

The background of the cover is a classical-style landscape painting. It depicts a lush green valley with a prominent waterfall cascading down a rocky ledge. To the left, a large, multi-story stone building with a tower-like structure is visible. The background features rolling hills and mountains under a soft, hazy sky. The overall tone is historical and scenic.

**Mario A. Iannaccone**

# **THE POWER OF WATER**

**History of the Lefèbvre family's  
Manifatture del Fibreno  
and its impact on culture and industry  
in Terra di Lavoro  
(1818-1918)**

**BOOK 1**

**This book tells the centuries-old story of the Manifatture del Fibreno. It reconstructs the impact of this factory, which exploited the power of water in an unprecedented way, becoming in a few years a huge industry that transformed the economy of the Liri Valley, its culture and its local society, introducing an industrial and working-class model of society that allowed a development that set this area apart from all the surrounding areas. The Lefèvre's factory was built in a place that had been known for centuries by artists and writers who went there in search of the memories of Caius Marius and Marcus Tullius Cicero. It made the area famous.**

**This unpublished research makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of the society and industry of Terra di Lavoro, an important province of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.**



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December 2023

Cover: Jean-Joseph-Xavier Bidault - private collection. Vue de la ville  
L'isola di Sora (1789). Oil on canvas 1024x662.

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## Introduction

Italy played an important role in the spread of papermaking technologies and processes. The first papermaking factories in Europe are thought to have been established in and around the town of Fabriano. At that time, the paper used was *bombacina*, already known to the Arabs and Persians, which was very brittle and unsuitable for holding ink. Later, there was a factory owned by a certain Polese da Fabriano (around 1150-1200), whose historicity is uncertain. Perhaps it represents a series of producers who introduced important improvements in the manufacturing process, such as the use of the hydraulic pile and multiple hammers, i.e. a water wheel connected to pestles that reduced the raw material to a pulp by means of a camshaft or hammers with hammers. This produced a paste that was pressed into rectangular shapes in a thin layer. When dried, the sheets were thinner than parchment - made from sheepskin - and less expensive. The quality of the pulp, which was also the result of a better selection of the raw material, rapidly improved the quality of the paper, which became more durable and glossier, and increased its mechanical properties (resistance to writing, tearing, folding, acids and inks) as well as the speed of production. At the beginning of the 14th century, paper was of good quality; later improvements were made by adding adhesives such as rice starch or animal glue to the pulp. The two first centres where it developed in an almost industrial (but pre-industrial) way were the Marches and the Amalfi Coast, where various factors (abundance of raw materials, proximity to the sea for transport, abundance of water and slopes that allowed the movement of machinery) facilitated production. Between the 15th and 16th centuries, paper production spread to other centres such as the areas around Milan, Varese, Como, various towns in Piedmont, Umbria and then the valley of the river Toscolano, Florence and the Florentine area, then the valley of the

rivers Liri and Fibreno in lower Lazio. In the meantime, of course, paper production had spread to other countries, such as France, which always competed with Italy in terms of technical innovation, production quantity and quality. In Coza (now Rouzique), for example, there were eight paper mills in the middle of the 16th century, and 13 in the 18th century: the quantity of paper required by the book industry, as in England, the Germanic lands, Bohemia and elsewhere, was becoming ever greater.

In Italy, the case of the Liri and Fibreno river valleys is particularly interesting for the developments that took place between the 19th and the end of the 20th century. Here, industries, techniques and integrated systems were developed to such an extent that they formed a real industrial district, for a time the most important paper industrial district in Italy, with individual industries such as the Fibreno paper mill and then the Liri paper mill, which for a few decades enjoyed many firsts on the Italian peninsula. This is the story of the birth and development of this district.

The most important paper mills in the Liri Valley and on Sora Island (later Isola del Liri) were founded thanks to the direct contribution of French industrialists, who brought to this agricultural land a new type of work, not related to agriculture because it was industrial; it brought hardships and changes, not always positive in the long run, but inevitable because, even if it arrived earlier in this area of southern Italy than in the rest of the south, it spread.

In short, modernity arrived, the machinery of the First Industrial Revolution with the social, cultural and environmental changes that it brought. Previously, these centres had been active in sheep-farming, agriculture, various handicrafts - even paper, albeit on a modest scale - and wool production. At the centre of this story is the small village of Isola, first called Isola di Sora and then Isola del Liri, which went from being a hamlet of Sora to becoming the most important industrial centre in the area. Factories were built here that became famous in the kingdom, Italy and the rest of the world, managed with a peculiar



mixture of adherence to romantic modules, northern pragmatism and government policy. During the 18th century, the area was visited by isolated scholars and painters attracted by its classical memories, but the first strong encounter with French revolutionary modernity came when the islanders were massacred by the hundreds by Napoleon's army on their way to Naples.

One of the earliest realistic and recent views of Isola dates from 1773 and was painted by the painter Jakob Philipp Hackert (1737-1807). In the watercolour, *La cascata a Isola di Sora con pescatori in primo piano* (*The Waterfall at Isola di Sora with Fishermen in the Foreground*), which is in the Albertina Museum in Vienna, the waterfall is very abundant, as it predates any of the factories, factories or intensive farming that would appear upstream of the waterfall over the next fifty years, including in the Boncompagni Castle next to the waterfall. The painting romantically celebrates the bursting nature, the water and the abundance of fish, but it also represents the sophisticated civilisation that built a bridge over the waterfall so that those who ventured there could enjoy the picturesque view.



Jakob Philipp Hackert, *La cascata in Isola di Sora con pescatori in primo piano*.  
(The waterfall in Isola di Sora with fishermen in the foreground, 1773).

At that time, the upper part of the Liri Valley had fewer farms, orchards, cultivations and industrial diversions. This picture dates from 1773, when Isola di Sora was still an agricultural and artisan village, already renowned for its beauty. The peculiarity that visitors have always noticed is that the large waterfall falls in the old town. Although not visible, many buildings stood to the left of it, both at the top and at the bottom.

Hackert was one of the most famous German landscape painters of his time, a guest of various rulers, and lived in Naples from 1772 to 1799, moving frequently and making portraits and views of many places in the Kingdom. With the arrival of Napoleon's army in 1799, he fled to Tuscany. There is evidence of his visit to the Isola di Sora in another work, also entitled *Città italiana con cascata* (1794). In this work, too, the theme is the sublime beauty of the landscape: the bursting nature of the foam of the abundant waterfall, the rich vegetation, the wooded heights, the ancient buildings - church, houses, a castle that was the seat of a duchy that still existed at that time, the Duchy of Sora. And then the fishermen fishing in the water, in a perfectly romantic combination.

The watercolour of 1773 and the painting of 1794 have in common the two waterfalls of Sora, the Cascata Grande and the Cascata del Valcatoio, but they are separated by 21 years. When he had to flee when the French arrived in 1799, the old idyll seen through Hackert's eyes came to an end.



Jakob Philipp Hackert, *Città italiana con cascata*  
(Italian Town with Waterfall, 1794).

Even greater is the view by Richard Colt Hoare (1758-1838), whom we will meet again, of the right side of the Liri, the waterfall, the river, the bridge. The same vision of an Eden lost in time, crystallised in an austere and dignified well-being. Moreover, as has often been said, the people portrayed in these paintings were the descendants of the same people who had expressed personalities such as Marcus Tullius Cicero and Caius Marius. We bring them here, at the beginning of this book, because these were the places where, just upstream from the waterfall, the most famous and celebrated factory of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the Manifattura del Fibreno, was born for several decades.

This last view shows the narrow bridge that connected the village to the river island, which was very visible at the time, much more so than today, when the banks and the bridge have been widened and the area looks very different.



Richard Colt Hoare, *Veduta sul fiume Liri all'Isola di Sora*  
(Landscape, Liri River at Isola di Sora, 1791).



## Chapter 1

### The places of Cicero

First of all Marcus Tullius Cicero. The great Latin orator owned several villas in Tusculum, Formia and Pozzuoli, but his favourite ones were in the Sora area. Of particular importance to him was the one next to the present convent and church of San Domenico. His attachment to it is attested in his work *De Legibus*, in which he recalls that his family came from this villa, as close to Sora as to Arpino.

"I. [1] Atticus: - Since we have walked enough and you have to start another discourse, shall we change places and continue the conversation sitting down on the island in the Fibreno - I think that is the name of the other arm of the river? [...]. Who would not smile with satisfaction after seeing this landscape? Just as you have just been talking about law and justice, which brings everything back to nature, nature is also dominant in these things that are valued for the relaxation and joy of the soul. That is why I used to be amazed, thinking that there was nothing but rocks and mountains in these places, and your prayers and verses led me to this. I used to be amazed, as I said, that you found so much joy in these places; now I am amazed that when you are away from Rome you can stay in another place.

At the beginning of *De Legibus*, Atticus praises the beauty of the countryside and wonders how Marcus Tullius could be so far removed from it.

"Marcus: - But I, when I can be away for several days, especially at this season, always come to seek the comfort and health of these places, and unfortunately this is very seldom allowed me. But there is another reason which gives me pleasure, and which does not concern you, Titus.

Atticus: - And what is this reason?



Marcus: - To tell the truth, this is the common home of myself and my brother; for here we come from a very ancient stock, here are the religious traditions, here is the lineage, here are many traces of our ancestors. And what else? Well, look at this villa, as it is now, richly restored thanks to the interest of our father, who, due to ill health, spent almost his entire life here in literary pursuits. You should know that I was born here when my grandfather was still alive and the villa was rather small, according to ancient custom, like that of Curio in Sabina. Therefore, in the depths of my soul and feelings, there is something indefinable that makes this place all the more dear to me, if it is true that even that famous and very wise hero 'renounced immortality in order to see Ithaca again'.

And here is the villa where Cicero's family originated. If we ignore the fact that this was a short distance from the two units of the manufactories we are going to discuss, we cannot understand some of the interest they aroused. The villa belonged to his ancestors, he says, and he was born there, and when he was born the villa was small according to the *mores maiorum*: austere, simple. Then he had it enlarged. But when he arrived there, he still felt something 'indefinable', so that the place was very dear to his soul, 'if it is true that even that famous and very wise hero, in order to see Ithaca again, is said to have renounced immortality'.

"II. [4] Atticus: - I take this reason at face value, because you come here more willingly, and prefer these places; indeed, to tell you the truth, I too have now become more fond of this villa, and of all this land, in which you were begotten and bred. For, I do not know why, we are moved by those places which preserve the traces of those we love or admire. Our own Athens delights us not so much for the magnificent and delightful works of the ancients as for the memory of great men and the place where each of them used to live, linger and discuss; I also look with great affection on its tombs. Therefore, from now on, I will love this place where you were born even more.

Marco: - I am glad to have shown you what is almost my cradle.

"III. [6] Atticus: - He was right then, this Magnus of ours, when he affirmed in the court, and I heard it with my own ears, while he was defending Amphius with you, that our state could be very grateful to this community, because it

had produced its two saviours, so that I seem already convinced that this too, which has begotten you, is your homeland. But we have reached the island. Nothing could be more pleasant. The Fibreno river is almost like a platform, and divided into two equal branches, it laps against these flanks and, in a moment, flows swiftly into a single arm, embracing so much land that it would be enough for a medium-sized gymnasium. Immediately afterwards, as if it were its task and duty to build us a place for our discussion, it flows into the Liri and, almost as if it had joined a patrician family, it abandons its rather obscure name and makes the Liri much fresher. In fact, I have never touched fresher water than this, although I have tried many, to the point where I can barely taste it with my foot, as Socrates does in Plato's *Phaedrus*.

The place where the Manifattura del Fibreno production units were set up had been known for many centuries and was depicted in paintings, drawings, engravings and travel diaries by people from all over Europe. They did not erase them, they did not rise above them, but they were close to them, right on the road that had been used for centuries by artists and scholars, clerics and politicians. In this way, when industry was born, the same people who came from the wealthy, the rich, the aristocracy, could, on their way from Rome to Naples or vice versa, unite contacts, relations and knowledge that could even become business relations.



Jacob More, *Un paesaggio ideale con Cicerone e i suoi amici*  
(Ideal Landscape with Cicero and his Friends, 1789).

The view painted by Jacob More is significant: *Un paesaggio ideale con Cicerone e i suoi amici* (*An Ideal Classical Landscape with Cicero and Friends*) of 1789, which is clearly inspired by *De Legibus*. This painting shows a recognisable area and the confluence of the Liri and Fibreno rivers in the area of San Domenico, or a nearby place that it seems to resemble. Carnello is a place that will become famous for the "Torre fullonica". To the right of this partly idealised landscape, beyond the river, the Zino wool mill and the Lefèbvre paper mill will be built.



Map of the extent of the Terra di Lavoro during the French Decade (1806-1816).

The history of the Terra di Lavoro area, once called Campania Felix, a Roman, then Longobard district, always recognisable over the centuries despite variations in territory, is long and complex. Its dimensions and borders were stabilised between the 18th and 19th centuries when it was defined Terra di Lavoro Province (1806-1860) with Caserta as capital from 1818.<sup>1</sup> At this stage, the area of Sora was located in the far north on the border with the Papal States, which began

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<sup>1</sup> On the organisation of Terra di Lavoro in the early 19th century, see. Rescigno Maria Rosaria, *All'origine di una burocrazia moderna. Il personale del ministero delle Finanze nel Mezzogiorno nel primo Ottocento*, Clio Press, Federico II, 2007, pp. 103-127.

a few kilometres to the north and west. Within this was the District of Sora coinciding with the suppressed Duchy of Sora.<sup>2</sup>



Duchy of Sora in the frescoes of the Vatican Palaces. One can see the location of Cicero's Villa marked and a little further to the right Isola. North is in the south, the viewpoint is that of Rome.

The district of Sora was established on 8 August 1806. Joseph Bonaparte, King of Naples, abolished feudal privileges throughout the kingdom and initiated an administrative reform that would be completed by his successor. By issuing *Sulla divisione ed amministrazione delle province del Regno* (On the Division and Administration of the Provinces of the Kingdom), Law No. 132 of

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<sup>2</sup> De Sanctis Gabriello (edited by), *Elenco alfabetico delle province, distretti, circondari, comuni e villaggi del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, Napoli, Stabilimento Tipografico di Gaetano Nobile, 1854.

1806, he divided the Kingdom into provinces, which in turn were divided into districts. Two subsequent laws, No. 272 of 8 December 1806 and No. 6 of 19 January 1807, drew up the districts. As district capital, Sora housed the district council, the offices of the sub-intendency and the seat of the local military district; the district receiver (office for the coordination of tax collection), on the other hand, was based in San Germano, i.e. today's Cassino. The city's first civil political seat was thus established, which administered almost the entire southern part of today's province of Frosinone and some territories in the province of Isernia (Volturno valley). The district, in fact, inherited the territory of the ancient Duchy of Sora and the feudal possessions of the Abbey of Montecassino, which had already been dissolved in 1799 with the occupation of the Jacobin troops of San Germano.<sup>3</sup>

The above map shows the extension of the Terra di Lavoro from the French Decade onwards, an extension that was maintained even in the period of the restored Bourbon Kingdom, Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. With a few differences, the extent is the same as in the period after 1860. One of the districts also included Gaeta. In the south it reached as far as Nola, at the same height as Naples, while the most important centre always remained in Caserta, although a sort of concapital was Capua. This made it a district that gravitated more to Naples, also culturally, than to Rome, even though its northern borders lapped the Roman zone of influence.

Geographically, the territory between Isola and the Upper Liri Valley at the end of the 18th century looks like a hilly area very close to the Abruzzi Apennines, crossed by a system of rivers that in the area are concentrated in the Fibreno, a short but good flowing river, and the Liri, which is much longer and becomes the Garigliano or Liri-Garigliano in the lower part of its course. The course of these rivers is rich in gradients, crags and waterfalls, especially in the first section. Over the years, in the 19th century, it became increasingly prone to flooding due to deforestation of the northern basin and the Apennines

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<sup>3</sup> I take these informations from Giordano Anna - Natale Marcello - Caprio Adriana, *Terra di lavoro*, Guida Editore, Napoli 2003.

At the end of the 18th century, the main centre of the area was Arpino, which had a clear and defined urban form, on a large rocky rise, and a well-established proto-industrial production of textiles and woollen cloth.<sup>4</sup> Sora maintained the profile of a rural village and, like most of the towns in the valley, was defined by a self-consumption economy that included all the basic necessities: foodstuffs, vegetables, animals, and the services necessary for an agricultural society. However, the example of Arpino and the activity of the people of Arpino had favoured in other centres, such as Sora, some proto-industrial settlements of wool production that had been moved from the narrow centre of Arpino, perched on a rock, to the plains.

From the second half of the 18th century, the Arpino manufacturers were supported by the central government in Naples, which even called in master weavers and woollen art technicians, mainly from Holland and France, to improve the techniques and processes that had become obsolete. It is also thanks to this that the weaving and cloth-making activity was developed and revived, which became extremely important at the end of the 18th century, turning the centre of Ciociaria into a real manufacturing centre. Like Cava dei Tirreni and other hill towns and villages in Campania, Arpino was part of a policy to promote manufacturing activities, initiated by the Bourbons and then reinforced by the French. It was intended to enable the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to meet the growing demand for finished textiles from the city of Naples and the Court itself, and above all to limit imports from abroad. It was also intended to place the Neapolitan economy in the context of the European economy as a supplier of processed raw materials in the field of yarns and textiles.<sup>5</sup> In the past, Arpino was

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<sup>4</sup> The material in the Proceedings of a conference held in Arpino in 1986 is still valid despite the passage of time: *Economia e società nella Valle del Liri nel sec. XIX l'industria laniera*, Atti del convegno di Arpino, 3/5 ottobre 1981, Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano. Comitato di Caserta, Caserta 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Lepre Aurelio, *Contadini, borghesi e operai nel tramonto del feudalesimo napoletano*, Milano 1963, pp. 195-240; Aymand Maurice, *Commerce et consommation des draps en Sicilie et en Italie Méridionale* (XV-XVIII siècle)



mainly an agricultural centre, but it also had a considerable craft industry, especially in the food sector. Its transformation into a manufacturing centre was encouraged by the state, but also by many geographical and commercial factors.

First of all, Terra di Lavoro was situated at the foot of the Apennines, along the traditional transhumance route from Abruzzo to Puglia, which meant that cheap Abruzzi wool was readily available. At the same time, it was not difficult to obtain fine southern wool, such as that from Apulia. The urban tradition and the rural structure of the area, together with the growing demand for woollen cloth from Naples and the whole of Campania, had an impact on the availability of raw materials: a positive trend that would continue until at least 1840. Naples was not the only centre of activities requiring the use of water-powered machinery, but it was the one with the highest concentration. This deep-rooted tradition of craftsmanship was flanked by an agricultural organisation based on large plots of land and a predominantly horticultural activity.<sup>6</sup> The historian Aurelio Lepre quotes a letter written by Tommaso Oliva to the Secretary of State of the Kingdom of Naples in 1795, in which he writes that the number of people working in the textile and wool sector in Arpino was 1300, excluding the spinners; including the latter and the surrounding area, the number rose to over 7000. There were 43 merchants who ran mills. It can therefore be assumed that, if only the 3000 or so spinners in Arpino are taken into account, half the population lived from the wool industry, since the total number of inhabitants was estimated at around 9000. Many of Arpino's textile workers emigrated to Rome and the Papal States. However, there was a bad situation in the relationship between workers and merchants, which was tried to be overcome in the 18th century with the enactment

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in *Produzione, commercio e consumo dei panni di lana*, Atti della seconda settimana di studio (10-16 aprile 1970), Firenze 1970, pp. 136-139. Di Maurice Aymand see also *La transazione dal feudalismo al capitalismo*, in *Annali della Storia d'Italia*, Einaudi, Torino 1978.

<sup>6</sup> Villani Pasquale, *Ricerche sulla proprietà e sul regime fondiario del Lazio*, Annuario dell'istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, XII, 1960, p. 177.

of the *Istruzioni e regole per le fabbriche dei panni di Arpino e per gli individui addetti alle medesime* (Instructions and Rules for the Arpino Cloth Factories) and the people working in them, but they remained on paper.<sup>7</sup>

The government tried to improve the quality of products and introduce new machinery, but on this side met opposition from merchants and some government bodies who feared negative repercussions on employment. It was thought that the new machines would put the entire social system of weavers in crisis by taking away women's work and centralising spinning activities in the factories.<sup>8</sup>

Innovation was very slow due to the lack of machinery. From this point of view, it is possible to define a turning point, at least in this area, with the arrival of the Napoleonic army, which favoured the penetration of foreign capital and entrepreneurs, and then also of technicians, both in the Arpino area and in the Liri valley, where there were no wool factories, and where the wave of innovation took root in a completely new way. The main innovation concerned the Liri Valley in particular, because Arpino was bound by its social difficulties: there was a risk that an increase in unemployment would provoke a popular uprising. But there were also technical difficulties: the scarcity of waterfalls and the consequent lack of energy made the area between Sora and Isola di Sora, a few kilometres from Arpino, much more suitable for innovation and the installation of new machinery. In Carnello, for example, and in some of the artisan workshops on Isola, there were already a number of hand-operated paper mills. The development of the wool industry prepared the area for other industries.

Once a road was built and the conditions for capital investment were in place, industry was born. Although some specialised mills already existed, as was the case almost everywhere in Italy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Davies John, *Società e imprenditori nel Regno borbonico 1815 1860*, Laterza, Bari 1979, p. 11 ssg.

<sup>8</sup> Lepre Aurelio, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-238.

<sup>9</sup> Iannaccone Mario A., *L'industria della carta in Italia. Storia, tecnologia, uomini e mercati*, 2020, Heritage Group, Principato di Monaco.

## The construction of the road

It would be impossible to understand how the hamlet of Isola could have become so central if one did not consider the importance of the road called "Consolare", built from Naples to Sora at the behest of King Ferdinand IV. It coincides in part (from Capua to Arce) with the Via Casilina and then, up to Sora, with the Valle del Liri.<sup>10</sup> The decision to build the road came at the instigation of Canon Giacinto Pistilli of Isola, who, as we shall see, presented the Royal Court of Naples with a number of industrial projects to be implemented by exploiting the waters of the Liri and Fibreno rivers. Among these - we will see the others - was a rolling road to connect the erected factories with Naples. The initiative also passed through the will of the Duke of Sora.<sup>11</sup> Although there were already factories in the area, mainly woolen mills and small gualchiere and artisan paper mills, the initiative seemed to be projected into the future, creating new factories to be connected to Naples and facilitate military links.<sup>12</sup>

The project was drawn up by the engineer Bartolomeo Grasso and work began in 1794 under the direction of Colonel Giuseppe Parisi. The expense of 300,000 ducats was borne by the municipalities (two thirds) and the feudal lords (one third) who were ten miles from the road.<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after work began, in 1796, the Court of Naples aggregated the states belonging to Duke Boncompagni-Ludovisi with the territories of Sora, Arpino, Arce and Aquino, all territories crossed by the Consolare, to the Royal State Property. The removal of these areas from the feudal lord's jurisdiction was due to the fact that the industrial development of the central Liri Valley, favoured by the road, was

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<sup>10</sup> It was called 'Consular' in imitation of the Roman roads that followed a route along the valley floor, whereas the earlier roads, which were little more than mule tracks, were mostly located in the hills.

<sup>11</sup> De Negri F., *Viabilità e Territorio nel Lazio meridionale. Persistenze e mutamenti fra '700 e '800*, Frosinone 1992, pp. 73-94.

<sup>12</sup> A. di Biasio, *Territorio e viabilità nel Lazio meridionale. Gli antichi distretti di Sora e di Gaeta. 1800-1860*, Marina di Minturno 1997, v. in particolare le pp. 45-54.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

envisaged and the feudal lord was to be prevented from hindering it with his own initiatives. Therefore, although feudalism was abolished in 1806 by Murat's measure, in the Liri Valley it was anticipated in 1796.

The road had a significant impact, replacing the mule tracks that had been built in the hills in the Middle Ages, abandoning the Roman roads at the bottom of the valley. However, the mule tracks had many obstacles because they lacked bridges. The Consolare meant the return of heavy wheeled transport to the middle Liri, with enormous consequences for the economy of the area. Benedetto Scafì wrote in 1871 that before the Consolare, to reach Sora and Arpino, one had to pass through the village of Santopadre, without the possibility of using a wagon, only using mules.<sup>14</sup>

The construction of the Consolare was interrupted by the wars of the Neapolitan Republic and the French Decade, but by 1820 it was completed and in 1823 milestones were placed along its route, starting in Naples and marking the Neapolitan mile (1,851 metres).

It was passable in both directions.<sup>15</sup> This road travelled and retraced dozens of times a year by entrepreneurs who lived in Naples and had factories in the Sora area, such as Zino and Lefèbvre, is also a precondition for understanding future developments.

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<sup>14</sup> Scafì Benedetto, *Notizie storiche di Santopadre*, Sora 1871; reprinted by the Municipality of Santopadre, Sora 1979, pp. 98-99.

<sup>15</sup> *La via consolare borbonica da Cassino a Sora*, Studi Cassinati, anno 2008 n. 2.

## Chapter 2

### The Massacre of 1799

While the consular road was being built, the inhabitants of Isola di Sora experienced the first dramatic impact of French revolutionary troops and political modernity. In 1799, a group of soldiers from the invading army slaughtered 533 defenceless people, all or most of them civilians, in the church of San Lorenzo on 12 May 1799. On that day, the population had gathered in the church to celebrate Pentecost.<sup>16</sup> Those who escaped the massacre left the village, only to return a few days later. As Eugenio Maria Beranger has written, this episode has been ignored in schoolbooks and little studied even in academic texts, and there is no memory of it in Isola or the surrounding area. Only a very modest marble inscription, made in 1899, commemorates it. It was placed to the right of the entrance to the Collegiata di San Lorenzo on the occasion of the first centenary of the event and reads as follows:

Il dì 12 maggio 1799 qui caddero massacrati dalle milizie francesi 533 cittadini, il popolo isolano nel giorno del centesimo anniversario pose.

On 12 May 1799, 533 citizens were massacred here by the French militia, the island's people on the 100th anniversary posed.

The inscription, enamelled in black on budget marble, is surrounded by a wreath of red flowers. At the foot of the inscription is a torch in bas-relief carved in reverse, symbolising extinguished life, and an ear

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<sup>16</sup> For this episode I refer to the excerpt of the report read on 25 February 2006 in Roccasecca on the occasion of the conference 'Le vicende del 1799 nell'alta Terra di Lavoro' (The events of 1799 in the upper Terra di Lavoro) organised by the Associazione "Le Tre Torri".

of wheat, symbolising reborn life. In 1999, the church was equipped with a second bell with an engraved inscription.

The conditions for this violent event had matured after the proclamation of the Neapolitan Republic on 23 January 1799 in Naples.



Plaque commemorating the massacre perpetrated by the French on 12 May 1799 at Isola di Sora.

When the armistice of Sparanise was signed on 11 January, months of political and social chaos and the birth of Insurgencies and counter-revolutionary Sanfedism followed. The populations of many areas of Italy, not only southern Italy, rejected the French occupation, which was expressed in acts of hostility and open ideological oppression,

especially towards the social customs and religious traditions of the people that the Jacobin armies had come to liberate.<sup>17</sup>

Many of the generals, senior officers and bureaucrats were openly Jacobin and therefore radical and violent in their choices. Thus, in reaction, the so-called troops of the Insurgents were formed and in the Sora area the resistance was led mainly by Gaetano Mammone (1756-1802). That climate also exacerbated personal hatreds, family feuds and parochialism, and the situation became difficult.

During the six months of the Neapolitan Republic, many areas in southern Italy fell into confusion and even anarchy. In the district of Sora, the figure of Bishop Monsignor Agostino Colajanni stood out. On 22 February, he proposed to the citizens gathered in Piazza Santa Restituta that Gaetano Mammone be appointed chief insurgent against the Jacobins, i.e. in charge of the anti-French resistance. The proposal was accepted. From a manuscript owned by accountant Vincenzo Basile of Sora and read by Achille Lauri, we know that Mammone thus addressed the crowd after his nomination:

I am happy with the command you give me; but think that I, for the love I bear for the royal House, will be terrible to the enemies of our Sovereign. I warn you: you are in time to appoint another. I know where the stench is: your head will ache: you will see it! - [and the people in reply], cut! cut! death to the Jacobins!

Mammone, in short, organised troops by choosing various aides to hit those suspected of pro-French ideas.<sup>18</sup> A local chronicle studied by Achille Lauri said:

Those were times when no one was any longer sure of either property, person, honour or virginity. Therefore it will not seem ridiculous to anyone

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<sup>17</sup> Viglione Massimo, *La Vandea Italiana: le insorgenze controrivoluzionarie dalle origini al 1814*, Milano, Effedieffe, 1995, pp. 304-306.

<sup>18</sup> Alonzi Valentino, known as Chiavone, a native of Selva di Sora, grandfather of the other and more famous Chiavone, protagonist of anti-unification brigandage.



that a wealthy Soran, Horatio Nola, wore cioce to be well seen by the villagers, to whom he often offered wine from his cellars.

At that time there was a lot of violence between the two factions, and the parochialism between Sora, Isola and Veroli became more acute, where a member of the National Guard of the Neapolitan Republic, Giovanni Battista Franchi, had arrested many people loyal to the Pope. This Franchi, on 11 March 1799, conquered Castelluccio (today Castelliri) and moved towards Isola, being stopped by Mammone's troops. Thirteen days later, a contingent of Verolians and Frenchmen approached Castelluccio and Isola with cannon fire, before being repulsed a second time by Mammone.

Sora, with its strategic position in relation to the connections with Molise and Abruzzo thanks to the Roveto Valley, prompted the French to act, who sent a contingent of 1,000 men to the area. Faced with this army, Antonio Cipriani, the commander of the insurgents of Isola di Sora, decided to surrender. A few days later, Mammone retook the centre and had Cipriani arrested and sent to Sora prison, where he was replaced by the loyal Valentino Alonzi. Mammone now had 6,000 men at his disposal. Demanding his presence further south, he took part in the siege of Altamura in Apulia, which surrendered on 10 May 1799. But at that time, in a tactical error, he left the area of Sora undefended, which he apparently considered safe.

Instead, on the same day, a French army of 13,000 men marched north towards San Germano, now Cassino. Some of them devastated the abbey of Montecassino, the centre of European monasticism and a place particularly hated by the most fanatical of them. Here, after their departure, the French were imitated by a number of Cassino Jacobins.

Two days later, on 12 May, they arrived in Isola asking to enter the town, which was still in the hands of the insurgents, although with few active forces. Due to a wrong decision, probably dictated by desperation and the certainty that the French would not stop - the details are not known - the two dragoons sent to parley with the insurgents were killed. The French then felt empowered to attack and, having broken through the resistance at Porta Napoli, across the bridge, which was the main

access to the village, they reacted with unprecedented harshness. Most of Mammone's men were not present and those that remained fell back towards the heights of Sora before heading for Naples where a concentration of insurgent forces was underway.

In the meantime, French soldiers set fire to several parts of the town and to the Collegiate Church of San Lorenzo, where the citizens had gathered for the celebration of Pentecost. They destroyed almost two thirds of the houses and the dead counted at the end was 533.<sup>19</sup> A plaque affixed in 1899 reads:

The municipal administration, the Committee of the Most Holy Crucifix, and the citizens of Isola del Liri, on the bicentenary of the massacre, vow that the grave tolling of this bell, which will break the silence of our parse every evening, will recall the tragedy that took place in the Church of San Lorenzo martire, and they hope that such acts of cruel impiety will never be repeated. The 464 men, 70 women, 9 priests and 100 strangers slaughtered in our memory cry out: Never again, Never again, Never again.

Thanks to Pietro Colletta, the names of those responsible for the massacre are known: Brigadier General Vatin and Commander Olivier. Colletta recounts the massacre in a few words but gives further details on the context and dynamics of the events.

Vatin sent to the Parliament for passage, which, if refused, he would take by force of arms; but the defenders, despising or not knowing the sacred rules of ambassadorship, drove the legate away with blows from arquebuses. The two rivers were impassable, it was raining, the French lacked provisions: victory became a necessity. The legion of Vatin, on the left bank of one river, and the legion of Olivier, on the right bank of the other, looked for a ford; and finding none, they built a bridge of bundles, barrels, and other wood, weak, small, unsuitable for war-carts and the hasty passage of many men; and so half the legion, going along the bridge, helped the other half, which swam across, with hands and ropes; and the whole, having crossed the waters, reached the

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<sup>19</sup> Beranger Eugenio Maria, 1799. *L'eccidio di San Lorenzo ad Isola del Liri: 533 cittadini trucidati dalle truppe transalpine. Una strage incredibilmente ignorata*, Studi Cassinati, (2006).

walls. So the defenders were not afraid. Through old ruins, and through the ruins of the walls of the houses, the French penetrated into that part of the country which, having crossed the same river and broken the bridge, was a new obstacle to the victors. But luck was on their side; the defenders had not demolished the piers, and the girders were still standing close to the banks. After reopening the passage in a few hours, the defences and hopes fell, the Bourbons fled, a little diminished and proud of the war and the deaths they had inflicted on the enemy. The enemy vented his indignation on the wretched inhabitants, and finding strong wine in the quarries, he was drunk with it and with rage, and continued the massacres, the stripping and the lasciviousness all night long. The rains swelled and the earth burned; in the new sun, where the temple-houses were, heaps of corpses, ashes and filth were seen.<sup>20</sup>

Colletta recounts that the French army made an ephemeral bridge with bundles of wood and barrels; the river had swollen because it had been raining for days. The writer in those days of 1799 had gone from being a Bourbon officer to the ranks of the revolutionaries of the Neapolitan Revolution, then had been readmitted to the Bourbon army, and finally had joined Joachim Murat's Kingdom of Naples. For this reason, his account shows no empathy for the hundreds of islanders who died.

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<sup>20</sup> Colletta Pietro, *Storia del Reame di Napoli dal 1734 al 1825*, Vol. 1, A spese di Felice Lemmonier, Firenze 1846, pp. 296-297.



Abbot Ferdinando Pistilli, author of the *Descrizione storico filologica delle antiche e moderne città e castelli esistenti accost de' fiumi Liri e Fibreno* (Historical and philological description of the ancient and modern cities and castles existing next to the Liri and Fibreno rivers), provides further details on the episode: the few survivors saved themselves after defying the violence of the current of the second branch of the Liri, all the bridges over the river having been cut except for the one at Porta di Napoli. Among those killed were 100 foreigners and not a few women, and the total count of victims including those who had dispersed in the camps and were caught and killed may have reached 700 people.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Pistilli Ferdinando, *Descrizione storico filologica delle antiche e moderne città e castelli esistenti accost de' fiumi Liri e Fibreno*, Stamperia Francese, Napoli 1823, p. 22.

The abbot says that the two days of plundering had been terrible, that he had lost two brothers himself and that the enchantment, beauty and naivety of his land had been lost that day. The few survivors 'dispersed to various places, particularly in Pescosolido, where hospitable charity characterised those villagers'. Giuseppe Nicolucci, vicar canon of the parish church, recalls in the *Liber Renatorum* how the surviving widows fled, terrified, half-naked and more dead than alive, some to Sora, others to Arpino, and others to nearby localities, and here they gave birth.<sup>22</sup>

After the massacre at Isola, the French desecrated Casamari Abbey on 13 May, killing six monks and burning others alive, as they did at Monte San Giovanni Campano.<sup>23</sup>

Little has been spoken and written about these massacres and this fact, this disregard for a tragedy of such proportions, is part of the problem of the historiography of the insurgencies. The French returned to the area in 1806 and the insurgents (in later historiography confused with 'brigands' tout court) commanded by Michele Pezza, better known as Fra Diavolo, prevailed. In September 1806, the French camped at Isola, then headed for Sora, which was taken after brief clashes.

The church was restored but remained closed for over two decades, being reconsecrated only in 1826 by Father Luca Brandolini. The religious man, indeed, attributed the massacre to the tactical stupidity of Gaetano Mammone, forgetting the obvious superiority of a regular army over guerrilla formations in the field.

Less than ten years after this event, some Frenchmen who were part of the same regime that had ordered the massacre, or at least their heirs, returned to Isola. They were not soldiers, but some of them worked in the administration of Joachim Murat's army. The memory of the massacre was probably still fresh. We have no record of what happened in the years that followed, between 1799 and 1805, because the sources are silent, but from 1808 the first factories began to operate using local

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<sup>22</sup> Nicolucci Giuseppe, *Liber Renatorum*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> Nicolucci Giuseppe, *Ibidem*, p. 9.

labour, and the first inspections by Frenchmen date from 1805 and 1806. In other words, very few years had passed since the massacre. In any case, it is remarkable that a small town affected by such an event became, a few years later, a place of attraction for French entrepreneurs, so much so that it was called Little Paris. At the time, most, if not all, of the inhabitants of Isola were still in the church of San Lorenzo, mourning the loss of some of their loved ones. Nevertheless, the collaboration between French and Italian technicians and businessmen took place, giving rise to one of the most interesting industrial phenomena of pre-unification Italy: the creation of the Valle del Liri paper district. The will of these people to put the past behind them and to try, if possible, not to bear grudges should be taken into account. The importance of Murat's industrial policy, which was later continued in the kingdom restored by the Bourbons, must be appreciated. The favourable geographical and geomorphological characteristics of the area, which had no equivalent in the Kingdom of Naples, left no other choice. The Isola di Sora was always surrounded by water and greenery. On the other hand, as we know, the plain of Sora was much visited by antiquarians, painters, the curious and young people on the Grand Tour who would stop off in the surrounding area in search, above all, of Ciceronian memories.

The Liri Valley was the northern part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies until 1860. Despite its geographical marginalisation, it underwent a strong process of industrialisation at the beginning of the century, gaining a central role in the Kingdom's economy. Following the establishment and expansion of the Manifattura del Fibreno (Fibres Factory), the Liri paper mill, the Ciccodicola industry and other small factories were set up, and for a few decades it became the industrial heart of a still predominantly agricultural region, surpassing the nearby Sora, which was still tied to crafts and agriculture, in terms of importance, industrial concentration and economic weight.<sup>24</sup> In order to

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<sup>24</sup> Barca Stefania, *Enclosing the River: Industrialisation and the 'Property Rights' Discourse in the Liri Valley* (South of Italy), 1806-1916, in «Environment and History», Vol. 13, No. 1 (February 2007), pp. 3-23.

understand this phenomenon, it is also necessary to consider the group of social actors that emerged in this society.

There was a small dynamic minority in the wealthy class of the kingdom, which invested in traditional manufacturing activities - especially wool production - and commercial agricultural activities, but also became interested in new industrial activities. The economy had a monopolistic character, partly because it was financially risky in an environment with very little domestic demand. Above all, there was a lack of infrastructure for easy transport, i.e. a passable road, but during the French Decade the Consolare began to have an effect, as some stretches were gradually made passable. The area lacked minerals, fossil fuels and raw materials, but it had plenty of water.

After the Napoleonic wars, the state intervened to overcome the structural imbalances in the southern market.<sup>25</sup> For geographical reasons above all, the cost of energy sources for industry, which were also lacking in the north, was prohibitive, and this explains how this natural disadvantage of the southern Italian economy was partially overcome by the inexpensive source of hydraulic energy that moved the Liri Valley. This crucial factor, already highlighted by the reports that Abbot Pistilli had addressed to King Ferdinand, became central. The system based on the production of wool that gravitated around Arpino was made up of industries driven by hydraulic mills in the area between Sora and Isola where the course of the river allowed for the construction of plants that were elsewhere difficult to set up.

As the century progressed, the valley's economy underwent a major transformation from a domestic rural production system to an industrial and semi-urban one. There had always been water in the valley and the technology to exploit it had been available for centuries. The transformation of the river into a form of natural capital, conceived as a means of generating profit for individuals and economic progress for the district and the nation, took place around 1810: «Thus, at the heart of the industrialisation of the Liri Valley, a paradigm shift in cultural construction took place regarding the perception of natural resources

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<sup>25</sup> Barca Stefania, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

and the means to exploit them and create a new social order based on the classical liberal principles of individual interest and the free market».<sup>26</sup>

A brief Jacobin revolution and the establishment of the Republic in 1799 showed how interested Neapolitan society was in experimenting with liberalism and the economic benefits it could bring, even if tempered by duties. The entry of Napoleon's army in 1806 introduced an even more substantial deviation: the remnant of Neapolitan feudalism was abolished and the nation's most important natural resources (land and water) were liberalised. But what did this mean? Liberalisation in previous decades had meant the acquisition of land previously belonging to the state, barons, municipalities or state property and the dissolution of feudal principalities such as that of Sora.<sup>27</sup> But what liberalisation was to mean and would mean in the case of water was an even more complex issue.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Barca Stefania, *Ibidem*, p. 7. The concept of Natural Capital was defined during the 1990s mainly in studies on the environment and renewable and non-renewable resources as forms of common wealth: AnnMari Jansson, Monica Hammer, Carl Folke-Robert Costanza, curr. *Investing in Natural Capital: The Ecological Economics Approach To Sustainability* (International Society for Ecological Economics), Island Press Washington 1998th edition (prima ediz. 1994).

<sup>27</sup> Corona Gabriella, *Demani e individualismo agrario nel Regno di Napoli, 1780-1806*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli 1806.

<sup>28</sup> Barca Stefania, *op. cit.*, *Ibidem*.





## Chapter 3

### The liberalisation of natural resources of the Liri Valley

To talk about the liberalisation of common resources, especially water, in the Liri Valley, we have to start a decade before the introduction of the Napoleonic Code. As we know, in 1796 the Boncompagni family sold the entire duchy of Sora and its water rights to the Crown. The guild of the town, as the local representative of the State, had administered the water rights and handed over the old mills to a group of merchants.

Within a few years, the monopoly of the hydraulic power of the river passed from the feudal power to the Crown and then to the local town council, thanks to the decree of Joseph Bonaparte of 2 August 1806 on the overthrow of feudalism.<sup>29</sup> The merchants leased the mills from the guild by signing concessions, usually for long periods. The district was still in a pre-capitalist stage and the use of nature was subject to the control of the moral economy: there was no free access to water power. Decrees were also issued to protect the forests, which were felled for the needs of the inhabitants, and royal reserves were created to provide wood for the shipyards.<sup>30</sup>

As far as water was concerned, it belonged to the community, represented by the Corporation of the City of Sora, which saw water as a means of generating an economic rent for the benefit of the community. However, this state of affairs did not imply energy

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<sup>29</sup> Palumbo Manfredi, *I comuni meridionali prima e dopo le leggi eversive della feudalità*, Forni, Sala Bolognese 1979.

