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History and the Social Sciences: The Second Congress of the «Società degli Storici Italiani»

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The second *Congresso Nazionale di Scienze Storiche* was held in the *Palazzo della Provincia* in the city of Salerno between the 23rd and 26th April 1972, in the presence of a gathering of some 470 participants from all over Italy, together with a number of well-known foreign scholars. As the title, *New methods in historical research* indicates, the intention was to develop the aims of the first Congress held at Perugia five years ago. Moving on from an initial exhaustive survey of the output, orientations and interests of Italian historiography since the war, an attempt was made to examine the same subject from a different angle, in which the growing tendency toward interdisciplinary study was treated as perhaps the single unifying factor of this output. A congress which was then highly complex, and which at times ran the risk of concentrating only on sources while at others showed a more promising tendency to tackle positively problems of methodology. It was the latter of course which provided answers to some of the questions set by the theme, although in practice this theme was not always followed (for example in the section on agrarian history, in that on structuralism and also to some extent in those on sociology and urban studies). In fact, a great deal remains to be done in order to overcome the disparity on one hand between the appreciation of the value of methods which come to us from other disciplines, and, on the other, their practical application to historical research.

In the first session, after the Rector of the University of Salerno had made a short speech of welcome, the first paper on the programme, entitled *Political thought and history* was given by Fulvio Tessitore. The paper began by criticizing past trends in this field, in particular the concept that the history of ideas provided a 'pure' history of culture — and idea which

derived from misuse of the term 'historicism' which had begun in the 1930s and was continued thereafter. This was a consequence of the privileged position given to philosophy in the study of political thought at the expense of philology, which was practically excluded altogether (historians, said Tessitore, were « half missing »). The abandonment of philology was the price paid for the fundamental and « indicative » distinction drawn between method and system (from Hegel to Dilthey, Croce and Hartmann). But a shift of emphasis is evident in new studies such as that of Firpo on Campanella (who is examined on a strictly documentary level) or those of Venturi. The intention here was not so much to develop a mechanistic study of the 'origins' of ideas, but rather to follow in practice their historical function. But inherent in this approach is the danger, which Venturi himself has pointed out, of studying political ideas only at the stage when they have already been generally absorbed and institutionalized. This then is no history of philosophy, but neither is it history of society *tout court.*

But, the author warned, it is necessary to look in some detail at the type of philosophy which historians have criticized. They criticize philosophy, *strictu sensu*, that is, pure speculation, and not that philosophy which is understood in modern terms to be « a factor of life in society ». And it should not be forgotten, argued Tessitore, that Idealism assumed this interpretation and followed this new path, at least in its historicism, in attempting to « destroy the rhythm of a being which is totally restricted to the act of thinking », which had been postulated by the followers of Gentile. This was a path which at that time could not be followed right to the end, but has been that along which contemporary philosophical thought has moved (existentialism, phenomenology, Ernst Bloch, psychoanalysis). At this point, however, the historians' attack on philosophy no longer seems to be validly motivated. Ideas have become « ideations », and political thought can be legitimately recognized in historical terms as the practical influence of thought in history. By providing ideas with a historical perspective, a non-conceptualist « mobility » of ideas is attained from the historical knowledge and, in the last analysis, from the history of ideas which results. And it is in this context that the role of sciences such as linguistics, psychology, and sociology, becomes evident. The paradoxical position of a structuralist like Foucault is certainly preferable to the constant danger of a relapse into concepts of « absolute unity ». As the speaker stated, the openly ahistorical position of structuralism derives from an « excess of historical awareness », rather than a deficiency. It remains true, however, that linking time and space can no longer imply the revival of a unilinear vision of the historical process (as any introduction of the idea of « discontinuity » clearly shows; in this context Tessitore drew attention to Mazzarino's critique of « linear » constructions). To conclude, then, the most suitable definition for a typical peripheral discipline such as this would seem to be « the history of political ideas ». Under-

stood in this way it may assume a role of no small importance for the study of history in general.

In the afternoon (with Marongiu in the chair), Pietro Rossi presented his extensive paper on *Cultural anthropology and historical research.* It was immediately apparent that this was one of the weightiest papers delivered during the Congress. It was well documented and frankly attempted to establish a dialogue with the historians. Unfortunately the latter were not prepared to take up this invitation directly, so that the distinctions between the two disciplines, which recurred throughout the paper, were left intact. This refers not only to those distinctions that were made explicit, but also to the author's implicit assumption in considering history as a traditionally individualist discipline which cannot basically then be considered a science. The silence of the historians on this point confirmed, however, how little the existence of such a limitation could be blamed on the author himself — a limitation which was immediately evident in his appraisal of the attitudes adopted by anthropologists towards history from the very beginning, that is, from the time of their emergence from the positivist melting-pot.

