

## Book Reviews

**Julien Dubouloz, Sylvie Pittia, and Gaetano Sabatini (eds.),** *L'Imperium Romanum en perspective. Les savoirs d'empire dans la République romaine et leur héritage dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne*, Paris, 2014.

Several major projects focusing on empires have come to completion in the past few years (Arnason and Raaflaub, 2011; Burbank and Cooper, 2011; Scheidel, 2009). One has now culminated in the publication of this collection of essays edited by Julien Dubouloz, Sylvie Pittia, and Gaetano Sabatini for Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté. Among the signal strengths of *L'Imperium Romanum en perspective* is its ambitious long-term perspective, with 22 chapters covering a period whose span reaches from the Hellenistic Age down to the sixteenth century. The book pursues two main objectives: to shed light on the administrative techniques of the republican and early imperial Roman government in both the jurisdictional and fiscal sectors, with special attention to the relationships between the centre (Rome) and the peripheries (provinces); and to show how and to what extent the Roman imperial legacy affected the ruling ideology of other empires in world history.

The first essay (Pittia) presents the complex concept of empire in its multifaceted forms from a historiographical perspective. The second essay (Dondin-Payre) discusses the impact of the Roman imperial ideology on early-twentieth-century European colonialism in North Africa. The rest of the book's first section deals with specific aspects of Roman administration, chiefly bureaucracy, taxation, and minting activity (Frija; Schettino; Laignoux). Several of these studies draw at-

tention to the written and oral forms of transmission of Roman aristocratic culture, concentrating on terminology, moral dimensions and aristocratic ethos. In so doing, they emphasize both the strength and the fragility of the Roman aristocratic families that formed the political and demographic backbone of the administrative apparatus (Dubouloz; Landrea). A single chapter (Metivier) takes a detour from the main topic by framing a comparison with the late Byzantine aristocracy in order to highlight the distinction between the aristocracy of the republican tradition and the service aristocracy established under Byzantine rule.

The central part of the book also dwells on individual aspects of the administrative organization of the Roman Empire. Some essays explain how, by filling institutional gaps or avoiding overlapping powers between various offices (i.e. consuls and proconsuls), a well-defined but never static constitutional law allowed Roman magistrates to rule the empire (Day; Prag). Others elucidate the way in which a set of shared norms (*ius gentium*), interchangeable managerial practices, and a unified accounting system enabled both economic transactions between the centre and provincial producers and tax collection by imperial and municipal authorities (Berendonner; Bispham; Chevreau). All these arrangements facilitated the political and economic integration of the imperial organization even in remote provinces like Spain (Edmonson). In the East, Roman institutional procedures also benefited from the legacy of the Hellenistic kingdoms (Kantor; Legras).

In the final section, a set of studies focuses on the Late Byzantine Empire, the West in the High and Late Middle Age, and Early Modern Europe. The chapter on Byzantium mainly concerns the relations of power between the emperor and aristocracies, examining how local powers jeopardized the imperial authority by calling into question the emperor's right to tax (Malamut). The other essays investigate the cultural and ideological legacy of the Roman Empire, as embodied in the Holy Roman and Spanish empires. One (Schnettger) discusses the concept of *translatio imperii* in the Holy Roman Empire. Another

(Sirantoine) examines the use and misuse of the term “empire” for describing the emerging kingdoms of Spain during the *Reconquista*. Two chapters (Bermejo, Pardo Moreno) deal with the reception of the Roman military tradition and imperial offices in imperial Spain. The last chapter (Merluzzi) reviews the different interpretations of the nature of the Spanish monarchy and critically discusses the problem of the transition from empire to monarchy in the Age of Charles V and Philip II.