<sup>30</sup> Corona Gabriella, *Demani e individualismo agrario nel Regno di Napoli (1780-1806)*, ESI 1994.

efficiency, nor was it free of social conflict. In practice, the guild's decisions were influenced by the merchant lobby. The situation changed rapidly within a few years. The law of 2 August 1806 abolished the feudal regime and the remaining institutions of the so-called 'moral economy', with the consequence that a large number of individuals could potentially gain access to the exclusive use and rights of use of water, while the guild lost its control over the energy rent of the river.<sup>31</sup>

It was a very complex process, during which a new concept of private property emerged, proclaimed by the law of 1806, which stated that, once all feudal rights had been abolished, rivers should remain public property and that their use should be regulated according to Roman law, which considered them *res nullius*, i.e. nobody's property. *Res nullius* meant public, everyone's. But this word could be confusing: *public* in this sense did not mean the property of the state, but the property of the *general public*, made up of all citizens.<sup>32</sup>

The purpose of the law was to abolish the monopoly of the nobility and religious institutions on the use of water, whether they leased it or used it themselves. The abolition of the feudal, lordly or communal monopoly on water also meant the 'liberalisation' of all hydraulic works installed along public rivers. These were the installations that had previously been managed by barons, monastic orders, city guilds or the state, the Crown. But what did it mean? In the new legislation, the state declared that canals and waterworks, as well as mills and gualchiere, were to be maintained as private property and that anyone could make improvements to public rivers after obtaining a licence from the Crown. Such a licence would be granted once it was recognised that the individual's intervention would be in the public interest and would not prejudice the rights of other private individuals. In short, water was to

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Collezione degli editti, determinazioni, decreti e leggi di S.M., Simoniana, Napoli, 1806, p. 257 ssg: Sodano Giulio, *L'aristocrazia napoletana e l'eversione della feudalità: un tonfo senza rumore?* in *Ordine e disordine. Amministrazione e mondo militare nel Decennio francese*, a cura di R. De Lorenzo, Napoli 2012, p. 137 ssg.

be available to all who would use it for the public good, to run mills or irrigate fields. The individual interest of landlords or mill owners was recognised as a public interest and a means of achieving the economic progress of the nation.

The so-called feudal subversion law reflected the interests of the new social group represented by French immigrants and Neapolitans. A group that, despite its smallness, existed and also wanted power and wealth from the exploitation of the rivers. During the French decade, the water economy of the Sora district changed completely: the Boncompagni palace, for centuries the seat of feudal power, was divided up and leased to various private entrepreneurs, as were the rights to use the waterfall that ran alongside it. In 1809, the first wool industry in the area was set up there, and within a few years the rooms of the palace housed factories with machines powered by water, which flowed through an ancient system of canals into the rooms where the paddles and mills were mounted and then discharged into the stone foundations. Palazzo Boncompagni became an unprecedented historical and symbolic concentration and a sign of economic power based on the principles of the liberal economy.<sup>33</sup>

Then came paper production, previously marginal and considered a by-product of the production of wool and other substitutes, which had been produced in small mills on the Fibreno since the 16th century. Within two decades, the Liri basin would be supplying paper to the developed publishing industry of Naples, but there were still some steps to be taken. The great transformation was rapid: in less than forty years, in 1840, Isola had a working population of about 1,500, 45% of the economically active population, and could even be called the “Manchester of the two Sicilies”.

The beginning of industrialisation in the Liri Valley was led by a social minority institutionally favoured by free access to water power.

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<sup>33</sup> Even today, one of the best general introductions to the group of Neapolitan entrepreneurs, their cultural and economic characteristics and the environment in which they operated remains John Davies' book: *Società e imprenditori nel Regno borbonico (1815-1860)*, trad. it. Laterza, Bari 1979. For example, in the introductory part, pp. 3-48.

But the liberalisation of water was not a peaceful process and, like all revolutions, involved a long series of social conflicts. The French, well aware of this, formed a special court, called the Feudal Commission, to enforce the law in the provinces of the kingdom. Many of the best and best known lawyers and political reformers of the time were involved in this commission that managed the division of formerly feudal and ecclesiastical lands throughout Southern Italy. They had the task of enforcing the decisions of the Court, which often concerned land but in many cases also the inland waters of lakes, few, and rivers or streams, many.

It was not easy to pass judgement on conflicts over water, as the law only established the right to free access and the abolition of the monopoly. In 1809, after three years of battles between barons, municipalities and individuals, the Minister of the Interior, Giuseppe Zurlo (1757-1828), a Jacobin by training and considered by historians to be on the side of the conservative Murattians, wrote a memorandum laying down the basic principles of water law. This would remain a landmark in the history of water legislation until the end of the kingdom in 1861. The *Zurlo Memorandum* stated that the use of non-navigable waters, i.e. almost all the rivers in the Kingdom, did not require a licence from the public authorities and was a matter to be regulated by recourse to civil law on private rights. The civil law was in charge of the relations between those who had the right to the use of water bodies. Zurlo excluded administrative power from the diatribes by defining the private nature of conflicts over water: his clear intention was to limit the involvement of the state in resolving such conflicts in order to prevent the courts from being clogged up with trying to resolve what were then private disputes. The *Memorandum* recognised the existence of public interests in the use of water as well as rights of common use, such as irrigation, and was aware of the need to prevent flooding and damage caused by hydraulic works. It ensured that city administrations were free to set rules for water distribution and public safety. These rules were intended to place distribution and control in the hands of the community. Although water could be appropriated individually, its use

had to be limited by rules that took into account the needs of the community and the stability of the environment.

The contradictions between the assertion of private property rights over water and the principle of regulating common ownership were the result of the theoretical contradictions that animated the Neapolitan elite in the transition from the old to the new regime. Freedom and property were the key concepts of the revolution; at the same time, the new regime strongly reaffirmed the importance of its administrative powers. But the concept of 'private property rights' eventually triumphed. Given his involvement in the liberal revolution in the kingdom, the minister felt compelled to use the language of freedom rather than that of duty. Indeed, while leaving local authorities free to make their own laws, the *Memorandum* stipulated that 'where these rules do not exist, the nature of the waters shall not be subject to any restrictions on those who wish to use them'.<sup>34</sup>

The *Zurlo's Memorandum* caused social conflict throughout the country because it promoted the idea that private property could be declared over rivers, even though they retained their public character. The minister was unable to keep the public authorities and the chancelleries out of the conflict, as the mill owners tried to assert their private rights over the authorities administered by the state, and these were swamped by legal disputes over water rights. To solve the problem, the King referred to the principles of the *Zurlo's Memorandum* in a special way, stating that water rights were a matter of public administration and that the ordinary courts should only be involved in conflicts between individuals. This declaration was enshrined in a royal decree in 1823 and reiterated in 1838 and 1850. The former Minister of Finance, Ludovico Bianchini, noticed that water law was not well defined and wrote in his work, *Della scienza del vivere sociale* (1857), that it was confusing, that it did not help to understand the motives of individuals and hence the many lawsuits that tried to regulate by private agreement what the general law did not regulate.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

However, the decree of 1823 did succeed in keeping the Crown out of the myriad litigations that arose and in preventing it from being directly involved in the judgments. It was not until 1853, a few years before the end of the dynasty, that the Crown asserted that the waters flowing through the kingdom were the property of the state and not 'free'. After half a century of private ownership, however, change was neither swift nor easy. While the concept of private ownership of the southern Italian rivers had been introduced into the legal culture of the place by the French revolutionary army, the public ownership of this common good had been reaffirmed by a dynasty that was at the time financially struggling and on the verge of collapse, mainly due to international encirclement. Economic interests, investments in hydraulic works and money spent on buying water rights and defending them in court could not simply be overturned.

In 1810, the Feudal Commission considered a lawsuit brought by merchants from the Sora district against the city council's monopoly on water. It was decided that anyone could build new mills on the Liri. While the restoration of the principle of free access to rivers was in the spirit of the law, Zurlo's concern about the need for local rules to establish water rights was not duly taken into account. Economic freedom, the freedom to own and use nature, was seen as necessary and sufficient for the pursuit of economic progress. This abstract idea, rooted in the contradictions behind the new political order, was linked to a new ecological vision of water expressed by the emerging Neapolitan bourgeoisie - such as the Zino and Sorvillo families - and the new entrepreneurs, mostly of French origin, such as the Lambert, Lefèbvre and Viollier families. Two conditions had been created for the flourishing of new businesses in the Liri Valley: the road from Naples to Sora and the principle that, with a licence, one could have access to water without having to pay anything to the State. It was now necessary to create the conditions for this development to take place.

Even if it was not possession but freely granted use, the discourse of possession was reiterated in the language of conflicts along the Liri Valley throughout the century; it was used by those who promoted lawsuits, by government officials and by lawyers. There are no

differences in the use of the terms ownership, possession and appropriation such as to cast doubt on the existence of common ideas about water and how it is exploited.<sup>35</sup> Everyone seemed to know what they were talking about, and yet there were ambiguities that could only be resolved after lengthy legal battles. In fact, those who installed the largest companies in the area at the time, as we shall see, Zino, Beranger and Lefèbvre, had to face literally dozens of lawsuits. Later, when the Italian state attempted to ensure public control over the use of rivers, the lawyer of a wool producer declared that his client had an exclusive right of possession over the Fibreno, and even produced purchase invoices. He was convinced that he was the owner of the river because the lawsuits spoke of ownership, when in fact the exploitation was supposed to be free. The ambiguities weighed heavily but did not prevent the development of the industry.<sup>36</sup> Lawsuits, meanwhile, reinforced individual property rights over water. The language of appropriation was also recited and used in the courts where lawsuits

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<sup>35</sup> In 1839, for example, a judgement by the royal judge of Sora condemned the convent of Santa Restituta for carrying out hydraulic works by disturbing the owner of a mill in his possession of the water. A few years later, the same mill owner objected to hydraulic works carried out by another industrialist upriver by invoking his exclusive possession of the water in that part of the river according to the concession he had received from the Crown in 1838. *Ibidem*, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> The De Ciantis brothers had a mill built in 1831, and a lawsuit was filed against the possibility of carrying out hydraulic work, which was considered illegal and harmful to public health: it caused the flooding of a public road and the stagnation of water, but the ruling was not enforced. Instead, the city council passed a resolution stating that the De Ciantis family should be encouraged in their business because they provided work for so many workers. As a result, the owners started their waterworks, and another industrialist requested the intervention of the intendant (i.e. the governor of the province) to assess the environmental impact of the new works. An engineer from the Corps of Bridges and Roads, sent to make a report on public safety, gave a very favourable opinion of the works, as they had been designed to improve industry and had benefited the public in every way. The new gate that the mill owners wanted to build was, according to the engineer's report, as necessary to the movement of their machines as those machines were to the culture of the nation. *Ibidem*, p. 12.



often followed even violent direct actions. The transformation of the Liri river into a natural capital through the assertion of private property rights transformed the valley into an industrial district. But at the end of the century, the population growth of Sora and Isola slowed down after decades of increase. Workers' wages had fallen, as had the general level of education, which had risen in the first part of the century and up to 1870-1880. Social mobility had proved to be very difficult: the wealthiest had become the landowners, those who had land, especially along rivers or canals. The entire district does not seem to have developed beyond the phase of the first and second industrial revolution, roughly from 1780 to 1900. Within this period, development was impetuous, then came to a halt.

Local finances at that point proved poor, credit was scarce and there were no public hospitals - apart from two called Sala Flavia in Sora and Isola - nor public schools in the district. The history of the economic and industrial growth and thus decline of the Liri Valley can be read in various ways: market obstacles, competition from foreign industry, political unification, loss of government protection, but also excessive concentration of industry in a few hands that destroyed competition.

One must also consider individuals, the behaviour of entrepreneurs and institutional inconsistency at the local level. As for the Fibreno, in 1896, after 90 years of environmental destruction all the industrialists were called by the prefect to help two government engineers fill in a questionnaire when the last chance to find a local agreement on water partition was lost.<sup>37</sup> No technical solution to regulate private property in the Liri Valley was yet available at that time. The legal dispute generated appeals with which the lawyers subjugated the state engineers. The dispute between the water users of the Fibreno river and

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13. As we shall see later, the prefect sent two technical officers in accordance with an 1884 law. The users had to register their water intake with the local civil engineer, but there was a lack of cooperation and the state had no control over the situation. They all called for the intervention of a higher administrative authority to resolve the conflict, but it was impossible to find one because the science of the time made it impossible to determine exactly how much water each of them was entitled to. *Ibidem*, pp. 13-14.

the Prefect would last for a few more decades. The length of the lawsuits was such that it became the best way to avoid state interference in legal affairs concerning water use. This phase came to an end after the First World War when new hydroelectric technologies overcame the old hydraulic machines located along the river banks.<sup>38</sup>

In the course of time, conditions in the Liri Valley basin worsened due to exploitation, but also due to environmental changes such as deforestation. During the rainy seasons, more frequent and increasingly serious floods arrived that increased the uncertainty of economic and social life, even causing entire factories to collapse. Violent floods affected Sora in 1825, 1830, 1845, 1856 and 1857 and again in 1879, 1903, 1906 and 1910, damaging agriculture and industry. In the disastrous flood of December 1845, three of the most important industries, Ciccodicola, Polsinelli and Courier, were seriously damaged. It was then the turn of the Cartiere del Liri and in 1900 the Ciccodicola wool mill was almost completely destroyed and had to be demolished.

Around 1855, the Municipal Council of Sora decided to dam the course of the river and build embankments of stone and cement. The project cost 15,000 ducats, which corresponded to 15 times the city's annual income, but it was never completed, also due to the collapse of the Bourbon kingdom and the change of city institutions.<sup>39</sup> The city council complained that flooding once caused by extraordinary rainfall had become an ordinary phenomenon and was no longer manageable. The river bed had been filled with sand deposits that had never been drained, and the many hydraulic works carried out along the course of the river, especially between Sora and Isola, had raised its level. Naturally, every time a job was carried out, an excavation, the debris

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<sup>38</sup> The discourse of individual rights fits with the primitive capitalist view of nature as a source of infinite wealth, once placed under the realm of property and mixed with capital investments of labour. There were high transaction costs, uncertainty of property rights and a lack of institutional efficiency on both the formal and informal side. Barca, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

was thrown into the river and stopped somewhere, often upstream of the Valcatoio and Cascata Grande waterfalls.

A state of permanent risk had been created and so the district of Sora in 1861 asked the new Italian State for help, which, after study, intervened with a contribution of 16,000 lire for a total amount of 76,000 lire for the works. Yet, in spite of the appropriations, work on the Liri's seat proceeded very slowly, taking decades. The flood damage affected many factories but not the Lefèbvre factories, which had occupied the most favourable area of the river course, either fortunately or because they had been the first to settle in a more sheltered area.

In 1879, the provincial government contributed 300,000 lire and the state another 25,000. It must be said that in many parts of Italy, floods became the consequence of the privatisation of natural resources that encouraged land owners to deforest in order to cultivate cereals and exploit the environment to the maximum. Deforestation, especially in mountainous regions, caused hydrogeological disruption, as rainwater, which was no longer stopped by vegetation, washed away the increasingly bare sides of mountains and hillsides and forcefully flowed into valleys and plains, which were consequently flooded. That these phenomena were already known at the beginning of the century is demonstrated by the pioneering studies of officials such as Teodoro Monticelli and Carlo Afan de Rivera, the latter a key figure in the public works sector in the first half of the 19th century.<sup>40</sup> Not only had the land been deforested along the Apennines and the Roveto valley, the river bed had also been filled with unregulated hydraulic works and mills at Sora and Isola del Liri.

The situation was clarified in the first official report on flooding in the Sora district, which was written in 1812 and asked mill owners to restore the riverbanks to the natural state they were in before the interventions. After the flooding of Sora in 1825, the new director of the Corps of Bridges and Roads, Carlo Afan de Rivera, denounced the city corporation because instead of making every effort to regulate the waters they tolerated the devastation by accepting the state of things.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

By 1930 most of the companies had closed down, leaving only one large paper group, Cartiere Meridionali, and the situation was still difficult. The government, which lacked the financial resources to implement its projects, was never able to enforce its legal decisions. This unregulated freedom of individual landowners over the water created many problems: the exercise of power by an emerging group of capitalists over other groups implied a new perception, an industrial and cultural micro-universe revolving around a few companies, such as the central one, Manifattura del Fibreno, and its water-powered machines. This new world fitted in with the state's economic policy, which aimed to increase national wealth through the creation of a manufacturing industry. It received constant and unconditional support from the Crown, intellectuals, painters, politicians and kings who, over time, visited it and made it known, reinforcing its central role in the re-imagining of the Liri Valley as a place where nature, culture and technology were in harmony.

The ideology of the time was an extension of Adam Smith's theory of individual and collective interest, in this case linked to natural resources; an ideology that was reflected in legal reforms and the indecisiveness of the courts. The Liri Valley and the river became, in the ideology of the time, a kind of natural good (natural capital), something offered by nature, the appropriation of which gave the owner advantages over capitalists located in ecosystems where hydraulic power was not available.<sup>41</sup>

The value of water within the cultural perception of nature encompassed its appropriation, and in this sense one cannot speak of free access in the case of the Liri Valley: water power cannot be produced without the possession of machinery and considerable fixed capital invested. Secondly, machinery cannot be installed without the possession of a piece of land along the bank, which implies the ownership of private property. Thirdly, since energy production by means of water fall was the most productive way of using the river, other, less profitable ways, such as fishing, livestock watering or even

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16.

irrigation, tended to be replaced, devalued, marginalised. Consequently, the control of the river and its appropriation by one social group, the mill owners with capital, increased productivity and return on investment at the expense of other groups.

It also has to be said that, as water abstraction for energy exploitation is a form of rent, it follows that hydropower obeys the Ricardian law of diminishing profitability due to improper closure of the river. If the number of users increases, the transaction costs also increase. The closure of sections of the river into individual properties increased the environmental risk because individuals felt free to act on the piece of nature granted to them without seeing themselves as part of a whole: these individual choices produced a decline in the quantity and quality of natural capital that had an effect on the sustainability of the economic system. However, all this was to be seen at the dawn of the 20th century.

The exploitation of the Liri was not an open-access system but a common resource on which a form of exclusivity was established, derived from the possession or rent of land and machinery, without allowing a genuine regime of common ownership. An important incentive that individuals usually have for deciding to cooperate is a clear perception of their interdependence and the prospect of a common future. The industrialists of the Liri Valley, however, had no such awareness, they did not conceive of themselves as a community but as individuals who maximised profit by acting according to this thinking.

Hydraulic energy is produced by a flow of water along the course of a river, a flow of energy that cannot be stored unless very expensive constructions such as dams or reservoirs were built at the end of the century and the beginning of the 20th century. This implied the appropriation and control over large stretches of the river by an individual: a company or agency of the State (what is called a natural monopoly).<sup>42</sup> But neither the mill owners of the Liri Valley nor the Neapolitan government wanted dominion over the river because they believed in the notions of economic freedom and national wealth. They

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

practised and favoured in essence an appropriation of individual free access in the form of concessions, even long-term concessions, concessions that could be subjected to a sale and purchase market. The problem was that individual users attempted to maximise their share of energy by over-using the resource without any real control; they obstructed, for example, the river bed with various artefacts without caring about the damage they caused to the downstream flow catchers of their artefacts. Such intervention in a resource that is owned by more than one person is counterproductive and takes a narrow view that easily causes effects on productivity. Individual choices that maximise the gain of one makes all other players lose. Local rules, if established, would have created a kind of common property regime based on the exclusion of outsiders and the regulated access of those who entered into that common property.

Other Italian rivers, such as the Po, had a long history in the form of hydraulic consortia, i.e. associations of users, not always formalised but accepted by custom and usage, which regulated the partition of water.<sup>43</sup> The case of the water consortia, as well as other cases involving common ownership of water, shows that this was a preferable arrangement even for resources with a high market value, such as irrigation water.<sup>44</sup>

Apparently, the history of the Liri Valley in the 19th century led to a change in the concept of common property. However, there was an ideological shift in the consciousness and cultural perceptions of the actors regarding what should be attributed to natural resources. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Neapolitan ruling class began to consider the previous feudal regime as a form of monopoly and moved towards a regime of free access, considering the latter as a form of private property. Moreover, they gave a very Smithian meaning to the term 'public', considering the collective as the sum of individuals and the public interest as the sum of private interests in business.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Consortia and other forms of common ownership of water resources generally had to do with irrigation rather than energy production.



## Chapter 4

### Isola di Sora. Places and Spaces

The Liri Valley, an Arcadian and agricultural area but also a reservoir of classical memories, is charged with the richness and value of history, with the fascination of memories whose weight, importance, and intensity we are probably unable to assess today, considering how the education of the ruling classes has changed: Cicero was an integral part of the education and instruction of most important men whether they had a technical background or not. The places of his origin, the area between Isola and Arpino, were considered sacred, as we have seen. And as we have already mentioned, showing Hackert's paintings, the Liri Valley was frequented by French, English and Germans, mainly painters but also classicists who became 'antiquarians', that is, archaeologists and curious visitors to famous places. Many of these left engravings, paintings but also memories, consecrating the place as an authentic and well-known stop on the Gran Tour.<sup>45</sup> One of the most notable figures is Alexandre H. Dunouy (1757-1841), a Parisian painter famous for his views. He stayed in the surroundings of Sora between 1770 and 1780, and then returned to Naples again for several months between 1813 and 1814 under the protection of Joachim Murat. On each visit he produced views, paintings that are a valuable historical

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<sup>45</sup> And that the entire area was an important stop on the Grand Tour between Rome and Naples is proven by Paolo Accettola's very valuable book: *Artisti e viaggiatori del XVIII-XIX secolo a Casamari e presso San Domenico di Sora. Dal paesaggio del Gran Tour all'industrializzazione*, Centro Studi Sorani Patriarca, Sora 2019. The book brings together a vast mass of iconographic documents and news that touch on the abbey of Casamari, the monastery of San Domenico di Sora and the surrounding area.



testimony for us today to understand what places looked like at that time.

In a famous picture painted in 1787, he depicts an area near Carnello, between Isola and Sora. The mountains in the background and the castle of San Vincenzo are an accurate indicator.



*Valle del Liri presso Sora negli Abruzzi*, by Alexandre-Hyacinthe Dunouy  
(Liri Valley near Sora in Abruzzi 1787).

The view became the model for other paintings and was reproduced for a long time in engravings, watercolours and drawings. The river is rich and placid, a peasant woman grazes two cows, the castle can be seen in the background. The vegetation is rich and dense and will be one of the first aspects to be changed given the intense need for timber and the need to cultivate the hills and plains with olives. One can also

see a wide road with many furrows, a sign of lively activity. This is how the area between Isola and Sora appeared at the end of the 18th century.

Another view by the same painter is the painting depicting the village of Isola, *La Cascata Verticale di Isola del Liri*. In the midst of a bucolic landscape (probably not idealised) we see a village of a few thousand inhabitants, agricultural and pastoral - cows graze in front of the bend in the river and arrive perched around the 15th-century Boncompagni castle and other late-medieval buildings. In this painting, the abundance of water for the wide bend in the river, now completely bridled in an artificial bed, is evident; the 'vertical' waterfall to the right of the castle is also depicted, which then had a considerable water flow at the bridge over the river before falling.



*La Cascata Verticale di Isola del Liri*, by Alexandre H. Dunouy  
(Vertical Waterfall in Isola del Liri, 1790).

On the right of the picture, a fine example of 18th century landscape architecture, some buildings can be seen below the hundred metres of difference in altitude that now separates Isola Alta from Isola Bassa, a place that was later used by many industrial activities to generate power. In the distance, surrounded by greenery, about three quarters of

the way across the picture, we can see the white mass of the Carmelite convent of Santa Maria delle Forme, then completely isolated in the countryside, which we will comment on below. In the background are the hills of Pescosolido and San Vincenzo.

Another painting by Achille Etna Michallon (1796-1822), which shows a stretch of the river Liri, correctly identified by Gilberto Brigenti as the area later known as Remorici, where the Soffondo was to be built on the right, proves that the area was already known before the historical development, despite its relative isolation from the capitals of Naples and Rome.

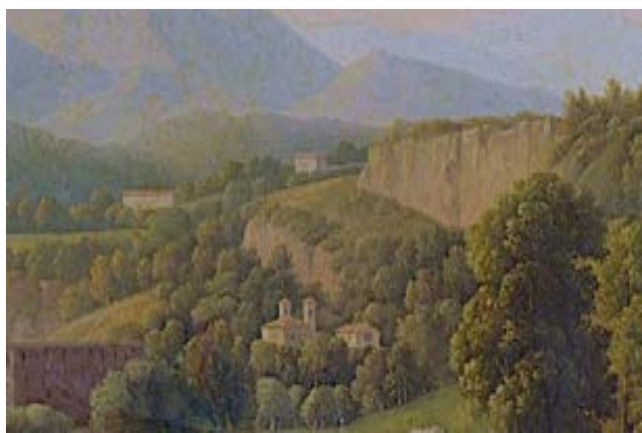
Santa Maria delle Forme, which existed at the time, was not included in the painter's view. Michallon, a landscape painter of great talent, master of painters such as Corot, although he died in Paris at the age of 26, painted the Sora area around 1816-1817. He joined his father, the painter and sculptor Claude Michallon (1751-1799), in Rome, choosing this place as a stop on his Grand Tour.



*Fibreno River (1817)*, by Achille Etna Michallon. Remorici area, just downstream from the point where the Soffondo will be built. These are the famous 'Cascatelle' of the Lefebvre Park.

This is the stretch that Madame Rosanne Lefèbvre would name 'cascatelle', and it would also be called Cascatelle Park in 19th century documents and maps. For most of the century, at least until the construction of the Ciccodicola factory, the area retained a wild and unspoilt appearance.

When observing these overviews of Isola, we note that, unlike what would happen in later decades, the wool manufacturing activities or artisan workshops, attested by sources as already existing, are completely indistinguishable from the rest of the buildings and totally integrated into the urban fabric. A detail of the same picture enlarging the right side of the picture, the one that identifies the present Isola del Liri Superiore, i.e. the area where the industrial complexes were to be built, shows us first of all the height of the difference in height then marked by steep cliffs that are now covered by roads and buildings. The cliff that can be seen on the right today is alongside the road that connects the upper and lower parts of Isola. As for the convent of Santa Maria delle Forme, visible in the background, it appears completely isolated, seen from the side in the distance and surrounded on all sides by thick vegetation. There already existed at the time, as a farmhouse, what was later renovated and enlarged to be known as Villa Louise, but in this view it is invisible, probably because it is hidden by vegetation.



Detail of *La Cascata Verticale di Isola del Liri*, di Alexandre H. Dunouy. On the left can be seen the building of the former convent of Santa Maria delle Forme.

In later paintings and engravings, the landscape, although still very green and rich in vegetation, appears more bare due to the increase in vegetable crops and the orchards and olive groves necessary for the increase in population and the consequent cutting down of the forests. It is difficult to say whether everything in these views reflects reality as it was at the time, it may be that the French painter exaggerated the number of trees as a certain amount of idealisation was inherent in this type of landscape painting, however, the view is in line with other contemporary views in these details as well.

Ten years later, in 1800, in another painting famous for the topographical clarity with which it describes the entire territory of the island, entitled *Veduta delle Cascate del Liri presso l'Isola di Sora vicino a Caserta* (View of the Liri Falls at Isola di Sora near Caserta), the area appears less wooded. It is an oil on canvas by an unknown German painter, as the title suggests, dated around 1800, about a year after the massacre of 1799. The painting shows considerable differences from the previous one, not so much in the built-up area as in the countryside. The settlement seems to have grown by several dwellings compared to 10 years earlier, although the difference is barely perceptible. The elevations of the convent and the house on the road seem different and closer to reality. The hydrography of the village has remained unchanged: the great waterfall, the second long waterfall to the left of the castle, known as the Valcatoio, is barely visible.



Oil on canvas *Veduta delle Cascate del Liri presso l'Isola di Sora vicino a Caserta*, anonymous german. Around 1800.

One can clearly see the road that led from Isola inferiore to Isola superiore and continued to Sora where one could take the Consolare. In the area of the difference in height between the upper and lower parts of the settlement (superiore and inferiore Isola), compared to the pictures of ten years earlier, the woods appear less dense and are replaced by extensive cultivated fields. One notices at least one more building in the area. Above all, Santa Maria delle Forme appears more visible and one can distinguish the present Villa Louise, which in the previous picture was hidden by vegetation and perspective. Enlarging this portion, one can see the large building still standing on the road leading towards Via Taverna Nuova. In the middle, smaller, is the present Villa Louise, then a farmhouse. The building that appears opposite, in perspective to the Monastero delle Forme, was a tower dating back to the 16th century that would later be incorporated into a



villa belonging to the Mancini family.<sup>46</sup> The design of the roads and their routes has now completely changed and simplified.



Detail: *Veduta delle Cascate del Liri presso l'Isola di Sora vicino a Caserta* (1800).

At the time, the area appeared devoid of woods, with few houses and vast meadows and orchards. Throughout the upper right-hand side of the picture, in fact, one sees low, regular, orchard-like vegetation, especially on the land belonging to Santa Maria delle Forme, where the first industrial buildings were to be built a few years later by Beranger and later by Lefèbvre. In the background, other farmhouses appear. By that time, the monastery had already been suppressed (the final suppression dates back to 1799), was uninhabited and belonged to the state property.

The future Villa Louise was originally the Villino Palma or Casino Palma, which can be found on maps of the area and which dated back to a time close to that of the Carmine monastery, as the ovoid windows on the first floor would show. This Villino Palma, which belonged to

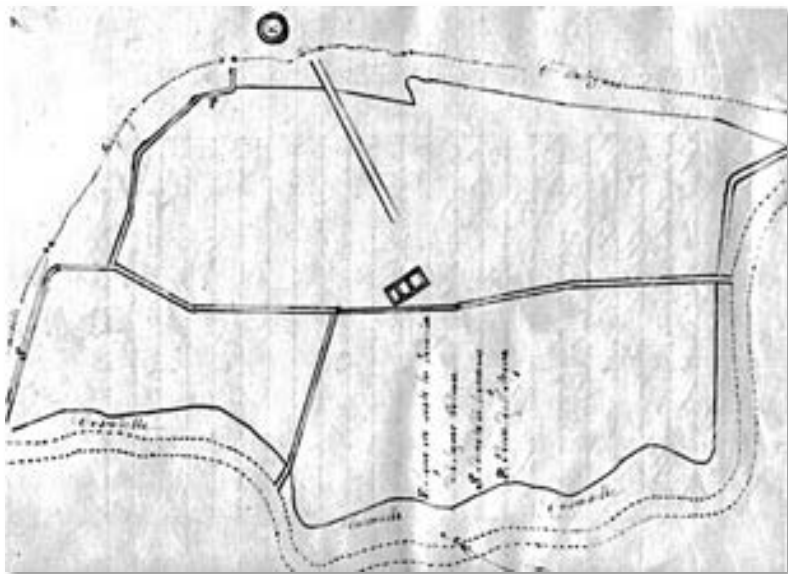
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<sup>46</sup> Loffreda Enzo, *Da borgo medievale a città moderna: lo sviluppo urbanistico-architettonico di Isola del Liri (sec. IX-XX)*, with the author, Isola del Liri 2017, p. 167n.

the family of the same name, was bought by the Lefèbvre family. On the ground floor was the site of the Officina Palma, which served as a metal workshop for the maintenance and repair of machines.



Villino or Casino Palma.



Map showing the Villa Louise ex Casino Palma with the two entrances, from the road and from the Manifattura del Fibreno.



From the same years, but a few years earlier and dated 1798, is a bird's-eye view map of the town and its surroundings, engraved on copper and included in the aforementioned *Descrizione storico-filologica delle antiche e moderne città, e castelli, esistenti accosto i fiumi Liri e Fibreno* (Historical-Philological Description of the ancient and modern towns and castles existing near the Liri and Fibreno rivers) by Abbot Ferdinando Pistilli (1756-1834), born in Isola. Originally published by Amato, a new edition was published in 1824 by the French printing house of Beranger and Lefèvre, based in Piazza San Domenico Maggiore in Naples.

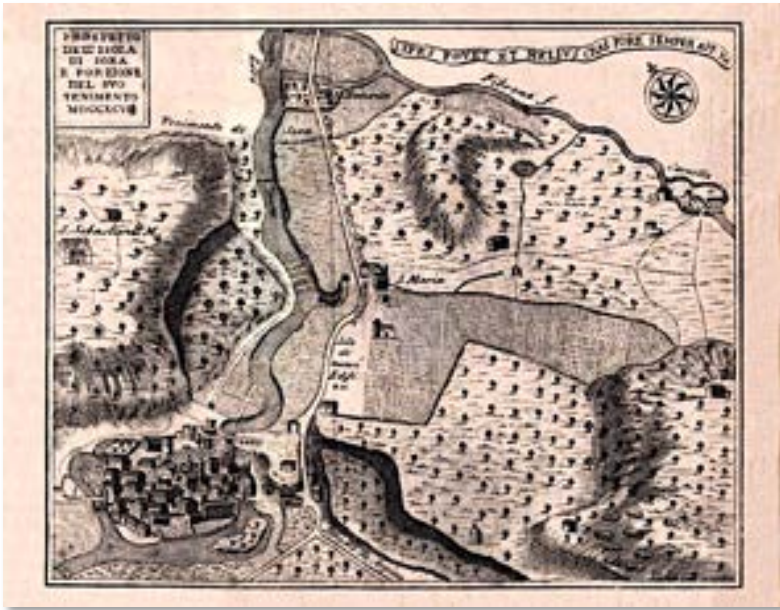
The engraving commissioned by Abbot Pistilli was made by Giuseppe Giordano (1764-1852), a well-known engineer and architect, General Inspector of the Corps of Engineers of Bridges and Roads, author of many fine views of Naples, which stand out for their precision. The engraving is part of a volume written by the Abbot who, in 1793, wanted to establish a spun-iron (wire) factory on the Isola di Sora.

The Commissioner of Campagna, Mr. Tommaso Oliva, who came here to carefully observe the feasibility of the manufactures, [had] the plan drawn by the engineer D. Giuseppe Giordano, a young man of great expectation in his profession, who drew and sketched it with a masterly hand, and to the great satisfaction of the Sovereign, to whom it was presented together with the representation of Mr. Oliva.<sup>47</sup>

As we read, the ironworks were of interest to Ferdinand IV, but there is no record of its establishment.

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<sup>47</sup> The plate bears the motto in the upper right-hand corner: "*Spes fovet et melius cras fore semper ait*", che riprende il v. 20, Elegia VI, Book II of Albio Tibullo (Gabi or Pedum, 54 a.C. ca. - Roma, 19 a.C.), Latin poet among the greatest exponents of heroic elegy.



The map shows the division of land and the presence of canals before the excavation of the Forme Canal in 1808.

Giordano's map shows a plot of land on which it says 'site of new buildings', a kind of zoning plan for the area that allowed for new buildings on the road from Isola to Forme just downstream from the suppressed convent. The small church that would be rebuilt by Charles Lefèbvre in 1832 also appears in this image.

Looking at this bird's-eye view engraving, one can see the convent of Santa Maria delle Forme, referred to simply as Santa Maria, shortly before its suppression. The map also shows a nearby farmhouse, visible because it is surrounded by arable land. It is understood that at this date (shortly before any intervention), the convent had a wing that acted as a corner and would be extended and lengthened 50 years later. The body of the building that made an elbow along the road to Sora would be demolished and enlarged in 1829.

The land annexed to the monastery was partly cultivated probably with wheat and partly destined for arboreal crops, mostly olive trees - very common in the area as can also be seen on the map - and fruit trees that reached as far as San Domenico, clearly visible on Giordano's map.

As for the town of Isola, Ferdinand of Bourbon, once he returned to the throne, healed the devastation wrought by the French and had the renovation of the church of San Lorenzo and other public works carried out at his own expense. The church, as mentioned, was restored in 1826 but returned to worship a year later with the necessary reconsecration.<sup>48</sup>



Convent Carmine in Isola di Sora by Richard C. Hoare (1790).

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<sup>48</sup> Loffreda Enzo, *Da borgo medievale a città moderna: lo sviluppo urbanistico-architettonico di Isola del Liri (sec. IX-XX)*, with the author, Isola del Liri 2017, p. 111. Loffreda provides no further details.

Very interesting is also a watercolour dated 1790, one of the oldest of those exhibited so far, by the English gentleman and artist Richard Colt Hoare (1758-1838). Between 1790 and 1791 he produced a series of 18 views of Sora and its surroundings, including the convent of Santa Maria delle Forme, with its church and nearby farmhouse. One view is entitled *Convento del Carmine di Isola di Sora* (1790).

The engraving is interesting for several reasons: firstly, it shows how the area now occupied by the lower part of the Lefèbvre factory, the Soffondo, looked at the end of the 18th century.<sup>49</sup>

The viewpoint starts from the opposite bank of the river, in the area known as Remorici or Remorice: a still virgin territory, very green and rich in water. It shows how wide the convent was at the back, towards Fibreno and Sora. It is long and is connected to other buildings, one of which overlooks the 20 metres waterfall that still exists today, albeit with a smaller volume of water, which at that time must have come exclusively from the Magnene stream, since the canal to bring water from the Fibreno had not yet been built. The waterfall seems to have been abundant (perhaps due to the season, perhaps due to idealisation) and probably flowed underneath the building through a stone arch. The remaining part of the waterfall is the one on the left, the rest has been harnessed in canals passing under the factory.

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<sup>49</sup> It sometimes appears in the spellings 'Soffundo' or 'Soffonno' (dialectal). To make it uniform, we shall henceforth call it 'Soffondo', as it appears in 19th century legal texts.



*Waterfall in front of the ancient Convento Carmine di Isola di Sora*  
(1810 circa).

In this early 19th century painting, dated 1810, which does not show the first interventions carried out in 1812 when work began on the Beranger concession, canal waters (called 'forme', in fact) appear to flow from three different underground channels. One passed under the monastery and two irrigated the orchards and crops to the right of the monastery church. A plentiful harvest of water that belonged to more than one stream or brook and that was largely harnessed in conduits that would move, together with the water from the Fibreno, the machines of the Manifattura. On 20 September 1811, the convent and church suffered a severe flood, which would favour their reconversion for industrial use, evidently due to the destruction of part of the interior religious furnishings.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> I take this information from the very accurate volume by a local historian, Enzo Loffreda, *Da borgo medievale a Città moderna: lo sviluppo urbanistico architettonico di isola del Liri*, with the author, 2017, pp. 118-119.

The waterfall on the left was later used by the Lefèbvre family as a domestic drain and passed under the palace kitchens. The area of rocks and water facing the street, in the central part, was later covered by the Soffondo built to harness the movement of water and animate various Dutch waterfalls.

As we know, the conditions that led a group of Frenchmen to invest time and money in the Terra di Lavoro matured with the law of 2 August 1806 with which the French Minister abolished feudality, effectively freeing many properties, and granting administrative autonomy to the municipalities, also reforming the administration of the territories.<sup>51</sup> The suppression of many monasteries had already begun in the 18th century with the Bourbons, but was pursued particularly hard in the French Decade with thousands of suppressions of monasteries, convents, churches, religious institutes, congregations and the consequent confiscation of their property. The process gave rise to dramas and imbalances; there were monks and nuns who had no means of subsistence for some time due to the abolition of farms and industries run by religious institutes. In many cases the contracts and customs of cultivation and work that bound religious property to the land were also cancelled.

The pre-existing Province of Terra di Lavoro was divided into four districts under Sora, Capua, Gaeta and Nola. The government of Joseph Bonaparte sent the priest Giacinto Pistilli, Ferdinando Pistilli's brother, to the territory of Sora to study the existing manufactures, the craft activities and the potential of the area.<sup>52</sup> Pistilli had already written a

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<sup>51</sup> Sodano Giulio, *L'aristocrazia napoletana e l'eversione della feudalità: un tonfo senza rumore?* in Ordine e disordine. Amministrazione e mondo militare nel Decennio francese, cur. R. De Lorenzo, Napoli 2012, pp. 137-157; Trifone Romualdo, *Feudi e demani. Eversione della feudalità nelle provincie napoletane: dottrina, storia, legislazione e giurisprudenza*, Società editrice libraria, Milano 1909. Francesco Mineccia, *Soppressione degli enti religiosi e liquidazione del patrimonio ecclesiastico nel Regno di Napoli (1806-1815)*, in Itinerari di ricerca storica, XXVI, 2012 (nuova serie), pp. 71-92.

<sup>52</sup> Zarrelli Saverio, *Alla ricerca dell'identità perduta*, Istituto V. Zarrelli, p. 55.

memorandum in 1792 entitled *Dimostrazione de' progetti presentati alla maestà del sovrano* (Demonstration of the projects presented to the Majesty of the Sovereign), Naples 1792, which the lawyer Gaetano Ferrante presented to the sovereign Ferdinand. Pistilli praised Charles, who had begun to introduce innovations and 'shake up feudal serfdom' in order to promote the arts. He invoked the names of Sully, Colbert and the 'enlightened sovereigns of the North' and again praised Ferdinand, who abolished feudal rights and 'corrected the defects of the old nobility, of the old anarchy'.<sup>53</sup> He then gives a very favourable presentation of his land, the Duchy of Sora and Isola (which together with Castelluccio had a total of 4000 inhabitants at the time). Among the modern industrial initiatives to be set up in Isola, he lists spun iron and cannons. To this end, he brings the testimony of an American who was travelling in those parts as early as 1792:

An educated American traveller, a native of New York, named Asmith, who had brought himself from Rome to the island to observe its marvellous waters, declared to Pistilli and others around him that, after wandering for thirteen years in the New World and nine years on our continent, he had never found a place more suitable by nature for manufacturing than the fortunate island of Sora.

And yet, possessing this incalculable treasure that nature has bestowed upon us, we have so far neglected to take advantage of it for all kinds of arts and crafts. Particularly in the spinning industry, of which we speak, our indolence has reached such a degree that we could, with the help of the mines and water of the State of Sora, make ourselves an active power in spinning iron, but we are still forced to repeat this from the chilly regions of the north.

This, moreover, is but one of the hundred factories that could be built in the island's river, known as the Liri. In the plans presented by Pistilli, after the iron wire factory, there immediately follows another, equally advantageous, cannon factory.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 26-27.