After surveying the development of the attitudes of the different schools of anthropology (Boas, the Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown school of functionalism, and the French Durkheim-Mauss-Lévi-Strauss tradition) Rossi was at his most interesting when tackling the relationship between anthropology and history, this time from the point of view of the historians. The direct conflict, which had been illustrated in the first part, between individualization and generalization, was toned down, revealing the concrete possibility of ending the lack of interest which has been characteristic of the relationship between the two disciplines for many years, once the dichotomy between primitive society and civilized society has been overcome, and once the possibilities of the use of unwritten sources have been taken up. This new attitude on the part of historians presupposes in particular that « interest in the way in which events are linked together is paralleled by an interest in the long-term transformation of social structures and mentalities ». In this field, following the lines laid down by Dupront and after the initial researches of Vaillant, Métraux and Zuidema, a series of promising opportunities for collaboration are becoming apparent. In studying peasant societies in the field of « the cultural stratification of a complex society », or again in studying the forms of culturalization, the use of anthropological insights may open up unexpected historical possibilities.

The debate on the two papers concentrated only on the second, despite Tessitore's self-confessed « unorthodoxy ». Both Lepore and Mazza pointed out a number of omissions regarding the use made by ancient historians of methods borrowed from the anthropologists. In addition the historical discussion on the 19th century origins of anthropology led Mazza to consider the fundamental watershed brought about in the field of ancient history by

the hegemony in about 1890 of the three German universities which were won over to idealist philosophy. Rossi pointed out that his paper made no claim to be an exhaustive survey but was intended as an examination of two separate solutions to the problem of the relationship between history and anthropology. The lack of comment on a number of these points, however, was due to the fact that a number of openings, although in themselves of interest, did not seem to have any clearly defined anthropological bearing.

An interesting discussion then followed between the speaker and Romeo De Maio; the latter had tackled the problem of the relationship between religious anthropology and history, and in particular had looked at the influences of magic on peasant sub-cultures, as a result of which he had found the Weberian techniques of analysis quite inadequate in fields in which written texts, such as pietist handbooks, were unusable, because the society in question was largely illiterate. The recent rediscovery of some eighty codices that formed part of an enquiry initiated by the ecclesiastical authorities in the South of Italy between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would provide an adequate testimony to the low level of diffusion of written texts within the Catholic community. Pietro Rossi agreed on the importance of the study of popular religion and made reference to the pioneering work in this field of the idealist ethnologist — Ernesto De Martino — who was the first in Italy to pose the problem of a whole series of « pagan survivals », to use Taylor's term, in a historical context. But Rossi warned his questioner to adopt greater caution when inferring, on the basis of the small proven influence of devotional manuals in the South, a more general mistrust of the sources which Weber had examined, and in particular of the value of literature which set out to lay down precepts. It was essential to bear in mind the differences between Calvinist and Catholic societies and the low level of participation was probably, as it remains even now, a characteristic of a religious society of Catholic origin. It was not by accident that Max Weber underlined the clear opposition between puritanism and magic; but Catholicism, perhaps due to its own doctrinal roots, tended to assume a position which was much less intransigent towards certain aspects of popular culture.

The two sessions of 24th (in the morning chaired by Manselli, in the afternoon by Ruiz Martin) were among the most intense of the whole Congress. The paper given by Bruno Paradisi on *The history of law and philology*, although subject to a number of necessary cuts, seemed to be divided into two parts, the first being mainly a survey, and the second an attempt to clarify the importance of philology in contemporary juridical history. The true « public function » exercised by philology from earliest times originated from the birth of textual criticism, the polemic between rhetoric and anti-rhetoric, and from the important *reductio ad unum* which resulted from the work of the medieval glossers. Philology in fact had a much more

radical influence in the field of juridical studies than literature, and of this the speaker gave ample evidence. With the closing of the Middle Ages and the collapse of the imperial institutions a new type of philology emerged which looked not to history and historical studies but rather to literature. This new philology, which was itself an offshoot of the humanist movement, made a considerable contribution to the refinement of techniques of examining juridical texts, but its evolution was also accompanied by a subtle process in which philology was substituted for history, which is essentially at the basis of the situation that we have inherited. The combination of law and philology is then of long standing, and one might even define it as being natural; but as a case such as that of Mommsen is extremely rare, a description of the way in which philology gained predominance in this field can also act as a brake as regards historical understanding of juridical phenomena. The existence of historical studies of national law (in particular Italian and German; in this context mention was made of the attempts to bring into contact historians and experts on positive law which characterise the work of the *Società Italiana di Storia del Diritto*) shows that something is changing, but also makes clear the necessity for philology to renew its « historical interests ».

