

Education for democracy in textbooks: the case of history texts in Italian schools in the years following the Second World War

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Introduction

The question of textbooks and their function both as an instrument and vehicle for a genuine education of the spirit and of the values of democracy appears, immediately after the fall of the Fascist regime, as one of the central themes in the more general debate which developed between the political forces of the National Liberation Committee (CLN) with regard to the reconstruction, on a new basis, of Italian schools. This happened for a series of reasons which are worth discussing, even if only briefly.

We intend to concentrate above all on the fundamental role attributed to textbooks in the framework of the organisation of Italian schools introduced by the Gentile reform of 1923. In addition to this we must consider the largely shared conviction of the particular function exercised by textbooks, in the course of the Fascist period, as ideological and political instruments; or, rather, as principal factors for the construction of a consensus, among the new generations, around the initiatives and achievements of the Mussolini regime. And we refer, in particular, not only to the introduction of the Unique State Text (*Testo Unico di Stato*) in the elementary schools; but also, and above all, to the systematic substitution, already put into practice towards the end of 1920s, of the old handbooks dedicated to humanistic and juridical disciplines for secondary schools with publications rigorously following the directives of the regime.

Finally, it must be emphasised that it was generally believed that an effective embedding of the habits of democracy in the population and of a new idea of citizenship had to pass through the promotion, starting with the new generations, of completely new cultural and civil models with respect to those promoted by propaganda in the Fascist regime; and that the schools – and within them the reading books and handbooks – would play a role of fundamental importance in this field in as much as they constitute the true mass structure capable of promoting, at various levels, alongside instruction and professional formation, a collective ethos with the aim of bringing about education on a large scale¹.

1. *Difficulties and limits of the process of defascistization of textbooks initiated by the Allied Military Government's Sub Commission on Education*

In the face of these convictions the attention given to the problem of the revision of textbooks that existed already during the Resistance comes as no surprise; this attention is demonstrated, amongst other things, by the resolutions and proposals expressed in the documents produced by the CLNAI and, more particularly, by the commissions for schools and teaching institutes created within the so-called *Repubbliche partigiane* (Partisan republics). Purely as an example it is worth remembering the *Proposte della Commissione didattica consultiva* (Proposals of the Didactic Consultative Committee) which were approved in October 1944 by the provisional Council of the government of the Republic of Ossola which included figures of the calibre of Gianfranco Contini and Carlo Calcaterra among its drafters:

Quanto al contenuto ideale, che deve essere dato al programma educativo nazionale, sia nelle scuole elementary, sia nelle scuole medie – one reads in the document – la Commissione propone [che] siano aboliti tutti I libri di testo adottati per lo studio delle lettere italiane, della filosofia, della storia, della geografia, dell'economia politica, che risultino improntati allo spirito del passato regime; [e che nella redazione dei testi nuovi] sia seguito uno spirito umanistico [e] siano armonicamente sviluppate ed educate negli alunni tutte le forme dello spirito che innalzano e temprano l'uomo, tenendovi presenti le fondamentali sue esigenze morali, civili, sociali e politiche².

¹ See R. Fornaca, *I problemi della scuola italiana dal 1943 alla Costituente*, Roma, Armando, 1972, pp. 12-26; D. Bertoni Jovine, *La scuola italiana dal 1870 ai giorni nostri*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1975, pp. 390-412; T. Tomasi, *La scuola italiana dalla dittatura alla repubblica 1943-1948*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1976, pp. 47-69; and, in particular, the pieces collected in N. Raponi (Ed.), *Scuola e resistenza*, Parma, La Pilotta, 1978.

² «As for the ideal content of the national educational programme both in primary and middle schools the Committee proposes the abolition of all texts so far adopted for the study of Italian literature, philosophy, history, geography, and political economics which are seen to be marked by the spirit of the past regime; [and that in the drawing up of the new texts] a humanistic spirit be followed and

In fact, it was the Sub commission for Education of the Allied Military Government, led by the American educationalist Carl Washburne, which initiated the first ideological revision of texts used in the Fascist period and insisted – in the framework of a more general *defascistization* of Italian schools – on the production and diffusion of scholastic publications more in line with the political, social and cultural ideals of the newly born democracy³.

Between 1944 and 1945, as is known, the Sub commission started drafting new didactic programmes for nursery and primary schools and for the Teacher Training Schools. At the same time it established criteria for the revision of textbooks to be used in schools of every kind and level. This work was entrusted to a central Ministerial Commission and to a series of Regional Commissions established as the various territories were liberated and came under the control of the Allied Military Government. These commissions were made up of teachers and school administrators appointed by Regional Education Officers in agreement with the Ministry of Education⁴.

The documentation, most of it never published, relative to the work of Washburne's Sub commission and the regional commissions for the expurgation of textbooks, allows us to evaluate fully the characteristics and limits of the intervention of the allies in this matter:

La revisione e la ristampa dei libri di testo – we read in a report on the outcome of the activities followed during the first months of 1946 – passò attraverso varie fasi, come quella dei programmi. Come per questi la prima fase fu puramente preliminare, fatta soltanto per poter riaprire le scuole il più presto possibile senza la propaganda fascista. A questo scopo furono immediatamente costituiti [...] dei comitati per la revisione, composti da educatori italiani fidati, per esaminare i libri di testo usati prima (tanto nelle scuole secondarie quanto nelle elementari) e per dire quali potevano essere adoperati così come erano, quali dovevano essere messi al bando e quali potevano essere usati purché alcune parti fossero eliminate.

that all the forms of spirit which raise and temper mankind be harmoniously developed and inculcated in all students, bearing in mind the fundamental moral, civil, social and political requirements». *Proposte della Commissione Didattica Consultiva approvate dalla Giunta Provvisoria di Governo*, in *La repubblica dell'Ossola*, 9 Settembre-24 ottobre 1944, Domodossola 1964, pp. 92-94. The didactic advisory committee, headed by D. Gaudenzio Cabalà, was made up of Mario Bandini, Gianfranco Contini and Carlo Calcaterra. But see also: *Scuola e Resistenza*, «L'Eco della scuola nuova», suppl. to no. 4 (with articles by Guido Quazza, Ferruccio Parri, Augusto Monti, Raffaele Ramat and Giuseppe Tramarollo); and Q. Casadio, *Gli ideali pedagogici della Resistenza*, Bologna, Alfa, 1967, pp. 86-135.

³ On the work of the Sub commission for Education see: C. Washburne, *La riorganizzazione dell'istruzione in Italia*, «Scuola e Città», 1970, 6-7, pp. 273-277; S.F. Withe, *Italian Popular Education between Fascism and Democracy 1943-1945: The Work and Legacy of the Allied Control Commission – Education Sub-commission*, University of Virginia Press, 1985; Id., *America and Reconstruction of Italian Education 1943-1962*, New York-London, Garland, 1991.

⁴ See Commissione Alleata – Sezione delle Relazioni Pubbliche, *Resoconto delle attività svolte dal Governo Militare Alleato e dalle Commissioni Alleate di Controllo in Italia dal 10 Luglio 1943, il giorno D in Sicilia, al 2 maggio 1945, giorno della resa tedesca in Italia*, Roma, Arti grafiche Tumminelli, 1945; Id., *Rassegna dell'attività del Governo Militare Alleato e della Commissione Alleata in Italia*, Roma, s.i.t., 1946, pp. 12-27.

In the case of reading books and primary school textbooks this revision proved immediately to be very difficult in view of the fact that there was only one series of textbooks, those of the State Monopoly, «which were full, in every part, of Fascist propaganda».