This book adds to our understanding of empires by asking new questions about the impact of expansion, management of new territories, and feasibility of empires throughout world history. It also frames useful comparisons from a different temporal perspective. In this respect, one criticism that can be raised is the absence of a section covering the period from the late Roman Empire down to the tenth century, even though the editors state that the focus of the project is on the institutions of the Republic and Principate and their legacy down to Modern Europe. In the comparative section, however, given the importance of the Late Roman, Early/Middle Byzantine and Carolingian empires in the period between those under investigation, references to these political constructions would have been most helpful (Haldon, 2012; Meier, 2012). Another observation concerns the balance between the book’s declared objectives and the specific questions addressed. The level of detail in the individual chapters is so great that the wider themes and processes are sometimes obscured.

To conclude, while it cannot claim to be a comprehensive history of the Roman Empire from a global perspective, this book achieves what it sets out to do, offering a compelling series of case-studies that help to flesh out the role of the Roman Empire in world history.

Paolo Tedesco

*Austrian Academy of Sciences*

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**Eric Helleiner**, *Forgotten Foundations of Bretton Woods. International Development and the Making of the Postwar Order*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2014, pp. 304.

Delegates from 44 countries assembled at the conference held at the Mount Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in July 1944, all determined to speak for their respective national interests. Among them were delegations from underdeveloped countries, including 19 from Latin American, 5 from Asia, 4 from Africa and 4 from Eastern Europe. The conference was therefore not an exclusively Western European and American affair, but a forum in which representatives of countries from around the world could put forth their opinions and underscore the main problems facing their countries.

The composition of the conference is essential to understanding the thrust of *Forgotten Foundations of Bretton Woods* by Eric Helleiner, Faculty of Arts Chair in International Political Economy and Professor in the Department of Political Science of the University of Waterloo, Ontario. Professor Helleiner's book, published by the the Cornell University Press, is composed of nine chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion.

In conventional treatments, the Bretton Woods Conference is depicted

as a transatlantic treaty between the countries of Western European and North America. Its main achievements were the crowning of the gold exchange standard as the international monetary system linking gold, the dollar and the West European currencies. During the conference the International Monetary Fund was conceived, basically with the same mission it has to this day: it is a lender of last resort for countries with distressed public finances, setting the conditions for accessing its credit. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, or World Bank, was born at the same round table, with the aim of assisting the development of backward countries, although it is commonly considered a Western-led institution with a "transatlantic" approach to development and unreceptive to developing countries' demands.

If one examines the output of Bretton Woods from the angle described above, it is natural to frame it as a sort of crowning of the global Western control, its sole innovation being the compromise between the classical liberal vision of economics and the newer interventionist economic practices, thanks to the creation of the IMF and World Bank.

No doubt the Bretton Woods Conference was about all of the above, but Eric Helleiner maintains that much more came out at the round table. In his book, he argues that the conference was not simply a gathering to build the new economic order under the West's leadership, but also addressed the emergencies of developing countries together with these countries' delegates. Bretton Woods was the venue for the latter to build the relations essential to tackling their problems in an international environment. That is, the conference was also about development economics, and it is not true that there was no room for developing countries' issues. A significant role was played by delegates representing China, India and Latin American countries, whose vigorous participation is documented by their continual requests to take the floor during the conference proceedings.

But what exactly did the backward regions want at Bretton Woods? And did they get it? Considering the developing countries as a uniform group for the sake of simplicity, they vociferously demanded a new

global financial order that would support their respective national goals. They were convinced that the international community could play a major role in assisting and strengthening national development initiatives. They demanded much more attention on the part of the international community. And they got it. Some two-thirds of the book reconstructs the influence of Latin American countries on the United States, because many US economists and policy-makers regarded Latin America as a virgin field in which to attempt new economic development experiments, much in the same way that Western Europe looked at Eastern Europe.

So, the developing countries played an active role at Bretton Woods and influenced the conference's outcomes; in many cases, they achieved some of their aims. According to Professor Helleiner, for emerging countries, participation in the negotiations could be considered even more effective than the drafting of the famous fourth point of the Truman program. This is certainly so, because at the conference the international community clearly acknowledged the need to reconcile liberal Western aims with the developing countries' aspirations.

Filippo Di Iorio

*"Federico II" University, Naples*

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**Simone Neri Serpieri** (ed.), *1914-1945. L'Italia nella guerra europea dei trent'anni*, Viella, Rome, 2016, 371 pp.

