

NODI DI STORIA DELL'EDUCAZIONE

COLLANA DEL CENTRO ITALIANO PER LA RICERCA
STORICO-EDUCATIVA (CIRSE)

I

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La collana è espressione delle attività del Centro Italiano per la Ricerca Storico-Educativa (CIRSE). Raccoglie studi originali e specialistici su questioni riguardanti la storia della pedagogia, la storia della scuola e delle istituzioni educative, la letteratura per l'infanzia e l'educazione comparata. Ospita volumi in lingua italiana e nelle principali lingue europee, favorendo la tendenza degli studi storico-educativi verso la dimensione comparativa e internazionale.

Education of Italian Elites

Case-Studies XIX–XX Centuries

edited by

Angelo Gaudio

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The education of Italian elites

An open historiographical question

ANGELO GAUDIO*

The education of Italian elites in the contemporary age is still far from a definite historiographical specific subject and overall focus is still under development. We have instead of a state of significant studies to other comparable domestic cases, such as the French one¹.

Historiography on universities shows greater overall consciousness thanks to the activities of Centro Interuniversitario per la Storia delle Università Italiane (CISUI) and the «Annali di storia delle università», while the role of secondary schools as institutions appointed to the formation of elites is incidentally asserted, both in the synthesis such as those of the Scotto Luzio², Santoni Rugiu³ and miscellaneous books⁴ as in case studies such as that of Cingari about the “Liceo Dante” of Florence⁵ but it is far from a specific problematization.

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1. *Une histoire de l'éducation et de la formation*, coord. TROGER V., Editions sciences humaines, Auxerre 2006, pp. 33–40, *L'école des elites entre le xvie et le xixe siècle*.

2. *Il liceo classico*, il Mulino, Bologna 1999.

3. *La lunga storia della scuola secondaria*, Carocci, Roma 2007.

4. CIRSE, *L'istruzione secondaria superiore in Italia da Casati ai giorni nostri*, a cura di E. Bosna e G. Genovesi, Cacucci, Bari 1988; C.G. Lacaïta, M. Fugazza (a cura di), *L'istruzione secondaria nell'Italia unita. 1861–1901*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2013.

5. *Un'ideologia per il ceto dirigente dell'Italia unita: pensiero e politica al Liceo Dante di Firenze (1853–1945)*, Olschki, Firenze 2012. Altri casi toscani: A. GAUDIO, *Una nuova*

This book aims to present some case studies that can offer materials for the construction of a history of the formation of the different Italian elites in time (from the the early nineteenth century until 1945) and in space (Sicily, Pisa e Trieste).

Caterina Sindoni⁶ offers an overview of the main educational and didactic institutions where most part of the Sicilian élite was educated from the second half of the XVIIIth century, immediately after the expulsion of the Company of Jesus from the island in 1767, to the Italian Unification. Tamara Colacicco⁷ presents an aspect of the history of the English university which is at the same time a moment in the history of the fascist soft power in England. Andrea Dessardo⁸ shows how educational choices intertwine with national ones in the last Austrian Trieste.

Andrea Mariuzzo⁹ offers a review of historiography on the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, the oldest and most presti-

fondazione scolopica: il Collegio Convitto delle Scuole Pie alla Badia Fiesolana 1876–1915, L. Pazzaglia (a cura di), *Cattolici, educazione e trasformazioni socio-economiche in Italia tra Otto e Novecento*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1999, pp. 401–417. I. REGOLI – G. NANNI, *Convitto nazionale Cicognini 1692–1992: tre secoli di cultura*, P. PENTALINEA, Prato 1993. G. Zanibelli (a cura di), *Il Liceo classico di Siena I. Dal Granducato allo Stato liberale*, Nuova Immagine Editrice, Siena 2012.

6. C. SINDONI, *La formazione dell'élite in Sicilia tra Settecento ed Ottocento. Il "Collegio cutelliano" di Catania*, in «Quaderni di Intercultura», Anno VIII/2016, ISSN 2035–858X, DOI 10.3271/M41, pp. 55–73.

