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Trends in linguistic, scholastic and educational policies in trentino and Alto Adige (1919-1939)

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ABSTRACT. The text proposes the examination of school and educational policy choices made in the territories of Trentino and Alto Adige, for German and Ladin speaking minorities in the time period between the end of the first major world conflict and the beginning of the second. During the historical period under consideration, the territories of the new provinces were headquarters and object of multiple political, economic and cultural operations, marked by different and opposite strategies: referrals of implicit nationalist trend which attributed extensive legislative powers to central authorities, were replaced by more democratic guidelines, that embraced local autonomies and recognized the rights of the minorities. Search for a political balance between the two instances, which was initially pursued, left the field with the arrival of the first fascist government to a new scenario with the aim of Italianize, even with the use of violence, the kind and organization of the new provinces. The same contradictory scenario will mark the evolution of educational policies in the new territories; the attempt to extend the Italian scholastic regulations to new provinces, first gradually and respectfully on the linguistic minorities, their schools and traditions, with the fascist government will suffer a significant change in behavior and reasoning. The theme of this research, which is little studied and analyzed in detail, assumes its relevance, whether in terms of historical and educational research linked to particular historic moment and geographical context, whether in terms of the consequences that it had in the construction of the Italian Republic.

Keywords: History of Education, Italian Educational and Schooling Policies, linguistic minorities.

As tendências nas políticas linguísticas, educacionais e escolares em Trentino e Alto Adige (1919-1939)

RESUMO. Este texto se propõe a analisar as escolhas de política escolar e educativas efetuadas nos territórios de Trentino e de Alto Adige, para as minorias de língua alemã e ladina no período compreendido entre o final do primeiro grande conflito mundial e o início do segundo. Os territórios das novas províncias foram objeto de múltiplas operações políticas, econômicas e sociais, marcadas por diferentes e opostas estratégias: encaminhamentos de implícita tendência nacionalista que atribuíam às autoridades centrais amplos poderes legislativos se alternaram com outras orientações mais democráticas, a fim de acolher as autonomias locais e reconhecer os direitos das minorias alemãs e ladinas. A procura de equilíbrio político entre as duas instâncias, inicialmente perseguido, deixou o campo com a chegada do primeiro governo fascista a um novo cenário, em face do declarado fim de italianizar, ainda com a utilização da violência, o tipo e a organização das novas províncias. O mesmo cenário contraditório marcará a evolução das políticas escolares e educativas nos novos territórios. A tentativa de estender a normativa escolástica italiana às novas províncias, primeiro de modo gradual e respeitoso diante das minorias linguísticas, das suas escolas e tradições, sofrerá com o governo fascista uma significativa mudança de comportamento e raciocínios. O tema desta pesquisa, que é pouco estudado e analisado em seus pormenores, assume a sua relevância, seja em termos de pesquisa histórico-educativa ligada ao particular momento histórico e contexto geográfico, seja em termos do ponto de vista das consequências que tal acontecimento teve na construção da república italiana.

Palavras-chave: história da educação, políticas escolares e educativas italianas, minorias linguísticas

Las tendencias en las políticas lingüísticas, educacionales y escolares en Trentino-Alto Adigio (1919-1939)

RESUMEN. Este texto se propone a analizar las elecciones de política escolar y educativas efectuadas en los territorios de Trentino y de Alto Adige, para las minorías de lengua alemana y ladina en el período entre el final del primer gran conflicto mundial y el principio del segundo. Los territorios de las nuevas provincias fueron

objeto de múltiples operaciones políticas, económicas y sociales, señaladas por diferentes y opuestas estrategias: encaminamientos de implícita tendencia nacionalista que atribuían a las autoridades centrales amplios poderes legislativos se alternaron con otras orientaciones más democráticas, a fin de acoger las autonomías locales y reconocer los derechos de las minorías alemanas y ladinas. La búsqueda de equilibrio político entre las dos instancias, inicialmente perseguido, dejó el campo con la llegada del primer gobierno fascista a un nuevo escenario, en virtud del declarado fin de italianizar, todavía con la utilización de la violencia, el tipo y la organización de las nuevas provincias. El mismo escenario contradictorio marcará la evolución de las políticas escolares y educativas en los nuevos territorios. El intento de prolongar la normativa escolástica italiana a las nuevas provincias, primero de modo gradual y respetuoso delante de las minorías lingüísticas, de sus escuelas y tradiciones, sufrirá con el gobierno fascista un significativo cambio de comportamiento y razonamientos. El tema de esta investigación, que es poco estudiado y analizado en sus pormenores, asume su relevancia, sea en términos de investigación histórico-educativa dirigida al particular momento histórico y contexto geográfico, sea en términos del punto de vista de las consecuencias que tal hecho tuvo en la construcción de la república italiana.

Palabras clave: Historia de la Educación, políticas escolares y educativas italianas, minorías lingüísticas.

Introduction

The present paper assesses the selection of educational policies and practices in the territories of Trentino and Alto Adige, in the period between the first and the second world wars.

During the historical period under consideration, the territories of the new provinces were the seats and the object of multiple and complex political, economic and social operations, marked by different and contrasting strategies.

