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## REVIEW ARTICLES

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### *Economic Growth in Tuscany and the Risorgimento*

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The present volume by Luigi Dal Pane \* provides what is in many ways an archetypal example of the new historiography of the Italian Risorgimento which, particularly in a regional context, is designed to investigate further the nature of the real demands existing in the period, the strength of the various elements of economic and social conservatism, the tensions arising from them, the ways in which public and private institutions were transformed, and the nature of the political and ideological programmes which were most closely tied to either practical or utilitarian ends. In short, the object of studies such as these is to examine in much greater detail what Croce once called those « manifestations of vitality » which alone allow us to obtain a clear picture of the attitudes and behaviour of the individuals, groups, and social forces involved in the historical process which culminated in the unification of the peninsula. The tradition against which Dal Pane's masterly study must be placed is made up of many eminently valuable and scholarly works which have served to pose a number of new problems and questions, but at the same time in general they have had a rather partial, disorganized and fragmented character, both in terms of the periods and the territorial areas covered. They have consisted on the whole of monographs rather than general studies, and the sort of problems to which they have

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\* LUIGI DAL PANE, *Industria e commercio nel Granducato di Toscana nell'età del Risorgimento*, vol. I: *Il Settecento*, 1971, pp. XVI-280, Lit. 7,000; vol. II: *L'Ottocento*, 1973, pp. IV-332, Lit. 5,600 (Bologna, Patron).

been devoted are very much those arising from « current research ». In contrast, Dal Pane's two volumes unmistakably constitute a truly comprehensive study, even though they do deal with a single region. They provide a model, and if it is more generally adopted it will certainly lead to a total revision and broadening of our knowledge of conditions in Italy prior to unification. This is particularly so as the distinction between general history and economic history is nowadays nowhere near so firm as it was formerly, and, in fact, the two criss-cross repeatedly with important consequence, in terms of methodology, that what the former loses in terms of generalization, the latter gains in comprehensiveness, so creating a new form of history which Gurvitch would describe as "pluridimensional".

The success of Dal Pane's study owes much to the long years of research which he has dedicated to it and to that fortunate combination of qualities which makes him a true *berufshistoriker* of the first rank. One need hardly mention that from as early as the pre-war years Dal Pane has been concerned with problems of historical method, in a period, that is, when professional historians showed little interest in such issues, and that he has subsequently maintained and developed his work in this field. Given Croce's primacy in the field of historical theory and method at that time, Dal Pane's work was all the more individual. Rather than to Croce, he turned for guidance to the work of another outstanding figure in the Italian cultural tradition, Antonio Labriola, to enable him to develop a framework of ideas and methods on which to base the study of economic and social history. His methodological essays on the « historiography of structures » and the « history of the working classes », which in the post-war years found many spontaneous parallels amongst theoretical writings originating from north of the Alps, arose from this background.

For Dal Pane, however, the theoretical premise is never a strait-jacket into which historical reality must be forced or disguised by wordy mystification, but rather a standard by which to organize research and against which to test hypotheses, always employing empirical evidence to do this. For while the historian may choose at will the subject he wishes to study and the criteria of interpretation which he wishes to adopt, once the research has been started the facts themselves exercise a certain objective influence; nor are they isolated but rather related to one another in ways that cannot be imagined beforehand. This is why there is a need for analytical research, and for a description of facts and evidence in as broad and extensive a way as possible. This, in short, means the need to explore those aspects which the *Annales* historians classify as *histoire non événementielle* — for Dal Pane

the changes in predominant trends of thought and ideas — which lie below what Labriola called the "iridescent spray" of the great stream of history.

In the volumes on the history of industry and commerce in the Tuscan Grand-Duchy many of the topics which Dal Pane has previously written about in the course of his very productive career as a historian and researcher find a place. His previous works range from the methodological writings, now collected in *La Storia come storia del lavoro* (1968), analytical essays, of which the most famous and stimulating are the *Scheda per la rivelazione dei dati dei catasti onciari del Regno di Napoli* (1955) and the equally illuminating *Ricerche sulla distribuzione della proprietà fondiaria nella pianura bolognese: 1789-1835* (1957), to his studies on *Lo Stato Pontificio e il movimento riformatore nel '700* (1936) and his *Il tramonto delle Corporazioni in Italia* (1940). He has also written on *La proprietà terriera e le origini del Risorgimento nel Bolognese: 1789-1804* and more directly on the Tuscan principality in *La questione del commercio dei grani nel Settecento in Italia: la Toscana* (1932), *La finanza toscana dagli inizi del secolo XVIII alla caduta del Granducato* (1965), as well as on *La storia del lavoro in Italia* (1944, 1958) which, by virtue of the wealth of information which it contains and the scrupulous method employed, has been termed a classical study.

