

Ernesto Rossi

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He fled to France in 1925: arrested in Italy in 1931, he moved from prison to prison and to internment on the island of Ventotene until 1943, and was then a «refugee for political reasons» in Switzerland. As such, he made use of the regulations for the reinstatement of an economics teacher in technical institutes. He became a public sector manager and a business journalist. Salvemini, Einaudi and Piero Sraffa thought highly of him, the academic world rejected him, the Accademia dei Lincei made him an award at the age of 69: for his «high abilities as an investigator and always lively in controversy, Ernesto Rossi stands out in that steady flow of writers on political economy applied to concrete problems which can boast of noble traditions in our country».

Before the Great War

He was born in Caserta on 25 August 1897, the son of Antonio Rossi della Manta, of noble Piedmontese origins¹ – which Ernesto always scornfully repudiated – and of Elide Verardi, from a Parma family. His father, a cavalry officer, had been transferred from the town in Campania to Florence in 1899. Ernesto was the couple's fourth child, and two more sisters and a brother were born after him. He was very attached to his mother, whom he always considered the source of his moral character, while he never showed any particular respect for his father, a vain and ineffectual man.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Rossi had at first hesitated when faced with the possibility of Italian intervention. In 1915, he wrote to his friend Onofrio Molea:

That you are also an interventionist [sic]? If you have the honour of

¹ Roberto Rossi Precerutti, *O poca nostra nobiltà di sangue. Le rimosse origini piemontesi di Ernesto Rossi*, Turin, Neos edizioni, 2020.

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belonging to the number of those who have given themselves this beautiful word, write to me, because it seems impossible for me. [...] On the other hand, although my brother writes to me that as soon as I get my school leaving certificate I should go to the military academy, I do not feel at all patriotic and I have determined to desert rather than go to war².

But he later decided to leave as a volunteer for the front, in August 1915. A choice fought to the last, in which the entreaties of the Florentine interventionist circles played an important part, although his desire was that for a just and lasting peace between nations³. From the front, inspired by a sense of responsibility in which can be felt echoes of his reading of Giuseppe Mazzini's *Duties of Man*, he wrote to his mother:

Recently when we were in the trenches I went out every night of my own free will to fix the barbed wire fences, which were in a pretty bad condition. Two soldiers helped me in this, whom I wanted to recommend for a cash reward, as I have seen done for many others who have actually worked less than them. I spoke to the captain and he raised a heap of difficulties and didn't do anything about it. But ... let's leave it that what I do is not for my superiors but because I think it is good to do it⁴.

On returning home, he was surprised at the atmosphere of hostility towards veterans that pervaded the city. He still lacked a compass that would allow him to orient himself, and at first he sided with the nationalist-inspired fighting movements. Between 1919 and 1922 he put his name to nineteen articles in «Popolo d'Italia».

The turning point in his life, at the age of 22, occurred in 1919, when he met Gaetano Salvemini, who quickly became his mentor and who, in some respects, took the place of a little-loved father⁵. It was decisive in removing him from temptations to nationalism and in making him decisively embrace

² Ernesto Rossi, *Guerra e dopoguerra. Lettere 1915-1930*, edited by Giuseppe Armani, Florence, La nuova Italia, 1978, p. 3.

³ Andrea Becherucci, *Ernesto Rossi tra pace e guerra*, «Rassegna storica toscana», July-December 2007, pp. 241-270; Ernesto Rossi, *Abolire la guerra*, edited by Antonella Braga, Florence, Nardini, 2020.

⁴ Id., *Guerra e dopoguerra*, cit., p. 65.

⁵ Id., *Come conobbi Salvemini*, in Giuseppe Armani (ed.), *Ernesto Rossi. Un democratico ribelle*, Parma, Guanda, 1975, pp. 43-48.

the cause of democracy.

In December 1920, Ernesto significantly chose as the subject of the thesis he would pursue in Siena «Social evolution in the thought of Vilfredo Pareto». Between 1920 and 1921, he moved to Basilicata at the request of Umberto Zanotti-Bianco on behalf of the Associazione nazionale per gli interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia (ANIMI) to carry forward its aid work in support of the populations of Southern Italy. He thus experienced at first-hand the conditions of economic underdevelopment and cultural and social degradation in which the peasants of that region struggled. In 1922 he returned to Florence, where he took over the management of the «Giornale degli agricoltori toscani»⁶.