The first, up until the formation of the Nitti Cabinet, but not for this less harmful, latent Nationalistic tendency; the second, characterized by the new criteria that enlivened the European and national vision of Nitti; the third, resting upon latent National Socialism with the return of the Giolitti government, of compromise and unstable equilibrium in the tendency to reattribute vast legislative powers to the central authorities, without adequate consideration of the local needs (Alatri, 1961, p. 67),

and a fourth, with the Fascist government, declared with the intent to Italianize the nature and the organization of Education.

With respect to such initiatives and interventions, historiographic reflection has produced, and continues to produce, interesting works that broaden the knowledge of the historic reconstruction of phenomena that are dedicated to particular and specific themes (relative to the new redefinition of the administrative structure, the problem of the local and provincial autonomies and the policies adopted towards the German-speaking South-Tyrolese minorities).

In spite of the abundant production of research and essays in related areas, the topic, the object of this study, has not enjoyed the same editorial fortune. Historiographic production records – still today – a scarce number of research and publications on this subject. There are analyses and comparative

studies of the linguistic policies adopted by Fascism that cross with the themes of the topic of this paper, such as the history of education and a more general character concerning the reconstruction of the historical events of the ethnic and linguistic minorities of Trentino and Alto Adige¹. However, in every case, given the particular emphasis of the specific thesis of the research, the most relevant questions, nuances and details to our theme, although present, are merely mentioned or outlined.

The absence of publications on the present topic has inspired the elaboration of this subject in the present paper, which is mainly organized and constructed upon research and analyses of contemporary documents.

Luigi Credaro: General Civil Commissioner (1919-1922).

In August 1919, Senator Luigi Credaro was appointed president of the Nitti Council and General Civil Commissioner for the territories of Trentino and Alto Adige². This appointment was the beginning of a period for these territories that was often referred to as “[...] the Credaro era” (Corsini, 1986, p. 71).

During his appointment (August 1, 1919 – October 22, 1922) Credaro was engaged with diverse and multiple questions. These concerned new definitions of relationships between the Italian State and the new provinces. These new definitions were not only in terms of an administrative reorganization of the attached zones, in relation to the broad provincial and communal autonomies enjoyed by these populations during the Hapsburg Empire³, but also in relation to the ethnic and

¹For a first analysis confront footnote n. 2.

²The General Civil Commissariat for the territories of Trentino and Alto Adige established by Nitti in August 1919, after the dissolution of the Military Governorate.

³[...] il legislatore Italiano apparve chiaramente orientato a favore della concessione alle popolazioni dei territori annessi di forme di autonomia le quali risultassero almeno equivalenti a quelle di cui esse fruiivano sotto la monarchia asburgica” (Pizzorusso, 1975, p. 102).

linguistic liberty of the minority populations. This last aspect included the problem of the new scholastic organization of the schools of these territories, that imposed the urgent need for a body of legislation with a strictly political nature (regarding the changeover of the Hapsburg regulations to those in force in the rest of the kingdom, the problem of minority language schools etc.) and of practical character (such as, for example, research on adequate housing and didactic material).

For every complex aspect of his appointment, Credaro consistently demonstrated attention and respect towards the new territories. This was because he considered that

[...] the natural right, the moral necessity, the national dignity and the same political interests suggest the necessity for a benevolent examination of all the votes of the people of Alto Adige (Pizzorusso, 1975, p. 81)

since

[...] the human conscience rebels against the idea of a compression of people upon people; wherever people search and attempt to form new social and administrative systems, they place the minorities in a position to enjoy the incomparable benefits of liberty (Pizzorusso, 1975, p. 81).

His orientation perfectly reflected the climate and the political spirit of the liberal Italy of Nitti, and of the Italian and Trentino political parties, convinced of the need to insure and guarantee the ample administrative and linguistic freedom enjoyed by the German population during the years of the Hapsburg Empire.

First the Military Governor Pecori Giraldi and then the General Civil Commissioner, Hon. Luigi Credaro, believed in no hasty modifications or introduction of changes without careful reflection and knowledge, and believed in resisting the pressure of Italian Nationalism that wanted the mark of Latinity and of the new sovereignty immediately impressed in Alto Adige (Corsini & Lill, 1988, p. 47)⁴.

Luigi Credaro and the scholastic-educational policies

The scholastic questions here are extremely political, in fact four fifths of the politics happen in the school (Benvenuti, 1976, p. 251)⁵, and “[...] without education of the people, without serious, universal culture, a democratic government cannot

exist” (Credaro, 1910, p. 3). These brief sentences clearly expressed Credaro’s ideas regarding scholastic policies that were adopted during the years of his commissionership. Convinced that the task of gradual Italianization of the new populations could only take place through the education of the people, he followed with particular interest the problem of the primary schools⁶. From the beginning, he strived for the creation of new Italian schools, the teaching of the Italian language and the change of the teaching language in minority language schools. In respect to German culture and schooling⁷, he was actively engaged in the defense of the Italian and Ladin groups in Alto Adige. Since the beginning of his commissary period, he maintained stable and inflexible positions on the principle of the defense of the nationality of the Italian language, to the point of subordination of every agreement with the Southern-Tyrolean to stop their cultural and economic assimilation of the Italians:

If the people of Alto Adige do not admit that the children of Italian families in Alto Adige must be instructed in Italian schools and that the Communes have the same duties as the Germans (to provide the premises, pay the teachers, etc.) we cannot speak with them about autonomy. Do the Italian minorities of Alto Adige have their own cultural rights because of the peace treaty or not? (Corsini, 1986, p. 96).