The paper given by Ettore Lepore was marked both by erudition and by a wealth of new ideas. The paper was entitled *Old and new interdisciplinary studies in ancient history*. It provided a brilliant discussion of problems, methods and orientations at present being developed in this field. It was presented with a masterly control that made it in many ways similar to the paper on anthropology. Rather than hesitate between « history and sociology » or between « sociology and history », following the example given by Mazzarino and Antoni, the speaker attempted to trace a well-defined path from antiquarianism to history and then to sociology, a progression which was not in fact always clearly defined, and perhaps one should add, could not be so. Much more clear, however, and more characteristic of the survey, was the attention which it devoted to so-called problems of new departures. More than one of the old war-horses of historical polemic were finally laid low; the debate over primitivism and modernism, for example, now seems completely irrelevant in terms of the revival of interest in problems of economic and social structure, which has resulted on one hand from the striking achievements of the 'functionalist' school of Moses Finley and Karl Polyani and, on the other, from the application of Marxist ideas on asiatic methods of production. The latter has also led to the development of new perspectives which again witness the progression from that paleo-Marxist phase to which the evolutionist ideas put forward by Thompson remained essentially tied, as Rossi had pointed out. Once again, it seemed that the dangers inherent in the adoption of a sociological perspective could easily be identified on the basis of the experience of the study of ancient history in Italy (reference was

here made to M. A. Levi). Lepore went on to suggest that it was far better to settle for the study of a micro-system or even of political history, rather than write erroneous and misguided economic histories. Provided that they developed on a firm and new basis of an « all-embracing philology », the indications of a return to political history and to the study of institutions in Italy are by no means a bad sign.

The speaker then turned his attention to fields which are less well known and which require, or ought to require, adequate techniques of approach. One of these was the problem of the development of memory and its relation to the oral tradition, and the enormous problem deriving from the fact that other cultures co-existed with the culture predominating in a literate society. On this subject an exchange of ideas with the medievalists would be useful (and not only on this; one thinks immediately of the way in which the problem of the relations between the city and the countryside have been carried forward by the Polish archaeologists, not to mention of course the *Sixième Section*). Mention was also made of the attempts to assess the influence of the evolution of a collective mentality on ancient society. And in this case there are a number of recent works which clearly show the danger of slipping into an « evolutionist constructivism », which have attempted by use of a comparative method to move from the synchronic to the diachronic. Other examples can easily be found, like ethnological and archaeological research on manufactures, or demographic studies of structures — at present extremely popular, even for the ancient period — together with ideas of « private economy » etc.

These various points, it must be noted, by no means exhaust the wide panorama provided by Lepore; as the written text will certainly show when it is published, he followed the theme of the relations between other disciplines throughout the whole series of subjects which he had referred to at the beginning of the paper. He treated in turn epigraphy, numismatics, papyrology, various aspects of archaeology, which had been influenced by the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant, as well as the history of scientific, political and religious thought, together with cultural and structural anthropology, both of which have been tainted to a certain extent by adopting a static interpretation of the primitive. Finally he examined legal and linguistic studies to conclude eventually with sociology. A mere list such as this of the various disciplines on which the present day ancient historians calls, in itself provides some indication of the breadth of this field at present.

In the section devoted to medieval studies the presence of three well-known medievalists, Alexander Gieysztor, Giuseppe Martini and Raoul Manselli in some way helped to make good the absence of Del Treppo, who was to have spoken on *Space, time and mentality*. As if in response to the flattering references made by Lepore, the Polish historian held the attention of those present with a masterly paper entitled *A number of problems*

relating to the history of 'material' civilisation in the Middle Ages. After acknowledging the « still great » positivist tradition which, despite all the criticisms which we may level against it, has left a significant legacy of studies on the conditions of material life for modern day medievalists, he skilfully laid out a number of the principal findings of some of the latter. While in methodological terms they are today increasingly convinced of the unity of historical processes, and dismiss narrow specializations, at the same time no aspect of cultural activity — understanding the term 'culture' in its widest significance of course — has escaped the attention. The range of these studies is significant; they have concentrated on increasing our knowledge of the structures of medieval agriculture, looking in particular at the « zones of intersection », and at the value of the narrow margins available for expanding consumption in the countryside; they are marked by the use of increasingly refined archaeological materials, by the use of mathematical techniques — not only statistics, as Gieysztor pointed out — and in studying problems of urban life. Finally the speaker suggested, with some boldness, that the relevance of medieval civilisation for the present could be found in the historical problem of underdevelopment. In a less formal paper Martini moved from general problems such as the old question of the relationship between sociology and history which was characterized, in his words, by the dangerous tendency to drain the second of blood, to a more specific examination of so-called local history. In this field we in Italy are still a long way behind, and it is to be hoped that with the use of computers it will be possible to overcome the problem (as in the case of the history of the commune of Milan) created by the lack of documents.

The Congress developed a more lively rhythm during the proceedings of the section devoted to economic history. The paper given by Luigi de Rosa on *Trends, cycles, and fluctuations in Italian economic history and historiography*, was of a rather different tenor to that which he had presented to the previous Congress. At Perugia he had provided a survey of the current output of Italian economic history, examining in detail the various sectors and compartments which are becoming increasingly numerous and differentiated and yet which are also being continually thrown back together again. Here at Salerno the speaker examined the position of one of the sectors which is among the most recent — at least to the present reviewer — and among the most discussed by historians all over the world; that is the history of economic dynamics. This is clearly a fertile and typical meeting ground for theory and history. Concepts such as long-term study, the study of cycles, the study of economic trends, provide a series of watersheds which reveal clearly contradictory ways of understanding the historian's task, and which indicate also the growing degree to which there is today an effective *histoire raisonnée* in contrast to a traditional individualist approach. If the Congress as a whole had shown a more general

awareness of this development, it would almost certainly have led to more fruitful results by clearing the ground of ambiguities and false problems. The dredging up of a great deal of dead wood is perhaps inevitable when scholars from often distant disciplines and of widely differing formation and preparation are placed together, but it is also something which could be avoided, and must be avoided, if any valid dialogue or discussion — which on this occasion rarely happened — is to take place. In those cases when discussion was not either leisurely, or remarkable only in its absence, it was by and large restricted to those who already spoke the same academic language, or else resulted from particular and outstanding efforts (for this see the section on the history of architecture).

