

Keynesian ideas at the centre of Western economic policy. Additionally, it is pivotal to remember that we cannot understand the adoption of a universal welfare system after World War II without considering the Cold War and the capital forces' fear that a resurgence of workers' struggles could increase the influence of communist ideas in Europe. Welfare, therefore, became a system of extended and collective social security that allowed mass industrialisation to overcome friction with labor forces, launching European capitalism into one of its most prosperous phases.

The book consists of eleven chapters, five of which analyse in detail various aspects of social spending, including social security, disability, health, housing, and education.

David Matthews' research undoubtedly has the advantage of being an easy, intuitive read, presenting the subject matter clearly and concisely, particularly through a fundamental historical approach. It is a valuable read, especially today, considering the progressive dismantling of European welfare systems in favour of privatization and, consequently, private profit. Initially designed to quell social protests on the one hand and facilitate capital accumulation on the other, the end of the welfare system could reopen a period of "permanent conflict," which would certainly not benefit the forces of capital themselves.

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M. Rabà, G. Sabatini (eds.), *Face Up. Faces from the past. The fight for freedom and democracy in Albania during the regime of Enver Hoxha*, Special Issue, *Ri.Me.*, 14/V n.s. (June 2024), pp. 257.

The special issue of the journal "Ri.Me" focuses on a topic that has until now been neglected by historical research: the complex history of Albania under the communist regime. Featuring contributions from Italian and Albanian historians and researchers, the volume aims to delve deeper into the Albanian people's struggle for freedom and democracy. The volume not only represents a first step in the study of Albanian history since the Second World War, but also an opportunity for Europe as a whole, as it provides a case study on the threats posed by totalitarian regimes, from the perspective of the search for truth and reconciliation.

Gaetano Sabatini's contribution, which also serves as an introductory chapter, provides an immediate understanding of the work's content and approach, explaining the collaboration between Italians and

Albanians in sharing historical experiences of totalitarianism. Sabatini goes beyond this topic, presenting the research that led to the publication of new inventories of previously unpublished sources on the relations between Italy and Albania, held primarily in the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Istituto Luce. The contribution, therefore, stands out for its approach, which seeks to present the origins, purpose, and objectives of research projects related to the study of Albanian history and the relations between the two shores of the Adriatic Sea.

Sabatini emphasises how cultural relations between Albania and Italy have developed significantly in recent years, especially thanks to joint initiatives by the institutions of the two countries “in the fields of science, technology, preservation of artistic heritage, and historical memory” (p. 7). In June 2022, by virtue of this commitment, Italy and Albania signed a cooperation agreement in the fields of culture and education for the period 2022-2025 envisaging the organisation of more than sixty events that took place during the “Italian Week” of 2023, covering various disciplines of science, history, theatre, and art. One of the primary goals of this collaboration was enhancing the historical memory with Italian archives trying to make the materials relating to the relations between the two countries, particularly during the period of the occupation (1939-1945), more accessible.

The volume therefore presents the work conducted during the “Face Up” project, which “constitutes another important piece added to the long overdue effort to come to terms with the past of the communist regime in Albania. The combined work of different academic institutions and NGOs explored and brought to light the tragic and painful truth of the politically persecuted prisoners of an open-air labour camp, twenty-seven survivors and their family members gave articulated long-verbal testimonies about their life in that camp” (p. 10).

The project was based on the valorisation of two types of sources: oral and written. The latter concerned the documentation preserved in the Archives of the Funds of the Directorate for State Security, aka Sigurimi. Regarding oral sources, interviews were conducted with survivors of the internment camps and their family members. The testimonies provided, therefore, “were the subject, at the same time, of collation and analysis work from the point of view of the psychology of the protagonists and the strategies of coping with the traumatic situations constituted by life in conditions of deprivation of personal freedom and permanent repression” (p. 10).

The volume, therefore, constitutes a preliminary result of the research conducted so far within the project and demonstrates the importance of collaboration and “cultural relations” between Italian and Albanian

researchers “on the theme of shared historical memory” (p. 14). The articles presented in the volume, adopting different approaches, unpublished sources, and new interpretative forms, have reconstructed the historical context “in which to situate the experience of the internment camps of the communist regime in Albania, a political, but also economic, and social reconstruction, which also goes so far as to represent the historical phase of Albania’s exit from dictatorship and its gradual return to democracy and to the natural geopolitical context of belonging constituted by Western Europe” (p. 14).

The direction adopted by the authors is the example of the “extraordinary vitality of the research activities in which the path of reconstruction of a common historical memory between the two sides of the Adriatic, between Albania and Italy, is currently substantiated, with reference to the theme of totalitarianisms of the twentieth century and the archival sources with which to study them” (p. 20). This vitality, as Sabatini states, will necessarily have to translate “into an ever-growing commitment to the preservation and promotion of the values of freedom and respect for the rights of the person, against all ancient and new forms of oppression, persecution, segregation” (p. 20).

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Luis Ribot, *Carlos II. El final de la España de los Austrias (1665-1700)*, Madrid, Marcial Pons Historia, 2025, pp. 579.

This interesting and innovative volume by Luis Ribot, an internationally renowned Spanish historian who has been studying the politics and history of taxation in both Spain and the Kingdom of Naples for decades, is part of a historiographical trend that, on the one hand, seeks to reinterpret the figure of Charles II of Habsburg, attempting to free him from the long *leyenda negra* that characterised this monarch. On the other hand, it seeks to underscore the importance of the last of the Habsburgs in leading the monarchy towards the 18th century, attempting to free it from the *Tratados de Reparto* imposed by foreign powers, who had already attempted to divide the territories of the Spanish Crown during the reign of Charles II.

In the introduction, Ribot analyses the “historiographical contempt” that for a long time, until the second half of the 20th century, characterised the figure of Charles II, often seen as a weak king, with health problems, mental weakness, and an inability to make important decisions. In reality, this interpretation often corresponded to an excessive emphasis