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## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

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G.W. BALL, *The Passionate Attachment. America's Involvement with Israel, 1947 to the Present*, New York - London, W.W. Norton & Company, 1992, pp. 382.

Clinton's election to the presidency has marked the beginning of a new phase in American foreign policy: for the first time since the war, the United States has showed its determination to give priority to domestic objectives rather than to the country's international role. The ratification of the North Atlantic Trade Agreement (NATFA) with Canada and Mexico and the summit in Seattle with the countries on the other side of the Pacific, with the purpose of setting up a free trading zone (November 1993), are clear indications of this new strategy, which not only places commercial agreements before political and military conventions but also opens the door to the formation of new alliances.

The new direction in American foreign policy, together with the decline of Soviet power and the ending of the Cold War, are signs that an era has come to an end and give cause for reflection. Surely one of the most important aspects of this period regards the genesis of the process that brought the United States to overturn its traditional policy of isolationism and to adopt an increasingly active role in the international arena.

The isolationist bent in American foreign policy goes back to George Washington. It was reinforced by President Monroe's doctrine and survived Theodore Roosevelt's imperialistic ambitions, the military involvement in the first world war, the idea of a supranational government — the League of Nations — which was sponsored by Woodrow Wilson, and finally, participation in the second world war. It was only with Harry Truman, and the need to meet the Soviet threat, that a comprehensive ideology about American responsibility towards the rest of the world was developed.

The political lucidity of the Truman government in translating this ideology into an economic programme and in taking full responsibility for its consequences, emerges with surprising clarity from a recently-published document, the minutes of the confidential meeting which took place at the White House on 3 April 1949 between the President of the United States, the American Secretaries of State and Defence, and the Foreign Ministers who had gathered in Washington to undersign the Atlantic Pact<sup>1</sup>. Truman and his

<sup>1</sup> *Vierteljahrsschrift für Zeitgeschichte*, n. 3/1992, pp. 415-423.

advisors did not believe that the confrontation with the Soviet Union would lead to an open conflict in the short term; the formula of a peacetime military alliance was to be adopted as part of a general strategy aimed to promote economic recovery and the establishment of democratic institutions in Germany and Japan, the process of decolonisation, the political and economic unification of Europe and the stipulation of anti-Soviet regional pacts in the Middle East and Far East.

The speed with which the United States changed the direction of its foreign policy, abandoning isolationism and taking on a role as a world power, may seem surprising but in actual fact, as Sergio Romano rightly points out in his introduction to the Italian translation of the aforementioned work<sup>2</sup>, both positions sprang from the same basic diffidence towards European politics: only on the condition that it led the field, without the fear of getting caught up in the web of European diplomacy, would America agree for the first time to abandon its isolationist policy and to work towards those very international agreements which George Washington had once defined scathingly as «entangling alliances», coining an expression that has become proverbial.

Another famous expression coined by George Washington, «the passionate attachment»<sup>3</sup>, used to describe the total and ruinous involvement of one country in the affairs of another as the result of a senseless alliance, provides the title to the book by G.W. Ball and D.B. Ball which analyses the relationship between the United States and Israel from 1947 to the present. This illustrates relationship better than any other example the abandonment of American isolationism and the pursuit of an active foreign policy. It is clear that by defining such a relationship as a «passionate attachment» the authors wish to put forward a very definite idea and to express a negative judgement on this aspect of American foreign policy; indeed at times the book reads like a political pamphlet. Nonetheless, it is a very interesting work, not only on account of the wealth of documentation presented by the authors and the vastness of their reconstruction, but also because George W. Ball — who is helped by his son Douglas, a scholar of international history and the international economy — is without doubt one of the leading experts on American foreign policy from the second world war to the present day.

Undersecretary of State in the Kennedy and Johnson governments, American Ambassador at the United Nations, lawyer and editorialist specialised in international politics, George W. Ball worked for the reconstruction of Europe after the war. He was adviser to Kennedy during the Cuba crisis, and

<sup>2</sup> S. Romano, «Aprile 1949: l'isolazionismo rovesciato» in *Limes Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica*, n. 47/1993, pp. 105-110.

<sup>3</sup> Both expressions, which are not widely known among European readers but which are fairly familiar to Americans, are taken from George Washington's political testament, that is his farewell speech in 1796 in which he announced his intention to retire from public life (cf. «The Annals of America» in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. III, pp. 1984-96).

fought a long and solitary battle against American involvement in the Vietnamese war. His reconstruction of the origins and development of the alliance with Israel, placed in the context of American domestic and foreign policy, offers us an extremely valuable insight into events, which is often in contrast with the official positions adopted by the various American governments.

The authors argue that the unconditional support given by the United States to Israel was not part of general American foreign policy and cannot be viewed merely in terms of a regional strategy to counter Soviet influence in the Middle East. Such an objective could have been more easily achieved by maintaining equidistance in relation to the Arab countries, thereby preventing the birth of nationalistic regimes like that of Nasser's in Egypt in the post-colonial period of transition. The authors equally reject the thesis that involvement sprang from the fact that morally speaking the Jewish cause was more sustainable than the Palestinian cause, since, as is well known, history has recorded tragic episodes on both fronts.

The reasons for the involvement and its long-lasting nature derived, and derives, largely from the political situation within the United States and from the influence exercised by the local Jewish community on foreign policy as a result of its electoral, economic and social weight. When Britain was about to end its protectorate over Palestine, the American Jewish community — which had supported the Zionist Movement from the very beginning in its project to set up a State of Israel — took steps to ensure that President Truman would back the creation of Israel at the United Nations. As is well known, Truman badly needed the support of the Jewish community if he was to succeed in getting re-elected in 1948, having won by only a few thousand votes in the previous election. The authors use the same argument to show that throughout the period, from 1947 to the present, reasons of domestic policy and national consensus prevailed over those of foreign policy in determining American support for Israel.

The book is divided into four parts and ends with some reflections on the future. The first part traces the history of Israel up to the Gulf War: beginning with the 1948-49 war, the authors go on to analyse the Suez crisis in 1956, the Six-Day-War in 1967 and the Kippur War in 1973, the Camp David Agreements and the main events of the 1980s, particularly the conflict in South Lebanon and the long standing revolt of the Arab-occupied territories. The second part examines the characteristics of the American Jewish community and the evolution of the political situation within Israel, with special focus on the policy to colonise the Arab-occupied territories. The third part deals with the relations between the United States and the Arab countries, while the fourth part analyses the material and moral costs of America's *passionate attachment* to Israel.

