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L'Invention de l'économie sociale: Le XIXe siècle français, by
André Gueslin

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current thinking on nineteenth-century Irish economy and society.” The book is thus divided into two parts: “Ireland before the Famine” and “The Famine.” This division mirrors, in many ways, a curious division in the historiography of Irish economic history. Research on the pre-famine period tends to be sociological, theoretical, statistical, and comparative. Post-famine studies are more narrative and particularistic.

To this reviewer, the most significant contribution of this book is its review and synthesis of research on pre-famine Ireland that has been published since 1970. Much of this work has focused on nuptiality, mortality, fertility, and on the social and economic causes and consequences of demographic growth: living standards, agriculture, land ownership, and domestic (household) textile production. Much of this research has been conducted by young and talented economists and historians—Cormac Ó’Gráda, P. Dickson, and Joel Mokyr—whose works represent fundamental contributions to our knowledge of pre-famine Ireland and, by comparison, European economic history. These researchers, along with Valerie Morgan and P. M. A. Bourke, were the first to apply the theories, approaches, and tools, of cliometrics to the Irish case. The pre-famine research is alive with intellectual energy, comparative analysis, and cross-pollination from other disciplines.

By contrast, the events of the famine itself have been examined in their own right, with less theory and fewer comparative methods. Daly summarizes both the events and significant research on the events, but this section of the book is distinctly less social scientific than the former section.

The Irish famine of 1846 to 1850 was caused by an invasion of a potato fungus. Ironically, the fungus was probably transported in a new agricultural fertilizer, guano from South America. This same fungus swept over much of Northern Europe with varying impact, depending on weather and the agricultural vulnerability of localities. Ireland was the most vulnerable, but even within Ireland, different regions were more or less susceptible to the grim botanical visitor. (This context begs for a modern ecological analysis of the infestation, using pan-European data and computer simulations.)

The famine, while treated as a particular set of events, has dictated many of the basic questions concerning the pre-famine century. Such questions concern the reasons for population growth, the issue of overpopulation, signs of Malthusian “adjustments” as early as 1814, the role of hidden employment, and cash infusion from domestic textile industry. Daly briefly reviews each of these topics, fairly assessing the contributions of both mainstream scholars and those who are more controversial. She is at her diplomatic best when reviewing Mokyr’s rejections of the pre-famine overpopulation thesis.

Daly’s book demonstrates that real progress has been made in the last two decades of Irish economic history. Her monograph is well written and concise, yet not without faults. She is uncritical of several assumptions that are commonly made in Irish economic history. One is that contraception played no role in pre-famine history, an assumption that few social scientists would make. Another is that potatoes in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a highly nutritious food. A third is that land tenure is largely synonymous with landlord-tenant relations. In fact, informal, *usufruct* rights to land among tenants may have been just as important to agriculture, marriage patterns, and inheritance. These assumptions offer challenges to future, creative students of Irish economic and demographic history.

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L’Invention de l’économie sociale: Le XIXe siècle français. By André Gueslin. Paris: Editions Economica, 1987. Pp. 340.

Some may find this title misleading, for André Gueslin is interested less in the history of economic thought than in the development—the “invention”—of certain institutions

of popular self-help promoted by "social economists" in the course of the nineteenth century, notably mutual aid societies and cooperatives. Although never as important in France as in England and elsewhere, *mutualité* and *coopération* came to play a not insignificant role in French social and economic life by the turn of the twentieth century, and Gueslin sets out in this book to explain why.

Gueslin locates the origins of *économie sociale* in the reaction of French intellectuals and ideologues to the "social question" in the early nineteenth century. Liberals, conservatives, and socialists, it seems, all contributed something. The utopian socialists got people thinking in terms of voluntary associations as a solution to social ills, and soon their disciples such as the *fouriériste* Godin and the *cabetiste* Beluze were experimenting with cooperatives. At the same time P.-J. Proudhon was championing various forms of mutualism, Catholic conservatives were creating "worker circles," and French liberals were pushing profit-sharing and *prévoyance*. Most important of all, in Gueslin's estimation, were the proponents of Republican *solidarisme*, especially the "Ecole de Nîmes" and its leader, Charles Gide. Gide's version of political economy lionized the consumer rather than the producer and thereby inspired a growing interest in consumer cooperatives at the end of the nineteenth century.

After dealing with theory and doctrine in the first half of the book, Gueslin then turns to practice. He describes at length the mutualist and cooperative endeavors of French workers in the 1830s and 1840s, but he stresses that the fall of the Second Republic and the advent of the Second Empire in December 1851 effectively killed off the first growth of *économie sociale* in France. When it later reemerged, it was shorn of its political content and subjected to close government supervision, with mutualism and cooperation following separate paths. Favored by Napoleon III as a means of channeling workers into nonrevolutionary forms of association, mutual aid societies developed rapidly in the 1850s and 1860s. By 1869 these societies had enrolled some 108,000 workers. The Third Republic continued to promote mutualism after 1870, particularly with legislation in 1898 that greatly expanded the field of operation of mutual aid societies, legalized company and union mutuals as well as municipal mutuals, and brought them all under the supervision of the new Conseil Supérieur de la Mutualité. By 1910 24 percent of French communes possessed some kind of mutual aid society and 500,000 workers belonged to mutuals. Workers represented only 13 percent of the total membership, however. Despite the hopes of bourgeois social reformers, mutualism had ended up attracting a mostly middle-class clientele in France.

