

Editor's note

WITH THE UTMOST RESPECT for my predecessors and their work, I am thrilled and deeply moved to take up the position of Editor of *The Journal of European Economic History*. Founded in 1972, thanks to the farsighted vision of the historian Luigi De Rosa, and with the Bank of Rome's backing, the review was the first to deal with *European* economic history and the first to deal with European history *tout court*. The building of the Common Market having been completed between 1957 and 1968, in a Europe still divided by the cold war, the countries of the European Economic Community set out on the path towards monetary cooperation after the Bretton Woods system ended in 1971 which led, over a period of thirty years, firstly, to the birth of the European Monetary System, then to the Maastricht Treaty and, lastly, to the adoption of the Euro as a common currency.

It was under these circumstances that, assisted by a distinguished international board, Luigi De Rosa set out to "gather the strands of national histories that bind European history and form a single yarn", using the methods and the broad perspectives offered by economic history. The aim was to examine the facts, theories, institutions and men that could explain the deep-seated reasons for European unity, considering that, before being an organization with common institutions, the roots of this economic unit were laid in the early modern period and in the middle ages. From the beginning, the review's ambition was to reconstruct the history of a common tree, from its roots to its fruit, through its manifold branches.

Although there has been a single aim, there have been many different research agendas. Right from the start, the *Journal* has been a review open to the different currents of economic history that have multiplied

in recent years; it has been open to different methods, bearing in mind the centrality of unpublished and original research based on archival sources; and it has been open to interrelated disciplines, such as economics, law and sociology. Above all, it has kept alive the dialogue between economics and history since the wisest economists are aware that that we need economic theory as much as historical research. In the spirit of such openness, the *Journal* has taken into account the influence Europe has exerted over other areas and the influence other areas have exerted over Europe. Furthermore, while setting its focus on the modern age, the *Journal* has not closed its doors to more remote periods, such as the middle ages, nor to the periods closest to us in time. More recently, the *Journal* has paid increasing attention to the contemporary era and, in particular, to the twentieth century, with the aim of encouraging a dialogue between the past and present and showing once again how history and economic history are useful and relevant.

Monetary, banking and financial history; the history of agriculture, industry and the service sector; the history of transport and trade; the history of innovations and technology; the history of economic institutions and of national and international policies; the history of those individuals and groups that have encouraged change or else delayed it; the history of philosophy, society and culture in its deep-rooted connections with economic history: all these have been the subjects of articles and have been debated in the pages of the *Journal* which has always welcomed contributions from scholars who have either revisited old and existing issues or opened new agendas, prompting questions and research. In this respect, an important contribution has come from the book reviews which we intend to reinforce with a contribution from publishers (more than 600) and reviewers. All contributions, be they articles or reviews, will be carefully evaluated and judged independently: articles, in particular, will be evaluated by an international panel of referees.

Today the *Journal* is forty years old. Distributed in ninety nations in every continent, it is published by Unicredit, a European bank which

supports Europeanism and operates in more than twenty countries, including some outside Europe. Evidence of the distinguished past of the *Journal*, in many ways unique in its kind, is to be found in the commemorative volume (1972-2012) published on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary, which contains a documentary list of one thousand articles and just as many reviews, all divided according to year, geographical area, author and subject. The introduction, which recounts the review's history and its growing influence both in Europe and world-wide, is by Peter Mathias, a founding member of the *Journal's* board; we are especially grateful to him. We should also like to thank the past and present members of both the advisory and the editorial board, without whose precious collaboration the review could not have grown and maintained its high quality, especially after Luigi De Rosa's death in 2004.

A complicated transitional phase began in 2005 under the direction of Paolo Savona, who was appointed Editor, and with Michele Barbato as Managing Editor. They were responsible for forming a new committee on a nation-wide basis, made up of illustrious economists and economic historians and for recovering the delay the review had accumulated during the months following its founder's death. They also organized the important conference commemorating Luigi De Rosa which was held in Naples in 2009. Last but not least, they introduced a referee system, which was at first only Italian and then became international, and which has rapidly enabled the review to meet the quality criteria established for international scientific journals.

We intend to continue to build the *Journal's* future on this legacy. The review will continue to focus on European economic history with studies which, independently of the period dealt with, are able to highlight with increasing clarity the links between past, present and future. The history of innovations, products, sectors, institutions, policies, political and social groups that underlie change, ideas and world views will continue to be part of the *Journal*. Through single national and transnational histories, the aim is to achieve a broader understanding

of events and of making comparisons that are important for understanding the present and imagining the future. We shall seek the “lessons of the past”, knowing full well that history does not repeat itself, but that growth, in the words of John Stuart Mill, is “path-dependent”.

In this respect, the *Journal*'s new editorial format is in line with Unicredit's renewed commitment to support the review. The *Journal* was founded with the awareness that familiarity with European history is not merely about economic values but is about moral behaviour too; in other words, it is a value in itself, which is able to clarify judgements and guide action. This awareness is even greater nowadays, forty years after the founding of the *Journal*, in the face of the challenges that European integration and globalization pose for citizens, national states and institutions. History restores to us the image of Europe as a place where, over the centuries, it has been possible to increase expectations, ideas and trade, and to accumulate socio-economic and scientific and technological knowledge, which has produced benefits for mankind. In order to grow, such a legacy must be safeguarded, and, first of all, made known. This is why European progress today once again passes through the knowledge of its history.

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