
REVIEWS OF BOOKS

M.S. ANDERSON, *War and society in Europe of the Old Regime. 1618-1789*, Fontana Press, 1988, pp. 239.

War is so closely intertwined with public finances and other forms of economic activity that the economic historian must necessarily try to keep a watchful eye on the studies of armies and fleets of past ages. The task is far from easy, and for this reason the up-to-date syntheses of the "Fontana History of European War and Society" are useful and welcome.

Matthew S. Anderson's contribution to this series deals specifically with the period 1618-1789, though, whenever necessary or appropriate, similarities and differences with previous or later situations are briefly sketched. Describing the organization of armies, fleets and militias over more than a century and a half implies dealing with a variety of themes, such as the evolution of standing armies, the growth of military professionalism, the gradual strengthening of tendencies towards uniformity and rationality in the functioning of the whole military apparatus, the social origins of soldiers, the relations between governments and armies and the role of possible intermediaries, the mentalities of soldiers and attitudes of civilians towards them, the tasks actually performed by the armies. It also implies the study of links between war and public finances, war and commerce, war and economic decline or development, war and demography, war and social mobility. The author succeeds in doing all this in a book of little more than 200 pages, in a tersely concrete style, with that admirable self-restraint which is indispensable for popularization of the highest level.

The work is never unbalanced. It deals with the whole of Europe, eastern and western, northern and southern, a task facilitated by Anderson's own personal past researches on the history of eastern Europe. Whenever special attention is given to a particular country, this is well justified by its premi-

nence in a given historical process. Likewise, the author never indulges in the treatment of a particular theme, even when the very nature of the subject (for example the exotic quality of Cossacks' history) is particularly tempting.

Within the period 1618-1789 the characterising features of the decades following the outbreak of the Thirty Years War clearly emerge: the attempts by some monarchs to give new vitality to their feudatories' obligation to provide levies; the tension — determined by the increasing financial demands of war — between governments and representative assemblies; the diffuse privatization of warfare in the 1620's and 1630's, when very large armies were raised by business-minded *condottieri*; the increasing incapacity of governments to support their armies, leading to the systematic plundering of the civilian population. The social and political unrest of these years did not however bring about — with the sole exception of the English case — the overthrow of governments by the army. Until the disrupting events of the 1790's in France, European armies were unable and unwilling to challenge legitimate authority.

By and large the story of war told in this book confirms what is known of political, social and economic history. For example, the most prosperous and advanced state of the first half of the XVIIth century, the Dutch Republic, also had the most efficient army. Its relative military decline was only one aspect of the general waning importance of medium-sized states (Sweden, Venice, Denmark, besides the United Provinces), coupled with the growing weight of the great mercantilist states — France and England — and to the emergence of Russia, victorious over Sweden.

Many changes took place from the outbreak of the Thirty Years War to the beginning of the French Revolution. By the 1730's siege warfare — which had been especially prominent in the previous century and a half — began to be less significant in western Europe, while the movements of field armies became ever more decisive. From the first half of the XVIIIth century there was also a reduction in the size of the armies of west European states. At the same time their navies became larger, as an effect of the increasing scope of the struggles for colonial empires, trades and markets. By contrast, in central and eastern Europe the Habsburgs, the Russians and the Prussians made substantial and successful efforts to increase their armies, thus completely altering the European distribution of power. Another significant divergence between western and eastern Europe was the disappearance, after the Counter-Reformation period, of religious hostilities in the West, while the Russians and the Habsburgs continued to fight total wars against the Ottomans, then there were clashes not only between differing creeds and mental attitudes but also between opposing interests. The century of the Enlightenment witnessed a diminution of privateering as well, even though it could still cause great damage to seaborne trade. But perhaps the greatest mutation of the time concerned the attitude of society at large towards soldiers and their activities. Whereas, during the XVIIIth century, growing humanitarian feelings shar-

pened the awareness of the irrationality of war, a tendency also developed to regard armies as objects which were valuable for their own sake, as distinct from their usefulness in maintaining internal order or fighting external enemies. Soldiers came to be regarded with a fascination they did not possess before. Their organization and discipline began to be seen as models for the whole society. It is no accident that from then on military dress became normal for most monarchs. Besides, in the second half of the XVIIIth century, some French writers on military matters clearly foresaw the system of universal military service and the consequent revolution in fighting that happened after 1789.

The author does not emphasize the effects of war on demographic and economic trends, but he underlines the economic problems and achievements of recruiting, supplying, feeding and paying huge armies. He especially stresses the efficiency, organization and economic resources needed to build up and support large fleets, and of maintaining them from home at enormous distances. Technical skill, efficiency, financial and economic resources were, then as now, foundations for war, especially for war fought at sea.

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J. I. ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. XXI-462.