In comparison with mutuals, the development of cooperatives after 1850 was, in Gueslin's words, more "stuttering," but also ultimately more successful. Because of their reputation as fronts for labor activism, cooperatives were virtually outlawed by the Second Empire even though liberals like Casimir-Perier, Léon Say, and Eugène Flotard promoted them in the 1860s as tools of social pacification. Their identification with the Paris Commune of 1872 kept cooperatives in bad odor for another decade after the fall of Napoleon III. By the 1880s, however, they were back in official favor as Léon Say and other liberals took control of the Third Republic. In the years that followed, city-based consumer cooperatives did particularly well. From 50 in 1880 their number rose to 3,260 by 1913. These included both *solidariste* and socialist cooperatives which, in the face of rising competition from private chain stores offering discounts, joined forces in the Fédération Nationale des Coopératives de Consommation on the eve of World War I. Meanwhile, another strain of *économie sociale* was taking root in the countryside, as reflected in the proliferation of buying and selling cooperatives, mutual insurance societies, and farm credit bureaus.

All in all, the history of *mutualité* and *coopération* in nineteenth-century France is complex and convoluted. In recounting it, André Gueslin draws on his own archival research on cooperative credit institutions (he has previously published the definitive study of the founding of the Crédit Agricole), but mainly he relies on a wide array of

secondary sources. His is a work of synthesis, and its originality lies in the whole rather than the parts. In recent years many historians have delved into aspects of what Gueslin calls *économie sociale*. Among American scholars, for example, William Sewell has treated the early history of mutual aid while studying the workers of Marseille and pre-1848 working-class corporatism; George J. Sheridan has investigated the mutualist activities of Lyon silkworkers under the Second Empire; Sanford Elwitt has looked at late nineteenth-century social economy as part of the effort to defend the "bourgeois" Third Republic against worker militancy; and Rosalind Williams has placed the work of Charles Gide in the context of Belle Epoque consumer culture. But only Gueslin has focused on mutual aid societies and cooperatives themselves, and he alone has tried to describe all facets of their early development. The resulting book may not offer any profound reinterpretations of French social or political history, but it serves a very useful purpose. Scholars looking for a detailed, comprehensive summary of the ideological origins and organizational development of these important French institutions will need look no further than this well-crafted volume.

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Da un sistema agricolo a un sistema industriale: Il Comasco dal Settecento al Novecento. Vol. 1: Il difficile equilibrio agricolo-manifatturiero (1750-1814). Edited by Sergio Zaninelli. Como: Camera di Commercio, Industria e Agricoltura, 1987. Pp. 594.

In contrast to its stunning, and often celebrated, natural beauty, the region around Lake Como in north Italy is notoriously poor in natural resources: over two-thirds of its 200 square miles are covered with steep mountains; viable farm land is scarce; in its eastern reaches, however, the region is endowed with modest iron deposits. Stark poverty has thus been a dominant feature of the region in the past and outmigration (whether seasonal or permanent) an absolute necessity for many of its people. And yet, in the last hundred years the region has emerged as one of the economically most dynamic areas of northern Italy, thanks to the growth of textiles and light metallurgy. However remarkable, its success story has never been systematically explored. Now a group of economic historians led by Sergio Zaninelli has undertaken to fill the gap with a major work in three projected volumes which, when completed, will cover the subject from 1750 to our own time. The present volume deals with the period from 1750 to 1814, when the economy of the region was still overwhelmingly agrarian and wretchedly poor, with little to suggest that a brighter future lay ahead.

The four parts of the volume deal with agriculture, manufacturing, trade and communications, and demography; all are in-depth, richly textured studies largely based on primary sources. Part One, by Giancarlo Galli, provides an exhaustive and penetrating analysis of the physical setting, farming techniques, and land tenure systems and shows how, despite government efforts aimed at improving agriculture, the status quo was not significantly altered nor was poverty reduced; it may indeed have grown worse over the years. The title of this section (which I translate as "Missed Opportunities in Agricultural Development") seems to suggest that conditions could have substantially improved with appropriate policies to prod agriculture in the direction of specialized, commercial farming, and with improved farming techniques. Galli's own analysis of climatic and soil conditions, however, leads one rather to conclude that there was little room for improvement and that the only way out of the region's woes lay in abandoning marginal land, giving up subsistence farming, and shifting labor and capital to manufacturing or service industries—which is what the Como region eventually did in the course of the nineteenth century. In only one area was agricultural change