herbert Broadley, explained in greater detail the task awaiting the Naples University professor:

22. See "List of Persons in Attendance", in INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS (1953).

23. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 29, "Corrispondenza con istituti, organizzazioni internazionali: Fao, Thomas F. Carroll to Manlio Rossi-Doria", 26 September, 1952, p. 1.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

25. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 29, "Corrispondenza con istituti, organizzazioni internazionali: Fao, Manlio Rossi-Doria to Thomas F. Carroll", 30 September, 1952.

26. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 18, "Corrispondenza con i rappresentanti Fao sui problemi della terra in Messico, Louis E. Hosch to Manlio-Rossi Doria", 25 November, 1952.

the Government of Mexico has asked FAO to provide a coordinator who would assist this Committee in the preparation of the report. It is expected that as coordinator you will exercise your judgement to ensure that the report is analytical rather than descriptive and that it will be of maximum usefulness to the countries of Latin America wishing to improve their agrarian structure²⁷.

The terms of reference of the assignment also made it clear that what was needed was “a good presentation of examples of success and failures of specific land policies or programs with as complete an explanation as possible” and that upon Rossi-Doria’s return, he would “be asked to give us a relatively full report on your work, in which you would give us your own appraisal and recommendations of the Mexican land tenure problems”, with a view to “possible further and more direct technical assistance to Mexico for continued analysis of land tenure and land reform”²⁸.

A few days later, Rossi-Doria crossed the Atlantic. From November 30th to December 8th, he was in New York and Washington, visiting the FAO office at the United Nations and the FAO North American Regional Office. He also became acquainted with Rockefeller Foundation activities there, as of 1943, via the Mexican Agriculture Program (MAP) on hybrid seeds and soil improvement methods, which came to be recognized as the foundational step in the ensuing global “green revolution”.

On the 8th of December Rossi-Doria finally arrived in Mexico City. At the time of his arrival in the capital a new president had just taken office: Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, a member of the dominant Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Cortines had won the election easily the previous summer. His presidency would be marked by austerity and moralization of public life, trying simultaneously to maintain social peace and secure the previous reforms. In foreign policy, Cortines sought to avoid loggerheads with the US and their interests and maintained a common front with the other South American countries (Smith, 1990: 107-13). More importantly, Mexican leadership was committed to taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the multilateral system established after the war’s end, intended as a vital tool for sustained economic growth and development (Thornton, 2021: 145-65).

27. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 18, “Corrispondenza con i rappresentanti Fao sui problemi della terra in Messico, Herbert Broadley to Manlio-Rossi Doria”, 28 November, 1952.

28. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 18, “Corrispondenza con i rappresentanti Fao sui problemi della terra in Messico, Terms of Reference of your Mexican Assignment”, 28 November, 1952.

Rossi-Doria's assignment got off to a smooth start in this favorable environment for multilateral aid and expertise. He met FAO personnel and experts already based in the Distrito Federal. He was also introduced to the members of the Mexican Advisory Committee, such as the chairman Gonzalo Robles, who was also Chief of the Department of Industrial Research in the Banco de Mexico. He took the opportunity to meet members of the federal government sitting on the committee, such as the Economy Minister Gilberto Loyo and a central figure in the Rockefeller Foundation's Program, the corn breeder Edwin J. Wellhausen. According to the reports sent by Rossi-Doria to the agency's headquarters, the relationship with the Mexican experts seemed to be, from the start, characterized by a mutual desire to be of help and share the work programme and preparation of the final document to be presented at the regional seminar²⁹.

In a letter sent to Carroll on the 20th of December, Rossi-Doria appreciated his Mexican colleagues ("I like this people, in which the flame of old 'zapatista' passion is alive") and underlined the collaborative relationship that he was establishing with them. He also explained the way he was going to work: "I will spend the next fifteen days continuing lectures and studies. I have read a lot of very good books and articles"³⁰, though adding that he was aiming "to utilize every opportunity to visit the country, sure as I am by long-standing experience that a two-day trip on the land gives more than ten excellent books". The main activity of his first days in Mexico was "the continuous attempt to understand and penetrate the 'Mexican way of life'. I see that it is very dangerous to base one's own judgement generalizing the first impression and notions. I am trying, particularly, to understand it in the delicate sector of the 'ruling class' and of the administrative and political order"³¹.