Any consideration of the economic dynamism of the Tuscan Grand-Duchy and of the beginnings of a process of modern economic growth must start, as Dal Pane rightly argues, from the mid-18th century when aspirations toward *Weltwirtschaft* become evident, even though some may argue that their origins can be traced back to the 17th century. It goes without saying that any analysis of economic growth must be based on a quantitative foundation, otherwise, as Dal Pane states, the historian risks producing a mere synthesis of his own ignorance. On this, one must acknowledge that the author has never lost patience or given way to flights of fancy, but has based his research solidly and extensively on a vast mass of documentary and bibliographical sources. The principal of these is the Leopoldine survey of 1766 (of which Dal Pane, in 1944, was the first to study the findings), and especially the parts which contain commercial statistics and the results of inquiries. Where the documents of the survey are silent, the author has been able to fill many of the gaps from other official and private sources. One feature of the author's method, and an example of objectivity, is the use which he makes of the statements of the contributors to the survey itself which provide extremely precise details, rather than indulging in descriptive passages of his own. This does not mean that he is committed to an unbending respect for the documentary text as such,

however, because these are always subject to the most scrupulous critical analysis.

From the findings of the Leopoldine survey, Dal Pane argues that the Tuscan economy in the 18th century was essentially static and that there were no fully or even partially developed features of a modern, industrializing, sector apparent. The social and economic system was based on a closed and static domestic economy in which goods were simply replaced but not increased for purposes of commercial speculation. This was of course a phenomenon which was by no means peculiar to Tuscany and was to be found in many areas of Europe in this period, as the *Hausvaterliteratur* collected by Schröder-Lembke demonstrates. As far as industry is concerned, there is still considerable doubt as to whether it is possible to trace a process of growth in this sector which conformed to the model established by the Industrial Revolution. Although the information on the accumulation of capital and the displacement of the labour force is nowhere near adequate, Dal Pane has nonetheless succeeded in establishing a disheartening picture of the traditionalism which shackled those very individual forces which elsewhere, in England, in France and in Holland, were personified in the figure of the entrepreneur and embodied in the bold and risk-bearing capitalist mentality. For example, when Leopold's enlightened administrators asked whether it was thought that the introduction of new machines might encourage industrial development, the communal representatives generally replied that traditional techniques were quite as good as could be hoped for. And while they were, on the other hand, agreed on the need for greater capital investment in order for industry to expand, they were content simply to invoke the intervention of the State. But amongst the anachronistic and contradictory demands for new privileges and monopolies, it is also possible to detect a real awareness of the need for a liberalization of the restrictions on, and impediments to, the free circulation of men and goods. Equally insistent were the demands that fiscal burdens should be reduced, that new roads and communications should be built, and that the overweening privileges of the cities should be reduced. But an examination of Tuscan industry shows that in the period of Regency, the legislation of the Lorraine government was not absolutely innovatory, but essentially followed the system of conceding contracts and monopolies which the Medicean government had established. For example, the privileges of the guilds of the capital were strengthened, which meant that the government sanctioned the subjection of the industries and commerce of the countryside to the interest of Florence and the other principal cities of the region, while in foreign policy the traditional mercantilist policies of the past were still adhered to. At the same time there were certain signs of a more liberal approach toward

domestic trade, for example in certain government legislation on the trades in livestock and victuals, as well as the early attempts to revise the laws on mortmains and feudal entails (*fidecommissi*).

The part of the survey dealing with agriculture helps explain the weakness of the industrial sector, for as a result of the demographic situation in the countryside and of the increase in demand arising from the huge rural proletariat created by peasant industry and the putting-out system, it is evident that the agricultural economy showed many more signs of vitality than the stagnant towns. Yet although there was an increase in the number of open fields and of commons, due to the drainage of swampland, which were farmed on a rotation system or with alternating crops, this was not sufficient to alter significantly the economic structure of landownership and working conditions, as Dal Pane shows. But in so far as growth is concerned, what really contributed to an agricultural revolution was not so much the adoption of extensive farming itself, but rather the adoption of the sort of techniques and measures which were capable of transforming the existing structure. But the typical Tuscan mixed farm could not switch to producing animal foodstuffs extensively and so were prevented from attempting an industrialized production of livestock for meat and dairy products. Because of the burden of gabelles, the unjust discrimination inherent in the prices established in the city markets, not to mention the very slender volume of domestic trade, even the cultivation of raw materials for the textile industries brought little reward to the producers. But despite such drawbacks, problems, and obstacles, there was still a general conviction, clearly exemplified by writers such as Bandini and Pagnini, that due to the transfer of capital into investment in land which followed the decline of Florentine industry, agriculture was the primary concern of the ruling classes, and that the interest in agriculture « might well be considered as an interest », as Dal Pane writes, « which was shared by all, because it also attracted the rural middle classes and the peasantry ».

