

Piero Craveri, *L'arte del non governo. L'inesorabile declino della Repubblica italiana*, Marsilio, Venice, 2016, pp. 592.

Piero Craveri's work ("The art of non-government. The inexorable decline of the Italian Republic") offers an in-depth analysis of Italian history from World War II to the present. It explains the profound reasons for the most important political, economic and social problems that have accumulated over the decades as well as the responsibilities of the Italian leaders and ruling classes for failing to solve them. These problems involve crucial aspects of Italian history: the role of the political parties within the form of government established by the Republican Constitution, the unfinished political work of Alcide De Gasperi, the failure of the agreement between the Christian Democratic and Socialist parties, the crisis of the Seventies and Eighties, and the so-called Second Republic.

The author focuses on three elements that were key factors in the Italian decline: the inability of political leaders to govern industrial development, the inability of the parties and political forces to stabilize Italian democracy, and the impossibility of thorough-going institutional renewal and renovation.

It is well known that nowadays Italy is in decline, like other European countries but even more severely. This is a common opinion, a psychological state of mind, reinforced by the macroeconomic data. The book therefore provides an explanation for the profound malaise afflicting the Italian economic and political systems today. It explains its historical reasons, the mistakes and the missed opportunities, with a simply fascinating interpretation: actually, the decline was already under way even back when things appeared to be fine, when Italy was overcoming poverty and joining the group of the world's most highly industrialized and richest countries.

Craveri's analysis turns on the strong connections between politics, institutions and the economy. In Italy, no one has managed to govern these linkages capably. A few – like Ugo La Malfa – realized that Italy

was not on the right track, that there was no balance between the play of politics, the role of institutions and economic and social dynamics. This is true not only for the last twenty-five years, when Italy has proved blatantly incapable of keeping pace with the other European nations. The contradictions are much older and deeper-rooted. The political system has been unable to realize and to foster widespread democratic dialectic through parties. A precarious link between the formal and the material constitution, as well as between politics and the public administration, marked a long period of missed opportunities in the economy and industry. Administration, which should have been the true "art of government", proved to be short-sighted and uncertain, often burdened by demagoguery. Leaders focused on administering power rather than counterbalancing it.

The descent began even as the Italian economy recorded rapid growth (full employment was achieved in 1963, and a few years earlier, in 1959, the lira had been honoured as the strongest currency). The so-called "economic miracle" turned out to be fragile and, in many ways, illusory. After the "golden age" of Alcide De Gasperi's centrism, political leaders failed to deal with the economic crisis of 1963-1964, which marked the end of the previous decade's prosperity. They chose to increase public spending. But that choice had different aims, namely to defuse social conflict and strengthen electoral consensus, while other serious problems should have prompted concern: the politicization of the trade unions, the expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus, the political occupation of the centres of public spending. Even the Communist Party was not immune to patronage and the demagogical sharing of resources, as the role of Parliament grew and the responsibilities of the government were diluted.

In the Seventies and Eighties social stability and economic growth worsened drastically. At that time Italian leaders began to see the external constraint as the only possible curb on public spending, with all that this meant. The European Union and the agreements to pursue European policies seemed the only defense against Italian failures. But

even this reasoning, though correct in part, turned out to be a mistake. Italy could revive its development only by remedying the failures of its own political class and the backwardness of its own economy.

Craveri certainly offers a convincing account of Italian history since World War II. He captures and highlights a “red thread” of innumerable questions, paradoxes and wasted resources. He does not write with resignation and does not deal with the wounds to Italy’s democracy and economy. He constantly maintains the glossy and objective view of a talented historian. Although he describes Italian decline as “inexorable”, at the same time the work presents an excellent opportunity to understand it better in historical perspective. And so to overcome it. To reverse it.

During a speech at the Christian Democratic party congress in 1954, Ezio Vanoni said: “It is clear to each of us that Italy is now at a crossroads: either it will continue and intensify its efforts after the war for its rebirth and reconstruction, or the distance with other countries will grow. Our destiny might be to fall under almost colonial conditions, from which we would not be able to recover”. Today Vanoni’s words seem prophetic, and Craveri’s book helps to understand why.