7. T. COLACICCO, *L'emigrazione intellettuale italiana in Inghilterra. I docenti universitari di italianistica tra fascismo e antifascismo, 1921–1939*, in *The Italianist*, n. 1, 2015, pp. 157–170. ID., *Il fascismo e gli Italian Studies in Gran Bretagna. Le strategie e i risultati della propaganda*, in *California Italian Studies*, n. 2, 2016, pp. 1–21.

8. A. DESSARDO, *Le ultime trincee. Politica e vita scolastica a Trento e Trieste, 1918–1923*, La Scuola, Brescia 2015.

9. A. MARIUZZO, *Scuole di responsabilità. I "Collegi nazionali" nella Normale gentiliana (1932–1944)*, Edizioni della Normale, Pisa 2010; ID., *Italian Universities, Fascism and the Promotion of Corporative Studies*, «Journal Of Modern Italian Studies», 2014, pp. 453–471; ID., *La Scuola Normale di Pisa negli anni Trenta, in Croce e Gentile. La cultura italiana e l'Europa*, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 2016, pp. 627–632; ID., *'Semenzaio' di docenti, 'seminario scientifico' e luogo di avviamento alla ricerca. La Scuola Normale di Pisa e il sistema d'istruzione italiano negli studi recenti*, in «Rivista di storia dell'educazione», 2016, 2, pp. 69–74.

gious Italian university institution of excellence. Daria Gabusi¹⁰ present an aspect of the history of the the so-called “Italian Social Republic” (Repubblica Sociale Italiana, RSI) or “of Salò” fascism.

A first version of these texts has been presented at the International Congress on “Society, Education and Elites” — Panel *Education of Italian Elites. Case-Studies XIX–XX Centuries* — University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain, 19 May, 2017.

10. *La scuola nella RSI. Maestre e maestri tra fascismo e resistenza: indifferenza, adesione e militanza*, in «Annali dell'Archivio della Resistenza e dell'Età contemporanea di Brescia», 2015, pp. 137–174.

Fascist propaganda abroad and the activities of Italian Studies academic staff in inter-war Britain

A transnational case study

TAMARA COLACICCO*

This article focuses on propaganda strategies developed by the Fascist regime during the inter-war period with Italian *émigrés* who were professors and lecturers. In so doing, it elaborates the role played by Italian intellectuals in both diffusing Italian culture abroad and highlighting Mussolini's policies. Since the 1990s scholars of Fascism have tended to accord preeminence to Mussolini's search for approval and related propaganda policies, analysing the strategies addressed to foreigners and efforts to gain control over emigrant Italians politically organised in the Fasci. The Fasci centred on it have been explored, the activity of Italian intellectual elites living abroad has remained unexamined. So, by taking Britain as a case study, this research fills that gap in the current historiography and

* Tamara Colacicco is visiting fellow, University of London, Institute of Modern Languages Research, London. Mail: colaciccotamara@gmail.com. *Acknowledgements* – This article has been written as a result of my paper presentation at the International Congress on “Society, Education and Elites” (University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain, 19 May, 2017). It is based on some aspects of my Ph.D., *Strade e volti della propaganda estera fascista. La diffusione dell’italiano in Gran Bretagna, 1921–1940* (FrancoAngeli, Milano – forthcoming 2018 under the definitive title *La propaganda fascista nelle università inglesi. La diplomazia culturale di Mussolini in Gran Bretagna*). This research has been financed by the University of Reading (Department of Modern Languages and European Studies). A special thanks is due to my main supervisor, Professor Christopher Duggan (1957–2015) for his generous criticism and the suggestions he provided me when I was developing these topics and to Professor Angelo Gaudio for having offered me the opportunity to share the fruits of my work at Bilbao.

identifies a new avenue for gaining a deeper understanding of propaganda work aimed beyond Italy, and for exploring the “duality” and aims of Fascist inter-war strategies.