Although throughout the book financial questions are touched upon, it is only in the last part that the authors analyse systematically the economic costs of the alliance with Israel within the more general context of American foreign policy. In the immediate aftermath of the war, American aid was intended to

speed up the reconstruction, while in the period spanning from Truman's presidency to the 1960s, aid was more geared towards promoting the economic development of third and fourth world countries and countries exposed to the risk of communist infiltration. Later aid took on a more marked role in the stabilising policies pursued by the US government in the context of the international balance of power, such as the recent case of aid granted to post-Soviet Russia.

In the case of Israel, aid was firstly granted as a kind of reparation for the holocaust and then to undermine the expansion of Soviet influence in Arab countries. Yet despite the demise of the USSR, in 1992 Israel continued to receive transfers and easy-term loans worth 3.1 billion dollars, equal to 28% of total American world aid which totalled 10.3 billion dollars in the same year, while Egypt received 20% of the total; the remaining 52% was shared out among countries in Asia (18%), South America (15%), Europe (10%) and Africa (9%) The disproportion in the distribution of aid to Israel, which according to the authors has little to do with international strategy but derives mainly from the influence of the Jewish lobby in Congress, is even more striking when one considers that, with a GDP of 10,000 dollars per capita, Israel is classified by the World Bank as a high-income country. Moreover American aid to Egypt was granted as a condition for the attainment of the Camp David peace agreement and therefore once again as a result of the American commitment to safeguard Israeli interests. Overall, between 1948 and 1991 the State of Israel, a country with only 5 million inhabitants (corresponding to 2% of the population of western Europe), received 53.531 billion dollars in American aid, a figure which in real terms exceeded the total aid distributed by the Marshall Plan.

Apart from direct aid, the authors show that on the basis of a study conducted by the Congressional Research Service Israel received a further billion dollars in indirect subsidies from the American government annually, aid over which the American administration never claimed to exercise any real control. Thus subsidies granted for the development of public housing were actually used to build Israeli settlements in occupied Arab territories.

Among the indirect costs of the American alliance with Israel were those arising from the 1973 oil crisis, which according to an estimate made by Henry Kissinger, amounted to around 10-15 billion dollars<sup>4</sup>. The authors argue that the rise in oil prices decided by the OPEC concomitantly with the Kippur War, together with the embargo and the reduction of production, was the direct result of the pro-Israeli policy adopted by the United States, which since April of the same year had ignored calls from Saudi Arabia for an intervention aimed at resolving the situation in the territories occupied by Israel.

This interpretation of the 1973 oil crisis, however, does not take into account at least one important economic factor: the end of the Mandatory Oil Import Program, that is, the system of oil-import quotas and controls adopted

<sup>4</sup> H. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, (Boston, Little-Brown, 1982), pp. 885-886.

by the United States in the second half of the 1950s to protect domestic producers from competition and to safeguard national industry in the event of sudden reductions in imports of crude oil. At the onset of the 1970s, a rapid increase in domestic consumption prompted the government in its decision to abandon gradually the Mandatory Oil Import Program; the government was afraid of using up domestic oil reserves — which had a great strategic value in the case of war — and it wanted to reduce the comparative advantage enjoyed by European and Japanese industry as a result of the lower cost of Arab oil compared to American oil. Following this decision, from 1970 to 1973 American oil imports increased from 66 to 161 million tons and from 1973 to 1979 they rose by a further 177 million tons. In the same period, European imports fell by over 130 million tons, and Japanese by 12 million tons<sup>5</sup>.

These considerations which highlight the role of the increase in demand for oil in the United States, added to the failure of previous attempts by Arab countries to boycott America in the period 1956-1967 and to the fact that from 1973 to 1976 the reduction in the quantity of oil produced by USA was three times the amount attained by the OPEC countries, reveal a clear bias in the authors' argument that the oil crisis was brought on mainly as a consequence of America's alliance with Israel and of the costs of such an alliance.

Generally speaking, the book tends to skim over American relations with Arab countries, leaving the reader with the idea that the alliance with Israel prevented the American government from establishing a rapport with the Arab world. In practice, merely by taking into account economic relations, we can see that, other than the direct aid handed out, for example, to Iran under Reza Pahlevi or to Egypt after 1977, the United States has never ceased to send aid to the Arab countries, even during the most heated phases of the Middle-East conflict. It was largely through such funds that the moderate Arab front was set up, a movement which, after acting to mitigate the excesses of the OPEC in the 1970s and to contain Islamic integralism in the 1980s, showed its most decisive face during the Gulf War in 1991.

One of the main forms of indirect funding by the United States which is noteworthy, although it is not mentioned by the authors, was the so-called 'golden gimmick'. This was a special tax law introduced in the United States in 1950 that enabled American oil companies to consider the royalties they paid to producing countries as a tax on earnings paid in another country and therefore deductible from taxes payable to the American treasury, instead of a production expense that had to be deducted from overall earnings to determine the tax payable on a company's net profits<sup>6</sup>. In this way, not only did American oil companies obtain higher net earnings, but whenever producing countries increased their tax revenue through direct taxation of the income of American oil companies, a transfer of revenue from the American treasury to the

<sup>5</sup> A. Roncaglia, *The International Oil Market*, (Macmillan, London, 1985), pp. 96-100.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-104.

oil-producing country took place, although the net earnings of the oil company remained the same. The American government accepted the golden gimmick for political reasons since it enabled it to transfer funds to oil-producing countries, above all to Arab countries, in an underhand way, with the aim to support pro-western governments and to ensure that Europe and Japan had a steady flow of crude oil at reasonable prices<sup>7</sup>. By this system the Saudi king alone received funds worth around 50 million dollars annually without their having to pass for approval through Congress, where there would be certain opposition from the Jewish lobby.

This shows that the United States not only supported the burden of aid to Israel but also the costs of financing the Arab countries. The fact that in the first case aid was mainly direct while in the second case it was largely indirect, made little or no difference to the American tax payer. Moreover, some of the costs borne by the United States which the authors ascribe to the indirect costs of the alliance with Israel had more to do with the indirect aid given to Arab countries, such as the lost earnings on unsold arms to the Arab countries.

