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Ferdinand was also concerned, perhaps even more than in Spain, to have an ecclesiastical court that was totally independent of the papacy. Naples was a papal fief and the pope was a near neighbor. Ferdinand always reacted very violently to the least sign of papal interference in the kingdom. Later, for Charles V, there was also concern over Protestant heresies. If political control had been the primary consideration, we should have expected that either Charles V or, even more likely, Philip II, would have planned the introduction of the Spanish Inquisition in the Netherlands. But this was precisely what they did not do because, as Philip argued, the local Netherlands Inquisition was harder on heretics than the Spanish Inquisition.

In the event, the Neapolitans, united for once in this cause, prevented the introduction of the Spanish Inquisition in their kingdom. In Sicily, where it was introduced, it never functioned as an instrument of royal absolutism and, on the contrary, greatly contributed to the paralysis of government that became the principal characteristic of the Spanish regime in the island.

But these are all arguable points. They do not detract from Cernigliaro's scholarly achievements in this book, for which all early modernists should be grateful.

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UDI: Laboratorio di politica delle donne. By *Maria Michetti, Margherita Repetto,* and *Luciana Viviani.*
Rome: Cooperativa Libera Stampa, 1984. Pp. 481. L 30,000.

The recent history of Italian women is as riddled with paradoxes as the history of contemporary Italy generally. How does one reconcile the dour Catholic images of Italian womanhood with the aggressive sexuality of the mass media? How to explain that Italian women were practically invisible in national politics until the early 1970s and then, when mobilized around civil rights issues, caused the whole political system to be realigned? Why is it that Italian feminism has yielded such a highly sophisticated conceptual literature, while women's studies generally falters before empirical research?

This history of the Italian Women's Union, or UDI—the largest, oldest, and most effective of the women's organizations operating in postwar Italy—reflects as much as it explains such paradoxes. Its authors, all three of whom are former leaders of UDI, aptly call their work a "building in construction": its bricks, position papers, protocols, and proceedings from the UDI archives; its mortar, a long, sometimes rough-going commentary, tracing the Union's history from its constitution in 1944 by women veterans of the Resistance to its refoundation in the mid-1970s under the influence of neofeminist movements. Written over a several-year period, while UDI was seeking to disentangle itself from its complicated ties to the Italian Communist Party (PCI), it inevitably reflects the authors' own disenchantment with and gradual disengagement from traditional left politics.

Their argument, though it will not be unfamiliar to historians of women's political movements, is thus conveyed with unusual immediacy. Basically, it

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is this: that a movement dominated by the class-based politics of the Left came to share both its limited perspective on the "women question" and its political fortunes and vicissitudes. Thus UDI pulled in a huge following during the Popular Front era. By 1950, it had over a million members. But its vigorous campaigning for a democratic, secularized, and anti-Marshall Plan Italy, under the auspices of the Communist party, undercut UDI's primary identity as a women's organization. Over the years, the conflict between a radical gender-based politics and the class-based reformism of a mass party became increasingly stressful. Already during the early 1950s UDI had clearly become an organization *of* rather than *for* women. In the 1960s, it was trimming even on reformist issues. By the early 1970s, it had been outflanked by neofeminist associations and its leadership was under attack for the "maleness" and conservatism of its positions.

More than the commentary itself, which focuses almost exclusively on policy issues, the documents convey the dilemma of well-intentioned leaders and increasingly feminist-minded cadres. Their problem was not so much to free themselves from communist political direction as simply to comprehend that their very language and modes of relating to each other, as well as their whole political outlook, had been conditioned by the strategies and subculture of the Left.