It is a pity that the Congress as a a whole did not follow the example set by papers such as that given by de Rosa. The paper started by providing a theoretical examination of the discovery (before and after the crisis of 1929) of economic cycles, the temporal limits of their effects (starting, with Schumpeter, with the economic revival after the year 1000), of their phases (Mitchell) and of their classifications « in terms of length, periodicity and determining causes », and went on to clarify the parallel concept of the *trend*, defined as « a movement from which, by eliminating the effects of short-term fluctuations, it is possible to arrive at the basic essential tendency of the phenomenon which is being studied ». The paper attempted to provide an understanding of the historical substance in which these concepts seem to be exceptionally rich, once they are seen correctly as « consequences and even accessory facets of capitalist development ». It is clear however that the application of these concepts to historical research is dependant on the degree to which the data concerning the development of essential economic determinants can be rediscovered, used and, wherever possible, correlated: that is to say, of salaries in terms of prices, of prices in terms of quantities produced, of rents in terms of areas cultivated, and so forth. But it remains true that the refinement of techniques of enquiry, together with theoretical developments, and their application in historical research, have represented the strongest stimulant for documentary reconstruction of this sort which has in turn been encouraged by the new perspectives opened up by their introduction. One has only to think of the immediate broadening of our knowledge which resulted from the initial attempts made in this field by Italian economic historians (Cipolla, Luigi de Rosa himself, Parenti, De Maddalena, R. Romano, Zanetti and a few others). The history of prices and monetary exchange has caused highly profitable changes not only in the approach to the history of banking and commerce, but also in the history of structures, that is, in social and agrarian history, and even in the history of economic thought. The speaker in fact exemplified in the most far-reaching and convincing manner, as a result of his examination of the work of the authors who have been cited, the nature of this revolution, which results

from the interpretation of « economic history not as an institutional discipline, but as a study of fluctuations, and of the interrelationship between fluctuations, because these trends end up by influencing and affecting institutions, leading to their modification, substitution or strengthening », and here, it is clear, one is coming to grips with the problem of *social change*, with those points of change and departure in human history.

Historical explanation is then reached by a process of empirical and quantitative enquiry, which provides evidence of the regularity and irregularity of secular economic development. This is a field in which one can never be too cautions and much remains to be done, but de Rosa rightly emphasized the positive role played by the use of hypothesis in historical research — citing for example, the four main phases with which Cipolla periodizes Italian economic development from the seventh to the nineteenth century. To this example I would also add the bisecular model, which de Rosa himself presented at the recent historical conference on the Spanish viceroyalty in Southern Italy. If this is set against the initial draft of the idea which can be found in *I cambi esteri del Regno di Napoli* it shows clearly the personal continuity of one line of research, and also the way in which progress in this field both in Italy, and especially abroad, has led to its fuller development and elaboration. Here in Italy the work has followed two directions and has been concentrated mainly on two periods; on one hand it has been concerned with the seventeenth century and the effects in Italy of the price revolution, and on the other with the eighteenth century, both before and after unification, and has concentrated on the Italian variants of the Kondratieff-Schumpeter cycle. In dealing with the seventeenth century, the paper not only surveyed the research which has been carried out in Lombardy down to the recent study by Sella, but also put forward an interesting suggestion derived from a comparison of the Lombard findings with others that are becoming available of the economic *trend* in the South, which for a long time had been marked by the general phenomenon of stagnation but toward the final years of the century became more lively owing to the first inflationary tendencies; this would make it quite possible for us to think that « the urban classes, after spending the whole century consuming the capital which had previously been accumulated, now attempted to escape their role as consumers through a drastic reduction in the buying power of their money ». The preeminent role played by the international cycle in combination with the internal cycle in the whole development of modern Italy and its industrial take-off were clearly shown by the detailed analysis provided by de Rosa in conclusion to his paper. But even here, in my opinion, he went far beyond the rather sectarian results of the IRI and ISCO researches, and beyond the studies of Talamona, Barberi and Pedone.

The next paper also dealt with the subject of history and economics; it was entitled *Banks, transport, and insurance*. The author was Federigo

Melis, who presented it as a simple « communication » (but as Ruiz Martin commented, Melis has the gift of making difficult things seem easy). In fact this paper provided yet another illustration of the originality, both in content and in method, of the work of Melis and what is beginning to be his Florentine school. It was also evidence of the fact that this whole way of interpreting, periodizing and treating the complex problems of the Tuscan economy in later medieval Europe and Italy can now be considered to have reached 'classic status', that is to say that it is an uncontested point of reference for the history of pre-industrial capitalist structures. In fact one can say that, as a result of the study of those sources which Melis so brilliantly discovered, so tenaciously defended and with which he is now associated in his own right, the figure of the medieval merchant-banker, his behaviour and attitude both within and outside his business enterprise, his whole mentality has been made to live for us, stripped of his secrets in the dramatic confrontation with the first phase of modern civilisation.

