

Sylla, Richard and Toniolo, Gianni (eds). *Patterns of European Industrialization: the nineteenth century*. Routledge, London and New York, 1992. xii + 276 pp. Figures. Tables. Index. £14.99 (paperback).

THIS book publishes the results of a conference held in Bellagio in 1988 to evaluate the state of European economic history. Despite the passage of several years, the papers remain fresh and of lasting interest. The level of analytical and historical awareness demanded of the reader is fairly high, and the book will be most valued by final-year undergraduates and graduate students.

The book's subject is the continuing relevance of the ideas of Alexander Gerschenkron, who left Russia with his family in 1920, migrated via central Europe to the United States, and settled finally at Harvard where he developed the ideas on European industrialization that guided a generation of postwar scholars.

From his knowledge of individual countries, Gerschenkron put forward the idea that unevenness in European economic development followed a coherent pattern. Some countries, growing spontaneously, led the industrialization process. Others, lacking a variety of "prerequisites" for spontaneous industrial development, lagged behind. Their relative backwardness subsequently induced creative tensions which led them towards more rapid, even explosive industrialization, and to forms of institutional innovation which supplied "substitutes" for the missing developmental prerequisites. The greater the backwardness, the more rapid would be the industrialization spurt which enabled catching up, the greater the role of industrial banking and government enterprise, the harsher the associated repression of living standards and the agrarian sector, and the more influential the political regime and modernizing nationalism.

As for the European outcome, despite the many tragic episodes of this history Gerschenkron remained an optimist, though not a determinist, believing that Europe showed how it was possible to achieve a consumer-oriented economy and political democracy by the most indirect paths. The editors point out the relevance of this to Europe today, with its new regional patterns of relative advance and backwardness, alignments, and nationalisms.

The book is divided into two parts. In Part I, Knick Harley, Richard Sylla, Paul Gregory, William Parker, and Don McCloskey reinterpret general aspects of European economic history. In Part II, new studies of national industrialization patterns are conducted by Nick Crafts, Stephen Leybourne, and Terry Mills (Britain), Maurice Levy-Leboyer and Michel Lescure (France), Richard Tilly (Germany), Giovanni Federico and Gianni Toniolo (Italy), David Good (Austria-Hungary), and Olga Crisp (Russia).

These papers revolve around several themes. One is the positivistic task of comparing Gerschenkron's hypotheses with new evidence of national development levels and patterns. Here Gerschenkron gets mixed reports. His concept of catching up through violent industrialization spurts no longer captures the essence of fluctuation in Russian, German, or Italian industrial growth rates reported by new research; as for British industrial growth, portrayed by Gerschenkron as slow and smooth, new research confirms the slowness but suggests a pronounced spurt in the mid-nineteenth century.

There is more support for Gerschenkron's idea of "endogeneity" (Harley) in institutional innovation, although supporters agree on the need for elaboration. Notably, economic historians of prerevolutionary Russia, the country which

Gerschenkron studied most deeply, argue that he comprehensively misconstrued the Russian pattern, undervaluing the contribution of agricultural growth, peasant incomes, and private sector activity; there was institutional innovation from above, but it made little if any contribution to economic development.

A related theme is the rejection of economic determinism, on the essentials of which the authors are agreed; in explaining the spread of industrialization across nineteenth century Europe, factors of ideology and politics, institutional failure and market failure cannot be ignored. Whether Gerschenkron's original formulations were sufficiently elastic on this point is a subject of dispute. Where Good sees the large role reserved for noneconomic factors as a strength of Gerschenkron's treatment of Austro-Hungarian development, Tilly argues that relative backwardness alone carries insufficient weight to explain the German pattern.

A last theme involves questioning the concept of Europe, as an economic continent, and as a continent of nation states. McCloskey suggests that Gerschenkron's purpose was to tell a story with an inescapable moral element. Parker, writing as an American with a continental perspective, sees the factors (not identified by Gerschenkron) behind the industrialization of the whole European continent as the most important issue. But McCloskey's implication is that "Europe" too is a teleological concept which historians use to impose meaning on the past, and which cannot be separated from its possible futures: at one polarity a common European homeland, at the other ethnic disintegration and strife.

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