But the territory's destiny lies in the third proposal. After the production of iron wire and cannons, came the paper mills, paper being seen as the pinnacle of civilisation:

It is paper that has perpetuated man's thoughts, written them down, expanded them and transmitted them to posterity: and it can be said with certainty that Europe owes its civilisation and the spirit of humanity that characterises it today to paper, which has spread philosophy and letters. It is to be hoped, therefore, that this kind of manufacture will never be considered sufficient for the honour of mankind, nor will it ever be sufficiently perfected. In our kingdom, however, although this manufacture has made some progress, it is far from having reached the degree to which other peoples have brought it. Especially in the provinces, and in some parts of Terra di Lavoro itself, as in the State of Sora, this kind of manufacture is in such a poor state that it would dishonour those nascent societies which are in the infancy of every kind of art and manufacture. In the vast State of Sora, in spite of the advantages of so much water, there is only one paper-mill; and this, belonging to the Baron, and leased at a high price, produces the most shameful paper that can be imagined. As it is alone, the natural people of the country must make use of it, or send themselves to Subiaco, not far away, in the Roman State, as the wealthy are wont to do. Here, then, is another inconvenience to the people, and another drain on their money, which could be avoided if paper-mills were built in great numbers, using the aforesaid waters, so that everyone could build them at his own expense, multiplying them, as it were, and perfecting the factories by imitation.<sup>55</sup>

Interestingly, it mentions the only paper factory in the Duchy of Sora (1792 is four years before its suppression) in the locality of Carnello owned by Baron Boncompagni. But poor quality paper was made there, it is said, even 'the most shameful paper that could ever be conceived of', so inadequate that it was supplied to the ancient Montecassino paper mill.

Pistilli's proposal was to be followed up, but only after fifteen years. Because of the suppression of the Duchy of Sora, and then the war, he was heard from again in 1806 when Joseph Bonaparte called on him

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<sup>55</sup> Pistilli Giacinto, *Ibidem*, pp. 29-31.



because he was aware of his studies and assessments. On 20 October 1806, therefore, Pistilli wrote an up-to-date report on the state of affairs in the territory of Sora, which followed that of 1792, as little had changed. The addition to this report of some maps schematising the distribution of land and water routes also underlines its semi-technical character. It will have a major impact on the beginning of French interest in the area.

Zarrelli mentions another visitor, a certain Le Riche from Parma, who visited the main manufactures in the kingdom, checked where new factories could be set up and thought of a system of incentives for development.<sup>56</sup> French envoys from the Duchy of Parma (ruled by the Bourbon-Parma family from 1731) considered the area between Sora and Isola to be particularly suitable for papermaking.

The Fibreno river, which flows into the Liri at San Domenico, where it forms a small island - almost invisible today - after separating the territory of Isola from Sora at Carnello, although it is much shorter than the Liri, only 12.8 kilometres, had abundant and particularly pure and crystalline waters. The Liri has a longer course, 158 kilometres, and in the last part of its course, after the confluence with the Gari river and before entering the Tyrrhenian Sea, it is called Garigliano.

The new French rulers relaunched new bodies for the promotion and dissemination of manufactures. Two of the most important bodies were the Giunta delle Arti, Manifatture ed Industrie del Regno and the Istituto di Incoraggiamento, which had its headquarters in Naples. He also instituted several Industrial Exhibitions between 1806 and 1809. Very important, then, for understanding the state of industry at the time, was the *Statistica del Regno di Napoli of 1811*.<sup>57</sup> Ferdinand IV had also introduced similar measures, but the French placed particular emphasis on this research, encouraging the creation of new factories that became

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<sup>56</sup> Zarrelli S., *Alla ricerca dell'identità perduta*, pp. 53-55.

<sup>57</sup> Cimmino Carmine, cur, *Statistica del Regno di Napoli del 1811: le relazioni su caccia, pesca, economia rurale e manifatture per i circondari di Sora e Arpino*, in «Rivista storica di Terra di Lavoro», Anno 2, n. II (luglio-dicembre 1977), pp. 77-83. Transl. *Catalogue of essays on the products of national industry presented at the solemn exhibition of 23 August 1812*.

necessary during the period of the English naval blockade. Hence the second French and Swiss immigration to the Kingdom of Naples of capable entrepreneurs and technicians.<sup>58</sup>

The first to follow Pistilli's advice and set up industries in the Sora area after Murat were the partners Charles Lambert and Jules d'Escrivan, to whom the government, by royal decree signed by Joachim Murat in 1809, granted free use for ten years of the Boncompagni Castle, which had become the island's royal palace after the suppression of the Duchy of Sora (by decree of 16 January 1796).<sup>59</sup> Along with the use of the palace and its annexes, the water that flowed underneath it and under the bridge, where there was a waterfall, was also granted for the installation of machinery for the production of woollen cloth, "fine cloth for the use of those of France according to the conditions reported in the Bulletin of the Laws of the Kingdom of Naples. Year 1809".<sup>60</sup>

In the *Catalogo di saggi de' prodotti dell'industria nazionale presentati nella solenne esposizione del 23 agosto 1812* we learn that in the exhibition held the previous year, 1811, Lambert's wool mill had won a gold medal. The catalogue was dedicated to Her Majesty the Queen Regent and opened with a sentence from the Royal Council of Manufactures praising the warrior king who defended the peaceful asylum of the arts while, at the same time, his consort supported the first steps of the manufactures that were born, under her protection, already "adult" or developed.<sup>61</sup>

The two partners in the Fabbrica Reale de' Panni later came to a quarrel when D'Escrivan withdrew from the company by not paying a

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<sup>58</sup> Rovinello Marco, *Cittadini senza nazione. Migranti francesi a Napoli (1793-1860)*, Le Monnier, Firenze 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Existed since 1443.

<sup>60</sup> *Bullettino delle Leggi del Regno di Napoli. Anno 1809*. From January to June, II ed., Napoli 1913, pp. 875-876.

<sup>61</sup> *Catalogo di saggi de' prodotti dell'industria nazionale presentati nella solenne esposizione del 23 agosto 1812*, Napoli 1812. For the state of wool mills in the Kingdom see De Majo S., *L'industria protetta: lanifici e cotonifici in Campania nell'Ottocento*, Athena, Napoli 1990.

portion of the share and Lambert sued him while maintaining his position as director.<sup>62</sup> The difficult history of this factory, which was to supply cloths for the army, is told in the text *Memoria per Carlo Lambert*.<sup>63</sup> The entrepreneur continued his business even during the Bourbon era, and won a silver medal at the 1830 exhibition.

On 7 August 1809, the suppression of the contemplative religious orders was approved with the confiscation of all their property and the conversion of the convents to other uses. Until then, the convent of Santa Maria delle Forme in Isola di Sora had been inhabited at least in part. After this measure, it was damaged, as we know, by a flood in 1811 and at that point used for productive activity. In 1812, the local entrepreneur Gioacchino Manna, who came from Arpino and belonged to a large family of wool industrialists, obtained from the government the free use of some premises of the suppressed convent of San Francesco in Isola to set up a wool factory or a factory of “peloncini”.<sup>64</sup>

At the same time as Lambert was setting up his wool factory in Palazzo Boncompagni in Isola di Sora and Manna was establishing itself in San Francesco in the village of Isola, another elderly French entrepreneur, Antoine Beranger, who came from Elbeuf, a village famous for its paper-making, arrived in the Kingdom of Naples with Joseph Bonaparte's army to find out where French immigrants with technical skills could find work.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Condanna al risarcimento per la somma investita nella realizzazione nell'Isola di Sora di una fabbrica di panni e pannini all'uso di Francia e a pagare le spese della lite. Parti in causa: D'Escrivan Luigi e Lambert Carlo biscottiere con bottega nella strada di Chiaia, 52. Archivio di Stato di Napoli, v. 76; Avati G., Memoria a pro del signor Carlo Lambert, francese, attuale direttore della fabbrica reale dei panni nell'Isola di Sora contro il signor Giulio Descrivano (sic) nella Corte d'appello, Napoli 1813, Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli.*

<sup>63</sup> *Memoria per Carlo Lambert, fabbricante di panni in sostegno della sovrana concessione del palazzo ex Ducale nell'Isola di Sora. Presso il consiglio dell'intendenza di Terra di Lavoro, Battista Seguin, Napoli 1828, Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, inventario LP 25893.*

<sup>64</sup> Pinelli Vincenzina, *I Lanifici e i Feltrifici*, in «Quaderni di Ricerche su Isola del Liri», Tipografia Francati, Isola del Liri 1996.

<sup>65</sup> Real Emmanuelle, *L'industrie et la ville: l'exemple d'Elbeuf XVIIe-XXe*

Elbeuf was the site of a large royal cloth manufactory (draps, draperie) that had been founded by Jean-Baptiste Colbert in 1667 and had a profound effect on the social, industrial and even urban organisation of the town. During the Napoleonic period, the mercantile structure of Elbeuf suffered from the war and it was not until 1804 that production returned to its previous level.

At first, Antoine took care of the distribution of periodicals that came from France and were read by administrators and army officers, then he managed to get them reprinted by setting up a printing house that was called Imprimerie Française. This led him to handle paper, purchase it and print it. He immediately became interested in how best to produce it. Beranger's print shop was set up in the suppressed Carminiello monastery in Chiaia, initially as a temporary concession. There, the periodicals *Journal des l'empire de Naples* and the *Journal français de Naples* read by the occupying officers were printed for years.<sup>66</sup> The use of the Carminiello premises was later confirmed by a decree of 3 June 1811, when Murat gave the premises free use to allow the Frenchman to continue his printing and type foundry business.

In 1808, Beranger formed a company with other French immigrants, among them Joseph-Isidore Lefèbvre, who entered into partnership with him by notarial deed of 14 August 1808 for the sole part of the Chiaia printing laboratory.<sup>67</sup> He also worked as an associate of his cousin Charles Lefèbvre (1775-1858) who was engaged in the financial-fiscal field for the Muratan kingdom and in supplying the army as I have recounted elsewhere.<sup>68</sup> Soon Charles also joined the Neapolitan printing enterprise.

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*siècles* in *La draperie en Normandie du XIIIe siècle au XXe siècle*, Alain Becchia (dir.), Presses Universitaire de Rouen et Le Havre, pp. 407-428.

<sup>66</sup> Apart from Rovinello, details on the change in the reception and receiving systems of foreigners in the Kingdom of Naples can be found in Di Fiore Laura, *Alle porte della città, ai confini del Regno. Il controllo degli stranieri nel mezzogiorno nell'Ottocento. Stranieri: controllo, accoglienza e integrazione negli Stati italiani* (XVI- cur. Marco Meriggi-Rao Anna Maria, Federico II University Press, Napoli 2020, pp. 161-176.

<sup>67</sup> AB XIX 4480, vol. I, pp. 23-24.

<sup>68</sup> Iannaccone Mario A., *I Lefèbvre D'Ovidio. Una dinastia fra le epoche*, vol. I.

The Carminiello is a complex with a deconsecrated church located in an alley a few steps from Piazza Mercato, on the edge of the Chiaia district. Deconsecrated during the Napoleonic period, it has never been reopened for worship. The building that housed the Stamperia Francese was located in what is now Via Giacomo Savarese and Via Corradino da Svevia. The building, dedicated to Saint Ignatius of Loyola, was entrusted by the Jesuits to Father Pietro Provvedi, who founded the college in 1611 and the church in 1614. After the expulsion of the Jesuits by order of the Enlightenment minister Bernardo Tanucci (1698-1783), the college was also suppressed in 1767 and has been state property ever since.<sup>69</sup> Entrusted to the Carmelites (hence 'Carminiello'), it was transformed into a literacy and training centre for girls, which is why it had many rooms and spacious interiors. The final suppression and alienation to the public domain took place in 1805.

The printing works was organised and was fully functional in 1809, at which date it was already known if we read in a chronicle a few years later that 'in Naples the type foundry was known since the year 1809'.<sup>70</sup> Mr. Beranger introduced it into his print shop as a separate department and there the business ran for about nine years with the printing of French texts and especially periodicals.

In those years, Beranger and his associates were not only interested in Naples, but also in the hinterland, where the land of Sora had been identified as particularly suitable for the construction of paper mills on the basis of the reports of Abbot Pistilli.

Between 1806 and 1811 he visited paper mills in the Amalfi area. From there, loads of paper arrived by land or sea, but in small quantities. The Amalfi Coast had an ancient tradition of paper mills, but the nature of the terrain did not allow the mills to grow to industrial size. Some small mills dated back to the 16th century and produced paper of remarkable quality, but in small quantities and at high cost. The only

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<sup>69</sup> De Luzemberger Maria, *S. Giuseppe a Chiaia e Carminiello al Mercato. Storia di due collegi popolari napoletani*, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli 2001.

<sup>70</sup> *Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, n. 113, 2 agosto 1821.

mechanisation used was water mills and gualchiers to grind the raw material.

If the quality of the paper produced was remarkable, the quantity, as mentioned above, was poor. Thick, amber-coloured sheets were suitable for fine editions. Since the Amalfi manufacturers could not use mechanised production processes due to the physical limitations of the territory - the paper mills were often located in very flat and narrow valleys, some of which can still be visited today as museums - they were to be replaced over the course of a few decades by competition from more modern industries, such as the emerging Sora district, which could produce large quantities of good quality paper for publishing and administration.

It was no coincidence that the Sora district, which was certainly taken over by the administration, was considered more promising. It was far from Naples and out of the way, but it had interesting growth prospects and allowed the establishment of real, modern, non-artisanal factories. Abbot Pistilli had made several reports, the premises were there, and so were the financial facilities. Moreover, the bureaucracy in the kingdom was growing, creating a strong demand for good archival paper that could be produced locally, avoiding the need to import it from France and central or northern Italy.

Obtaining the concessions was not impossible, but it was necessary to demonstrate financial solidity from the outset, which is why he joined forces with others, all French even then. On 9 January 1811, a new company structure was created with Joseph-Isidore Lefèbvre and his wife Marianne Lefèbvre and Beranger's wife Marguerite Douillet as partners. Also associated with typography and the foundry were the financiers and *négociants* - the term used to describe entrepreneurs and merchants - Augusto Viollier, Pierre Coste and Charles Lefèbvre.<sup>71</sup> The first two came from Lyon, a city that had, along with Marseilles, provided much skilled labour, technicians and entrepreneurs to Murat's

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<sup>71</sup> *Pel Signor Pierre Ibert contro i reclamanti la proprietà degl'effetti da lui sequestrati a danno del fu Charles Antoine Beranger*, Porcelli, Napoli 1820.

initiatives. Lefèbvre, on the other hand, came from a ramified family that at that time had its centre in Paris and Versailles.

The claims made by a partner called Pierre Ibert, had no small influence on the decisions that were taken shortly afterwards.<sup>72</sup> The latter, who was Beranger's creditor for 40,000 ducats of the kingdom, a considerable sum, carried out two distrains on third parties, attacking the property of the innocent Viollier and Coste, because they were Beranger's associates. The latter objected, forcing Ibert to provide a guarantee of compensation. However, the creditor was unable to obtain his money because the premises granted by the State administration were in usufruct and the machinery of the printing works, the type foundry and the paper mill in Sora were in partnership with others and their payment had not been completed. On 7 July 1812, Antoine Beranger obtained a concession for industrial activities on the premises of Santa Maria delle Forme in Isola di Sora, above the waterfall.<sup>73</sup>

After Murat's defeat, the advent of the Restoration with the return of the Bourbons, Beranger and those who had become his associates, including his cousins Lefèbvre, managed to stay in Naples unlike many Frenchmen. A decree of 13 April 1818 granted him a contract authorising the Stamperia Francese to publish all codes, laws and acts of the Bourbon government on an exclusive basis.

However, this privilege was revoked two years later when, on 1 August 1821, Ferdinand I dissolved the contract in favour of the reorganised Royal Printing Works.<sup>74</sup> This decision caused a certain setback to Beranger's finances and he began to distance himself from the business. However, the second edition of Ferdinando Pistilli's

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<sup>72</sup> Pierre Ibert was a merchant living in Elbeuf. Becchia Alain, *La draperie royale d'Elbeuf*, Publications de l'Université de Rouen, Rouen 2000, p. 279.

<sup>73</sup> Dell'Orefice Anna Maria, *L'Industria della Carta nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia: 1800-1870*, Ginevra 1980, p. 80; Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Ministero degli Affari Interni, II fasc. 559, Napoli, 27 settembre 1820. Archivio dell'Istituto d'incoraggiamento di Napoli, 1811-1820, Napoli 18 ottobre 1818; Loffreda Enzo, *Da borgo medievale a città moderna: lo sviluppo urbanistico-architettonico a Isola del Liri* (sec. IX-XX9, apud. aut, 2010, pp. 118-119.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*.

Historical-Philological Description, *Descrizione storico filologica*, of 1824 was published by the Stamperia Francese.

The Ibert-Beranger dispute, which began in 1811 and only ended with the death of Beranger himself in 1822, was to cause problems for the management of first the printing press and then the Isola factory and its partners.





Side of the Carmine al Mercato church  
where the Fibreno Printworks was installed.

## Chapter 5

### The convent building

The convent of Santa Maria delle Forme was granted to the Carmelites of the Old Order by the Congregation of Mantua in 1508. The concession was requested by the then Archbishop of Sora, Giovanni Massimini, after the rector, Don Giovanni Carrara, had been forced to resign at the request of the wife of the Duke of Sora and Prefect of Rome, Giovanna Feltria da Montefeltro (1463-1513), identified as the woman in Raphael's portrait *La muta*. The woman, a patron of Raffaello Sanzio, was married to Giovanni Della Rovere (1457-1501). The document of renunciation was approved in 1510, but the official acceptance by the Carmelites did not take place until the Congregation of 1510. A convent was therefore built next to the church, which was not completed until 1534.<sup>75</sup>

In the following years, at the behest of the later Duchess of Sora, Eleonora Zapata Boncompagni (1593-1679), embellishments and, in part, renovations were carried out by the stonemason Michele Vitelli.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Saggi Ludovico, *La congregazione mantovana dei carmelitani sino alla morte del Beato Battista Spagnoli (1516)*, Roma 1954, pp. 210-211; Ughelli Ferdinando, *Italia Sacra*, Venezia 1717-1722, I, p. 1247.

<sup>76</sup> Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Fondo Boncompagni, *Ricevute di pagamenti fatti da donna Eleonora Zapata Duchessa di Sora a Michele Vitelli, scalpellino per lavori della Fabbrica della chiesa di Santa Maria delle Forme nell'Isola*. prot. 585, n. 7, 1634-1635.



Giovanna Feltria da Montefeltro, wife of Boncompagni Duke of the Duchy of Sora. Portrait by Raffaello.

No traces of this work remain, although the church and its arches with various stone decorations are still visible today. When it was suppressed in 1809, the monastery was 270 years old and had influenced the life of Isola in many ways. There was also a large estate that provided work for dozens of peasants. Its fate was sealed together with that of the convent of the Conventuals of St. Francis, located in the same area of Isola inferiore.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> A.S.C., Intendenza Borbonica, Amministrazione culto, b. 30, fasc. 103, Isola 1808-1855.

Santa Maria delle Forme was connected by a road to Isola and Sora on one side and to Carnello on the other. The roads that connected Isola to Caserta and Naples passed through Cassino and Atina or Roccasecca and were tortuous and impassable for large wagons. The river was not navigable because of its flow, but above all because of the high waves. The choice was therefore mainly due to the abundance of water and labour, the relative proximity to the main centres and the advanced state of construction of the Consolare Napoli-Sora road. In addition to the land, the property included an old farmhouse (later renamed Villa Louise).

In Santa Maria delle Forme the rooms were spacious and functional. Even today, when you enter the main door, you can still see the articulation of the spaces inside into aisles, reminiscent of the original use as a church. The following photo shows the original cloister (the yellow body was added later) in Baroque style.

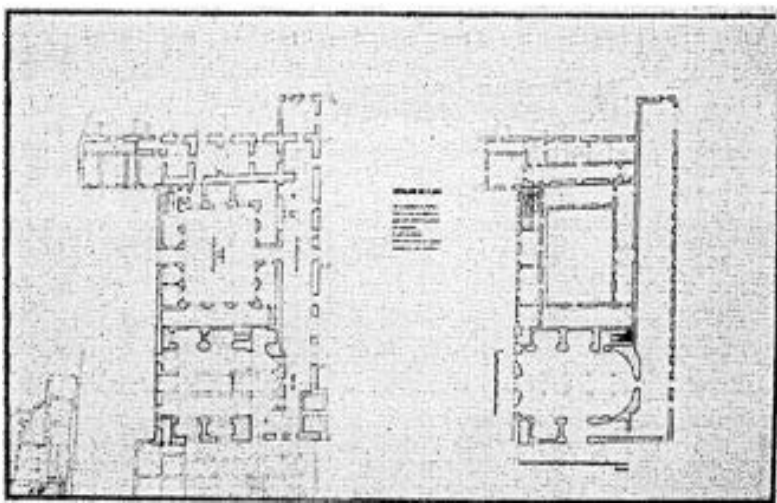
Isola's facilities were adequate for the start of the business, and they were, but not for its development. However, Beranger managed to install machinery and run it for the decade 1812-1820, until his death.

As in any Carmelite convent, there must have been a small cemetery here, but it had been removed some twenty years earlier, so no trace of it remains. It was probably located behind the church, where the paper mill buildings were later built.



Cloister of the former convent of S. Maria delle  
Forme later part of the Lefèbvre residence.

The interiors of the factory can still be seen today more or less in the condition they were in at the beginning of the 19th century because, apart from a few minor alterations, they have remained intact.



Map of Santa Maria delle Forme church and monastery.

This picture shows a plan of the interior on the ground floor (right) and second floor (left), where the cells of the Carmelite nuns are also highlighted. Of course, the subdivision of the cells no longer exists, and the spaces were unified to obtain sufficient volume for the installation of machinery in the work carried out by Beranger in 1812 and then perfected by Lefèbvre in the following years. The church was divided in height into two floors: ground floor, first floor and attic.

Despite the bulkiness of the massive columns and arches in the church part, the volumes were still sufficient for the installation of the industrial equipment of the time.

The interiors can be seen in the following photographs taken in the 1990s, when a company from the Pigna group, Cisa, which had taken over the Società delle Cartiere Meridionali, worked on the premises. The premises used were the actual convent and the church divided into two floors. Many years later, the well-built part of the former convent, with its beautiful thick walls, became part of the Lefèbvre house, and it is not impossible that it was used for some work, at least for the first 15

years, and then completely separated from the house. The following two photographs show some of the rooms of the 16th century Carmelite church. The second picture shows the nave of the church, the windows are high and the arches that can be seen on the side correspond to the side chapels (three on each side). A third floor, supported by the three central pillars, was added to the two-storey nave.



Inner view of former Santa Maria delle Forme church.



Spaces in the Fabbrica delle Forme.

In the image below, the façade of Santa Maria delle Forme disrupted by interventions since 1812-1813. The remains of two travertine pilasters and the trace of the church's central portal can still be seen on the main façade; a second floor with windows and a wooden roof was created in the upper part.



Facade of the former church of Santa Maria delle Forme.

Apart from the side columns and pilasters, the building is not recognisable as a church, but it is probable that some of the alterations, such as the upper floor, were made before Beranger's arrival, since they are already visible in the painting of 1810: the marble decorations were covered and the window and door openings were adapted for industrial



use. What is certain is that the two buildings next to the church, shown in the following picture, are new.

They are the oldest of the extensions to the original structure and correspond to Beranger's house, which also served as an office and storehouse during the first ten years of his business, and the other, next to it, with its large windows, is an industrial building and was certainly used for working with machinery.



Home-office built by Beranger, and alongside the shed for industrial use.

## Chapter 6

### Start of activity

The facilities that finally allowed Beranger to start manufacturing in Isola, to build the first, admittedly modest, extensions, and to import the machines were granted between June and July 1812, and in the following July, the year 1813, the factory was still 'constituted'.<sup>78</sup> These are the months it takes to transport and assemble the machines.

Other benefits obtained at that time included the possession of the premises free of charge for 10 years and the adjoining walled land (art. 1), i.e. an open space, probably used as a vegetable garden at the time of the monastery and surrounded by a wall that was later demolished. In addition to a loan of 3,000 ducats from the Ministry of the Interior, Beranger was also granted the possibility of purchasing the same premises at the end of the free lease. The contract also provided for a grant to import the machinery needed for production.

Beranger then ordered machinery from England and Holland and brought in skilled workers to assemble it. He was paid only for the adaptation and purchase of the machinery.<sup>79</sup> In 1812, the excavation of a canal had also begun, which was to bring water from Carnello to Santa Maria delle Forme behind the convent and the newly built sheds.

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<sup>78</sup> Decreto 6 luglio 1812, n. 1398, in *Collezioni dei decreti reali del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, sem. II, pp. 12-13. Also Archivio di Stato di Caserta, Intendenza Borbonica: Corti amministrative comunali, fascio 1346, Comune di Sora 1813, *Carte relative alla costituenda fabbrica di carta del signor Beranger a Isola*.

<sup>79</sup> Dell'Orefice Anna, *L'industria della carta nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia. 1800-1870. Economia e tecnologia*, in «Cahiers Internationaux d'Histoire Economique et Social», Librarie Droz, Ginevra 1979, pp. 251-473. Ivi, p. 330.

It should be noted that this concession was made only 13 years after the massacre of San Lorenzo in May 1799, and one wonders how a French businessman who was part of the French administration was received by the islanders at that time. There are no written records or testimonies. It is possible that the wind of change brought by the installation of machinery, which took place between 1812 and 1813, immediately after the concession of the buildings, dulled the grief and the desire for revenge that many islanders must have felt at that time. We can imagine the curiosity of the inhabitants when they saw the parts of the complicated French machines assembled in the new buildings being transported on dozens of carts.

In his early days as a businessman, Beranger had had Joseph-Isidore Lefèbvre as a partner in the printing works in Naples, and the latter's organisational support was becoming increasingly important. At that time the population of Isola must have been around 2,500, if we take into account that the census of 1861 put the number of inhabitants at around 6,000 and that a few years earlier there had been 4,000 in Fontana Liri. As early as 1812, about a hundred of them, both men and women, were employed in the factory. It was a great novelty for the local families, mostly farmers or stockbreeders, to have access to such a job, which was not seasonal and offered the security of a continuous income, even if it completely changed the rhythms of life.



Interior, addition built in 1812. First floor.

The photograph reproduced above shows the interior of the building for industrial use that was built next to the convent by Beranger after the building for residential and office use. In the 1990s it was in use by the Cisa industrial paper company, which had taken it over from Cartiere Meridionali.

The following photograph shows the same two-storey shed used as a factory with machinery installed on the lower floor as it was served by a canal. The building was used throughout the history of the Manifattura del Fibreno and then by the Cartiere Meridionali.



Exteriors of the industrial building built in 1812.

The photograph taken from the outside, taken some 30 years later, shows the signs of time: the roof, intact in the previous photo, can be glimpsed collapsed here. The people called it, simply, the *Forme* building or *Forme*, a name for canals. Beranger began his first productions shortly after 1813, and among the specialisations that immediately made his factory famous was tissue paper, which no one was yet producing in southern Italy, not of that quality. Little is known about its management except that it had to be energetic, at least up to a certain point, and successful. The imported machines consisted mainly of cylinders, refiners and kneaders, set in motion in the new premises. After that, the actual processing to make the thinner sheets of normal and special tissue paper was done by hand.



Handmade paper production (Pescia), [www.laviadellacarta.it](http://www.laviadellacarta.it)

Beranger immediately developed the idea of increasing quantities and foresaw excellent prospects for development in both printing and paper production. The increasing bureaucratisation of the Kingdom of Naples, the process of innovation and aid to modernisation first introduced by Ferdinand of Bourbon in the mid-18th century and accelerated by Joachim Murat, continued during the Restoration period. This process, which required the creation of orderly archives, the printing of all kinds of contracts and dispositions, the reorganisation of the system of courts, land registers and every other branch of state administration, created a robust and continuous demand for good archival paper that was avoided by importing it from France and northern Italy because of the high costs.



## Chapter 7

### The Manifatture del Fibreno in 1813

A year after its foundation, the factory, which was variously called Manifattura del Fibreno (or, sometimes, the Manifatture del Fibreno, the official name of the company) or Fabbrica delle Forme (the production unit in S. Maria delle Forme) - we will use the latter name when referring to this production unit - was already highly productive by the standards of the time. In 1813 the factory was producing excellent tissue paper, plain paper, drawing paper of various types and printing paper, all of which were considered to be of such high quality that they were equal to the French, English and Dutch paper used in the Neapolitan academies.<sup>80</sup>

The mill was equipped with modern cylinder machines for macerating and shredding rags, capable of much higher quality and quantity output than the old hammers used in other paper mills at the time. There were four cylinders, two shredders and two refiners, and they could do the work of 48 hammers. They were powered by a large water wheel located at the rear of the factory, which was driven by the Canale delle Forme and also had the function of pumping water to a large capacity tank located on the first floor of the building.

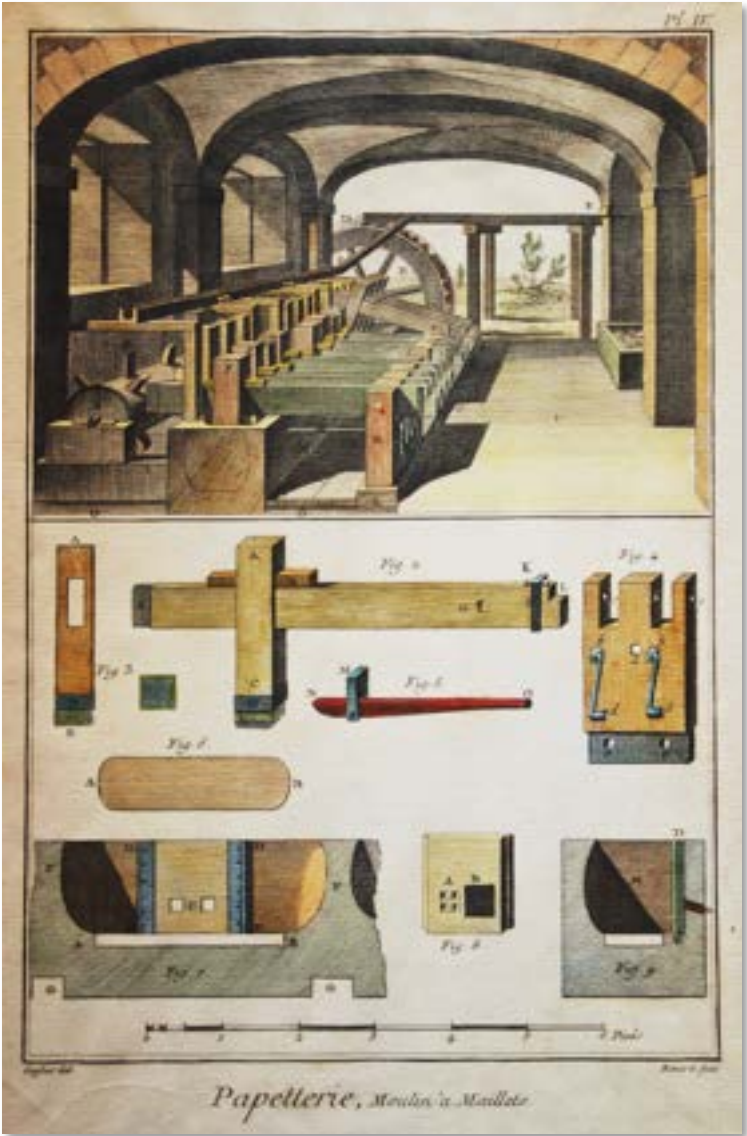
The following picture shows an installation similar to that of the Beranger factory: a multiple hammer pile driven by a large water wheel. Unfortunately, little or nothing remains of these installations. We do know, however, that the factory immediately adopted the 'Dutch

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<sup>80</sup> ASIN, *Domande e rapporti, 1809-1818*, Napoli 7 luglio 1817, A. Beranger al Re; Millenet Jules, *Coup d'Oeil sur l'industrie agricole et manufacturière du royaume de Naples*, Naples 1832, p. 43.



method' for crushing rags, i.e. the so-called Dutch tanks or cylinders, invented at the end of the 17th century.



Hydraulic guillotine-driven defibrators.

At that time, the water in the canal came from the so-called Molini Reali del Carnello (Royal Mills of Carnello), which were put up for sale by the King and belonged to the firm of Zino & Degas. The water, filtered and purified by comb filters and fine sieves, went into the dough. The canal that carried this water was built in 1812, about 2 kilometres long, and was later improved and enlarged by Lefèbvre in 1818 to provide greater safety and a greater flow rate. In the upper part of its course, it carried the bed of an existing irrigation canal, that of the Tremoletto, a canal that ended in a seasonal lake of the same name. The remaining part, less than a kilometre, was dug out and later raised to the level of the ground. The paper mill also had 8 vats, 8 tins, a wash house and a rotting room, all fed by the waters of the Fibreno river.

The jet or stream was regulated by means of cataracts and arrived at the channel, which set in motion a wheel that was light but, as mentioned, had considerable power. The rooms used for the various processes were arranged in a very rational way in order to reduce production times as much as possible. Inside the complex, in the part of the old convent and in the new building next to the old church, accommodation was provided for the director, employees and workers, mostly foreign technicians.<sup>81</sup>

The rags were transported and stacked in a warehouse on the ground floor, where they were sorted, then beaten to remove impurities and finally taken to the wash-house and rotting room where they were reduced to a soft paste. The tools were of the highest quality and the maintenance workshop was equipped with the latest tools, fats, oils and fuels. The quantities produced had to be modest.

The next stage was the French press, equipped with a single screw and a winch to increase its power. Smoothing was done with a water mill. In Beranger's time, the mill was also equipped with a joinery and a turnery to repair the frequent breakdowns of the machines. Within a

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<sup>81</sup> Vincitore Vincenzo, *La riconversione dei siti industriali della zona del Liri*, Theses ad Lauream Università degli Studi di Cassino, A.a. 2001-2002, pp. 104-195.

few years, this paper mill had become important, even if it was only for local production.

In 1817, at the end of the French Decade (1806-1815), Beranger applied to the new Bourbon government - which had retained some of the same officials - for a 10-year patent for the import of cylinders, the manufacture of tissue paper and other drawing papers, and the production of maps. As we know, he asked for his factory to be granted the privilege of a 'royal manufactory', like the royal manufactory at Elbeuf, the place from which he came.<sup>82</sup> The privilege, if granted, would have brought advantages similar to those enjoyed by the cotton mill of the Frenchman Jean-Jacques Egg, a Swiss born in the village of Ellikon, who, between 1812 and 1813, founded a large factory in Piedimonte with about 200 fellow countrymen, later joined by many local workers, until he had 900 employees. Between 1816 and 1825, he received various privileges and privatives.<sup>83</sup> The request submitted by Beranger, however, was not followed up.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Becchia Alain, *cit*, p. 151. Amable Beranger, who was still working just before the Revolution, was probably the father of Antoine. *Ibidem*, p. 355.

<sup>83</sup> Ricciardi Antonio, Izzo Francesco, *Relazioni di cooperazione e reti di imprese. Il caso della Campania*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2006, p. 176; ASIN, *Domande e rapporti, 1809-1818*, Napoli 7 luglio 1817, *Beranger al re*. Il Cotonificio Egg-Berger-Cotoniere a Piedimonte d'Alife, 29 ottobre 2016 in [www.altaterradilavoro.com](http://www.altaterradilavoro.com)

<sup>84</sup> Archivio di Stato di Caserta, Intendenza Borbonica: Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio (INAIC), b.2, fasc. 265, Capua 23 giugno 1817, L'intendente di Terra di Lavoro al ministro dell'interno. ASIN Domande e rapporti 1809-1818, Napoli 7 luglio 1817, *Carlo Beranger al Re*.



"Gualchiera".



Example of a French-style single-screw press,  
present in the first phase of the factory.

We know from industrial directories published over time and other documentation that in 1817, just under five years after its start-up, the Manifattura del Fibreno employed 150 workers, all from the Isola area. This is a remarkable figure considering the still small number of inhabitants. Probably 10 per cent of the locals began working in the factory.

At that time, 14 types of paper were already being produced, including, in addition to normal papers, special papers named as follows:

Ministra' Paper  
White and Cerulean Tissue Paper  
Fine and Cerulean Royal Paper  
White Coarse Royal Paper  
White and Cerulean Dutch Writing Paper  
White drawing tissue paper  
White and Cerulean Tissue Paper  
White Double Map Paper.<sup>85</sup>

The carpentry and turning workshop was well equipped to support the frequent repairs and maintenance of the machines, soon to be reinforced by the contribution of the Palma carpenter. The technicians who worked there had been called in from abroad - from France, Holland and England - and had, in turn, trained the local workers, enabling continuous maintenance.

In recent years, the factory had been equipped with the most modern cylinder machines of the time, to macerate and grind the rags and obtain a semi-finished product superior to that produced by the hammers in use in other paper mills of the time.

Moreover, for his industrial and economic merits, Charles-Antoine Beranger had been among the few, along with the Lefèbvre, to have enjoyed naturalisation.

When he fell ill in 1820 - a year in which he was no longer active in the company - the other operating partner, Mr. Vollier, was unable or unwilling to continue running the factory and left it to Charles Lefèbvre. At this point, the other partners also sold their shares for 30% of the nominal value, making him the new owner. The sale was seen as a good deal by the partners, who were quickly losing interest in the factory and wanted to get rid of what they saw as a risky commitment.

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<sup>85</sup> ASC/IBAIC, b.2, fasc. 26, Sora, giugno 1817, Il sottintendente all'intendente.

At the time of the factory's creation, Beranger was already in his 60s and plagued by debts and creditors from France. He remained there for 10 years, until the age of 70, when he died in Naples in 1822.<sup>86</sup> In the meantime, the printing works had entered into a direct relationship with the Royal Institute for the Encouragement of Natural Sciences. It retained the name Stamperia Francese until 1830, when it became Stamperia e Cartiera del Fibreno by Charles Lefèbvre, in agreement with Beranger's widow.<sup>87</sup>

At this point, Charles was preparing for a turning point in his life: a supplier to the French armies, in charge of the indirect tax services in Trani and Barletta for some fifteen years (until at least 1828), he used his considerable liquid assets for various innovative projects and decided to devote much time and money to the paper mill project. Without his determination, the Santa Maria delle Forme paper mill would probably have remained as small as others in the area.

Without the success that awaited him, perhaps the paper district that grew up around his mill would never have developed.

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<sup>86</sup> Becchia Alain, *La draperie d'Elbeuf, des origines à 1870*, Publications de l'Université de Rouen 2000, p. 150. The Beranger family had several exponents active in modern manufacturing from the very beginning, such as a Charles Beranger and an Amable Beranger.

<sup>87</sup> *Corrispondenza Francesco Cantarelli ed approvato nella tornata del 4 settembre 1834*, Napoli 1834, p. 17.

## Chapter 8

### The transfer of ownership 1821

When he took over as paper industrialist from Beranger, Charles Lefèbvre was 46 years old and the father of four children.<sup>88</sup> He had no experience in running paper or wool factories, but he had a remarkable ability to manage business, buying and selling, and making money flow. In this case it was an entirely different business, not commercial but industrial.

I have written elsewhere about the history of the Lefèbvre family and refer to those volumes for more in-depth studies of the various industrial and financial activities of this important family in the Bourbon kingdom and post-unification Italy.<sup>89</sup> In this *History of the Fibreno Manufactures* I will refer to some of the events within the family regarding the industrial life of the island site.

Beranger had built a flat next to the monastery, the one we have seen in an earlier photograph, which also began to be occupied by Charles during his stays to follow work and orders. Keeping his main residence in Naples, at the Palazzo Partanna, he obtained a small but elegant flat suited to the needs of the moment - a *pied-à-terre*, as André-Isidore would call it - sufficient to accommodate the family during the fine season.<sup>90</sup> It is also probable, as Enzo Loffreda argues, that in the early years the entrepreneur preferred to live in the former farmhouse of the

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<sup>88</sup> Flavia (Parigi, 1813), and the children born at Palazzo Partanna: Léon (1815), Francesco Ernesto (1817) and Louise (1821).

<sup>89</sup> Iannaccone Mario A., *Una dinastia fra le epoche. Storia della famiglia Lefèbvre d'Ovidio*, 4 voll., p.a. 2022.

<sup>90</sup> Dell'Orefice Anna, *op. cit.*, p. 331.



suppressed Carmelite convent, later known as Villa Louise, which was later used as the residence of the directors of the Santa Maria delle Forme factory.<sup>91</sup>

In the spring of 1821, on the 5th of May, the French community was shocked by the death of Napoleon, a man who had left his mark, for better or worse, on the previous decades and who could be seen and judged at that time with a certain distance.

In the same year, an important financial house was founded in Naples, which helped to inject liquidity into the Neapolitan credit and industrial system, which was certainly suffocating at the time. Naples needed money and financial initiatives to create modern enterprises. The Rothschild Bank of Naples was an independent branch established in the capital of the Kingdom, where development and prosperity were expected. Founded in 1821 by Carl Mayer von Rothschild (1788-1855), it began advising and financing the King and industrialists.<sup>92</sup> The bankers were called in by King Ferdinand who provided them with guarantees for continuous business. C. M. de Rothschild & Sons (which operated from 1821 until 1863), had its headquarters in Frankfurt and an important branch in Paris. There is no indication that the Rothschilds were involved in the transfer of ownership from Beranger to Lefèbvre as the latter had sufficient financial means and connections to be able to cope with the considerable commitments that the newly established manufactory required. In 1821, the first plans to expand the industry were launched, partly subsidised by state loans at favourable rates granted by the minister Luigi de' Medici, an experienced diplomat and financier. These subsidies were, however, granted against a certain economic reliability.

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<sup>91</sup> Loffreda Enzo, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>92</sup> Rovinello Marco, *Un grande banchiere in una piccola piazza: Carl Mayer Rothschild e il credito commerciale nel Regno delle Due Sicilie*, in «Società e Storia», 110, (2005), pp. 705-739.



Carl Mayer von Rothschild.

Charles sensed a great future for the paper industry, and his investment must have been inspired by more than a vague vision of the future. The same idea was shared by Luigi de Medici, his powerful friend and minister. The paper industry was then being promoted by the state. It is also likely that he received assurances of orders from the administration, which needed a reliable supplier of paper and printing.

French entrepreneurs continued to do business with each other; Lefèvre, for example, became a partner of Auguste Vollier. The latter

was one of the driving forces behind the shipping company, a joint stock company, which Lefèbvre would join years later.<sup>93</sup>



The only known portrait of Luigi de Medici  
from a lost original.