After having examined the types of financial aid given by the United States to Israel, the authors pose the question as to what would happen if such aid were stopped. They answer the question by noting that in the period 1949-1973, when American aid totalled around 3.2 billion dollars — largely in the form of loans — Israel's GDP rose on average by 9% p.a., whilst in the subsequent 18 years, when aid totalled over 50 billion dollars — mostly in the form of transfers — the country's GDP slowed down considerably: from 1974 to 1977 it never rose above 5% p.a. and afterwards fluctuated from 1 to 3%. Thus American aid acted as a brake on Israel's development, helping to produce an economy in which the state is the direct or indirect owner of 93% of the land and 20% of national income is derived, in many cases, from inefficient state controlled enterprises, while a cumbersome bureaucracy stifles private initiative, leads to overspending in the public sector and encourages tax evasion and the spread of the black market. The authors claim, therefore, that the withdrawal of American subsidies would force Israel to implement a major restructuring of the country's productive structure and to transform its aid-dependent economy into a market economy.

Certainly the withdrawal of American aid would imply a major restructuring of the Israeli economy, but we need only to look at western European countries to see how superficial it is to ascribe to such aid the state's control over the economy and the economic distortions caused by it; moreover one also has to take into account the specific nature of Israel's historical origins. At the same time the relation between trends in GDP and the amount of American aid is hardly relevant since it is obvious that in a period when state infrastructure was

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Senate-Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, *Multi-national Oil Corporations and U.S. Foreign Policy*, U.S. Government Printing Office, (Washington, 1975), p. 2.

being built from scratch, as was the case with Israel in the first 25 years of its existence, GDP grew rapidly, while after 1973 when the main work of construction was over and at a time of general world recession, GDP slowed down noticeably (once again a comparison with western European economies would be revealing).

In effect, the question we need to ask about the future of the Israeli economy is: how will the country make the transition from a war to a peace-time economy? It is quite clear that until now American aid has enabled Israel to sustain elevated costs for home and foreign defence and for colonising occupied zones; costs which, without such aid, would have been unsustainable. If in the near future the peace process in the Middle East leads to big reductions in these costs and to a gradual reduction in American aid, Israel will find itself having to reallocate resources and to transform its production structure. It could then ask the United States for aid which — qualitatively speaking — would be very different from the type of aid received up till now.

Overall, we can say that while this book makes a very detailed and thorough analysis of the relationship between domestic and international policy and the genesis and evolution of America's alliance with Israel, using a wide range of sources, financial aspects are treated somewhat inadequately. Apart from the quantification of the cost of American aid for Israel borne by the American tax payer — a figure which by its very enormity reflects the special nature of relations between the two countries — economic factors are not discussed very convincingly and only partly bear out the authors' thesis. Leaving aside the analytical capacities of the authors, we should observe, moreover, that the peace agreement between Israel and the PLO, signed in Washington on 13 September 1993 (the book came out in 1992) has certainly placed the alliance between the United States and Israel in a new perspective.

Nonetheless, the very fact that the peace agreement has been reached endorses the basic thesis put forward by George and Douglas Ball. Israel agreed to make concessions that were indispensable for the attainment of peace after Bill Clinton had been elected President of the United States with a large majority, following an electoral campaign centred on the need to give more priority to domestic issues. This election pledge — which was made, moreover at a time of recession — cannot be realistically fulfilled without cutting back on the country's international commitments.

If this interpretation is correct and the likelihood of a medium-term reduction in American aid to Israel combined with the favourable international situation following the Gulf War has effectively helped to speed up the attainment of an agreement in the Middle East, it is reasonable to argue that America's unconditional support of Israel did not accelerate the peace process and that the alliance between Israel and the United States was well and truly a 'passionate alliance'.

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A. CAIRNCROSS, *The British Economy since 1945: Economic Policy and Performance, 1945-1990*, Oxford (UK) Cambridge (USA), Blackwell 1992, pp. XIII + 338.

In this one-volume history of the British economy and British economic policy over the almost fifty years since the end of the Second World War, Sir Alec Cairncross aims to provide a rather matter-of-fact account of developments from the point of view of an economist who has spent some time in the business of economic management and a much longer time thinking and writing about it' (Preface, p. XI). Cairncross worked for the British government as an economist during the Second World War and in the early post-war years; he was professor of applied economics at the University of Glasgow in the 1950s; and he returned to government service in the 1960s, as the government's Chief Economic Adviser 1961-4 and the head of its economic service 1964-9. He has deliberately and understandably confined himself to macroeconomic developments — understandably because a narrative history of those complex developments alone produces a moderately long book. The volume is one in a large series, entitled 'Making Contemporary Britain', on British post-war history initiated and published by the Institute of Contemporary British History, and is, therefore, designed primarily for students of economics and history rather than for professional economists. It succeeds admirably in its aims.

The author has adopted a roughly decadal approach to his subject, with chapters 2-6 covering respectively the first five post-war years, each of the next three decades (up to May 1979), and the years of Mrs Thatcher's premiership (1979-90) as a whole. Since the first post-war Labour government under Prime Minister Clement Attlee held office from July 1945 to October 1951, the arrangement is at first inconvenient: the Korean war period rearmament initiated by the Labour government has to be discussed along with, and indeed *following*, the policy measures of the Conservative governments of 1951-9. Thereafter the division of events and policies by decade works well — for instance, the contrasts between the intentions and experiences of Conservative and Labour governments in the first and second halves respectively of both the 1960s and 1970s are clearly and interestingly drawn. And, as Alec Cairncross points out at the outset (p. XII), 'there *were* marked differences in the preoccupations of successive decades that this treatment brings out'.

The narrative chapters are preceded by an introductory one outlining 'changing ideas on policy and performance'. This provides a succinct and informative introduction to many economic-historical issues of the post-war period, for example on the nature and causes of British economic decline, especially relative to other European countries. The account of some more economic-theoretical issues, such as the rise of monetarism, is oversimplified, at least to a reader who professionally 'grew up' with these intellectual developments in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Each of the narrative chapters also usefully begins with an overview of the problems and preoccupations of the governments in that decade.

The different types of policies pursued by the various governments are comprehensively and authoritatively surveyed, and their details explained without any sacrifice of readability. Attempts at economic planning, fiscal and budgetary policy as an instrument of demand management, measures to deal with current account balance-of-payments deficits (including two devaluations — in 1949 and 1967 — and the move to a floating pound in 1972), and incomes policies dominate the discussion up to the end of the 1970s. The analysis plays down the role of monetary policy, at least until the Thatcher chapter; and there are no data on the money supply or the rate of inflation comparable to those given for other macro-economic variables. In this respect, more balanced accounts of macro-economic policy can be found in the major studies for the National Institute of Economic and Social Research by J.C.. Dow, F. Blackaby and others, and A.J. Britton (*The Management of the British Economy, (1945-60)* (1964), *British Economic Policy 1960-74* (1978), *Macroeconomic Policy in Britain 1974-87* (1991)). But this book is not intended to supersede those publications, which appear frequently in the notes and in the further reading recommended at the end of each chapter except the last and they receive pride of place in the extensive bibliography at the end of the book.