È ovvio – we read in the report mentioned above – che la cosa migliore da farsi sarebbe stata quella di abolirli completamente; ma questo disgraziatamente avrebbe lasciato le scuole elementari completamente senza testi e la preparazione di nuovi, anche su basi semplicissime, richiedeva tempo (e carta), Perciò da principio si rimediò rimettendo in circolazione i volumi di quelle serie che avevano il meno possibile di parti infette, strappando via le pagine incriminate. Il secondo stadio che seguì il più rapidamente che fu possibile fu quello di avere tutta la serie riscritta e ristampata, dopo avervi tolto gli elementi fascisti e averli sostituiti con materiale nuovo, ma a parte questo i libri rimasero gli stessi nella forma generale [...]. Eppure anche questo metodo era un ripiego, poiché i libri in questione, essendo stati concepiti originariamente con uno spirito completamente fascista, continuarono surrettiziamente a mostrare la loro origine anche dopo ripetuti tagli. Quindi seguì per forza la terza e ultima fase, quando la situazione era ridiventata abbastanza normale per poter pubblicare liberamente libri di testo per le elementari sul mercato scolastico normale, e finalmente fu possibile eliminare anche le reliquie dei vecchi libri di testo fascisti⁵.

It is worth pausing on this third and last stage insofar as the criteria adopted by printers and the publishers in the compiling of new texts for primary schools only partially reflected those formulated by Washburne's Sub com-

⁵ «The revision and reprinting of textbooks went through various phases just as the teaching programmes did. As with these, the first phase was purely of a preliminary nature simply to allow the schools to open as soon as possible without fascist propaganda. To this end committees for revision were immediately formed [...] made up of trusted Italian educators, to examine the textbooks which had been used (both in primary and secondary schools) and to decide which ones could be used as they were, which should be banned and which could be used as long as some parts were eliminated [...]. It is obvious that the best thing to do would have been to abolish them altogether; but this, unfortunately, would have left the elementary schools without texts and the preparation of new ones, even of the most simple kind, needed time (and paper). So, at the beginning we made do by putting back into circulation the volumes of the series that had the fewest “infected” parts, removing the more outrageous pages. The second stage, which followed as quickly as possible, was to have all the texts rewritten and reprinted, after having taken out the fascist elements and substituted them with new material. Apart from this, however, the books remained in the same general format [...]. But even this method was only a stopgap since the books in question, having been conceived originally with a completely fascist spirit continued, surreptitiously, to reveal their origins even after repeated cuts. So, inevitably, the third and final phase followed when the situation had become normal enough for the free publication of textbooks for primary schools and, at last, it was possible to eliminate the relics of the old fascist texts». *Resoconto dell'attività di epurazione dei libri di testo*, undated (but early in 1946), in Archivio dell'Istituto Nazionale per la storia del Movimento di Liberazione in Italia di Milano (afterwards: INSMIL), Fondo CLN Lombardia, *Commissariato Scuola*, b. 79, f. 3 (Commission for the defascistization of textbooks), pp. 1-2. The text of the report is reproduced, with a few formal variations, in Allied Control Commission – Sub Commission for Education, *La politica e la legislazione scolastica in Italia dal 1922 al 1943. Con cenni introduttivi sui periodi precedenti e una parte conclusiva sul post-fascismo*, Milano, Garzanti, 1947, pp. 388-389.

mission and added to the didactic programs for elementary and nursery schools promulgated by the Decree of May 24 1945⁶. In fact, even if it was true that these texts turned out to conform, for the most part, to the dictates of the new programmes as far as approach and organisation of the material went, it is also true that from the point of view of content and the educational models which they proposed the post-fascist reading books and textbooks were a long way from reflecting the ideals of the new political and civil climate.

In this respect the criticisms expressed by the Commission for the revision of textbooks for the primary schools of Lombardy are significant. In a report of 21 November 1945 regarding the new publications sent by the publishers, they wrote:

In complesso I testi mantennero un carattere di generale mediocrit : se i criteri didattici che li ispirarono sono tuttora validi, manca la freschezza, il carattere di attualit . Si ebbe l'impressione che si trattasse in gran parte di una ripresa della vecchia produzione (precedente all'introduzione del libro di Stato) piuttosto che di opere sorte nell'animo di chi – pur vivendo nella scuola e per la scuola – partecipasse con giovanile sensibilit  ai problemi dell'ora presente. Questa   forse la causa per la quale: 1) in parecchi casi si dovettero suggerire modifiche relative a residui di ispirazione ormai superata; 2) pochi furono nei testi gli accenni alla storia recentissima [...] della ripresa della vita nazionale. Solo in alcuni casi si not  non solo il felice sforzo da parte di Autori ed Editori, ma la riuscita realizzazione di libri rispondenti alle esigenze attuali di una scuola che si propone di svolgere una vera opera educatrice intellettuale, morale e civile⁷.

The observations formulated by the Commission for the revision of textbooks in Lombardy indicated very precisely one of the weak points of the post-war production of school texts: the integral or partial re-proposal of textbooks which dated back to the early 1920s and were, sometimes, nothing short of the last phase of Giolitti's era. These, in some cases, were simply reprinted without any attempt at bringing up to date even the most obviously anachronistic parts⁸.

⁶ *Decreto Luogotenenziale 24 maggio 1945, n. 459 – Programmi per le scuole elementari e materne*, «Bollettino Ufficiale. Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione», 1945, 7-8, pp. 266-308.

⁷ «All in all the texts maintain a character of overall mediocrity: even if the didactic criteria which inspire them are still valid they lack freshness, topicality. One gets the impression that we are dealing, on the whole, with a re-run of the old stuff (preceding the State Textbooks) rather than works of inspiration by someone who – even though being in the schools and for the schools – took part with youthful sensitivity in present day problems. This is perhaps the reason why: 1) in several cases it was necessary to suggest modifications relative to the remains of an inspiration which had already been surpassed; 2) there were very few references to recent history [...] of the re-birth of national life. In just in a few cases not only a positive effort on the part of the authors and editors is noted but also the successful realisation of books which respond to the present requirements of schools which are proposed as the promoters of a truly intellectual, moral and civil education». *Relazione della Commissione per la revisione dei libri di testo delle scuole elementari*, 21 novembre 1945, Milano, in INSMIL, Fondo CLN Lombardia, *Commissariato Scuola*, b. 78, f. 15 (Commission for the revision of textbooks for Primary Schools).

⁸ See M. Bacigalupi, P. Fossati, *Da plebe a popolo. L'educazione popolare nei libri di scuola dall'Unit  d'Italia alla Repubblica*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1986, pp. 237-250.

With regard to this it is worth emphasising that, relative to reading books and textbooks for primary courses, only from 1947-1948 do we begin to see really new publications; and even in these cases reading passages, stories, descriptions and biographies destined for students of primary schools will continue to be characterised for a long time by the scant – and sometimes very scant – references to the current political and social trends in the country. These were perhaps considered to be matters too delicate and controversial by the authors and publishers in the context of the strong ideological conflicts which characterised Italian society in those years. Gianni Rodari, in October 1947, pointed out that:

La Repubblica italiana ha ormai più di un anno di vita, ma a scorrere le decine di testi di lettura e di storia che abbiamo davanti agli occhi, sembra che ai nostri scolaretti sia proibito saperlo [...]. [Questi libri] ci sono parsi destinati a ragazzi vestiti alla marinara coi calzoni al ginocchio, come nelle riviste di moda di quarant'anni fa, anziché ai nostri ragazzi, che sono stati nelle cantine sotto i bombardamenti e che hanno visto con i loro occhi l'insurrezione nazionale, qualcosa come le Cinque Giornate di Milano, i partigiani fucilati nelle strade e Mussolini appeso a Piazzale Loreto⁹.

The work of the Allied Sub commission led by Washburne with regard to textbooks for secondary schools was just as complex even though it was guided by criteria and methods which were necessarily different. On this front an immediate distinction was made between the books needing revision, depending on their subject matter. One reads in the previously mentioned report of the first months of 1946 that:

Molti dei libri erano strettamente tecnici con poco o punto spazio adatto ad infiltrazioni politiche, oppure erano ristampe di opere classiche, o senza note o con note puramente letterarie o tecniche. Questo voleva dire che le eliminazioni su vasta scala di libri o di brani di essi furono limitate ad alcuni settori soltanto (per esempio la storia, la geografia, le antologie letterarie) e anche in questo settore si poteva trovare di solito del materiale tollerabile per una sostituzione immediata quando era necessaria. In questo modo fu possibile procedere semplicemente ampliando ogni tanto le prime liste pubblicate, via via che altre regioni venivano conquistate e che altri libri erano presentati per l'approvazione, mentre si lasciava che il mondo editoriale provvedesse a riempire le lacune, stampando libri di testo nuovi¹⁰.