Lambert continued to work in Isola with the other Frenchmen. In the aforementioned book *Memoria per Carlo Lambert fabbricante di panni in sostegno della sovrana concessione del palazzo ex Ducale nell'Isola di Sora of 1828*, the French businessman tells his story, which has very interesting implications for the events of the first industrialisation of the area and its protagonists. He recalls, among other things, that in 1822 the Ducal Palace was occupied by Austrian troops, who temporarily prevented the factory from operating. There, together with his brother Giacomo (Jacques), he ran a gualchiera for the production of cloth. The memoir was written to defend his work and to warn that if he were

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<sup>93</sup> Iannaccone Mario A., *Se non rischi non ottieni. Storia della Compagnia di navigazione a Vapore di Napoli*, 2020; Guderzo Giulio, *Vapori e sviluppo. La parabola di Civitavecchia*, in *Tra Lombardia e Ticino: studi in memoria di Bruno Caizzi*, a cura di Raffaello Ceschi-Giovanni Vigo, Edizioni Casagrande, Bellinzona 1995, pp. 175-202. Ivi, pp. 190-191.

expelled - the reference is to the new sovereign and the new government - the inhabitants would be displeased, and indeed this seems to have been the case: like the Lefèbvre, Lambert was well liked.

Lambert's business continued with a felt mill and a small paper mill organised in 1831. The Frenchman, who had been working in Isola and living there for just under 20 years, befriended the newcomer and fellow countryman. Lefèbvre would often invite him to the dwelling he had built for himself, larger and larger, next to the factory. Unlike those of Lefèbvre, Lambert's daughters married local notables. In 1852, a son-in-law of Lambert, Loreto Mazzetti, a family that owned a palace in Isola and a villa on the high ground, set up 10 mechanical combing machines in the factory, and another daughter, Luisa, married Giuseppe Polsinelli (in partnership with his brother Angelo in Carlo Lambert's company) who bought Palazzo Boncompagni.

Looking further afield, we know that throughout Italy - and Naples was no exception - the publishing industry was flourishing and the Bourbon kingdom had introduced a bureaucratic system of registering deeds and documents that required an unprecedented amount of paper, much more than in the past. Every deed, every will, every lawsuit, every decree, every public and private act that had any civil or criminal relevance had to be printed or written and registered for filing, sometimes in several places. This required paper, a lot of paper. This need convinced the entrepreneur, who had previously worked in the field of indirect taxation and military supplies, to set up this factory, which required frequent and inconvenient journeys. Although the isola industry was already established and subsidised, it was still a considerable financial risk: one had to be prepared to manage it personally, learn the production stages and live in an isolated place for part of the year.

It should be remembered that it was precisely in 1821 that the last miles of the Consular Road were laid towards Sora, which reached Isola at milepost 75. At that point, the journey to Naples could take a few hours, perhaps 4 or 5 depending on the number of stops and vehicles, but even less. Travelling along the valley floor route of the old Via

Casilina, which connected Cassino to Naples via Caserta, the road was quite smooth and represented a revolution for the valley. Some areas were threatened by endemic banditry, but the risks along the road, which was manned at rest stops, had diminished. Charles during the summer began to move his family for long periods to the premises that had been inhabited by Beranger pending the construction of more comfortable ones.

Mr. Testa worked in the factory at this early stage (1822-1825) but the manager employed was the Frenchman Joseph Courier, one of the few naturalised Frenchmen with him.<sup>94</sup> Born in Voiron in Isère in 1790, his second marriage was to Rosemarie Fournier (1793-1823), who died a few years later in Isère. His third marriage was to Angela Maria de Vecchis, who also died young, and with whom he had a daughter. When his third wife also died, he remarried for the fourth time to Benedetta de Medicis, with whom he had a son, Dionisio Courier (1838-1899), who was to become one of Isola's paper entrepreneurs. Courier's eldest daughter married Charles François Boimond (1800-1873) in 1843. The descendants of these two families would found two paper mills: the Tritto paper mill and then the Boimond paper mill, located on the same road as the Cartiere Meridionali towards San Domenico.

So it was Lefèbvre, after Beranger, who attracted French technicians to Isola and paid them well. They passed on their technical skills to the island's paper industrialists, who, although they had Italian names, still had French blood in their veins. The brothers Angelo (1846-1927) and Giovambattista Mancini (d. 1906), nephews of Joseph de Chaud and brothers-in-law of Joseph Courier, who completed their entire apprenticeship in the Lefèbvre paper mills before setting up their own factories, are a case in point. In the years that followed, Isola del Liri became home to a veritable *petit colony* or *petit Paris*, although few of them came from Paris. Those who ran the textile mills and then the railway were also of French nationality. There were the Montgolfier,

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<sup>94</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 1; See also Cigola Michela, *Le cartiere storiche del basso Lazio*, Ciolfi, Cassino 2002, p. 63. Courier, in turn, founded an important paper mill in Isola del Liri years later.

the Beranger, the Courier, the Coste, the Lepreux, the Boimond, the De Chaud, the Roessinger and others. In short, they formed a separate entrepreneurial aristocracy. The French intermarried, but some, like the Courriers and the Boimonds, joined the local population. The exception was the Lefèbvre family - as well as the Didots and Montgolfiers - who did not settle there, preferring to keep their main residence in Naples.

From 1824, however, the Lefèbvre family began to spend more and more time in this house during the summer, while in winter they stayed in Naples, a city that offered many opportunities for recreation and where they met some of the richest French people, including Auguste Viollier and members of the Degas family. The Naples of the early 19th century was a city of some 420,000 inhabitants with a rich cultural and social life, the capital of the largest kingdom in the south, occupying 1/3 of the Italian peninsula. The city's theatres, the San Carlo and the Teatro del Fondo, were packed, and the Neapolitan School of Music was lively. The lifestyle of the family was more aristocratic than upper class. In Naples, many of the rituals and customs that the Lefèbvres had learnt in Paris at the beginning of the century, when they had been integrated into the world of Napoleonic high society, even though they were royalists, were repeated: the opera, concerts, parties, receptions, salons. Their salon on the island was always well attended, especially in spring and early summer.

As already mentioned, the Isola factory, situated in a beautiful natural setting and rich in historical memories, played a central role. Soon, a new, large and comfortable palace would be built next to the factory, an occasion for the further social rise of the Lefèbvre family. The tutors of the Lefèbvre children were responsible for their education up to the age of 15, after which their education was perfected in high schools - a product of Napoleon's innovations - and in university institutions. André-Isidore, a cousin, particularly remembers the name of Léon and Ernesto's main tutor, Mr. Bossi of Lucca. Not that there was a lack of schools for boys and girls in Naples, but none were considered suitable for young Frenchmen. Charles Lefèbvre had four children when he began his entrepreneurial adventure in Isola: Flavia (1813),

Léon (1815), Ernesto (1817) and Maria Luisa (1821).<sup>95</sup> Apart from Léon, who died in 1829 at the age of 12, the daughters married members of the French and Neapolitan aristocracy, while Ernesto became the heir to the industrial empire and was educated for it.

In 1824, the new apartment, or rather the palace, was finished, with at least one guest room, and from that year on, the rich began to be invited. This is how his grandson André-Isidore describes it:

Born a Frenchman, my uncle had been forced by circumstances to become a Neapolitan citizen in 1816. Grateful to the sovereign, who treated him on every occasion as one of the most worthy of his esteem, Charles Lefèbvre never missed an opportunity to show his fellow countrymen that he remained French at heart. Indeed, all foreigners of distinguished rank found in his welcome a reflection of their homeland. In his way of life, both in Naples and on Isola, he was ready every day to extend a courteous invitation to those who were recommended to him. The various holders of the French embassy, who were gradually appointed to the court of Naples, maintained friendly relations with him, and the last of this series of diplomatic representatives, the Duke of Montebello, particularly admired the nobility of character of the man who had become his friend.<sup>96</sup>

This is how his nephew explained the relationship between Charles and the dozens of French (and other) guests who made Le Forme a stop on the Grand Tour of southern Italy in the first half of the 19th century. Beginning in 1824, numerous writers, diplomats, artists and clergymen visited Madame Rosanne and Monsieur Charles at the Isola factory, while work began on the renovation of the second unit at Carnello, next to the Zino brothers' wool mill, which began in 1824 and was completed in 1825. The guests who came to visit the factory came from all nations: Germans, English, Poles, Russians, Latvians, Italians, Swiss and, of course, many French. In 1824, a relative from Paris, Ernestine Lefèbvre, visited the factory and the printing works in Naples, still called the *Stamperia Francese*, and was amazed by its size, and this was

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<sup>95</sup> A baby girl born in 1809 had died few months after the birth.

<sup>96</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. IV, p. 163.

before the major extensions at the end of the decade. On the same occasion, Rosanne had a portrait made by the already famous painter Raffaele d'Auria, sending it as a token of affection to his nephew. The painter reproduced, he wrote, the regular features and noble pose that made Rosanne a person of remarkable beauty.

Already at that time, Rosanne began to be regarded as a master in welcoming those who presented themselves accompanied by a letter of introduction, by chance or necessity. To know the details of this activity we have an exceptional document, the *Journal*, which Rosanne compiled over many years and on which she recorded facts, anecdotes and names of guests on the island.<sup>97</sup> He did not write much about the paper mill but what little he does say about it is significant.

The text, lively and full of minute details, gives insight into the daily life of this industrialist family and their circle of friends and relations. It is a cross-section of a world, that of the European romantic upper middle class that lived aristocratically and acted bourgeoisly; a class that existed for almost a century and that disappeared almost everywhere in Europe with the advent of the First World War.

To understand the impact on this area of the Terra di Lavoro of the establishment of large industries that took place within a few decades, we can read maps or plans, drawings and paintings by travellers, descriptions of what the area looked like before its transformation and after. No less interesting is the demography. The arrival of the 'French' in Isola changed the demography of the village, leading to an increase after the massacre of 1799. The population must have been around 2000 in 1830, thirty years later it had risen to 4800 in the 1861 census. Over the next six decades, it steadily increased by 10% per year. As a significant source, the registers of marriages celebrated in the local church - we are only talking about the church of San Lorenzo di Isola -

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<sup>97</sup> We retain the *Journal* in the patient transcription that André-Isidore made of it as the original copy has been lost. Probably, after being used by André-Isidore it was sent back to his cousin Ernest, Rosanne's son, and has since been lost. The text records visits and events for a good 28 years: from 1824 to 1852, the years that André-Isidore calls 'L'âge d'or de la famille Lefèvre', AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 34.



from 1809 to 1860. Years in which few marriages took place, such as 1809-1814, are contrasted with years in which marriages, evidently postponed, were celebrated in much greater numbers, such as 1815 (31) and, after other years of uncertainty due to the 1817-1818 war (16 marriages in all), the 52 celebrated in 1819, the year of the consolidation of Bourbon power. Marriage at that time meant getting married when one was sure of a job to support the family. With the arrival of the new authorities between 1817 and 1818 (the king had retaken the kingdom in December 1816), the situation was stabilising and between the end of 1818 and 1819 it was, in fact, definitively stabilised.

In 1818 and 1819, the Fibreno manufactory - it did not yet officially have that name - began to employ many people under Beranger's management, then with Charles Lefèbvre, recruitment increased even more, favouring the work of entire families.

This availability of work remunerated enough to support a family affected the demographic increase in the following decades, as Isola del Liri increased, unlike, for example, Arpino, which tended to decrease: the factory guaranteed stable work, perhaps not paid much but removed from the uncertainties of the climate, compared to work in the countryside, and guaranteed by forms of security. In the Lefèbvre and Zino factories, but also in Manna, services would be added that had not previously been seen. The average number of marriages over the next forty years is stable at around 20 per year.<sup>98</sup>

In relation to marriages, birth certificates are very significant, showing a steady increase from around 90 in the early 1910s, to around 100, then 110, 120, the average for several decades, to around 175 from 1850 to around 200 in the last years of the Bourbon period.<sup>99</sup> In general, the town showed a steady increase in population, which was not to be taken for granted given that other towns were beginning to depopulate and Rome and Naples were attracting people. There was also

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<sup>98</sup> I take thin numbers from the Wedding Registers n. 52-76 Anagrafe dell'Archivio Storico di Isola del Liri (years 1808-1860).

<sup>99</sup> Registri n. 10-51, years 1811-1860. Archivio Comunale di Sora. Sopraintendenza archivistica per il Lazio.

considerable building development around the factories until the formation of a real industrial district that had its backbone, for the paper industry, in the Lefèbvre industries and then, as we shall see, in the Liri Paper Mill.



## Chapter 9

### CARNELLO Spaces and Places

As we shall see, the Manifattura del Fibreno is spread over three locations: Santa Maria delle Forme, the Soffondo (the lower part) and Carnello, a place that has been frequented for centuries by men of letters and artists because Cicero was born and grew up there and because it was enriched by ruins from Roman times. The place-name 'Carnello' probably derives from the fact that this land was a mass burial ground in the Middle Ages, a 'carnaio' in the terminology of the time. At the time of our story, Carnello was a small village in the district of Sora, a few houses and a road surrounded by fields. This was the second site of a production unit that would play an important role in the industrial conversion of the area.

Looking at a map from 1795 kept at the State Archives of Frosinone, one can see why Carnello was so interesting: its fields were irrigated by a number of water intakes and 'forme' or canals that powered at least one "gualchiera" and probably - judging by the picture - at least three mills (the 'molini' are always indicated in the plural), flowing in a comb-like fashion towards the river (as was also the case in the area of the 'forme').<sup>100</sup>

It was an area rich in water, including spring water.

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<sup>100</sup> Atti Demaniali, B. 65, Fasc. 153.



Map of 1795 kept at the State Archives in Frosinone.

The first images of the area date back to the late 18th century.<sup>101</sup> We know that in Cicero's time there were wash-houses and that the area had been used since ancient times for various metal and ceramic works, and that in the Middle Ages the "gualchiere" had affected both banks of the Fibreno. The building that can already be seen in ruins was a fulling mill or fulling tower (sometimes also called Torre d'Alboino), i.e. an installation for the fulling process: the waterproofing of woollen cloth

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<sup>101</sup> *Repertorio dei siti protostorici del Lazio. Province di Roma, Viterbo e...*, by Clarissa Belardelli, Micaela Angle, Francesco di Gennaro, Flavia Trucco, p. 381 ssg.

by felting or, later, by grinding. A by-product of this wool activity was the pulp used for paper, which was reduced to a paste by means of hammers and then threshed. Obviously, they were powered by hydraulic energy, which is why the machinery was housed in buildings close to canals.

According to the scholar Giulio Emery, who does not give any other information, the paper industry had been "prevalent" in Isola for centuries. However, there is no certain information about this. The Fabriano chroniclers allude to papermakers who also emigrated to Sora in the 14th and 15th centuries, where the art of papermaking was not yet known. This is quite possible, since there is evidence of papermaking activities along the river. However, it is difficult to say that they were widespread.<sup>102</sup> In 1519, an 'impressor de libri de canto figurato' called Ottaviano Petrucci (often referred to as Ottavio Petrucci in the deeds) from Fossombrone obtained from the Duke of Sora, Guglielmo di Croy, the concession of the existing water veins in the locality of Carnello, on the border between Sora and Isola del Liri, to set up a paper mill there. Fossombrone was a town in Le Marche not far from Fabriano where paper mills had flourished on the Metauro river since the late Middle Ages.

The German artist Jakob Philipp Hackert, whom we have already met at the beginning of this book, also left a watercolour titled *Le Molini a Carinello con il Fiume Fibreno* (1793), while travelling in that area. It depicts the locality in its state prior to modern settlement. In the foreground, on the left, one can see the ruins, still existing today, of a fullonica tower used for centuries for washing skins or textiles.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Emery Giulio, *L'isola della carta*, in *Il Cartaio* n. 6, pp. 16-21.

<sup>103</sup> Ippolito Luigi, *Il luogo di nascita di Marco Tullio Cicerone*, Società archeologica arpinate, 1936, pp. 120-121. A. Jacob, in Daremberg e Saglio, *Dictionnaire*, s. v. *Fullonica*; L. Pernier, in De Ruggiero, *Dizionario epigrafico*, s. v. *Fullones*; M. Della Corte, *Fullones*, in *Solemne Praeconium I. A. Galante*, Napoli 1921, p. 85 ssg.



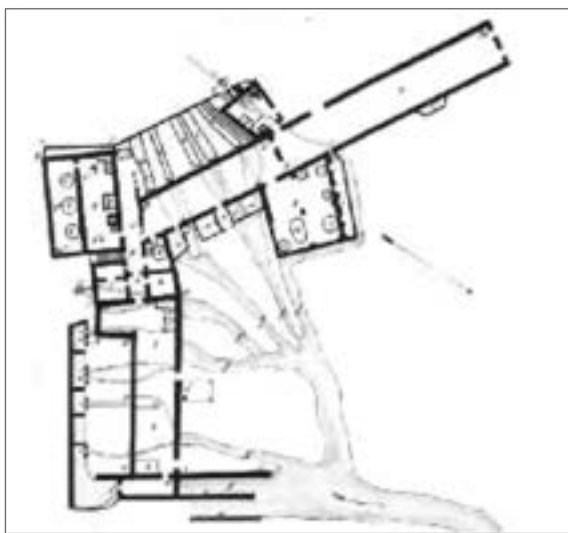
*Le Molini a Carinello con il Fiume Fibreno*, 1793, Jakob Philipp Hackert.

The adjective 'fullonica' designates the art of the fulloni, i.e. those workers who, in ancient times, were responsible for washing, removing stains and preparing robes. The toga especially needed the work of the fullone and this explains the great diffusion that this craft had in an area that had been dedicated to weaving since Roman times.<sup>104</sup>

In the watercolour, next to the Follonica tower across the river, you see a slide and a group of women with a basket because they used to wash clothes there for centuries. Certain old customs still persisted but were destined to disappear over the course of a few years. In the foreground, the usual images of bucolic peace: a man and a woman conversing, a man with a mule. On the right, the small church of Santa Restituta.

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<sup>104</sup> Magaldi Emilio, s.v. *Fullonica*, in *Enciclopedia italiana*, IEI, Roma 1932.



Map of the Zino wool mill  
(the Lefèbvre paper mill is not highlighted).

In 1824 Lorenzo Zino bought the so-called Carnello Island, a piece of land surrounded by the river and another piece of land nearby. In the place where there were 12 gualchiere (wool mills), powered by 9 canals coming from the Fibreno river, an imposing wool mill was built. A plan preserved in the Naples State Archives shows that the Zino wool mill was not the same as the Lefèbvre paper mill. As there was more than one mill, the spaces were divided and Lefèbvre added other buildings between the two bodies of the Zino wool mill. The two industrialists had to share the 'forms' of the running water. This 1832 image shows the floor plan of the two main buildings next to the church.<sup>105</sup>

It was mainly at the beginning of the 19th century that the first modern installations with working gualchiere arrived in Carnello.

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<sup>105</sup> *Planimetria dell'impianto di Carnello conservato all'Archivio di Stato di Napoli*, "Ragguaglio dello stato nel quale si ritrovava in giugno 1832 il Lanificio del Signor Lorenzo Zino sito in Carnello sul fiume Fibreno fra Sora e Isola, in Terra del lavoro".





Carnello after the construction of the Zino wool mill and the Lefèbvre Paper Mill (1832, *Poliorama Pittoresco*).

The picture above shows an intermediate phase: a bridge and other buildings of the Zino wool mill were built, which appear drawn in foreshortening and replaced the grove that stood behind the church. The buildings of the Zino wool mill appear smaller than they would later be represented. The buildings of the Lefèbvre paper mill already existed in this year, 1832.

In the next image, an engraving by Raffaele Carelli (1795-1864) from 1842 that appeared in *Poliorama Pittoresco* (26 November 1842), the same locality is seen, from the same position, with the Zino wool mill more prominent. The wall surrounding the church property can be seen. Only a few trees remain of the dense grove of a few decades earlier. The single-arch bridge appears different: larger and served by an elevated road. It could be the angle of the view, but it is more than likely that the heavy loads travelling back and forth on the road to and from the Zino and Lefèbvre factories made it advisable to strengthen it. Moreover, it is attested that the two industrialists made improvements to the road to both Isola and Sora. Not far away, but not visible in this

picture, there was a hamlet and a few kilometres away the town of Sora. Together, the two factories employed more than 400 people at this time.



*Lanificio Zino, "Poliorama Pittresco" 1842.*

The full-length tower on the left provides orientation: more or less in the centre is still the small church, now surrounded on one side by imposing industrial buildings. The building behind the church is flanked by a long two-storey building on the right of the picture.

The Zino family had an established wool manufacturing business in nearby Arpino, but the medieval structure of the town did not allow for such industrial expansion. Therefore, at the beginning of the century, a branch of the family set up a woollen cloth industry along the Liri river, before participating in the construction of a paper mill on Isola Superiore in the 1830s. The Zinos had shifted the focus of their activities to Naples, where they developed important activities and

succeeded in an industrial transformation that many had attempted but failed to achieve.

Here we can see the artist Raffaele Carelli's desire to show how industry and nature can be reconciled: the industrial aspects of the building, the already imposing industries, are reduced as if by the exuberance of nature and the presence of the old historical artefact, as if the important transformations that took place in the landscape and society were in perfect balance with the places.

It is obviously more difficult to show the same thing in the larger of Lefèbvre's Manifatture del Fibreno factories, where the size of the factory, warehouses and outbuildings had tamed or 'civilised' the 'bucolic' dimension, as the romantic sense of nature demanded. However, as we shall see, Lefèbvre's factories were not visible from the road, they were hidden and did not offend the eye of the romantic traveller.



*Carnello*, Consalvo Carelli, 1838 (Bank of Italy Collection).

The last painting in this section was painted by a member of the Posillipo school, Consalvo Carelli, son of Raffaele Carelli and also a successful painter. It dates from 1838 and shows the landscape of Carnello in a realistic view, but with fantasy elements. The tower of Fullonica appears on the same side of the river as the buildings, while the other elements: the church, the paper mills of Zino and Lefèbvre, the bridge, are hidden. In Consalvo's painting, the realistic view is preferred to the picturesque one in order to bring all the elements together. In the detail shown below, the details of the Lefèbvre paper mill, which are barely visible in the painting, are isolated: the house and offices in the background on the right and the low building in the centre. In the background are the heights of San Bartolomeo.



The half-hidden Lefèbvre paper mill (detail).

When Beranger rented the old Carnello paper mill once belonging to the Boncompagni family, he found it old and dilapidated. However, the availability of water was exceptional and the presence of well-fed

canals was remarkable. The Zino factory was established where there had previously been a small paper mill. The Boncompagni family had also tried to spread the silk industry in the area by attracting experts from the Lecco region.<sup>106</sup> This explains why such a rare activity in the area was then reactivated by the Lefèbvre family on their estates: on the Gelsi estate, near the Fibreno paper mill, a small silk factory was set up with traditional spinning machines and silkworm breeding beds fed by a mulberry cultivation.

The purchase of the Carnello land, with a perpetual emphyteusis contract (an agricultural contract), took place on 22 June 1826. While the purchase of the water rights to the old Boncompagni paper mill was finalised on 22 October 1827, and not without legal wrangling, because the factory had already been built by Lefèbvre and apparently the land owner wanted to appropriate it.<sup>107</sup>

Claude François Lepreux, a Frenchman living in Naples at vico Sergente Maggiore no. 3, and Charles Lefebvre then living in Naples, strada Riviera di Chiaia no. 267, found themselves before the judge over a dispute concerning land. Lepreux had purchased 34 plots of land from Louis P. Lemaire, which he in turn had received from Margaret Douillet, at that time the widow Beranger in 1816. The latter, in turn, had acquired it from the State when the ten-year free concession expired in 1806. It should be noted that all the names are French, while the small local Sorano elite had not entered the business, being still tied to agriculture and traditional industries such as woolen mills or small metallurgical workshops.

In the deed of purchase signed by the notary Emmanuele Caputo of Naples on 7 August 1822 for the price of 3,900 ducats, there were not only the premises of the paper mill, the church and the garden of Santa Maria delle Forme located on what was then known as the Consolare

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<sup>106</sup> Della Valle Carlo, *L'industria della carta nel Lazio meridionale*, extract from the «Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana», n. 9-10, Roma 1955, p. 8; Achille Lauri, *Sora, Isola del Liri e dintorni*, Sora 1914, p. 125.

<sup>107</sup> *Contratto di enfiteusi perpetua dalla Cassa di Ammortizzazione dello Stato a Carlo Lefebvre della cartiera del Carnello*. BCIL Archivio Boimond, contenitore 13, b. 6 AA (22 giugno 1826).

road to Sora, but also the rights to the water taken from below the Carnello mill in the Molini Reali locality. The deed of sale describes the measurements of the premises in palms. Among the purchases was also the monastery of Forme defined as square, composed of pillars and arches, and the church, composed of a single nave with six chapels founded with two rooms for sacristy use behind, where there were no stone steps, no altars or other furnishings.

Then there was the question of land, theoretically disconnected from both the buildings and the water intakes. This made the management of these affairs very complicated. Auguste Lemaire had leased the thirty-four properties to August Viollier from 9 August 1816 until August 1821 and then for another five years until August 1826. However, Viollier, who had mainly engaged in the steamship industry - Lefèbvre's partner - temporarily left the Kingdom of Naples. Lefèbvre, who took over the lease of the paper mill, did not release the funds leased by Viollier in Carnello, where innovations had been made: the recent construction of the new paper mill with the installation of the expensive paper machine. He therefore asked for another year's extension until 21 June 1827. On the expiry date, Lefèbvre handed over 33 funds and not the thirty-fourth, called Vicenna, precisely because it was occupied by the factories: releasing the fund was impossible for him because the buildings and hydraulic improvements had been made on it and were worth much more than the land itself.

In another fund called Vienne or Vicenne Grande, on the other side of the river, canals had been dug to allow the waters that animated the Fibreno paper mill to pass; two "gates" supported by masonry had also been built. As we have seen in a previous chapter, although the *Zurlo Memorandum* granted concessions to citizens in this matter, allowing them to collect water to power hydraulic machines if the conditions were met (ownership of land on the banks of a watercourse, ownership of a mill), it did not clarify the legal procedure to be followed in order to ensure justice for litigants in similar cases, whose disputes were left to private litigation because the laws of the State did not allow for easy interpretation.

According to Lepreux, more water had flowed into the old 'forma', or canal, on the Vicenne Grande land than had previously flowed through it, and this water had crossed the land and penetrated laterally, causing damage to the farmers who had complained. It was the classic case of damage to the 'common good' and general prosperity that was invoked in such cases. As far as the Vicennola fund is concerned, opposite the paper mill, the road had been widened, as can be seen from photographs dating from the 1820s and 1830s.

Therefore, when the plaintiff received thirty-three plots instead of thirty-four, he formally protested in a court document that the Vicenne plot had not been returned because of the easements imposed, the innovations and what he called "usurpations committed". Lepreux therefore summoned Lefèbvre to appear before the civil court of the province of Terra di Lavoro in order to order him to vacate the land called Vicenne, to demolish at his own expense the factory buildings considered to be abusive, and to close the new canals and the two gates with the corresponding factories on the said land and on the Vicenne Grande estate. He also asked for the water to be restored to its original state by taking it from the Molini Reali di Carnello. These had been put up for sale in 1827 by the firm of Zino & C.



Inner courtyard of the Civil Court of the Province of  
Terra di Lavoro, Capua.

But Charles Lefèvre was a stubborn man, ready to fight with lawyers and well-connected in Naples. He did not want to and could not give up the factory he had built, nor the water intake, which was also of considerable industrial value because of the paper machine he had installed at great expense. The fact that the source of the river from which the water was drawn was about 8 kilometres from the Carnello factory meant that the water arrived very pure, not muddy, even drinkable, and this provided a homogeneous mixture that was beneficial to the quality of the paper. The purchase of Carnello was thus completed in 1828, after overcoming the obstacle of Lepreux's opposition.

The document of 1827, like others, will be part of the transcripts that will be included in the records of the legal disputes that Ernesto Lefèvre, and later his son Francesco, had with the tenants and then purchasers of the Forme Factory, the Cartiere Meridionali. There were irregularities in these matters, which were not regulated by clear state laws, and which were only resolved under the management of the owners of the Cartiere Meridionali. Reading these documents, which were repeatedly the subject of legal disputes that lasted for decades in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, we can learn a great deal about the state of the paper mill, which was already large but not very large and was soon to become the largest in Italy.

At Carnello, the use of calcium chloride to increase the quality of the raw material made it possible to abandon the traditional system of shaping the paper and to mechanise the entire production process with the use of the paper machine.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem.*





## Chapter 10

### The endless paper making machine

Lefèbvre bought and installed a type of machine that did not yet exist in Italy and which, more than the previous machines already in use in Italian paper mills, heralded the start of the Industrial Revolution. In order to ensure a more certain return on his investment, he requested exclusive possession of the machine in the territories of the kingdom and exemption from customs duties on the accessories that made the machine work. The expected concessions for the Carnello machines were granted in 1830, for a period of five years, once the assembly of the equipment had been completed. The assembly took place between the end of 1825 and 1826, when the plant was already in operation.

Lefèbvre had thus set about producing paper using an innovative process before he was absolutely certain that he could dispose of the mill and the land on which it stood. Apparently, he was not only confident, but also knew that he could count on support in Naples. This machine was the first of four, five with the one installed 30 years later in the San Carlo factory, to be installed in the following years. To understand the competitive advantage this installation brought to the young Sora paper mills, it is worth understanding what this machine was and the benefits it brought to the production process.<sup>109</sup>

It was invented by Louis-Nicolas Robert (1761-1828), a young technician working for the Didot family of paper manufacturers and publishers in Essonnes, south of Paris. This explains the presence of the

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<sup>109</sup> Mancini Stefano Maria, *La manifattura della carta nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, in Stat Litteris Orbis. Volume commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Liceo Classico "Matteo Camera" di Amalfi, Angri, Gaia, pp. 331-334. *Ivi*, p. 337.

Didots in Carnello: Lefèvre had the paper machine installed by the technical-industrial group that had invented it and their associates. Robert's invention made possible the first mechanisation of the paper industry.

A replica of his machine was built for the Frogmore Paper Mill Museum, a museum located in the area of the first English paper district, where the same machines were used as in the Liri district. The machine received the semi-finished product from a short conveyor belt or tray and, after forming, released a laminate of pulp or continuous sheet, still wet, which was pressed by two heated rollers. This sheet was picked up manually and placed on bars where it was dried and then cut. Mechanisation was not yet complete, but the machine allowed continuous production, even if the loading of the raw material and the unloading of the finished product were still done manually. Robert patented his invention in Paris on 9 September 1798 and assembled the first fully functional machine in 1799. As seen in the following photograph the section of the rolls and cylinders that would shape, heat, dry and laminate the paper is very small. It was precisely these sections that would later be improved.



Prototype of the first Continuous or Endless Machine  
(Sans Fin) by Louis-Nicolas Robert.

Robert was unable to profit from this invention because it had been patented by his employer, Saint-Léger Didot (1767-1829). He therefore thought of emigrating to England, involving his brother-in-law John Gamble, who was in Paris at the time. The latter was neither a papermaker nor a technician, and on his return to England he explained the project to his brothers Henry (1766-1854), Charles (1768-1841) and Sealy Fourdrinier (1773-1847), paper makers of Huguenot origin. In this way, they were able to take up the innovation, improve it and finally present the first patented machine in London in 1801.<sup>110</sup>

The model used in Carnello was the one first seen in action at the Royal Paper Mills of Montargis, well known to Charles Lefèbvre, who in those years had bought land and a castle there, which he had razed to the ground and rebuilt when he still intended to return to Paris and build himself a house in the capital and a chateau in the Loire Valley, which

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<sup>110</sup> *Gazette Issue 1791* pubblicata il 4 ottobre 1817.

he did. The château was very old and dilapidated and the grounds vast and uncultivated. Rebuilt in the neoclassical style, it was given to his daughter Flavia in 1835 when she married the Marquis Raoul de Raigecourt.

To return to the machine, the Fourdriniers had added a paper-drying section to the original model, but it was not yet perfect. These problems were solved by the mechanic Bryan Donkin (1768-1855), who patented an improved model of the machine in 1807. Donkin's model, which was based on various modifications of Robert and Didot's French prototype and the Fourdrinier machine, became the basis of every modern papermaking machine. In England, the first of these machines was installed at Frogmore Mill in Apsley (Hertfordshire) around 1808. The first models were installed outside England: in France, Italy and the United States, where the machine was built by Thomas Gilpin based on English models.<sup>111</sup>

Robert's machine - rudimentary and imperfect - consisted of an endless wire cloth A passing between two rollers B and C. While the position of B was fixed, that of C was adjustable so that the cloth could be stretched. The dough contained in the large vat D was thrown by the paddle wheel E, which was drawn into it, onto the moving cloth, which also had an oscillating motion. The dough was distributed as best as possible in a 50 cm wide layer, which, slowly advancing, dripped through the pair of cylinders C-H and left the cloth in the form of a damp ribbon of theoretically unlimited length, which was finally cut into sheets and air-dried, like handmade paper.<sup>112</sup>

The machine sometimes called Fourdrinier-Gamble started to become operational and was also installed in France, in Sorel (Eure et Loir) in 1811 and was bought by the entrepreneurs Berthe & Grévenich, who owned a factory. Lefèvre visited the machine and hired

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<sup>111</sup> *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. Vol. 81, No. 4 (Oct. 1957), pp. 391-405, University of Pennsylvania Press. Ivi, p. 391.

<sup>112</sup> Dell'Orefice Anna, *L'industria della carta nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia. 1800-1870. Economia e tecnologia*, in «Cahiers Internationaux d'Histoire Economique et Social», Librairie Droz, Ginevra 1979, pp. 251-473. Ivi, pp. 299-300.

Grévenich's son, Émile, as technical director of the Carnello factory. By 1827, France owned four paper machines: at Berthe & Grévenich in Sorel; at Canson in Annonay; at Didot in Mesnil sur l'Estrée and at Delcambre in Jean-d'Heurs. He also brought one of the members of the Firmin Didot & C. dynasty to Isola, enabling a very rapid transfer of technology to Italy.

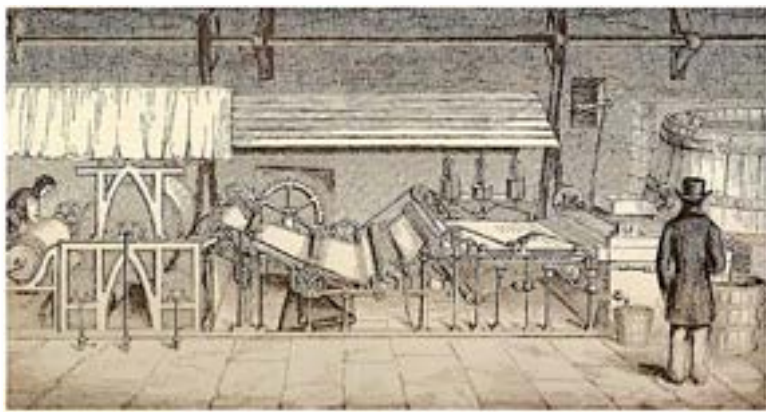
Industrial development thanks to this great invention did not become effective until 1830. Until then, the machines installed were operational as long as there was a technician capable of operating them and, if necessary, modifying them. It was not until the middle of the third decade that their cost and maintenance became more affordable for more companies. For part of the 19th century the flat 'fourdrinier' paper machine competed strongly with the round machine developed by Englishman John Dickinson (patent 1809). Ferdinand Leistenschneider from Lorraine, who belonged to a family of engineers and manufacturers, had developed a round machine before Dickinson but did not have the financial means to patent it until 1813. At Lefèbvre, first the flat paper machines and then the round paper machines were installed, making a total of five large plants.

Despite the rapid development many of these inventors did not earn any money from their achievements, such as Donkin who set up his own workshop, the Bryan Donkin & Company in Bermondsey in 1802. John Gamble received little or nothing from his work and the Fourdriniers, having spent £60,000 that they no longer earned back were declared bankrupt in 1810. Other inventors in the industry went into poverty, such as Charles Fenerty (1821-1892), who in the United States was credited with experimenting with the first papers made from pulp and wood in the 1940s. However, by 1851 there were 200 Donkin machines installed worldwide.

These machines had a first section where the wet pulp was fed into the machine. In the second part, the wet press section, the layer formed by the fibres was pressed by a series of cylinders whose function was to squeeze the pulp, which was still full of water, and mechanically remove as much of the residual liquid as possible. In the subsequent drying section, the pressed sheet was again passed through heated

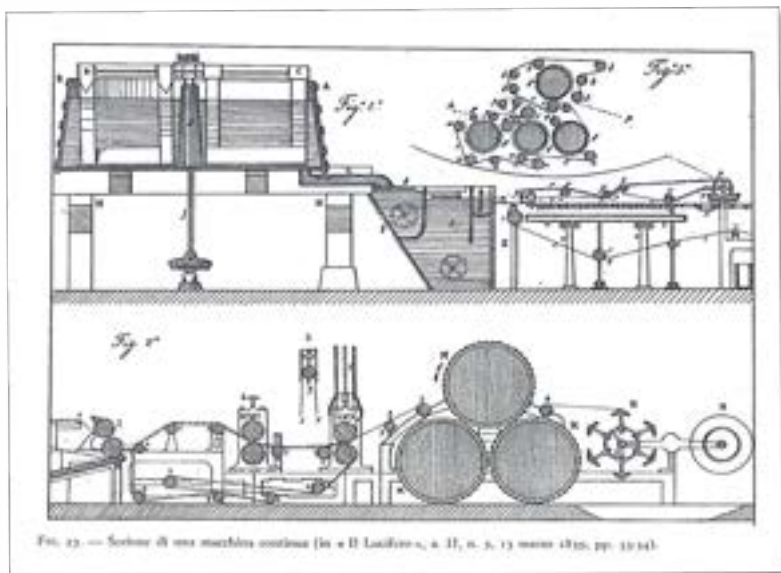
cylinders to accelerate the drying process and further reduce moisture. This refinement came about in 1820 thanks to the Englishman Thomas Crompton, who invented steam-heated cylinders to pre-dry the paper as it came out of the moulding machine. These cylinders, initially external, were later incorporated into the Fourdrinier machine. In 1833, their presence was noted at Firmin Didot's company in Mesnil-sur-l'Estrée. In the calender section, the paper is smoothed by passing through cylinders in even narrower passages. All flat machines ('sans fin', 'endless') operate according to these principles, however much they have been refined over time. What you see in the picture below is a machine that combines the contributions of Nicolas Robert, Saint-Léger Didot, John Gamble and the Fourdriniers. The first machine installed at Carnello must have been very similar.

In Italy, the Carnello paper machine quickly became famous. In 1828, Rosanne wrote in her diary that it was a "miraculous machine", reflecting the enthusiasm of the technicians Didot and Grévenich and the visitors who flocked to see it. Almost all the guests at the Palais Lefèvre, who had to travel the two kilometres by carriage through orchards and tree-lined avenues to Carnello, vied with each other to admire the machine.



Macchina Senza Fine (Sans Fin o Endless Paper Machine).

Shortly afterwards, the construction was modified to include the so-called *dandy roller*, invented in 1826, which allowed a mark to be automatically imprinted on the paper at a predetermined point and at the desired rhythm, something that until then had only been possible to do manually.<sup>113</sup>



In this image from the magazine *Il lucifero* of 1839 the machine (designed in 2 parts) is more complex than the models of 30 years earlier.

An endless machine similar to Lefèbvre's in that part of Italy was only set up in 1836 when Count Francesco Lucernari, having obtained the free use of the Liri river waters, established a paper mill. Although close to Isola and Sora, Anitrella was, however, in the Papal States and

<sup>113</sup> For gradual changes in papermaking processes see AA.VV, *Technological Transformation in the Global Pulp and Paper Industry 1800-2018, Comparative Perspectives*, Mark Kuhlberg, Miquel Gutiérrez-Poch, Timo Särkkä, curr., Springer International Publishing 2018.



so, given the protectionist regime in place at the time, its paper could not compete with that of the Lefèbvre.<sup>114</sup> The machine installed in Carnello, which was about 10 metres long, was difficult to imitate in Italy for several years.

Even the owner of the old Fabriano paper mill, the most famous on the peninsula at the time, wondered how it was possible to produce such a wide and long continuous sheet, and regretted not being able to see it with his own eyes. His astonishment is recorded in the texts: As early as 1829, Niccolò Miliani, owner of the famous Fabriano paper mills, wrote of the amazement he felt when he saw a sheet of paper as long as a sheet coming out of the machines installed in the Sora paper mills, and expressed his regret that he was unable to visit them, given the distance of 80 miles separating him from them, "to see how on earth such large formats could be obtained".<sup>115</sup>

The technicians who assembled the Carnello machine, as we learn from Rosanne, all came from England and stayed in Isola for a long time. Their provenance was probably Frogmore Mills, the only place at that time where machines like that one were built.<sup>116</sup> Modifications were then made mainly on the processes first by Émile Grévenich and in the 1830s by Amédée Montgolfier. The work was also supervised on the technical side by Joseph Courier.

On the other bank of the Fibreno river, Lefèbvre also thought of improving the water intakes to supply the improved factories in Isola del Liri and so he had the canal, first dug by Beranger 10 years earlier, rebuilt as far as Tremoletto. It became a two-kilometre-long canal, raised and with a brick base, which avoided annoying the crossed fields with leaks.

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<sup>114</sup> AA.VV *Dall'abbandono del patrimonio edilizio al suo riuso in un nuovo contesto di beni a rete: le linee d'acqua e le industrie della carta nel Lazio*, in *Ricerche e progetti per la città, il territorio e l'architettura*, n. 5 2021, University of Bologna, pp. 101-128. *Ivi* p. 115.

<sup>115</sup> Vocino Michele, *Primati del Regno di Napoli. Attività meridionali pria del Regno d'Italia*, Mele, Napoli 1959, p. 112.

<sup>116</sup> Clapperton R.C., *The Paper-Making Machine Its Invention, Evolution, and Development*, Pergamon Press, Oxford 1967, pp. 54-64.



Portrait of Louis-Nicolas Robert, inventor of the first paper machine (watercolour by his sister: M. René Putois collection).

In 1828, Charles ('Charles' in all official documents) Lefèvre partnered with the publishing company Firmin & Didot in Paris for two renewable years as he was interested in improving the printing processes and installing more modern presses in the Stamperia Francese. After further investments and the expansion of the printing

works, it became the Tipografia e Stamperia del Fibreno in 1830, as a specialised production unit of the Manifattura del Fibreno.<sup>117</sup>

It was then that Lefèbvre began to work on Isola, investing the considerable sum of no less than 100,000 ducats. He considered enlarging the factory, building new sheds behind the convent and the church and below street level, and installing new machinery, including no fewer than 16 Dutch batteries. In 1832, in partnership with another industrialist, the Neapolitan Lorenzo Zino, he contributed to the construction of a modern 4-kilometre road between the hamlet of Carnello and the town of Sora to facilitate the transport of carriages to and from the Lefèbvre and Zino factories. Thirty years later, cousin André-Isidore praised the quality of the materials used in the construction of this paved road. This was the first of a long series of public works carried out by the Lefèbvre family in the area, which, as we shall see, included sewers, school buildings, a chemist's shop and two outpatient clinics, as well as roads and, later, a railway line with Isoletta station. Local historians point out that the landscape of Isola del Liri and Sora was also greatly influenced by the activities of the Lefèbvre family in terms of infrastructure.