The period between 1914 and 1945 has been the subject of many classic historiographical studies, which have depicted a scenario characterised by long-term ideological and cultural conflict setting two different and antagonistic views of the world against one another. So the idea of a "thirty years' civil war" in Europe set forth in the volume here reviewed certainly cannot be seen as an original historical interpretation. Rather, it represents the cornerstone of a firmly established historiographical tendency, whose most representative author is unquestionably E.J.

Hobsbawm.<sup>1</sup> Neri Serpieri's volume, in any case, takes this reading of the period as its point of departure, with the assertion that the idea of European civil war was not an exclusively historiographical invention but a reading of events that was also embraced by contemporaries.

The definition, in fact, made its entrance into the political vocabulary during the inter-war period. Combining the image of civil war with the idea of a decades-long continental conflict, several important intellectuals of the period considered the fight as an ideological battle between two radically opposed worldviews. According to Riccardo Bauer – an Italian anti-fascist historian and politician quoted by Neri Serpieri in the Introduction – the struggle pitted a conception of life as creative freedom against the idea of society as subordination and hierarchical order. That is, what marked the period was the political and military conflict between democratic countries and authoritarian regimes.<sup>2</sup>

The collection of essays investigates the different feelings, perceptions and analyses of the Italian protagonists of those decades, developed in order to justify their own life experiences in connection with the broader national and international struggle. The Italian situation was quite exceptional, placing the country in a central position within the overall picture. In fact, when the war ended in November 1918, a new internal conflict broke out almost immediately. The social unrest of 1919-1921, under weak Liberal governments, quickly gave way to the rise of Fascism, which automatically transformed international enemies into domestic adversaries.

As noted, the idea of an ideological struggle – which, as Pieter Lagrou suggests in his article, formed part of a longer period of war and revol-

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<sup>1</sup> The literature on the topic is extensive, but the most important and defining work remains, with no doubt, E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century*, Michael Joseph, London, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> R. Bauer, cit. in S. Neri Serpieri, *1914-1945. L'Italia nella guerra europea dei trent'anni*, Viella, Rome 2016, p. 9.

ution that began thirty years before the Great War in the Balkans, in the Russian and the Ottoman empires<sup>3</sup> – permeates all the essays. The volume is subdivided into two sections: one dealing with political problems, the second analysing societal issues in connection with such topics as culture, labour and the economy.

Within this historiographical framework, in his contribution (“L’ordine politico nella cultura costituzionale del Novecento”), Maurizio Fioravanti discusses the opposition between different constitutional cultures in an examination of changes in the structure of the State in Italy between the Great War and the 1940s. Observing this process through the lens of the concept of juridical culture, the author traces three constitutional philosophies that overlapped and succeeded one another, defining the final transformation of the form of the State after the Second World War.

Starting with the decline of the liberal State in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, whose crisis was certified in the celebrated 1909 lecture by Santi Romano, Fioravanti highlights the emerging authoritarian project of Alfredo Rocco, intended to bridle the economic and social forces that threatened political stability by increasing the power of the central government. However, a third constitutional attitude arose during the 1930s, namely the doctrines of Costantino Mortati, which connected the legislative moment with the definition of several fundamental principles of community, designed to guide the law-making process.

The crisis of the State is also paramount in Alessio Gagliardi’s essay on inter-war corporatist discussions in both fascist and non-fascist cultures. The author rightly emphasises, based on his past studies,<sup>4</sup> the great array of corporatist proposals and projects that were to be found within Italian culture in general and, in the late 1920s and the 1930s, within the Fascist Regime.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> P. Lagrou, “Ripensare l’Europa nella guerra dei trent’anni”, in Neri Serpieri, pp. 28-29.

<sup>4</sup> See especially A. Gagliardi, *Il corporativismo fascista*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> A. Gagliardi, “Per rifondare lo Stato: progetti corporativi tra fascismo e anti-fascismo”, in Neri Serpieri, cit., pp. 237-256.