⁹ «The Italian Republic is already one year old but on looking through the dozens of reading books and history texts we have in front of us we get the idea that the pupils are not allowed to know this [...]. [These books] seem to have been made for children dressed as sailors with trousers down to their knees as in the fashion magazines of forty years ago instead of for our children who were in the cellars during the bombings and saw with their own eyes the insurrection of the Nation, the 'five days' of Milan, partisans shot down in the streets and Mussolini hanging in Piazzale Loreto». G. Rodari, *Ragazzi nuovi e libri vecchi*, «L'Unità» (Milan Edition), October 30 1947. See Centro Didattico Nazionale per la scuola elementare e di completamento dell'obbligo, *Funzione e uso dei libri di testo nella scuola primaria. Atti del convegno nazionale* (Roma 1966), Roma, 1967; E. Barassi, S. Magistretti, G. Sansone (Eds.), *Il leggere inutile. Indagine sui libri di lettura adottati nella scuola elementare*, Milano, Emme Edizioni, 1971; M. Bonazzi, *I 'pampini' bugiardi. Indagine sui libri al di sopra di ogni sospetto: i testi delle scuole elementari*, Firenze, Guarraldi, 1972.

¹⁰ «Many of the books were strictly technical with little or no space for political input, or they were reprints of classical works, either without annotations or with those of a purely literary or tech-

Particular attention, as we have seen, was given by the central Ministerial Commission and the regional commissions to history texts not only because of their high content of fascist ideology and the political use for which history teaching (particularly, but not exclusively, contemporary history) had been used in the course of the fascist period¹¹, but also because, following the directive given after July 25 1943 by the Badoglio government, the parts relating to the most recent history – the ‘March on Rome’ and the realization of the ‘Fascist Revolution’ where the ideological and political propaganda of the regime was more direct and outrageous, had been cut out from the teaching programmes and the subject had been put back, as far as the *terminus ad quem* is concerned, to the end of the First World War¹².

The revision of history texts concerned, altogether, 147 works for a total of about 200 volumes between handbooks, anthologies of history or historical criticism and historical atlases. The Ministerial Commission for the *defascistization* of textbooks published an *Elenco ufficiale dei volumi esaminati* (Official list of volumes examined) in November 1944, which included: (1) books whose use and sale were prohibited. Those that, according to the commission, must be expurgated since they are pervaded by the spirit of Fascism and by fascist attitudes such as emphasis, rhetoric etc.; (2) books which could be sold as long as the parts or single pages indicated, were removed. Books which contained single and isolated elements which could easily be eliminated; (3) finally, books approved for use and sale, that is revised by the Commission and deemed to be suitable and those for which, according to ordinance number 4 of the Allied Command, the publisher, on his own responsibility, has declared that they contain no references in support of Fascism¹³.

nical nature. This meant that the elimination on a large scale of books or passages from them was limited to just a few sectors (for example, geography, history, literary anthologies) and even here one could usually find tolerable material which could be immediately substituted if necessary. In this way it was possible to proceed simply by enlarging the first published list as other regions were progressively being liberated and other books were presented for approval. Meanwhile the publishers were allowed to fill the gaps by printing new texts». *Resoconto dell'attività di epurazione dei libri di testo*, undated (but early in 1946), p. 2. See also *Approvazione dei libri di testo per le scuole elementari 1945-46. Circolare del Col. Carleton W. Washburne agli Editori e alle Commissioni Regionali per i libri di testo*, 22 Maggio 1945, in INSMIL, Fondo CLN Lombardia, *Commissariato Scuola*, b. 74, f. 8 (*Circulars AMG*); and *Scelta dei libri di testo. Circolare del Magg. A. A. Vesselo (Ufficiale Regionale per l'Educazione) sull'istruzione pubblica n. 64 al Provveditore agli studi reggente*, 22 September 1945, *ibid.*

¹¹ See S. Guarracino, *I manuali del consenso*, «I viaggi di Erodoto», 1989, 8, pp. 170-183.

¹² See G. Di Pietro, *Da strumento ideologico a disciplina formativa. I programmi di storia nell'Italia contemporanea*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 1991, p. 99.

¹³ Associazione Romana Editori Libri e Riviste, *Elenco ufficiale dei volumi esaminati dalla Commissione ministeriale per la defascistizzazione*, Roma, s.i.t., 1944. The Commission was chaired by G. Santonastaso. That text should be integrated with: *Aggiunta all'Elenco ufficiale dei volumi esaminati dalla Commissione ministeriale per la defascistizzazione. A cura della Commissione regionale per la Lombardia dei libri di testo delle scuole secondarie*, undated (but October 1945), in INSMIL, Fondo CLN Lombardia, *Commissariato Scuola*, b. 79, f. 5 (Commissione per la defascistizzazione dei libri di testo).

Altogether there were 18 out of 147 history texts (for a total of 30 volumes) whose use and sale were prohibited; 54 texts (for a total of 65 volumes) were authorized for use only on condition that the unacceptable parts were removed (generally speaking, those referring to the period following the First World War) and, finally, 75 texts (for a total of 105 volumes) were approved as they had been written.

As regards the real and proper history handbooks for the various classes of secondary schools (excluding, therefore, anthologies and atlases), a comparison of texts used in the fascist period and those approved by the Commission reveals an interesting aspect: the re-proposal after the Second World War, with only a few cuts and alterations, of the most authoritative and widespread handbooks from the fascist period, that is, those of Pietro Silva, Niccolò Rodolico, Alfonso Manaresi, Nino Cortese, Augusto Lizier, Agostino Savelli, Francesco Landogna and Francesco Calderaro¹⁴.

The case of the “ultra fascist” handbook, *Vita vissuta. Corso di storia per i licei e gli istituti magistrali*, by Francesco Calderaro, is emblematic of a real continuity between Fascism and post-Fascism. The publishing house La Nuova Italia continued reprinting it without any problems right up until 1953 when it finally decided to substitute it with the text by Armando Saitta, *Il cammino umano* (the first volume of which appeared in 1952), of a more progressive nature.

Given this situation, the genuine perplexity of the members of the Commission for the expurgation of textbooks for the middle-schools of Lombardy is understandable; in a report dated October 10 1945, concerning the strategies employed by authors and publishers in this new phase, they commented:

La Commissione soprattutto ha soffermato la sua attenzione sui testi di storia. Alcuni autori, che avvalorarono, con la loro autorità scientifica di maestri e di studiosi, una concezione fascisticamente propagandistica della storia italiana, hanno presentato libri di testo che, mantenendo uguale la struttura, hanno mutato l'atteggiamento politico. La Commissione, preoccupata della serietà degli studi e del costume scolastico, segnala agli insegnanti questi casi di mancanza di coerenza e di onestà civile perché sentano la responsabilità che si assumono nel riadattarli nella scuola¹⁵.

¹⁴ We refer to the following handbooks: P. Silva, *Corso di storia*, Milano, Principato; N. Rodolico, *Sommario storico ad uso dei licei*, Firenze, Le Monnier; A. Manaresi, *Corso di storia per i licei e gli istituti magistrali*, Milano, Trevisini; N. Cortese, *Corso di storia per i licei*, Firenze, Sansoni; A. Lizier, *Lezioni di storia per i licei*, Milano, Signorelli; A. Savelli, *Storia per i licei*, Firenze, Sansoni; F. Landogna, *Corso di storia per i licei*, Napoli, Morano; F. Calderaro, *Vita vissuta. Corso di storia per i licei e gli istituti magistrali*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia.