Returning to the Carnello machine, for many years it remained the exclusive property of the Lefèbvre mills, giving them a competitive advantage over mills of similar size. As the market was soon to discover, the Carnello produced more paper, in larger sheets and of higher quality. However, the paper machine had one drawback: it only produced smooth paper on one side, while the other side had to be scraped, which not only increased costs but also made the material more fragile.<sup>118</sup> The defect will be eliminated several years later.

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<sup>117</sup> Lauri Achille, *op. cit.*, p. 6. The partnership between Lefèbvre and the Parisian publishers did not last long. The Cartiera del Fibreno in turn became a publisher with two printing works in Naples.

<sup>118</sup> Dell'Orefice Anna, *L'industria della carta nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia. 1800-1870. Economia e tecnologia*, in «Cahiers internationaux d'histoire économique et sociale», n. 10 (1979), Istituto Italiano per la storia dei movimenti sociali e delle strutture sociali, Ginevra, 339n.

In 1831, the Carnello paper mill was 7500 square metres in size and was all new floor space, because the old buildings, some dating back to the 17th century, had been demolished.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> ASC, Intendenza fasc. 4, Sora 13 novembre 1831.



## Chapter 11

### The “*little Paris*”

The story of the Lefèvre factories is not only an industrial or environmental history, but also a cultural and social history. The reason for this is easy to understand from the following lines, which show that the Fibreno factory was something more complex, precisely because of the physical and personal link that the French entrepreneur and his family had with the place where they lived, even if only for a few months a year. We read a passage from Rosanne's *Journal* transcribed by his nephew André-Isidore in a series of large notebooks later donated by his heirs to the Bibliothèque National de France.

Year 1824. A very large group gathered at Isola in May 1824. My husband and Flavia did the honours for Mr. Costa (Pierre Coste), Director of the Factory, and were the protagonists of all the amusements of these days. This group consisted of Monsieur Comte de Jerre, French Ambassador in Naples; the Countess de Serra and their two children; the Countess de Tréville and her two children; the Countess de Frogoff; Monsieur de Belval, Embassy Secretary; Madame Eugénie; Monsieur Riboulet, tutor. They spent 15 days in Isola visiting the surroundings where they procured the most pleasant souvenirs. At the end of the same month, I arrived in Isola and, in June, we were visited by Monsieur de l'Ecluse; Monsieur Duvergier de Hauranne, son of a deputy. Then Monsieur and Madame Arcambal, who knew nothing of Isola and whose enchantment at seeing it was total; and again came Monsieur de Volkoff attaché of the Russian Embassy.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Archive National Français, Paris, Fondo Lefèvre. AB XIX 4481. vol. VI, p. 4.

As we know and as this passage from the *Journal* of 1824 confirms, within a short time of the first arrangement of the flats, Isola's destination was already known and appreciated by an international and prestigious group of high-ranking people. Indeed, the powerful French ambassador and other high-ranking French officials with whom Charles always maintained cordial relations were named. Why would they have bothered to leave Naples to reach that uncomfortable location at the time if they did not attribute an uncommon importance to Lefèbvre's activities?

Prosper Duvergier de Hauranne (1798-1881), politician and future senator and later Russian embassy officials and Russian, French and Italian nobles are mentioned.<sup>121</sup> The Mr. Costa named is probably Charles' former partner, Pierre Coste of Lyon, who had in turn invested money in his own factory at Nibbio, which would be taken over in 1857 by the Viscogliosi and renamed Cartiera Beniamino Viscogliosi. Year after year, and for some twenty years, the guests became more and more.

The year 1825. Our family grew by two persons, Madame Dareste and Ernestine. We had Mr. Lerarron; Mr. Léopold Dareste; Mr. Dauria (sic), Master of Drawing; Mr. Arcambal; Mrs. Salvage and Mrs. Dunorey; Mrs. de Lanoue; Mr. Cuneo; Lady Mary, accompanied by an Englishman, a Prussian and a Russian with a geographer, a painter and a numerous retinue of servants. Then the Prussian minister, Count de Fleming, Count Totoska, Mr. Sasse and a Pole arrived. The Intendant and his entire entourage also arrived at Isola. They invited us to Arpino where they gave a splendid party.<sup>122</sup>

The intendant mentioned in this passage is the Marquis of St Agapito, who was intendant from 1821 to 1834. Madame Dareste was a distant relative who was responsible for the early education of

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<sup>121</sup> This Mr. Riboulet must have been called from France: even today there are very few people with this surname and all in the Naples area, probably descendants of this Riboulet.

<sup>122</sup> AB XIX 4481. vol. VI, pp. 5-6. Transcription from the *Journal* by Rosanne Lefèbvre. In the translation I retain the original forms of the names as they were written by the author.

Lefèbvre's two daughters, Flavia and Luisa. She remained close to the family until her death in 1859, when she was buried in the newly erected family tomb in the Monumental Cemetery in Naples. Three other servants were hired at the same time. Ernestine Lefèbvre, a cousin who was a nun and future superior of the Paris convent of the Augustinians du Sainte-Croix de Jesus in the centre of Paris, was also appointed as a visitor. The main masters - Monsieur Riboulet for the males and Madame Dareste for the females - were responsible for teaching composition, literature and the classics; a second master taught science and mathematics. Stays on Isola were special occasions to combine science, history and Cicero with the observation of nature, rocks and rivers, while also discussing the progress of technology. There were also teachers of singing, dancing and music, confirming that the lifestyle of the family was already aristocratic, not only in the great palace of Calabritto, where they lived at the time in Naples, but also on Isola.

In 1825, very important Prussian ministers and diplomats, such as the Count of Fleming (Flemming), plenipotentiary at various courts, visited the Lefèbvre family. Léopold Dareste (1791-1869), the painter Raffaele D'Auria (1799-1859), the official artist of the Bourbon court, who painted the portraits of all the Lefèbvres, was also present. Léopold Dareste was the son of Antoine Dareste de La Chavanne (1760-1836), director of the tobacco factory in Naples, and brother of Rodolphe (1789-1879), Chef de Bureau au Ministère des Finances, an important executive in French public finance, a milieu from which the Lefèbvre family came. The Dareste, like many other French *négociants* and professionals in Naples, came from Lyon, the city to which Charles often travelled with Paris. It is probable that the Dareste, referred to in some documents as "Cai..." and with the surname Chauvet, a misinterpretation caused by poor photostatic copying, was Marie Anne Charlotte, known as Caroline Charvet, and was a relative of the Lefèbvre family, a cousin, according to the burial certificate.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> In File 44-Inc. 23 f. 1 we learn that C... (?) Dareste was Léopold's wife. She died in 1859: «Il conte di Balsorano Ernesto Lefèbvre prega vostra eccellenza



In those years, the record was broken by a certain Hébert, who stayed with the family for a good 18 months, drawing and painting the people of Naples and Campania in their customs, nature and landscape.<sup>124</sup> It seems to have been the young Ernest Hébert (1817-1908) who was Stendhal's cousin. In January 1824, the philosopher Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776-1847) visited Naples and its environs and recounted that he and his friends had also visited the *Panorama de Paris*, a large 360-degree painting installed in Naples, which reproduced a view of the French capital. On that occasion, Ballanche, who was travelling in the company of Juliette Récamier, met Charles Lefèbvre.<sup>125</sup> On 9 February, he recalled in a letter that he had dined with the Lefèbvre family and had made a series of visits around Isola del Liri, not forgetting, of course, to visit the technical innovations installed at Isola and Carnello.<sup>126</sup> The Lefèbvre family and their hospitality are also mentioned in the travel account of the painter and writer, a pupil of David, Étienne-Jean Delécluze (1781-1863), who arrived in Sora in June 1824 together with Duvergier de Hauranne. The two friends were on their Grand Tour in Italy and had decided to visit little-visited areas, but rich in classical memories, in the hinterland of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

In the village of Sora, he and his companion are welcomed by a small colony of French people who have settled on the banks of the Liri and its falls.

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di acconsentirgli pagati 24 di scudo (sic) di aggiungere al terreno di già organizzato anteriormente nel Camposanto per la costruzione della cappella sepolcrale in modo che mediante il precedente acquisto gli sarà permesso di far depositare nelle due estensioni di questo gli avanzi della sua pia cugina [Madame] Cai[...] Chauvet vedova di [Léopold] Dareste [...] “cugina dei” Lefèbvre».

<sup>124</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 3.

<sup>125</sup> *Lettres de Ballanche à Madame Récamier, 1812-1845*, Agnès Kettler, cur., Honoré Champion, Parigi 1996, p. 535. Here Charles is improperly referred to as the frère of Joseph-Isidore. This definition has caused several errors in less careful historiography where Joseph-Isidore is identified as a son of Pierre Lefèbvre di Pontarlier.

<sup>126</sup> Agnès Kettler, *Lettres de Ballanche à Madame Récamier, 1812-1845*, Honoré Champion, Paris 1996, p. 771.

In this enchanting place, near the confluence of the Liri and Fibreno rivers, an engineer, Charles Lefèbvre, had in fact built a flourishing paper mill. Delécluze received delightful hospitality from this family, with whom he was not unknown.<sup>127</sup>

The main attraction was the Carnello machine, installed in a place long known to the "vedutisti", who evoked Cicero's traits there. On the first day of July, Récamier and Ballanche reappeared together with a friend of theirs, Monsieur Jean-Jacques Ampère (1800-1864), son of the famous physicist, historian, future member of the Académie Française, who belonged to Juliette Récamier's circle of friends.<sup>128</sup> The woman was still considered an example of elegance, imitated and admired. We can imagine her in the typical outfits of the mid-1920s: close-cropped hair, long, dark-coloured dresses and a narrow waist.

In July or August of the same year, 1824, the whole family moved into the house in Naples, a large rented apartment "that stood on the Riva di Chiaia", or Partanna Palace. At that time the junction between Chiaia and today's Via Poerio had not yet been built and the Riva di Chiaia was a sandy shore with a much narrower passage than today. The side of the palace occupied by the Lefèbvre family had a view of the sea, as the promenade that would have widened the shore did not yet exist. Récamier, who had already been welcomed by the Lefèbvre family in 1813, stayed at the Calabritto Palace from 9 July to 25 November 1824. For her, they were a family of compatriots who gave

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<sup>127</sup> The author writes here in the third person: «Au village d'Isola di Sora son compagnon et lui son fêtés par una petite colonie de Français établis sur le bords du Liri et des ses cascades. Dans cet site ravissant, à prossimité du confluent du Liri et du Fibreno, un ingénieur, Charles Lefèbvre, avait en effet monté une papeterie tres florissante. Delécluze reçut dans cette famille, où il n'était pas un inconnu, une charmante hospitalité». Étienne-Jean Delécluze, *Carnet de route d'Italie (1823-1824). Impressiones Romaines*, Boivin & Cle., Parigi 1942, p. 29.

<sup>128</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. V, p. 207.

her "the sign of the warmest friendship".<sup>129</sup> Récamier's account of the trip includes a short portrait of Charles:

He was gifted with a lively intelligence for business and great energy. He also possessed uncommon strength and willpower. He acquired a considerable fortune in just a few years and founded a large paper mill on Isola di Sora. Which is the first of its kind and, as I believe, the only one that has ever existed in the Kingdom of Naples.<sup>130</sup>

Lefèbvre was a man of considerable experience and had made a fortune in the field of civil administration; yet, what struck everyone was his large island paper mill, the real novelty that made him a man of a new type. His wife is described as a beautiful and good woman, the mother of several equally beautiful children.<sup>131</sup> The 'elegant and affectionate hospitality' of the newlyweds, 'with the different nuances of their characters', had won a place of honour in the memory of the old friend.<sup>132</sup> As we know the Lefèbvre family were wealthy by the end of the 18th century, but the personal wealth that Charles acquired through his own business was very significant. For the Frenchwoman, her stay in Naples in 1824 was full of turmoil. Serious political events involving

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<sup>129</sup> Lénormant Amélie, *Souvenirs et correspondance tirés des papiers de Madame Récamier*, Levy, Parigi 1860, p. 138.

<sup>130</sup> «Doué d'une vive intelligence des affaires et de beaucoup d'activité, il avait en outre une force et une constance dans la volonté, peu communes au degré où il les possédait. Il acquit en peu d'années une fortune considérable et fonda à l'Isola di Sora une grande papeterie. La première de ce genre, et, je crois, la seule qu'ait jamais possédée le royaume de Naples», *ibidem*. p. 139. Amélie (Jacqueline) Cyvoct Lénormant wrote in 1859, some 10 years after Récamier's death. She was his niece and followed her through the years of poverty, collecting his correspondence. She married Jacques Lénormant de Belley.

<sup>131</sup> «Sous l'empire doux et trop limité d'une femme belle, bonne, qui lui avait donné de nombreux enfants beaux comme leur mère». *Ibidem*.

<sup>132</sup> Curiously, the words used by Lénormant and André-Isidore are very similar. The former's book was written in 1859, the latter's memoirs were written in the form we have today around 1885, so it is natural to think that when he wrote André-Isidore, he had in his hand the collection of letters by Récamier edited by Lénormant, whom he had, moreover, met at the Lefèbvre's in Naples. V. AB XIXI 4481, vol. V, pp. 208-209.

people close to her had upset her. René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848), a great friend of Récamier's, had been dismissed from his post as foreign minister on 6 June by Jean-Baptiste Joseph, Count of Villèle (1773-1854). Chateaubriand and Ballanche were exponents of liberal Catholicism, in the minority during the reigns of Louis XVIII and also of Charles X. The room in the apartment in the Palais Coscia-Partanna that Lefèbvre reserved for Récamier that summer overlooked the magnificent and rich gardens of the Villa Reale. Bitter and anxious, she suffered from insomnia. To distract her, excursions were organised to the heights of Naples or around the city. When the heat became too much for Récamier's fragile health, they made sure she slept in the cool. They took her to Capo di Monte, to the Virgilian sites of Pozzuoli, Baia and Capo Miseno in a sturdy, fast rowboat on calm days when the beauty of the then splendid Gulf of Naples seemed laden with literary memories, perfumes that intoxicated the senses, bustling with the traffic of sailing ships that ploughed its azure waters. Récamier carried the books of her friends Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël with her. Ballanche, on the other hand, was guided by Strabo and was very disappointed to see that Cape Miseno was nothing more than a miserable strip of flat land with a few shrubs half burnt by the sun.

On 16 September 1824, couriers brought important news from France: Louis XVIII had died.<sup>133</sup>

The new king, Count Charles d'Artois, immediately ascended the throne taking the name Charles X (1757-1836, reigned from 1824 to 1830). Other Frenchmen or former Muratists were in Naples at the time, such as General Filangieri or Charles de Lénormant (1802-1859) who had been invited one evening to the Lefèbvre salon. The discussions must have been endless, worried for some, joyful for others. Lénormant, a renowned archaeologist, became an intimate of Récamier and married her niece Amelia Cyvoct. Finally, before Christmas, Récamier left Naples for Rome where she was to continue on to Venice and Trieste where she visited Joachim Murat's widow, the Countess of Lipona.

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<sup>133</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. V, p. 210.

During those months, Rosanne Lefèbvre had her own portrait painted by the painter Raffaele D'Auria, who sent it to his nephew André-Isidore in Lyon.<sup>134</sup> D'Auria, a friend and frequent guest of the Lefèbvre family, had studied at the Institute of Fine Arts in Naples under Giuseppe Cammarano (1766-1850) - a painter who, among other things, frescoed the royal palace in Caserta - and made his debut at the first Bourbon Biennale in 1826, immediately becoming a portrait painter much in demand among the Neapolitan aristocracy and the royal household, to the extent that he painted at least six of Francis I's children. Carelli, Raffaele and Consalvo were among the painters who frequented Lefèbvre's studio. The portrait given to André-Isidore, we are told, brought out 'those accentuated and regular features which made Madame Charles Lefèbvre (sic) such a beautiful person even then, when she was only 42 years old'. The details of the accessories in this drawing are perfectly executed and have resisted the ravages of time'.<sup>135</sup> When he wrote these notes forty years later (around 1880), the painting was still in the possession of André-Isidore, in Paris, and he claimed to have it under his own eyes as he wrote.

As we have seen, the area of the Liri and Fibreno rivers was dedicated to the textile industry, and in the town of Arpino and the surrounding area a real district was born, according to today's terminology. The birth of modern factories was encouraged in a continuous process by Ferdinand IV, then by Murat and then by the Bourbons, who returned to power until 1861. The successive governments also invited the local wealthy to invest in paper mills by offering various forms of incentives: raw materials, concessions, privatisations, subsidised financing. The Gemmiti family, the Gigli family, the Bartolomucci family, the Mancini family and then the wool producers, who had diversified into paper production, such as the

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<sup>134</sup> AB XIX 4480-4483, Fonds André-Isidore Lefèbvre. Livre Deuxième 1822 à 1841. *Précieux souvenir de ma tante Rosanne*.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibidem*. Madame Charles Lefèbvre: this was a usage of the time and simply means 'the lady of Charles Lefèbvre'.

Manna, the Ciccodicola and the Zino families, became involved. The policy of expansion in the paper industry continued under Francis I (1825-1830) and throughout the reign of Ferdinand II (1810-1859), who came to the throne as a young man in 1830. The factories of Picinisco, Sant'Elia, Fiume Rapido (already active between 1519 and 1591), Atina and Anitrella were also founded during this period, but the Liri Valley remained the centre.

Lefèvre's international contacts, his habit of travelling and his ability to recruit the best technicians from abroad gave him a considerable advantage over his competitors. He was familiar with the most modern factories in France and England and offered lucrative contracts to the technicians and chemists he brought to his factory from Lyon, Montargis, Elbeuf and Essonne, all centres that had played an important role in the advances in paper-making technology in the 18th and 19th centuries. The technicians were offered lucrative contracts, probably incentives in the form of profits, and comfortable board and lodging. This enabled them to keep pace with foreign industry and maintain their leadership in the kingdom for decades. In 1823, the Gigli family founded a paper mill at the mouth of the Fibreno river, followed in 1827 by Raffaele di Manzio and Joseph Courier in the Tritto di Isola district, which was to last for more than a century and a half under various management.<sup>136</sup>

Also important was the activity of the Sorvillo family of Naples, who in 1836, in Borgonuovo, a hamlet of Isola del Liri Superiore, were to set up the Liri Paper Mill with various partly French partners - as we shall see - a mill that was described as 'incredible' and would rival the Manifattura del Fibreno. Sorvillo's daughter-in-law, Eugenia Caracciolo, was a first cousin of Teresa Doria, daughter-in-law of Charles Lefèvre. The Anitrella paper mill in Monte di San Giovanni Campano (a municipality bordering Sora) had also been considered the most modern factory in the Province of Rome up to that time.

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<sup>136</sup> The complex history of the industrial building that would later become the Mancini paper mill is recounted in the valuable Iafrate Amedeo - Iafrate Amleto, *La cartiera di Tritto*, self-published, Isola del Liri 2021.

In the fifteen years that followed the first plant, he would continue to introduce improvements until the Cartiere Manifatture del Fibreno excelled in size, machine equipment, process innovations and product variety. For several years, the general management was entrusted to Joseph Courier and the technical management of the two mills first to Mr. Testa and then to Mr. Martin in 1825, who ran it until 1833, when he was replaced by Émile Grévenich who became director from 1833 to 1844.<sup>137</sup> Martin continued to work for another eight years. Perhaps he felt that he had failed personally, and in 1841 he committed suicide by throwing himself into a waterfall. He was the father of Caroline Martin (1796-1837), the wife of a Didot who came to Isola. The first director, Giacomo Filippo Testa (1803-1894), a chemist by profession, originally from Genoa, married a French cousin, Gabrielle Jeanne Castanie (1812-1849), in 1846, with whom he had three daughters, one of whom, significantly given the frequency of the name in the Lefèbvre family, was called Maria Matilde Flavia (born in 1847). Although Italian, Testa was of French culture. His maternal grandfather, Jean Jacques Castanie (1776-1828), had been a soldier in the revolutionary and then Napoleonic armies, eventually becoming a general and field marshal. The names Courier, Grévenich, Testa, Didot, Montgolfier, Martin show us that Charles was mostly a soldier.

In the factories, some operations remained manual until the second half of the century and others until the end. The rags, for example, arrived on large wagons and were divided into four categories according to their consistency and the fabric they were made of; the new procedure counted up to 16 qualities, taking into account colour, type of fabric, strength, degree of shredding and whiteness.<sup>138</sup> The female workers, known as "frullone", used a piece of iron to crush the rags into small pieces, which were then put into a centrifuge, the

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<sup>137</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 1.

<sup>138</sup> Dell'Orefice Anna, *L'industria della carta nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia. 1800-1870. Economia e tecnologia* in «Cahiers internationaux d'histoire économique et social» n. 10 (1979), Istituto Italiano per la Storia dei movimenti sociali e delle strutture sociali, Ginevra, 336n.

"frullone", to remove the slag. Once reduced to a homogeneous mass, they were washed and left to soak for several days - the length of which depended on the type of fabric and the additive used - in water tanks (marcitori) located in the lower part of the factory. Lefèbvre and Montgolfier reduced the duration of this phase, which had previously been too long, with the result that glue was needed to make the paper impermeable to ink.

The coarser rags were sent to the "marcitoio" (rotting mill) to make their fibres more malleable, while the others were sent to the next stage, the mills. The innovative introduction of chloride of lime instead of a bleaching mixture proved more effective in terms of quality and less harmful to the health of the workers. Charles Lefèbvre was also the first, after numerous production experiments, to use 'bleached' poplar pulp for writing and printing paper and unbleached poplar pulp for lower quality paper. However, it was not until 50 years later, thanks to his son Ernest, that this raw material began to be used on an industrial scale, once many of the problems in the process had been solved and it had become cheaper.<sup>139</sup> The expansion of the Manifatture del Fibreno, with hundreds of workers, led to the construction of new social housing blocks in the northern part of Isola, divided into types according to whether they were inhabited by workers or managers.

After the reconstruction of the Château de Brûlerie, the Lefèbvre family returned to Isola to spend the first warm season. After the annotations for 1825, Rosanne's diary remained blank for a full 28 months, an interval that can be explained by the couple's work at the château and the sudden death of their 12-year-old son Léon, who died of acute bronchitis that could not be cured. The boy was buried in Lyon, but the body - for reasons we do not know - was never transferred to Naples. At the time, the Lefèbvre family was probably still thinking of

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<sup>139</sup> Some experiments were also adopted externally. The Lefèbvre mills also used substitutes that gave the paper a special texture and quality. Substitutes included reeds, rushes, marine and aquatic plants, old ropes and nets. Dell'Orefice Anna, *op. cit.*, p. 370 (rif. A.S.I.N., Napoli, 28 febbraio 1856). *Ibidem*.



returning to France. In fact, the story picks up about two years after this tragic event with a quick and dry chronicle: the Lefèbvre family spent more than two years in France, much of it in Paris. The factory, however, remained in good hands, and there is no doubt that there is correspondence between Charles and the managers of Forme and Carnello, as was customary for industrialists of the time, in some archive.

Year 1828. After spending 18 months in France and 10 months in Naples, we returned to the island in May where Mr. Frédéric Didot arrived a few days after us. The famous Carnello machine was assembled, which required the presence of three English and six French workers who worked for ten months. Afterwards, we were visited by Mr. Hamilton; Mr. François Falconnet; Mr. Ulrich. In the autumn, there is nothing more remarkable to report than the formation of Lake Forme.<sup>140</sup>

That year, the entrepreneur returned in time to welcome a new technician who came from a renowned family of printers and paper experts, the Didots. He was Frédéric Firmin Didot (1798-1836), grandson of the founder of the printer-publisher dynasty, married to Caroline Martin (1796-1837), with whom Charles had entered into partnership.<sup>141</sup> Didot stayed in Naples for many years because he is still cited in 1836 for having prevented a fire at the Fibreno factory. During his absence, a paper machine had been set up in Carnello to speed up the production process from pulp to paper as wide as 68 centimetres.

Charles found the factory much changed: the continuous machine in full operation, productivity increased tenfold. Until then, the factories had managed work by hand, at a leisurely pace. The paper machine brought about a real revolution. It transformed pulp into paper directly,

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<sup>140</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, pp. 2-5.

<sup>141</sup> He was the son of Pierre Didot (1760-1853), who at that time was in charge of the publishing and printing house and had interests in the paper industry. Frédéric is not among the founder's direct descendants. In that year, there were at least 6 members of the Didot family alive and associated with the famous publishing house, but none of them is named Frédéric.

with a succession of connected and uninterrupted mechanical operations, requiring a large amount of raw material, the cenci.<sup>142</sup> A detail that should not be overlooked: in other parts of Italy, the greater density of small paper mills had long since given rise to real rag wars, which did not occur in the Liri Valley, also thanks to the proximity of a huge raw material market: Naples.<sup>143</sup>

In 1829, Rosanne returned to invite guests to the palace next to the factory as further extension work on the *Forme* loomed. The work would last until 1832, but a work plan with a map is dated 1829.

The year 1829. At first we were in the company of the Meuricoffre family; Mr. Bonnet and Mr. Sorvillo and the following: the Duke of Laurito and Mr. Enrico Catalano. In the autumn the house was full of workers and we had to stay at the Casino Aunioni, and that season was one of the most pleasant we had ever spent on the island. We left Naples with the three Friozi girls and found Don Enrico Catalano when we arrived. Mr. Melerus and his daughter then arrived, and later we received Mrs. Dumorey and Mrs. Salvage, Messrs. Suell, Degas and Carelli from Rome. At this point we played a comedy on St Charles' Day. This was one of the most enjoyable celebrations: a country dance in the morning; illuminations, balloons and fireworks in the evening. Dinner and music by a large orchestra. Nothing was missing from this gathering of family and close friends.<sup>144</sup>

Among the guests was Natale Sorvillo, who would go on to found Liri's rival paper mill, *Fabbrica della Carta*, with many partners, and who was a well-known figure in Neapolitan finance and banking before and after unification. Many of the other nominees also represented the

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<sup>142</sup> Dell'Orefice Anna, *L'industria della carta nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia. 1800-1870. Economia e tecnologia* in «Cahiers internationaux d'histoire économique et sociale» n. 10 (1979), Istituto Italiano per la storia dei movimenti sociali e delle strutture sociali, Ginevra, pp. 47-54.

<sup>143</sup> Ciuffetti Augusto, *Carta e stracci. Protoindustria e mercati nello Stato pontificio tra Sette e Ottocento*, il Mulino, Bologna 2013.

<sup>144</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, pp. 6-7. Transcription from the *Journal* by Rosanne Lefèbvre.

Neapolitan financial elite. Within fifteen years, the Liri paper mill, with one flat and one drum machine (25 cans of paper and 3 cans of cardboard per day), would become the second largest paper mill in the kingdom after Lefèbvre.<sup>145</sup> Achille Meuricoffre, the owner of another, less important paper mill, was a banker from a very wealthy Swiss banking family with many interests and businesses.<sup>146</sup> It is also worth noting that the competition between rival entrepreneurs did not preclude the possibility of good relations: the market was flourishing and there was room for all enterprising people. In addition, the paper industrialists lobbied and worked together to make demands on the government.



The home of the Swiss bankers Meuricoffre,  
frequent visitors to Isola.

<sup>145</sup> Marra Alessandro, *La Società economica di Terra di Lavoro. Le condizioni economiche e sociali dell'Ottocento borbonico. La conversione unitaria*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2006. Marra mentions Filippo Cirelli, *Il Regno delle Due Sicilie descritto e illustrato*, v. III, f. 1, Terra di Lavoro 1856 - Manifatture di Isola, Napoli, pp. 35-26.

<sup>146</sup> Caglioti Daniela L., *I Meuricoffre, da Goethe al Credito Italiano: cinque generazioni di banchieri protestanti a Napoli (XVIII-XX secolo)*, in M. Doria & R. Petri (curr), *Banche multinazionali e capitale umano. Studi in onore di Peter Hertner*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2007. Achilles' sons were Oscar and Tell: E. Capriati, *Oscar e Tell Meuricoffre: banchieri evangelici nella Napoli del XIX secolo*, in *Ginevra-Napoli/Naples-Geneve*, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", Napoli 2010.

In her notes, Rosanne mentions an 'aerostatic balloon' flown in the park, obviously by Montgolfier, and a Degas, part of that family of Frenchmen transplanted to Naples since the mid-18th century related to the still French branch of the painter Edgar Degas (1834-1917). There is also Raffaele Carelli, appointed professor of Fine Arts at the Royal Institute of Fine Arts.

Finally, Rosanne records two other related facts: the work on the formation of a pond - now disappeared - in the garden being laid out around the new Palazzo Balsorano.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Cigola Michela, *Le cartiere storiche del basso Lazio*, Ciolfi, Cassino 2002, p. 63. Here we speak of a 'post-1825'.



## Chapter 12

### New investments in Isola and Carnello Paper Mill

At the same time that he was buying and renovating a château in the Loire Valley to give to his daughter, Charles Lefèbvre decided to give the *pied-à-terre* of the Forme a larger and more luxurious home for his family, which had meanwhile grown in number. In addition, there was a need for space because in fine weather at the French-Neapolitan salon, in addition to guests, there was also a flurry of technicians, innovators and entrepreneurs from Belgium, France and England.



Glimpse of Santa Maria delle Forme, early 20th century.

The detail taken from a painting prior to 1812 and reproduced here shows the state of the convent of Santa Maria delle Forme before the renovations by Lefèbvre. One can clearly see the part of the building

facing at right angles from the rest of the complex, looking along the length of the then Provincial Road to Sora, a side that was to be lengthened. The Consolare did not pass through Isola Superiore, however the state of the road and the archway is better and renovated than it was in 1790, which means that interventions had been made, if the painter respected the appearance of things.

As can be seen, the corner building was small, with only a window in the centre and a small window at the side. On the ground floor, there was a door, a small side door and a small window on the river side.

The following picture shows the same area after the intervention. As can be seen, this is not a renovation but a refurbishment.



Palazzo Lefèbvre, street side via Tavernanuova.

The corner building has gained at least 50% more volume, not counting the terrace on the right above the entrance to the main area. The forms are completely neoclassical, very elegant, with the four openings on the ground floor counterbalancing the four windows with entablature on the first floor, crowned by the parapet of an upper roof

terrace. This building, built next to the former convent of S. Maria delle Forme, was known as Palazzo Lefèbvre. The complete restoration mainly enlarged the volumes of the north-eastern facade, the main facade.

Today, after many decades of neglect, the palace has been restored and is externally intact. It is a large building, two storeys high, facing the street and extending inwards. At the time it was surrounded by a large English garden with many tall trees, crossed by a watercourse, a pond, and divided into an upper park and a lower park called the Cascatelle Park. Charles wanted a stately home, spacious, with communal areas, a servants' passage, a loggia, a large sitting room, a desk, a 'dining room' (rough French for 'chambre à manger'), a 'gallery' decorated with paintings, a room for Mr. Lefèbvre, one for Mrs. Lefèbvre, one for the 'young lady' (Flavia) and another for the children. There is also a plan showing the layout of the rooms.<sup>148</sup>

At right angles to the palace was the main entrance to the paper mill. At the same time as rebuilding the palace, Charles also had the small church, or rather the neo-Gothic chapel of Santa Maria delle Forme, built, which still exists today. He also built the complex of the Soffondo, a building that takes advantage of the fall of water. He also had the old road considerably widened.



Behind the former monastery and chimney stack  
can be seen the Stracceria completed in 1830.

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<sup>148</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 6.



1833. At the beginning of April we had as our first visit the Smith family; Miss Maherby; Mr. Enrico Catalano and a little later the Baroness of Champflé; General Arcambal; Mr. Bocet, Mr. Carlo Francavilla. At this time we had a very pleasant outing in the woods of the Japinto Fountain, crossing the river after eating, Abbé Campoli's subintendant fell in the water at the moment Mr. Bocet left the boat [...] a few days later I left for France taking the road to Rome.

In 1833, Rosanne left behind a few dry notes, a succession of high-sounding names (baronesses, generals, characters of various nationalities and carefree games in the nature of the Liri Arcadia). That year the management of the Manifatture del Fibreno, as mentioned, had passed to Mr. Émile Grévenich (1806-post 1866) who would hold the post until 1844, the son of the partner of the Grévenich & Berthe company who in 1806 had installed a pulping machine in Sorel (Eure-en-Loire) and who in 1811 was cited in a papermaking manual as an innovator in the Anstalt mill.<sup>149</sup> She therefore came from a family that had perfected the process of refining and bleaching pulp.

Later, Grévenich enriched the French *petit colonie* by purchasing vast properties in Fontana del Liri and Colli di Monte san Giovanni Campano, where he had a road and bridge built.<sup>150</sup> Together with the French - the usual Arcambal, a former ambassador - there are always, in these years, English, Russians, Poles and Italians. On 5 May 1834, he arrived from Naples and spent the whole summer there, partly

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<sup>149</sup> Desormes Émile, *Notions de Typographie À L'usage Des Écoles...* 1888, p. 455; Lenormand Louis, *Neuer Schauflass der Kunste and Handwerke*, Voigt Weimar 1862, p. 141.

<sup>150</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 1; for Grévenich, see Valeriani P.- Velocci F., Colli, 1998; Ottaviani Marcello, *Cartiera Piccardo di Fontana Liri* 2010; Corradini F., *Un inedito di Federico Grossi...*, *op. cit.*; ASV, *Archivio Buoncompagni Ludovisi Pel Principe di Piombino D. Antonio Ludovisi Buoncompagni, non che Pel Principe D. Baldassarre Ludovisi Buoncompagni contro il Sig. Emilio Grevenich, ed altri*, prot. 39, n. 179, Napoli, 1861.

because work was being done on the big house in Naples.<sup>151</sup> Rosanne hosted the de Serre family, the Russian princes Lapoukyn, the military man d'Alopius, the prince of Fondi, General Dudinot, Edouard Viennot, bishop of Melfi and his nephew, the duke of Lanica, the general marquis de Lauriston and his wife, Colonel Winspear, General Hubert, the intendant and his entourage, the de Mareuil family. The director of the province of Terra di Lavoro, now based at the Lefèbvre, was also present. The entrepreneur visited the factory regularly but left the management to people of absolute competence like Grévenich.

This type of relationship was also a novelty: normally, factories, wool and textile mills and paper mills were rented out to technicians and master craftsmen on long leases, on average 10 years. In the case of the Manifatture del Fibreno, the people who took over the general or technical management - various names - had a relationship of agent and employee, with long contracts.

In this part of the Journal, Rosanne reports the 'surprise' of the Countess of Serre who noticed the 'great changes' that took place between 1824 and 1834. In fact, in those ten years, the Forme and the palace where the Lefèbvre resided in Isola had completely changed: the park, the church, the Soffondo, the palace itself were all new. In 1824 when it was first housed, the Palace did not exist and the factory was housed inside the church and probably in the first buildings next to it. On 1834 everything had changed, as can be seen in the following watercolour by Carelli.

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<sup>151</sup> In 1834 the family left Palazzo Partanna because it was being renovated. At the beginning of the summer months - it was almost always summer - in 1834, Palazzo Gallo was mentioned, where the family had temporarily taken up residence while Palazzo Coscia Partanna - which, although it had been renovated several times, was in need of maintenance - underwent various renovations. After an inheritance in 1829, the ancient building came into the possession of the family of Giuseppe Grifeo, who decided to carry out a new restoration of the common parts and structural reinforcements, with the intervention of the architect Nicolini. The restoration works were carried out from 1824 to April 1826. Russo Giuseppe, *Il Palazzo Partanna in piazza dei Martiri*, Edizioni Unindustria, Napoli 1974, p. 145.



Detail of the view of the S. Maria delle Forme area of the Manifatture del Fibreno and the Lefebvre Palace, in the 1836 watercolour by Gabriele Carelli. The Soffondo (lower left building) and the neo-Gothic church completed in 1832 can be seen. The extensions are to the side of the church.

Carelli's watercolour shows an aerial view of the whole of the industrial area at the time, which was much smaller than it would be after 1845, when other works led to the construction of the imposing rag factory and other warehouses.

The extensions had affected the buildings to the right of the old church facade, particularly the sheds and other service rooms, probably used for maintenance. The factory grew as needed in 1824, 1829-1830, 1845 and 1856-1865. Charles had the foresight to buy up all the surrounding land on both sides of the river and St Bartholomew's Hill. The Forme was adapted from time to time to the needs of production, while the San Carlo factory, a specialised production unit, was already completed in the 1850s: its construction and architectural typology was very reminiscent of the factories of northern Europe or the Rossi paper mills in Arsiero. It was part of a different era.

Opposite, then, the factory of S. Maria delle Forme stands a modest and elegant Gothic building, on the border of the public street, which passes between the one and the other. This extends its foundations into a deep whirlpool, where the copious waters of the factory rush in to join those of the Liri, which flows nearby. So it is that, erected on the roadside, it shows the traveller only its head, used as a church, while the remaining part of the body, destined to serve as a paper mill, remains below the road.<sup>152</sup>

The chapel built in front of the factory entrance, the first building seen by generations of workers who entered early in the morning and left in the evening, was to be a symbol of life for the paper mill workers for almost a hundred years. Many period photographs depict crowds gathering there in front on religious holidays and festivities, with the band. And it turns out, as we shall see, that it also served as a burial ground.

In the same watercolour, opposite the church, we see the first two sheds, one two-storey and the second one single-storey, lit by large windows that contained the largest machinery. Later, other buildings were added and finally the sheds at the end of the complex, as we shall see. As for the park, it was by no means modest, as André-Isidore himself testifies, who was enraptured by it, but very large and only later reduced in size to make room for other buildings such as the Stracceria and the new buildings that extended Lefèbvre Palace after the first intervention. There were two different architects for the garden and the palace; the garden was designed by a garden architect, almost certainly a Parisian - although we do not know his name - who had been able to take advantage of the rich availability of land and water.<sup>153</sup> An

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<sup>152</sup> *Annali civili del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, Real Ministero dell'Interno, Napoli 1833, p. 82.

<sup>153</sup> *I segni del lavoro nella Valle del Liri: preesistenze storiche, cultura materiale, innovazioni tecnologiche*, pp. 131-167. Ivi. p. 142 in Balbo Pier Paolo, Castellet y Ballarà Susanna, Parisi Tonino, *La Valle del Liri: gli insediamenti storici della media Valle del Liri e del Sacco*, «Quaderni di documentazione per una storia urbanistica edilizia ed artistica della regione Lazio», Officina Edizioni, Roma 1983.

important part of the Lefèbvre family lived in and around Versailles and an important tradition of garden architects was established there.

The park was crossed by the Liri, which gives an idea of its size: the river flowed more than 300 metres to the west of the building and the Fibreno, another boundary, was almost 2 kilometres to the north. To the north-east, a few kilometres away, was the shallow but fish-rich Tremoletto lake, where guests were taken to fish (the seasonal lake is now a wetland). At that time it was part of the Lefèbvre family's landed property. The waters of the Liri river, which flowed through the estate, formed foaming rapids and a second small lake, then resumed their regular course after a waterfall, probably the one that lies next to the Soffondo.<sup>154</sup> On the southern edge of the property stood Villa Louise, which for a time was the home of the Montgolfier couple, a family blessed with five children, two girls and three boys.

The Canale delle Forme, as we know, takes its water from an inlet at Carnello, near the Fullonica tower, and carries it for about 8 kilometres to the Forme factory. It was raised about 1.5/2 metres above street level. Because of the added quality it gave to his paper, the owner of the paper mill called this canal "verga d'oro" or "golden rod". This water turned the rags, which flowed into the mill by the quintal every day, into gold. Even today, the canal still exists in its entirety, from the Fibreno intake to the lock of the main body of the mill.

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<sup>154</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, pp. 2-3. In dialect it was called "Soffundo".



Spaces in the rag mill “stracceria”, built between 1829 and 1830.

The photograph shows the large space of the Stracceria deprived of the ceiling-floor that housed machinery on the ground floor and manual sorting on the upper floor.



## Chapter 13

### Soffondo

The Soffondo is an original building, built to make the best use of the water flows coming from the roadside of Via Taverna Nuova and from the Fibreno factories, to power other machines, in particular the batteries of 16 Dutch chimneys and various frays, leachers, dedicated to the fermentation, defibration and mechanical grinding stages, which required water and energy.



The spot rich in running water where the Soffondo was built.

In the picture that has as its viewpoint the other side of the Liri, a rise that was traversed, as we can see, by a sheep-track, three distinct watercourses flow from the rocks downstream of the Convent of the



Forme. These are the waters of the Magnene stream that flowed below the convent and two other 'forme' that irrigated the orchards and fields to the right of the convent. The two streams on the right probably ran one free in the fields and the other served the Villino Palma, a farmhouse dating back to at least the 17th century. These watercourses were bridged by Manifatture del Fibreno.

The peculiar architecture of sloping sheds that partly follow the contours of the bank is also evident in Carelli's watercolour.



Soffondo, Carelli watercolour, 1836.

The Soffondo was a large two-storey shed that reached from the river level to the street level, plus two more, lateral ones, the last one narrow and facing the river. These buildings were used for fraying and pulping rags that were sorted in the Stracciatoio, which was located on the upper level.



A lake formed by what remains of natural waterfalls. On the left the Magnene, which passes under the palace, on the right the Soffondo front, which was served by the purest water of the Fibreno.

Some processes were able to reuse the effluent that had already been used in the final stages of production in the upper factory, while others used pure water brought by pipes directly from the Fibreno reservoir behind the monastery complex. The Soffondo and the Forme were connected by a tunnel, or rather a system of tunnels, that led to the basement of the factory, which was accessed by stairs and a goods lift. However, there were two tunnels that could be walked in, while others were service tunnels. The tunnel system became more structured over time. The watercolour on the right shows the tunnel connecting the upper and lower parts of the factory, which was extended after 1905. The waterfall that drains the Magnene has always been left free.



Side entrance to one of the connecting tunnels  
between Soffondo and the Forme Factory.

This picture shows one of the passages that allowed access from the floor of the Soffondo to one of the two viable tunnels that led to the factory. Some of these very narrow tunnels were dug simply to allow water pipes or mechanical shafts to pass through.

The following picture shows a phase of the restoration of the Soffondo, when a project to create a paper museum was started and successfully completed in the late 1990s, a project that remained unfinished despite the considerable amount of money spent.