Condemned to 20 years in prison

With the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti, the climate become heavy for opponents of the regime. Thanks to Salvemini, Rossi – who had joined the National Union launched by Giovanni Amendola – came into contact with some figures of anti-fascism in Florence, of secular and socialist inspiration, including Carlo and Nello Rosselli, Piero Calamandrei, Nello Traquandi, Enrico Bocci⁷ and Dino Vannucci⁸. They were the leaders not only of the first public demonstrations of dissent but also of the first attempts at conspiracy against the regime that took place in Florence, from the Circolo di cultura politica to Italia libera⁹. The clandestine newspaper «Non mollare» was the cause of Rossi's first move abroad¹⁰. Reported to the police by the informer

⁶ Massimo Omiccioli, *La «strana» biblioteca di uno «strano» economista. Viaggio tra i libri di Ernesto Rossi*, Rome, Biblioteca della Banca d'Italia Paolo Baffi, 2018, p. 30.

⁷ Lucia Tumiati Barbieri, *Enrico Bocci: una vita per la libertà. Testimonianze*, Florence, Barbera, 1969.

⁸ Marta Vannucci, *Un italiano che non mollò: Dino Vannucci (1895-1937) medico antifascista fiorentino da «Italia Libera» al Brasile*, Florence, Nardini, 2013.

⁹ Cf. Luciano Zani, *Italia libera. Il primo movimento antifascista clandestino, 1923-1925*, Bari, Laterza, 1975, and *1925-1985. Un circolo di cultura nel nome dei Rosselli*, «Quaderni del Circolo Rosselli», 5, 3, July-September 1985.

¹⁰ Gaetano Salvemini, *Il «Non mollare» in Non mollare (1925)*, photographic reproduction of issues with accounts by Gaetano Salvemini, Piero Calamandrei, Ernesto Rossi, Florence, La nuova Italia, 1955 (new edition by Mimmo Franzinelli, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2005).

typographer who was printing the paper on 31 May 1925, he avoided arrest by fleeing to Paris.

In October he returned to Italy to take part in the national competition for qualifying to teach economic subjects in technical institutes; he came first out of 53 candidates,¹¹ and opted for Bergamo – the «Vittorio Emanuele II» Institute, where he would meet Ada in 1928 – and because of its proximity to Milan, where he kept in touch with the clandestine anti-fascist network which included Ferruccio Parri and Riccardo Bauer, and where he regularly saw Luigi Einaudi, then a professor at Bocconi University, who was to publish some economic essays on «Social Reform», which he directed. In 1929, together with Carlo Rosselli, Emilio Lussu, Salvemini and others, he founded the anti-fascist movement Giustizia e Libertà in whose steering committee he remained until his arrest.

Meanwhile, the clandestine network of Justice and Freedom was also under surveillance. The police could count on an infiltrator, the lawyer Carlo Del Re,¹² and on 30 October 1930 about forty people were arrested, including Ernesto Rossi.

During the transfer from Bergamo to Rome, he threw himself from the train running near Viareggio, only to return to the authorities after a day spent wandering without receiving help. On 9 November he was questioned by the investigating judge and reaffirmed his convictions as an opponent of fascism. Following his arrest he was suspended from work and salary (by ministerial decree of 9 January 1931), then officially transferred from Bergamo to Udine (when in reality he was already detained, so the official transfer remained on paper), but still suspended from work and salary (ministerial decree of 18 March 1931). He was sent for trial on 6 March 1931.

The trial began on 29 May and ended with a twenty-year prison sentence.

¹¹ «Bollettino ufficiale del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione. Atti amministrativi», 52, II, 51, 3 December 1925, p. 3570.

¹² Ernesto Rossi (ed.), *Una spia del regime*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1955 (new edition by Mimmo Franzinelli, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2000).

After his conviction, he was dismissed by ministerial decree of 10 August 1931.