In this work Israel gathers the fruits of extensive research on the history of Holland in the modern era, giving a vivid fresco of Dutch hegemony in international trade during the period. The study is based on a wealth of first-hand documentary material which enables the author to make an accurate reconstruction of events and to comment critically upon the prevailing historiographic theories. In fact Israel aims to give a global interpretation of the Dutch golden era, presenting, on the one hand, existing knowledge and, on the other hand, placing himself in direct and at times polemic contraposition with Braudel and his school with regard to both subject and method (as occurred in the 1982 study on "The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World 1660-1661," which is an ideal preface for this book).

The keystone of Israel's new interpretative model is the re-evaluation of political history in relation to the history of economic structures in the long-term. On this basis a complex periodisation consisting of seven phases is made for seventeenth-century Holland — the long seventeenth-century, one could say, given that for Israel the period of Dutch supremacy constitutes a temporal unity covering more than a century — which are defined by the events of international politics. The periodisation of the Braudelian school,

on the other hand, distinguishes between two broad phases of rise and decline, separated by the mid-century watershed, and is based on the dynamics of the trade in low-value goods which mainly involved the Baltic area and which formed the basis of Dutch power.

According to Israel, however, it was precisely the break with this model that marked the beginning of the extraordinary rise of the United Provinces, which in the alternating of hegemonies (Venice, Antwerp, Genoa) marked the transition to greater integration with the world economy and to growing centralisation of commercial and financial functions. Phase one, which began with 1590, was characterised by the conquest of new markets, the expansion of the sector of luxury goods, and by the improvement and specialisation of banking and insurance activities. Phase two, from 1602 to 1621, the twelve years of the truce with Spain, was a phase of high growth, especially as far as the Mediterranean and Baltic trades were concerned and in the sphere of luxury goods whose demand was more stable than that of primary articles. The next period — phase three — was marked by the Thirty Years War, which weighed heavily on international trade, although not always in a negative way: Holland countered the recessive effects by increasing its activity in the colonies. During this period the main companies for colonial trade were set up, with the full support of the State.

It was after the turn of the mid-century — which is usually considered the starting-point of decline — that Holland's role as "warehouse of the world" reached its acme, and when the characterising traits of this supremacy according to Israel's model were reinforced and came to the surface. These were: the importance of luxury trade; the importance of the domestic production of luxury textile goods; the importance of relations with Spain, who was the provider of precious metals. As in phase two, the beginning of the upward growth trend coincided with an improvement in political relations with Spain, following the end of the Thirty Years War. If there was a falling-off in the trade of low-cost goods and relations with the Baltic area (a phenomenon upon which the decline theory rests), there was also a great increase in the trade of luxury goods and, directly related to this, in national textile production. The high cost of labour, a constant in the Dutch economy, far from being an insurmountable obstacle, came to act as an incentive for technological innovation and for specialisation in high-quality manufactures.

The tranquillity inaugurated by the peace of Munster however was disturbed by frequent international crises which were both political and commercial in origin, like that of the Baltic at the end of the 1660s which saw the victory of Holland. Resentment about Dutch supremacy started to grow in Europe and a large-scale offensive was prepared which was launched in 1672 through French initiative. Phase five, which coincided with the last quarter of the century, was characterised by the intensification of international conflict and the reinforcement of mercantilistic and protectionist tendencies. Whether the causes of hostility were military, structural, chance, economic, political or

even religious, the consequences for trade were inevitable. The Dutch position was attacked on many fronts. The most serious threat came from the conflict with France, which combined its military effort with an authentic trade war against Holland, making extensive use of tariffs.

If, on the whole, Holland managed to withstand the wave of attack, responding extremely well in certain areas (carrying out a restructuring of the textile sector, for example), at the beginning of the new century the struggle for the Spanish succession considerably weakened the Dutch hold on the Spanish and Hispanic-American markets, which according to Israel represented one of the vital nerve-centres of Dutch hegemony and caused by chain reaction a deterioration on all other fronts. The decline was by now irreversible — but what kind of decline? Israel elaborates an original solution to the historiographical puzzle over Dutch decline in the seventeenth-century: the phenomenon exists not only in relative terms — the incapacity to keep pace with the expansion of other European countries — but also in absolute terms (even if to a lesser degree in the colonies). Neither can the falling behind be fully gauged from data on the volume of trade. It was not only the quantity but also the quality of Dutch trade which changed. Holland's active role in the control of the international distribution of goods changed into one of passive intermediation. The very factors which in particular circumstances had determined Dutch success in the seventeenth-century turned to disadvantage in an era of growing protectionism and the triumph of industrial mercantilism.