Restoration and consolidation work on the Soffondo.

During this phase, which took place in 2003, the buildings, which had been without roofs for some time, were cleared of the vegetation that had covered them, the clearing that had originally been part of the site was cleared and footpaths were created to allow easy access to all the buildings. Unfortunately, the machinery, which would have provided a remarkable example of industrial archaeology, was removed.

In the foreground above is the iron bridge that gave access from the Forme area to the land where the Ciccodicola factory was later built.



One of the vast rooms of the Soffondo.

The following pictures show the structure of the Soffondo when it was cleared of all debris and vegetation in 1999 in preparation for the Paper Museum, which was later not realised.



The Soffondo seen from above.

The roofs have disappeared and the remnants have been removed because they were unsafe. In this photo you can see the width of the structure, which was imposing.



The soffondo during the restoration work ordered by Mayor Magliocchetti.



## Chapter 14

### New additions

In 1836, when Carelli painted his bird's-eye view, the factory was already of considerable size, although its volume was still far from the 23,000 square metres reached after the extensions of 1845. In her diary, Rosanne recounts the many visits she made to Isola in the year following her daughter's marriage to a marquis from one of France's oldest nobility families. She went there in April and began to receive state officials, nobles and other personalities in a long theory that included names of the Neapolitan aristocracy. It seems that we are talking about a place of pleasure and leisure and not about the site of what was then the largest paper-making industrial complex in the whole of the Italian peninsula.

The Palazzo of Isola also became a luxurious refuge and quarantine place during the years when cholera spread in Naples, as it did in 1836. During this period, Rosanne, who concentrated on being a guest, had her daughter Maria Luisa as her main companion, while Charles was often in France or in Naples to attend to other business.

Mr. and Mrs. Arcambal, accompanied by Mr. Lagrace, arrived at the Forme on 7 June and spent a month during which they seemed to be accompanied by all the pleasures of life. Shows in Sora, excursions, four impromptu parties followed by dances and banquets. At this point, the anniversary of the 18th of June arrives, so memorable for our family! We celebrated it for two days with various entertainments. The Mass and the litanies have their place in the midst of all the commotion [...]. We had a visit from the Prince of Satriano and his sons; [our meetings] were enlivened by a young lieutenant called De Signori, who was very kind to us. One of the extraordinary things he had in mind was that we should find a theatre set up in the factory, where an author from Sora



would perform a farce of Pulcinella for us. The surprise was complete because all this was organised while the large group was enjoying themselves at the waterfalls.

When we arrived on the 3rd of July, we did not expect any more visits because the heat was so intense at that time [...] we were astonished to see a car approaching with - guess who? - Mrs. Ramsey and Miss Bell! [They were only passing through on their way to sleep at Sora, but we were too polite not to accommodate them for two nights. They were also very kind and indulgent and allowed us to go to Carnello for a dinner that had been planned for eight days. [...] Mr. and Mrs. Arcambal left us on the 7th of July and with them the pleasures disappeared. We were alone for a long time, during which my husband, Ernesto and Mr. Girard stayed in Naples to bathe in the sea. In their absence I received a visit from the Count de Monori, who saw Isola for the first time and liked it so much that he spent seven days there, although he was only passing through on his way back to Rome.

As you can see, there are many travellers who go from Naples to Rome and vice versa. With a good carriage it took a whole day to get from Naples to Isola, and then from Isola to Rome, and then on to Cassino. This meant that Palazzo Lefèbvre was an ideal stopover on the way and this is another secret of its success among the high society of the time. We learnt that the Lefèbvre family occasionally dined at Carnello, where the factory director lived.

On the 3rd of September I went to Naples to say goodbye to my husband, who was leaving for Marseilles on the 5th: it was a sad farewell, as Ernesto was not expected to return. I returned to Isola on the 10th with Mr. Girard and Mrs. Nicolas, who were staying for a month. We did our best to make her forget Naples, which was her first visit, and showed her all the surroundings. Two days before they left, we saw Mr. Philippe arrive, who was a pleasant surprise and stayed with us for 15 days.

Around the same time, on the 13th of October, the Countess of Forceville, coming from France, passed through Naples and Isola on her way back to Rome. She found obstacles everywhere because of the cholera that had spread everywhere and the one that had developed in Naples kept her prisoner in the *Forme*. In the end, she stayed for two months, during which she enjoyed the country, which she crossed in every way, either accompanied by Luisa or

alone. She was well and assured us that she would return at a more favourable time. During her stay we were attacked by English people who had chosen Sora as a place for their quarantine. Many had been recommended to me, and I looked after them, trying to make their discomfort as light as possible. I had many dinners and evenings [...] Cholera had now spread to Arpino, Arce, Sora and the Forme. The only victim was a little girl. We bravely endured this new ordeal and learned that my husband had arrived in Naples at the same time and joined us on 17 January 1837.<sup>155</sup>

Cholera and its quarantines are the protagonists of this year. The account of the summer of 1836 is exceptionally rich in visits and names, between characters and personalities who only appeared that year and the regulars whose names appear frequently. Rosanne seems to be overflowing with happiness and fun, even though there is the sad note of the cholera that ravaged the Neapolitan area and lower Lazio. The problem was most acute in Naples, where certain districts close to the Spanish walls were plagued by infectious diseases. The disease also claimed a victim there that year, in the Forme, a little girl. Probably a little worker.

There is almost no break between the first, long and joyful part of the story and the following part, in which cholera is mentioned, because this epidemic, which broke out in 1829, had been hitting European cities one after the other for more than five years, and it was only in that year that it reached Naples. Attempts were made to contain it with cordons sanitaires and quarantines, to which we had become somewhat accustomed. In the lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it had killed 250,000 people by 1830. In 1835, all the Nordic countries, Prussia and almost all the Italian states were infected.<sup>156</sup>

In terms of named persons, one can note here the constant presence of the aforementioned Jacques Philippe Arcambal and his wife. He was then 67 years old and would have died in 1843. He was a constitutional

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<sup>155</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, pp. 10-14.

<sup>156</sup> Tognotti Eugenia, *Il mostro asiatico. Storia del colera in Italia*, Editori Laterza, Bari 2000.

monarchist, former councillor of state and head of the office of Joachim Murat's General Intendency. His task was to administer Joachim's family life, property and buildings, including the Palazzo Calabritto and the Palazzo Partanna where the Lefèbvre lived.<sup>157</sup> He was a general in the armies of Naples in 1799, when the massacre of 1799 took place. He was not directly responsible but was part of the occupying armies of Italy. The Arcambals had lived in Paris since 1816, but they travelled and visited Lefèbvre almost every year. This shows that the policy of the Bourbons of Naples was not vindictive and rancorous: Arcambal Murattians could circulate freely in the territory of the Kingdom. The small waterfalls mentioned are in the lower part of the park called Parco delle Cascatelle, just upstream from the Boncompagni Castle. At that time, the whole area was almost free of buildings and hydraulic works, and looked much as it did at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the next.

What is even more interesting is the fact that inside the factory there was a theatre where a Sora writer performed a farce of Pulcinella. The surprise was great, because it was performed while the large group was having fun by the waterfalls. In this way, the space of work and labour is always spectacularised, because it is not yet commonplace: it is perceived by all visitors, and perhaps by some of those who worked there, as a place of wonder, where technology is shown in all its power, and so it makes sense to use it for this purpose.

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<sup>157</sup> Papagna Elena, *La corte murattiana* in *All'ombra di Murat. Studi e ricerche sul decennio francese*, cur. S. Russo, Edipuglia, Bari 2007, pp. 27-62. Ivi, pp. 36-37.



It is to be believed - because it is typically part of the Lefèbvre doctrine of these years - that the workers also witnessed the farce of Punchinello inside the theatre.

A snapshot from the early 20th century shows us a Punchinello in front of the factory.



## Chapter 15

### Organisation of work

The technological innovation of the Lefèbvre factories, as mentioned above, brought about a profound social and cultural change, which required new relationships with the workforce and a different conception of time and the organisation of life in the whole area. In an interview conducted by the author in 2020, a local person stated that the mentality of Isola had changed in relation to all the neighbouring towns and that, after the Lefèbvre factory had been built, the islanders were considered as 'citizens' by the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns such as Isola Liri, Arce and Sora. The availability of a 'salary' linked to work, to the time spent, and not to livestock or agricultural commitments, had changed the mentality.<sup>158</sup>

A first turning point had come with the transition from work in the home to work in factories, a transition that had taken place mainly in the paper industry in certain areas of Italy - the Genoese, the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, the Garda area, the Brescia area - and then in the textile industry with the introduction of looms set up in buildings built for industrial use. As we have seen, this introduced a different way of life, a change in family roles and a sociological shift towards the nuclear family.

There was also a job in the factory that did not require any training, the vat worker. The work of these workers was repetitive and tiring, and they were hired on an as-needed basis, without any professionalism of their own. This was typical of the tradition of the people of Arpino and the artisan families, who had long been involved in papermaking,

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<sup>158</sup> Recorded in 2020 in Pistolegno Remorici in the presence of the historians Bruno Ceroli and Rita Zaccardelli.

leather tanning and other handicrafts. Craftsmanship required the acquisition of a professionalism that was passed on from father to son, from the elderly to the young, and that was absorbed in the slow rhythms that are characteristic of craftsmanship.

The worker's time was very different from that of the farmer or the craftsman. The work of the labourer often required punctual, repetitive operations that required nothing more than a willingness to learn a series of gestures or simple actions. It is true that there were master papermakers and that they had their own recognised and respected professionalism within the mill. In the smaller mills, the master papermaker carried out the most important operations, while in the larger, i.e. automated, mills, such as the Manifattura del Fibreno, the operations began to be divided up into an organisation that was far removed from that of the twentieth-century factories, but still close to that model. There was also the possibility - if the law allowed it - of using forced labour, in agreement with the authorities, by forcing vagrants and beggars to work in the factories or by asking prisoners or other marginalised people to be available for the simplest tasks.<sup>159</sup>

The new organisation of work brought a further change. Whole families were also used to maintain the traditional roles between men and women and between adults and children. If we compare the operations carried out in a handmade paper mill and in a paper mill before the introduction of the paper machine, we can still see similarities between the two realities and a symmetry in the composition of the workforce distributed among the departments. In the handmade paper mill, four operations or phases were identified: a preparatory phase, consisting of the sorting of the rags, followed by maceration, fraying and fraying in the basket stacks.<sup>160</sup> The actual manufacturing phase began with the formation of the pulp in the vats and its fixation in the moulds that allowed the composition of the sheet

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<sup>159</sup> Martini Alfredo, *Industria della carta e proletariato di fabbrica*, in *Studi romani* n. 30, 1982, p. 202.

<sup>160</sup> Domenico Fedrigoni, *L'industria veneta della carta dalla seconda dominazione austriaca all'unità d'Italia*, ILTE, Torino 1966, p. 23.

of paper, perfected by drying and stacking. If the sorting and stacking phases were carried out by women, the fraying of the rags required the strength of men to manoeuvre the hammers and the large pile hammers. According to Fedrigoni, in the departments where papermaking took place, men were employed because greater physical strength was required; some worked at the rollers and cylinders, others at the glue pot, the presses and the paper beaters. Those responsible for the final stages of processing were the pickers, ponitori and elevators.

In a paper mill of the 1820s and 1830s, before the introduction of the latest innovations, where hundreds of people were employed, the production organisation did not differ much from that of the paper mills of the previous century:

The first operation to be carried out in a paper mill is the sorting of the rags. There is a table on which samples of all 16 types of rags are hung up, and it is amazing to see the confidence and speed with which the women in charge of this task carry out their work. To facilitate the next step, the shredding, they cut the rags into small pieces and hold them with both hands over a sharp iron plate. Once the rags have been selected and sorted in this way, they are put into the shredder to remove any dirt and other contaminants that can be removed by simple shredding. Then they go into the rotting machine, where a good quantity of water is poured over them to wash and soak them, and after these repeated washes, when they are saturated with the liquid, they ferment and prepare to suffer the final shredding [...]. After that, the rags are passed on to be crushed either in the woodpecker mills or in the more recent invention, the cylinder mills. Once these operations have been carried out, the work continues in the vat, where the pulp, diluted if necessary, is poured into the moulds that give rise to the sheets [...] and when the sheets are made by hand, taking the moulds that are in the vat, the water is first squeezed out under the press and then the grain is removed and this operation is repeated several times, according to the different qualities of paper, until the required smoothness is obtained.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> *Della fabbricazione della carta nei reali dominii di qua del faro. Annali civili del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, fasc. II, Napoli 1833, p. 86.



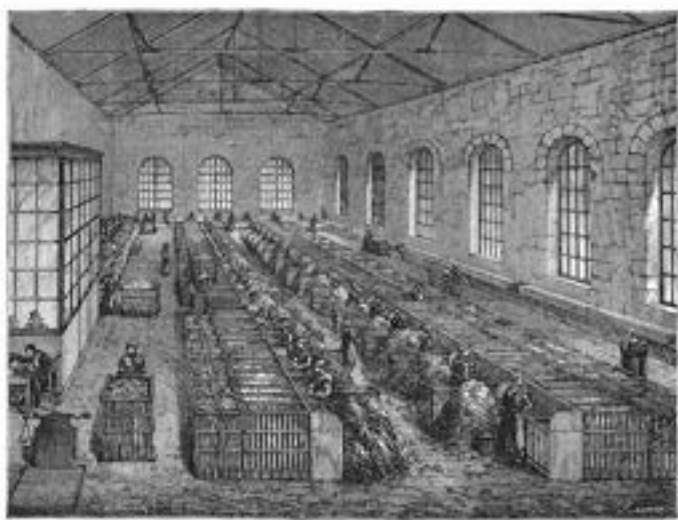
What changed, says Alfredo Martini in his account of this passage, was the number of people, the noise, the suffocating environment, the smells, the total separation from the surrounding rural world. The factory was already a factory because of the environment in which it was located, and the operations were similar, but with the paper machine we entered true modernity, and we will see why. Slowly, a new social concept took hold and already with the introduction of the cylinder fraying machines, that is to say the Dutch ones, which appeared in Italy at the end of the eighteenth century, production times were shortened, allowing a greater quantity of rags to be produced in a unit of time and requiring a greater number of vats and workers in the production phase.

As a result, production times began to tighten. Working in the factory, isolated from the town, Martini writes, had begun the process of separation from agriculture, and the machine began to dictate new rhythms of work and life, even if in most factories this separation affected small groups of people. With the Dutch and the centralisation of production, where it had taken 12 hours to macerate rags and 24 hours to process the pulp and turn it into paper, the time was now cut in half.

But it was the paper machine that brought about the real turning point, the complete change, and turned the pre-modern mill or factory into the modern factory. Both the Dutch and the paper machine were associated with an increased male presence, and both, especially the latter, required strict time control to prevent, for example, the paper machine roll from being ruined at the end of the run and falling to the floor, or an insufficient amount of paper being fed at the beginning of the run. It was precisely this control over time that imposed a greater control over labour, and it was especially with the introduction of the paper machine in 1826, as mentioned above, that the whole process was accelerated and a different concept of time was lived, a time that came close to the modern one. The same was to happen later with the installation of automatic spinning machines.

It is not easy to explain what happened, but it is possible to describe this diversity by comparing the sounds, the signs that marked the phases of the day, before and after the establishment of the factories: the bell and the siren.

The bell called people to work with long, harmonious tones made up of an articulated motif of chords and differentiated tolls that varied according to the time of day, in accordance with a daily economy dictated by the rhythms of agriculture. The sound of the siren signalled the multiplicity of operations that were carried out at a regulated, regular pace, measured by experience and fatigue. The monotonous wailing of the siren divided the periods of light and darkness; each time it returned, it reminded us of the separation between the past and the present, between the farmer and the worker, and with its single, crescendoing and always equal tone, it underlined the monotony of the factory rhythms imposed by the endless machines to which the worker had to submit and to which he had to adapt his powers of ingenuity and operations in which speed replaced regularity.<sup>162</sup>



Rags sorting in a large 19th century French paper mill. The work organisation was identical to that of the Manifattura del Fibreno.

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<sup>162</sup> Martini Alfredo, *Biografia di una classe operaia. I cartai della Valle del Liri 1824-1954*, Bulzoni, Roma 1981, p. 45; which incorporates concepts found in Thompson Edward G., *Tempo, disciplina del lavoro e capitalismo industriale, in società patrizia, cultura plebea*, Torino 1981, pp. 3-55.

The factory implied always the same work, always the same tasks, stereotyped gestures - in general this was the case, except for some tasks - while activities related to agriculture, livestock breeding and even handicrafts varied according to the weather and the season. As the concept of time and space inside the mechanised factory changed, so did the organisation and structure of the territory outside. Families move and reorganise their lives around factory work because they can no longer live far from it. If they lived in scattered cottages or small hamlets, they had to be as close as possible to the factory, because the time before and after going to work was shortened, the distance to walk could not be long. After the introduction of the paper machine, this whole process accelerated as production increased. This changes both the composition of the workforce and the pace of work, definitively sanctioning the birth of the modern factory and also the formation of what Marxist terminology would have called the "proletariat": wage-earners often have no property, no farm animals, no wells, no plots of land or farms to cultivate.<sup>163</sup> Here, too, the development of hand-operated paper mills made it possible, albeit with greater difficulty, to integrate them into the surrounding territory and to encourage a gradual estrangement of the peasant workers from the land, even allowing them to supplement their wages by working in the vegetable garden, but what happened next was different and the changes were irreversible, leading to the type of society, family and use of leisure time that we associate with modernity. The speed of mechanisation that took place in the Fibreno paper mill between 1824 and 1830 also created new situations in the relationship between the peasant family, the artisan family and the family working in the factory. The different types of family began to differentiate themselves, as did their mentalities: the family working in the factory had more liquid money, which led to different behaviour. However, the family working in the factory has fewer and fewer possessions, unless they come from the past.

Unlike the textile industry, the paper industry needs a lot of female labour that is not related to mechanical work. The papermakers created

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<sup>163</sup> Dell'Orefice Anna, *op. cit.* pp. 385-391.

their own professionalism, based on digital sensibility, on the speed of the operations to select the rags, to separate the extraneous material such as buttons and fibres, to shred the raw material, to sort the different types of paper produced. The growing need for female labour was due to the process of mechanisation, which affected the central areas of the factory and increased the demand for labour in the ancillary departments.

Undoubtedly, the introduction of the paper machine, starting in 1826 in Carnello and then gradually in the following decades in the other factories of the area and of the peninsula, brought about a revolution in the papermaking system, with profound consequences on the relationship between workers and labour and between master and workers. The mechanised departments became more important and technicians became important, respected and well-paid figures; the work of the manual departments was subjected to the rhythms of the machine throughout the process cycle. The acceleration of rhythms and the need to ensure greater productivity per unit of time also meant an increase in the use of raw materials and a general acceleration of previous manufacturing processes. The manufacturing sector was characterised by a decrease in the number of adult males and an increase in female and even child labour. In the Lefèbvre industries, the sorting departments consisted of large rooms with wooden benches equipped with baskets, well-lit and close to large windows to take advantage of natural light. The different types of rags were collected and sorted according to colour and fibre, and the department gradually became more and more labour-intensive.

Another consequence of the introduction of the paper machine was to break up the relationship between adult and child, based on the slow, didactic rhythms of learning a trade. This led to the creation of the 'guaglione di macchina', whose job it was to monitor the entire process of transformation in order to detect any slowdowns or hiccups. If he detected any malfunctions or jams, he had to call in the adult supervisor, who was the repository of a new, highly valued mechanical skill, separate from his previous knowledge of the production processes. For this reason, as mentioned above, the managers at both Lefèbvre and

Cartiera del Liri, Roessinger, Boimond and nearby Lucernari, were foreigners for many years. Italy had been at the forefront for centuries, but had been overtaken in the mechanical field by the Dutch, then the French and the British, and their presence was inevitable. They were specialised technicians, engineers, builders, often from dynasties of papermakers and manufacturers, able to solve any problem, repair machines, modify the production process if necessary. It was not until the end of the century that the first Italian and local paper technical directors appeared in Isola, immediately after what had happened in the mechanised textile sector.

All this led to a quantitative rebalancing between men and women in the factories; the factory absorbed the whole family, employing men, women and children. In fact, the massive employment of women and children dealt a final blow to the traditional economic social structure, as had already happened in continental Europe and before that in England.

The use of female and child labour, the general low level of qualification, are precisely the most direct social results of a stage of capitalist development that has replaced craft skills with the machine and attracted women, children and inexperienced workers into the orbit of labour. Far from constituting a coefficient of backwardness, therefore, women's work is a significant index of the industrialisation quotient.<sup>164</sup>

With the completion of the process of mechanisation throughout the structure of the local paper industry, the general control of the capitalist entrepreneur over the lives of the workers, during, before and after work, was consolidated. The entrepreneur, who, like Lefèbvre himself, was also motivated by moral and religious scruples, felt responsible for keeping his workers as healthy as possible and protecting them so that the factory could function. These were times when workers could be dismissed from one day to the next, without the protection of trade

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<sup>164</sup> De Clementi Andreina, *Appunti sulla formazione della classe operaia in Italia*, in «Quaderni storici», numero 32, 1976. Cited in Martini Alfredo, *Biografia di una classe operaia*, cit., p. 47.

unions or companies, so the philanthropy of entrepreneurs had this moral root as well as that of guaranteeing a certain well-being to their workers so that they could carry out their tasks well.

The processes of philanthropy or paternalistic intervention that are typical of this phase of industrialism, sometimes inspired by religious motives, nevertheless imply a control over the workers that we will observe in more detail in the next chapter. The greatest need for the entrepreneur in the introduction of the paper machine was the continuity of production, that is, the absolute certainty that a sufficient number of workers would be employed on a daily basis so as not to interrupt its operation. Obviously, an overall project was needed to bind the workers to the factory and to control their daily output. From this point of view, the Manifattura del Fibreno became the centre of a spatial revolution, and a veritable workers' city grew up around it.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> De Clementi Andreina, *op. cit.*, p. 48.



## Chapter 16

### Chronicles from the 1840s

Charles Lefèbvre, a man of great experience, was aware of these changes at the age of 50 in 1835. For 16 months, between 1837 and 1838, he entrusted the management of the factory to the trusted Parisian, Émile Grévenich, and remained in Naples to supervise the renovation of his new apartment in Palazzo Partanna. He returned to Isola for the first time on 15 May to meet his son, who had just returned from a year in England. Also that summer, the theory of prestigious international visitors began again: the son of the Belgian Prime Minister Félix de Mérode (1791-1857), Francis Xavier de Mérode (1820-1874) and many other foreign visitors. After a break of almost three months in Naples, Rosanne and her daughter Maria Luisa returned to La Forme in the autumn to receive new guests who chose this route to Rome rather than the coastal road via Gaeta. These included the Count of Syracuse and the entire Falcon family of bankers, one of the most prominent foreign immigrant families in Naples.

On the day of San Carlo, we were expecting a new bishop and the steward, Prince Zurlo, in Sora [...] on 4 November we had two banquets in one day, one at noon with the steward [...] on 20 November we had the pleasant visit of Lady Acton, who was coming from Rome and returning to Naples. I embraced her with great pleasure, as did her dear Jean Emerick, who was the portrait of her father. We stayed three days [...] We left in the evening with Louise, Léon and Fanny. My husband, Lady Acton and Ernesto set off at 10 o'clock to sleep in San Germano and see Monte Cassino.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, pp. 14-17.



The steward was not Giuseppe Zurlo, the man who wrote his *Memorandum* in 1809, but a relative, Biase Zurlo (1755-1835), then steward of Molise but living in Naples. Lady Acton was, of course, the wife of Lord Acton, whose magnificent villa had been bought partly by the Lefèbvre family and partly by the Rothschilds before being sold on.

The following years, 1838 and 1839, were also active ones, punctuated by numerous moves, intense social occasions and even the occasional passing of visitors. Reading Rosanne's diary and the memoirs of her cousin André-Isidore, we learn that the 20-year-old Ernesto spent a period in England that, with interruptions and returns to Italy, lasted from October 1836 to May 1838: a total stay of one and a half years, enough to give him a good command of the language and a knowledge of the technical innovations on display in Manchester and Liverpool. One of the characteristics that always distinguished Lefèbvre from other businessmen in the area was his ability to keep abreast of developments in a direct way.<sup>167</sup>

The year was 1839. My husband left on 4 May and I stayed behind to wait for the Clermont-Tonnèrre family [a noble family from the Dauphiné]. As soon as we arrived, the Forme was swarming with visitors. It was the season for pilgrimages to Rome, where I had gone for personal sanctification, and I regretted not being able to help my husband with such a large number of guests [...] Madame de Jobal [...] arrived with two servants, and later that day I saw five cars pass by [...] which continued on to Sora without stopping, hoping to find a good hotel [...] there were 22 of them! How astonished they were to find absolutely nothing. Their drivers did not know this road at all [...] so they had to come and ask my husband for hospitality. They were Madame Mauville, Madame Crismoy, Madame Chaponnay and Madame Dumanoir, their children, tutors and servants [...] all accommodated at the Forme! The most difficult thing was to feed these people, because resources are few when you are not prepared. The ladies were so enchanted by my husband's welcome that Madame de Mauville wrote me a letter from Rome full of fond memories of their stay at the Forme.

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<sup>167</sup> AB XIX 4480, vol. III, p. 70; AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, pp. 14-17; AB XIX 4480-4483, vol. II, *Ernest Lefèbvre complete son éducation en Angleterre*.

My husband is returning to Naples to see an old friend and to help him bear the pain and anguish of the illness of his poor daughter, who died on 8 June. We took the Isola road shortly after his relatives left for France; we arrived at the Forme on the 17th, still very sad [...] we received a visit from the Lord of Kuster [...] my husband left for Naples the same day he left us [...] and boarded the "Francesco I" for France, he had numerous business trips.<sup>168</sup>

As many as 22 people were housed on the Isola at any one time, indicating that the road was busy Those arriving from Rome probably passed in front of Palazzo Lefèbvre on their way to the Consolare road to Naples. This also suggests an increase in traffic after the completion of the road. Charles Lefèbvre, on board the *Francesco I*, left Naples in mid-June for France, where he had business to attend to and would not return until November, disembarking at Civitavecchia and travelling the coastal route in a carriage. In the meantime, the hostess had received other powerful people of the kingdom as guests, such as Gerolamo Pignatelli and the Prince of Dentice, both of whom had a stormy military career.<sup>169</sup>

In the same year, 1839, Rosanne received Maria Carolina of Bourbon, Duchess of Berry (1798-1870), who lived part of the year in Naples and came with a retinue of no less than 18 people to Isola del Liri in October. Her enthusiasm for the place, the park the surroundings, the house but also the factory, was great.<sup>170</sup>

The year 1840. Before speaking of my arrival here, I must mention a journey made by my husband in the winter of 1840. He came to Isola to see the Duke of Bordeaux, who was returning to Rome via Monte Cassino and wished to see our 'cascatelle' of which his mother had told him so much. I was sorry that the season did not permit this walk, and my husband was much impressed by the Prince's kindness and indulgent goodness [...]. I arrived on

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<sup>168</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 18 ssg.

<sup>169</sup> Acton Harold, *I Borboni di Napoli: 1734-1825*, Giunti, Firenze 1997, pp. 363-365.

<sup>170</sup> She was the daughter of Francis I, King of the Two Sicilies and Archduchess Maria Clementina of Habsburg-Lorraine. She married Charles Ferdinand of Artois, Duke of Berry.

16 May, accompanied by Louise, Marie de Raigecourt and her governess. It was a joy for the whole village to see Flavia again, whom the inhabitants had missed so much. She spent 40 days here, walking with her husband and enjoying the affection of the family. The time passed happily and without a trace of sadness. It was on the 14th of July when we left Isola to say goodbye to my daughter. [On the 10th of May we had two visits from Mr. Arcambal from France and Mr. Casotti, a strong and distinguished man whom I had known since childhood. D.B.F. (sic) made a short stay in the Forme that year. The rumours of war, which we had heard in Naples because of the turmoil in Sicily, prevented ordinary visitors from making plans for the season: the villagers, who had become more sociable with us, were in any case content with our simple country pleasures, and my children seemed perfectly content.

Isola remains a destination for friends, princes and ambassadors of high rank, who stop there on their way to or from Naples. Obviously, the place, seen from time to time in its quality of industrial centre, *Petit Paris*, place of bucolic beauty, place of classical memories, attracts different types of travellers.

Rosanne makes another interesting statement when she says that the locals have finally become sociable. There had probably been a certain coldness in the early years: the massacre of 1799 was still fresh in the minds of the townspeople.

In 1840 Charles disappeared for a few months, from January to May; his wife points out that she would like to talk about it separately, as if it were a very important trip, but she does not. Charles maintained important contacts with the industrial and financial world in Paris, Lyon and Marseille. Between 1840 and 1841, the son of the Duchess of Berry, the 19-year-old Henri de Bourbon-France, Duke of Bordeaux (1820-1883), legitimate heir to the French throne following the assassination of his father in 1820, stayed at the Lefèbvre.

## Chapter 17

### Carnello, 1840

In the autumn of 1842, the magazine *Poliorama pittoresco* dedicated a short report to Carnello, written by a person who signed himself Ott. M. It was a colourful piece accompanied by a beautiful picture, in this case by Raffaele Carelli, showing a happy community that had integrated work in the factory with work in the fields and crafts. The *Poliorama pittoresco* was a magazine that, through these readings, encouraged adherence to the new economic liberalism applied to industry, which met with some resistance in the sectors of Neapolitan society most closely linked to the great producers and merchants of wheat, oil and products of agriculture and sheep-farming in general.



Zino & Henry Officine Meccaniche opened in Naples in 1838.

The author gives us a positive portrait of the place, which in those years saw full employment for the combined workers of the Zino Wool Mill and the Lefèbvre Paper Mill. Both Zino and Lefèbvre, at that time, were known in the Kingdom for being partners or owners of cutting-edge industries.



*Veduta delle fabbriche de' signor Zino a Carnello e della contigua chiesetta di Santa Restituta su le rive del Fibreno. Carnello.*

(Landscape of Carnello with Zino and Lefèbvre Factories) Poliorama pittorresco 1842.

In a lively tone, the author of the piece recounts his journey from Sora to Carnello on a *char-à-banc* - in the area, transport carts were called the French way - on a gentle, quiet evening and describes the place. Sora was a lively town, at the centre of the Duchy of Sora for centuries, on the border between southern and central Italy.

Two miles from Sora, a town in the Terra di Lavoro of which few of our readers are aware, is a charming place that attracts the curiosity and attention of many Italians and foreigners who come in large numbers to visit our districts. It has always been known under the name of Carnello, and according to a very old tradition it is the place where the blood of the martyrs of the early days of the Sora church was spilled, and where the head of Saint Restituta, the illustrious virgin and apostle of Sora, was cut off by a pagan iron and rolled bloody in the dust.

The Fibreno river, with its clear and fresh waters, winds its way through the Carnello fields, which are very pleasant and fertile thanks to nature and the hard work of the Sorano farmers. Whoever looks at Carnello from the top of the hill on which the town is built and from which the Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie rises, will feel the same sweet emotion in his soul as whoever looks at the beautiful and fertile plains of Samaria, enamelled with a thousand colours, from the top of Mount Carmel.<sup>171</sup>

In the first sections of the account, partially reproduced here, the author dwells on colourful notes and historical memories, in this case referring mainly to the church of Sora and the memory of the martyrs. In the third part of the account, the theme of technology and industry is introduced, which took hold in the area apparently without creating damage but only offering employment and prosperity.

Our ancestors, however, did not appreciate the value of these places and only took advantage of the spontaneous benefits offered by nature; the waters of the Fibreno River, which in later times became the source of great works, gave rise to a small paper mill, a gualchiera and some mills. But only a few years into the 19th century, Carnello began to change. Industry realised the importance of the site and soon a magnificent wool mill was built, not only for the benefit of the entrepreneurs, but also for hundreds of young people who, no longer idlers and strikers, could earn an honest living working with their own hands and, what is more, be trained in the various arts that the factory needed. The brothers Lorenzo and Giuseppe Zino, by improving and enlarging their magnificent factory and the outbuildings that house the numerous employees who oversee the many branches of production, are constantly

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<sup>171</sup> *Poliorama Pittoresco*, 1842 Napoli, p. 125.

providing a secure livelihood for a large number of workers. There is no telling the incalculable benefit this has brought to the craft industries of the surrounding towns, and in particular of Sora, to which most of these workers belong.

This author, too, made the new rhetoric of progress his own: the happy and abundant nature and the industrious capacity of mankind to no longer simply take 'the advantages, which nature spontaneously offers'. It is the ideology of tempered economic liberalism that permeates almost all the writings of the time. The first mention is therefore for the Zino brothers who were the first to use the Carnello site for a large factory of their own, after which the mention moves on to the Lefèvre factory.

Around the same time, Mr. Carlo Lefèvre, to whose enterprising spirit we owe the splendid creation of the Fibreno paper mill near the island of Sora, contributed greatly to the beauty and importance of Carnello. Having taken possession of the old small paper mill, he built another one there, magnificent beyond belief, and replaced the old way of making paper with the wonderful machine of endless paper. These various and important industries, the natural beauty of the place, the crystal-clear waters of the Fibreno river, which are so useful to the public, and the indispensable multitude of craftsmen and workers make this charming district very lively.

Near the Opificio is a small church built by the first believers on the spot where the glorious virgin martyr Saint Restituta shed her blood and received the crown of the Forti. Under the patronage of this holy apostle of the people of Sorano, the arts flourished in Carnello, and it was in this church, on the 28th of August 1842, that Mr. Zino and the artisans wished to devoutly express their feelings of tender gratitude to the patron saint, celebrating the annual commemoration of her martyrdom with the most solemn pomp.

It is said that Carlo Lefèvre 'enhanced the beauty and importance of Carnello': beauty does not seem to be a concept that can be associated with importance or utility. But in the romantic spirit of the time, which in Naples as in many parts of Italy was imbued with the cult of progress, progress, machines and automatism were seen as something intrinsically beautiful.

And in any case, it is not so much the paper mill as the endless machine that is the real turning point. For the rest of the play, the place is described in idyllic tones, as if the new industries had brought unprecedented happiness and harmony to these lands.

The two horses were running at full speed, and we were not distracted from observing their surroundings. The solemnity was not limited to the little church of Carnello, but a magnificent illumination began at the gates of Sora and extended for two miles to the church itself. The lights, surrounded by balloons of different colours, which were thrown by the wind, gave the most beautiful effect with their variety of colours. Due to the speed of our course, it seemed as if they were flying in front of us, and this made the unbroken line of lights, vaguely imitating the colours of the iris, all the more magical and brilliant to our eyes.

And the race was animated by a multitude of cars of all sizes, all full of people going to the festival or coming back from it. You would have seen people coming and going, pausing, asking each other questions, shaking hands, and joy, satisfaction and contentment on every face. Those who came to the feast full of enthusiasm for the Blessed Virgin Martyr, their Mother, were sensitive to the tributes paid to her; and those who took part in the celebration were more than satisfied with the sweet impression they had made on the souls of their fellow citizens. As we approached Carnello, the illumination of the road became more abundant and brighter, and the number of people who had come to the place increased, so that our horses had to be slowed down. But when we were within two miles of Carnello, it was impossible to continue: we had to dismount. We paid the little coachman, who, after adjusting the bandage on his head a little, fired his whip once more in the air and, with that shrill voice that had just injured my ear in the Parco Loffredo, called out: "Places for Sora, gentlemen... places to return...".

What counts in the lively scene described by the author is the happiness of the people, their prosperity and harmony, their desire to enjoy themselves, which was a confirmation of the right policy of the prince, who had allowed and encouraged the establishment of those factories that were slowly transforming those areas. At that time, the benefits of mechanisation, which was also beginning to take people



away from the land, were all positive and could be seen with full optimism.

One of the characteristics that make Carnello so charming is its central position between Sora, Arpino and the island of Sora. On the evening of the 28th August, this fact brought the place to life. From each of the three points came a large part of the population, who, like sisters because of the analogy of the arts, found themselves mixed and confused in the liveliness of a noisy celebration. There was no huddle, where there were no friends from the three countries who harmonised one sympathy, one soul: it was a mutual embrace, a recognition, a walk together, a reciprocation of the sweetest feelings of affection. My readers are undoubtedly endowed with a heart and a sensitive soul, and I would be doing them an unforgivable disservice if I were to dwell any longer on the purest, friendliest sweetness that was enjoyed at Carnello from seven o'clock in the evening until eleven o'clock in the morning.

All this took place in the light of the innumerable lights that shone from the windows, balconies and loggias of the factory and the neighbouring buildings, and they brought about the most complete triumph over the night, whose darkness was increased by huge clouds that piled up and spread everywhere, blotting out even the faint light of the stars.<sup>172</sup>

The *Poliorama* article is interesting for the testimony it contains where the author recalls that the site had been occupied in the centuries prior to the 19th century by a small paper mill and a gualchiera used to grind wheat but also to beat wool.

In the 19th century, therefore, a 'superb wool mill' was first established in Carnello for the benefit of two brother entrepreneurs, Lorenzo and Giuseppe Zino, but also for the benefit of 'hundreds of young people who were no longer idle and strikers and honestly procured bread with the work of their own hands'. This was a typical way of referring to youth: the idle and strike-breakers who roamed the countryside in search of some work, and the workers who submitted to the strict but profitable discipline of the factories. It is hard to imagine

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<sup>172</sup> *Poliorama Pittoresco* XVI, Anno settimo-Semestre primo, *Il 28 agosto 1842 a Carnello*, pp. 126-127, 26 novembre 1842.

that everyone was on strike before, but certainly the rigid organisation of these factories introduced a new organisation of time, which created a different human type, and pieces praising this novelty often appeared on the *Poliorama pittoresco*. The factory created a culture of 'arts', i.e. specialisations. Almost at the same time - the time lapse is minimal - Lefèbvre also took over "to whose enterprising spirit we owe the distinguished establishment of the Fibreno Paper Mill near the Island of Sora, which contributed greatly to increasing the beauty and importance of Carnello". Further pieces on the *Poliorama* are later dedicated to Lefèbvre. Here, when we speak of enhancing the beauty and importance of Carnello, we do not mean the beauty of the places but their notoriety and agility with the road works and improvements (construction of roads, squares, restorations) that made the small town a place visited and visited by its many guests. Also from here we have news that his property was built on 'an ancient small paper mill', on which 'another one there erected magnificent above all belief, and to the ancient way of making paper, replaced the marvellous machine of endless paper', a real attraction by then for those places. In 1842, a second endless machine had also been placed at Fibreno, but the Carnello one was still the most famous because it was the first.

Since then, the 'delightful contrada' for the 'indispensable multitude of artisans and workers' has been very lively. So, indeed, the portrait of it here is Campania Felix.

An engraving of a few years later by Zuccagni-Orlandini, dated 1845, records the appearance of the same place from a different perspective, more foreshortened with respect to the establishments.<sup>173</sup>

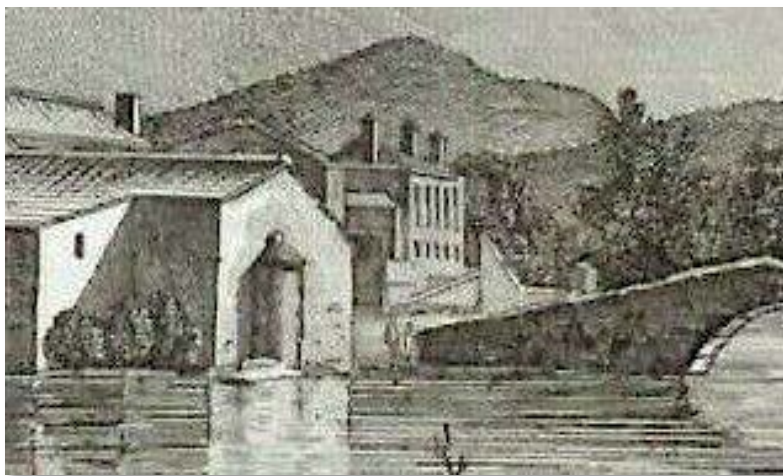
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<sup>173</sup> View published in the well-known *Atlante illustrativo, ovvero Raccolta dei principali monumenti italiani antichi, del Medio evo e moderna, e di alcune vedute pittoriche...* by Attilio Zuccagni-Orlandini, published in Florence in 1845 in 3 volumes as an appendix to the *Corografia fisica, storica e statistica dell'Italia*. ..., a work in 12 volumes, published between 1837 and 1845, accompanied - in addition to the *Atlante illustrativo* described above - also by a two-volume geographical *Atlante degli Stati Italiani* by Attilio Zuccagni Orlandini (1784-1872). Orlandini was born in Fiesole as Giuseppe Orlandini. After being adopted by his wealthy maternal uncle, Attilio Zuccagni (1754-1807), a botanist and geophilosopher, he adopted the name Attilio Zuccagni-Orlandini.



Zuccagni-Orlandini, *Atlante illustrativo*, Firenze 1845.

This engraving shows us the only image available at this time of the Lefèbvre Paper Mill, the one that contained the endless machine. One can see a two-storey, rather tall building behind the Zino buildings, which are those built on the Liri front.



Detail of the previous image by Zuccagni-Orlandini:  
in foreshortening, on the right, the Lefèbvre paper mill can be seen.

In the foreground is the church of Santa Restituta rebuilt in the opposite direction: where the apse used to be, today, shifted and set back, is the façade in the classicist style.



Entrance to the Lefèbvre paper mill, Carnello.

The picture above shows the entrance to the Manifattura in Carnello around 1890, when it was still managed by Lefèbvre. The archway, which still exists today, led into an area occupied on the right by the Lefèbvre paper mill buildings with the paper machine rooms and on the left, in relation to the viewer, by the Zino wool factories. The building in the picture was occupied by offices and probably also by the director's house, as was customary at the time.



Carnello: the complex comprising the Lefèbvre paper mill and the Zino wool mill. The paper mill structures are those on the right, with the chimneys.

The only known photograph of Carnello, foreshortened, taken from the road to Sora, was taken at the end of the 19th century. The Lefèbvre company is closest to the photographer's location, where the two chimneys are located. The whole area at the time underwent considerable urban development, but the houses from the first half of the 19th century were later replaced by others.



Lefèbvre property in Carnello after the sale of the factory to De Caria.

The map above, attached to the 1909 sale deeds, shows that the Lefèbvre estate was extensive, with buildings on the north bank of the Fibreno. These were probably workers' dwellings, since the industrial installations were located on the right bank of the Fibreno, marked as De Caria.



Manifatture del Fibreno, Carnello unit.

