
REVIEWS OF BOOKS

H.-J. BRAUN, *The German Economy in the Twentieth Century*, London/New York, Routledge, 1990, pp. xi-279, with tables and diagrams in the text.

Braun's volume on Germany is part of the "Contemporary Economic History of Europe" series, which is a wide-ranging work intended for a large public. Consistent with the spirit of the series, the book provides a valuable guide, which is useful both to those wanting an introduction to the main issues and to those who, already acquainted with specific aspects, are interested in a synthesis. Braun's synthesis is indeed intelligent and comprehensive, bringing the reader within reach of the results of a large quantity of research that includes a considerable volume of research on more recent periods, itself a sign of the vitality of German contemporary history (the bibliography is extremely useful). This does not mean that Braun's text is a kind of neutral review. The rigour of a clear exposition, in the style of an economic history which has a definite specialistic slant, does not prevent the author from developing an original interpretative line.

The text is divided into two parts, the first dealing with Germany in the period up until 1948 and the second dealing with the Federal Republic (a separate volume is planned for the Democratic Republic). While the first section has a chronological division, the second is divided according to themes. Being less conditioned by political upheavals and catastrophies and consequently providing a more homogeneous object, the peace-time history of the post-war period gets the lion's share in Braun's treatment.

The first chapter, which has an introductory flavour to it, concerns the economy of the *Kaiserreich* up until the first world war. The subsequent chapters of the first part follow the usual periodisation of the country's political history. Here a central and reoccurring issue seems to emerge in the rela-

tionship between economics and politics in the context of the widely debated historiographical questions, such as the features of the *Weimar's* economic policy during the Great Depression or the question, loaded with ethical implications, over the relationship between industrial elites and power in Nazi Germany.

The very detailed section on the Federal Republic is an attempt to render more compact and homogeneous the extensive but very analytical historiographical literature on the subject, according to the major themes, an original attempt considering that much of this work is in German. Of special interest are the chapters on economic doctrine and policy, where the interaction between ideologies and government practices is analysed, and on public finance.

The second part is more analytical and technical; here the author may have been influenced by the nature of the literature he is examining, which belongs to the historiography of the recent past and is therefore close to the current analyses of economists and political scientists that are often included in the bibliography Braun himself is studying. The very clear treatment of the single aspects of West Germany's economic history — apart from those already mentioned these include: economic growth and fluctuations, capital and labour, structural change, foreign trade — enables him to avoid getting embedded in several wide debates or rather clashes on questions of principle concerning periodisation and above all the role of the Marshall plan, currency reform and the social market economy in the formidable years of growth in the 1950s and 1960s.

Here again, at closer analysis, the question of the relationship between economics and politics re-emerges. While for the Nazi period Braun develops the thesis, with its strong ethical overtones, of the full responsibility of politics for the conscious and meditated decision in favour of total war, with all its economic repercussions, for West Germany and its peacetime achievements he assumes a moderate position, supporting the view that politics holds sway over economics only in the short term. On the other hand, explanations about economic dynamics based on the purely endogenous factor of the cycle lose much of their force.

In any case, the positive specificity of post-war Germany becomes less apparent in a careful analysis of the single aspects and in a comparison with the rest of Europe; the volumes of this series may be useful precisely for this reason. An initial step in this direction is the fine introduction by the editor, D. Aldcroft, who unifies the economies of western Europe in the post-war period under the same label of "semi-market systems" (p. 11), irregardless of economic miracles, *laissez-faire* policies and state intervention. Moreover, as Braun points out in his opening words, the western countries all share concern over problems facing the world at the end of the millenium, first and foremost of which is the ecological question. In this context there seems little point in speaking about the marked specificities of single countries; only a rigorous and sensitive analysis like Braun's, a picture with many elements and

nuances, can render the complicated and unique combination of factors concerning the different national economic histories.

COSTANZA D'ELIA
CNR Research Institute on the South
Italian Economy, Naples

J. BREWER, *The Sinews of Power, War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783*, Cambridge (Ma), Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 290.

The historical process by which Great Britain became in the course of the eighteenth century the leading world power, has been traditionally interpreted as the effect of the expansion of trade began in the previous century and of the development of a military machine during the wars with Louis XIV's France. Other studies have laid emphasis on certain aspects of contemporary English society — such as the institutional and financial framework — as factors which enabled the transformation to come about.

Brewer's book, which covers the period between the Glorious Revolution and the end of the War of American Independence, follows on in the wake of the latter studies. Starting from the observation that military expansion was made possible by the high and consistent level of public spending, the Author concentrates his analysis on the two main channels of State financing, taxation and the national debt, and on the role of public administration in carrying out fiscal policy.