In the course of a persuasive exposition, all of which was impromptu but left nothing vague or imprecise, discussion went well beyond the sections in which it had been arranged, in such a way as to make a comprehensive résumé virtually impossible. I will mention here only the essential points, but would make it clear that the discussion covered three centuries (from the close of the thirteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century) of the existence of tertiary and « auxiliary » sectors. In the first place it provided a survey of the central importance in the development of historical interests, from Doren to the present day, of the adoption of organic analysis (or as Melis would say: « operative ») of the sources which have proved to be of the greatest importance, that is of commercial documents (account books, records, original deeds) the majority of which may still be found in the Tuscan archives, and served to make fully understood the possibility which they provide of illuminating a field which is vast both geographically (in terms of the involvement of the Florentine enterprises of the period in a zone of economic interests which covered the Mediterranean and also went outside it) and in the number of specialist fields covered (due to the very wide information about the merchant himself which these documents provide). All of this is implied in the discussion of the « quality » of the document. Secondly this geographic scope, together with the relationship between the original deeds (which for the most part have been lost), and the registered documentation, has made it possible to fill in a number of gaps, to make more precise a series of suggestions, and to dispel a series of legends in the history of the bank. Valuable as they are, studies such as those of de Roover on the Medici bank, and of Jacques Heers on the Genoese bankers, will need some revision in this light. The medieval origin of economic « trust » has also been established with some precision, as has that of the credit agencies devoted first to long-term lending (« *prestito d'insieme* ») and

then gradually to more specialized activities, although the companies remained at the same time characteristically involved in a whole series of economic activities which did not concern credit (which, from the point of view of historical reconstruction, is clearly highly fortunate). The chronology of the diffusion of banking operations has also been precisely traced (the clearance account, the current account, the banking draft, the cheque, and the endorsed I.O.U. — *cambiale*). As Melis pointed out, it has also been finally possible « by studying the management of these mixed enterprises, which were both mercantile and banking, to reach some idea of the credit which remained in the kitty through the movement of investments ». Thirdly the Venetian commercial documents and, above all, those preserved in the Datini Archive at Prato (which constitutes a fund of 106,000 commercial letters, 600 account books, together with more than 30,000 individual items) throw a ray of light on a subject which has remained neglected hitherto, that is, the question of transport in this period. By studying the phenomenon in both its active and passive aspects — that is to say, by studying the day-to-day development of the company which produced the service, and the day-to-day development of the company which was served by it —, it has been possible to reach an effective measurement of the cost of sea transport and to locate the crucial developments of different types of charter operation (which were linked no longer to the weight, but rather to the value of the cargo) and also to emphasise the « incalculable consequences of the revival of overland travel » on the development of international maritime traffic. Fourthly, drawing to a conclusion which the limitation of time made all too premature, the speaker lucidly described the three phases through which the insurance contract emerged as autonomous, in relation first to the purchase transaction and then to the charter contract; the earliest dating for this — although it derives from a particular case — goes back to 1333, but it is from a period some decades later that the continuous study of the insurance premium begins, which by now had become independent and was typified by highly variable levels, which in turn indicates the existence, from that period on, of an authentic valuation of risk. At this point it is possible to make a general conclusion; in the evolution of economic institutions a decisive role is played by « the continuous action of the subject which moulds in its own form every auxiliary part in accordance with the needs of its principle activities, so that it may better attain its own objectives through them ».

The discussion which followed concentrated on a number of problems. The discussion was opened by Paolo Ungari who declared himself to be in agreement with Paradisi for a number of reasons, among which was the broadening of the interests of legal historians to cover more recent periods. With regard to Lepore's paper, Mazza made some remarks about archaeology, and Tagliaferri asked for a clarification on the possibility of extending later medieval archaeology to museums, which had been mentioned. Was there not a

risk in so doing, he asked, in allowing the essential economic and social connections to be lost? Lepore explained how field excavation was no longer sufficient, and how it should be complemented by essential, but highly complicated, work within the museums. In more general terms he also emphasised the dangers inherent in creating an « archaic age » when the real problem in any historical explanation lay, in his opinion, in the existence of « qualitative leaps ».

In order to explain his silence on the subject of medieval papal finances, which had been pointed out by Monaco, and in order to present two short but highly interesting communications which he had prepared to fill the gap left by the missing medieval paper, Federigo Melis once again took the platform. In the first he tackled the thorny problem of productivity in the pre-industrial period. Taking the example of the various operations in woollen manufacture in this period, he explained how the time factor became relevant, not only in regard to the length of the operations but also in terms of the gaps between them, that is to say for the discarding, during which the half-worked material remained idle. In the case of the postal service which was organized at that time directly by the merchants, he showed how we may reconstruct from information on the frequency of departures the extent of the « diffusion » of economic news, which in turn depended on the « regularity » of the service.