«The prison university»

Thus began a long period of detention. In the Pallanza prison on Lago Maggiore he studied economics, mathematics and English, then Spanish, as well as reading many novels and essays that the censors carefully examined and which are reported in the very extensive correspondence with his mother and wife¹³. In prison, on 24 October 1931, he married Ada, also a teacher. At the end of the year he was transferred to the prison in Piacenza. From April 1932 the prison administration introduced a regulation that prohibited the sending of books from relatives and friends, requiring them to be purchased through the prison administration. Even so Rossi continued to devour books, in his critical manner:

University teaching as it currently exists in Italy – at least for the Faculties of literature and law that I know slightly – is the most mortifying thing you can imagine. The practice of handouts, full of errors, which often treat a minimal part of the subject without any coordination with the rest, handouts for which no teacher takes responsibility and which are used to prepare for exams within a few days, is the best demonstration of the low value of our university teaching. Many professors, having reached the professorship, which was the goal of all their ambitions, solidify in the little they learned as young people, they no longer read books or magazines, and content themselves with repeating the same tales for decades; so that three-quarters of the time spent at the university is wasted¹⁴.

In November 1933 he was detained in the Regina Coeli prison in Rome under particularly harsh conditions of detention. On 25 January 1934, he wrote to his mother:

During periods of relative tranquility, we are easily led to believe that the forms of courtesy and tolerance with which men treat each other correspond to a certain kindness of soul, rather than to the recognition of their current interests. But any political upheaval that breaks the dams of the old order is enough to make the scum come to the surface, not only by unleashing those bestial masses that were previously hidden

¹³ Ernesto Rossi, *Nove anni sono molti. Lettere dal carcere 1930-1939*, edited by Mimmo Franzinelli, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2001.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, letter to his wife Ada, 30 September 1932, p. 148.

in their lairs, but by unleashing in everyone that bestiality that was previously hidden by good manners. And then we remain horrified and lose all hope in humanity¹⁵.

In jail, however, from 1936 he again met Riccardo Bauer and, later, Vittorio Foa, who had been arrested after the raid on the Giustizia e Libertà group in Turin in 1935. Together with his cellmates he inaugurated a real «prison university», which included lessons and discussions on philosophy, especially Croce – whom Bauer loved but Rossi detested – and mathematics. Some readings from these years had the power to arouse in him perceptive reflections, for example, on democracy and its meanings.

They say that a «democrat» is someone who, despite his social position, is «easygoing», «informal», «unpretentious»: the Count who pisses on the wall in the street is a «democratic» gentleman: even if he professes the most medieval theories on the rights of the nobility to rule over the untitled vulgar.

And it is said that an institution is «democratic» if it does not present obstacles of class or economic conditions to the ascent of individuals to supreme positions. This is why many speak of the Catholic Church as a democratic institution, whereas it is one of the most typical examples of autocracy¹⁶.

When, even in prison, they heard of the regime's measures against Jews, Rossi did not miss the serious consequences that these would have, for example, on the university¹⁷. He wrote to his mother on 22 October 1938:

A good number of professorships remain vacant at the same time: a boon for all candidates, who will now flock to the *concorsi* bringing as qualifications their profound studies on race, corporate order, autarchy, etc. And there will be a corresponding «circulation of the elites» for stockbrokers, for doctors in hospitals, for company managers, and for all the other posts vacated by the Jews. Almost the same results are achieved with the expulsion of specialists as with the destruction of machines: almost no one can see the general, indirect, widespread damage, while those interested in eliminating competition rejoice in the immediate advantage that they can gain in the transition period¹⁸.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 265.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 654.

¹⁷ Alberto Cavaglion, *L'Università senza gli ebrei. Il 1938 nelle lettere di Ernesto Rossi*, in Patrizia Guarnieri (ed.), *L'emigrazione intellettuale dall'Italia fascista*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2019, pp. 3-13.

¹⁸ Ernesto Rossi, *Elogio della galera. Lettere 1930-1943*, Bari, Laterza, 1968, p. 444.

From prison to internment

In November 1939 he was selected for confinement on Ventotene. On the island he rediscovered the elite of anti-fascism and conspiracy: the communists Pietro Secchia, Mauro Scoccimarro, Umberto Terracini, Luigi Longo, Camilla Ravera and Giuseppe Di Vittorio, Altiero Spinelli – formerly a communist but at odds with the party – the socialists Sandro Pertini, Alberto Jacometti and Eugenio Colorni who were to join the Socialist Party after the fall of the regime¹⁹. In a climate full of sectarianism and mutual distrust, intellectual harmony matured and, later, friendship and collaboration between Rossi, Spinelli and Colorni. In 1941, from these discussions, which also involved Colorni's wife, Ursula Hirschmann,²⁰ came the *Ventotene Manifesto* or, more precisely, the document *Per un'Europa libera ed unita. Progetto d'un manifesto* [For a free and united Europe. A plan for a manifesto], which was dedicated to the themes of the reconstruction of the international community after the war, when the advance of the Nazi troops still seemed to encounter no obstacles.