Brewer's analysis is not totally innovatory; among other works he draws on the recent, important studies on taxation by Peter Mathias and Patrick O' Brien. Nevertheless it is not without originality.

In the first place, the author differs from the views of Peter Dickson who in *The Financial Revolution in England. A Study of Development of Public Credit, 1688-1756* argued that the national debt was a more important factor than taxation in financing the country's military expansion. On the contrary, Brewer believes that it was precisely the existence of an efficient system of taxation and of tax collection which gave English investors the necessary security for lending money to the Government. In this historical context, therefore, fiscal imposition and the recourse to the national debt were not alternative means for financing public spending, as is shown by the evolution of the two aggregates and their components, namely, short — and long-term debt and direct and indirect taxes.

The second interesting aspect of the book is the reconstruction of the development of English public administration after the Glorious Revolution. Compared to the nations of continental Europe, Great Britain showed that already in the first half of the eighteenth century its administrative system

was more modern, being numerically large, centralised and substantially homogeneous throughout the country. The control exercised by Parliament and especially by the House of Commons made sure that the power of a strong administrative machine did not degenerate into arbitrary acts and corruption, that is to say, that no alliance damaging to freedom was formed between high bureaucracy and military elites.

This picture of the role of the English government contrasts with the classic image of eighteenth-century *laissez-faire* Great Britain. Yet Brewer believes he can explain such a contradiction by distinguishing between domestic and foreign economic policy: the government and parliament adhered to a policy of *laissez-faire* as far as domestic economic life was concerned but were forced to intervene in order to support overseas military and commercial expansion.

In drawing this distinction, Brewer's analysis seems superficial since it fails to grasp the basic unity in English economic strategy. Analogously, the author appears to be a little over hasty in relegating seventeenth century Great Britain to a military and commercial position of secondary importance, in order to concentrate on its development after the Glorious Revolution. Nevertheless, these minor issues do not take away the originality in Brewer's book nor interest for the reader.

GAETANO SABATINI
Faculty of Transport Economics
and International Trade, Naples

J. KOMLOS, *Nutrition and Economic Development in the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy: An Anthropometric History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, xvii, 325 pp.

In *Nutrition and Economic Development in the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy*, John Komlos launches a new interpretation of the initial stages of the industrial revolution in Austria. Komlos argues that the availability of food and the skills, strength, stamina, and size of the labour force are more important contributors to industrial revolution than is the accumulation of physical or financial capital. He demonstrates that, in Austria at least, the nutritional status of the population deteriorated just prior to the industrial revolution and forced the monarchs, Maria Theresa and Joseph II, to initiate institutional reforms designed to overcome bottlenecks in economic growth and head off a subsistence crisis.

In his introductory chapter, Komlos presents a concise overview of recent literature on the causes and processes of industrial revolution. Komlos reveals his own intellectual journey as he records his encounters with and responses

to various interpretations. Chapters one through three form the core of the book. Chapter one provides a theory of anthropometric history focusing on the connections among human physical growth, reproduction, demographic change, and nutrition.

Chapter two analyzes and interprets data on the heights of eighteenth-century Habsburg army recruits and school children as a proxy for nutritional status. These data show that the standard of living in the western provinces of the Habsburg monarchy declined from the 1740s to the 1770s (immediately prior to industrialization) and recovered gradually from the 1780s to the mid-nineteenth century (during the onset of structural economic change in the Habsburg monarchy). Until the 1780s, nutritional status was better in the isolated rural areas of the monarchy than in the more developed western provinces. From the 1780s on, however, the nutritional status of Hungary and Galicia began to be undermined as resources were diverted deliberately to Lower Austria and Bohemia. As a more unified market developed, the heights of army recruits from different regions of the monarchy gradually converged.

Chapter three examines the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II. Here, Komlos argues that the pro-natalist policies of the early mercantilists had to be supplemented in the late eighteenth century by legislation to protect the weakest segments of society. The enlightened reforms could only have been adopted at a moment of crisis, since they were enacted at the expense of the most privileged segments of Habsburg society, the guilds and the nobility. The documents he cites do not support conclusively Komlos's view that the motives for reform were endogenous rather than exogenous; the chapter in fact shows that the monarchs' motives were complex and included humanitarian concerns, the desire to enhance the military strength of the monarchy, the need to increase tax revenues, and so on. By the reign of Francis I, economic growth had acquired a momentum of its own and no longer required as much support from the monarch. For this reason, Komlos suggests that the economic policies of Francis were more liberal than reactionary.