The development of the Italian culture and of the new national sentiment was persecuted also through the institution of specialization courses for primary school teachers. These courses were for current teachers and for the benefit of future generations. They were conducted for the first time from August to September of 1919⁸,

[...] it was necessary to provide for the people for whom the nature of their own job was particularly

⁴“Io ho dedicato quasi tutta la mia attività e posso dire tutta la mia vita, ormai non più breve, allo sviluppo della scuola popolare, a quella cioè, specialmente, che intende all’educazione, all’elevamento delle classi le quali vivono di lavoro manuale e danno alla società il tesoro della produzione. Io ebbi sempre questa idea che la grandezza, la potenza, l’autorità ed il prestigio dell’Italia nel mondo dipendono dalla grandezza civile e morale e dal grado di cultura che i lavoratori raggiungono”. (Adami, 1958, p. 20). “Alla formazione di uno spirito nazionale specialmente per mezzo della lingua, il Credaro si adoperò con lenta, assidua penetrazione che gli consentirono da Roma i governi centrali ...mentre lottava con i communes dell’Alto Adige per ottenere nuovi locali scolastici, per aprire scuole italiane ed indicava corsi per adattare le maestre dei giardini d’infanzia ad una educazione più attiva, libera, italiana... per moltiplicare il numero delle scuole italiane, per sostituire la nostra lingua alla tedesca nei communes ladini e nella zona mistilingue dove prima non esistevano scuole italiane” (Formigini, 1931, p. 677).

⁷“Intanto è necessario che ciascun popolo rispetti l’altro e questo può avvenire soltanto se ciascun abbia la scuola della propria lingua ed educi la nuova generazione come vogliono la scienza dell’educazione e il rispetto del santo principio di nazionalità” (Credaro, 1923, p. 54).

⁸“Ma il provvedimento più significativo tra quanti furono presi che concernessero in qualche modo l’istruzione popolare nelle Nuove Province dopo la vittoria, è l’istituzione dei corsi di istruzione per i maestri. [...] Così nei mesi di agosto e settembre [...] furono istituiti sei corsi estivi di istruzione per i maestri delle scuole italiane, a Trieste, a Grado, a Abbazia, a Riva di Trento, a Cavalese, a Cles, e uno per i maestri delle scuole alloglotte a Firenze” (Ferretti, 1923, p. 149-151).

⁴A conferma di tale indirizzo politico si veda il discorso pronunciato dal re il 1 dicembre 1919 per l’inaugurazione della XXV legislatura: “Le nuove terre riunite all’Italia impongono la soluzione di nuovi problemi. La nostra tradizione di libertà deve segnare la via alle soluzioni, con il maggior rispetto delle autonomie e delle tradizioni locali” (Benvenuti, 1976, p. 4).

⁵Lettera di L. Credaro al Ministro della Pubblica Istruzione A. Anile del 20 aprile 1920, cito da S. Benvenuti (Benvenuti, 1976, p. 251).

intended to exercise a notable influence on the new generations: the teachers. To instill devotion, admiration, and love for Italy in them (Della Valle, 1920, p. 5).

The study program was organized in lessons and lectures delivered by university lecturers and was intense and very varied. As well as the necessary notions relevant to the Italian language, the courses covered teaching material in the areas of history, geography, literature, pedagogy, scholastic legislation, art history, scholastic hygiene and the Italian rights. The Commissioner, and more generally the Italian government, believed that these moderate and non-invasive initiatives would convince the new teachers, especially those in the provinces of linguistic minorities, to adopt softer and more open positions towards the new political situation, and that these would have eventually brought about a peaceful linguistic and cultural assimilation.

The trends of scholastic and educational policies pursued by Credaro were often opposed, for diverse reasons, not only by the Government of Rome, but also by the populations of the new territories. Above all, Italians would accuse him, on more than one occasion, of having German-loving and anti-Italian behavior. In spite of such concrete adversity, Credaro continued his project and presented, in July 1921, a bill⁹ intended to regulate in a definitive way the precarious situation of the schools of Trentino and Alto Adige. In spite of a first opposition from the government, firm and seemingly inflexible, Credaro, threatening government discharges, attained the approval of his project. However, although it was approved on September 28, 1921, it was only published in the Official Gazette on December 2nd. The new body of legislation, known as Corbino law¹⁰, sanctioned in Article 1 the obligation for Italian families from Alto Adige of regularly sending their children to Italian schools in the Communes where they could be taught¹¹. This obligation was tied to the objective criterion of the language spoken at home (for the purposes of the present decree those who mainly speak the Italian language at home are considered Italian

families)¹². The language spoken home, which is used in daily relations, therefore became, according to Credaro and more generally according to the nineteenth century romantic-Risorgimento tradition, the only criterion defining the nationality of the people, and therefore valid towards every minority. For this reason, convinced that it was "[...] a disgraceful denationalization, to substitute the language spoken at home with another language [...]" (Corsini, 1986, p. 97), the institution of new Italian and German primary schools strived to employ the home language.