The final chapter, 'half a century in retrospect, 1939-1989', brings together data on Britain's real economic performance from earlier chapters and includes a brief discussion of the use of economists in British government since the Second World War. It also emphasises the inescapable limitations and the failures (perhaps equally inevitable) of UK macro-economic policy, which since the end of reconversion in 1950-1 has conspicuously failed to promote economic growth or to sustain high employment without inflation. One of the strengths of this book is its consistent emphasis, reinforced in the conclusions (pp. 302-7), on the external constraints on domestic economic policy throughout the five decades. As Alec Cairncross justly remarks in his last sentence, 'The economic history of the future will need a wider focus [than domestic economic policy] and will have to give even more prominence to international factors, whether they derive from the worldwide influence of the market or from policies devised at the international level.' Overall, this book is strongly recommended to its intended readership.

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C. GEISSLER-D. J. ODDY (eds), *Food, Diet and Economic Change: Past and Present*, Leicester University Press, pp. 224.

Despite its being a relatively new branch of economic history, the history of

food has for some time been the object of detailed study in several important international research centres. This fact, together with the rising interest which the subject has aroused among many historians, shows that it has become a serious object of scientific enquiry within the realm of economic history. At this stage, it seems, therefore, appropriate that the various research centres should conduct a global survey of all the studies which have so far been undertaken on the subject, focusing on methodological criteria and theoretical frameworks, with the purpose of making known the results of individual researches and opening a lively and stimulating debate at an international level. In this way, the exchange of contacts and information would be useful in helping historians to avoid hasty and even risky research projects that have no sound theoretical proposition nor any widely accepted methodological basis.

The book under review meets the aforementioned needs and brings together a series of studies presented at a conference organised by the 'Historians and Nutritionists Seminar' held at King's College London. The essays are divided into two sections: the first group comprises studies on food habits and changes in diet in Great Britain and Ireland, while the second is made up of essays that deal with the evolution of eating habits in other parts of the world, analysing above all the changes in diet which are brought about by economic crisis.

Although the studies vary in scope, there is an underlying uniformity in the approach used by the different authors. This overall coherence is the result of a fruitful and effective methodology which has been developed, discussed and tested in various parts of the world. Right from the start researchers in charge of the centre have aimed to give their enquiries an international dimension; indeed the first study was carried out in Ethiopia under the supervision of Derek S. Miller, a deeply committed advocate of research on the history of food, to which the volume is dedicated.

This study undertaken in a third-world country has enabled scholars to broaden considerably their research horizons and to make useful comparisons between the Ethiopian diet and European food habits. In this way, a valid school is emerging within the centre which has an international status and which is becoming an indispensable frame of reference for anyone wishing to undertake studies on the history of food.

Turning to the book, the first study focuses on the changes in diet in Scotland over the centuries. A theme very dear to Fernand Braudel is taken up again and widely explored: namely, that important food choices based on changed economic and social conditions were always possible within the narrow 'old biological regime'. By examining the writings of contemporary travellers, scholars have deduced that while up until the end of the sixteenth century meat had a preeminent place in Scottish diet, from the beginning of the seventeenth century the consumption of farinaceous foods gradually increased, especially in the lowlands. As Prof. Smout and Dr. Gibson stress, however, this trend did not so much derive from a radical change in taste but from definite economic

factors: the lack of an adequate supply of meat for the whole population brought about an upturn in prices and meat consumption became a source of discrimination between the rich and the poor.

The next essay looks at population growth and partly takes up the question explored in the previous study. The author, Prof. Wrigley, observes that Great Britain — together with other North-western European countries — has never suffered the plight of dramatic famine and that subsistence levels were such as to support an increase in population, especially after the Great Plague in 1665. Nonetheless the author points to a wide regional diversity in mortality rates, with urban communities showing a higher mortality rate than rural areas. Moreover, while this is now a widely accepted fact, scholars have still not been able to explain satisfactorily in what ways and with what foods inhabitants in rural areas were able to overcome periods of crisis, a very difficult problem to resolve considering the lack of available sources.

Undoubtedly a very interesting methodological approach — leaving aside the occasional tendency to make somewhat sweeping statements — is that chosen by Prof. Moore which is based on the study of dental cavities as a means of understanding the food habits of ancient communities. Moore has deduced that up until the end of the eighteenth century there were very few changes in diet and consequently the distribution of cavities did not change much and their overall number remained very small. At the beginning of the nineteenth century two new factors led to a notable increase in the number of cavities: the first was the sharp increase in sugar consumption while the second was the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. The latter, in particular, meant that there was much more wheat flour available for baking bread and thus the intake of carbohydrates grew. Moore concludes that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the typology and distribution of cavities had taken on present-day dimensions.

Another interesting study is Dr Crawford's on diet in Irish poor houses from 1840 to 1890. The number of poor houses in Ireland grew after 1840 in an attempt to solve the extremely serious problem of poverty. On the basis of the 'less eligibility' principle which regulated admission to these poor-houses, the diet was supposed to reflect the food habits of the poorest workers and so a group of poor-house assistants visited the most destitute areas to see what kind of diet prevailed.

From the very beginning the potato had a central role in the poor-house diet while the lack of meat was especially noticeable. Yet a series of poor potato harvests sufficed to cause a rapid diffusion of scurvy within the hospices; not surprisingly the infection disappeared as soon as potatoes returned as the mainstay of the poor-house diet.

Dr. Nelson's essay sets out to explore the differences in diet among social classes in Britain from 1860 to 1980. Up until the end of the nineteenth century there were notable differences between rich and poor classes. As a result of economic hardship, the first World War brought about a slight but temporary change in food distribution, while the 1929 crisis led to a sharp differentiation

in the diets of the various social classes. It was not until the second World War, with the introduction of a strict rationing system, that differences between classes became less marked and that a radical change in food distribution got under way.

Closely connected to the above study is Dr Buss's work on the changes that have taken place in British diet in the period from the end of war-rationing to the present day. According to Buss in this period there was initially a rapid increase in the consumption of foodstuffs that had been in short supply during the war, like white bread, sugar, butter, meat and sweets, but that subsequently their consumption dropped significantly, mainly as a result of the health damage caused by an excessive and indiscriminate use of such products.

