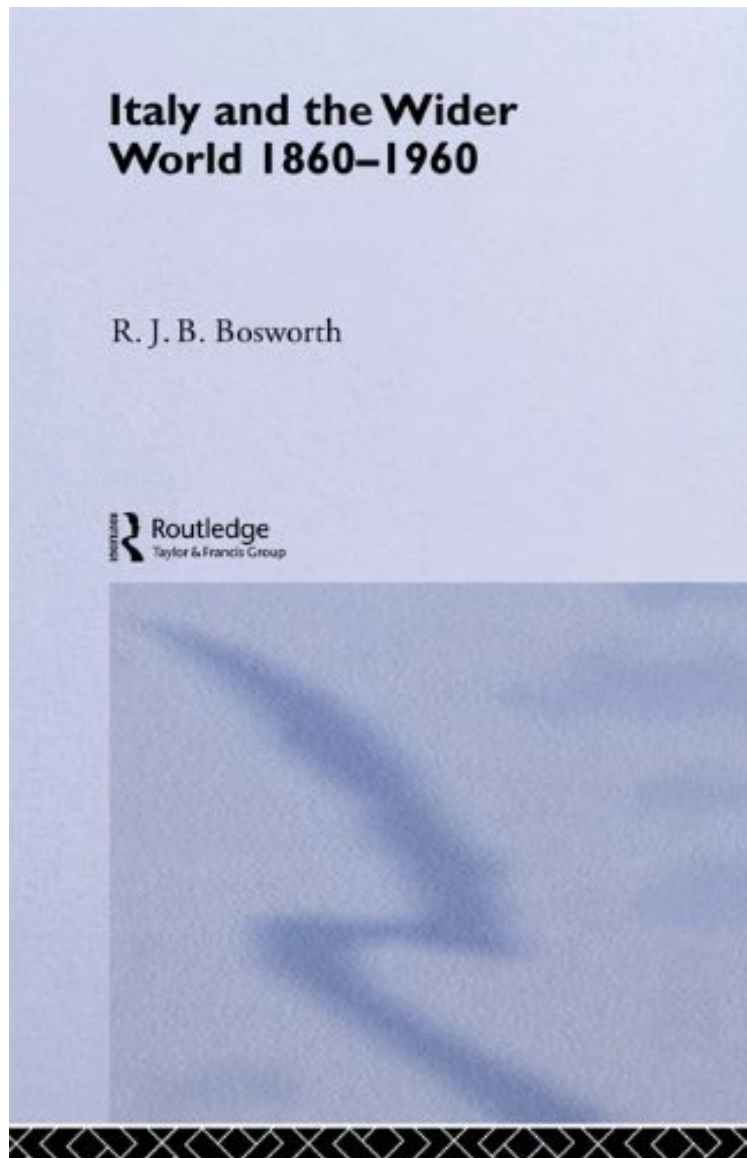


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Italy and the Wider World: 1860-1960

Von R.J.B. Bosworth

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Von R.J.B. Bosworth : Italy and the Wider World: 1860-1960 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Italy and the Wider World: 1860-1960:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A new look at Italy in the World!Von Ein KundeR. J. B. Bosworth. Italy and the Wider World 1860-1960. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, 252 pages. Richard Bosworth describes himself in the preface to this volume as "the canguro of Italian historiography" (p. x). The image is appropriate not only because he is the most well-known Australian