For Israel, the Dutch experience constitutes an important stage in the evolution of a world economy which is characterised by the transition from medieval polycentrism to centralisation, and from a city-based hegemony to the hegemony of states. The role of the state in the Dutch golden era is heavily emphasised several times by Israel in its various aspects: the control and support of industry and financial institutions; continual military support of commercial expansion. The fact that the dynamics of the economy appear to be indissolubly interwoven with those of politics, especially in a period when trade was closely linked to the formation of modern states and their needs, and to overlap with military events, is very clearly illustrated by Israel in this work which adheres to the best canons of traditional political and economic history. If, as far as method is concerned, one could have expected a more original synthesis between events and structures, economic data and political data, Israel's excellent and very solid research nevertheless provides much insight into the complex functioning of the world economy in the seventeenth-century and its variables.

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P. MELOGRANI and S. RICOSSA (eds.), *Le rivoluzioni del benessere*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1988, pp. VIII-236.

The single parts — written by fourteen different authors — that make up this book do not show, if considered separately, much originality, but the work as a whole is indeed very original. It is the successful outcome of an idea which is both simple and sensible: to unite in a relatively small and readable volume the fundamental conceptions of specialists in different branches of the human sciences about a major historical process: the great industrial transformations (to start from that which took place in England at the end of the XVIIIth century), their significance and their economic, social and mental implications.

By and large the single studies of this volume are summarized versions of well-known analyses and research to which the authors have given outstanding contributions. Consequently, scholars with wide interests, capable of extensive reading and with a real knowledge of general history will find moderate value in them. But while I hope that such fortunate well-read scholars still exist in sufficient numbers, I fear that their survival is threatened by the tendency towards the fragmentation of knowledge. Quite a number of readers will therefore welcome this book — written by specialists — as a healthy remedy against the shortcomings of specialization. With great conciseness, elegance and clarity it focuses on a vital question from a variety of interdependent viewpoints, thus gaining an immediate almost universal appeal.

In spite of their diversities, the authors agree in considering the first industrial revolution as a prelude to an economic transformation of enormous consequence which continues today, and which has radically changed, and will continue to change, our environment, behaviour and ways of feeling and thinking. Sylos Labini discusses the nature of major economic cycles; Brian Mitchell statistical questions; Julian Simon demographic trends; Piero Melograni and Georges Vigarello medicine, hygiene and public health; Daniel Headrick European colonialism; Giancarlo Lunati ethical problems; Nicola Matteucci political issues; Ronald Hartwell and Sergio Ricossa (from quite different angles) the standard of living question; Federico Zerri the evolution of the plastic arts; Jean Delumeau the history of fear and Jean-Claude Chesnais that of criminality; Vittorio Mathieu the interplay of science, technology and culture.

There are plenty of ideas in this work, many of them expressed vigorously, by authors who have different talents and personalities. The unity of the book is thematic, reinforced by the authors' conviction of the great importance of the subject, but there is no coordination of effort to give it a unity of concepts and criteria. In a brief review it is therefore impossible to describe it as well as it deserves.

I have found particularly engaging the pages written by Vittorio Mathieu. After proving that the rise of an industrial economy is much better explained

if one also gives attention to the evolution of cultural and psychological attitudes, he goes on to discuss brilliantly and problematically the nature of magic; the relation between *homo faber* and his tools, machines and artifacts; the interdependence between industry, the arts and the humanities; the incorporation in machinery (more patently than in human beings) of the past (i.e. historical) technical knowledge and ability; the need for a new education (much more traditional than one may think) in our industrial society. Since machines are our creations we know them technically, and only in this limited sense are they truly our servants. Factual knowledge, statistically elaborated, of the services they perform or performed for society is not too difficult to attain, though historical statistics may not always be as complete and as reliable as one may wish. But knowledge of how and how much a world of machines determines human nature and its perception of reality is less factual, less simple, less measurable, more hypothetical. However we badly need this speculative knowledge too (especially the diffusion of this knowledge) in order to devise ways to hinder or diminish, in the future, the mass-production (standardization) of men that seems to go hand in hand with the mass-production of goods.

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G. H. NASH, *The Life of Herbert Hoover. The Humanitarian 1914-1917*. New York/London, W.W. Norton & Company, 1988, pp. XII-497.

This is the second volume of G. Nash's monumental biography of Herbert Hoover. The study is based on a great mass of material which is for the most part first-hand. The reconstruction of the American president's life is so minute that in places it becomes a kind of chronicle. Moreover, the author's attachment to his subject is very strong and Hoover, who tended to project himself as the fervid supporter of American ideals, becomes the incarnation of these ideals in Nash's book.