¹⁵ «The Commission has concentrated its attention above all on history texts. Some authors who confirmed a conception of Italian history embedded in fascist propaganda, on the basis of their authority as experts and scholars, have presented textbooks which, while leaving the structure unchanged, have simply altered the political position. The Commission, being concerned about the seriousness of studies and behaviour in schools brings to the attention of the teachers these cases of lack of coherence and civic honesty so that they be aware of the responsibility they take in continuing to choose them as set texts». *Relazione della Commissione di epurazione dei libri di testo della scuola media*, 10 ottobre 1945 Milano, in INSMLI, Fondo CLN Lombardia, *Commissariato Scuola*, b. 79, f. 5 (Commissione per la defascistizzazione dei libri di testo).

As in the case of textbooks for primary schools even the history books for secondary schools would have to wait for the end of the 1940s before a really new production became available¹⁶. Apart from delays and ambiguities on the part of the publishers however, it needs to be emphasised how, both from the historiographic and didactic point of view, the texts which circulated in Italian secondary schools immediately after the war presented a close continuity with the past rather than an effective opening to the cultural and civil appeals of the new democratic society. And if, from the scientific point of view, the prevalent trends wavered between the economic and legal historiography of the beginning of the century or Croce's more recent – but no less limiting – ethical-political approach and the still prevailing interpretative modes which adopted a nationalistic and imperialistic key to Italian history which was assimilated in the course of the 1930s¹⁷, from the point of view of the civic and democratic education of the new generations history texts proved to be completely inadequate if not even misleading.

On the other hand, the persistence within the teaching body of a culture and a historical sense, still, in large measure, founded on the traditional canons of Gentile, and the consequent absence of a true stimulus towards change on the part of the world of education, helped to mask the delays and failures of the sector, at least until the beginning of the '50s¹⁸. Finally one should add that, paradoxically, that same freedom of choice of textbooks given to teachers (in virtue of the Legislative Decree of October 16 1947, number 1497, with which the Ministerial Control Commissions for school texts were abolished), far from bringing about the desired effects, ended up by strengthening and consolidating the situation described above¹⁹.

The question of a revision of history handbooks and, more generally, of the same programmes themselves for the teaching of this discipline in primary and secondary schools was forcefully brought again to the attention of the political classes and public opinion at the beginning of the 1950s by two events which were not directly related to the world of education but loaded with significance for the development of the fragile Italian democracy: the debate in Parliament

¹⁶ In this respect see, E. Ragionieri, *I manuali di storia nelle scuole italiane*, «Società», 1952, 4, pp. 325-337.

¹⁷ See G. Ricuperati, *L'insegnamento della storia dall'età della Sinistra ad oggi*, in Id., *Clio e il centauro Chirone. Interventi sull'insegnamento della storia*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 1989, pp. 28-33.

¹⁸ See G. Quazza, *L'insegnamento della storia*, «Scuola e Città», 1958, 3, pp. 87-90.

¹⁹ «The freedom of choice for textbooks – Minister Guido Gonella stated in a speech in the Senate in October 1948 during the conclusion of the discussion on the education budget – has already been implemented by abolishing State textbooks and control commissions. The Government does not have the means to intervene [...]. The Ministry can only carry on doing what it does every year: remind teachers to respect the current regulations. But the Ministry has, when all is said and done, the duty to put itself in the hands of the educators who are the ultimate judges of the situation» (*Discorso tenuto dal Ministro Gonella al Senato della Repubblica a conclusione del dibattito sul Bilancio della Pubblica Istruzione*, 21 ottobre 1948, in G. Gonella, *Cinque anni al Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1981, 3 vols., I, p. 37.

over the Scelba law on the repression of neo-fascist activities (1952), and, on a different level, the emergence of a growing alienation of the new generations with regard to institutions and democratic regulations emerging from the anti-fascist struggle, which was largely the fruit of little or no knowledge of the events which had brought about the birth of the Republican State.

2. The debate on the teaching of contemporary history in schools and the renewal of history handbooks in the early 1950s

In the course of the parliamentary debate on the Scelba law the request for bringing texts up to date and for extending history programmes for secondary schools up to recent events – that is to Fascism, the Resistance and the building of the democratic Republic – brought together the government majority and the opposition of the left. They were convinced that as well as the repression of neo-fascist activities there was a need to promote in the country a democratic conscience fed by awareness and a sense of history²⁰. As an example of this, the Christian Democrat Giorgio Bo, in a speech in the Senate on January 1952 asked himself:

Che cosa ha fatto in cinque anni la Repubblica democratica per consolidare nella vita della nazione le nuove istituzioni? Troppo poco [...]. Pensate che ancora oggi non si è trovata l'opportunità di sostituire tutti i libri di testo che vanno per le mani dei nostri scolari, di modo che vi sono ancora opere scritte e stampate durante l'epoca fascista e impregnate della sua mentalità e zeppa delle sue menzogne. Fra i tanti concorsi che allietano la nostra vita non si è ancora trovato il tempo e il denaro per bandirne uno per un manuale che spieghi alle giovani generazioni che cosa è stato in realtà il fascismo [...]. Chi ha saputo dire che la Resistenza ha costituito e costituisce una delle pagine più alte e più luminose della nostra storia e forma comunque il titolo principale per cui l'Italia [...] può tenere alta la sua fronte nel consesso delle nazioni civili? Tutto questo lavoro di formazione delle coscienze, di rigenerazione morale, di educazione dell'uomo e del cittadino è appena incominciato. E io capisco che [...] si deve fare qualche cosa di più; che elaborare una legge [sulla repressione delle attività fasciste] può essere un'impresa troppo facile ed insufficiente. Dobbiamo lavorare in profondità, fondare uno stile ed un costume, preoccuparci dei giovani e non limitarci ad approvare dei provvedimenti legislativi²¹.

²⁰ See the debate on the Bill «Norme sulla repressione dell'attività fascista» presented to Parliament by the Home Minister Mario Scelba, in Senato della Repubblica, *Atti Parlamentari. Resoconti delle discussioni 1948-1952*, vol. XXXI 16 gennaio-23 febbraio 1952, Roma, Tipografia del Senato, 1952; e Camera dei Deputati, *Atti Parlamentari, Discussioni*, vol. XXX, Roma, Tipografia della Camera dei Deputati, 1952.

²¹ «What has the democratic Republic done in these last five years to consolidate the new institutions in the life of the nation? Very little [...]. Just think that still today the opportunity has not been taken to substitute all the textbooks which pass through the hands of our students. There are still works written and printed during the fascist period which are full of its mentality and impreg-

In the wake of Giorgio Bo's speech numerous others followed from senators belonging to a diversity of political parties: from Ugo Della Seta to Giovanni Conti and Edoardo Di Giovanni up to Antonio Banfi and Ferruccio Parri. The last named, previously a highly esteemed head of the Resistance, Prime Minister from June to December 1945 and one of the leaders of the Partito d'Azione (Action Party) and then of the Partito Repubblicano Italiano (Italian Republican Party), expressed himself thus on the bill presented by Minister Scelba:

Finora la nostra organizzazione politica e i nostri partiti non hanno saputo risolvere il problema dell'educazione. La presentazione di questo disegno di legge può essere l'indice di un fallimento, l'indice di una scarsa capacità educativa della nostra democrazia ad irradiarsi nelle sfere giovanili. Il problema dei giovani è problema di fondo per il nostro avvenire²².

The communist philosopher Antonio Banfi echoed Parri's words. In reiterating the urgency required for the promotion of a democratic conscience in the younger generations he said:

Quale amarezza io provo quando, sfogliando I testi di storia che vanno per le mani dei nostri giovani, vedo che in essi prudenzialmente l'autore si arresta alla fine della Grande Guerra, e alle soglie del fascismo! Si attende forse un altro giudizio su di esso? Si attende un ricorso storico per cancellare quella che è la pagina più grande, più eroica del popolo italiano [la lotta di liberazione dal nazi-fascismo], in cui tutto il suo avvenire riposa? Ma come ci meraviglieremo di ciò, se lo spirito che informa l'insegnamento [della storia] ancora s'indugia nei quadri fascisti o pre-fascisti, e nulla è stato fatto per mutarli?²³.