Although its main argument is not unfamiliar, this account is particularly instructive on two points. First, it is dealing not just with any left party: if an effective working alliance between women's groups and mass parties were to exist, we might expect to find it in the Italian Left, for the PCI from the start was both unusually self-aware and occasionally even self-critical about its positions on women's issues. Second, the authors themselves are experts on political give-and-take: they make it clear that UDI was not victimized by but subordinated itself to communist politics. So they emphasize that the PCI secretary Togliatti originally fought to keep UDI autonomous—partly to broaden its appeal to "all democratic women," Catholic as well as left, but also to change the nature of the party itself, from a narrowly based party of resistance into a broad-based movement working with allied organizations. This strategy was dashed in the wake of the overwhelming Christian Democratic electoral victory of 1948. As the Left closed ranks in self-defense, it shut off debate on nonclass issues. Consequently, at a time when the Italian female social image was being reshaped by militant Catholicism and American mass culture in the 1950s, the Left lost contact with the majority of Italian women. In the so-called dark years, UDI was bureaucratized like other flanking organizations of the PCI, and its own leaders, who had become increasingly specialized in women's issues, lost any real voice in party policy-making.

But were UDI's leaders alone in having internalized the style, priorities, and values of left politics? The argument that UDI suppressed an incipient radical gender politics is untenable without more evidence both on UDI's social composition and the broader cultural context in which it was operating. Who joined UDI? The conventional wisdom answers, the wives and daughters of communist militants. If so, did they bring special aspirations to their membership? Were there feminist impulses in the peasant and trade union struggles that UDI backed during the 1950s and 1960s? If so, how more precisely were these filtered out of the political-demand structure? Did the Left suppress the memory of an earlier feminist tradition, as the authors contend? Arguably, two decades

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of fascist antifeminism had taken care of that. In any case, the legacy of bourgeois feminism, like that of prefascist liberalism, seems not to have been especially significant. In early twentieth-century Italy, class relations were so conflictual, regional disparities so great, and religious divisions so strong that bourgeois feminism had a narrow appeal. In the post-1945 era, the Left was able to mobilize around women's issues so successfully at least partly because middle-class feminism was so weak and because its major antagonist, Christian Democracy, was so traditionalist on family and women's issues. And insofar as it actively promoted the rapid and pervasive changes in custom and culture following in the wake of the economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s, the Left, it could be argued, fulfilled the historical role of bourgeois feminism by modernizing the status of Italian women. In the process, the stage was set for the neofeminist associationalism of the early 1970s: its precedents were not so much early twentieth-century Italian feminist as post-1968 American liberationist.

Lacking this broader context, it is tempting to measure UDI against an ideal—namely, a mass organization combining radical feminism with social reformism, and the efficiency of well-run bureaucracy with grass-roots democratic associationalism. But this model is ahistorical, and it fails to account for the fact that UDI sometimes deployed its limited autonomy and resources with a skill and farsightedness absent in other left organizations. Thus it withdrew from the Moscow-backed international women's organizations well before the PCI and the left trade unions criticized "Stalinist excesses" in the mid-1950s. More remarkably, unlike other left bureaucracies, it was uniquely capable of being reformed in the mid-1970s—as, of course, the authors' own personal experience testifies.

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A Financial Revolution in the Habsburg Netherlands: *Renten* and *Renteniers* in the County of Holland, 1515–1565. By *James D. Tracy.*
Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. Pp. xvi + 276. $35.00.

At the end of the seventeenth century, Europe witnessed the beginnings of a major change in the field of public finance. By dramatically increasing its public borrowing and by shifting from high-rate short-term credit to low-rate long-term loans to be redeemed from a sinking fund, England had struck resources that thus far had remained hidden. They were to supply the state with amounts that surpassed the annual tax revenue by far. Pioneering "the financial revolution," England in this way succeeded in holding more than its own during its many wars against a richer France that were not to end before 1815. Yet according to Tracy, this feat of the English was no more than an incident—albeit the final one—in the long, complicated history of the rise and development of governmental finance since late medieval times. A similar occurrence was the hardly known transformation of public credit in the Habsburg Netherlands during the sixteenth century. In its effects and results it paralleled and preceded the English case. Apart from its crucial importance as a factor in the

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