While stating that his intention was to discuss a number of problems which had been left open in de Rosa's paper, Carlo Poni took the opportunity to communicate the results of his latest research in the history of Venetian and Bolognese industry. The long-term expansion of the silk sector from the late Middle Ages onwards was closely tied, as was the manufacture of silk, to the cultivation of mulberries, and hence also to problems of acclimatization and to the increased size of peasant homesteads, as well as to the perfectioning of techniques of cultivation and of silk throwing. At a certain point, probably around the beginning of the century, or perhaps a little earlier, the putting-out system was replaced by the factory, a development which took place in Italy before anywhere else (but beware: the factory system is not the industrial revolution!). The concentration of the work force reached notable levels; in the Bologna area in the sixteenth century it was up to 45 workmen, but within a century it had risen to beyond a hundred, and by the end of the century in the Veneto the number of silk mills had reached 200. The investors were nearly always nobles, who leased their factories, although the practical management of them did not go to the purchaser of the leases. It is here that we see the character whom Manzoni described so well, Bortolo the *factotum* of the enterprise, that is to say in practice its manager. In reply Luigi de Rosa noted how the factors illustrated by Poni served to confirm the basically subordinate position which a country such as Italy, which exported only raw materials, or at best half-worked

materials, had taken on by this period, and which therefore did not modify the description of the seventeenth century as a century of decay. But de Rosa's remarks also illustrated some highly important factors; for example the role of the market, the use of a type of *leasing*, even four centuries ago, and also the presence in Italy of that *manufactory system* in relation to which de Rosa cited the mention which Barbagallo made to what was perhaps the first case of industrial espionage, perpetrated by the English.

The paper by Leonard Benevolo on the *History of the city* which opened the morning session on 25th (with Manacorda in the chair) was one of the most stimulating, in particular due to the attempt to establish a real dialogue, even at the cost of sacrificing a part of the 'autonomy' of the speaker's own discipline. The twin foci of Benevolo's discussion gradually emerged; on one hand he aknowledged the medieval origins of the major Italian cities and their « invention of town planning »; on the other he looked at the progressive loss, from the Renaissance down to the triumph of the industrial city, of the traditional medieval balance between city and society. The industrial city destroyed this relationship in all the forms which Benevolo had defined in a most fascinating way — the liberal city and the « recorrected post-liberal » city. The only remaining hope lies in the radical alternatives put forward in the work of architects, who are heirs of the spontaneous invention of town planning. In its historical development, Benevolo saw the city as a unifying and essentially rational centre, but this was destroyed in the modern period by the control of the dominant classes who « excluded both categories of specialists — the artist and the technician — from the running of the industrial city, which from the mid-nineteenth century was based on a direct combination of bureaucracy and property ». From this analysis it was easy to understand how one of the most recurrent themes in the debate on the city has been that of the 'ideal city', that it to say, the reaction, of necessity utopian, of the thinker to the aquisition of the city by economic and purely political interests. Frediani remarked on Benevolo's criticism of the way in which art historians understood their relationship to history, but the subject of the 'ideal city' was the one which was most discussed. Marongiu, Senisi and De Seta spoke on this, and the latter provided an example from the Italian Mezzogiorno, referring to Vitruvio's ideal model, which was copied in part in the work of Fra' Giocondo in Naples at the time of Alfonso of Aragon. Menna also demanded a number of clarifications on the claimed « permanency » of the pre-industrial city.

But on this occasion the discussion was enlivened by the participation of the economic historians. Carlo Poni took the lead, and in an interesting statement attempted to tie the dialogue between historians and architects down to a more immediate subject — that of the origins of the industrial city, which have normally been related to the introduction of steam power, prior to which the diffusion of industry did not bring about any significant

concentrations. In fact the study of pre-industrial Italian cities between the thirteenth and the eighteenth centuries does not seem to confirm this theory. For, as it becomes apparent that water resources had already been introduced into them (the canal from Reno to Bologna), and that by the late sixteenth century there were also relatively high concentrations of workmen inside the city (again, in Bologna there were not less than 6,000 workmen employed in the weaving work-shops), the traditional picture no longer seems valid. Poni pointed out that this development had a number of specific implications, among the most interesting of which was the establishment of a greater equilibrium (in comparison with the Mancunian model) between fixed social capital and private capital, clearly with the direct aim of controlling important water currents and with them areas of land. Melis then related the expansion of the city of Florence in the early Middle Ages to the relationship between the city and the countryside, which was distorted in favour of the latter; a considerable amount of wool was worked outside the city with a result directly opposite to the modern phenomenon of the immigration of workers into the centre of the city. Finally Lepore made two observations on the paper; he remarked on the fact that the ancient city was not mentioned in the discussion, and contested the validity of the strongly critical attitude toward modern architecture in Eastern Europe.