By the end of the 18th century these aspirations were still imprecise, confused and often even contradictory. They are well reflected in the work of Pietro Leopoldo who applied to Tuscany the innovatory reforms of the European enlightened despots in a particularly comprehensive and determined way. The measures which he introduced ranged from the abolition of the general tax-farm and monopolies, to the suppression of the guilds and of the obligations for apprentices to matriculate and pay dues to the guild, the removal of obstacles to the free circulation of grain and foodstuffs, and the concession of the freedom to export or import goods, to allow them to circulate freely, to sell them at freely established prices, as well as the right

to sell land at will and to follow or adopt any profession or trade. These reforms in turn led to a unification of the market, itself a result of the political unification of the state, which as Anzillotti noted the principalities had never been able to effect due to their dependence on the cities to which they owed their origin and consistency. Dal Pane then concludes from this that for Tuscany in the 18th century « while one may in general terms talk of a revolution, this was no industrial revolution but rather the creation of a free market in the broader sense of free landownership, free trade and freedom of employment ».

Moving on to the 19th century, Dal Pane's study is again based on a very wide and extensive range of sources which include the census returns for 1811 and 1841, the records of the Chambers of Commerce, the Customs records, the proceedings of the Consultative Chamber for Craft and Manufactures, the budgets of branches of the public administration, journals such as Zuccagni Orlandini's *Corografia*, Serristori's *Statistica*, or the *Giornale agrario toscano*, the *Commercio*, the proceedings of the *Accademia dei Georgofili* and so forth, as well as the writings of contemporary economists. Dal Pane's view is that heavy industry was still a thing of the future in the last years of the politically independent existence of the Grand-Duchy. He concentrates mainly, however, on showing how the positive features of Pietro Leopoldo's policies were thereafter consistently maintained and were not abandoned either during the Restoration or in the years of the provisional government. The policies of the Tuscan governments remained true to the principles of liberalization and emancipation which, in view of the long period over which they were applied, helps explain why it was that Tuscany was able after unification to take part, even if not in a particularly spectacular manner, in the industrial and commercial "take-off", from which the more socially and economically backward regions were excluded.

If one takes the economic situation of the Grand-Duchy, however, in the early 19th century there is little real evidence of economic growth. Tuscan industry was still based on a craft and artisan foundation. With only very rare exceptions, the use of mechanical power was virtually unknown, and where it was traditional water-driven machines were still generally employed, meaning that industries were sited where there was available water-power, although such places were not often the most conducive to their further development. At the same time, it should be remembered that it was hardly a practical proposition to import foreign coal, since its price, and that of the transportation involved, would have made it too dear to allow for competition in prevailing market conditions. And although

Tuscany had a long and splendid tradition of industrial experience in the past, the main sectors of industrial activity had changed very little from the past. « During the period of the Lorraine regime, the problem was not one of introducing new industries, for the country was well endowed with these, but rather of adapting the existing industries to the new circumstances of both the domestic and the international markets ».

There was then no transition from artisan production to profit-based and speculative industrial production. « Large industry », as Busacca wrote in 1855, « producing goods on a large scale, requires a proportionally large and free field of action. Hence its basis is always to be found in the level of consumption within its own country, and foreign exports form only a secondary aspect, which can only achieve real importance when it is divided amongst those foreign countries where industry has made little progress: but it is domestic consumption which must be adequate if such industries are to be maintained . . . ». But although the domestic market was narrow, Tuscan products were not sufficient to meet all its demands, and the gaps were filled by foreign manufacturers. The lack of capital certainly contributed to maintaining the stagnant condition of the Tuscan economy, and it continued to be directed almost exclusively toward investment in land. The various joint-stock ventures which began to appear were also quite inadequate to break the vicious circle in which the economy was trapped.

Dal Pane's arguments appear much more persuasive than those of other historians who have claimed that in the final years of the Grand-Duchy joint-stock organizations began to predominate. For in the joint-stock companies what was really important was to have a number of large shareholders prepared to take speculative risks, but in Tuscany there were no large capitalists who were prepared to risk their money outside agriculture, nor even small capitalists prepared to allow their investments to be subject to any element of risk. On the whole joint-stock ventures were limited to sleeping-partnerships, or limited partnerships between a few familiar investors. In view of this guarded and cautious entrepreneurial approach, there was little to be hoped for from foreign investments, quite apart from the very limited opportunities provided by the home market. Although the relations between the Italian capitals, including Florence, and the leading financial interests in Europe is a topic which still requires to be studied, Dal Pane shows that in Tuscany there was extensive foreign investment in the private sector. As Dal Pane rightly observes, the development of industry and commerce cannot be treated apart from the development of credit, and it must be regretted that earlier plans for a general history of banking in Italy have not been followed up.