Introduction

Between the late 1990s and the 2000s, the academic debate about Mussolini’s search for consensus moved from considerations of the internal Italian situation to those of foreign policy. The newest trends in the historiography of Fascist Italy include a scholarly interest in Fascism’s attempts to exercise political control over emigrant Italians and Mussolini’s efforts to influence foreign public opinion and individuals. The dictator focused attention on emigrants through the Italian Fasci Abroad (Fasci). The Fasci, recognised by Mussolini in 1923, were National Fascist Party (PNF) branches established outside Italian national boundaries. Contributions from Roberta Suzzi Valli and Claudia Baldoli have prioritised the Fasci in the UK, with particular focus on London¹. Established in 1921, only the second branch to be set up after that in Lugano, Switzerland, the London Fascio involved around 1,000 individuals, working mainly in restaurants and ice cream sales². Research by Pietro Pinna has also investigated the Fasci in France, outlining that, while Britain and the Us applied restrictions to immigration during the first post-war period, the French government supported Italian and foreign immigrants between 1927–1938 in the hope of

1. See R. SUZZI VALLI, *Il Fascio italiano a Londra. L’attività politica di Camillo Pellizzi*, in «Storia Contemporanea», n. 6, 1995, pp. 957–1001; C. BALDOLI, *Exporting Fascism. Italian Fascists and Britain’s Italians in the 1930s*, Berg, Oxford–New York 2003 and Id., *I Fasci italiani in Gran Bretagna*, in *Il fascismo e gli emigrati, La parabola dei Fasci italiani all’estero, 1920–1943*, edited by E. FRANZINA and M. SANFILIPPO, Laterza, Napoli–Bari 2003, pp. 53–74.

2. See on the London Fascio and on the social and professional conditions of Italians living in Britain’s capital R. SUZZI VALLI, 1995, *op. cit.*, pp. 957–959 and the second work by Baldoli quoted in the previous footnote, p. 64.

obtaining the labour power required in growing iron and mining industries³.

While attempting to influence emigrants, Fascism also paid attention to persuading the foreign public. To this end, from the early 1930^s onwards, the dictator promoted an attractive picture of Italy and its development under Fascism. This policy led to the establishment in 1933–1934 of a specific department concerned with foreign propaganda matters: the Propaganda Directorate–General (DGP), the first unit under the Ministry for Popular Culture (MINCULPOP), which was established in 1937⁴. As shown by Benedetta Garzarelli’s investigation of the case studies of France and Germany, Fascism’s interest in influencing foreign audiences included unofficial and “semi-illegal” activities such as the production of propaganda pamphlets or articles for local newspapers and “official” enterprises organised by the Fascist bureaucracy with the approval of governments in the host nations⁵. The development of Fascist Italy’s propaganda policies abroad was assisted by feelings of benevolence toward Mussolini in some European democratic countries in the years up to 1935. In France, for instance, two years before the Mussolini–Laval agreements, the innovation of the dictator’s domestic policies, such as Corporatism, and fear about the rise of Nazism in Germany resulted in the repressive and antidemocratic aspects of the dictatorship being viewed as marginal⁶.

By focusing on the UK situation, this article identifies a new avenue of investigation into multidimensional aspects of the dictatorship’s search for approval abroad, filling a gap in the secondary literature available. In so doing, rather than focus-

3. P. PINNA, *Migranti italiani tra fascismo e antifascismo. La scoperta della politica in due regioni francesi*, CLUEB, Bologna 2012, pp. 11–21.

4. B. GARZARELLI, *Fascismo e propaganda all'estero. Le origini della Direzione Generale per la propaganda*, in *Studi Storici*, n. 2, 2002, pp. 478–520, here p. 478 and ID., «Parleremo al mondo intero». *La propaganda del fascismo all'estero*, Edizioni Dell’Orso, Alessandria 2004, pp. 34–6 and pp. 193–208.