Chapter four, although a conclusion, is not the end of the discussion, for in chapters five and six, Komlos goes on to apply his model to Britain and extend it to early industrial growth in general. These final chapters are repetitious and speculative, but they may provide a guide for future research. The book also includes three appendices, presenting information on recruiting practices of the Habsburg army, additional tables and charts, and a mathematical model of the connection between nutritional status and economic growth.

Komlos develops his thesis in a thought-provoking but not entirely convincing manner, in part because he insists so emphatically that his interpretation represents a decisive break with past scholarship. Despite this criticism, the basic argument — that the industrial revolution in Austria was sparked

by a conscious attempt by the enlightened monarchs to overcome the threat of a Malthusian crisis — is compelling and demands further study.

CATHERINE ALBRECHT
University of Baltimore

R. WHIPP, *Patterns of Labour: Work and Social Change in the Pottery Industry*, Routledge, London-New York, 1990, pp. 248.

The object of R. Whipp's analysis is the English pottery industry from the end of the last century to the 1920s, in the context of which he also examines the nature of "labour", understood not so much as part of the productive cycle as human activity that involves the entire sphere of social realities in a continuative way.

In this sense, the author shows that his interest in the pottery industry — which has already been the object of various studies undertaken by him in the first half of the 1980s — is based on the possibility of studying at close hand several specific problems concerning the process of industrialisation. Among these are: 1) The influence of the creation of a mass market on industrial sectors characterised by production based on a low level of fixed capital and professional specialisation only in certain phases of production; 2) the establishment of trade unions in the context of an industry which was extremely varied and geographically decentralised; 3) the importance of the social relations which developed between work place, professionalism, family and community.

It becomes immediately obvious, however, that Whipp's main interest is in the last of these problems, on which he focuses almost the entire study and for which he suggests general interpretative criteria. Yet comparing the importance of the problem with the results of the research — which actually concerns a sector that employed only 0.5% of the work force — it is difficult to accept the arguments forwarded by the author as definitive answers, especially since they often appear to be in conflict with the much more consolidated work of: Clapham J.H. (1938); Clegg H. (1979); Dobb M. (1963); Gordon D., Edwards R., and Raich M. (1982); Hobsbawn E. (1968); Landes D. (1969); Pollard S. (1962), (1982); Thompson E.P. (1968); Thompson P. (1987).

Nevertheless, the volume appears to have succeeded in piecing together the intricate puzzle of the pottery industry, characterised as it was by extreme professional segmentation — Whipp lists more than thirty distinct activities, such as modelling, decorating etc. — and by the absence of concentration: the number of businesses, which increased from 150 to 400 between 1762 and 1901, was still unchanged in the 1920s. The only cohesive element

of the industry was its geographical location which was encompassed within a five-mile radius of Stoke Town Hall, an area in which nine tenths of all English pottery was produced in 1900, providing a population of 250,000 with its principal source of employment. For almost 200 years Staffordshire appeared in this sense as one large industrial district. The presence of a few leading manufacturers (Wedgwood, Johnson, Minton, Doulton, Gryndley, Maddock, Meaking, Grimwade, Copeland and Cauldon) who in some factories employed up to 3000 people was not enough to break up the area's homogeneity. At the beginning of the century, the aforementioned businesses represented, in numerical terms, scarcely 10% of the total and employed 25% of the work force.

The puzzle is solved by Whipp in a satisfactory way by cross analysis of two sets of factors: the dynamic of production and the dynamic of social relations built up around work, which are examined by breaking down the sector into sub-industries, classified according to the type of goods produced (earthenware, china, sanitary, electrical and chemical goods, tiles, and rockingham) and the places of production (Stoke, Hanley, Longton, Fenton, Burslem and Tunstall).

From the analysis great continuity emerges in the system of production whose characteristics remained those of the previous century. In 1924 human energy was still used for the movement of machinery in the majority of cases, followed by steam power which was used three times as much as electric power. For the whole of the period under study, the dominant manufacture continued to be traditional earthenware which still represented 55% of total production between 1907 and 1924. Whipp also focuses upon certain internal dynamics, such as the growth of sub-industries which produced materials for sanitary goods (laboratory bowls, piping for the building industry and the growth of electricity insulating porcelains etc). It was these which ensured that the Staffordshire industrial district continued to occupy its position as world leader in the sector, at least until the second world war. Moreover, the growth of sub-industries also helped to bring about changes in the social organisation of work. Producing for a mass market which required a standard quality of product, such industries gave rise to greater uniformity in decentralised work (the materials used, the time needed for production, the costs of the semi-finished product etc.), an increase in the overall amount of non-skilled labour and the birth of a managerial culture.