As we have already mentioned, the essays contained in this book do not only consider food choices in the British Isles but they also explore diet and changes in eating habits in other regions of the world. Among these is a very interesting study by Dr Wheatcroft who analyses the effects of the famine which broke out in the U.S.S.R. in the aftermath of the Revolution. At first it was strongly felt in the northern towns, especially Leningrad, but later it spread to the Volga, the northern Caucasus and south east of the Ukraine. In many regions, given that the worst effects of the crisis were caused by a sharp fall in potato and wheat harvests, famine was partly averted by an increase in meat and milk consumption. In the long term this was to lead to the development of livestock raising, but in the short term it did help to keep down mortality rates.

The results of these studies — and of the other equally interesting studies that we have not outlined, for lack of space — confirm the value of such research for showing how much more complex and fluid historical processes are compared to what we once imagined in the not so distant past.

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H. KELLENBENZ, *Die Függer in Spanien und Portugal bis 1560. Ein Grossunternehmen des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, Verlag Ernst Vogel, 1990, 2 vols. pp. XV-533 pp. 264. With maps and illustrations.

The Fugger affair dominated Kellenbenz's academic career: in the bibliography of the book under review (which, together with the notes and the indexes, forms the subject-matter of the second volume of the work) we find more than eighty titles of works by Kellenbenz on the subject. Kellenbenz himself retraces the stages of his research in the introduction: he literally followed the Fuggers'

expansion, moving on from the German archives to Portuguese and Spanish archives (especially Seville and Simancas) and to American archives.

Kellenbenz began research on the Fuggers in the 1950s, encouraged by Cole, Lane, Redlich and E.J. Hamilton, who in the 1930s had put forward his pioneering theories on the price revolution.

Monographs on the Fuggers had already been published, notably by Freiherr von Polnitz for Germany and Carande for Spain. In his book Kellenbenz outlines the bankers' activities in Spain and in Portugal at the height of their power: he makes a synthesis of these activities and links them to the Central-European structure of the Fugger system.

The vast context of the system is described in concentric circles in the introduction to the book: beginning with the commercial links between Northern Germany and Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, Kellenbenz goes on to trace the effects of the great discoveries on the activities of the merchants in the region and to outline the different stages and strategies of the rise of the firm of Fugger, with particular attention to Anton Fugger.

It is well known that the Fuggers were very eminent representatives of a multifaceted economic elite, involved in manufacturing, commerce and banking. The sphere of their activities was not only and immediately confined to that of the economy and the European market as it was after the discoveries of the New World, with the unusually erratic price trends, but in particular comprised the much less reliable terrain of imperial finances. The dichotomy between the entrepreneur and the Emperor, both seemingly powerful but in practice each heavily dependent upon one another, characterised for better and for worse the Fugger affair.

The Fugger's era was the era of Charles V who unified a good part of Europe under his crown. 'Das wundeste Punkt im Herrschaftssystem Karls waren die Finanzen' (p. 28); finances represented the weakest point of Carlo's system of rule. The Fugger affair is entwined with a particular period in the formation of the modern state, that of the Hapsburgs' hegemony in Europe in the first half of the sixteenth century, and with their uneasy dominion over states that differed not only in language and culture, but also in administrative and fiscal structures and their increasing financial needs, due first and foremost to the many wars being waged at the time.

After this initial sketch, the powerful central part of the book consists of a very precise and detailed analysis of the Fugger system. The first section outlines the various stages in the relationship between the Fuggers and Charles V, first, and then Philip II, the loan mechanism and the more difficult repayment mechanism. Special attention is paid to the transfer of Crown bonds (*Juros*) in repayment of loans obtained, bonds that could be resold on the Spanish market which was ready to absorb these forms of passive gains, unrelated to entrepreneurial activity.

The vast second part examines in detail the Fugger system in Spain and Portugal, a system which required a structure comparable to that of the state's

financial administration as far as complexity and territorial range are concerned, and without doubt in many ways more efficient and more advanced than the state system. There is a documented analysis of the agents entrusted with the Fuggers' business in Spain and Portugal and of their accounting techniques. Much of the Fuggers' activity in the Iberian peninsula concerned the *maestrazgos*, those far-reaching territories belonging to the orders of knighthood which, handed over by the Crown to its creditors, required a complicated administration, and were frequently punctuated by conflict. Other no less important aspects of the system are then examined: ordinary credit, insurance problems, commerce.

The Fuggers' presence in the Iberian peninsula hinged on banking. However, commerce, too, had its importance and involved a wide range of goods: grain, mercury, cinnabar, products of the *maestrazgos* (their revenue was in fact collected in kind), metals like copper, produced in the Fuggers' mining enterprises and hungered after by the imperial finances for minting; precious metals and valuable items such as spices, jewels, exotic woods and slaves.

The third section goes back to the starting point, i.e. to the central-European part of the Fugger organisation, the heart of their system. The Fugger firm branched out from Augsburg to Spain via a broad network of outposts and agents. Antwerp and Lyons were especially important. The circulation of news, agents, correspondence, goods, promissary notes and cash was coordinated by the head-quarters at Augsburg, using an advanced accounting system.

The Fuggers and their microcosm personified the modern Western economic world, a macrocosm whose parts were by then inextricably linked to one another and where man was conditioned by numbers and the individual economic agent was conditioned by price oscillations which, like pulsations, regulated the proto-capitalist organism (*Frühkapitalismus*).

One of the last questions posed concerns the profit level of the Fugger system: profits and risks were extremely unequal in the various branches of the Fuggers' activity which complemented each other and had to guarantee a large supply of capital.

Thus it is a system of great complexity, a synthesis of which can only be achieved through the definition of 'enterprise'. The book's subtitle 'a great sixteenth-century enterprise', is not at all a neutral specification. All distinctions between profit and capital and profit and enterprise are immediately conflated. The debate on the legitimacy of profits and interest in its theological, ethical and juridical implications was moreover very intense at the time, and the Fuggers were at the centre of the debate.

Towards the end of the book it becomes explicit that Kellenbenz belongs wholly to the German tradition of studies on entrepreneurs and their history, which embraces the historical school of economics as well as economists like Schumpeter. Entrepreneurs like the Fuggers took risks in every branch of their business and with their profits built public utilities. There was a capitalism

based on Catholic ethics, where profit was seen as being morally good and a sign of divine blessing.

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E. KINGSTON-MANN, T. MIXTER, *Peasant Economy, Culture and Politics of European Russia 1800-1921*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. XVII-443.