Given then that the presence of credit institutions capable of sustaining any expansion in industrial output is an indicator that an economy is entering a phase of growth, it is evident, from the fragmentary evidence which we possess at present, that the Tuscan banks were quite incapable of lending any dynamism to independent enterprises. The savings banks (*Casse di Risparmio*) had little influence on industry and preferred to lend their money to public bodies and branches of the administration — as Prato noted — because of the « inveterate misoneism » of the land-owners who were openly hostile to investments in industry. The situation was much the same for the other six credit and issue banks which were founded between 1816 and 1849, and Dal Pane shows that their activities were very restricted and cautious.

Commercial activity was, on the other hand, if not actually bursting with life, at least free of hindrance, thanks to the legislation of the Enlightenment and of Leopold II, which had abolished internal tolls and tariffs and had increased foreign trade in homage to free-trade principles. In fact Tuscany provided a very exceptional example in Europe, and deeply impressed men such as Bowring and Cobden. But although Tuscan commerce was flourishing, it was naturally unable to go beyond certain limits, because of the economic state of the country as a whole. Further progress in this field would have required an increase in other fields of economic activity, in particular in industry and agriculture. As a result foreign trade became increasingly weak. The traditional stay-at-home features of the economy, and the lack of investment goods, prevented the development of a Tuscan fleet, and the majority of Tuscan trade was carried in foreign vessels. Not surprisingly there were, as a result, signs of stagnation and contraction. Livorno saw itself gradually overshadowed by Trieste, a port which provided an outlet for a much richer and more diversified hinterland. The entrepôt trade also began to fall off as foreign ships increasingly began to load goods directly in the places where they were produced.

Overall, and with only a few exceptions, there is no evidence in Tuscany of the massive pauperism which affected so many other regions, and especially the south, and this despite the demographic increase which could well have been supported by the newly reclaimed land that was being brought into cultivation had it not been for the tendency to turn to extended rather than intensive farming. « If one considers the problem from a purely statistical perspective », Dal Pane observes, « it cannot be denied that ends and means were related. There was a desire to obtain the greatest well-being possible within the terms of the existing economic order, and therefore following the principles of Enlightenment conservatism men sought

to bring together those elements which were considered to be indispensable for the improvement and development of traditional structures and institutions. Within such limits the Tuscan economy achieved considerable advances, and probably reached as full a degree of development as could have been achieved within such conditions ».

The Tuscan ruling class, made up of the type of small landowner the English refer to as "gentry", had a highly developed sense of private property, of legal rights common to all citizens, and of the need for law and order. In their cultural and intellectual formation they were deeply influenced by the liberalism of the legislation of the Lorraine governments and showed an irrepressible cosmopolitanism. It is now generally accepted that the willingness with which that class (or at least part of it, the Ridolfi, the Ricasoli, the Peruzzi, the Fenzi and others) accepted new ideas was not due simply to personal motives or calculations. Contact with the most advanced ideas in Europe together with the careful and informed observation of the political and economic expansion of the great European states could not but lead to a very modest appraisal of the conditions of the archaic Grand-Duchy and to an awareness of the "*biedermeier*" nature of its ideals. In this context Dal Pane draws our attention to the last "president of the Grand-Duke's Council", Giovanni Baldasseroni, who although hostile to any experiments which might radically change the structure of the old State, understood that something must be done to find a way out of the stagnant situation into which Tuscany had fallen. The reference to Baldasseroni is significant, for if it is important not to lose sight of the individual State's desire for autonomy, Baldasseroni's action is highly indicative of the uncertainties and disquiet evident in the final years of Tuscany's independent existence. Understanding that the boundaries of the small Tuscan state were too restrictive and narrow, he sought to create a wider area in which Tuscany and the other Italian states might still preserve their sovereignty and independence. It was an illusion which was both optimistic and pathetic. For although historians have hailed Baldasseroni's proposal for a league of Italian states as one of the most intelligent put forward in Restoration Italy, it also pointed, in a way that the author cannot have intended, to the regional crisis and to the end of the period of enlightened reforms. By adopting the free-trade programme of Neri, Serristori, Gianni, Tavanti and the others, Baldasseroni helped speed the change from free trade to liberalism, from reform to revolution. The honest minister saw the Federation of Italian States as a sort of common market, and did not understand that this essentially reflected the readiness for unification. Hence the alliance between the leading conservative Italian princes, which was designed in

international terms to protect them from Austria, could not but symbolize the increasingly widespread belief that the small size and weakness of the Italian states meant that the time had come to form some larger and more compact unit, and one that would not be simply economic. The dramatic ambiguity in Baldasseroni's position lay in his failure to understand this. His foreign policy was an attempt to preserve, through a system of political balances, the sovereignty of the individual states. But in so doing he found himself operating in a vacuum and relying on the principles of the laws of *raison d'état* which had passed with the previous century.