Italianist but also because of the wide range of territory he covers in the eight chapters of this peculiar study. This is not a standard history of Italian foreign policy or of some temporal, geographical, or substantial aspects of it. What Bosworth does here is to synthesise his earlier writing as well as anticipate the results of some of his current research and integrate them with what is essentially a critique of the existing literature on the subject (the volume has 52 pages of notes). The result is a masterful, critical overview of both Italian history of foreign relations and its historiography, a feat that only senior scholars can usually pull off. In the introduction Bosworth makes an interesting distinction between what he calls 'legal' and 'real' Italy. The first, "driven by a costly and perhaps irrational desire to mimic an imagined past, played the games of European Great Power politics and sought to seize territory in the *mare nostrum* and its hinterland. The 'real' Italies, by contrast, through emigration laid the bases of the commercial and cultural empires of the future, in New York, and Buenos Aires, Kenya and Australia" (p. 3). This distinction is based on Bosworth's adherence to the Bielefeld school's precept that the study of "diplomacy and other forms of international policy should be placed in their social and economic context" (p. 7). In the book, however, Bosworth fails to adhere to this canon fully. He certainly pays attention to "the history of labour markets and financial practices, emigration and ideology, tourism and leisure, philosophy and sociology, and power in its fluctuating and manifold political, social and economic forms" (p. 7) but more than integrating these different historical fragments into a *histoire totale*, he deals with them in sequence. Thus, the interesting distinction between 'real' and 'legal' Italy is reflected more in the organization of this volume than in the treatment of the material. Bosworth, in any case, is conscious of this limitation since he admits that "this short book is scarcely the appropriate base from which to launch an historiographical revolution" (p. 13). Every revolution, however, begins with a first shot, and this is a well aimed one. The first five chapters are devoted to 'legal' Italy. Bosworth tackles, in turn, Italian diplomacy within European power politics (chapters 1 and 2), the Italian military in war and peace (chapter 3), Italian commercial policies (chapter 4) and the rise and fall of the Italian empire (chapter 5). It is impossible to summarise the content of these five chapters in a book review since Bosworth touches upon basically every topic that has been the subject of debate among historians. All along, he interprets, rebuts, integrates and systematises. Overall, Bosworth claims that there was continuity in the diplomatic efforts of Liberal, Fascist and (First) Republic regimes. Lacking the necessary strength to challenge the status quo, they had to engage in tortuous and interminable diplomatic manoeuvres to attain marginal gains. In tackling the history of Italian commerce, Bosworth agrees with Rosario Romeo's affirmation (although he disagrees with him on almost everything else) "that a United Italy could only make sense if it succeeded economically" and pushes this view to its logical conclusion by stating that "such success remains the fundamental justification for the retention of an Italian nation state" (p. 78). Not surprisingly, after an initial "naïve reliance on the market" by the end of World War I "the state had become the basic motor of Italian industrial growth" (p. 85). Bosworth's overall evaluation of Italy's imperial ambitions and adventures is a trenchant one: "bathetic." It proved costly and did not resolve Italy's demographic problem, which was the rationalization usually given to justify efforts in this area. The last three chapters of the book deal with "real" Italy. Chapter 6 looks at emigration, while chapter 7 examines culture and ideology. The last chapter is devoted to a neglected area of Italian studies: tourism. Such a neglect seems surprising since "in the century from 1860 to 1960, Italy's biggest and most lucrative industry, the one certainly with the largest number of employees and perhaps with the most satisfied customers, was tourism" (p. 159). Bosworth examines primarily the origins, development and organisation of this industry and makes some occasional forays into its impact on the perception of Italy and Italian products abroad. In the past Bosworth has been occasionally criticized for what Christopher Seton-Watson has called the "excessively moralistic and condemnatory" tone of his writings on Italy (see his review of this same volume in *Modern Italy*, 1, 2, Autumn 1996: 110-112). I find Bosworth's tone to be occasionally sarcastic, but this appears to me as a strength rather than a weakness. It helps the reader keep things in perspective and makes the reading more interesting and often even enticing. The volume is to be particularly recommended to doctoral students grappling with the literature on Italian foreign relations and looking for a thesis topic. Almost every paragraph in this book, in fact, provides a point of departure for further research. The only major problem with this volume is its price: \$ 90.95 Canadian seem excessive. Bosworth, however, can hardly be faulted for this.

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Kurzbeschreibung Richard Bosworth's overview of Italy's role in European and world politics from 1860 to 1960 is lively and iconoclastic. Based on a combination of primary research and secondary material he examines Italian diplomacy, military power, commerce, culture, tourism and ideology. His account challenges many aspects of current Italian historiography and offers an original vision of the place of Italy in modern history. *Pressestimmen*' A most valuable and original book.' Lucio Sponza, *Italian Studies* Kurzbeschreibung Richard Bosworth's overview of Italy's role in European and world politics from 1860 to 1960 is lively and iconoclastic. Based on a combination of primary research and secondary material he examines Italian diplomacy, military power, commerce, culture, tourism and ideology. His account challenges many aspects of current Italian historiography and offers an original vision of the

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