The decree was applied during the school year of 1921-22 and such delay

[...] created a series of difficulties of application. Parents refused to take their children away from German schools to send them to Italian schools after three months of lessons; and were not completely wrong from a pedagogical point of view... The hostility of the Pan-Germanists, few in number, but powerful compared to the Italian farmers and workers who were their employees, were more audacious and found justification in the inappropriateness of the reform. Hence, there was an obstinate resistance¹³ from many families (Credaro, 1923, p. 66).

The major hostility occurred in the schools of Salerno, Egna and Bolzano, where student attendance was low with respect to the number of students obliged to attend. However, average the response of the Italian families was, according to Credaro, satisfying. Convinced, therefore, that this legislation would not incite any violence towards the South-Tyrolean group, but only sanction a right for the Italian minority¹⁴ and oppose a strong and firm refusal to any modifications, Credaro threatened further discharges. The dispute concluded in his favor and the law followed unmodified; but the position of Credaro became even more difficult. In fact, the question opened by the Corbino law had not only intensified the conflict that was already very difficult between the General Civil Commissioner and the central office of the new province, regarding the jurisdiction of the respective offices, but had above all renewed the hostility of the Nationalist movement towards his actions. The

⁹Nell'articolo, Credaro (1923) riporta la propria relazione sulla situazione delle scuole in Alto Adige, il testo del disegno di legge, entrambi inviati al governo centrale il 13 luglio 1921 e il testo definitivo del regio decreto. Inoltre evidenzia "[...] il testo del decreto -legge nel suo testo ufficiale, il quale contiene alcune variazioni importanti da quello da me proposto il 13 luglio -, sia dal punto di vista scolastico sia da quello finanziario. Tali variazioni non devono essere dispiaciute agli avversari della scuola italiana nell'Alto Adige e agli amministratori tedeschi dei Communes mistilingui!" (Credaro, 1923, p. 66).

¹⁰R.D.L. 28 agosto 1921 n. 1267 *Institution di scuole elementari italiane in regioni alloglotte*. "La dizione dell'oggetto fu infelice; più precisamente si sarebbe dovuto dire 'scuole elementari italiane in regioni alloglotte'" (Corsini, 1986, p. 99-100).

¹¹Oltre ed insieme a tali motivazioni di natura pedagogico-educativa, pesavano nel pensiero e nell'azione del commissario, anche ragioni di carattere più politico quale quella di conservare, proprio grazie alla scuola, la nazionalità del gruppo Italian minoritario.

¹²Una commissione tecnica composta da due insegnanti doveva esaminare i bambini, ed informarsi sulla lingua usata dai loro familiari nei rapporti domestici, in base a tali informazioni veniva stabilita la scuola (italiana o tedesca) che avrebbero dovuto frequentare.

¹³Molte famiglie presentarono ricorso formale a Roma per bloccare l'attuazione della legge, ed aiutate e indirizzate dai quattro deputati tedeschi del Deutscher Verband - la lega tedesca - ne ottennero una temporanea sospensione, in attesa di una soluzione definitiva.

¹⁴"Dai fatti sommariamente esposti, che, occorrendo saranno ampiamente precisati e documentati, chiaro appare per chi chiaro vuole vedere, che il commissariato generale, pure fra forti ostacoli, opposti da chi men doveva, svolse un piano organico e graduale per la diffusione delle scuole popolari italiane nell'Alto Adige per annullare l'azione snazionalizzatrice dell'Austria e delle società tedesche" (Credaro, 1923, p. 68).

Nationalist movement insistently demanded a more vigorous politics for Alto Adige to complete the assimilation of German language and culture by the population, and conveniently, via violent means, by the Italian legislation.

Another critic and staunch opponent of every action and political intervention of Credaro – accused ‘of cowardice and errors’ was Ettore Tolomei. Tolomei was committed to history, geography and glottology studies, and to demonstrating the Latin origin of the attached territories. He was therefore the first champion of a swift and complete annexation. Tolomei, who was named “[...] the apostle of the Italianity of these lands [...]” (Tolomei, 1918, p. 494)¹⁵, had already occupied a prominent role in the propaganda for the Italianity of Alto Adige¹⁶ prior to the annexation, through the columns of the weekly ‘The Italian Nation’ and above all in his magazine ‘Archive for Alto Adige’, which he founded in 1906. During the period of the military government of Pecori Giraldi (November 3, 1918 – July 31, 1919), Tolomei was nominated president of the Commissioner’s Office for the language and culture of Alto Adige¹⁷, an appointment he held until September 10, 1919, when further to obvious discordance and irreconcilability¹⁸ between his positions and those of Credaro – he became Civil Commissioner – and decided to dismantle the office¹⁹. Free of official appointments, he continued to carry his personal ‘cross’ against the politics of Credaro through the articles of his magazine²⁰, and his cultural and political action was

before long used by Fascism as a pretext and justification for the task of violent oppression that was, by that time, conducted in the region²¹. In fact, Fascism auspiced a rapid absorption by the new populations, which was accomplished through the enforcement of the Italian language in the toponymy, schools and public offices via the complete elimination of every provincial autonomy.

