
Francesco Dandolo, *Il Mezzogiorno fra divari e cooperazione internazionale. "Informazioni Svimez" e la cultura del nuovo meridionalismo (1948-1960)*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2017, pp. 269; Filippo Di Iorio (ed.), *Problemi dei paesi economicamente sottosviluppati. Supplementi a Informazioni Svimez*, Quaderno Svimez 52, 2017, pp. 117.

Our discussion of Francesco Dandolo's book necessarily starts out from the source that he uses. There is a letter sent in 1956 by Hal Hary, an economist at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), to Andrew Kamarck, then an economist at the World Bank, in reply to the latter's query about reliable and authoritative sources of information on the Italian economy and the Mezzogiorno. Hary wrote: "All I can think of is that the weekly bulletin of the Svimez (Informazioni Svimez) is an exceptionally competent source with all new developments regarding plans, opinions, problems, and performance in the Mezzogiorno." The letter is to be found in the UNECE papers in Geneva (United Nations Office at Geneva Library). Dandolo has demonstrated the perseverance to reread every issue of that bulletin, the intelligence to read between the lines, and the ability to paint abroad canvas.

His approach is reminiscent of that taken by his teacher, Luigi De Rosa, founder of this Journal, when he undertook in 1997 to write his economic history of postwar Italy, *Lo sviluppo economico dell'Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, based on the *Review of Economic Conditions in Italy*, a publication founded by Banco di Roma in 1947, just a year before *Informazioni Svimez* first appeared.

The preface to the volume is by Adriano Giannola, president of the Association for the Development of Industry in the Mezzogiorno (Svimez), which this year will celebrate its seventy-second anniversary. The book is composed of four meaty chapters. The first (“Misurare il divario”) covers the Association’s early efforts to devise parameters of development that were not narrowly economic but also took account of social aspects: not just income, but housing, education, and a host of other items. The second (“Le premesse dello sviluppo”) offers a highly original reconstruction of the debate on public intervention in the South. The third (“Industrializzazione”) examines industrialization from various standpoints, with interesting pages on the European experiences of industrialization of backward regions. The fourth (“Mezzogiorno e cooperazione internazionale”) sets the tone of the book, and it will be the focus of my remarks.

Apart from personal inclinations, I emphasize the fourth chapter because it is a rare example, and certainly one of the most complete and rigorous we have, of an *international* history of the South of Italy. Its basic theme concerns the international community’s dawning awareness, against the Cold War backdrop, that the Mezzogiorno was the largest backward region of Western Europe; its realization that the Mezzogiorno was not only an Italian political and economic problem, and its coming to see the scope of measures that were consequently required. This came about in a very precise geopolitical context, one so important as to establish the centrality of the issue of development. That centrality began to ebb with the crises of the 1970s and collapsed with the end of the Cold War, when the debate on development was watered down and finally vanished in a global ocean in which “a

rising tide lifts all boats," as trickle-down economics would have it. Dandolo's book is, then, also an effort to recover that lost "culture of development."

The marked originality of the fourth chapter is especially in evidence in its exposition of the triangulation among Italy, Europe and the United States and between entities and programs (World Bank, OEEC, European Recovery Program, the Vanoni Plan, and so forth). The cast of characters includes Pietro Campilli, Francesco Giordani and Donato Menichella and, among non-Italians, such eminent figures as US Secretary of State George C. Marshall, World Bank President Eugene R. Black and IMF Managing Director Per Jacobsson. The story is one of capital and finance, of international relations, but also of personal relationships. All the leading players were steeped in a culture of development that had burgeoned with Roosevelt's New Deal in 1933 and reached its acme (but also its temporal end in many respects) with Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967). It was this culture that in mid-course produced the Marshall Plan (1947), the Vanoni Plan (1955) and the Treaty of Rome (1957) that adopted the Vanoni Plan, annexed to the Treaty itself because acknowledged to be consonant with the Treaty's objectives. A culture which, unlike that prevailing today, was embodied in *shared institutions* for *shared objectives*. A culture, I should add, bound up with a cycle of industrialization and a technology cycle and with specific relations of force between the West and the rest of the world, the circumstances and ingredients of which were in part unique and cannot be replicated.

Another theme of the book concerns the role of Italy and the Mezzogiorno in the Mediterranean, northern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. This is highly topical theme in the light of the summit meeting between the European Union and the African Union in Côte d'Ivoire on 29 November 2017 and the creation in September 2017 of the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) as the centerpiece of the Union's External Investment Plan, which, it is hoped, will relaunch the policy of development cooperation that lay at the heart of the Treaties of Rome. In

this regard, it is gratifying to encounter the name of Giorgio Sebreondi in the book. Sebreondi was among the first to speak of a Euro-Arab-African *development plan*; his key concept was *integration* – of the Mezzogiorno in Italy, of Italy in Europe, and of Europe in the Euro-Arab-African and, naturally, transatlantic area. There is, then, a good deal of current relevance here, but also an element of *déjà-vu*, of a path left unfinished but still visible. In this sense, Dandolo's book is also a call to action.

Another name it is a pleasure to find mentioned – one far less familiar in Italy and very dear to me – is that of David E. Lilienthal. Director of the Tennessee Valley Authority under Franklin D. Roosevelt (again, we have evidence of the *circularity* of experiences and models, the cross-border exchange of ideas), in the 1950s Lilienthal was head of the Resources and Development Corporation, which, as Dandolo recalls, frequently sent missions to Italy in those years. It is worth quoting from a letter from Lilienthal to Donato Menichella, Governor of the Bank of Italy (the letter is in the Bank of Italy's archives): "After seeing the great effort that Italy is making, the results achieved, and the magnitude and importance of South Italy development effort, no one with my background of experience and interest could fail to be impressed and heartened." These words are all the more significant because the man who wrote them was one of the giants of the culture of development – not so much at a theoretical level but in practice.

To sum up, Francesco Dandolo's book is immersed in this international history, revisiting and reconstructing it in search of that decisive step forward for the Mezzogiorno on which so much depends.

I shall conclude with some words on the slimmer but equally valuable volume edited by Filippo Di Iorio, published at the same time as the book by Francesco Dandolo and certain to be an indispensable guide for interpreting the vicissitudes of the South in this international perspective. Di Iorio gives us a reasoned bibliography of the supplements to *Informazioni Svimez* and of the articles translated and published therein between 1952 and 1964. Readers will find the leading contributors

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to development economics. Di Iorio organizes the material according to three criteria: chronological, by author and by topic. What emerges is a rich debate that draws on economics, law, political science, sociology, statistics, history, and urban studies, in a multidisciplinary, *integrated* approach (another echo of Sebregondi's conceptualization), an approach that, with overspecialization and the eclipse of the *ultimate purposes of policymaking*, subsequently fell out of favor. We again find studies by many institutions, including the United Nations Economic Commissions for Africa and Europe. There are dozens of names, among them those of the economists Paul Rosenstein Rodan and Jan Tinbergen, who from 1954 were members of the board of directors of Svimez (the former until 1968, the latter until 1982). In the 1950s and 1960s no foreign economist failed to call on Svimez, which in those years was a veritable foreign ministry for the Italian economy.

I close these remarks on these books of two Neapolitans, one by birth, the other by adoption, by quoting the great philosopher and historian Benedetto Croce, himself a Neapolitan by adoption: "Every instance of concrete knowledge cannot but be, like historical judgment, linked to life – that is, to action."

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