In April 1952, almost at the same time as the debate in the Senate of the

nated with its lies. Among all the things we have had to do there has been neither time nor money to call for a revision of texts which explain to the younger generations what exactly Fascism was [...]. Who has been able to explain that the Resistance constituted and constitutes one of the most illustrious pages of our history and is the main reason why Italy [...] can hold its head high among civilised nations? All this work towards the forming of the mind, moral regeneration, education of man and citizen, has only just begun. And I understand that [...] we need to do something more; that making a law (on the repression of fascist activities) can be too easy and insufficient. We must go deeper, establish a style and a way of life, concern ourselves with our young people and not limit ourselves to approving legislative regulations». Sitting of 22 January 1952, in Senato della Repubblica, *Atti Parlamentari, Resoconti delle discussioni 1948-1952*, cit., pp. 29912-29913.

²² «So far our political organisation and our parties have not known how to resolve the problem of education. The presentation of this bill can be seen as a sign of that failure, a sign of the inability of our democracy to get educational ideas through to young people. The problem of our youth is a fundamental problem for our future». Sitting of January 23 1952, *ibid.*, pp. 30014-30015.

²³ «What bitterness I feel when, leafing through the textbooks which our students are given, I find that the authors have prudently stopped at the end of the Great War – on the threshold of Fascism! Are we perhaps waiting for a re-assessment of it? Are we waiting for an historical appeal for the cancellation of our greatest achievement, the most heroic on the part of the Italian people [the struggle for liberation from Nazi-Fascism] upon which all its future depends? But why should this surprise us when the spirit behind the teaching [of history] is still guided by a fascist or pre-fascist mentality and nothing has been done to change this?». Sitting of January 24 1952, *ibid.*, p. 30072.

Scelba law was taking place, there was an important conference in Perugia organised by the Associazione per la Difesa della Scuola Nazionale (Association for the Defence of State Schools, ADSN) which dealt with the teaching of history in Italian schools. The principal exponents of lay and Marxist oriented culture and historiography of the day were present: Benedetto Croce, Luigi Salvatorelli, Augusto Monti, Piero Pieri, Delio Cantimori, Ernesto Sestan, Nino Valeri and Valdo Spini²⁴.

That assembly – which gave rise to a much wider debate destined to develop, in the years that followed, in the pages of the most important cultural and educational journals in Italy (from «Il Mondo» to «Società», from «Scuola e Città» to «Riforma della Scuola» and to «La Voce della Scuola Democratica», to name just the more important) – on one hand contributed to re-launching the objective of extending history programmes to include more recent events and, on the other, drew attention again to the necessity and urgency for an updating of school history texts.

With regard to the first of these objectives it is worth remembering the paper given by the historian Piero Pieri at the conference in Perugia on *La tradizione della Resistenza e l'insegnamento della storia* (The tradition of the Resistance and the teaching of history). In this paper Pieri showed himself to be clearly in favour of extending the programmes so as to include the fascist period and the events concerning the Resistance and the foundation of the democratic Republic in Italy:

Si obietta – he noted – che la scuola deve tenersi lontana dalla politica, che non si devono rinfocolare ire e rancori; che di conseguenza non è il caso di parlare di avvenimenti tanto vicini a noi e materia di cronaca più che di storia. Che sia auspicabile una superiore concordia, nessuno lo mette in dubbio; ma essa non può sussistere all'infuori dello schietto riconoscimento di alcuni principi fondamentali posti alla base della nostra vita politica e sociale, e addirittura del nostro mondo morale; altrimenti finiremmo col negare la nostra stessa vita e la nostra civiltà e col lasciare libero corso a quelle forze negative cagione di quella rovina dalla quale a fatica ci siamo salvati e dalla quale penosamente cerchiamo di risollevarci.

According to Pieri it was necessary to introduce into Italian schools not the history and detailed account of Fascism and the Resistance, but rather an explanation of the significance of those events within the more complex story of the unitary State, with the aim of promoting in the new generations a critical sense and an authentic awareness of the value of the re-born democracy. Pieri specified:

Resistenza e lotta partigiana [...] significarono sforzo generoso di rinnovamento spirituale, di purificazione dopo tanti anni di vergogna [...]. Una lotta veramente di tutto il popolo

²⁴ For the conference organised by ADSN in Perugia on the 26-27 April 1952 see the report by E.R. [E. Ragionieri], published in «Società», 1952, 4, pp. 337-338.

lo italiano in una superiore concordia e in una alta speranza. Così s'integrava e si compiva veramente la tradizione del Risorgimento. Tutto questo non va taciuto, non va nascosto ai giovani: si tratta di un grande patrimonio morale da salvare e da trasmettere [...]; e la scuola non deve mancare a questo altissimo suo compito; e i libri di testo non devono mostrarsi muti di fronte alle fondamentali esigenze della formazione spirituale dei nostri giovani²⁵.

Apart from the questionable interpretation of the struggle for freedom from Nazi-Fascism as a completion of the Risorgimento and the perhaps too 'ecumenical' reading of the Resistance, it should be emphasised that Pieri's position on the teaching of recent history in schools did not meet with agreement from other authoritative lay and left-wing historians who were worried particularly about the risk of the discipline being exploited.

Such was the case, for example, of Gaetano Salvemini who, on many occasions in the ensuing months, in the pages of «Il Mondo», wondered whether it was not preferable «negli alunni delle nostre scuole la più candida ignoranza sulla storia del fascismo e della resistenza ad un insegnamento controllato da catechisti, insegnanti di disegno, presidi repubblicani e un Ministero clericale»; and above all if it was just «preoccupare l'animo indifeso della gioventù con insegnamenti, i quali non possono non essere perturbati dalle passioni di un tempo troppo vicino a maestri e alunni». Salvemini's position was anything but isolated as can be seen from, among other things, the consensus that his views were to receive on almost all the political and ideological fronts²⁶.

The communist historian Ernesto Ragionieri intervened at the conference in Perugia in 1952 on the question of the renewal of textbooks dedicated to contemporary history. After reviewing the main events relative to the expurgation of school texts in the years immediately following the war, he paused to exam-

²⁵ «One objects that schools should keep away from politics, that they should not stir up anger and rancour again; that as a consequence one should not speak of events which are so close to us and are news items rather than history. No one doubts that we hope for more substantial agreement; but it cannot be reached without a sincere acknowledgement of some fundamental principles which are at the base of our political and social life and even our moral world; otherwise we shall end by negating our own life and civilisation and leaving a free hand to those negative forces which were the reason for that disaster from which we have barely saved ourselves and, with great difficulty, are trying to recover [...]. The Resistance and the partisan struggle meant [...] a generous effort towards spiritual renewal, purification after many years of shame [...]. A struggle of truly all the Italian people in substantial agreement and high hopes. In this way the tradition of the Risorgimento would be truly integrated and completed. All this cannot be silenced, cannot be hidden from the young: we are talking about an enormous moral heritage which must be saved and transmitted [...]; and schools must not neglect this high duty; textbooks must not be dumb in the face of the fundamental needs for the spiritual formation of our youth». P. Pieri, *La tradizione della Resistenza e l'insegnamento della storia*, «Nuova Rivista Storica», 1952, 5-6, pp. 515-517.

²⁶ «For our students to have a naive ignorance of the fascist period and the resistance rather than teaching controlled by catechists, art teachers, fascist head masters and a clerical Ministry – to worry innocent young people with subjects which could not fail to be troubled by the passions of a time which was too near both to teachers and students». G. Salvemini, *La storia nelle scuole*, «Il Mondo», October 6 1953, p. 4; Id., *Storia e Filosofia*, *ibid.*, March 29 1955, p. 13.

ine analytically the approach and basic orientations of the most widespread handbooks which were being used in Italian schools: from the new editions of the old texts which had survived the fascist period to those printed after 1945.

The conclusions which Ragionieri came to were strongly critical: with the exception of the two very recent texts by Spini and Saitta which were appreciated for their approach which was inspired by the canons of the new Marxist historiography, all the others, to a greater or lesser extent, were judged to be either not up to the level required for the didactically efficient and ideologically correct teaching of history (for example, the works of Pepe-Omodeo, Barbadoro and Morghen); or – as in the case of Picotti-Sabatini-Rossi, Vivona, Silva, Maresi and Rodolico – completely inadequate, when not simply misleading, as far as the interpretation of history went.