In the last ten years, Anglo-American historians have often shown interest in Russian society and its relationship with politics, as can be seen in such works as Moshe Lewin's *The Making of the Soviet System* (London, 1985) and the two monographs *Red Petrograd* by A. Smith (Cambridge, 1983) and *Peasant Russia. Civil War* by Orlando Figes (Oxford, 1989). This interest continues in *Peasant Economy, Culture and Politics of European Russia, 1800-1921*, a collection of eleven papers edited by Esther Kingston-Mann and Timothy Mixter. The book focuses on the changes that affected the world of the Russian peasantry in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, changes that were marked by important historical events in national politics: the abolition of serfdom in 1861, the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and the civil war.

The editors have divided the book into three sections: economy, culture and politics. However, we can single out certain connecting themes which link up the essays and justify their being published as a collection. The essays all make a radical criticism of the clichés that have characterised the image of the Russian peasant village in the past. In Marxist interpretations as in neoclassical interpretations, in Romantic literature as in populist literature, we find the same fixed image of the peasant community based on age-old stereotypes: backwardness, poverty, immobility, isolation, social homogeneity. While these have increased the peasant community's charm, they have deprived it of historical veracity. On the contrary, the authors of the book show that the peasants made a collective effort to define a strategy of protection and change, and to develop ways and means to secure greater control over the economic and natural uncertainties that threatened the village's very survival.

The village was an institution capable of development and change. Stephen G. Wheatcroft shows that the peasants' standard of living improved quite definitely between 1891 and 1913. In her analysis of the Voronezh province, Elvira M. Wilbur scales down the idea of poverty, which actually affected only a small sector of the province, and shows that peasants enjoyed relative levels of wealth and managed to increase productivity and income. Esther Kingston-Mann explains that communal distribution of land, emblematic of

Russian backwardness, did not in any way exclude forms of investment in labour and capital, especially investment in land reclamation, irrigation and the improvement of cultivation methods. In the Tver province more than 3,973 *desiatiny* of common land was given over to permanent meadowland in 1877 and after 1894 the amount of meadowland increased to 14,152 *desiatiny*. In the Moscow province rationalised rotation was introduced in 1892 in two villages and by 1900 the system had spread to 127 villages.

The abolition of serfdom strengthened the peasant village's links with the outside world. However, even in the period before 1861, it is wrong to speak of total isolation. Rodney Bohac's essay deals with a hitherto unknown aspect of early nineteenth-century peasant politics: against the background of great European events such as the Napoleonic Wars and the great economic crisis of the 1820s, Bohac shows that there was a dense communications network between the peasants and the administrators who lived in Moscow and St. Petersburg. For example, petitions and often anonymous reports were sent to the central authorities which were part of what the author calls 'everyday resistance' techniques. Therefore, there was no communication gap between the centre and the outlying areas: demands and requests from the village assemblies contributed actively to decisions taken at high levels. Thus there was silent opposition, especially to fiscal abuses and to demands on labour which were often too onerous for peasant communities.

The isolation stereotype is weak even when analysed from the point of view of social relationships. The constitution of peasant unions during the 1905 Revolution was a great opportunity: as Scott J. Seregny writes, the unions united social forces from the countryside with those of the towns. The changes brought about by the 1917 Revolution, described by Orlando Figes, were even more incisive. Some peasants took part in the district and provincial assemblies. Others joined the army, where they learned new trades and attitudes of mind. Contemporaneously, the villages opened up to take in millions of townsfolk who migrated into the country in the hope of being taken on by the party's rural offices, in the political organisations and in the departments of the Red Army.

A powerful process of internal democratisation accompanied these developments: the *mirski skhod* formed by the old heads of the family was increasingly challenged by the common general assembly while groups that had previously been dominated by the gentry, merchants and state officials were replaced by the Soviets and by village committees dominated by small landowners.

Although society and the economy became increasingly more receptive to external influences, value systems changed at a much slower rate. Modernising and traditional elements intermingled. Jeffrey Burds points out that after the abolition of serfdom, when Russian peasants seized the opportunity to emigrate to distant provinces to find work, they never abandoned their village but created a 'wage market' with new customs and traditions that arose from the merging of outside values with those of the village. Elements of 'moral economy' mingled

with more modern vindications; this fact emerges in the protests in 1858 against the sale of vodka at commercial prices which, as David Christian tells us, started in Lithuania and spread to the provinces of Great Orthodox Russia and to the Penza province, and again in the emigrant agricultural workers' rebellions in the second half of the nineteenth century in favour of a liberalisation of the labour market, examined by Timothy Mixer. Samuel Ramer, in another example, writes about the healers, more generally known as *Znakbari*, who believed that illness was part of a magical idea of the universe, complete with devils and pacts with the dark forces of nature and so on. After 1850, these healers coexisted with representatives of official medicine, until they managed to gain the upperhand once more, during the first World War.

Christine D. Worobec's paper shows how strong the patriarchal structure was in the relationship between the sexes. However the structure lends itself to more problematic interpretations. Women were subjugated to the authority of their father, their husband, their eldest son and did not enjoy major privileges, although they were respected for the labour they contributed. In an agricultural and proto-industrial-based economy in which every member was responsible for a particular job in one or more areas of the production process, reproduction was essential since the child's work in the future was the key to family survival. However, while women accepted male authority in the family and in the community, they used the roles and the honour bestowed upon them to assert their will and to mitigate some of the worse aspects of their subordination. Both victims and plaintiffs, they exploited certain situations and manipulated ancient customs to gain power for themselves. For example, the wife of the head of a family endured her husband's authority but still wielded considerable power because of her indispensable role in keeping the family together as a social and economic unit and presenting it in a favourable light to the community. In those areas of high male emigration, such as the provinces of Kostromo, Poshekhaie, Iaroslavl, Arzamas and Nizhnii Novgorod, the task of running the family and the smallholding fell to the women. In those areas married women had control over their lives and enjoyed more independence than those who lived in areas with a low emigration rate. Furthermore women participated in the decisions of the local courts. Judicial sources mention women who went to court to protest about the ways property had been divided, about the usurpation of their funds, and to denounce drunk or violent husbands.