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José Carlos Vilardaga, *São Paulo no Império dos Felípes: conexões na América Meridional (1580-1640)*, Fapesp-Intermeios, São Paulo: 2014

José Carlos Vilardaga is Professor of American history at the Federal University of São Paulo. With a doctorate in social history, he has studied the early modern Iberian empires, with special regard to the Luso-Castilian connections in South America between the 16th and 18th centuries. The book under review, *São Paulo no Império dos Felípes: conexões na América Meridional (1580-1640)*, is a further elaboration of his Ph.D thesis, which received important awards in Brazil.

The book forms part of the renewal of Brazilian studies in social history, in particular the strand of work on the early modern history of São Paulo, which began in the 1980s. The work examines the integration of the town into the Spanish Habsburg Empire during the period of the Iberian Union. As a result of a dynastic crisis, Philip II of Spain ascended to the Portuguese throne in 1581, and the crown was then inherited by his successors Philip III and Philip IV, until the Portuguese Restoration of 1640 reconquered the reign's independence, establishing the new royal house of Braganza. The Iberian Union arose as a large, multifaceted political entity encompassing the Spanish and Portuguese colonial domains in the Americas, Africa and Asia, in addition to the territories under the jurisdiction of the two crowns in Europe, including, in addition to Castile, Aragon and Portugal, possessions in the Low Countries, Italy and Germany.

In 1581, São Paulo was a small new *mameluco* settlement in the interior of Portuguese America. Investigating the process by which this remote outpost was incorporated into the Spanish Habsburg empire, for Vi-lardaga, means considering a concrete case to see how the government in Madrid acted to maintain imperial unity in the face of the enormous amplitude and diversity of the empire. An effective bureaucracy played a primary role in articulating the imperial system's various components. In that context, the preservation of the subjects' fidelity to the royal authority was crucial. This could only be achieved by assuring them some kind of benefit. Madrid applied a variety of strategies, according to the multiple realities it had to deal with, but in general terms we can say it recognized a network of subordinate power centres with some degree of autonomy, in which local, regional and corporative claims could find expression. For this reason, the Spanish Habsburg Empire is regarded by the historians as a paradigmatic polysinodal empire. *São Paulo no Império dos Felipes* demonstrates that the central administration succeeded in paying attention to and exerting influence over a small, different, remote and recently annexed land, through recourse to multiple approaches.

Vilardaga's discussion of the process of incorporation of São Paulo into the Spanish empire represents a contribution to overcoming the "analytical limbo" that so long enveloped the topic of early modern São Paulo. Traditional historiography has emphasized the isolation of São Paulo both geographically and economically and its border character, with ambivalent implications for the extraction, the culture and the temperament of its inhabitants. These features have been questioned recently by a series of works that provide an image of the town as perfectly, although peripherally, inserted into the Atlantic and local mercantile circuits, in which the intersection of the Christian Iberian inheritance with the Native American contribution produced a significant cultural hybridization. *São Paulo no Império dos Felípes* follows in the wake of this output, demonstrating that strong links were established between São Paulo and the interior of the continent, especially Paraguay, during the colonial unification under the Iberian Union.

Thus, the volume goes into the vertical relationship that tied São Paulo to the core of the empire, but it also throws light on the horizontal relationships between São Paulo and the neighbouring areas. In this way, the book reconstructs a local history with a regional and a global dimension, fusing two lines of research on the history of empires that tend to proceed in parallel, almost in opposition: one focusing on the dualism between centralization and autonomy, the other on infra- and inter-imperial connections.

Vilardaga shares the view of the Iberian Union as representing powerful Spanish interference in the governance of Portugal and its colonies. *São Paulo no Império dos Felípes* demonstrates that the key events in the historical development of São Paulo in the 16th and 17th centuries certainly occurred in that framework, and indeed derived directly from it. The volume considers the Union in its intrinsic heterogeneity as a multidimensional phenomenon – based on a legal and institutional arrangement formalized by the Agreement of Tomar and the creation of the Council of Portugal and resulting in a web of political, economic, and cultural relations and exchanges that triggered interesting dynamics

in terms of identities – that evolved over space and time. São Paulo was only one of the threads intertwined in the imperial loom, one of the forms assumed by colonization in that context, but it serves as a fruitful observatory to capture some important developments in the system between 1581 and 1640. From this point of view, the history of São Paulo is nothing exceptional: the town had a peculiar place in the complex of strategies utilized by the Spanish monarchy to pursue its interests, but the ways in which the evolution of imperial administration affected it were not atypical.

