

**Agostino Giovagnoli** (ed.), *L'Italia e gli italiani dal 1948 al 1978*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2019, pp. 367.

This collection of essays offers an interpretation of Italian history between 1948 and 1978 based on careful analysis of the pivotal political, economic and cultural developments of three decades of Italian life.

The volume traces the Italian people's successful effort following the Second World War to build a political and social identity integrated into a wider international context. The essays provide multidisciplinary and multi-perspective analysis, identifying key trends that shaped the evolution of society in a variety of spheres and giving readers a better understanding of subsequent developments as well.

In the field of economic analysis, the main topics explored are the development of Southern Italy, land reform and internal migrations. Francesco Dandolo's essay outlines the effort made by the Italian government to promote the development of the Mezzogiorno starting in 1950. Implementation of the measures envisaged was assigned to the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno, which in the "first period" of development intervention also committed to supporting land reform. From 1957 on, resources were directed to the industrialization of the Mezzogiorno, whose production system was to be included in the European Common Market. In this sense, the international positioning of the Italian government was essential to obtain the support of supranational institutions like the World Bank and the European Investment Bank, which guaranteed a substantial volume of investments for industrial development. Other essays in the book show the clear connection between economic growth and the main changes in Italian society, well captured by the trends of internal migrations. The industrial development of the North of Italy led to a surge in labour demand, which was satisfied mainly by the movement of workers from the South. Benedetto Coccia's essay gives us a thorough treatment of the phenomena related to migrations, including the challenges of integration in new and evolving urban contexts which were mostly unprepared to receive a large influx of mi-

grants. Finding a place to live and contending with diffuse prejudices in the social environment in the North of Italy were among the chief difficulties newcomers from the South had to overcome. Emigration to other European countries was also very significant throughout the period in question. Its domestic economic impact, quantified by the amount of remittances, spurred changes in the economic system and consumption habits of the South.

Turning to politics, the book offers insights into the main actors and events of the three decades. The essays recount signal political achievements, such as the reorganization of secondary education, family law reform and the introduction of divorce into Italian law. They also cover the debate and conflicts that emerged among Italy's mass political parties, which were the expression of different interests and cultural orientations. The essay by Paolo De Nardis and Luca Alteri examines the students' movement and worker militancy of 1968, identifying the main protest groups, their demands and the cultural substratum that inspired their activities. Key political events are also examined from the perspective of major players and set in a local, national and international context. The essay by Valerio De Cesaris observes that the Catholic Church wielded significant influence in determining Italy's international positioning after the war. Among other things, this allowed Italy to benefit from international economic cooperation, procuring resources that stoked industrial growth during the post-war "economic miracle". Catholic political leadership enjoyed broad support throughout the period 1948-1978. The Catholic national political establishment had strong local roots, fostering the success of local government initiatives. The city of Brescia, for instance, recorded impressive development during Bruno Boni's almost thirty years as its mayor. His close collaboration with national government representatives made possible the realization of major urban projects in such sectors as public transportation, roads and university construction. Brescia's rapid development is acutely examined in the essay by Paolo Corsini and Marcello Zane. Finally, the book proposes important insights into the Italian cultural

environment between 1948 and 1978. Mainstream events like the *Giro d'Italia* and the *Festival di Sanremo* captured and reflected the changes in Italians' tastes, preferences and even political orientations year after year. The essay by Stefano Pivato recounts the epic rivalry between the cyclists Gino Bartali and Fausto Coppi, which many regarded as a contest between the primacy of morality and that of physical strength. The Catholic world supported Bartali, whose sobriety and integrity contrasted with the supposedly libertarian lifestyle of Fausto Coppi, beloved by left-wingers. Similarly, the essay by Leonardo Campus shows that the subjects of the most successful songs at the Sanremo festival reflected the evolution of public opinion on such topical issues as the emancipation of women, internal migrations and the critique of traditional cultural models. The book also explores the role of television and cinema in national cultural growth. As Anna Bisogno explains in her essay, starting in the 1950s the state broadcasting company, RAI, played a fundamental role in increasing the literacy of the population while also offering entertainment programs that are remembered to this day. Similarly, the development of cinema led to internationally celebrated works that portrayed the progress and problems of Italian society in the 1950s and 60s. The essay by Guido Levi investigates in detail the events involving the period's most successful films and their directors.

To conclude, the collection of essays edited by Agostino Giovagnoli, encompassing a variety of perspectives and using multidisciplinary tools, presents a valuable historiographical analysis of a period of important economic and cultural growth for Italy and its people. As Giovagnoli points out, the careful study of Italian history is now more pertinent than ever, in order to avoid a superficial interpretation of the role of people and politics in the democratic system. To define the identity of a community, it is necessary to retrace its history and the choices it made. Such knowledge is necessary to fight the spread of populism and discriminatory ideologies, with their divisiveness and opposition to diversity. Between 1948 and 1978, Italy and its people experienced

very rapid development and vigorous cultural growth. The anti-fascist orientation of politics, mass parties, internal migration and Italy's positioning in the new international context were key ingredients of Italy's "economic miracle". The period witnessed the completion, after Fascism, of the country's economic, social and cultural unification, with political and civil achievements that helped powerfully to shape the identity of the Italian people.

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