In the first half of January, Rossi-Doria made some field visits to the country's northern states. In his personal papers there is a diary of this trip, particularly concerning the area of the Comarca Lagunera and the state of Chihuahua. The analytical notes he wrote from direct observation of farm management in Comarca Lagunera are of great interest. He compared the performance of private farms to the typical Mexican

29. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 18, "Corrispondenza con i rappresentanti Fao sui problemi della terra in Messico", Mexico. Field Report No.1, 15 December, 1952.

30. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 18, "Corrispondenza con i rappresentanti Fao sui problemi della terra in Messico", Manlio Rossi-Doria to Thomas F. Carroll", 20 December, 1952, p. 2.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

collective –and government-supported– farms of the *ejidos*. Through direct observation of both types of farms, private enterprises were, he considered, more efficient in their production and management of natural resources and reflected a more pronounced investment and savings-oriented approach. *Ejid*os was a more egalitarian organization but had less flexibility in managing the workforce and other resources. His final comment on how to relaunch these kinds of cooperative farms was that, 16 years after their establishment, “the impression is they need a powerful ideal drive and a determined educational effort”³².

Indeed, education in rural communities was one of the main concerns of Manlio Rossi-Doria’s analysis in Mexico. He had a chance to study the subject during his stay and discuss it with an expert in the field, the rural sociologist Alfonso Fabila. On the 24th of January, he had a lengthy exchange of ideas with Fabila on “cultural missions”. He noted that during the years between 1921 and 1938, they became “the soul of Mexico’s whole rural school”, working in particular on “community *promoción*”, and supporting villages during the establishment of *ejidos*³³. After being discontinued for political reasons, these cultural missions were experiencing a partial revival, thanks in part to UNESCO’s interest. During Rossi-Doria’s visit there were approximately forty missions in Mexico, mainly in small villages located in isolated rural areas. These missions were based on a team led by a schoolmaster and consisting of an agronomist, health care professionals, social workers, a construction worker, a mechanic, a musician and an art teacher. The team worked for a maximum of four years to help the *promoción de la comunidad*, starting from direct analysis of the problems and urgent requirements of the village, and geared to supporting the community “to meet its needs with its own resources (*proprios recursos*)”³⁴. These missions seemed to have achieved good results, but there were many doubts regarding any larger-scale program in broader communities. According to the Italian expert, the only way of benefiting properly from these missions was by integrating such programs nationwide and within a regional coordination frame-

32. Quote translated from the Italian original. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 2, “Relazione di Manlio Rossi-Doria sui principali problemi fondiari-agrari del Messico, Viaggio negli Stati Settentrionali e Occidentali”, 7-18 gennaio, 1953. There is no page numbering. His notes on Comarca Lagunera farms are on the first eleven pages of the “diary”. The quote is from the last page on Comarca Lagunera. On *ejidos* farms, see UNITED NATIONS (1955, par. 144).

33. Quote translated from the Italian original. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 1, “Diario di viaggio in Messico, Le missioni culturali. Conversazioni con Alfonso Fabila”, 24 January, 1953, p. 3.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

work, in a sincere spirit of coordination and dialogue between public administrations and private interests³⁵.

Rossi-Doria's stay lasted till the 24th of February. During his last weeks in Central America, he managed to reach an agreement with the local members of the Advisory Committee to be the person in charge of preparing a first draft of the general report to present at the FAO-Latin American Seminar on Land Problems. In this he had the support of the other members of the committee. This was a clear sign of the mutual trust established in such a brief time between Rossi-Doria and the local experts, and recognition of the former's skills. He also said he was willing to be of assistance in preparing six already planned regional studies to be discussed with Minister Loyo, one of the potential Mexican delegates to the FAO Seminar³⁶. Thomas Carroll expressed the organization's satisfaction at the job done by its Italian expert³⁷.

Back in Italy, in mid-April Rossi-Doria wrote to Carroll that he was ready to share the final drafting of the general report for the forthcoming seminar in Brazil and a final report on his mission³⁸. The draft of the general report on the "Main problems of Mexico's land tenure and agriculture" is in Rossi-Doria's personal papers, written in Italian. The document is divided into two main parts. The first is based on an analysis of natural resources in the different main regions of the country, with advice on possible better utilization³⁹. The second is a reconstruction of the land tenure system in the country. In particular, he focused on the transformations occurring after land reform policies started in 1915 in the wake of the *Revolución mexicana*. At the expense

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

36. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 18, "Corrispondenza con i rappresentanti Fao sui problemi della terra in Messico", Mexico. Field Report No. 2, 31 January, 1953, and "Manlio Rossi-Doria to Thomas F. Carroll", 3 February, 1953.

37. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 18, "Corrispondenza con i rappresentanti Fao sui problemi della terra in Messico, Thomas F. Carroll to Manlio Rossi-Doria", 13 February, 1953.

38. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 29, "Corrispondenza con istituti, organizzazioni internazionali: Fao, Manlio Rossi-Doria to Thomas F. Carroll", 13 April, 1953.

39. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 2, "Relazione di Manlio Rossi-Doria sui principali problemi fondiari-agrari del Messico, I principali problemi fondiario-agrari del Messico. Vicende recenti, situazione attuale, prospettive future", pp. 1-70.

of large *haciendas*, the collective *ejidos* farms were created first, and only later was the development of small private estates allowed⁴⁰.

Rossi-Doria wrote some remarks of great interest in his last report prepared for the Mexican mission. He explained that the country had highly varied regions, in which he envisaged different kinds of reorganization and technical improvements to agricultural sectors. He was well aware that the framework in which this kind of development program “can be begun only by means of the systematic intervention of the state”⁴¹. In this context, Rossi-Doria suggested possible FAO support in the form of technical assistance to the government, particularly in experimentation, accurate surveys of national resources, land surveying and classification and cadastral surveys, applied studies of land economics. These fields were considered as being capable of improvement. He also foresaw government agency resistance to FAO advice, “since the Mexicans are determined to resolve their own problems with complete independence”, recommending that “the aid and participation of the FAO, if approached wisely, could be well received and very useful to the government”⁴². His comments on the assistance needed in the experimentation sector are worth highlighting. He was well aware of the remarkable work done by the Rockefeller Foundation’s Program. However, he was skeptical about the overall management of such activities in the country as they were “organized in such a highly specialized way”; what he suggested was “a more complex principle of organization of the experimental stations” in “the framework of a more complex agrarian system”. He also added that a “proposal for a program of this sort must be elastic and must make provision for both recruitment of technicians of high quality and training of Mexican personnel”⁴³. Another aspect that struck Rossi-Doria, perhaps for its similarity to Italy, was “that the economic-social conditions vary so greatly from one region of the country to another [...] that very careful analysis is required before any judgement can be made regarding the correction and improvement in different sectors”⁴⁴. This condition led him to propose “the establishment of a Study Center for Land Economics and Agricultural Economics”, that could be created from collaboration between FAO and the government. Rossi-Doria saw that the Central-American country “finds itself

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-120. On the evolution of Mexican land reform policies, see Secretariat of the United Nations et al. (1954: 37-9, 81-4).

41. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 2, “Relazione di Manlio Rossi-Doria sui principali problemi fondiari-agrari del Messico”, Final report, 15 April, 1953, p. 5.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

in an exceptional position for two reasons” when it came to launching these kinds of institutions, active in all the already suggested fields of collaboration. The first was “the great variety of natural environments and the complex historical and social development of the country”. The second was “the political and social evolution and the political and economic stability which it has achieved”. His idea, if they were to win the full support of the government, was to propose a scheme that was “not exclusively Mexican, but rather to create centers for the training of technical personnel who can eventually continue this work also in other countries of Latin America”⁴⁵.

5. ACHIEVING INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP: A NEW MISSION IN BRAZIL

Soon Rossi-Doria’s excellent work in Mexico met with positive feedback from other experts and UN professionals working in the region⁴⁶. In May, he crossed the Atlantic Ocean again, this time bound for Brazil, to attend the Latin American Seminar on Land Problems, held in the city of Campinas, near São Paulo. The Seminar lasted for five weeks, from the 23rd of May to the 26th of June. There were 122 registered attendees, 15 government delegations and representatives from 8 different international organizations. Rossi-Doria was one of the few Europeans that attended⁴⁷. He had an active role in the Seminar, participating as round table supervisor on the 5th of June on the subject of the “Application of land tenure systems in Latin America”, coordinating a workshop from the 1st to the 5th of June on the “Problems presented by an agrarian structure where latifundia are prominent”, giving a lecture on the “Necessity for an integrated approach to Land Reform” on the 8th of June, coordinating another workshop from the 8th to 12th of June on the “Direct measures to improve the agrarian structure”,

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-1. Rossi-Doria also shared his idea with the Mexican Advisory Committee members, promising his full support in persuading the FAO management to establish this new research center. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 28, “Primi viaggi: Viaggi in Messico, Brasile, Manlio Rossi-Doria to Manuel Mesa”, 6 April, 1953, and “Manlio Rossi-Doria to Emilio Alanís Patino”, 29 April, 1953.

46. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 28, “Primi viaggi: Viaggi in Messico, Brasile, Albert Hirschman to Manlio Rossi-Doria”, 5 June, 1953. In the same file there is a previous letter that Hirschman wrote to Rossi-Doria in March. Hirschman warmly supported the appointment of the Italian agricultural economist as the FAO expert working with the Colombian government.

47. See the list of participants in CARROLL (1953: 4-17).

and being a panelist at the round table “Colonization policies in Latin America” on the 19th of June (Carrol, 1953: 24-8).

In his lecture on the integrated approach in agrarian reform he outlined his method on that complex subject, which he saw as more than a simple land redistribution process and requiring sensitivity to local differences. In his talk, Rossi-Doria rejected “one-fits-all” solutions and argued for commitment to an equilibrium between productive/commercial efficiency and the needs/well-being of the rural population, calling for active and continuous involvement and dialogue among political elites, agricultural experts, landlords, and farmworkers. To his mind, throughout the Latin-American continent “reforms cannot stop the course of economic development, but can be integrated, speeding them up and boosting them”⁴⁸, recalling what he had recently observed in Mexico. The lecture aroused interest in the Brazilian press, which published several articles on it⁴⁹.

Another sign of the importance of Rossi-Doria’s participation in the Seminar was the final resolution which stated that:

The Seminar [...] recommended the advisability of establishing a Latin American Regional Center, Foundation or Institute for investigation and training in the field of land problems and agrarian reform on a permanent basis.

It is not intended to create a new international organization, but a center which could be maintained and supported by the human, technical and financial resources of the already existing organizations, especially of the Expanded Technical Assistance Program of the United Nations and other possible resources.

Members of the Seminar further suggested that in the establishment of such center or foundation, consideration should be given to locating it in Mexico, because that country represents in the Latin American region a body of con-

48. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 12, “Per una visione integrale dei problemi della riforma agraria”. The file contains the Italian text of the lecture entitled “Per una visione integrale dei problemi della riforma agraria”. The quote, translated from the Italian, is on page 20.

49. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 11, “Rassegna stampa internazionale sui risultati della missione Fao in Brasile”.

crete experiences with agrarian reform with all elements of success and failure that have accompanied its course.

The center should give its work a sub-regional emphasis in order to study land problems by some of the natural zones that make up the continent (Carroll, 1953: 51-2).

Thus, the final proposal was the same as Rossi-Doria had reached with the Mexican Committee and FAO at the end of the mission a few months before. Without doubt, the resolution reflected the high consideration in which Rossi-Doria held the land reform policy being carried out in Central America.

That year, in late fall, the proposal received the official support of the FAO conference, through resolution n. 32, approved by the 7th session of that agency's conference, held in Rome⁵⁰.

The seminar results were considered a success and set a precedent for other similar meetings and forums on the subject in different continents. FAO organized these new conferences in partnership with other UN agencies, such as a Seminar for the Land Problems in Asia and the Far East, held in Bangkok, Thailand, in November-December 1954, and a Seminar for the Land Problems in the Middle East, held in Salahuddin, Iraq, in October 1955. Moreover, with ETAP support, the permanent research center in Mexico was on the way to being established within a few years (Santa Cruz, 1959: 108; Secretariat of the United Nations *et al.*, 1956: 177).

Rossi-Doria's stay in Brazil was prolonged till September. He was appointed to a new FAO mission starting on the 1st July, at the request of the Comissão Nacional de Política Agrária. The new assignment involved preparing a report on the proposed policies and laws on land problems, based on an analysis of the land tenure system in the different regions of the country⁵¹. The whole task was based on a detailed schedule of

50. The text of "Resolution No. 32, Latin-American Center of Agrarian Studies" is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/x5576E/x5576e08.htm>; see also paragraph 241, in "Report of the Conference of FAO. Seventh Session", Rome, 23 November - 11 December, 1953, and in ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 29, "Corrispondenza con istituti, organizzazioni internazionali: Fao, Thomas F. Carroll to Manlio Rossi-Doria", 27 January, 1954.

51. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 10, "Rapporti tra Rossi-Doria e la Fao dal Brasile", Brazil, Field Report No.1, 10 August, 1953.

study, meetings and field trips in different Brazilian states⁵², with the support of one of his young Italian disciples, Michele De Benedictis, who was working in Brazil at that time⁵³. At the end of the mission, Rossi-Doria prepared a lengthy final report on his mission, based on a detailed description of the main agrarian regions of the country, with sections on land tenure and property rights issues, agricultural labor productivity, and some district-level analysis of some both dry and irrigated areas in the less-developed north-eastern states⁵⁴.

Upon his return, Rossi-Doria decided that it was time to focus again on the problems of the Italian South. In the following years, he effectively saw no direct collaboration from the Italian government, remaining a critical observer of the outcome of the agrarian reform programs (Rossi-Doria, 1958). This choice was confirmed years later, at the beginning of 1962, when Paul Rosenstein-Rodan and Raúl Prebisch contacted him to serve as a consultant on agrarian reform in Latin America as part of a panel of nine experts for the recently launched program of the Alliance of Progress. Rossi-Doria refused. As he made clear in a letter to Prebisch, he had “essential commitments” in Italy: he had to look after his brainchild to which he had devoted most of his energies on his return from Latin America, the Center for Advanced Training and Research in Agricultural Economics, attached to the University of Naples, proudly defined by Rossi-Doria as “the first graduate-level teaching and research program of its kind in this country”⁵⁵.

6. AN UNINTENDED CHILEAN LEGACY IN THE FAO BORDERLAND

At this point, one might wonder if FAO could follow Rossi-Doria’s idea of establishing a regional center for training and research in agrarian reform, after officially having endorsed it.

52. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 4, “Programma di ricerca sulla riforma agraria in Brasile, Estudos da reforma agrária no Brazil, Plano de trabalhos do prof. Rossi-Doria no Brazil”.

53. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 13, “Materiale di lavoro per lo studio sui problemi fondiari del Brasile”, and fasc. 14, “Corrispondenza del periodo del viaggio in Brasile”.

54. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 1. Messico e Brasile, fasc. 20, “Relazione sui problemi fondiari del Brasile, I problemi fondiari in Brasile”.

55. ANIMI, Archivio Manlio Rossi-Doria, 2. Rapporti con istituzioni e movimenti, 4. Lezioni conferenze e viaggi di studio, 2. Viaggi in USA, fasc. 11. “Proposte di lavoro non accettate durante il viaggio negli USA, Manlio Rossi-Doria to Raul Prebisch”, 30 March, 1962.

At first glance, the proposal remained a dead letter. Following the activities of the FAO in South America in the ensuing years, a different outcome can be hypothesized. Indeed, an expert was working with the UN agency that had taken the idea to heart, even without direct contact with Rossi-Doria. This was the Harvard-educated agrarian economist Solon Barraclough (Kay, 2006). Barraclough probably became aware of the project of opening this regional center during the second Latin American Seminar on Land Problems organized by FAO in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1959. He was one of FAO's experts attending that event, where the request to establish such a center was reiterated (Carroll, 1961: 25-6). The US economist, in 1962, proposed the seat of the center be in Chile, asking for funding through the UN Special Fund for Technical Assistance. As a specialist in land tenure, Barraclough was firmly convinced of the urgency of setting up this kind of institution, conceived as a critical tool to boost the efforts and opportunities to launch large agrarian reform programs in the countries of the region⁵⁶.

Unlike Rossi-Doria, Barraclough was actively involved in the effort to support land reform programs in the region's countries at the beginning of the 1960s, thanks to the launch of Alliance for Progress and the key role of FAO in this effort. As Regional Officer for Land Tenure and Agrarian Policy in Latin America for the UN agency, he coordinated the Land Tenure Project managed by CIDA. Barraclough shared Rossi-Doria's vision of rural development. In the CIDA study that he prepared on Chile, the US expert made it clear that the difficulties of that country's agriculture were not only economic but also social, having "to do with low incomes and unequal distribution of income, and with illiteracy, lack of opportunity, and other aspects of the generally disadvantageous position of the farm population" (Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development, 1964: 93).