In this photograph, the entrance to the Carnello factory is still intact, with the carts coming out empty after unloading rags or wood. In this case, the photo was taken so that the entrance is on the left, where the portal seen in the previous photo is hidden. The building behind the carts is an example of a relatively modern industrial building, given that the photograph was probably taken in the first decade of the 20th century, as can be seen from the fact that the shed is equipped with electricity (you can see the electric wires outside, in the corner). This was the long building that housed first one and then two paper machines, driven by mills, behind the older buildings seen on the left.





The map of the Carnello factory, drawn up immediately after its purchase by Raffaele de Caria, shows the state of the buildings at the end of the 19th century. As you can see, all the buildings are marked as part of the property, even those that were part of the Zino wool mill. The factory was therefore very large. Even on the previous map, which shows the whole area, the industrial complex is assigned to the paper mill.

## Chapter 18

### **Expansion (new extensions, new buildings)**

In the years that followed, the technical progress of the paper mills was continuous. If in 1828 there were 150 workers between Fibreno and Carnello, by 1841 the number had more than doubled to 340, including 100 men and 240 women, almost all of whom worked in the rag sorting mill. The production cycle required 10,000 "cantai" of rags per year, from which 6,000 "cantai" of good paper per year were produced and exported to Greece, Malta and Brazil.<sup>174</sup> The cantai was a unit of measurement used in the Kingdom of Naples and was equivalent to about 100 kg. During the 1840s, Charles and his collaborators improved the endless machine by modifying it to provide smooth paper on both sides and installed another at S. Maria delle Forme and a second at Carnello, improved models of the first Donkin. Other processes introduced (drying, sanding, pressing) had improved the strength, whiteness and lustre of the finished product by abolishing the traditional and age-old phase of marking, which would be replaced by boiling after shredding and fraying.

The rags were shredded from cylinders, then treated with calcium chloride and potato starch. Because of their quality, whiteness and purity, Fibreno papers were increasingly in demand for fine editions.<sup>175</sup> Nel 1844 gli operai erano saliti a 400 e si producevano 150,000 risme di carta. A year later another 50 workers were hired, bringing the number to 450 with an output of 180,000 reams. By 1846 a further 20

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<sup>174</sup> Cigola Michela, *Le cartiere storiche del Basso Lazio*, Ciolfi, Cassino 2002, p. 63.

<sup>175</sup> Dell'Orefice Anna, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

workers had been added, rising to 470, with seasonal variations that could exceed 500, and production reached the then remarkable figure of 197,000 reams of paper.<sup>176</sup> Women employed in the business of shaking rags (called *frullone*) were more numerous because they were required for the delicate and time-consuming task of sorting the rags.

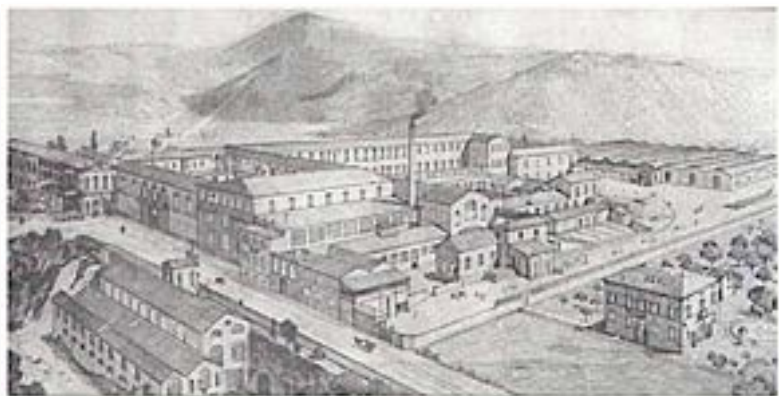
The local economy now depended on a few families, including the Bartolomucci, the Lefèbvre, the Roessinger, the Boimond and the members of the Liri paper mill, such as Sorvillo. A visible impact on the area, which affected all the larger paper mills, was the construction of integrated residential complexes with the first, still timid, examples of social housing and services and guarantees of childcare with kindergartens, schools and doctors' surgeries.

Meanwhile, another paper mill had come into being, the Courier paper mill. It was founded in 1832 by Giuseppe Courier, who was born in Voiron in France and came to Italy with other Frenchmen at the beginning of the 19th century to help develop the then nascent industry in the south. Giuseppe, who died in 1860, was succeeded by his son Dionisio, who in 1861 brought the factory up to a daily production of 2,000 kilos of various types of paper. In 1873 the factory employed 126 workers, who worked 12 hours a day and received an average wage of between 0.40 cents and 1.00 lire. It had a building worth 170,000 lire, a paper machine, burned 7,000 quintals of wood and used rags, chemicals and other materials. In 1874 the factory ceased production, affected by the crisis that at that time led to the closure of several paper industries in southern Italy. A few years later, the mill resumed production and in 1889 it employed 85 workers.

The following watercolour, dated 1905, was executed on behalf of the Cartiere Meridionali when the decision was made to purchase the complex.

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<sup>176</sup> Cigola Michela, *Le cartiere storiche del Basso Lazio*, Ciolfi, Cassino 2002, p. 64.



Questo acquarello mostra lo stato delle Manifatture del Fibreno nel 1905 quando fu acquistato dalle Cartiere Meridionali.

You can clearly see how the company expanded at the back, with the large rag factory (Stracceria) and the buildings housing the flat and continuous machines behind the old Forme building, and with the row of nine sheds near the hill where rolls of paper were packed and shipped. This part of the factory no longer exists and the sheds were demolished after the Second World War to make way for private housing.

The part behind the convent, that is to say the regular building that covers the whole edge of the factory on the right and behind the chimney, is the Stracceria, where the rags were sorted. The park, of which only a small part remains, is now the garden in front of the Lefèvre restaurant (which retains the name of the owners of the factory but has no connection with the family, now called Lefèvre D'Ovidio).<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Paris Carlo, *I segni del lavoro*, cit. p. 142; Malusardi, *Isola del Liri*, cit. p. 73.



Portion of the historic Lefèbvre park and paper mill.

Of the building, the rooms on the ground floor have been recovered, while the rest of this section of the factory is reduced to an empty facade.

The following photograph (taken from *L'Industria della carta*, Turin 1903, p. 11) shows the Stracceria at work still under the management of Francesco Lefèbvre. The shredders are still numerous, four per station, and the premises are crowded with workers.



Selection of rags, Fibreno, third floor (Scavia 1903).

Unfortunately, paper produced from the pulp made from the fibres of the cenci was becoming an ever smaller share of the market; it was now being replaced by pulp from cellulose and the following picture shows the department a few years before its final closure: the women employed at each station were reduced to three.

Rag pulp was considered a substitute in times of crisis for pulp supply. Open windows, in this case, replaced the lack of ventilation and air recycling facilities, considering the fact that the rags were often dusty.





Storage of rags for sifting at the Manifattura del Fibreno.

This photograph shows the rag store that was adjacent to Palazzo Lefèbvre. Many historians have observed that the Lefèbvre family, together with the Boimonds in particular, brought a new industrial culture to Sora and the Terra di Lavoro, which was later adopted by other local dynasties, but not by all of them - not by the Ciccodicola and the Manna.

This new culture can also be seen in the mills. For example, in the paper mills that preceded the French ones or were built before 1808, the relationship between the owners' houses and the mills was very close, even in the way they were built.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Tonino Paris, *I segni del lavoro nella Valle del Liri: preesistenze storiche, cultura materiale, innovazioni tecnologiche*, in Pier Paolo Balbo - Susanna Castellet y Ballarà. Tonino Paris, curr., *La Valle del Liri. Gli insediamenti storici della Valle del Liri e del Sacco*, Officina Edizioni, Roma 1983, p. 157.



Mancini paper mill:  
the dwelling of Mancini family was above the paper mill.

In the Courier-Mancini paper mill, which is also later than the Lefèbvre, built in 1832 and which stands on the head of the islet at the confluence of the two branches of the river at the centre of Isola, the base structure housed the production equipment, while the upper part housed the residences of the owners, who were the Courriers and then the Mancini (the two families were related). This organisation had a strong analogy with the layout of the manor houses typical of the agricultural economy.<sup>179</sup> There was no physical separation between establishment and dwelling.

At Anitrella - a few kilometres south of Sora - the paper mill 'stands close to the drop in altitude that characterises the course of the river at that point'. Taking advantage of the orographic trend, the paper mill overlooks the gorge for five floors, four dedicated to production activities and one to housing.<sup>180</sup> The paper mill was run by the Piccardo family, originally from Voltri (Genoa), who had moved to Anitrella (Monte San Giovanni Campano) in the years 1836-1838 to run the mill

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>180</sup> *Ibidem.*



on behalf of Count Lucernari. He then founded his own paper mill in Anitrella.<sup>181</sup>



Piccardo paper mill in Fontana Liri. The house was above the paper mill. This drawing was done with a reconstruction from memory.

Giuseppe Piccardo (1879-1858) ran the Lucernari paper mill until 1850, followed by his son Giulio until 1873, when the mill was leased to the booming Cartiere Meridionali. The managers and technical directors lived inside. There was no physical separation between the buildings, as in the case of Lefèbvre, who built a new wing exclusively for residential use. The Mancini and Lucernari factories, among many others, were integrated into the urban fabric in terms of the size and type of the buildings and the materials used: it was difficult to distinguish the residential buildings from the factories from the outside. The Manifattura del Fibreno served as a model for the Liri Paper Mill and the Boimond Paper Mill, which radically changed the dimensions and the relationship between the factory and the landscape, since the three plants "are located at a distance from the historical centre of Isola

<sup>181</sup> Ottaviani Marcello, *La cartiera Piccardo di Fontana Liri*, «Studi Cassinati» (luglio settembre 2010), pp. 176-182.

Liri and, moreover, assume a layout typical of an industrial complex, albeit of the 19th century". In other words, the owner's house cannot be confused with the factory, even though the buildings are close to each other. Moreover, the Liri paper mill was a joint-stock company, so the 'bosses' were far away. As at Boimond, the directors lived in houses that were recognisable as such. The Lefèbvre, after the extensions of 1830 and those of 1845 and more in the following decades, show industrial sheds: long buildings, wide spaces, elongated forms. There is no confusion.

These factories also impressed the travellers of the time because of their singular novelty, which was the stigma of modernity. They also showed, as soon as they were built, that concern for hygiene and health - at least in terms of intentions and the exchange of space, light and air - which was called 'enlightenment' and which could only be seen in certain advanced industries in England, France and northern Italy. Charles Lefèbvre never showed the craftsman's mentality of Antoine Beranger. He wanted to separate his home from the smells of maceration and the metallic noise of the factories, while at the same time taking a personal interest in production as a supervisor. This was another example of his ambitious class consciousness, which was also a sign of the world to which he belonged and from which his family came. When everything was regulated and controlled, he delegated to experts, as was the case with Cartiere del Liri, then Meridionali and Boimond.

Travellers on the Grand Tour, passing through these lands in search of historical or classical traces, of Cicero or Virgil, would come across a modern factory, and this would astonish them to no end, since Italy was associated with the past and certainly not with the most modern industry. As two contemporary witnesses, Domenico Cuciniello and Luigi Bianchi, wrote:

[...] the scraps for papermaking, already selected and in 18 distinct ways, are nectarred, ground, rinsed, shredded and, in the refined ones, reduced to a very liquid pulp; which, mixed with vegetable glue, a prodigious machine receives from one end, and makes from the other, in a single minute, to the

seer's eyes, beautiful and glued, dry paper of every quality, of interminable length.<sup>182</sup>

The description mentions the "prodigious machine" and goes on to describe the unprecedented dimensions of the factory, conveying impressions that seem almost incomprehensible to a 21st-century reader, but in fact manage to convey the wonder of the time. The Fibreno factory was made up of long, narrow rooms, adapted to the length of the machinery and lit by very large and high windows, open on the longest sides. The working areas were large and allowed rapid checks throughout the working cycle. The relationship with the energy sources to be used was at the basis of the organisation of these architectures, which were developed in height, one floor above the other, in order to be able to use a single vertical drive shaft connected to the various machines by a horizontal transmission system.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Cuciniello Domenico - Bianchi Luigi, *Viaggio pittorico nel Regno delle Due Sicilie, dedicato a sua maestà il Re Francesco pubblicati dai SS.ri Cuciniello e Bianchi*, primo di Cuciniello e Bianchi, presso gli Editori vicolo S. Spirito, I, Napoli 1830-1833, p. 333.

<sup>183</sup> *I segni del lavoro nella Valle del Liri: preesistenze storiche, cultura materiale, innovazioni tecnologiche*, cit., p. 159.



The waterfall area and Boncompagni Palace.

What seems old and dilapidated today, partly due to the state of the buildings, which have long been in a state of semi-abandonment, is nevertheless impressive: the dimensions are remarkable, especially in relation to the time, and even more impressive must have been the San Carlo factory, as it was called at the time, which was built in the middle of the century. A late-18th-century print shows what the area upstream from the main Liri waterfall looked like when the factory was built in the 1820s: a rural, bucolic landscape in the truest sense of the word.

More than any other settlement, the Lefèvre paper mill influenced the social and economic situation of the area, providing an early example of success for the activities of other entrepreneurs. Helped, of course, by the favourable socio-economic conditions of the area and his undoubted entrepreneurial skills, Charles implemented a particularly successful financial strategy: reinvesting profits in the manufacturing business itself. This allowed him to develop the business by

modernising the plants and expanding production, unlike other entrepreneurs such as Zino himself or even Manna, who had to hand over their factories to the management of administrators because the manufacturing activities were of secondary interest compared to the commercial work they carried out.

Natale Sorvillo was in business with the Swiss bankers Meuricoffre, and the Liri paper mill, which he helped to build in 1844, was still a sideline for him. Lefèbvre had the means to invest in other activities and he did, investing in the nascent gas industry, steamboats, the first service companies such as the Partenopean Society, cotton spinning and publishing. However, he always had a special eye for the Manifatture del Fibreno.

As we know from the writings of his French cousin André-Isidore, the activities of the Manifatture del Fibreno had nothing to do with the family's investments. The family, on the other hand, participated in the financial game of the Naples piazza, going in and out of business, sometimes even investing a lot of money in the buying and selling of real estate and land. However, the Manifattura del Fibreno was self-financing. Other entrepreneurs, such as the Manna family, lacked the ability to transform themselves. In fact, most of them saw the creation of new industries as yet another opportunity to take advantage of government favours for speculative operations.<sup>184</sup>

The Visocchi of Atina and Count Lucernari of the Papal State with his paper mill in Anitrella can also be mentioned for their importance.<sup>185</sup> They invested part of the income from farming in paper industries by setting up two important mills on family-owned land. They were still feudal lords who owned the land on which many peasants worked and organised their manufacturing activities within the rural society of which they were superintendents. The peasants who worked on the

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<sup>184</sup> Davies John, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-238.

<sup>185</sup> The Atina Paper Mill founded by Pasquale Visocchi in 1844 was forced to wait until the founder's death to develop. At that point, his sons divided up the vast property, dedicating each one to a specific sector and giving the industrial activity a more autonomous role. See Pinelli Vincenzina, *I Lefèbvre*, Isola del Liri 1981.

fields they owned were diverted to factory work and used as human capital. However, this dependence of industry on agriculture eventually affected the possibility of development to the extent that Lucernari, while remaining the owner of the paper mill, had to rent the management to a technician.



## Chapter 19

### Industrial paternalism

One of the first experiences of industrial patronage in Italy was that of François Jacques de Larderel (1790-1858), born in Vienne in the Dauphiné. A French engineer and entrepreneur, he promoted the industrial exploitation of the Tuscan boraciferous fumaroles in Pomarance (Pisa), now known as Larderello. The industry took off and had seven factories. Initially the workers received low wages and poor treatment, but their conditions improved: each family was given a house and a vegetable garden, free assistance and free medicines. Larderel also set up free, though not compulsory, schools. Overall, a complex working community was established on a paternalistic basis.<sup>186</sup>

From the point of view of the history of sociality and industrial organisation, the story of Lefèbvre in Isola also needs to be deciphered in this sense. He brought mechanical industrialisation to a rural and artisanal area and, more than Larderel, triggered an irreversible process of socio-cultural transformation of the local community, the economy of the area and the exploitation of the *natural capital* formed by the river. This process cannot be underestimated, as it has changed the face of these places forever. In the work of the Lefèbvre father and son - the former's management ended in 1854, the latter's in around 1888 - one can read the attempt to establish a "paternalistic" protectionism on the site, similar to that being experimented at the time in England, France, Belgium, regions such as German-speaking Alsace, Holland and even the United States. Lefèbvre's paternalistic protectionism was similar, though more effective and benign than Larderel's. In the case of Isola,

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<sup>186</sup> Guiotto Luigi, *La fabbrica totale. Paternalismo industriale e città sociali in Italia*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1979, pp. 95-102.



we cannot speak of a genuine, organic 'workers' village' or integral factory, but of something that was on the way to becoming one, the city factory, albeit adapted to the characteristics of the place. Placed in this context, the history of the Manifattura del Fibreno becomes perhaps more readable, and can be read in parallel and in contrast to other events of 'organic communities' that had developed elsewhere. In order to understand what we are talking about, it is worth recalling briefly, after the story of Larderel just mentioned, the vicissitudes of the Rossi di Schio and the Crespi di Busto Arsizio, in order to assess the similarities. In comparison, Lefèbvre's experience takes place in a social, cultural and urban environment that is largely already formed, complex, ancient and not entirely modifiable. Nevertheless, the elements of similarity are not few.

The typology of company, initiated by the so-called "paternalism" of the industrialists of the 19th century, and which in the French-speaking world includes notable examples such as the Ménier Workers' Town in Noisel in the Marne (chocolate factory) and then William Lever's Sunlight (1851-1925) in England, but also various cotton industries on the European continent, also appears in Isola in the Lefèbvre industry and later in the Roessinger and then Boimond industries.<sup>187</sup> The construction of an integrated society in which workers, employees, managers and bosses lived in close harmony is implicit in the Lefèbvre case. We know that Charles and his son initiated projects to support their workers. These are lesser known aspects of the company's work, but they follow a model initiated in northern Europe and established in Italy, especially in the 1870s, with the experience of Alessandro Rossi (1819-1898) and Cristoforo Benigno Crespi (1833-1920), entrepreneurs of the generation of Ernesto Lefèbvre (1819-1891), the founder's son. They all shared a

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<sup>187</sup> *Construire la ville. L'urbanisme en Seine-et-Marne au xxe siècle*, Archives départementales de Seine-et-Marne, coll. «Mémoire et Documents», 2007; Gérard Noiriel, «Du "patronage" au "paternalisme": la restructuration des formes de domination de la main-d'oeuvre ouvrière dans l'industrie métallurgique française», *Le Mouvement social*, n° 144, 1988.

similar vision, often explicitly inspired by the demands of social Christianity.

The progenitor was Francesco Rossi (1782-1845), who founded a factory in 1817, but it was his son, Alessandro, who took over and began the process of modernisation. He placed great emphasis on education, respect, work ethic and religion, and combined this approach - which was complex and can only be summarised here - with the duty of factory owners to create and develop industries. A paper mill was added to the Rossi's large wool mill. In 1876, Alessandro founded a kind of integrated village or community that reflected his organic paternalism, combining protectionism and moderate liberalism.<sup>188</sup> Among other things, he wrote a work entitled *Socialismo e fraternato* (1888), in which he explained his ideas, which were completely opposed to socialism and the revolutionary authorities, whose errors he tried to explain to his workers not only through the written works he published and distributed, but above all through facts. As early as 1876, he provided his factories with a complex of services, including a church, a theatre, a school, gardens and houses, organised according to a hierarchy of tasks.<sup>189</sup> The Rossi wool mill (hence Lanerossi) included the Fabbrica Alta, the factories in Pievebelvicino, Torrebelvicino and Piovene Rocchette, with an innovative organisation of work and society.

The architect Antonio Caregaro Negrin (1821-1898) was entrusted with the construction of the workers' village complexes, which took many years to complete. In 1873 the Lanificio was transformed into a Società Anonima with headquarters in Milan, Francesco remained at the head of the company, involving his sons Giuseppe, Giovanni, Gaetano and Francesco, guaranteeing family continuity in the business with the *gerenze* system and also creating a large paper mill that for a

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<sup>188</sup> Baglioni Guido, *La costruzione di un paternalismo organico nel pensiero di un imprenditore italiano d'eccezione: Alessandro Rossi*, Studi di sociologia, Anno IX, f. 3/4 (luglio dicembre 1971, pp. 289-351. Ivi, p. 301.

<sup>189</sup> Sassi L.- Ricatti B.- Sassi D., *Schio. Archeologia industriale*, Sassi, Vicenza 2013.

time became the largest in Italy, taking over the supremacy of Manifatture del Fibreno.

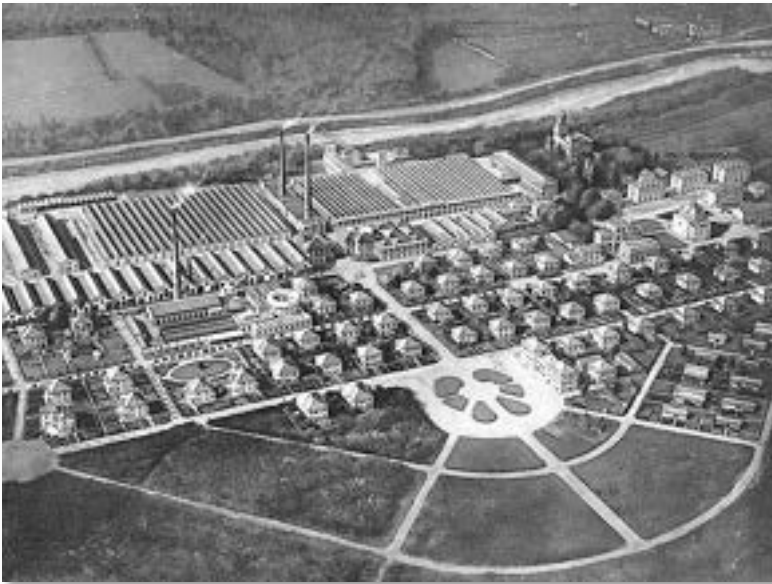
The factory was built by Alessandro in Schio in 1849 in neoclassical style. The colossal factory, designed by the architect Auguste Vivroux from Verviers in Belgium (80 metres long, 13.90 wide, 6 storeys), was very light with its 330 windows and equipped with all the conveniences of the time, from running water to toilets. The Jacquard Garden (1858-1878), an example of landscape architecture open to the workers for relaxation and recreation, was included in the expansion plan. Then came the Jacquard Theatre, built in 1869, where operettas and didactic or veristic melodramas inspired by workers' lives were performed. This was followed in 1872 by the construction of the so-called "Garden City" of the Workers' Quarter, an attempt to realise the utopia of harmony between bosses and workers, directly inspired by Belgian and French industrial cities. It included small villas for managers and technicians, workers' houses, the municipal school, a kindergarten, a church, the nominated theatre and other services of public interest, such as the municipal icehouse, the baths, the swimming pool, public laundries and, of course, shops. Great importance was attached to education, which was fundamental for the preparation of future craftsmen, but also of technical leaders and modern farmers, with school buildings being built in Schio, at the Podere Modello di Santorso and also in Vicenza. Alessandro and his sons promoted the construction of railways in the Alto Vicentino to speed up the transport of raw materials and products from the various textile factories and the Arsiero paper mill.

The Lefèbvre orchards and farms also provided work for families whose members worked in the factory. Nothing like the Jacquard garden, of course - the history of Schio was to come much later - but the same desire to offer services to the community and to open the Cascatelle Park from time to time, during holidays or special occasions.

## Crespi family

Cristoforo Benigno Crespi (1833-1920) and his son Silvio Benigno (1868-1944) began building houses and infrastructure around their cotton mill on the banks of the river Adda. They built a sort of castle that dominated the community and then a real workers' village. This is the most important testimony in Italy of the phenomenon of the workers' village, an attempt to create a self-sufficient microcosm, in regular plots, with a very clear, rational urban layout, which regulated the lives of the workers, their families and the whole community, in order and harmony.

The village of Crespi d'Adda has a remarkable homogeneity due to the fact that the town planning was the work of a single person. It was a project of the 1870s, inspired by French and Belgian examples. The Crespi family presented themselves as 'enlightened' businessmen and philanthropists, committed to protecting the lives of their workers and thus making up for the delays in the State's own social legislation.



Planimetry of the village of Crespi d'Adda.

The Crespi family's idea was to provide each worker with a small house, complete with a kitchen and garden, and to provide the community with all the necessary services: church, school, hospital, after-work club, theatre, public baths. As we have already seen, for mechanised industries such as these, it was essential to have workers available at pre-arranged times and without scattering, as was the case at the beginning of the industrial season. The inhabitants of Crespi were, in a sense, benevolently made "prisoners" near the factory. By providing them with a home, by regulating their social life even after work, by offering social guarantees, a moral behaviour was created that was reflected in regularity at work, which meant avoiding both the conflicts between bosses and workers and the growing social conflicts.

From 1878 the village was built around the factory on the Bergamo side of the Adda river. The workers' houses, clearly inspired by the English style, were built to the east of the factory; to the south, small villas were built for the workers and larger villas for the managers, respecting the social and corporate hierarchy.

The doctor's and priest's houses, together with the large 14th-century neo-medieval palace and other buildings in eclectic, even neo-Renaissance style, have remarkable features of decorum and harmony. In theory, the workers had no reason to leave the village for long, where they found everything: religious services, entertainment, food, essential services. The nearest centres were Brembate to the east and Trezzo sull'Adda to the north.



Crespi d'Adda after his building.

Built on a triangle of land wedged between the confluence of the Brembo and Adda rivers, the lack of roads and bridges at this point has prevented further development. The church and school are flanked by the great factory, a monumental cotton mill that at its peak, around 1870, employed at least 4,000 people, not all of whom appear to have lived in the village. In the centre of the village there was a cemetery, where hierarchies were also respected in the type of monuments: the pyramidal building containing the coffins of the Crespi family dominates the simple rows of workers' crosses. The manor house is more like a castle, built on a relief like the church, an exact copy of the Renaissance S. Maria di Busto Arsizio, the birthplace of the Crespi family.

The other buildings are all in neo-medieval style, with precious terracotta decorations - dear to late Lombard Romanticism - and wrought-iron fittings. The factory is also neo-medieval, with the central entrance, between the sumptuous executive offices, expressing the highest celebration of industry.



Entrance to the Crespi d'Adda cotton mills.

While the experiences of the Rossi of Schio and the Crespi of Busto Arsizio are easy to read within the culture of mature industrial paternalism, now unjustly considered a pejorative term, that of the Lefèbvre is more difficult to interpret, although it is within the same framework.

They employed whole families in their factory - wife, husband, children - in order to guarantee full employment. As we have seen, this had advantages for the workers, but also for the employers. On the one hand, it made it more difficult for them to be absent from the workplace and, on the other, it gave the worker a certain security, albeit a fragile one, given the protection guaranteed at the time, but still greater than in agricultural work. Courses were also organised for the workers' children to give them a basic education.

Since the company was founded near the old historical centre of Isola, not far from other centres, there was no need to build a real "ideal" village like those of Crespi, Schio, Larderello or the later Villaggio Solvay, also because this type of company was not yet common at the

beginning of the 19th century: the company's greatest development took place in the forty years between 1825 and 1865. Nevertheless, they tried to reconcile the needs of their workers with the productivity requirements of their company.

While the Rossi, Crespi and other entrepreneurs had to have many workers and employees living near their company, the Lefèbvre's did not have this problem because the area where their company was located was densely populated and demographically favourable, growing by 20% a year in the middle years of the century. Not far from the Manifattura del Fibreno, in its various production units, there were three large centres: Isola, Sora and Arpino. The need to build an organic and self-sufficient workers' village was therefore less felt. Nevertheless, they, and those who imitated them by setting up other companies in later years, did something similar.



Exit of workers from the Cartiere Meridionali. The photo was taken immediately after the First World War.

The picture above shows workers leaving the Cartiere Meridionali immediately after the First World War. The trees in the background are



the orchards that surrounded the Lefèbvre properties linked to the Manifattura del Fibreno.

Alfredo Martini wrote on this subject:

«The paper worker of Isola del Liri is the anthropological and social result of a precise process of industrialisation, linked not only to the appearance of the factory, the workers and the machines, but also to a spatial revolution in the existing relations within a society that had been rural until then. The proximity of Isola del Liri to Arpino, where a process of proto-industrialisation had been underway since the middle of the 18th century, obliges us to take an interest in what happened in the whole of the Liri Valley during those years. In fact, the intertwining of Arpino, Isola del Liri and Sora was to be a constant in the transformation of social relations».<sup>190</sup>

The construction of service facilities such as houses, care centres, schools or induced activities, linked to the production centre, projected the French entrepreneurial activity into a profoundly new perspective compared to what had been realised in southern Italy until then. The only exception that can be mentioned is the Real Colonia di San Leucio, dedicated to the art of textiles and silk factories, which accommodated a certain number of workers with housing and services. However, it had very different characteristics, which can be read in the experiments of the utopian societies of the Enlightenment rather than those of the industrial paternalism open to the market of the 19th century.<sup>191</sup>

Returning to the Lefèbvre, the Sala Flavia, one in Isola and one in Sora, were among the services provided to the population. These were small hospitals that treated various types of infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, respiratory and cardiac diseases and wounds. They were called Sala Flavia in honour and memory of Charles's eldest daughter, who died in 1843, and were founded in 1845, when statistics on them

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<sup>190</sup> Martini Alfredo, *Biografia di una classe operaia appunto i cartai della valle del Liri (1824-1954)*, Bulzoni editore, Roma 1984, pp. 33-34.

<sup>191</sup> Stefani Stefano, *Una colonia socialista nel Regno dei Borboni*, Roma, Edizioni Poligrafica; AA.VV., *Storia di Napoli*, Napoli, Società editrice storia di Napoli, 1972, vol. X, p. 818.

began.<sup>192</sup> They were financed by a fund that provided a perpetual annuity of 150 ducats per year.

Up to now there was only a very small hospital on Isola, lacking all comforts, but recently a more decent place has been added, which can accommodate 10 or 12 sick men and women. It has a perpetual annuity of 150 ducats a year, donated by the Count of Balsorano, Mr. Carlo Lefèbvre, who wished the pious hospital to be called Flavia, in memory of a daughter of the donor who died in the prime of life.<sup>193</sup>

It should not be forgotten that the industry, and Santa Maria delle Forme in particular, had an organic relationship with the houses that surrounded and were connected to the factory. Livestock farming, cheese-making, orchards, crops, silkworm breeding and olive-growing were all carried out on the same land as industry.

Carnello and Santa Maria delle Forme were born in places where factories had existed since ancient times, they were not new creations, they did not have the utopian character of the Rossi village in Schio, Crespi d'Adda and the other workers' villages that were to be built, especially in the first decades of the 20th century.

Certainly, technological innovation accelerated social and cultural change, requiring new relationships with workers and a different concept of time and life.

After the introduction of the first paper machine, and then more and more as other automatic machines were installed in the years that followed, the entrepreneur's main concern was the continuity of production, in the need to ensure the necessary number of working hours so that the machines would not stop working. A certain number of working hours naturally translates into a precise number of workers who must be available in that unit of time. Hence the need for a plan to tie the workers to the factory and to control what could be called the daily supply of labour. The Cartiera del Fibreno, especially in the

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<sup>192</sup> *Movimento degli infermi negli ospedali civili del Regno D'Italia nel 1883*. Direzione generale della statistica, Roma 1885, p. 28.

<sup>193</sup> Cigola Michela, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

central unit of Santa Maria delle Forme, became the centre of a real spatial revolution. An important testimony in this regard is a booklet of the time, published in 1832 by the Stamperia del Fibreno and written by Jules Millenet: *Coup d'oeil sur l'industrie agricole et manufacturière du Royaume de Naples*.<sup>194</sup> As he passed by, he noticed the existence of houses for technicians and workers, a hospital and schools. This testimony is very important and shows the entrepreneur's early social concern.

The hospital, before being renamed the Sala Flavia Hospital, was active, and the schools, although modest, taught arithmetic, reading, writing, the history of the kingdom and the catechism. Religion was also part of Lefèbvre's didactic system, and it is no coincidence that the church was built above the Soffondo, on a sort of practical embankment, easily accessible from the road.

We know that both Charles and Ernesto were very active in religious works in Naples, in some cases with initiatives linked to their activities in the city. Next to the little church there was a staircase, now collapsed, leading down to the factory below street level. Those who wanted to, could stop and pray in the morning before starting work.

The whole social life was structured around the paper mill and all the spaces were subjugated by this entrepreneur and then by the others that followed, who favoured the construction of other houses in Borgonuovo. This aspect, so visible elsewhere, is here, one could say, more hidden, given the precocity of the experimento.<sup>195</sup> This aspect, so visible elsewhere, is here, one could say, more hidden, given the precocity of the experiment. This spatial revolution was grafted onto a precise ideological plan, aimed at involving the worker in production through the person of the entrepreneur, a generous, pious and responsible father. Catholic entrepreneurs were often advised by their

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<sup>194</sup> Millenet Jules, *Coup d'oeil sur l'industrie agricole et manufacturière du Royaume de Naples*, Stamperia del Fibreno, Napoli 1832.

<sup>195</sup> Millenet Jules, *Coup d'oeil sur l'industrie agricole et manufacturière du Royaume de Naples*, Napoli 1832, cit., p. 34.

confessors to give back to the community what they had earned and made rich, but it was also a widespread custom.

Factory discipline was also presented as an educational necessity and linked to the general generosity of the master, which took the form of voluntary services, donations, bonuses and security (later called welfare). In the legislation of the time, nothing could be demanded as a right, everything had to be expected and conceived as gratification.



Asylum inside the Cartiere Meridionali.

This picture shows the kindergarten that operated in the Cartiere Meridionali after the purchase of the Lefèvre. We have no pictures of the nursery that the French traveller – and others after him – saw in a room in the factory, but it must have been very similar.



Types of workers' houses built between the Manifattura del Fibreno and the Liri Factory.

The paternalistic structure of the 19th century would only be dismantled at the end of the century by the emergence of a new working-class mentality. The 'social towns' that grew out of these factories were the instrument for controlling almost the entire life of the working-class family. Even birth was usually sealed by the presence of the master and the priest. The bosses took out insurance policies, educated the workers' children, supplied the commissary or the shops they ran with food at subsidised prices and controlled its distribution, which also directly affected the workers' wages. All this allowed the ideological control of the boss, who acted with the wisdom of the family man and ensured the self-sufficiency of the worker. This state of affairs ensured the continuity of production in the factory of general labour, through a stability, so to speak 'forced', of the families, who were housed in the houses and given accommodation, and of the specialised

labour, through the technical school for children, which took place during the lunch break.<sup>196</sup>

The structure of the social village or invisible workers' village of Isola di Sora - *invisible* compared to the urbanistically *visible* one of Crespi d'Adda - appears, as already mentioned, more hidden than other examples of workers' villages-built ex novo by architects and town planners in a later period. If the shop and the nursery were integrated into the factory, the church, built specifically for the workers, was organic to the factory but accessible to all. Built by Lefèbvre, it is located in front of the factory entrance and overlooks the Soffondo; it was available to the workers for ceremonies and weddings, baptisms and funerals celebrated by the chaplain. The church was recently restored in 2005. The social houses, the school, the small hospital, the nursery activities are witnessed, remembered and recorded, even if the material survival of the structures should be verified, given the intense building activity since the end of the 19th century.

This, however, is enough to make the experience of the Lefèbvre factory and its two production units an example of a "diffuse" and invisible workers' village that had a profound impact on the life, sociality, demography and town planning of Isola Superiore.<sup>197</sup> From a symbolic point of view, two buildings located a short distance from each other are significant: the two churches in front of the factories, one in the Lefèbvre factory and the other in the Cartiere del Liri complex.

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<sup>196</sup> *Atti del comitato d'inchiesta industriale. Riassunti delle disposizioni orali e scritte, volume primo, parte settima*, Roma 1874.

<sup>197</sup> Bertucelli Lorenzo, *Il paternalismo industriale: una discussione storiografica*, Department of Political Economy, Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia, 1999.



This photo dates back to the 1920s.

The photograph above shows the Fibreno church around the 1920s. The building appears in a poor state of preservation, surrounded by a wall and a gate. During previous decades, it had been one of the places of factory representation, where workers were married or had their funerals, their children's baptisms and from where processions departed. In this photograph the Palazzo Lefèvre, in the background, appears abandoned. After Francesco's death in 1910, the family left the palace, never to return. For a time, the ground floor was occupied by a recreational club and an office of the Royal Postal Services. The new directors of the Fibreno, by then the property of the Cartiere Meridionali, resided in what was then known as Villa Pisani.

The next photograph shows the aforementioned chapel of the Cartiere Meridionali factory, also built in neo-Gothic forms in the middle of the century together with other structures that no longer exist today.



The little church in Cartiere Meridionali yard.

This was built by a devout private individual and later incorporated into the company's structures. During the 19th century, Isola was connected to the railway. Sorvillo joined the board of directors for the construction of the section from Naples to Abruzzi to Tronto, which had a 35-kilometre branch line to Ceprano. The project, abandoned and then resumed due to the wars of the Risorgimento, was completed in 1863. We have a testimony from the Lefèbvre's cousin who arrived in Ceprano in 1865 and stopped to admire the new station that his relative also wanted. It was not until 1897 that the railway arrived at Isola Superiore and was connected to the Lefèbvre factories, by then leased to the Cartiere Meridionali, and the other main factories. Loading and unloading sheds were then set up behind the Manifatture del Fibreno, connected to the railway line. A small engine was purchased and used for these connections.



The photograph reproduced below was taken a few years after the sale, in 1914.



Train that connected the Meridionale paper mills facilities.

The next image is a photograph from the early 20th century, probably around 1920: a crowd of people are taking part in a parade that looks like a carnival. Some of them are wearing masks (one of them is a Punchinello) and behind them is a kind of float in the shape of a biplane. The massive wall that enclosed the vast Cascatelle Park is clearly visible, and the photo seems to have been taken at the height of the Remorici Pistolegno from a window of Palazzo Ciccodicola, the great friend and enemy of the Lefèbvre family. On the left, the small church in front of the Manifattura del Fibreno is just visible, and at the end of the street, Palazzo Balsorano. The photograph can be placed in time thanks to the parade floats and public lighting that arrived in the area around 1910.



Carneval in Tavernanuova Street.



## **Chapter 20**

### **The master's house**

The so-called pure industrialists, i.e. those who devoted most of their time to the companies they managed and financed, were a new type of professionalism. They were characterised by being up to date, keeping abreast of international technological and process innovations that made the business more profitable and the product better, and thus participating in the spirit and culture of the new ruling class, prepared from a technological, financial and managerial point of view.

We can take the example of the Rossi dynasty, wool and paper industrialists who built villas overlooking their factories. The Rossi villa in Arsiero, the Rossi wool and paper industrialists' mansion, dominated the company complex. The logic was similar. The Rossi family were local and therefore their family was large and articulate, which led to their entrenchment. Most of the Lefèbvre family, on the other hand, had remained in France, which made it easier for them to relocate when the Neapolitan industrial adventure came to an end.

This old postcard shows the Rossi's main villa-palace, to which was added another large country villa called Villa Rossi Santorso, not far from both the main palace and the Fabbrica Alta and Fabbrica Bassa settlements.



Villa Rossi (Schio).

The duplication of residences had become necessary to accommodate the various branches of the family, which, as mentioned above, numbered many people and several generations. For the Lefèbvre family, it became necessary at some point to separate the country residence from the factory after they were ennobled as Counts in 1854.





Villa Rossi S. Orso.

Villa Rossi Santorso was a palazzo villa in the neo-romantic style. In these manorial landscapes, inspired by the pre-industrial organic society, there is always a small church or chapel, in homage to the needs of religious care, and a park, as in the working-class towns they built.

Palazzo Crespi is also a famous and remarkable example. Later than the others, it stands out for its grandeur. Benigno Crespi used to travel from Milan to the workers' village to live there with his family from May to November. During the summer, as was typical of the businessmen of that generation, who had little interest in the sea or the mountains - except for cures, the spa - the workplaces of others became places of pleasure and leisure. At Crespi d'Adda, however, Benigno, and later his sons, received visitors, held parties, discussed business and made trips to nearby towns.

The imposing palace was built between 1893 and 1894 in the neo-Romanesque Gothic style by the architect Ernesto Pirovano (1866-1934). It is a striking palace, with a tall tower that recalls the function of the ancient towers that were meant to underline the power of a family. It may therefore be useful to see the similarities and differences with the Lefèbvre case.



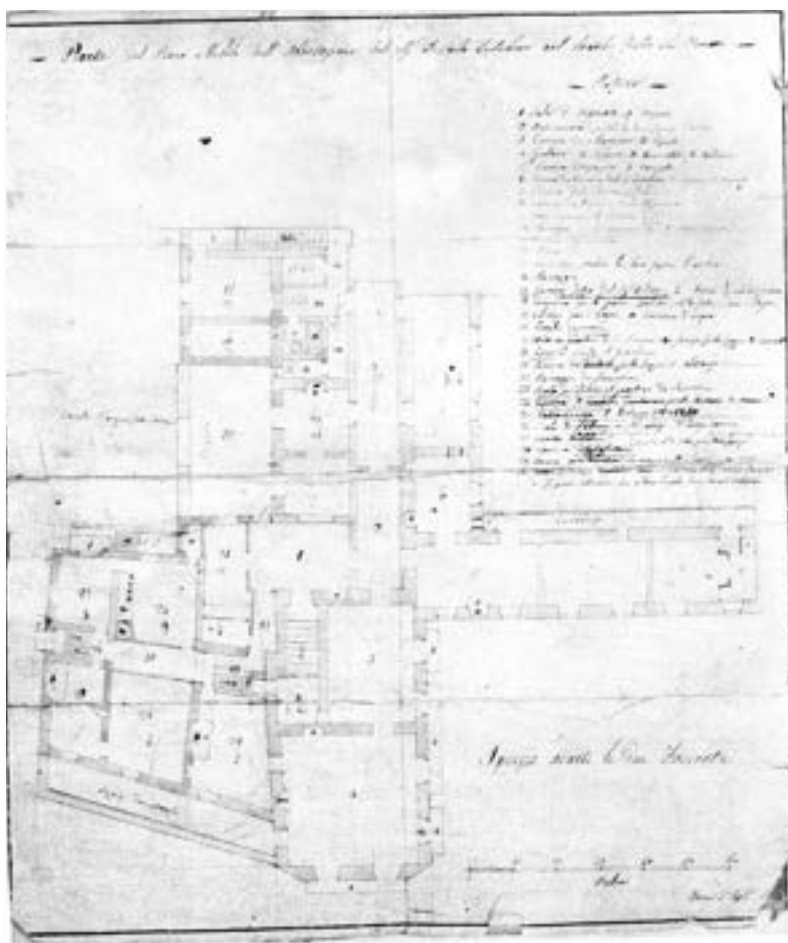
Palazzo Crespi in Crespi d'Adda.