As is now known, the *Ventotene Manifesto* aroused little enthusiasm. This prompted Rossi and Spinelli to deepen and correct some aspects. When the document of the Partito d'azione known as the «Seven Points» (January 1943) was circulated, both Rossi and Spinelli adopted a waiting position without joining the new political formation.

On 7 July 1943, Rossi was transferred to Regina Coeli together with Vittorio Calace and Bauer, once again charged with the assassination attempt on the king in Milan on 12 April 1928, even though the three had already been acquitted in the preliminary investigation in 1930 for the same crime. They were released on 30 July 1943: the regime had fallen five days earlier and

¹⁹ Antonella Braga, *Un federalista giacobino. Ernesto Rossi pioniere degli Stati Uniti d'Europa*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007, pp. 158-159.

²⁰ Ursula Hirschmann, *Noi senzapatRIA*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993; Silvana Boccanfuso, *Ursula Hirschmann una donna per l'Europa*, Camogli, Ultima spiaggia, 2019. Cf. further Fabio Zucca (ed.), *Eugenio Colorni federalista*, Manduria, Lacaita, 2011.

Rossi was able to reach Florence by train and rejoin his family

He was now 46 years old. He resumed contact with the comrades he knew and made new ones. He went to Milan, as a guest of Mario Alberto Rollier, and to Bergamo: in Florence he took part in an important federalist meeting with Rollier and Colorni. The Movimento federalista europeo was officially established in Milan on 27-28 August 1943, with many shareholders, some socialists, some republicans, Altiero Spinelli, his sister Fiorella and Ursula Hirschmann²¹. As Ada Rossi recalls, «at that point Ernesto and I wanted to go to Bergamo: a possible stay in Switzerland had already been expected in the first federalist congress in order to have contacts with possible European federalists from other countries»²².

Once back in Florence, he took part in the first national convention of the Action Party, which he had joined in the meantime, and he set off again for Bergamo, where Ada was waiting for him. At the news of the armistice, he moved to Milan: it was only on the advice of relatives and companions, worried about his now compromised health, that he gave up the idea of joining the armed resistance.

A refugee for political reasons in Switzerland

He crossed the Italian-Swiss border at Arogno, on the southern shore of Lake Lugano, on 14 September 1943. He was allowed into the Swiss Confederation as a «civilian refugee for political reasons»; the Ticino socialist councillor Guglielmo Canevascini (1886-1965), who was also the first to offer him hospitality in Lugano-Besso,²³ gave guarantees on his behalf. Rossi would have been sent to the internment camps in quarantine, unless he had his own assets to stay in Switzerland or had a person guaranteeing for him by

²¹ A. Braga, *Un federalista giacobino*, cit., pp. 241-256.

²² Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), Florence, *Ernesto Rossi Papers* (ER), f. 159, Ada Rossi, «Qualche ricordo del periodo in Svizzera», 1986, p. 2.

²³ Elisa Signori, *Il dovere di schierarsi: Guglielmo Canevascini e l'antifascismo*, in Riccardo Carazzetti, Rodolfo Huber (eds.), *La Svizzera e la lotta al nazifascismo, 1943-1945. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Locarno, 31 Marzo 1995*, Locarno, Armando Dadò, 1998, pp. 69-91.

paying a bail deposit²⁴. He was able to quarantine with his brother Paolo, who lived with his family near Ascona. Paolo Rossi,²⁵ four years younger than Ernesto, had emigrated to Switzerland in 1925 to escape police action, having become involved in the «Non mollare» affair. At the end of September 1943, Ada joined her husband at Paolo's house, after crossing the border at Menaggio. Many years later, she was to describe the confrontation with the Swiss border guards as follows:

To their questions I said:

«The State Councillor Mr Canevascini is protecting my husband Ernesto Rossi and me».

«But can you prove that your husband is Ernesto Rossi?»

«I don't have any documents, because it is dangerous to be identified by the fascist police».

«Will you show us your marriage ring?»

Fortunately, «Ernesto & Ada» was engraved on the ring! I showed it to him and got the green light into the friendly country²⁶.