Finally, the research shows how the possibility of low-cost production (owing to the existence of good clay soils and of coal deposits near to the surface throughout the region) and the variety of production — guaranteed by the continued request for exports which accounted for 30 to 45% of the total product — ensured that questions of sex, age, family and community were at the centre of the social relations of work. There was, for example, a whole spectrum of activities which was exclusively male and another entirely female, a distinction which had a bearing on professionalism, wage, social

mobility and specialisation. The latter, which concerned mostly male activities, was in fact restricted to workers who were over forty years of age. The role of the family was even more fundamental since it made possible the creation and management of authentic productive units through the network of horizontal and vertical relationships. Equally important was the role of the social community, which, through the persistence of traditional schemes that were nearer to a productive system organised around guilds than to an industrialised system, dictated work rhythms, wages and professional mobility.

Consequently, these were the forces and social relations with which anyone wishing to introduce change had to come to terms. This was the case of the first generation of managers, who sought to agglomerate the surrounding area of production around the leading manufacturers, the first unified trade union (the National Society of Pottery Workers) which succeeded in overcoming the corporative thrust of the mid 1920s, and the associations based on sex distinction (the National Amalgamated Society of Male and Female Pottery Workers) formed in 1906 and forging ties with the representatives of the community in order to ensure health care, legal help and subsidies.

LEANDRO CONTE

CNR Research Institute on the
Southern Italian Economy, Naples

S. WOOLF, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. IX + 319.

Stuart Woolf has carried out fascinating research in the Napoleonic era, on the ideals that inspired it and on the legacy it bequeathed to Europe. As the title of the book shows, the author sees the process of integration between the various regions of Europe, directly or indirectly tied to France, as the essential character of this historical experience, a process which, with the arrival of the French legions, brought the issuing of new codes and the building of roads, the reform of the customs systems and the compilation of new land registries; in short, the attempt to build a modern state machinery.

Woolf's analysis starts from the definition of the model of state which developed during the revolutionary decade. In it, the citizens' participation in political life marked the new way of understanding the relationship between state and society. In the name of the identification of the people with the nation the revolutionary government removed the institutional obstacles to the expression of freedom of the individual and destroyed feudal rights, ecclesiastical privileges, the constraints on economic activity and more generally the complex organisation of the *Ancien Régime*. These were all replaced by new administrative, financial and economic structures, inspired by the ideals of

the Enlightenment and acting as intermediary between the citizens' will and the action of the state.

Napoleon only partially realised this model, since it was his conviction that an efficient administrative structure was the primary prerequisite for modernising a state and for freeing its citizens. In this connection Woolf observes that although Napoleon wished to be kept informed about the smallest details of the administrative life of his empire and satellite countries, he never interfered with the programme of reform of the public administration which was drawn up in the course of the revolutionary period; on the contrary he diffused it, linking his own personal and dynastic fortunes to its success.

Thus, the French civil servants who followed the *Grande Armée* brought with them the ideals of modernisation and Woolf carefully reconstructs the phases that characterised the realisation of such a programme and the conflicts with local social and cultural realities in every region of Europe. Yet the aspect which most interests the economic historian is the author's analysis of Napoleon's economic policy.

Napoleon did not have any economic training: his ideas on the subject were simple and at times contradictory. The experience of the assignats and the Directory's bankruptcy had led him to adopt a rigid monetary policy, restricting the circulation of metallic currency, imposing limits on credit and balancing the national budget. At the same time, Napoleon supported the production and exportation of French goods in every way possible, convinced that there was a fixed amount of producible wealth and that France's portion of such wealth could only increase by constraining that of other countries.

It was above all in the clash with England that Napoleon showed how little he grasped the difference between military strategy and commercial strategy and failed to evaluate the long-term costs of the government's programmes. In practice, by reinforcing French control of the European market, the adoption of the Continental System made the commercial equilibrium of the satellite countries even more precarious.

The economic opportunities offered by administrative change and by the sale of ecclesiastical lands and commons were not always enough to compensate for the damage caused by the maintenance of the armies and the attempts by French manufacturers to hamper rival products through political power. Analogously, the creation of new frontiers and the signing of preferential treaties with France had signalled the end of traditional, old-established trade relations while new relations seemed unstable and artificial.

This extensive overview by Woolf leads to the conclusion that the modernisation of state machinery brought the various regions of Europe closer together but that Napoleon's economic policy failed to achieve such an objective. After 1815, with the reopening of trade routes with England, very little remained of the economico-commercial system of Napoleonic Europe; con-

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versely most of the period's administrative, financial and juridical structures survived. Not even France pursued Napoleon's orientations in economic policy, but rather counteracted the emperor's economic planning with a policy of *laissez-faire*.

GAETANO SABATINI

Faculty of Transport Economics
and International Trade, Naples