Surrounded by a park, the palace stood out from the surrounding architecture and was also used as a manor house and representative residence for visitors or people coming to the village on business. The Lombard crenellated style is typical of the eclectic taste of the period.

The context in which Palazzo Lefèbvre in Isola was built is quite different. The work was completed in 1845, with the last additions, and it was flanked by a large villa that was completed with furnishings just before 1860. It was not built on virgin soil, but as an annex to a pre-existing building, to which it also had to be architecturally adapted. It was also surrounded by a large park and dominated the Fibreno factory complex, but not from an isolated position. For the first few decades, it also had a dominant position on the heights of Isola Superiore but was later obscured by other buildings and the trees that grew there.

In the history of the Manifatture del Fibreno, as we know, public relations played an important role; therefore, the role of the Palazzo, a centre of attraction and a place of passage, knowledge and publicity, should not be underestimated. Villa Rossi and Villa Crespi were physically isolated, albeit at a short distance, from real working-class villages and were part of a more advanced phase of Italian industrialism and the culture of Italian industrialists. It should be remembered that the Crespi family, whose industrial adventures began with Benigno, was not of aristocratic origin but of artisan and then bourgeois origin. The same can be said of the Rossi family. All these captains of industry, such as Donzelli, Binda, but also Zino, Sorvillo and many others, received the 'lay ennoblement' of a seat in the Senate. The Lefèbvre family, on the other hand, came from the functional aristocracy of the Dauphiné and Paris, and by the time of their Neapolitan adventure had been accustomed to an aristocratic lifestyle and to frequenting Parisian high society for over a century. This was also reflected in their behaviour, which was discreet even compared to the architectural style of the Rossi and Crespi families. Palazzo Lefèbvre in Isola was built, as mentioned above, in various stages as its usefulness became increasingly important and stable to the policies of the entrepreneur.



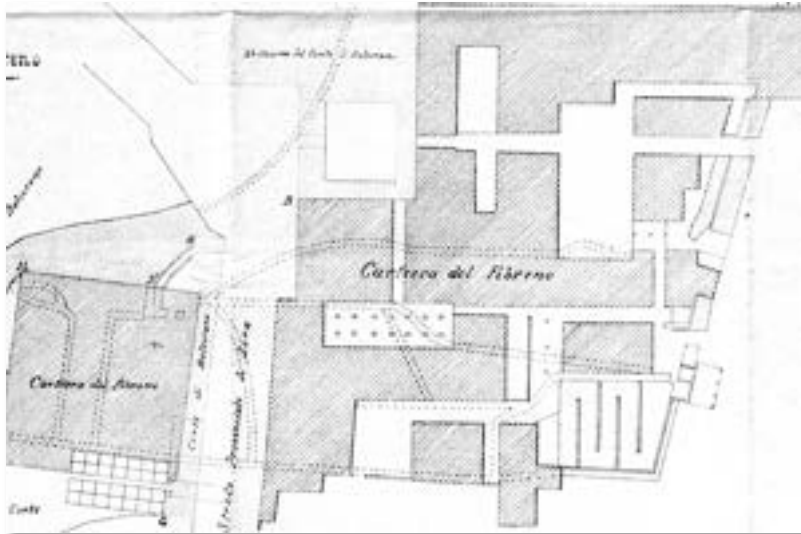


First phase of renovation of Lefèvre Palace.

A French architect was commissioned to redesign the interior and exterior of the building, while retaining all the supporting structures. Half of the first floor of the front of the palace is about 80 metres long and ten metres wide. As can be seen from the plan of the first phase of the palace in 1830, Lefèvre used only two wings of the former convent as family dwellings, the one on the right facing the street (horizontally)



convent united - it was inhabited for more than 50 years, while the factory, the whole of which is outlined in dark, developed around it.



Detail of second phase of renovation of Lefèbvre Palace. After 1845.

The map also shows, with dotted lines, the watercourses and pipelines that ran beneath the buildings. The clarity with which they appear here and the definition of their course are not found in other documents. From the "Garden of the Count of Balsorano", the canal that brought water from the Fibreno and collected it in a large cistern. This first flow of clean and pure water from the Fibreno was brought to the factory through three pipes, shown here in blue: one went under the south-eastern part of the building and reached the Soffondo; a second went through other parts of the factory and also reached the Soffondo after a few branches; and a third went under the old church and the building immediately behind it. This was a small masterpiece of hydraulic engineering, which made maximum use of the water coming from the Fibreno canal and, once it had been fully utilised in the factory, recovered more energy by releasing it into the Soffondo.

The maximum force of the water was recovered in the fall and in the difference in height that separated the high factory of the Fibreno from the low factory of the Soffondo. In this way, thanks to the peculiar construction of the dam that raised the water level and the fall of the Soffondo, the factory had an abundant supply of water, cheap and very pure, not to mention the supply of the Magnene, which was used for the water games and canals in the park, then for the toilets and kitchens in the palace. The water in this complex was used in an admirable way, all the more so when - the capacity of the canal was increased and another factory was built, the San Carlo wallpaper factory - the same water, which came down from a minimal slope, was also used by this factory, with a diversion and for the irrigation of the grounds.

This was the real wealth of the factory and the reason why the Cartiere Meridionali, which also owned all the installations of the former Liri paper mill and other buildings, wanted to buy the Manifatture del Fibreno and its water intakes, which were cheaper to maintain, better laid out, less prone to flooding and cleaner. The factory, unlike the Liri paper mill, was situated on an elevation just before the sluices, which helped to drain off excess water and avoid flooding problems. The high line marking a watercourse passing under Palazzo Lefèvre indicates the Magnene stream, which flows under the building and drains its effluent.

The building, in addition to the adjacent church, had large rooms where, until 1800, the Carmelites had their refectories, choir, chapter rooms, storerooms and rooms for agricultural work. All the rooms of the church, but not those of the convent, were used as factories, with minor adaptations. The busy Baroque architecture was not entirely suited to a factory, but the space was found and the church was divided into several levels to create working and storage areas.

After many years of neglect, it was restored in 2003. Today's exterior is very similar to the original, but the interior has changed. There is, however, a technical document, the *Perizia De Rogatis* (1913-1915), which gives us an idea of what the interiors looked like before they were divided into apartments, allowing us to imagine the refined

elegance and comfort that characterised them, as well as the spaciousness of the rooms.

The palace was, and still is, more than 50 metres long and at least 8 metres wide, with high, ornate ceilings in which the surveyor who carried out his inspection between 1913 and 1915 suspected the presence of frescoes that had almost been erased. It was entered and exited through two large arched doorways on the two short sides and through several doors on the opposite side of the façade, leading to a service corridor one and a half metres wide. The entrance, through which the carriages parked in the large clearing in front of the façade, is still intact and can be seen in the photograph below, when it still belonged to the family.



Entrance to Palazzo Lefèbvre when the ground floor facing the street was occupied by a post office and a recreational club; behind, the entrance to the palace front under the cast-iron canopy.

The ceilings were very high, about 4 metres, as was customary in stately homes of the time. They had vaults for both structural and aesthetic reasons, and these created an ever-changing play of light and shadow with the sun coming in through the four large French windows. The 'grand salon' was rectangular in shape, with a splintered and inlaid marble floor, and was heated by a very large fireplace.

All the walls were decorated with 'paste paintings' in large panels. Even in 1915, the engineer De Rogatis, who visited it with a detached eye, noted the 'decorations' on the walls of the salon, i.e. paintings of landscapes, seascapes with ships and galleys, all running around the vast hall. It was certainly a celebration of Naples and its history, with classical allusions. There were also fine marble frames at the top and bottom and large mirrors on the wall. An idea of what Palazzo Lefèbvre must have looked like can be gained by visiting the elegant villa next door, where one can still see examples of neoclassical Empire style furniture that must have been part of the palace's furnishings, such as a marble coffee table with 'Etruscan' legs, finely crafted chairs, early 19th century painted cabinets, Empire style, with colourful scenes and precious inlays, all in French taste and workmanship. The visitor was dazzled by the abundance of light from the large French windows, the many chandeliers, the mirrors and the taste for clear, serene decoration in bright colours.

A single marble balcony ran around the whole of the building, which became a large terrace at the entrance. At the time when the palace was inhabited, the rectangular terrace facing the entrance was complemented by a frame that provided shade during the hot season, hidden by pots and trees and equipped with various amenities such as chairs, sofas, potted trees and parasols. Lighting was provided by large Biedermeier-style chandeliers with crystal drops and long wax candles. The 20 by 8 metre ballroom would have required at least 16 chandeliers, based on the average for the time. Sadly, not a single one survives. Lighting in such a large palace must have required a lot of candles, and then gas when it became available after mid-century, which is why the larger rooms faced south, certainly to make better use of the light. The furniture was appropriate to the rank of the ministers, generals and famous writers: elegant, refined, without being pretentious.

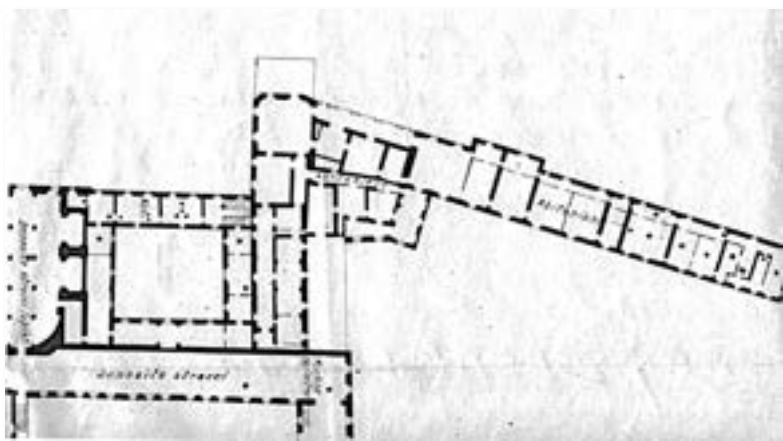
Unfortunately, everything was lost over time (except for the pieces in Villa Pisani and a decorated 'Chinese' style majolica stove still in the palace) due to the dramatic vicissitudes the palace went through, including earthquakes and foreclosures. We do know that the many windows and French windows overlooking the long balcony on the park

side had expensive, light-coloured curtains. The palace was also decorated with a large number of pictures, sculptures and paintings that covered the walls or were made directly on the doors, cupboards and sideboards. In some places it was possible to admire *trompe l'oeil* and classical or classical-inspired figures, similar to those in the nearby villa built by Ernesto in 1855, whose walls are entirely decorated with scenes reminiscent of Virgil's *Aeneid*. It is astonishing to think that the palace was next to what was for several decades the largest and most modern industry in the kingdom, with large and noisy machines driven by water and then steam turbines. For this reason, the palace should be seen as an extension of the factory, a place of representation. It was also, and not only, what in later centuries would be considered a public relations structure. In this sense, the originality of its function cannot be underestimated.

Looking at the reproduced plans, we can see that the streams that moved all those wheels and gears flowed mainly in the southern part of the building, protecting the inhabitants from the noise. Next to it was the *Stracceria*, separated by a service building, but this was the least noisy part of the work, being mainly manual. The ragging room was on the opposite side of the street, but it was relatively quiet and did not disturb domestic activities.

Next to the main room were two other large but smaller rooms. One was called the 'billiard room', where the men retired after lunch or dinner to smoke, discuss and play. The very expensive Italian-made billiard table, probably bought by Charles, still exists today. The other was the '*salle à manger*', the banqueting hall, used when there were not enough guests to require the use of the main ballroom, and certainly used when the Bourbon kings visited the Lefèbvres. We know that the Lefèbvres played the piano and that all their children and grandchildren were trained in music, so a corner of the large hall was reserved for the piano and a set of stringed instruments. Rosanne tells us this indirectly when she talks about the custom of playing and giving concerts in Isola and Naples. So, a banqueting hall, a billiard room for playing, smoking and chatting, a ballroom: the 1,200 square metre apartment on the first floor alone allowed for such an expenditure of space. We do not know

how much space was devoted to the ladies, to their chatting, to tea; probably part of the hall had sofas and chaises longues for their amusements. We do know that the three directors of Carnello, Fibreno and later Soffondo were often invited to these parties.



Lefèvre Palace.

Below, one of the former convent sides adjoined the Rag Depot.

There were at least a dozen guest rooms in the palace, which could accommodate up to 25 people in addition to the family, using the Trianon annex (circa 1855) and the 'chalet', a building also added around 1855. From the outset, the rooms were equipped with sanitary facilities: at least one for every two rooms. The room next to the master's bedroom is remarkable in De Rogatis's description: a bright little room reserved for the toilet of the lady of the house, Rosanne, with very refined accessories. The observer, far from being an aesthete, admired the fine porcelain basins, the shelves, the cast-iron supports, the marble basins, the precious taps and fittings. The same that were used by the guests.





Back of the Lefèbvre Palace and exit to the factory, “Stracceria” Department.

The next picture shows the building constructed between 1829 and 1830, with extensions added in the following decades. In this form, however, it could be considered architecturally self-sufficient: two wings, a loggia on the first floor, a balcony on the second, the entrance

from the park on the left. It was separated from the neighbouring factory by corridors and insulation.



Detail of second phase of renovation of Lefebvre Palace. After 1832.

The rooms in the palace were fitted with radiators and were therefore heated by a central heating system, which was very expensive and rare in the early 19th century. Some bedrooms had fireplaces for particularly

cold days (the entire 19th century was a very cold period: these were the years of the 'Little Modern Ice Age').

Most of the bedrooms had 'inclusions' with baths and separate 'loo rooms' (as defined by De Rogatis) with a drain and sewage system. By means of a system of pipes and a small aqueduct or tank on the roof, which filled the siphons with pumps, it was possible to use the Magnene for the toilets, which was diverted during the 1829 works to flow under the building.



Facade detail.

The bathrooms were undoubtedly fitted with an S-shaped siphon during the first decades of the house's use. Bidets, on the other hand, were not used, as far as we know, but were installed around 1880. The *water closets* that Alberto de Rogatis sees look old and give him a sense of antiquity. But when they were installed, they were a very recent invention. The plumbing was probably redone after toilets became more

widely used, that is, after the Great Exhibition of 1851 and therefore during Ernesto's renovation in 1855. The Villa and the Châlet were completed in that year.

After the building was completed in 1830, the family undertook at least two major renovations: in the mid-1940s, which doubled the size of the house, and in the 1950s. There was also a 'restorative' intervention around 1875-1876. In practice, an intervention every 20 years. From then until the arrival of De Rogatis, 40 years passed without any restoration or conservation work being carried out on the palace (or on the company, whose roofs were sagging). This is why the palace was in such a bad state at the time, not to mention the earthquake that had opened cracks in the roofs and let in a lot of water.

In any case, the palace was always considered to be very comfortable: it had a wood-burning boiler on the ground floor that heated water that was carried to every part of the palace by a system of lead and cast-iron pipes. Similar services were provided for the workers, who are not known to have ever complained, despite their very long shifts; the factory was equipped with toilets and washrooms with hot water, as the various boilers were installed throughout.

In the house on the ground floor there was a large kitchen with a large marble worktop, several cast-iron stoves and a boiler. It was equipped with chimneys, smoke extraction, several marble tables, a large collection of cooking utensils and pots and pans, some of which still existed in 1915, and a hearth. One wonders if there were canteens in the factory: they are not mentioned in the documents, but they had to exist; it is inconceivable that 400 workers, including women and children, stopped to eat at the workplace; they had to have a room where they could eat. The certain presence, because it is attested, of an internal commissary suggests that there must also have been a refectory, as well as a kindergarten and an infirmary. These services were considered essential.

Under the kitchen there was a drainage system for the water used in the Magnene through large pipes closed by grids and easily opened with handles. Next to these rooms was an icehouse, dug below street level, where blocks of ice were brought in during the winter, which lasted

throughout the summer and allowed perishable food to be stored and even sorbets to be made. Next to the icebox were large cellars, where you can imagine cheese, sausages, preserves, salt, sugar and all kinds of spices.

The kitchen had an antechamber where dishes were laid out, garnished and decorated. There was a hierarchy of service personnel: waiters, head waiters, cooks, assistant cooks, apprentices, housekeepers. Charles, and later Ernesto, used different cooks, first French and then Italian, who became members of the family. Unfortunately, their names were never recorded. In addition to the main reception rooms - the billiard room, the ballroom and the dining room - which, in those days, had to offer a remarkable scenic effect with their synthesis of French and Neapolitan refinement, the house as a whole had more than 40 rooms after 1855, including bedrooms, small rooms and bathrooms. The passage between the different rooms was discreet, thanks to the antechambers and corridors. Many of the rooms were connected by a long corridor that ran along the side of the house facing the park. There must have been a great deal of traffic along this corridor from morning to night, as it connected most of the rooms in the house. The maids had the task of tidying and arranging the rooms every morning.

Throughout the house, on the main floor, green Calabrian marble and white Carrara marble were used, while the most common type of wood was chestnut, which was abundant in the Isola area. The entire north-facing part of the house had a single long, massive balcony, which had a function similar to that of the corridor on the opposite side, although it was probably not used as a passageway. De Rogatis was astonished to discover that this balcony was made by assembling huge slabs of thick marble, which, it should be added, must have been transported at great expense at the time of construction.

Palazzo Lefèbvre was built around the concept of privacy for all those who inhabited it. Born in the upper middle class, privacy had spread to the nobility especially after the fall of the Ancien Régime. By the time of the golden age of the Lefèbvre of the first Italian generations it was spreading to all the wealthy classes. The layout of the rooms

shows a sensibility that, at the time, was mainly found in northern Italy and northern Europe: ensuring that everyone could enjoy the presence of others without being subjected to them. A 'romantic' sensibility prevailed at Lefèbvre Palace.



The elegant neoclassical façade.



## Chapter 21

### Visits in safety



Isola del Liri in the first half of the 20th century.

As we know, the Palais Lefèbvre was very close to the factory, but the noise of the water-powered machinery would not have been disturbing. Later, however, new turbines and increased production with larger machines made it difficult to live there. For this reason, Ernesto probably built the Villa physically separate from the factory buildings to protect it from vibrations and tremors.

We must therefore imagine a palace comfortable for the life of a large family, but also suitable for industrial representation. In fact, it was an extension of the Manifattura del Fibreno. It could not function with less than 30 employees, as attested by the letters, who were housed on the top floor and in the outbuildings. On the ground floor, in addition to the kitchen and the icehouse, there were large storerooms, service



rooms for cleaning, a laundry with running water, a coal room, a woodshed, entrances to the factory and some smaller rooms on the mezzanine floor.

We know that the entrance hall and the staircase leading from the ground floor to the first floor were decorated with 'fake' frescoes, i.e. paper decorated with brightly coloured tempera paint, glued to the walls. At the beginning of the 20th century these were almost completely discoloured and mouldy due to the dilapidation of the roof, which was leaking with the rain. With a little care and money they could have been saved. In the beginning they must have been bright and colourful and their scenic effect remarkable. Some parts of the building were also covered with a fine two-tone grey and pale yellow wallpaper, made by Lefèbvre himself at the Manifattura del Fibreno. What better way to show the beauty of its production? Another set of artefacts is missing at the time of the visit: books. The Fibreno factories were famous for printing hundreds of valuable books, often art books. In the 19th century, these books made it the most prestigious printing house in pre-unification Naples. On various occasions, Lefèbvre's guests cited these publications for their value, the quality of the paper and the colours. It was also a sort of sample book for the technicians and patrons, who always visited Isola to check the quality of the paper before commissioning. By 1915 there was no longer any trace of the large sample book.

It is also interesting to note that, in several places, the corridor that ran the full length of the ballroom, the banquet hall, the rooms, the billiard room, had compartments connecting with the factory. These compartments were closed with thick wooden covers between December 1892 and January 1893 when the Stabilimento del Fibreno was leased to the Società delle Cartiere Meridionali. The fact that they were wooden 'tompagnature' suggests that a definitive solution was not initially considered. When he ordered those gaps to be sealed, Francesco Lefèbvre hoped to recover the factory. Later, partly due to the tortuous and warlike events that divided him from the management of the Cartiere Meridionali, it was gradually sold, between 1903 and 1907 also due to the accumulated debts owed to them or repairs and

work owed to third parties. During this period, the walls were rebuilt in masonry. After 1907, the new owners had actual walls built and the separation between Palazzo and factory became definitive.

On the other hand, the Villino Trianon, a two-storey building, about 30 metres wide and 15 metres deep, which stood in the Fondo Strada dei Gelsi before San Carlo, was a tribute to the lost monarchy. The name was intended to recall, in function or plan, the *Petit Trianon*, a casino of delight built at Versailles in 1768. Built by Charles around 1830 and enlarged around 1855, we know that it was considered a place for banquets in fine weather and in autumn. On its two floors it could comfortably accommodate visiting industrialists and their families, leaving them privacy and tranquillity amidst the orchards. It was for a long time, above all, the home of the directors of the Fabbrica San Carlo. It probably had a vast hall, some retreats, a fireplace. It appears to have had as many as seven rooms, about 400 square metres in total.

Rosanne never mentions it, but it is true that her focus in the *Journal* is all on the names of the guests, the times of their stay and the dates, little describing the places, except generically 'the beauty' of the picturesque nature that surrounded the Palazzo.



*The Petit Trianon.*

Returning to the internal passages between the house and the factory, they tell us something very interesting: in the years when the complex belonged to a single owner, a generous master and ingenious industrialist, guests could easily reach the central part of the factory, where paper was produced, through a system of corridors and passageways. We have the testimony of guests who also saw the machines, such as the historian Gregorovius, one of many. The tour that the Lefèbvres gave to their guests, whether they were interested industrialists or just curious, took place in an environment that was not safe: the machines were dangerous, noisy, full of moving mechanical parts such as cogwheels and belts. There were large quantities of finished or semi-finished paper, acids, rags, transported on trolleys pulled by hand or pushed on rails. The Manifattura del Fibreno premises were brighter than other factories, but still noisy and dangerous, although there are no records of many industrial accidents. It was not until the end of the century, after 1880, that the factories were equipped with safety devices (doors, covers, prohibited areas). It is easy to see how visitors, especially women with their elaborate dresses and long hair, were exposed to risks. Looking at the premises in their present state, we can understand that these visits were carried out in accordance with special safety rules and through passages that allowed a partially elevated passage between the residential building and the factory on the first floor. There was no language yet to describe the new machines, so the reactions of these visitors were generally astonishment at the technological advances. The Palazzo Lefèvre became a comfortable and ideal stage to show the beauty of the place and the wonders of technology. Also part of the show was the Soffondo, which was built vertically on three levels on a steep bank of the river, a cliff under which the water swirled, and this system made it easier to look down on the Dutch pomace mills and the millstones where the rags were turned into paste. Paths and walkways, now demolished, were used to visit these "marvels of technology", traces of which can be found in the walls of the buildings; other clues are confirmed by the way in which the visits were told.



Soffondo (side view).

The passage from the house on the ground floor to the ground floor of the factory, where the large machines were installed, was made by wooden walkways, which allowed everyone to see without getting too close and provided a safe route. The large, noisy machines, driven by long shafts, the paper machine, the mixers, the profilers, could be viewed from small balconies, safe walkways. There was a flight of steps that led to the side of the Soffondo where the park, called Parco delle Cascatelle, continued.

The picture above shows the side of the Soffondo in the direction of Isola. In this area the park continued literally surrounding the establishments. The bank was rather steep, there were wooden balustrades to protect against accidental falls, but we know that what the landlady called the Parco delle Cascatelle constituted a remarkable landscape; it looked down on the Liri river, which was embedded there in the midst of higher and therefore foaming banks. Thus, the spectacle of industry and tamed but lively nature persisted in the Palazzo of Isola.



Budaut, detail. River towards the waterfall: the 'Cascatelle'.

On the other hand, it is significant that the second generation of the Lefèbvre family in Naples, in the person of Ernesto, built a large villa even more clearly separated from the Palazzo Lefèbvre. The large villa, in direct and clear reference to Parisian architecture, is situated about a hundred steps from the facade of the palace, separated from the building by its own garden. This separation was in keeping with models that had become popular in Belgium and France at the end of the 19th century. However, unlike the former, the villa was never occupied by the family and after 1860 was given to the directors of the factory.

The life of the now ennobled Lefèbvre family took them further and further away from the factory. Ernesto was a skilful entrepreneur, but also a nobleman with considerable financial resources. While his first sister, who died in 1843, was very close to Isola, his youngest sister, Maria Luisa, rarely visited him after her marriage to Gioacchino, Count of Bagnara. Her places, her itineraries, changed and she became estranged from the affairs of the Manifattura del Fibreno. Ernesto took care of the factories, but less directly than his father, especially after a certain age. He made less use of the palace and the villa. His wife, Teresa Doria d'Angria, came to Isola often in the early years, then less and less. Significantly, an important square in the centre of the town, between the two waterfalls, was named after Isola, Piazza Teresa Doria;

later the name was changed to Piazza Boncompagni and Teresa's name was given to a nearby street. It is as if the passage of the Lefèbvre was just one stage in a much longer story.



Piazza Boncompagni, formerly Piazza Teresa Doria.

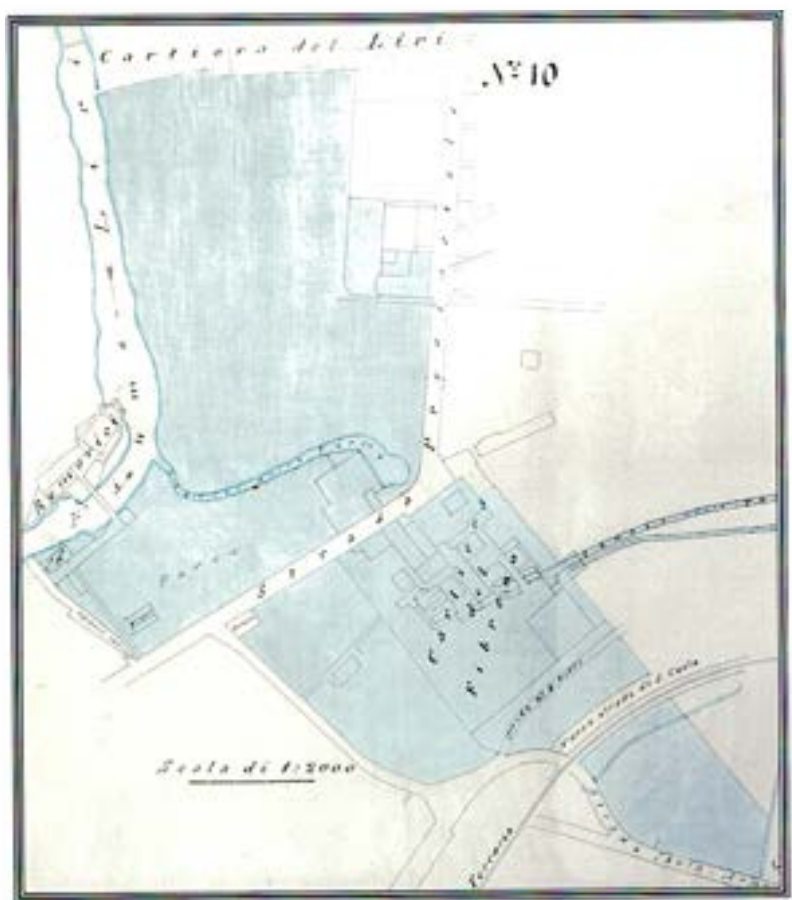
As for the children, they became even more estranged: the eldest, Carlo, spent his entire youth away from the affairs of the factories and left Naples: he was interested in money, not industry. Flavia, in keeping with the custom of the time, received a donation for her marriage and then lived her life as a marquise of the international jet-set, married to Pedro de Toledo, Marquis of Casafuerte, ambassador to St Petersburg, and then spent most of the rest of her life in Paris. We have no record of her returning to the Isola factories, except perhaps hastily and in passing. Only Francesco, the youngest son, lived in the palace with his wife Giselle and tried to save the factories by surviving the paper industry crisis that hit the whole of Valla del Liri from the 1870s.



Villa Lefèbvre.

The above-mentioned villa, built in a distinctly Parisian style and now known as Villa Nota Pisani, is unique in the Ciociaria. Connected to the Fabbrica delle Forme, it was only occasionally inhabited by Ernesto. Over time, the various directors of the factory moved in. For a long time it was a real annex to the Lefèbvre production units. On the right of the photo is the Lefèbvre Palace and in the background, barely visible, is the large, now disused, Cartiere Meridionali complex.

The villa was thus an integral part of the Lefèbvre factories, but it never replaced the palace, its use being linked to the needs of the factories and the need to provide comfortable accommodation for the directors, always highly experienced and sometimes very famous people.



Extension of the Fabbrica delle Forme and the Lefèbvre  
or Cascatelle Park.





## Chapter 22

### The visits of royalty

The Lefèbvre family was accustomed to receiving visits from princes, heirs to the throne, ambassadors, politicians and ministers, but in 1832 they received two visits from the reigning monarch: to Naples and to Isola. In the following years there were two more visits that symbolically represented two periods and two models of monarchy: in 1858 (heir to the throne) and in 1884, in Turin. These events sum up the evolution of Italian history.

The first is recorded in Rosanne Lefèbvre's diary and refers to May 1832, the year in which all the renovations to the factory were completed. It is worth quoting the whole passage because it represents an act of homage by a sovereign to an industrial excellence of the kingdom, which is often cited. Rosanne therefore wrote

Year 1832. We began with a visit from Mr. Belleli [...] then: Marquis Gioja; the Duke of Terra Nova; young Balzo. The Lushington family spent ten very pleasant days here. We had beautiful rides in the surrounding countryside [...] we had musical competitions and read aloud. After their stay, Mr. de Rothschild sent us a German family consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Bimpfen and their sons, Emile and Alphonse. They stayed only two days. As soon as we left these last visitors, in the evening, as we were going to bed, we heard a mail horse stop at the door. It brought us a note written in pencil from the Princess Maximus of Rome, whom I did not know but of whom I had often heard from Madame Salvage [...], asking me to receive her, her husband, her children and her niece. I was delighted to meet them. The next day, after lunch, they left for Rome. Around the 18th of June, we had the pleasant visit of Madame La Ferronays, accompanied by her daughters Eugénie and Pauline, Count

Heitzelten and Count Esterhazy. They spent six days here, during which time we also received Mr. Arpino from Naples.<sup>198</sup>

The first part of this story shows a crescendo of visits to the site, made famous by travelogues, engravings and paintings in Naples describing the City of Waterfalls. Belleli was a wealthy banker related to the Degas; German guests sent by the Rothschilds followed. But it was not over yet. When the family planned to return to Naples, a royal visit was announced.

On the 12th of July, when we were about to return to Naples, my husband received official news that the King was coming to Sora. So the authorities of that town met in the *Forme* to discuss how to receive him in the most worthy manner. They began to ask my cook to prepare the two dinners that were planned; so we sent to Isola everything that was necessary to prepare the *Casino Marsella*: sheets, linen, silver, crockery, etc., and then my servants to receive the guests. At 8 o'clock in the evening we were in front of our house, in the least suitable condition, my husband (who had come in a hurry from Naples), my children and I; we were watching the construction of a triumphal arch that was to be made for the king's passage the next day, when suddenly we heard a great clattering of horses on the *Carnello* side; it was the steward and his retinue. He announced that the king, exhausted by his efforts, had taken the shortest route, the opposite of the one he was supposed to take. Bored by the honours he had received at Arpino, he wanted to avoid more by visiting our factory.<sup>199</sup>

That visit followed another one that the king had made to the *Stamperia del Fibreno* on 30 May, where an exhibition had been set up with a sample of the papers produced at the paper mill and the books printed. The *Stamperia* had changed its name and location and had moved to *Calata di Trinità Maggiore*, a large, spacious place with warehouses and a 'display' of books. The king was impressed by this and so a little over a month later, deciding on a visit to Sora, he let it be known that he also wanted to visit the machines.

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<sup>198</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 8.

<sup>199</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, pp. 8-9.

The King's visit was announced on the 12th of July, and discussions began immediately on how to accommodate this illustrious guest. The Palazzo Mazzetti, which was empty at the time, was chosen and all the material for the reception - cooks, food, bedding, crockery - was brought from the Palazzo Lefèbvre with a column of maids and cooks. Then the King arrived, unannounced and early, to find Rosanne unprepared. The king appeared at the door of the palace, in the courtyard in front of the factory, with a large retinue of ministers, soldiers and dignitaries such as Count Statella, Generals Saluzzo and Gaetani, Signor Alfani, Count di Sangro, the Minister of Police and the Intendant, i.e. the president of the province of Terra di Lavoro, who was staying at the Lefèbvre. In a deliberate and well-considered move, the King honoured the reputation of the Manifattura del Fibreno.

And I was so unprepared for this blow that I began to cry out: 'This is impossible'. In fact it was too late, but five minutes later His Majesty was at our door. So we had to put on a good face to receive a King in slippers. His entourage consisted of Count Statella, the aides, Generals Saluzzo and Gaetani, Mr. Alfani, the Count of Sangro, the Count of Sragone (sic), the Minister of Police, the Intendant, two secretaries, two valets and ten servants. His stay lasted 24 hours [...] The King's indulgence, which was not yet known, and his extreme kindness helped us to overcome the inconveniences of a double surprise. We ate in a situation greatly affected by our state of emergency and, above all, by the absence of the cook. We told the king everything, and he was the first to laugh. The poor man had been locked in the kitchens since eight o'clock in the morning; the only way he could get out was to climb out of a window [...] then the King, as if to apologise for the vigil he had imposed on us, but having decided to eat at the *Forme*, invited Luisa himself [...] there was general merriment [...] my husband cooked a roast, and so well that I only found out afterwards that the King was delighted with it. After our visit, we had coffee at the *Cascatelles*', much to the delight of the retinue. The King himself had forgotten and had to be reminded that he had to go to Sora, where a large crowd was waiting to see him. He left us gracefully, showing his gratitude, and we were ashamed to have received him in such an unworthy

manner. He condescended to accept a fan which he had taken with him to dinner, and which he said he kept as an aid against the heat...<sup>200</sup>

Everything was prepared at the Palazzo Mazzetti, but he declared that he did not want to stay there and wanted to dine at the Forme. Before dinner, at 8 o'clock, he escaped from the building through a window to avoid the crowd that would have stopped him. Of course, the whole thing was a joke: he was a 22-year-old boy, exuberant, witty, and spoke in dialect. Arriving to Palazzo Lefèbvre, he was welcomed and began a visit that lasted 24 hours. He slept there, contrary to previous arrangements, and visited the entire complex, the machines, the upper and lower factories. Rosanne gave a brief account, full of wonder and sympathy, and it is the only one we have.



Young Ferdinand II. In 1832 he paid a double visit: on 30 May to the Stamperia del Fibreno and on 12 July to the Fabbrica delle Forme.

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<sup>200</sup> AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, pp. 9-10.

What Charles had written in a memoir was lost when, according to Achille Lauri, he was taken to the castle of Balsorano, half destroyed by the earthquake of 1915.

According to the hostess, the king ate Charles's fried food, which he loved, and the two of them, accompanied by the royal retinue of course, drank coffee while strolling in the Cascatelle Park, on the banks of the Liri, next to the imposing buildings of the Soffondo. Every part of the factory, as well as the palace, was new, rebuilt and gigantic by the industrial standards of the time. It is here that we can better understand why Charles Lefèbvre, a shrewd diplomat and aware of the novelty he was introducing, had his palace built very close to the factory, contrary to the customs of the time.

The next morning - the timing is obvious - the king wanted to visit the "exhibition" of the paper mill. During this tour, he was told how the machines worked and how the whole production process worked: a visit to the man with the crown was the same as a visit to the factory, and so the king could do so without offending anyone. To visit the house was to pay homage to the factory, to its activity, to its novelty. This day is described in Rosanne's vivid account, a small masterpiece of memoir that follows the pamphlet published a little earlier, which illustrates the King's more formal visit to the paper and printing exhibition at the Stamperia in Naples a month earlier.<sup>201</sup>

Ferdinand II had just succeeded Francis I at the inauguration ceremony on 12 January 1830, when he was 20 years old. In his official and private dealings, he showed himself to be very friendly and well-disposed towards the Lefèbvre family, and so he bound them closely to his household by introducing them to the Court, then to the Constituent Assembly, and finally by granting them the comital nobilisation *ad personam*. A lover of technological innovation, it was he who promoted the construction of the Naples-Portici railway, encouraged the great

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<sup>201</sup> *Mostra di carta e di caratteri della stamperia e cartiera del Fibreno ... nella solenne esposizione del dì 30 maggio 1832 giorno onomastico di Ferdinando secondo re delle Due Sicilie, Cartiera del Fibreno, Isola del Liri, 1832.*

workshops of Pietrarsa and boosted the merchant navy. Today we regret that he did not do enough, that his promises of innovation and support for industry were only sporadically followed by action. However, it must be remembered that the Bourbon kingdom was subject to a process of political and economic encirclement that drained it of much of its energy, and that private initiative was always lacking. In any case, the Lefèbvres, like other French, Swiss and German families, were the flagship of his modernisation policy.

At the time of the visit, the factory and the house still smelled of fresh lime and paint, everything was new and shiny; Achille Lauri, who visited in 1910, before it had been emptied, described Palazzo Balsorano as still 'splendid' and later commented: 'The annals of the Lefèbvre family must not forget this date, which greatly honoured their leader'.<sup>202</sup>

On 4 May 1859, Prince Umberto of Savoy came to visit the paper mills and stayed at the home of Natale Sorvillo, who had moved from the Bourbons to the Savoy banking structures. Umberto also visited the Boimond paper mill and stayed at the Manifattura del Fibreno, the largest paper mill in Italy at the time. Ernesto was in Paris at the time to avoid possible reprisals and the war that was raging in the area. He had rented a large apartment in the Rue des Capucines in Paris and would live there with his family for a few years, with some trips to Italy. It was there that his daughter Giulia was born. Despite their ties to the Bourbons, the Lefèbvre family swore allegiance to the new king, who had unified Italy at the cost of a bloody war. The new rulers continued to recognise the value and importance of the paper mills of the Liri Valley, and the Manifattura del Fibreno was praised, for example, in the *Illustrazione italiana* (no. 10, 1881).

At the National Exhibition in Turin in 1884, the Fibreno mills were once again honoured by a royal visit from the new king of unified Italy. The journalist Raffaele Erculei, considering the production and prestige of the Manifattura del Fibreno, praised it and acknowledged that it had

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<sup>202</sup> Lauri Achille, *I Lefèbvre*, Isola del Liri 1910, p. 8.

made great progress. Referring to the wallpaper produced by the Forme factory and printed in San Carlo, he wrote in issue 35 of *Illustrazione italiana* (31 August 1884).

«By perfecting their technical systems and applying a series of new designs, such as the showcase on display in Turin, which we are presenting to our readers in this issue. [...]. There are reproductions of antique Venetian fabrics, tapestries from Genoa and Florence, tapestries based on originals in the Corsini Gallery in Rome, brocades copied by Cretonnez from 17th and 18th century originals with good artistic taste. The Milan jury's report praised the Fibreno for the variety of its designs, so that, as we would say from this side, it has made great progress, even though in Italy it is very difficult to have designs for fabric and paper, and we are unfortunately far from the progress made in France, where in Paris alone there are more than 300 industrial design studios at the service of artistic industries. It is to be hoped that the schools of applied arts in industry, subsidised by the State, will provide Italy with a number of talented draughtsmen, so that our products will not have to fear foreign competition in the future, even in terms of harmony of form and colour. The wallpaper industry has a very short history in Italy. Its invention is attributed to the Chinese and in Europe it dates back only to the 17th century. [...]. The first appearance of this industry in Italy was at the Milan Exhibition of 1881, with the products of the late Carlo Oggioni, the Giovanni Ferro company and, above all, the Stabilimenti del Fibreno. [...]. A very rare machine, specially built in the Gontani Marten workshop in Paris, prints up to 24 different colours simultaneously and can produce up to 1,200 rolls of paper per day. Fibreno has factories in Naples, Rome, Milan and Turin, and this year has even exported its paper to South America. We are sure that this very important industry, which brings so much honour to our country, will find in the jury of the Turin Exhibition the just rewards that the quality, quantity, beauty and good price of its decorative papers deserve».<sup>203</sup>

Note that he praised not only the technique, but also the taste and refinement. The article is accompanied by two illustrations, one of

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<sup>203</sup> Ercolei Raffaele, *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, n. 35, 31 agosto 1884, Treves, Milano 1884, p. 135.



which is an engraving by Ettore Ximenes: *La mostra degli Stabilimenti del Fibreno, visitata delle loro maestà (The exhibition of the Stabilimenti del Fibreno, visited by Their Majesties)*. They were present in two sections of the exhibition, that of wallpaper, which was considered spectacular, and that of paper production. After visiting the entire exhibition, the Savoy monarchs stayed longer in the Fibreno wallpaper pavilion, where it was decided to immortalise them in an engraving, probably from a photograph.

This was an example of Italian excellence that could be proudly displayed at an international level, while in the paper and papermaking sector itself, the Isola del Liri factory was joined in 1884 by other industries, particularly in northern Italy (Lombardy and Veneto in particular).

It was Count Ernesto Lefèbvre, then 63 years old, who received the royals. The picture shows delegates, organisers and ministers, with the royals in the centre, approaching Lefèbvre, who shakes hands with them. They are all under a large pavilion. On the left of the picture is a large sample book, and the wall behind it shows the wallpaper spread over a large area.

The royal stay was due to the prestige of the production: the Manifattura del Fibreno had several competitors at the time, especially in northern Italy, such as the Rossi di Perale di Arserio factories, but in the field of mechanical and handmade wallpaper production it maintained absolute supremacy, rivalling French and English papers in terms of quality.

The sample album, as you can see from the picture, is very well stocked with probably dozens of different designs and colours. The large display case is closed on three sides by glass, but open at the front, allowing visitors to touch and appreciate the cards on display.



Umberto I and Margaret of Savoy approach Ernesto Lefèbvre  
at the Fibreno Pavilion. Turin Exhibition 1884.

The visit of Umberto I (1844-1900) and Margherita (1851-1926), in the heart of the Bell Époque and the ultimately not insignificant splendour of Umbertine Italy, would be another highlight of the Fibreno's career, the third visit of a royal after the two of Francis II in May and June 1832.



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