The scenario that emerges is definitely one of variety and process, running in parallel with the gradual institutional transformation of the 1920s and 1930s. Gagliardi, in fact, suggests that one of the key issues in 1919-1922 was how to regulate the conflict between socio-economic interests. In this sense, the period of Mussolini's first government can be interpreted as a sort of continuation of earlier intellectual proposals designed to ensure some form of institutional representation for organised interest groups. The Fascist laws of 1924-1926, and especially the Syndical Laws of April 1926, marked a decisive shift in the construction of the Fascist State. In those same years, and then again after 1943, corporatism itself became the arena of a cultural and political confrontation between fascist and non-fascist intellectuals, who offered various interpretations of the fundamental principle of representation for social and economic interests.

Another element in the contraposition between Fascism and the anti-fascist forces is investigated by Leonardo Rapone in his study of the ideas developed by Antonio Gramsci in prison between 1926 and his death in 1937. Seeking to understand political and socio-economic developments in the history of Italy, Gramsci conceived the notion of "passive revolution," based on his analysis of the Restoration period (1815-1870) as a set of institutional and ideological arrangements to establish new socio-economic relations while avoiding revolutionary upheaval. In this sense, he describes the Italian Risorgimento as a "revolution without revolution"<sup>6</sup> led by the bourgeoisie, following that Gramsci identified as reaction, a national overturning of the French revolution.

Interestingly, in Gramsci's analysis the inception of capitalist economic planning, of which Fascism represents the Italian, authoritarian version, was the 20<sup>th</sup>-century form of passive revolution, designed to transform

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<sup>6</sup> L. Rapone, "Rivoluzione, reazione, rivoluzione passiva", in Neri Serpieri, p. 196.

the old individualistic society into a planned economy without political and social cataclysm. Corporatism was the instrument used by the Italian elites to deal with the rise of mass society and economic crisis, simultaneously defeating socialism by transforming the capitalist economy without social or political turmoil.

At the same time, however, the supposed dichotomy between fascists and anti-fascists was not as clear-cut as is sometimes claimed. In fact, there were grey areas of ideological entanglement and continuity. In this sense, Mariuccia Salvati's essay highlights the existence of several cultures of labour, neither capitalist nor socialist but not necessarily fascist either, which emerged in the aftermath of the two world wars.

The author utilizes a biographical lens to investigate these themes in the inter-war period. The life of Camillo Pellizzi, a Fascist intellectual with strong links to the Anglo-Saxon world, is taken as a fundamental individual experience that linked different European political cultures. Her account of Pellizzi's life enables the author to make it clear that the contrasts between Fascism and anti-fascist forces were often far more complex than one might expect, and that there were forms of socio-political continuity between them.<sup>7</sup>

This grey area is examined by analysing the transversal political network that Pellizzi established, especially during his stay in London, where he was professor of Italian Studies at the University College. These connections reveal a convergent political trajectory pivoting on the amalgamating theme of technocratic corporatism, which was shared by a galaxy of political cultures, such as social Catholicism, guild socialism, revolutionary syndicalism, and, naturally, Fascism. Certainly, the common underlying idea was a severe criticism of liberal capitalism, combined with a sort of national, non-Marxist socialism. This historiographical perspective allows us to grasp the similarities, not only in the British scenario but also in the rest of Europe, between intellectuals

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<sup>7</sup> M. Salvati, "Le culture del lavoro tra due dopoguerra: dal gildismo alle relazioni umane", in Neri Serpieri, p. 262.

coming from diverse cultures, such as Ezra Pound, Odon Por, Clifford Hugh Douglas, G.D.H. Cole, and, obviously, Camillo Pellizzi himself. In conclusion, the essays collected in this volume offer further evidence of the paramountcy of the inherent nexus between external and internal conflicts and the politico-ideological projects of the two opposing sides, which essentially represented two different ways of responding to mass politics, social unrest, the need for industrial productivity and a new 20th-century modernity.

**Valerio Torreggiani**  
*Roma Tre University*