Benevolo held, however, that the whole problem of the ideal city (and here he discussed at some length Filarete and his Treatise) must be related to its historical roots, which resulted from the expansion of resources without a parallel development of political guarantees from above. With Filarete, then, in the second half of the fifteenth century, and his conception of the city which differed so much from that of Alberti, who had been quite content with the city as it stood, there begins the « realization of the shift in the equilibrium of the cities ». For this reason Argan's definition, which embraced several millenia, appears too broad. In conclusion, Benevolo stated that the history of the city did not seem intrinsically different from the history of agriculture or from other « types of history »; and while it had its own particular form, this does not imply the need for a separate methodology differentiated from that of history in general. The city is totally immersed in the social structure of its age.

The high standards attained by the Congress were fully preserved in the penetrating analysis of *Results and perspectives of modern history of science*, conducted by Paolo Rossi. It seems particularly critical that a paper of this standard was not followed up in debate. The paper began by noting the general pessimism over the relations between history and science, which is common to both historians (Hill: state of total lack of communication), and philosophers of science (Giulio Preti: how can science be given a historical perspective which is not false by definition?). Specialization looks after the rest, making the dialogue between various sectors of the history of science

quite fruitless. In fact Rossi's paper was outstanding, due to the efforts he made to put forward some factors which might overcome this impasse. Recognizing the necessity for the history of science to come to terms with the « deliberately atemporal knowledge » characteristic of scientific knowledge, that is to say the uncontestable importance of theory, he attempted a survey of the historiography of this field. One distinct tradition results from the reflections of scientists themselves, while the other is more « philosophical » and interdisciplinary, both of which come together in the classical position of the German school of the last century. But the optimism of this school was thrown into crisis in the twentieth century by the criticisms of American historians and of Cassirer, which were directed at epistomological debates, and the relationship between Marxism and sociology.

The contrast between epistemological and historical approaches, between internal and external perspectives, would seem to provide a crystallization of the contemporary situation in the history of the sciences, after the great polemics between Hall and Merton, and between Needham and Koyré. Clearly this is of the greatest importance; and to this problem a number of others are closely connected, the first being that of the disparity, or essential coincidence, between science and technique, between scientific development and technology. When Alexander Koyré openly argued for the « transcendence » of thought and of theory over practice, a position way beyond the carefully developed defence of the value of theory put up by Canguilhem had been reached; this resulted from the dangerous attempt « to resolve historical research in epistemology », from the uncontrolled reaction against « the over-estimation of the importance and influence of technology in the scientific revolution » on one hand, and against Marxist and also empirical historiography on the other. At this point the insistence of the followers of Althusser on the existence of epistemological *coupures* was also shown to be ambiguous. Paolo Rossi was fully aware of the need to find a solution, and put forward some interesting and positive suggestions, the aim of which was to overcome the dichotomy between internal history and external history. Following the lead provided by the works of Yehuda Elkana, who attempted to find a middle course with his concept of « the image of science », the speaker showed how intervention by historians in this field was both possible and necessary. « In other words, the theoretical and experimental problems which emerge in the course of the development of theories of experiments, point to possible *directions* of change, of integration, and of development. But the choice of problems that are to be resolved, of experiments that are to be carried out, not to mention the evaluation of their importance, is tied to that mental picture of the sciences. The latter are directly influenced by biographical, political and social factors. But every mental picture of the sciences is in turn directly connected to the theoretical development of the sciences, which do then effect historical and social happenings ».

The advanced nature of the problems and approaches put forward in this paper would have been clearly shown had they been contrasted in discussion with the papers of Tessitore or Galasso. But there was no discussion. It was Galasso who had the onus of treating the old but difficult subject of the relationship between *Sociology and history*. He started from a fact which in his opinion is common to all types of methodology: the need for generalization, which need not necessarily imply idealism (for example the positivist prejudice that « history is science »). And it is true that the historians' general ideas are increasingly taken from sociology. Naturally social history is the field which has been most greatly influenced with the result that its research is now very different from that of Trevelyan.

While it is true that a great number of the more famous debates on the relationship between history and sociology have been conducted in terms of « evaluation », sociology has had on the other hand an effect which has been strongly « opposed to the formation of ideologies ». In this context Galasso listed the various attitudes which had been expressed in the past: the progress from the somewhat simplistic determinism of early Marxism to the recognition that sociological problems formed part of the historian's field (Fustel de Coulanges), from the « precociousness » of French historians in the 1930s to the more representative status of Meinecke in Germany, or of Huizinga in Holland, or of Toynbee in England. The case for Italy required separate attention, due to the fact that a large number of obstacles has come into play: the widespread attitude in which sociology was seen as an inevitable « impoverishment of historicism »; the predominance of idealist philosophy; the closed character of the political system; the « major ambiguity of the economico-juridical tradition ». Despite this, however, the speaker went on to show that it was quite unfair to maintain that historical studies in Italy were provincial, as it was in the 1930s that concepts such as that of social class were studied in depth, and it was the same period, we should not forget, that saw the appearance of historians of the calibre of Maturi and Chabod, together with Barbagallo and Ottokar.