This is a book which draws attention to various social problems through an analysis of specific contexts. Mainstream economic processes, however, are perhaps given inadequate treatment. Often in works of micro-history, individual realities are analysed in depth but are not linked to more general changes and in part such a criticism could be applied to the present book in which the authors should have taken less for granted the reader's knowledge of industrialisation, the spread of monetary economics, market expansion, urbanisation, government economic policies and so on. Apart from these criticisms, the book's undoubted value lies both in the contents of the essays

which contribute considerably to our knowledge of sections of Russian history and in its broader application of methodological tools; by showing us a state that is peopled with men who make decisions and power which is used to govern and not only to oppress (Rodnay Bohac), the village as a stratification of social classes in a state of constant flux (Orlando Figes), and the creation of a wage market that covers new geographical and social areas (Timothy Mixer and Jeffrey Burds), the authors highlight the need to set individual choice within well-defined contexts that can be rationally interpreted.

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A.M. PIUZ-L. MOTTU-WEBER, *L'Economie genevoise, de la Réforme à la fin de l'Ancien Régime, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles*, preface by Jean François Bergier with the collaboration of Alfred Perrenoud, Beatrice Veyrassat, Laurence Wiedmar and Dominique Zumkeller, Geneva, Georg Editeur, 1990, pp. X-668.

This multi-author volume is best linked to Antony Babel's *Histoire économique de Genève des origines au début du XVIe siècle*, a work completed in 1963, drawing on a huge collection of documents. As J.F. Bergier rightly points out in the preface, a similar single-handed undertaking would be impossible today, considering the advances in historical scholarship, especially in the methodologies used in various branches of economic history. Therefore, this new work has been entrusted to a team of specialists, under the careful supervision of the renowned historian Anne-Marie Piuz and Lillane Mottu-Weber who follows worthily in her footsteps. It is to be hoped that a third volume on the nineteenth and twentieth century will complete a general history of the Genevan economy.

This is the history of a city which is of vital interest to European historians owing to its ties and associations with the Mediterranean world, on the one hand, and with the Protestant world and northern Europe on the other. Moreover, it is the history of a city that has always managed to preserve its own political independence and to secure its own material survival and economic prosperity in the midst of circumstances which have often been unfavourable. In other words, it is the history of a winning model that has successfully supplied products and services within a context — Europe — which did not leave much room for manoeuvre. To appreciate this statement we need only to consider the fact that the city had to move between the interstices of two political structures, the Kingdom of France and the House of Savoy; that, for its food supplies, it had a tiny hinterland; and that, from the middle of the

sixteenth century it had to compete in the silk industry — one of the key sectors in the urban economies of the period — with the rise of both Lyons and Italy.

Another feature of the Genevan Republic was that it had always been a Protestant (Calvinist) centre and the home to exiled reformers, especially French and Italians. Genevan historians have in fact identified two periods of *refuge*: a first wave of refugees arrived around the mid-sixteenth century and a check second following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. These migratory movements brought the city economic, demographic and cultural benefits, new impetus and new manufacturing processes. This was the case with the silk industry and with 150-200 Italian merchants and artisans contributing to its growth in the period 1550-1600.

Although the Italian community was not particularly large (from around a thousand people in 1560 its numbers fell to 350 by the beginning of the seventeenth century), it nevertheless made a vital contribution to the city's economic, cultural and scientific development.

Similarly, the arrival of Huguenot *émigrés* toward the end of the seventeenth century gave an important stimulus to the city, saving it from increasing provincialism, especially in view of the falling birth and female fertility rates after 1650. Calvinist morality and what was unmistakably a modern form of birth control were, nonetheless, the reasons behind Geneva's modest population growth: in 1560 it stood at 21,400 and it was to reach this figure again only in 1750, after falling to 12,700 in 1650, and eventually rising to 24,500 in 1800. The fact is that, while Protestant migration led to a rapid population rise (it was estimated that 10,000 refugees arrived in the city after it had converted to Reform in 1536, just when its total population did not exceed 10-12,000 inhabitants), it was unable to sustain such growth for long and eventually numbers dwindled. The population gap then came to be filled by other migrants, especially from France, as well as by Italian and German emigrants during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. All this ran parallel to the opening of new roads on French territory and the annexation of Savoy to France. For a discussion of these issues we refer to the detailed statistical data presented by A. Perrenoud, who also addresses problems inherent to social history such as education, the somewhat rigid social divisions and the improvement in the standard of living in the eighteenth century.

D. Zumkeller, L. Wiedman and Piuz herself pay equally careful attention to the relationship between the city and its minute territory, in terms of food supply and agricultural policy. Inevitably there was heavy specialisation (cheese, wines, cattle, milk, vegetables) and a search for high profits in order to compensate for the dire grain shortage. Despite relative success in this domain, even Geneva was not completely spared the scourges that periodically afflicted the Old Regime, namely food shortages, epidemics, social tension (for example, the banishment of 'bouches inutiles' in times of famine, proposed by the more radical Calvinists). Yet at the same time, new administrative instruments and advanced methods for calculating population and new welfare policies were

being devised, which together with the discovery of an 'urban question', placed eighteenth-century Geneva — the Geneva of Jean-Jacques Rousseau — on a level of modernity that was scarcely equalled in Europe in this period. The city road network, the building of bridges over the Rodano with two-way traffic, the solving of many health and hygiene problems were only some examples.

The same can be said for the city's manufacturing industry which has been carefully studied by L. Nottu-Weber in this as in previous works. Just as Geneva had responded to the crisis affecting its trade-fairs in the sixteenth century by recycling its industry in sectors that were in safe expansion, like the wool and silk industry, and printing, this capacity for adapting constantly to the needs of foreign markets was confirmed in successive centuries. Like other European cities, Geneva responded to the so-called crisis of the seventeenth century, restructuring and reinforcing its manufacturing sector which was geared towards luxury industries. One original Genevan specialisation was in fact clock-making which, together with jewellery, first established itself in the period immediately following the Thirty Years' War and finally triumphed in the eighteenth century, especially in the 1780s. Again, exploiting the difficulties facing the weaving and printing of Indian cloths in France, Geneva seized on the opportunity to specialise in this sector, too, although later, particularly towards the end of the eighteenth century, Genevan technology in this branch of industry did not, generally speaking, keep abreast of development in other European countries.

In effect, Geneva's tepid industrialisation reflected the evolution of the city's economy towards an equally important sector, the financial sector. Of course, other urban economies (Genoa, Amsterdam and Venice, for instance) experienced growth in this sector, but in the case of Geneva it had a very important and, above all, original role. As A.M. Piuz writes somewhat evocatively, «l'ancien marchand, devenu marchand-banquier au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, s'intitule désormais banquier au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle». While in the sixteenth century credit had financed manufacturing, favouring short and medium-term transactions, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Genevan capital was invested in the Dutch and British trading companies and in financing the national debt of various European governments, engaged in a series of devastating wars and needing a never-ending supply of capital. Persecuted in France, the Huguenot bank used Geneva as the natural hub for its European affiliations which were linked to one another through family ties and cemented by financial solidarity.