The union of the diverse and, among themselves, heterogeneous, opposition forces to the policies of Credaro²², supported by the violence of the Fascist organization and the conduct of Fascist action squads²³, in the end compelled Credaro to resign and to escape from Trento in the October of 1922.

The new political climate and the debate about Trentino and Alto Adige

A long period characterized by a complete and radical overthrowing of the previous political, social and cultural trends began for these territories after the violent end of Credaro’s era. Fascism, which was already in power, eliminated every autonomous concession of the Trentino and Alto Adige populations and “[...] the minorities found themselves in a situation characterized by a total refusal to recognize the need to value their own ethnic and social characteristics” (Pizzorusso, 1975, p. 200).

The scholastic and educational policies, *in primis* the questions of minorities’ language schools and linguistic education, underwent significant changes:

Fascism came to power with the clear conviction that the minority language schools in a national state signify the strengthening of the contrasting State forces, and that it is therefore absurd for the State to nourish irredentism. Thus, Fascism began an assimilation project in Alto Adige which interrupted the anachronistic term of the German school (Gasparri, 1929, p. 53-115).

¹⁵Può essere interessante confrontare la definizione dello stesso autore con quella espressa da Salvemini “l'uomo che escogitò gli strumenti più raffinati per tormentare le minoranze nazionali in Italia. I suoi ammiratori gli attribuirono il merito di avere 'creato' l'Alto Adige e lui accettò senza riserve quella gloria. Prima che lui creasse un Alto Adige abitato da italiani, nessuno si era mai accorto che esistesse un Alto Adige sifatto” (Salvemini, 1952, p. 439).

¹⁶“Il diritto di nazionalità ha la precedenza sul diritto di residenza [...] contro di esso non può accamparsi il diritto dell'incolato. Se (come è quasi sempre) la genesi della loro presenza colà fu la conquista o l'usurpazione aperta e insidiosa, l'eliminazione loro è un diritto conservato dalle generazioni autoctone, diritto che non soffre di prescrizioni né menomazioni. Codesto corollario implica, è vero, un corollario spietato: il diritto perenne di espulsione dei popoli intrusi [...]”. Da codesto principio suole il diritto Italian di sfruttare e ricacciare oltre il Brennero gli inquinamenti germanici” (Tolomei, 1915, p. 53-54).

¹⁷Il Commissariato redasse un Manifesto del Commissariato di lingua e cultura per l'Alto Adige a Roma l'11 novembre del 1918 che venne poi affisso, dopo alcune modifiche, sui muri di Bolzano il 18 e 19 novembre (Tolomei, 1918).

¹⁸“Nasce un sentimento di invincibile disgusto” (Tolomei, 1918, p. 657).

¹⁹“Visto l'indirizzo della politica italiana nell'Alto Adige, sul quale pur troppo non era oramai possibile conservare dei dubbi o farsi delle illusioni, non restava che di sciogliere di mia propria iniziativa, il Commissariato” (Tolomei, 1918, p. 614).

²⁰Molti i commenti ed i giudizi negativi verso il decreto Corbino: “La misura non è sufficiente poiché la lingua italiana è la lingua dello Stato e lo Stato deve porgere a tutti il mezzo di impararla, siano italiani che tedeschi; ma intanto è un buon mezzo” (Istruzione e Cultura, 1921, p. 403). “La stampa locale torna a dimostrare come il decreto Corbino, insufficiente nella sua redazione si sia alla prova dei fatti dimostrato praticamente incompleto e non rispondente alle necessità nazionali [...] infatti si appoggia alla legge scolastica provinciale tirolese, la quale come è logico, aveva intenti e perseguiva scopi diametralmente opposti ai nostri contro la creazione di scuole italiane. Ancora più grave è la constatazione che il decreto Corbino dispone la frequenza della scuole italiana da parte di tutti gli alunni del primo anno, che in casa parlino abitualmente l'italiano, ma nessun provvedimento contiene per coloro che abbiano iniziato la scuola. Quanti fanciulli italiani nei sei anni di cui consta l'intero corso elementare devono essere lasciati educare tedesicamente dopo cinque anni dalla vittoria? In molti comuni le deficienze del

decreto Corbino vengono riparate dichiarando italiana la lingua di insegnamento, ma per questa trasformazione essendo necessario il consenso del Comune ciò non può ottenersi nei numerosissimi comuni dove domina ed impera il ‘Deutscher Verband’. L'unica soluzione dell'intricato problema consta nella liquidazione del decreto” (Tolomei, 1928, p. 876).

²¹A proposito delle prime violenze delle squadre fasciste confronta i volumi di Benvenuti (1976) e Corsini (1969).

²²I liberali nazionalisti, gli irredentisti, gli ex combattenti e tanto i più i nazionalisti italiani non gli perdonavano di essere stato un neutralista e di essere un ammiratore della cultura germanica. Per Tolomei la meditata cautela con cui procedeva nei rapporti con la minoranza tedesca in Alto Adige aveva fatto del suo governo provvisorio un vero disastro, rallentando l'affermazione delle orme di Roma, che avrebbe dovuto essere immediata e profonda. Mussolini lo disprezzo per gli stessi motivi e dichiarò alla Camera che Credaro aveva sì e no i numeri per governare un asilo infantile. I fascisti agli inizi di ottobre del 1922 lo cacciarono da Trento e ne chiesero le dimissioni perché troppo tollerante verso i sudtirolesi, i quali a loro volta lo avevano avversato e ostacolato giudicandolo troppo incline a sostenere la tesi degli italiani di Bolzano, di Trento e di Roma” (Corsini & Lill, 1988, p. 55).