Initially the couple resided in Lugano but in early December 1943 they moved to Monte Brè, as guests of Mr and Mrs Maffioletti. Ernesto and Ada lived in straitened circumstances; to save on wood and coal, they spent a lot of time in the cantonal library in Lugano, which was heated. Ada sold two gold coins that she had brought with her from Italy. And from the United States, Gaetano Salvemini – who had emigrated in 1925 – sent them money through a Quaker network, by a procedure considered illegal in Switzerland.

For contacts with Italy they relied on the parish priest of Monte Brè, who acted as collector and distributor of the messages exchanged with their respective families in Italy²⁷. At last, on 1 March 1944, they were allowed to move to Geneva, where Ernesto was able to undertake further studies, especially in the library of the Graduate Institute of International Studies. The

²⁴ Renata Brogginì, *Terra d'asilo. I rifugiati italiani in Svizzera 1943-1945*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993.

²⁵ Paolo Rossi, born in 1901 in Florence, was an expatriate in Switzerland but, «being a restless and fickle character», he had not maintained regular contact with his family of origin. For him, see the terse biographical note of Mimmo Franzinelli in E. Rossi, *Nove anni sono molti*, cit., p. 871.

²⁶ HAEU, ER, f. 159, Ada Rossi, «Qualche ricordo del periodo in Svizzera», 1986, p. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

couple found a small apartment and, since there was no bathroom, every week Ernesto went to the Einaudis, to use their bathroom, and Ada visited Franco and Yvonne Formiggini. Apart from this inconvenience, at 19 rue Chantepoulet

the apartment, which consisted of just a corridor, a living room, a small bedroom and a kitchen, was perpetually busy with coming and going. There were several tables, however, always filled with books, papers and two typewriters. He was constantly typing...

Our very modest home was a meeting place for Italian and also foreign refugees, so much so that they called it the «Italian Consulate»; while Egidio Reale's home (an elegant and comfortable apartment) was called «the Italian Embassy»²⁸.

In the meantime, a tight network of contacts with Italian exiles had taken shape²⁹. Among the very young people who helped Ernesto, many attended the university camp for refugees set up and directed in Lausanne by the engineer, Gustavo Colonnetti, a former professor at the Polytechnic of Turin, where even the professors were, for the most part, Italian refugees, including Luigi Einaudi, the jurist Francesco Carnelutti, the philosopher of law Alessandro Levi, and the surgeon Mario Donati.

Rossi's contacts with Italians in Switzerland were not limited to expatriate circles but also included the Italian Legation in Bern, headed by Ambassador Massimo Magistrati, who had been appointed shortly before the fall of the regime; their relationship «was perhaps not very cordial but not hostile either»,³⁰ so much so that the embassy officials themselves attended the Dante Alighieri association alongside leading anti-fascists.

Another crisis occurred with the arrival of autumn. Many refugees had crossed the border in the summer and were without warm clothing. To face

²⁸ Ibid., p. 7. On Einaudi's stay in Switzerland, cf. Luigi Einaudi, *Diario dell'esilio 1943-1944*, edited by Paolo Soddu, Turin, Einaudi, 1997

²⁹ Among the exiles, Franco Formiggini, Sergio Finzi, Aristide Foà, Ernesto Carletti, Giuseppe Leone Ronzoni, Beppino Disertori and, in the young people's group, Gilberto Rossa, Giandomenico Sertoli, Luciano Bolis, Carlo and Guido Majno, Gianfranco Draghi, Silvano Balboni, Giacomo Pezzotta and Carlo Donati. The names are found in Ernesto Rossi, *L'Europa di domani, ovvero gli Stati Uniti d'Europa*, edited by Antonella Braga, Turin, Aragno, 2021, pp. XXVI-XXIX.

³⁰ HAEU, ER, f. 159, Ada Rossi, «Qualche ricordo del periodo in Svizzera», 1986, p. 4.

the rigours of the colder seasons, a support network was set up between the Italians already living in the country and the Swiss themselves; in the Dante Alighieri offices, woollen clothing, coats and shoes were presented to refugees. The Rossis benefited from the generosity of Paolo and his wife, who gave Ernesto a suit and a coat and Ada an overcoat. She recalled years later that Ernesto continued to wear those clothes even when he was appointed undersecretary for reconstruction in the Parri government, while Einaudi continued to use the umbrella he had bought at the Geneva flea market even as governor of the Bank of Italy³¹.