Sono soprattutto lo spirito e la sostanza dell'educazione fascista – he concluded severely – che sono rimasti intatti in questi libri. Sciovinismo, agiografia sabauda, spirito antidemocratico e antipopolare ne costituiscono le caratteristiche essenziali, e il tutto viene disciolto in una narrazione alla base della quale sta la concezione che *i drammoni politici siano l'elemento decisivo della storia*²⁷.

Ragionieri's analysis, undoubtedly praiseworthy for its breadth of research on current texts and its strong appeal for their renewal, was not however devoid of a certain basic ambiguity. It tended, on the one hand, to judge the texts in circulation on the basis of a precise historiographic option – the new, Marxist, one²⁸ – and on the other to consider the adherence or not to the canons of that historiography to be the main criterion for the evaluation of both the validity and the didactic and educational effectiveness of the above mentioned texts. Actually, the critical observations formulated by Ragionieri went well beyond the polemics concerning the objectivity and didactic and formative effectiveness of the historical reconstruction proposed in the school textbooks in circulation: they aimed at legitimising, in an exclusive way, an interpretation of Italian and European contemporary history in which converged references and motives which were not altogether alien to the current political polemics. Given this state of affairs the reservations expressed by historians of a catholic inclination and those of the Croce school is not surprising. They were anything but willing to accept such a stance²⁹.

Ragionieri's approach, among other things, was destined to be taken up and re-proposed in the years that followed in various critical reviews on history text-

²⁷ «Above all it is the spirit and the substance of fascist education which have survived intact in these books. Chauvinism, hagiography of the house of Savoy, an anti-democratic and anti-popular spirit are their essential characteristics. And it is all blended in a narration founded on the concept that *political melodramas are the decisive element in history*». Ragionieri, *I manuali di storia nelle scuole italiane*, cit., pp. 325-337.

²⁸ See D. Coli, *Idealismo e marxismo nella storiografia italiana degli anni '50 e '60*, in P. Rossi (Ed.), *La storiografia contemporanea. Indirizzi e problemi*, Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1987, pp. 39-58.

²⁹ See the notes in L. Masella, *Passato e presente nel dibattito storiografico: storici marxisti e mutamento della società italiana (1955-1970)*, Bari, De Donato, 1979, p. 26 sgg.

books edited by Giorgio Rochat, Luigi Ganapini, Massimo Legnani and others for the journal «Il Movimento di Liberazione in Italia», official organ of the National Institute for the history of the Liberation Movement in Italy³⁰.

But we shall return to that problem later when, with history programmes being extended to the end of the Second World War, discussions will concentrate specifically on the evaluation of the nature and causes of Fascism and on the significance of the Resistance, thus involving directly the very origins and characteristics of the Democratic State.

We should now take into account the fact that the debate which had developed in those months had important repercussions in the political-educational field. In October 1952 during a parliamentary debate of the education budget, Minister Antonio Segni, accepting some agenda items which had been presented by members of parliament from the majority and the opposition, took on a series of commitments of noteworthy significance. In the first place he accepted the request formulated by the Honourable Oscar Luigi Scalfaro and other Christian Democrats to bring to the knowledge of the students of all middle schools the *Lettere dei condannati a morte della Resistenza italiana* (Letters of members of the Italian Resistance condemned to death), published by Einaudi, and in general the literature which documented the heroism and sacrifice of the Italian people in the struggle for freedom³¹.

In the second place, taking up an official position on the delicate problem of extending history programmes to include the most recent events, he clearly agreed with the various agenda items which had been presented on the subject; the Minister of Education said:

Sostanzialmente sono d'accordo con gli onorevoli Mondolfo, Ravera, Targetti, Poletto and Benanni, i quali chiedono che l'insegnamento della storia comprenda anche le vicende più recenti, giungendo fino quasi ai nostri giorni. Vi è, in proposito, anche l'impegno costituito dalla legge sul neofascismo.

But he added, immediately afterwards:

Nessuno deve però misconoscere le difficoltà insite nella trattazione di una materia così scottante, la delicatezza estrema che essa richiede in un ambiente, come quello scolastico, nel quale sono presenti e hanno diritto allo stesso rispetto e agli stessi riguardi i figli di chi ha sofferto, o forse di chi è caduto, schierato dall'una o dall'altra parte [...]. Ancora oggi mi troverei profondamente imbarazzato a trovare le espressioni adatte per spiegare ai figli

³⁰ See L. Ganapini, R. Gruppi Farina, M. Legnani, G. Rochat, A. Sala, *La storia contemporanea nella scuola. Note sui libri di testo*, «Il Movimento di Liberazione in Italia», 1964, 75, pp. 68-98; G. Rochat (Ed.), *Inchiesta sui testi per l'insegnamento della storia contemporanea nella scuola italiana*, *ibid.*, 1970, 101, pp. 3-58.

³¹ See the agenda item signed by Scalfaro, Vigorelli, Conci and Benanni presented to the House during the *Discussione del Bilancio di previsione del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 1952-53*, sitting of October 22 1952, in Camera dei Deputati, *Atti parlamentari, Discussioni*, vol. XXXIV, Tipografia della Camera dei Deputati, Roma 1952, p. 41819.

innocenti di uomini che hanno pagato con la vita l'adesione alla repubblica di Salò non solo la vanità dell'ideale per il quale i loro padri sono caduti, ma anzi ciò che di riprovevole vi fu nel loro atteggiamento. Chi ha una vera esperienza di scuole si rende conto delle ragioni non politiche, ma di umanità e di sensibilità pedagogica, che inducono a considerare con una particolare delicatezza questo argomento.

Being persuaded, however, that «l'insegnamento della storia [dovesse giungere] fino al periodo attuale», and that one could not ignore «quella parte [della recente storia nazionale] che si riferisce alla nascita della Repubblica italiana», the minister took on, in front of parliament, the task of initiating what Poletto and Piasenti had requested and presented on the agenda. That was, «provvedere con la massima urgenza alla pubblicazione e alla diffusione di un opuscolo che obiettivamente esponga ai giovani delle scuole medie superiori i fatti e le vicende della storia d'Italia dal 1920 ai giorni nostri»; a pamphlet destined to represent the first, important, step in a chain of events which would culminate with the definitive amendment of the *terminus ad quem* of history programmes for secondary schools³².

Those aims were implemented a few months later with the publication of a small volume by the historian Luigi Salvatorelli, *Venticinque anni di storia, 1920-1945* (Twenty five years of history)³³, which was distributed free of charge to all the teachers and students of the final year of secondary schools throughout the country by the Ministry of Education.

The work of the liberal historian Luigi Salvatorelli, necessarily concise and informative, was characterised by the calm and quiet tone of its narration and by the well-balanced evaluation of events and personalities. The periodization of history adopted went well beyond the Second World War arriving up to the

³² «Substantially I am in agreement with the honourable Mondolfo, Ravera, Targetti, Poletto and Benanni who are asking that history teaching should include even the most recent events, almost up to the present time. There is, on that point, even the commitment established by the law on neo-fascism – No one, however, must fail to recognise the difficulties inherent in the treatment of such a sensitive subject, the extreme delicacy needed in a field such as that of schools, where the children of those who have suffered or those who have died are present, from both sides, and have the same right to respect and care [...]. Even today I would find it profoundly embarrassing to try to find the words necessary to explain to the innocent children of those who paid for their adhesion to the Salò republic with their lives, not only the vanity of the ideals for which their fathers died but also what exactly there was reprehensible in their behaviour. Those who have a real experience of schools will understand the reasons, not political but human and pedagogic, which lead us to consider this argument with particular delicacy – the teaching of history [should extend] to the present day – that part [of recent national history] which refers to the birth of the Italian Republic – to provide, with the greatest urgency, for the publication and diffusion of a pamphlet which objectively explained to students of secondary schools the facts and the events in the history of Italy from 1920 to the present day». See the speech of Minister Antonio Segni at the end of the *Discussione del Bilancio di previsione del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione 1952-53*, sitting of October 23 1952, in Camera dei Deputati, *Atti Parlamentari. Discussioni*, vol XXXIV, pp. 41834-41835. See the speeches and relative agenda items presented by members Targetti, Poletto and Piasenti, *ibid.*, pp. 41854-41856.