²³Il 2 ottobre del 1922 una squadra fascista occupò in modo violento la scuola elementare tedesca Elisabetta di Bolzano (c.f.r. *Le giornate di Bolzano*, nella rubrica *Cronaca e notiziario*, in ‘Archive for Alto Adige’, a. XVIII, 1922, p. 307-311). La violenta protesta si spostò poi a Trento dove i fascisti occuparono il palazzo della Giunta provinciale.

New directions in scholastic-educational policies for Trentino and Alto Adige (1923-1939)

Gentile's²⁴ reform of 1923 legislated in Article 1 that

[...] teaching is performed in the language of the State in all the primary schools of the Kingdom. In the Communes in which a diverse language is usually spoken, that diverse language will be studied during extra hours. The teaching of a second language is obligatory for minority language students, whose parents made such a request for their children [...] (Art. 4 del R. D. 1 ottobre 1923 n. 2185)²⁵.

It is interesting to note the observation of Klein that brings to light how this formal request ended in exposing parents and students to the “[...] danger of being labelled as ‘anti-nationals’ and ‘anti-fascist’ with the expected consequences” (Klein, 1984, p. 72).

Article 17, which stated that “[...] at the beginning of the school year of 1923-24, lessons will be given in the Italian language for minority language students in all the first classes of the primary schools [...]”, clearly expressed the project of gradual Italianization of these schools that had to come to a close with the scholastic year of 1927-28.

Article 24 furthermore established:

In the schools in which the instructional language is not Italian, and until it will not be Italian, a regulation of the present decree, it is obligatory for students in all classes to commence learning the Italian language from the second grade of primary school. Students cannot be admitted to higher grades if they do not pass the test of the Italian language. There are five fixed hours of lessons per week for the teaching of the language for the first three years, and six hours per week for the following years.

The junior-middle and senior secondary schools shared the same destiny, where already since 1924 the minority languages were considered and treated as second languages.

Such measures were welcomed with great favor and approval by Tolomei, who declared in the Senate during a discussion on the balance of Public education:

The scholastic reform follows precise policies, the aim of the whole plain of teaching is not just for the new Italian generation to learn Italian as a language of communication, but to form true Italians, with national sentiments... The schools now have, and must have, lessons in the Italian language. It is intended that the schools shall have hours for

German language lessons, but in the end, they are Italian schools. The population is convinced that Italian membership is a necessity, an interest, an advantage, and that it is the duty of everyone to speak Italian, the language of the State (Tolomei, 1928, p. 514-516)²⁶.

Successively, with the R. D. November 22, 1925 n. 2191 “Dispositions regarding the instructional language in primary schools [...]”, definitely came to abolish both the teaching of all the minority languages and the possibility of the additional hours for teaching these. With the R.D. of January 24, 1926, five obligatory hours of Italian language lessons would be introduced in the classes that were still not transformed. Because of these regulations, in Alto Adige, in 1928, there were 760 classes with Italian as the only teaching language, while in another 30 German was tolerated as supplementary teaching matter. The German classes would be later abolished at the beginning of the school year of 1929 to 1930.

The same kind of measures also affected the teachers. The R.D. of October 1, 1923 n. 2185²⁷ expected the minority language teachers to have a qualification to teach the Italian language which was invalid if it was issued before the annexation. However, in most cases teachers were invited to choose the path of early retirement or to transfer to other Italian provinces rather than sit the qualification exams. The successive R. D. of November 22, 1925 (art. 2) recorded the obligation of the qualification and prescribed a two year term for its attainment, suffering the removal of the teaching appointment. To facilitate the attainment of this qualification, several courses for teachers were instituted in the province of Bolzano. At the end of 1928²⁸ the transfer of many minority language teachers to other Italian regions was arranged, to accelerate the process of Italianization because

[...] many minority language teachers, highly praised from a didactic point of view and for their assiduity, speak Italian just like Germans, with Italian sentences and words. Furthermore, it is clear they

²⁴Per una prima analisi del provvedimento rimando al mio precedente lavoro *Indirizzi di politica linguistica e di politica scolastica ed educativa durante il fascismo (1923-1939)*.

²⁵“Ordinamento dei gradi scolastici e dei programmi didattici dell'istruzione”. G. U. 24 ottobre 1923, n. 250.

²⁶L'articolo ripropone interamente il Discorso del Senatore Tolomei pronunciato il 4 febbraio del 1925 in occasione della discussione in Senato del bilancio della Pubblica istruzione. Tolomei divenne senatore per volere e dello stesso Mussolini il 3 marzo 1923 e venne anche ‘assunto’ dal governo fascista quale consigliere per la questione atesina. In questa nuova veste elaborò un progetto subito approvato dal Gran Consiglio del Fascismo: “Sulla base posta dal Governo fascista –provincia unica di Trento – i tedeschi dell'Alto Adige devono intendere che il Governo fascista, pur con rispetto delle credenze e dei costumi e col proposito della pacifica convivenza delle due stirpi, non intende affatto di dare quelle garanzie di perpetuità del germanismo nella regione atesina che sono state richieste, per opera del Deutscher Verband ai Governi passati. Anzi spalancare la porta all'opera di italianità che sale e s'afferma naturalmente, e favorisce ogni forma di penetrazione per l'assimilazione di questa terra di frontiera nella grande unità della Nazione” (Alatri, 1961, p. 89-90).