B. Veyrassat devotes the last chapter to the Genevan banks (*Passavant, de Condolle & Cie, Thellusson, Necker & Cie, Lavabre, Doerner & Cie*) and asks whether it is legitimate to trace the origins of financial capitalism to Geneva. Veyrassat gives us a convincing answer: increasingly involved in financing national debts, especially that of France, the Genevan bank came to create new financial instruments. At the same time, accepting the principle of hereditary transmission as far as government stock was concerned, the French monarchy got

itself into very deep water, as is well known: while previously such stock had an average duration of about twenty years before being naturally extinguished, the government now had to deal with claims on stock which had a much longer life. Yet the financial crisis, which the Genevan banker Jacques Necker was called upon — in vain — to resolve, claimed as its victims not only the French monarchy but also many banks in the Swiss capital.

The above observations are sufficient to reveal the interest and European scope of this chapter on the history of the banks and the movement of capital in Europe. Together with L. Mottu-Weber's attempt to give a general outline of the Genevan economy over the centuries, the chapter brilliantly concludes this history of Geneva. It is clearly a multifaceted city and deserves greater attention, especially from historians in other European countries. With the city's great economic and political influence, it would be wrong to underestimate the importance of this lively and dynamic Calvinist republic.

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J.-L. ROSENTHAL, *The Fruits of Revolution. Property Rights, Litigation and French Agriculture, 1700-1860*, Cambridge-New York-Oakleigh, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. XIV-216.

The aim of this work is to highlight the influence property rights had on the performance of agriculture and the economy in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France. It continues the debate among French historians about the real impact of the French Revolution on changes in landownership and on the increase in agricultural production.

As is well known, according to a widely-accepted interpretation, French agriculture was not deeply affected by the reforms implemented during the Revolution and the Napoleonic period. Excessive fragmentation, a low rate of investment, tardy mechanisation and a heavy regional division, continued to be the main characteristics of property structure well into the early decades of the nineteenth century. In this respect the Revolution (see Alfred Cobban, whom Rosenthal quotes frequently, although there are others) did not so much mark the appearance of a real entrepreneurial bourgeoisie but rather the arrival, in the political arena, of administrators, functionaries, and men of law.

According to another school of interpretation, to which Rosenthal clearly adheres, the establishment of new property relations, formally sanctioned by the bourgeois revolution, released energies that could never have emerged during the previous period.

Rosenthal's starting point are land reclamation and irrigation works which

are studied in four different periods: the period previous to 1700, that from 1700 to 1789, the revolutionary period and the post-1815 period. His theoretical approach is taken from the well-known theses advanced by Douglass North and, before him, Ronald Coase about the relationship between transaction costs and institutions. In other words, the author sets out to define the role of French institutions in regulating water use with the aim of minimising transaction costs (the cost, that is, of specifying, trading and enforcing property rights).

We should start by saying that Rosenthal's analysis of the relationship between institutions, the lack of reform and reclamation and irrigation works is extremely rigorous and based on solid theoretical propositions. Starting with the assumption that 'if transaction costs are zero, then individuals will arrive at an efficient allocation of resources independent of the original assignment of property rights', the author wishes to show that in the case of water regulation the situation in France was quite the reverse, since the execution of efficient drainage-irrigation projects would have entailed extremely high transaction costs, and equally high political costs arising from reform and juridical change. In the absence of structural reform — which was clearly the case in France on the eve of the Revolution — the cost of inefficiency rose progressively.

As regards the actual execution of the many projects which were proposed in the course of the eighteenth century, the following questions had first to be settled: 1) who owned the marsh-land (the *marais*) to be drained; 2) who was to undertake the drainage, or through whom was it to be undertaken; 3) who was to bear the costs and who was to receive the main benefits. The fact is that in France, as in other European countries, such rights were far from being well defined. The resources of the marsh-land (game, fish, marsh vegetation) were used by villagers and seigneurs alike. Indeed the latter were just as concerned as the former not to forgo the benefits they enjoyed using communal property, benefits they would lose if the land were reclaimed and brought under cultivation. Unlike in Britain, the enclosure movement and the spread of bourgeois property still had a long way to go.

Within this general context, the author analyses reclamation projects in Normandy and irrigation works in Provence. His conclusion is that neither the drainage techniques, which were fairly basic, nor the costs of such intervention, which were not excessively high, constituted insurmountable obstacles to the execution of the projects. This is borne out by the fact that large tracts of land were reclaimed and (to a lesser extent) irrigated in France in the first half of the nineteenth century; in other words, during the period when the establishment of property rights and an ending to endemic litigiousness among different social groups finally made it possible to overcome a situation of paralysis.

Now, while the overall picture and methodology, as outlined above, appear convincing and instructive, much less convincing is the treatment of all the system's variables. For instance it seems reductive to say that land reclamation

techniques used in France did not require high-level technology and that as such did not constitute an insurmountable obstacle. It is true that the introduction of steam engines throughout Europe was neither easy nor to be taken for granted. Yet they did enable a solution to be found in those areas which were subject to constant flooding. Again, in calculating the costs to be borne Rosenthal takes into account only labour, while it is equally true that the costs of canal digging and the maintenance of bridges, dams and locks were themselves far from being trifling. The deterioration of the Dutch polders, which occurred in a period of low agricultural prices (1650-1759) testifies to this. Again, to use the cost of labour variable so insistently in a juridical situation marked by the existence of *corvées* can seem misleading and anti-historical. To calculate quantitatively the level of litigiousness while neglecting the fragmented nature of holdings can also seem risky in an analysis of the weaknesses of French agriculture. The type of soil and its level of fertility, the slow mechanisation in the countryside, the inadequate use of fodder plants and the weak commercialisation of agricultural production were also important aspects to take into account. As a French historian (Michel Morineau) has remarked in relation to these points: 'la jurisprudence et *a fortiori*, la loi ne s'en mêlèrent que tardivement et parsimonieusement'.

With these few points of criticism we do not intend to reverse our original judgment of this book. Rosenthal is as lucid in his analysis of the aspects that favoured and hindered drainage in France as he is in other parts of the work. His study enriches our knowledge not only of French agriculture but also of a very important chapter in our history, namely, the history of international wasteland and reclamation.

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