

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

European Economic History

Review Author: Glicerio S. Abad, S.J.

Philippine Studies vol. 21, no. 3 (1973): 398–399

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

their demonstrations were spontaneous reactions to certain issues," will not stand the light of day.

A conclusion of this study that will be pounced upon to doubt and discredit any socio-political activism of students and of the young is that "there are few leaders who seem to have long-standing and sustained interest in student demonstrations and organizations." Indeed, the past century of activism is replete with persons who later occupied positions of power, privilege and prestige in the socio-political establishment they had decried in their youth as corrupt. There are persons who continue to be idealistic and as critical of society as they were in their student days, but they are decidedly in the minority.

The fact that many idealistic and activist students will be coopted by the establishment does not negate the validity of their protests against the injustices and inequalities in society or the truth of their grievances against the corruption and tyranny of socio-political institutions. Neither do their mistakes, excesses, intemperateness and convulsiveness, subvert their intentions and invalidate their objectives. In fact, the greatest indictment against our society and our institutions may lie precisely in this, that they brutalize the young into compromising their convictions as they confront the harsh realities of life in society.

Youth is a time of idealism, vision and generosity. But with the passing of the years the majority of the youth chooses to conform to what is comfortable and convenient and safe. However, there remain what Helder Camara has called Abrahamic minorities. They follow the convictions, ideals and hopes of their youth. In so doing, they awaken others from their apathy and indifference, raise the consciousness of the majority to the wider concerns of community, and challenge all to meet their responsibilities both as Christians and as citizens. At the very least, we should be grateful that there is such a time as youth, however passing it might be.

M. D. Litonjua

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC HISTORY: Tenth Century to the Present,
By Elias H. Tuma. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. x, 384 pages.

Writing the economic history of all of Europe is a rather ambitious undertaking. The economic history of one country is difficult enough to write about adequately and is of an extensive enough scope to provide material for one book. But to get the data for the economic histories of many countries, to analyze and compare them so as to arrive at meaningful generalizations is an arduous task which Prof. Tuma has undertaken with — in my estimation — creditable results. Fortunately, however, much of the spadework has been done by other scholars who have published monographs

on different aspects of European economies in the past and it was left to Prof. Tuma to collate these works and show their relationships.

Part of the problem of writing economic history is that its scope, methods, and relevance are at present being questioned. Its scope has varied over the centuries from the narrow and specialized to the general and comprehensive. Trade and agriculture, for example, were the focus of interest in the 17th and 18th centuries; national debt, coinage, and production in the 19th; and national economies in the more recent decades.

The methods of economic history, on the other hand, have changed from the traditional generalizations, which were characterized by insufficient specification because of the broad interests of past economic historians, to the more modern econometric and interdisciplinary approaches. Efforts now are expended into greater quantification of the available data which are ranked on an ordinal scale and, if possible, even measured according to cardinal numbers. Such increasing levels of measurement would, it is hoped, make for greater objectivity and for greater facility in comparing different countries.

Moreover, the interdisciplinary approach takes into consideration the fact that the behavior of economic variables does not occur in a vacuum but is influenced by the social and political environment. All these current trends further complicate the already complex task of writing economic history.

Because of the unavailability of recorded data on the earlier centuries, Prof. Tuma starts his study with the tenth century, the period when modern Europe began to emerge. He traces the changes that occurred in different European countries through the centuries, from the Middle Ages through the period of mercantilism to the modern period of technological change. He organizes each chapter in terms of topics rather than of countries. One chapter, for example, deals with change in the agricultural sectors of different countries in Europe, another with the rise of the urban sector, a third with the development of the business firm, a fourth with the rise of labor organization, etc. The periods up to World War I are treated rather thoroughly, with the final chapter giving merely an overview of the more recent past.

As one reads the book, he is overwhelmed by the comprehensiveness of its scope. I would, however, have wanted a more detailed treatment of the various topics. To me the text seems to be too terse and concise. But the extensive bibliography at the end of each chapter leads the reader on to more intensive studies. It is therefore a good textbook, giving the general framework of the economic developments in Europe and guiding the interested reader to more thorough treatments in previously published monographs and articles.

Glicerio S. Abad, S.J.