Return and reappointment

On 20 April 1945, Rossi at last returned to Italy. A short but very significant period of his life had ended. In addition to the federalist commitment embodied in numerous writings and, in particular, in the drafting of *Gli Stati Uniti d'Europa*, published in 1944 by Nuove edizioni in Capolago, founded by Ignazio Silone and Egidio Reale, he also cooperated with other refugees in drafting a civics book entitled *Uomo e cittadino*³².

The years of moral and material reconstruction in Italy were also very intense³³.

In a letter addressed to the Directorate General of the Technical Order at the Ministry of Public Education, on 12 July 1945 Rossi asked to be reappointed, to have his career rebuilt in the post he would have had if he had not been imprisoned, and that he be paid the salaries due to him and not collected for

³¹ Ibid., p. 9.

³² Storeno [E. Rossi], *Gli Stati Uniti d'Europa*, Lugano, Nuove edizioni di Capolago, 1944; later translated in Telos [E. Rossi], *L'Europe de demain*, s.l., Centre d'études de l'Europe fédéraliste, 1944); *Uomo e cittadino*, Bern, Comitato italiano di cultura sociale, 1945. Cf. Raffaella Castagnola, *Silone e le Nuove Edizioni di Capolago*, in Ead., Paolo Parachini (eds.), *Per una comune civiltà letteraria. Rapporti culturali tra Italia e Svizzera negli anni '40*, Florence, Cesati, 2003, pp. 125-138; Rossi's text *Gli Stati Uniti d'Europa*, accompanied by other federalist writings and preceded by a substantial historical-critical introduction, has now been reissued by Antonella Braga with the title *L'Europa di domani*, cit.

³³ M. Omiccioli, *La «strana» biblioteca di uno «strano» economista*, cit., p. 361ff.; Simonetta Michelotti, *Stato e Chiesa: Ernesto Rossi contro il clericalismo. Una battaglia per la democrazia*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2007.

the period of detention, and that, finally, holding the position of undersecretary at the Ministry of Reconstruction, he be assigned a new place of work in Rome or, alternatively, Florence. The provision for his reinstatement in post read as follows:

We inform you that the Disciplinary Council at the Higher Council of the Ministry, at its the meeting of 4 April 1946, expressed a favourable opinion on the acceptance of the request of Professor Ernesto Rossi, former full professor of legal institutions at the Royal Technical Commercial Institute of Udine, dismissed as of 30 May 1931, for political reasons, which seeks to obtain his readmission to the role in accordance with the RDL 6 January 1944, n. 9 and of the Royal Decree of 19 October 1944, n. 301. In accordance with this judgment, with measures in progress, Professor Ernesto Rossi, with effect from 16 April 1946, is reappointed as full professor of legal institutions in the Royal Technical Commercial Institutes, and appointed to the said Royal Commercial Technical Institute³⁴.

This was the «Luigi di Savoia Duca degli Abruzzi» Technical Commercial Institute in Rome, and just over a year after his reinstatement he was given leave of absence, on 12 June 1947, to take up the post of president of the Azienda rilievo alienazione residuati (ARAR).

He was to go on leave from the institute in Rome, at his own request, on 1 October 1958 because of a serious attack of depression, although he had for some years occupied a position for the Ministry of Public Education in the University's chair of Political Economy.

Also at the suggestion of Einaudi, however, Rossi believed that he had the qualifications for university teaching in economics.

University ambitions and disappointments

Long imprisonment and exile had cut him out of the the discipline's academic circles. But above all, his sharp judgments on the acquiescence to fascism by most university professors, his not very accommodating character and, finally, his reputation as a severe and outspoken reviewer did not make him very welcome in this milieu.

³⁴ HAEU, ER, f. 1, «Notizie sulla Lettera del preside G. Papa al Prof. Rossi Ernesto». Both the Royal Decrees can be seen here in the section *From persecution to reparation*.

He was rejected twice in a *concorso* for professorship. The first time he applied for the chair of political economy announced in 1948 by the University of Modena³⁵. He was not included in the short list of three winners by the committee, of which Giovanni Demaria was a member, due to the fact that Rossi had heavily criticized the latter's work in an article that had appeared in «L'Italia socialista»³⁶.