²⁷Art.18 “Nessun maestro, munito di diploma o abilitazione rilasciati sotto il regime anteriore all'annessione delle province di cui trattasi, può insegnare in lingua italiana se non possiede la prescritta abilitazione...”

²⁸R.D. 5 febbraio 1928, n. 577.

are not of sure political faith, and are therefore certainly not the most adapted teachers in which to trust the very delicate school of Alto Adige (Gasparri, 1929, p. 80).

As an evident result

[...] these linguistic-legislative measures had obviously not only a linguistic-instrumental function, that is to use the Italian language rather than another, but had a precise aim of national integration (Klein, 1984, p. 78).

In this sense, the broad range of concessions promised by the State to students of all ages must be noted: tax exemptions for senior secondary school and university for students of Italian origin, scholarships and other types of encouragement and economic bonuses to promote the enrolment of German speaking students of German origin in Italian schools.

The forced march of assimilation proceeded with governmental and provincial decrees. The new form of school, the task of which was now largely declared as being “[...] above the technical preparation, is developing... an Italian spirit [...]” (*Lingua e Cultura*, 1930, p. 373)²⁹ was becoming increasingly concrete and operative. Enthusiastic Italian comments and reflections of Tolomei, such as,

The Italian school is born everywhere. In this part, the work of the government had readily superseded the first questions. Not only in the multilingual communes, but also in those of all or almost all of minority language Communes, the school was made Italian, parting from the principle that every citizen must know the language of the State... The schools now have and must have, lessons in Italian. They are Italian schools. The population is convinced that, forever belonging to the country of Italy, it is a necessity, an advantage, and a duty that everyone must know how to speak Italian, the language of the State (Tolomei, 1928, p. 34).

In the face of this incessant process of obliged Italianization in education introduced by the new political course, the survival response of minority language populations concentrated upon trying to find other places, times and spaces, far from official places, during which their anthropological, cultural and linguistic patrimony and traditions could be safeguarded and passed on. Their first attempt occurred via private lessons. However, by the end of 1923, a decree of the scholastic authority of Bolzano banned private teaching of German, except by teachers

possessing a special permit from the State. This permit was obtainable via an Italian language examination that was extremely complex, to discourage each possible attempt at it³⁰. Successively, teachers who intended to teach German privately were obliged to communicate this intention to their students’ Italian language teaching staff and to the inspector. The teaching staff and inspector could evaluate the associated risks of such lessons and ban them. Only in 1934, following the approaching politics of Italy with Germany and Austria was the province of Bolzano given the possibility to institute private German language schools. Fifteen German language courses were opened in the major centers of Trento; however, teaching at these courses was limited to just four hours a week. These renewed political trends met with the opposition of the strongest nationalist currents, such as that of the group reunited around the magazine ‘Archive for Alto Adige’. Although this group disapproved of this concession for teaching German,

[...] since all the world know that in the Reign of Italy the school of the people is totally and solely Italian...nobody expected the sudden announcement, of the past May, of news that nobody wanted, the news that German language courses would be instituted in all the Communes of the province of Bolzano (*Lingua e Cultura*, 1935, p. 443)³¹,

they tried to evaluate the possible positive outcomes.

In effect that concession which permits private German language schools in the province of Bolzano is surrounded by several precautions. The concession limits teaching to four hours a week, which cannot create any damage and gives Italian public school teachers the right to withdraw the special teaching permit if the children demonstrate scarce profit due to the overload of attending two schools. It is likely that this will be the case everywhere. In fact it is likely that the experiment will end in the complete withdrawal of the concession or in reducing it to a dead letter, so as the fruit of the hard work of our good teachers will not be compromised (*Lingua e Cultura*, 1934, p. 471)³².

Above all, the reunited group around Tolomei hoped that this concession would be finally reduced, if not definitely eliminated, “[...] the intolerable existence of foreign clandestine schools” (*Lingua e Cultura*,

²⁹Articolo non firmato nella rubrica *Lingua e cultura*, in ‘Archive for Alto Adige’, a. XXV, 1930, p. 373.

³⁰“Una delle condizioni per ottenere tale permesso era che il corpo insegnante conoscesse l’Italian al pari del tedesco. Pochi insegnanti tedeschi conoscevano l’Italian. Inoltre l’esame di Italian era così difficile che anche insegnanti con buone cognizioni letterarie non lo superavano. Quindi furono tutti automaticamente squalificati” (Salvemini, 1952, p. 445).

³¹Articolo non firmato nella Rubrica *Lingua e cultura*, in ‘Archive for Alto Adige’, a. XXX, 1935, p. 443.

³²Articolo non firmato nella Rubrica *Lingua e cultura*, in ‘Archive for Alto Adige’, a. XXIX., 1934, p. 471.