The book consists of four chapters. The first and the last open and close the temporal circle of the Iberian Union.

After discussing the process of constitution of the union, its juridical, political and institutional configuration, Chapter 1 zooms in on the incorporation of the Portuguese empire, Brazil and, finally, the Captaincy of São Vicente in the Spanish Habsburg Empire, stressing the interest of Madrid in controlling the region. It presents a portrait of São Paulo on the threshold of the transition and documents the organization and the reception in the town of the first powerful manifestation of the new royal authority: the *armada* of Admiral Diego Flores Valdés, which left Seville in 1581 bound for Brazil.

Chapter 2 addresses a second step taken by the Spanish Crown towards the incorporation of São Paulo into the empire: the nomination of Francisco de Souza as Governor General of Brazil. This introduces the theme of the connections between São Paulo and the nearby Spanish domain of Paraguay, which are treated extensively in the subsequent chapter. In fact, Francisco was responsible for the town's inclusion into the imperial system, in two senses: he built alliances with local elites by granting, or promising, offices, titles, lands and labour, and he developed a broad plan for the economic dynamization of the Captaincy of São Vicente based on agriculture and mining, which both presupposed and furthered its integration with other areas of the Brazilian colony and of Spanish America.

Chapter 3 discusses the strengthening of the links between the region

of São Paulo and Paraguay that occurred during the period of the Iberian Union. The action of Governor Francisco de Souza produced economic integration between the two areas and thereby between the two major circuits they belonged to, namely the Portuguese Atlantic and the Spanish Potosino. The interchange between the two areas was opposed by the Spanish government, which was determined to protect the wealth of Potosí from smugglers and external threats, by prohibiting the path that joined them. Nevertheless, the sertão of Guairá, which divided São Paulo from Asunción, became a space of social and economic contact, as it was encouraged by the local authorities. This ambiguity reflects the corporative nature of the Spanish Habsburg empire, in which the central power had to coordinate the often antagonistic interests at stake.

Chapter 4, on the final stages of the Iberian Union, is devoted precisely to exploring the tensions that stemmed from the conflict between the corporative constitution of the Empire and the modernizing and centralizing policies implemented by Madrid in the 17th century. Oriented to reaffirming imperial unity in an era marked by economic difficulties and military challenges, these measures ultimately radicalized identities. For Portugal, the year 1621 can be seen as a turning point, with the resumption of fighting in the Low Countries and the rise of Gaspar de Guzmán, Count-Duke of Olivares, as Philip IV's valido. Until that time, a common Catholic and Hispanic identity, with the convergence of multiple forms of identification – regional, municipal, familial, corporative – was shared by the Portuguese. But Guzmán's legislation on the Portuguese, based on the accusation that they conspired with Jews and heretics against the monarchy, because of their association with the New Christians, involved in trade with Dutch, effectively institutionalized their "otherness" and imparted a decisive impulse to the formation of the Lusitanian identity. Further, the *lenda negra* on the inhabitants of São Paulo, penned by the Jesuits, showed a religious component, to which was added a political content – according to this version, they were rebels against both God and Rey. The state of

relations between the region of São Paulo and Paraguay fluctuated during the period of the Iberian union, reflecting both changes in the local equilibrium and shifts in imperial policy, but overall there was a gradual deterioration. This surely depended on the resurgence of a competitive logic, which spread from the Old World to the New and led to the demarcation of territories and, with them, identities. But *São Paulo no Império dos Felipes* presents this development more as the consequence of the struggles that opposed the two parties in the contest for the exploitation of the native workforce. From that perspective, the heightening of the local tensions between the Spanish and the Portuguese – the background to the Acclamation of Amador Bueno – appears as the product of the partisanship which concerned the two societies during the first decades of the 17th century, rather than of “nationalistic” opposition or even, to use Frederic Schaub’s formulation, a “national sentiment”, distinct from the “nationalism” that developed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

To conclude, perhaps the greatest merit of Vilaradaga’s work is its successful interpenetration and balance between the micro and the macro scale of analysis, combining the study of small events, individual and family trajectories with the concern for broad temporal and geographical structures and the need for synthesis, with recourse to archival sources – the publication is the fruit of five years of research in Portuguese, Spanish, Brazilian and Paraguayan archives – and to the inputs of a more or less recent historical literature.

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