Nor did he reach the short list in the *concorso* announced by the University of Sassari for finance; awaiting the result of this second *concorso* he wrote to Einaudi, on 19 July 1948:

I entered the *concorso* for a chair in economics at the University of Modena. They told me that the Commission, chaired by Professor Demaria [strictly Marco Fanno] didn't put me in the top three. I don't understand: I really believed that Professor Demaria would have taken advantage of the opportunity to show me his gratitude for what I had written in the article *Corbellerie con l'acceleratore* in Italia socialista... I hope not to have other 'friends' in the Commission examining qualifications for the chair of finance at Cagliari [strictly Sassari], which I also took part in, presenting my qualifications a year ago, and which I believe will have to be decided in the next few days³⁷.

On 25 August 1948 he informed Salvemini in similar terms, adding:

They told me that the chair has been assigned to De Maria's assistant. He's going to be one of the usual gossipy, rambling corporatists. You cannot imagine to what a low level economic science has been reduced in Italian universities. I am also sure that Einaudi would gladly help me. But it bothers me to interest him in something of a personal nature³⁸.

³⁵ HAEU, ER, f. 1, «Notizie sulla operosità scientifica e sulla carriera didattica del Prof. Ernesto Rossi». On this occasion he presented as publications the essay *La questione doganale dopo la guerra*, in the appendix to the volume *Un trentennio di lotte politiche*, in which he collected the writings of Antonio De Viti De Marco, the studies published in «La riforma sociale» directed by Einaudi, a study of De Viti De Marco's *Trattato di scienza delle finanze*, which appeared in the «Rivista bancaria», the pamphlet *La finanza fascista* published by Giustizia e Libertà when he was already in hiding, some reviews, a study published anonymously in 1933 in «La riforma sociale» and some observations on collectivism published in 1940 in the «Rivista di storia economica», in addition to *Gli Stati Uniti d'Europa*, cit., and the part he wrote of *Uomo e cittadino*, cit.

³⁶ Rossi's article was entitled *Corbellerie con l'acceleratore* and was published on 9 June 1948. On the whole affair, see the article by Achille Agnati, who is not well disposed towards Rossi, *Einaudi, Demaria e «Sesto Empirico»: la cattedra «negata» a Ernesto Rossi*, «Rivista internazionale di scienze economiche e commerciali», XXXIX, 8, 1992, pp. 641-659.

³⁷ Ernesto Rossi, Luigi Einaudi, *Carteggio (1925-1961)*, edited by Giovanni Busino, Stefania Martinotti Dorigo, Turin, Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, 1988, p. 285.

³⁸ Ernesto Rossi, Luigi Einaudi, *Dall'esilio alla Repubblica. Lettere 1944-1957*, edited by Mimmo

Rossi instead withdrew from a third *concorso* in economic policy announced by the University of Venice in 1954 when he learned that the young Federico Caffè, for whom he had great esteem and who he believed deserved the chair more than himself, was a candidate³⁹.

Public sector manager and business journalist

From 5 July 1945, he held the post of Undersecretary for Reconstruction in the Parri government (the minister was Meuccio Ruini). From September 1945 he was a member of the Consulta; from 29 October 1945 on the appointment by Prime Minister Ferruccio Parri he was called to chair the ARAR, where he put his economic skills to good use. On the institution's board of directors he was joined by two well-known private sector entrepreneurs, the engineers Giorgio Valerio of Edison and Giuseppe De Benedetti of Vetrocoke⁴⁰. The industrialists thought he was a simpleton, but they miscalculated, because in prison Rossi had had opportunity and time to study the matter of the illicit enrichments of many business groups and to develop plans so that it did not happen again⁴¹.

With the rise of Alcide De Gasperi to the presidency of the Council, Rossi submitted his resignation but was confirmed in his post with support from Luigi Einaudi, the governor of the Bank of Italy. A well-regarded public sector manager, he did not wish to enjoy privileges; he had a salary equivalent to

Franzinelli, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2004, pp. 375-376. For the Modena *concorso*, see «Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione. Bollettino ufficiale», 76, I, 1, 6 January 1949, pp. 44-45, and for the Sassari *concorso*, *ibid.*, 76, I, 20, 19 May 1949, pp. 1302-1307.