In the period after the war French influence was again felt, but this time at a different level. While European sociology was becoming increasingly « Americanized » (this, curiously enough, took place just at that moment when the Americans were beginning to reconsider their aims), and with the acquisition of a new empiricism were making « the final break with positivism », it was improbable that European culture, prepared and nurtured on the grounds opened by Weber and Durkheim, should delay in making its own individual contribution. This was provided by the reintroduction of the scale of values (Aron) into sociological currency, by the structuralists and Gurvitch attempting to free themselves from « sociology of order and progress », to make it clear that the concept of structure is not the equivalent of a « mathematical sum of institutions ». Finally there was the Marxist

critique of functionalism which provided a greater accentuation of the role of conflict (but the Marxist reaction to these new developments has been twofold: on one hand there is the orthodox, but the other has certain positivist tendencies in so far as Marxism is conceived to be a general science of society).

What the historian must never forget, the speaker pointed out, was that we are dealing with highly articulate systems, which cannot be used as mere « wells from which to draw ». In fact the most decisive progress has been made when history has grown on itself (the case of archaeology provides an example). But the demand to be « all-embracing » comes from the historian: can the social sciences satisfy this demand? As science is also a component of an ethical and civil framework, the reply may be in the affirmative, as an optimist like Busino would hold, but only so long as the contribution is not merely 'technical' (this is the limitation, Galasso pointed out, of a generalization which « seeks only to classify »). That is to say that, while history draws on the new techniques, it cannot renounce its involvement in the world of values, from which it derives its humanistic character. But there is something more; once that tendency in sociology that is hostile to the formation of ideology becomes absorbed into historical study, and becomes part of its own « attributive function », the relationship becomes increasingly fruitful for the former, rather than the latter. This is why the historian must not be « grateful » to the social sciences. To write history signifies to judge, and judgement is impossible — Galasso pointed out — without some conceptual equipment. Once again the relationship with philosophy is here apparent, and the problem of those categories and values which are, in studying history, indispensable for understanding the logic of change: it is no accident that the theory of change still remains the weak spot of sociology. This is a subject which can only be treated in philosophical terms, and in the philosophy of history there is no room for any scientific hypotheses which claim to « replace documents and the uniqueness of historical facts ».

The discussion of Giuseppe Galasso's paper took place in the afternoon of 25th (with Gieysztor in the chair). Pietro Rossi declared himself to be totally opposed to Galasso's conclusions, and in the ensuing debate Galasso exhibited his widely recognized skills to the full, despite the insecure ground which he was defending. But with this debate the liveliest phase of the Congress came to an end. In all frankness, it could not be said that the main theme of the Congress was in any way developed by the sections devoted to agrarian and demographic history. In the first case, Ildebrando Imberciadori, in his paper *Toward a history of the countryside*, attempted to reach some general conclusions, and wanted to develop in one fell swoop a whole series of approaches derived from different disciplines; these ranged from law to pedology, from agronomy to « instrumentation », from psychology to politics, to education, to the arts, to what the author describes as « the individual

and social way of life ». To his passionate demand for greater interdisciplinary studies Stuart Woolf then added a number of comments.

Massimo Livi Bacci's paper on *Sources and methods in demographic studies* was excellent and much closer to the main theme; but the concentration on new developments in this field, such as the use of micro-demography, did not really assist in establishing grounds for communication with other disciplines. At the same time the speaker went to great lengths to show how this field of study is inseparably tied to other historical and non-historical disciplines: « whoever throws off these ties must accept that not only is he renouncing history — in the guise of demographic and population history — but also demography ». Starting from the study of major long-term concentrations and movements of population, historical demography has moved on to study and reconstruct analytically demographic mechanisms in micro-phenomena, in particular with techniques for exploiting fully name registers. Livi Bacci examined the more positive aspects of this contemporary shift in research interests, mentioned some of the limitations, and also suggested some of the leading areas which could be developed successfully while avoiding « the risk of remaining prisoner to refinement of methods alone ». In so far as traditional research topics were concerned, the application of new models would bring about a revival, he held, which could be desirable on a number of grounds. Finally, he carefully delineated the spheres of time and space (medium and long-term periods, and important aggregates) within which research in this field might be organized. Finally one must say that the subject *Structuralism and historical research* — the title of the paper given by Cesare Segre — was in fact more fully covered by the remarks made in the course of other papers (Pietro Rossi, Lepore) than in this particular analysis, which was restricted entirely to linguistics. In addition the tendency today, as is well known, is to give less attention to the theoretical debate, which by now has been largely discounted and in many respects treated as a mere rhetorical quibble, in order to deal with the problem through the results of concrete research.

In fact the final day of the Congress was largely taken up by the general assembly of the Society, and the re-election of its officers. Bringing together some four hundred Italian historians, the Society is able to stimulate research, to defend their interests, to act as their representative at an international level, and as a political pressure group with regard to that wide range of problems which still remain unresolved — the problem of the degree course (*laurea*) in history, the nature of future Departments, the major question of the relationship between teaching and research in universities, the protection of the country's cultural patrimony, and the organization of research in Italy. Clearly these are very considerable tasks which will require the mobilization of all available forces and of all those involved in the study of history in Italy.