1935, p. 444)³³. The clandestine schools³⁴, significantly called *katakomben schulen* (catacomb schools), represented the extreme form of *boycottage* and resistance to the work conducted by the central government. These schools were already present, once private teaching was forbidden after the Gentile's reform became widely diffused. These schools were born thanks to both the support of the Communes that supplied and equipped rooms for the local clergy that organized schools in the rectories and to the German press that urged people to open a school in every private home. In spite of the many – sometimes violent – abolition attempts, such activity registered constant growth. The difficulty in containing the proliferation of these schools is documented in the frequency of concerned statements and opinions in articles published in the magazine 'Archive for Alto Adige' (*Lingua e Cultura*, 1934, p. 470)³⁵.

The local clergy, in addition to organizing and managing the catacomb schools in the rectories, carried out other clandestine activity. This was done to maintain teaching in the German language in the seminaries and religious institutions and the use of German for the ecclesiastical rites, which according to the law should have been conducted in Italian. The major frictions between the clergy and the government concerned the teaching of religion in the primary schools. Following the protests of the Bishop of Bressanone, the ministerial order of January 10, 1924 permitted religious teachings in the 'locally used' language for Grade 1 of minority language primary schools and the use of the mother tongue, therefore also German, in the primary schools with mixed language students. This measure, however, was not uniformly adopted in all the provinces. The individual scholastic authorities evaluated and legislated it autonomously, and in most cases they prohibited the use of German language, consequently dismissing priests who opposed this regulation and substituting them with Italian priests. On August 31, 1926, the scholastic authority of Bolzano prescribed the mandatory use of Italian, also for religious teachings. In order to find a solution to the proliferation of

continuous and different regulations, in 1929 the Fedele ministry sanctioned the obligatory use of the Italian language for the teaching of Catholicism in all primary schools (including minority language schools) of the new provinces, in spite of the contract of the agreement³⁶.

A further attempt to obstruct the politics of 'denationalization' of the government was attempted through the publication of German newspapers for children. The Nationalist exponents harshly denounced such publications and also sternly denounced the government who they accused of not knowing how – or wanting – to suppress the spread of such publications

German newspapers continue to proliferate, which the head of the Government indicates that he wants to eliminate, but instead these have continued to be tolerated, and however these continue to stream underhandedly (*Lingua e Cultura*, 1929, p. 524)³⁷.

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³³Articolo non firmato nella rubrica *Lingua e cultura*, in 'Archive for Alto Adige', a. XXX, 1935, p. 444.

³⁴La 'tipologia' delle scuole catacombe nacque inizialmente in Alto Adige, successivamente il fenomeno si estese anche in Valla d'Aosta e nella Venezia Giulia.

³⁵Nella rubrica *Lingua e cultura* vi era quasi sempre uno spazio, seppur molto breve, dedicato all'argomento, che riguardava la problematica, e la condanna, della diffusione di tali scuole. Più raramente si trovano articoli che pubblicavano i nomi delle scuole e degli insegnanti denunciati. "Bisogna però dire che in questo decennio non era venuto fatto di purgare l'Alto Adige dalle infeste scuolette straniere clandestine. Forse era mancato ai Prefetti il modo di andare fino in fondo col necessario rigore. Anche le canoniche erano e sono scuole straniere clandestine". (*Lingua e Cultura*, 1934, p. 470). "Viene denunciata certa Antonia Dichristin di Caldaro, perché teneva scuola clandestina. In casa di un oriundo trentino di Caldano, certo Moran, vien sorpresa un'altra falsa maestra, Maria Bud, mentre, non curante di numerose precedenti diffide, impartisce lezioni in tedesco a tre bambini di cinque anni". (*Lingua e Cultura*, 1929, p. 518).

³⁶Rispetto alla posizione del Papa Pio XI, vi sono diverse ed opposte letture. Estremamente critica quella di Salvemini (1952, p. 446) "[...] i cattolici tedeschi e slavi aspettarono invano che Pio XI si facesse vivo per deplorare quel che avveniva [...]". 1, di altra natura quella proposta da Klein "Neanche il Concordato tra la Santa Sede e lo Stato Italian si volge a favore degli allogeni, poiché Mussolini non accetta la richiesta del Papa che l'istruzione religiosa venga svolta in lingua materna nelle scuole elementari delle nuove province e di far venire dei sacerdoti dall'estero nel caso di mancanza di sacerdoti parlanti la relativa lingua minoritaria". (Klein, 1984, p. 86).

³⁷Articolo non firmato nella rubrica *Lingua e cultura*, in 'Archive for Alto Adige', p. 524. "Abbiamo a Bolzano un ottimo giornalino fascista per le scuole, il Baillia dell'Alto Adige; chiunque lo vede non ha parole bastanti per lodare lo spirito che l'anima, il senno che lo dirige, la vivacità e la grazia del testo e delle illustrazioni. E' uno strumento eccellente di penetrazione nella scuola e nella famiglia. Assai più frutterebbe se la sua influenza non venisse neutralizzata dal noto foglietto scolastico Der Postillon, tedeschiizzatore dei fanciulli, che si dirama in un numero inverosimile di copie, sostenute da forze ignote. Non lo si è ancora tolto di mezzo. Perché? Forse si temono le ripercussioni dall'estero?" (Tolomei, 1931, p. 273).

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