The events of the quadriennial 1914-17, which saw Hoover engaged in food aid operations in Belgium and Northern France, both under German occupation, showed the future president in the role of philanthropist. From the very beginning, Hoover's humanitarian commitment distinguished itself by its innovatory character, in both dimension and style. After the invasion of Belgium, Hoover abandoned nearly all his interests and his activity as a mining engineer — which, after having brought him wealth, was in fact showing some signs of crisis — and founded the *Commission For Relief in Belgium*. He presided over this with the air of an autocrat until the United States' entry into the war. The breadth of the role assumed by the organism was unprecedented: first and foremost to provide more than nine million

civilians with food and other indispensable articles like clothing, at a time when international trade was disrupted and hampered by war. Such an enormous task, which was considered by contemporaries as "the greatest international undertaking in the history of charity" required a solid and efficient organisation. Hoover applied strict managerial criteria to the running of the Commission, realising "the apotheosis of enterprise applied to philanthropy." In effect, the Commission's activities throw light upon aspects of European economic history in the period of the First World War which are little known. The organisation of aid in Belgium and in Northern France developed into a huge effort of planning and control: the goods, bought thanks to international loans or coming from private charity, were entirely withdrawn from the market and had to pass through the various bureaucratic channels of the Commission. The latter, through a minute system of control at the centre and on the periphery and through meticulous book-keeping, had the task of assessing the needs of the population and of guaranteeing the maximum transparency and distributive equity.

Numerous problems faced the Commission and its president, ranging from constant financial difficulties to political problems which were none the less serious. The organism risked collapsing several times not only on account of the repeated diplomatic crises but also through Belgian attempts to take over its direction and control; Hoover had to struggle to the last in order to preserve the American character of the undertaking, which he nevertheless succeeded in doing. In effect, with his devotion to the cause of aid, the future President was also carrying out a great publicity campaign, showing ability and far-sightedness. Already keen to prove himself in new fields at the moment of the occupation of Belgium, Hoover recognised the need to organise aid to civilians on a scale in proportion to the new dimensions and characteristics of the war. The grandeur and the results of the undertaking secured him a far-reaching reputation and guaranteed his triumphant entry into American politics.

One of the merits of Nash's study is the reconstruction of numerous events of western political and economic life during the period of the first world war which are little known. On the other hand, one of the shortcomings of the work is its often highly hagiographic tone. For example, while giving a vivid picture of dynamism and enterprise in the mining sector around the time of the war, in which Hoover had reached an important position, Nash gives only secondary importance to his financial and patrimonial operations. The overall result is a picture which is somewhat unbalanced in favour of the future President's public life, and in some places one has the impression that the biography is depicting the same character of the propaganda and the myth.

In conclusion, Nash's work is useful for the historian in two ways. On the one hand, there is the great quantity of documentary material. On the other hand, it is precisely Hoover's myth, fomented by Hoover himself and

taken up again and developed by Nash, which makes it possible for us to understand more clearly the implications of those features of American ideology — faith in progress, in private initiative, in industry — that the crisis beginning in 1929 was to put to the test, marking the political defeat of their standard-bearer.

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A. TEICHOVA, M. LEVY-LEBOYER, and H. NUSSBAUM, eds., *Multinational Enterprise in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de L'Homme, London and Paris, 1986, pp x + 396.

The conference volume is a literary form whose passing few reviewers would mourn, and volumes like this, with twenty five contributors, are not usually exceptions to the rule. Yet the volume under review is. It must rank as one of the best conference volumes prepared for the International Economic History Congress. The editors are to be complimented on the genuinely international perspective they have brought to bear, with a range of contributors from the first, second and third worlds. They have even provided us with a full index (an omission which less punctilious editors usually refuse to repair, as the publisher's demand for it invariably comes when the conference is little more than a happy memory). If all conference volumes were conceived and edited so well, the genre would not have fallen into such disrepute.

Part I examines the growth of multinational enterprise with a thoughtful critique of the concept by David Fieldhouse and a stimulating preview by Alfred Chandler of his forthcoming European extension of *The Visible Hand*, and by Mira Wilkins of her study of foreign multinationals in the U.S.A. Case studies of the groups Philippart and Schneider, Rothschilds' industrial interests, Tate and Lyle, and U.S. multinationals in the U.K. car industry show the wide range of industrial multinationals. The banking sector is represented by case studies of multinational financial intermediation in the Danube basin, Sweden and the Middle East. Four German scholars — Helga Nussbaum, Peter Hertner, Harm Schröter and Verena Schröter — provide a welcome corrective to the all-too-common Anglo-Saxon multinational experts' views of German and Central European market organisation, by examining the functioning of cartels and other forms of multinational regulation. Eight concluding essays on the government and multinationals range geographically from Mexico, through Poland and Finland to Zimbabwe. The

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authors — not all of whom space permits naming — are equally multinational. Parochial English-speaking readers will be particularly interested in Richard Overy's useful study of German multinationals and the Nazi state in occupied Europe which usefully draws attention to the available archives and articles.

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