³³ L. Salvatorelli, *Venticinque anni di storia (1920-1945)*, Roma, Edizioni Scuola e Vita, 1953.

early '50s: the last section of the volume, in fact, included the peace treaties, the Democratic Constitution and the early development of the Italian Republic, the economic reconstruction of Italy and the rest of Europe, the formation of the two 'Blocs' and the 'Cold War', the Atlantic Pact, the start of the process for European integration (with the foundation of the European Organisation for Economic Cooperation, the Council of Europe and the Economic Coal and Steel Community and the attempt, which then failed, to form a European Defence Community); up to the process of de-colonisation and the emergence of independence movements by the peoples of Asia and Africa, the Korean war, the death of Stalin and the first signs of a thaw between the two 'Blocs'.

The effort to overcome definitively the nationalistic perspective and to offer the reader a view of the entire reality of Europe and the world was of undoubted significance as was the space given to the events linked to the Russian revolution in 1917 and the birth of the Soviet State and the enormous impact that the Russian revolution had on the masses of the working classes in western countries.

In reconstructing European events of the '20s and '30s – the period which Salvatorelli called *The Age of Totalitarianisms* – the causes and development of the crisis of liberal and democratic institutions and the advent of the dictatorial regimes in Italy, Germany, Spain etc., were investigated with remarkable objectivity as were the changes undergone by the Soviet Union after the rise of Stalin.

Naturally, the parts of the book dedicated to Italian affairs were very full and detailed. These started from the crisis after the First World War and the advent of Fascism and then developed by way of an analysis of the building of the totalitarian State (with references to the clandestine activities of the anti-fascist movements abroad), to culminate with the events of the war and a systematic – albeit concise – reconstruction of the various phases in the struggle for Liberation: the reconstruction of the pre-fascist parties and the birth of new political formations, the CLN (National Liberation Committee) and the partisan war, relationships with the Allies, the Constituent Assembly and the foundation of the Democratic Republic³⁴.

It is worth emphasising that in describing the various stages of the struggle against Nazi-Fascism Salvatorelli introduced a new theory of interpretation – that of the struggle for freedom as *civil war* – which, in these last years has met with a certain success among historians of different ideological and cultural orientations³⁵. At the time, however, it raised not a little concern and opposition from scholars of an Actionist and Marxist orientation: this brought about a genuine aversion for the volume which was destined to reflect upon the

³⁴ Salvatorelli's book was received positively in catholic and lay cultural circles. See particularly: M. Bendiscioli, *Recensione a Luigi Salvatorelli, «Venticinque anni di storia (1920-1945)»*, «Humanitas», 1953, 10, p. 1037; and C. Casucci, *La storia nelle scuole*, «Il Mulino», 1954, 4, p. 288.

³⁵ See, in particular, the fundamental work of C. Pavone, *Una Guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità nella Resistenza*, Milano, Bollati Boringhieri, 1991.

more complex operation started by Minister Segni. To give just one example: in the pages of the review «Società», Ernesto Ragionieri thus branded the liberal historian's book:

Né, letto il volumetto del Salvatorelli, potremmo longanimemente affermare che tutto si sia risolto in una *felix culpa* [del ministro Segni], della quale ci rallegreremmo, se avessimo trovato rispecchiato davvero lo spirito col quale l'insegnamento della storia contemporanea, del fascismo e della Resistenza in primo luogo, era stato richiesto. Nulla [invece] sembra poter peggio corrispondere alle finalità di formazione democratica dei cittadini che il rinnovato insegnamento della storia contemporanea nelle scuole italiane si riproponeva³⁶.

The cool reception, when not open hostility, reserved for Salvatorelli's book and, more generally, to Segni's choice to proceed by degrees towards the introduction of recent history in Italian schools contributed considerably to the hindering of the Minister of Education's activities on this front; so much so that within the Christian Democrat party itself a desire prevailed to avoid political and ideological conflicts destined to have an effect on the activity of the government majority and the very cohesion of the government body³⁷.

This explains, for example, the surprising «removal» of the problem which occurred in the immediately succeeding phase, at least in as much as it concerns government politics: a removal even more significant in that, during the second half of the '50s, the debate in the historiographic field and the pressures applied within parliament and outside of it by parties of the left in favour of an extension of history programmes up to the most recent events, and a modernisation of the teaching of that subject and textbooks, took on previously unknown dimensions³⁸.

³⁶ «Nor, having read Salvatorelli's little book, could we, by any stretch of the imagination, affirm that everything has been resolved in a *felix culpa* [by Minister Segni], for which we would rejoice if we had found truly reflected in it the spirit required for the teaching of contemporary history, of Fascism and primarily of the Resistance. Nothing [instead] could correspond less to the aims of a democratic formation of the citizens which the renewed teaching of contemporary history in Italian schools intended to put into practice». E. Ragionieri, *La storia contemporanea nelle scuole italiane*, «Società», 5-6, pp. 674-675.

³⁷ See *Insegnamento della storia nelle scuole. Atti del convegno tenutosi a Bologna nei giorni 28 febbraio-1° marzo 1953*, a cura della Commissione nazionale per le attività culturali della Democrazia Cristiana, Bologna, Libertas, 1953.

³⁸ Purely as examples, see: A. Vaj, *La storia del ventennio fascista e della Resistenza*, «Riforma della Scuola», 1958, 2, pp. 7-8; *La Resistenza nella scuola*, *ibid.*, 1958, 4, pp. 7-10; 5, pp. 11-15; 6-7, pp. 21-25 (with papers by A. Capitini, R. La Porta, G. Pezzoli, L. Borghi, P. Alatri, G. Petronio, G. Arian Levi, C. Mungo, A. Visalberghi, N. Badaloni, R. Battaglia, D. Rosi, G.B. Salinari); G. Salinari, *Non è lecito ignorare trenta anni di storia*, *ibid.*, 1958, 8-9, pp. 7-9. For relevance to the historiographic debate see: G. Ricuperati, *Storiografia e insegnamento della storia*, in *Id.*, *Clio e il centauro Chirone. Interventi sull'insegnamento della storia*, cit., pp. 37-53.

3. *Delays, opposition and ambiguity: the introduction of contemporary history in Italian secondary schools (1960-1963)*

It was necessary to wait for the end of the decade before those pressures produced concrete effects. In the political context of the beginning of the third legislature, which was characterised by the first attempts to enlarge the government majority by including the Socialists (with the advent of Amintore Fanfani as the secretary of the Christian Democrats), but also by the emergence of a move towards an involution of Italian political life (the Tambroni government of March-July 1960 supported by the votes of neo-fascists of MSI)³⁹, Minister Bosco (third Fanfani government), with the DPR (Presidential Decree) 6 November 1960 number 1457, promulgated the new programmes for the teaching of history in secondary schools and Colleges of Education. To these, in the three following years, were added those destined for Technical Schools (DPR 30 September 1961 number 1222) and to the new middle schools established in 1962 (DM = Ministerial Decree, 24 April 1963)⁴⁰.

The new programmes, as is known, finally introduced an account of the most recent events in Italy and the rest of the world to secondary schools. Within them, «the Resistance, the struggle for freedom, the Constitution of the Italian Republic; the ideals and achievements of democracy», took on particular importance.

In the face of this undoubted and fundamental breakthrough some questions destined to condition, in a negative manner, the application and effectiveness of the new teaching aims, remained however, unresolved. For example the problem of bringing the history teachers culturally up to date (most of them not having an adequate knowledge of recent events), and the problem, no less important, of producing a new generation of handbooks and textbooks⁴¹.

More generally, the growing climate of ideological and political conflict, during the '60s, within Italian secondary schools, undoubtedly favoured an

³⁹ See R. Sani, «*La Civiltà Cattolica*» e la politica italiana nel secondo dopoguerra (1945-1958), Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2004, pp. 133-162.