Barraclough failed to secure the funding to open the FAO's regional center. He was nonetheless convinced that Chile deserved this kind of institution because of the urgency of the problem of its agriculture –fundamental for the development of the country–, and also for the quality of its agricultural education programs and the interest that the topic of agrarian reform and land redistribution had aroused in the Chilean public discourse in those years, at the top of the political agenda. Another important circumstance was that Chile, in its capital Santiago, hosted the FAO Regional Office

56. FAO Archives, Record Group 12, sub-group ESH, RU 8/5, vol. I, "Mr. Barraclough's programme of work, Regional Office Santiago, Solon Barraclough to E.H. Jacoby", 17 April, 1962, pp. 1-2, and "Memorandum to Mr. Hernán Santa Cruz and E. H. Jacoby from Solon Barraclough. Report of travel and activities", 17 May through 1 June, 1962, p. 3.

for Latin America. In these years, the person responsible for this post was the Chilean diplomat Hernán Santa Cruz. After being, at the beginning of the 1950s, one of the key political brokers in establishing the UN of the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) (Ross, 2014: 86-8; Santa Cruz, 1984: 143-63, 441-94), and the launch of ETAP (Santa Cruz, 1984: 335-56; Stokke, 2009: 51-7), Santa Cruz was indeed emerging as one of the most important supporters of socially minded approach to rural development. First, in 1958, he was appointed as special consultant of the FAO's Director General on Rural Welfare (Santa Cruz, 1959), and then, in 1966, he was chair of the FAO's World Land Reform Conference, held in Rome in June 1966 (FAO Agriculture Department, 1968).

The outcome of this commitment was the establishment of the Instituto de Capacitación e Investigación en Reforma Agraria (ICIRA, Agrarian Reform Training and Research Institute) in 1964. The Institute was conceived to focus on Chile. FAO was the executing agency of the agreement establishing the institute. Solon Barraclough was appointed project manager, acting as international director of the institute. Through this institution, the US economist assisted the Christian Democrat president Eduardo Frei (1964-1970) and the socialist Salvador Allende (1970-1973) during the preparation and approval of the agrarian reform law in 1965-67 and thereafter in the course of its implementation. ICIRA published 280 monographs and reports and had almost 42,000 participants in its training courses (FAO Chile, 2017). Particular attention was given to peasant empowerment and direct participation, thanks to the collaboration of the exiled Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire and his disciples (Vasconcelos, 2020). This bold experiment ended in September 1973 with the tragic coup that overthrew the democratically elected President Allende. At that point rural development took a very different path in Chile. Barraclough was removed from ICIRA. One year later, in a FAO-published review, he criticized how, after General Pinochet's junta seized power in the Southern Cone country, the agrarian reform program followed "a very repressive conservative strategy". In this article Barraclough argued that there were no neutral rural development programs, but different political inputs that could lead to very different "rural development strategies", making it clear that, unlike the current Chilean government, he was a supporter of "development policies that benefit the low-income rural classes" (Barraclough, 1974).

After the coup in Chile, an era of socially-sensitive reformism by FAO came to a close. The focus on large development plans, planning and governments as main beneficiaries of aid was waning. This, combined with resistance by key sectors of local elites toward larger and direct popular participation in development programs, sealed the fate of more progressive land reform policies (Frey & Unger, 2017: 9; Guldi, 2022: 207-305).

Though he was never directly involved, the activities of ICIRA in the 1960s can be considered an unintended legacy of Manlio Rossi-Doria's contribution to the UN agency.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Rossi-Doria's ideas, conceived to foster a democratic development of the rural Italian South, acquired a broader outlook that matched the prevailing ideas on land reforms and rural development within the "borderland" of the FAO (Sayward, 2017: 2). In fact, the multilateral institution, through its experts, fostered a vision of rural development sensitive to democratic empowerment and aimed at a better life for the marginalized peasants (Guldi, 2022; Ribi Forclaz, 2019). The Italian was among the first specialists hired by the agency in the framework of the revolutionary –because of its groundbreaking nature– UN technical assistance program. He contributed to defining a peculiar vision of development shared with other experts working with FAO and, at the same time, he understood that Latin America was one of the geographical centers of this attempt to exert a socially sensitive and State-led approach to multilateral aid in which agriculture was one of the main fields of activity.

In this perspective, Rossi-Doria, with his missions in the region and his politically minded vision of the role of the expert, could be seen as one of the pioneers in spreading the authoritative role of FAO on land reform policies. This endeavor was carried out by driving the establishment of new institutions dedicated to bolstering knowledge exchange and capacity building at regional and country levels, thanks to the opportunity given by the UN program. In this respect, the role of the Rome-based agency would further blossom in Latin America, reaching its peak during the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s. Therefore, the establishment of ICIRA shows us how the legacy of an expert such as Rossi-Doria, by shaping and reflecting FAO's main outlook on agrarian reforms, navigated the complex waters of regional and Cold War politics and a changing consensus in international aid priorities.

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