5. ID., «Parleremo al mondo intero», pp. 67–71.

6. Ivi, p. 67.

ing on middle and lower class emigrants' political life in the inter-war period, it analyses Italians from the perspective of emigrant intellectuals, assessing the value of their activities and links with the broader exercise of Fascist propaganda.

1. Fascist propaganda in the UK between “official” and “unofficial” activities

The operation of Fascist propaganda abroad was complex and multidimensional, including the workings of official institutions strictly related to the Italian government in Rome on the one hand and, on the other, the exercise of cultural strategies through which Fascism aimed to act as a “soft power”. In particular, although the contribution offered by consulates was also significant, in Britain the Italian Embassy in London was the main centre for Fascist propaganda related to official institutions. While it had played this role in the 1920^s, this was accelerated under ambassador Dino Grandi between 1932 and 1939⁷. Three central aspects of Grandi's strategy in Britain's capital had been to promote the “fascistisation” of Italians assembled in the London Fascio and to develop relations with British audiences such as local Fascists⁸.

I will show that previously unexplored Ministry of Foreign Affairs' papers held at Farnesina, Rome, by the *Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri* (ASMAE), particularly those in *Archivio Scuole* (AS), indicate that the propaganda that was developed outside official institutions between the end of the 1920^s and throughout the 1930^s was mostly disseminated by

7. See N. LABANCA, *Politica e propaganda. Emigrazione e Fasci all'estero*, in E. COLLOTTI, *Fascismo e politica di potenza. Politica estera, 1922–1939*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 2000, pp. 137–172, particularly pp. 162–163 and C. BALDOLI, *Exporting Fascism*, cit., pp. 11–12, pp. 37–49 and pp. 159–180.

8. See C. BALDOLI, *Exporting Fascism*, cit., pp. 37–49 and pp. 97–101. See also S. DORRIL, Stephen, *Blackshirt. Sir Oswald Mosley and British Fascism*, Viking, London 2006, p. 361.

Italian Studies professors and lecturers (*italianisti*) and spread through cultural environments involved with universities and outside academia. It must also be considered that before the Second World War the diffusion of Italian culture and politics abroad was consistently used to carry out anti-Fascist propaganda. As the case of Gaetano Salvemini shows, this was true in Britain as well as in other democratic countries such as France and the US. Indeed, before being employed by Harvard University in 1933, Salvemini moved to Britain more than once and, though he travelled often to Paris during the mid-1920^s, he also temporarily lived in London and Manchester. Between 1926 and 1934, Salvemini applied for professorship positions in history and Italian at Bedford College, London, and at the University of Cambridge. However, his attempts remained unsuccessful due to the control exercised by the Fascist regime in selecting most applicants proposed for academic vacancies abroad⁹.

Previous research has investigated the Italian government's promotion of the diffusion of Italian language and culture for the purposes of propaganda aimed at emigrant communities abroad and to relaunch Italian cultural prestige among foreigners in many overseas countries including the Us, South America and Australia¹⁰. However, the activities pursued by the *italianisti* in synergy with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MAE) have not yet been investigated, and an exploration of these allows us to reconstruct the complexity of the propaganda operation during the inter-war years, taking Britain as a case study. Such approach also improves our understanding on the political uses of Italian language and culture abroad between the 1920^s and Italy's entry into the Second World War and outlines how the regime attempted to influence both emigrants and foreign citizens.

9. T. COLACICCO, *L'emigrazione intellettuale italiana in Inghilterra. I docenti universitari di italianistica tra fascismo ed antifascismo 1921-1939*, in *The Italianist*, n. 1, 2015, pp. 157-170. On Salvemini's attempts in Britain see *ivi*, pp. 160-162.

10. F. CAVAROCCHI, *Avanguardie dello spirito. Il fascismo e la propaganda culturale all'estero*, Carocci, Roma 2010, pp. 208-212.