³⁹ HAEU, ER, f. 1, letter from Ernesto Rossi to Nina Ruffini, 8 July 1954. In fact, Federico Caffè won the competition as the first of the three winners, but the University of Venice appointed instead another of the winners, Innocenzo Gasparini, who was to be, in the seventies and eighties, dean and rector of Bocconi University. Cf. Nicola Acocella, *Caffè, Federico*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2019 <<https://www.treccani.it>> (accessed 25 March 2022).

⁴⁰ Luciano Segreto, *ARAR. Un'azienda statale tra mercato e dirigismo*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2001. L'ARAR had been assigned by the government the task of selling off the great stockpile of war residues that the allied troops had left in Italy: trucks, cars, motorcycles, bullets, boats, telecommunication systems, tyres, clothing, medicines and much more. The company was charged with supervising this enormous asset patrimony and selling it to make profits.

⁴¹ Fabio Ecca, *Lucri di guerra. Le forniture di armi e munizioni e i pescecani industriali in Italia (1914-1922)*, Rome, Viella, 2017.

that of a tenured professor in a technical institute, and decided against a candidacy for the Constituent Assembly⁴².

Rossi may legitimately be considered the founder of investigative economic journalism. Many of his articles were to end up collected in the numerous volumes that Laterza published in his name in the 1950s. He contributed for a long time to Mario Pannunzio's «Il Mondo». In 1955 some members of the liberal left and some of the most famous contributors to «Il Mondo» joined forces to give life to the Partito radicale, which Rossi joined, but without much enthusiasm.

In 1961 the «Piccardi case» broke. The name of the state councillor Leopoldo Piccardi – Rossi's friend and collaborator since the days of the ARAR – found itself in the work of Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, which revealed Piccardi's participation in two Italian-German legal initiatives of 1938 and 1939 on race and law. Rossi – as faithful to friendships as ever – defended Piccardi to the bitter end, as did Ferruccio Parri, but Pannunzio unleashed a press campaign against the lawyer, accusing him fiercely⁴³.

Piccardi resigned from the Radical Party secretariat, followed in solidarity by Franco Libonati, Arrigo Olivetti and Eugenio Scalfari. Rossi ended his collaboration with «Il Mondo», while the dispute between Pannunzio and Piccardi ended in court only in 1967.

In 1966 Rossi quite unexpectedly received the prestigious Francesco Saverio Nitti prize from the Accademia dei Lincei, which softened the bitterness for exclusion from the academy. The committee was distinguished, chaired by Gustavo Del Vecchio with Valentino Dominedò, Piero Sraffa, Sergio Steve and Paolo Sylos Labini; these are the reasons for the award:

A scholar of finance and economic policy, Ernesto Rossi applied himself from an early age to research recognized as of great merit by his teachers Antonio De Viti De Marco and Luigi Einaudi. In the initial post-

⁴² Antonia Carparelli, *Ernesto Rossi (1897-1967)*, in *I protagonisti dell'intervento pubblico in Italia*, edited by Alberto Mortara, Milan, Franco Angeli, 1984, pp. 607-638.

⁴³ Antonio Cardini, *Mario Pannunzio. Giornalismo e liberalismo*, Naples, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 2011, pp. 277-298.

war period, these researches were carried out with positive survey criteria in the areas of the Italian state budget, public debt and customs tariffs. Deprived for many years of personal freedom for political reasons, he meditated on the foundations of economic policy in the vision of a peaceful and free reconstruction of the European economy. Subsequently, his activity as a scholar and writer has turned to problems concerning the structure of capitalism and the forms of state participation in industrial production. Of particular importance has been the continuing examination of Italian economic policy since the Second World War. From his platform as observer and critic, he has made an important contribution to the knowledge and evaluation of the political-administrative structures of the Italian economy. Endowed with high abilities as an investigator and always lively in controversy, Ernesto Rossi stands out in that stream of writers on political economy applied to concrete problems which can boast of noble traditions in our country⁴⁴.

In addition to depression, the effects of all the privations suffered during the years of prison, confinement and exile began to be felt on his body. In September 1966 he was admitted to hospital for the first time. Once back home he devoted himself to the board for the publication of the works of Gaetano Salvemini, initiated thanks to subscription in 1957. He was again admitted to hospital on 14 January 1967. He died in Rome on 9 February 1967.

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⁴⁴ M. Omiccioli, *Ernesto Rossi economista in carcere*, forthcoming in the journal «Moneta e credito».

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