⁴⁰ See DPR 6 novembre 1960, n. 1457 – Nuovi programmi per l'insegnamento della storia nei licei classici, nei licei scientifici e negli istituti magistrali, «Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana», 10 dicembre 1960, 302, p. 4537 sgg.; DPR 30 settembre 1961, n. 1222 – Sostituzione degli orari e dei programmi di insegnamento negli istituti tecnici, *ibid.*, 2 dicembre 1961, suppl. ord. al n. 299, pp. 1-135; Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione – Direzione Generale dell'Istruzione Media, *Orari e programmi d'insegnamento per la scuola media statale*, Roma, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1963.

⁴¹ See G. Sansone, M. Marelli Vaccaro (Eds.), *La storia dannosa. Indagine sui libri di storia adottati nelle scuole medie*, Milano, Emme Edizioni, 1972; G. Ricuperati, *Tra didattica e politica: appunti sull'insegnamento della storia*, «Rivista di storia contemporanea», 1972, 4, pp. 496-516; Id., *L'insegnamento della storia nella scuola secondaria fra ricerca, ideologie e istituzioni scolastiche*, in Ricuperati, *Clio e il centauro Chirone. Interventi sull'insegnamento della storia*, cit., pp. 121-143.

increasing exploitation of the teaching of recent history. This is shown, for example, in the repercussions registered even in this field arising from the more general arguments on Fascism-antifascism, on the meaning and importance of the partisan struggle, on the so-called «Resistenza tradita» (betrayed Resistance), that is on the failed realisation, due to the moderates, of the ideals and expectations built up in the period of the fight against Nazi-Fascism⁴².

The social-cultural transformations and the changes in habits recorded in the course of the '60s contributed to emphasising the delays, uncertainties and limits of the project to make the teaching of contemporary history in schools the cornerstone of an authentic critical conscience and, more generally, the basis from which to promote democratic citizenship among the young generations.

Already in April 1965, for example, the results of a major survey which took place in the secondary schools of Voghera on *Fascismo e Antifascismo* (Fascism and Anti-Fascism) were published in the Florentine periodical «Il Ponte». The survey was carried out using a sample of over a thousand students and was based on a questionnaire containing 14 questions aimed at evaluating the level of knowledge of the phenomenon of Fascism and Anti-Fascism and to reveal the opinions of the interviewees. This survey was to give surprising – and in many ways disconcerting – results on the mentality and political orientations of young people. In reporting the most relevant aspects of the survey «Il Ponte» put the accent on the attitude of rejection of the condemnation of Fascism which characterised the students interviewed, most of whom, instead, were convinced that a very different truth existed of the Fascist experience with respect to that of Anti-Fascist propaganda. The editors of the Florentine publication also emphasised how they found themselves faced with an essentially moderate generation integrated and easily adapted to the way of life which society had imposed on them – and not only on them. It was the generation of the «nati dopo» (born after), those who had not lived through the period of the war for liberation, and only a few of them could «give a chronological collocation and an exact definition of the Resistance movement»; but it was also the generation which showed not only ignorance but also diffidence in the face of the great ethical-civic ideals and the democratic aspirations which had inspired the struggle against Nazi-Fascism⁴³.

A further and even more decisive confirmation of the failure of the project to make the teaching of history an instrument for education for democracy came from the student protests of 1968. Here it is worth remembering the important paper on *La storia contemporanea nella scuola italiana* (Contem-

⁴² See R. De Felice, *La storiografia contemporanea italiana dopo la seconda guerra mondiale*, «Storia Contemporanea», 1979, 1, pp. 91-108.

⁴³ C. Bertoluzzi, *I nati dopo. 1003 studenti delle scuole medie superiori di Voghera rispondono su 'Fascismo e antifascismo'*, «Il Ponte», 1965, 3-4, pp. 398-527.

porary history in Italian schools) given by the historian Guido Quazza at the conference on «Libri di testo e Resistenza» (Texts-books and the Resistance) held at Ferrara in November 1970 on the initiative of the Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia (National Association of Italian Partisans, ANPI)⁴⁴.

In it the scholar, summarising the main steps of the debate on Fascism and Anti-Fascism and on the interpretation of the Resistance and the birth of the democratic State which had been proposed by historians of various ideological orientations in the years after the second world war, did not fail to reveal the limits of the connections between historiography and politics and to denounce the negative effects of that position from the point of view of the civic formation of the new generations:

Che cosa è venuto da questa considerazione della storia contemporanea nell'ultimo venticinquennio per quanto riguarda i giovani? – Quazza asked – [...] Ne è conseguito che la parte migliore di essi per impegno e intelligenza, ha finito col cogliere il sostanziale distacco fra cultura e intelligenza, non come una conseguenza inconsapevole, ma come un mezzo consapevole usato dai politici, dai partiti, per avallare un sostanziale monopolio del potere. Qui non si vuol fare della polemica politica, ma si deve riconoscere con molta franchezza che da qui è nata la diffidenza dei giovani verso la 'doppia verità' dei partiti. In particolare, la Resistenza è stata utilizzata ai fini dell'interesse delle parti politiche più contrastanti. I moderati, ad esempio, ne hanno fatto un sacrario di glorie da mummificare, cioè un fatto concluso che non doveva avere più conseguenze dirette nella nostra attività quotidiana. Ma anche le sinistre hanno presentato un concetto di Resistenza che non era quello rispondente realmente alla Resistenza quale fu, cioè non un tentativo di rivoluzione, rimasto incompiuto, ma una lotta nazionale fondata su un compromesso politico. Di qui il graduale formarsi di un senso di insoddisfazione verso la 'Italia della Resistenza', sfociato poi, dal 1967 ad oggi, nella contestazione giovanile, la quale quindi è stata in primo luogo una crisi di sfiducia nei partiti che si dicevano innovatori o rivoluzionari e in secondo luogo una rivolta contro il 'sistema dei partiti' [...]. I giovani hanno perfettamente ragione: quando polemizzano con la Resistenza, polemizzano con una certa immagine della Resistenza che noi abbiamo dato, un'immagine ambivalente [...], mitizzata da un lato e, dall'altro, apparentemente rivoluzionaria [...]. Se vediamo la Resistenza in questo quadro ci spieghiamo anche perché ha inciso poco [nella formazione della coscienza democratica dei giovani]⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ G. Quazza, *La storia contemporanea nella scuola italiana*, in *Libri di testo e resistenza. Atti del convegno nazionale tenuto a Ferrara il 14-15 novembre 1970*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1971, pp. 26-33 (but see, also by Quazza, the speech at the debate, *ibid.*, pp. 114-116).

⁴⁵ «What has come from this consideration of contemporary history in the last twenty five years as far as our youth are concerned? [...] The result is that the best of them as far as commitment and intelligence go have come to the conclusion that there is a substantial detachment between culture and intelligence, not as a consequence of lack of awareness but as a means used consciously by politicians, by the parties, to endorse a fundamental monopoly of power. We have no desire to indulge in political arguments here, but we must recognise, frankly, that this has given birth to the diffidence of youth towards the 'double truth' of the parties. In particular, the Resistance has been used to further the interests of the most contrasting factions. The moderates, for example, have made it a shrine for glories to be mummified, that is, an event concluded which should have no further effect on our daily lives. But even the Left have presented a concept of the Resistance which was not the one actually corresponding to the Resistance as it was, that is, not an attempt at rev-

We are in complete agreement with Guido Quazza's analysis. We should simply like to add that, in our judgement, the student protest of 1968 undoubtedly represented the moment of emergence at the level of public opinion of a problem which had deep roots and which involved, as far as responsibility goes, the entire Italian political class: a problem of delays and inadequacies certainly, but also of the incapacity to see oneself – apart from specific political and ideological tendencies – as part of a «*storia comune e condivisa*» (common and shared history); to construct, that is, if we may refer to Gramsci, a kind of *autobiografia della democrazia italiana* (autobiography of Italian democracy) to offer to the new generations as the foundation of an ethical-civic conscience.

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olution, still unfinished, but a national struggle based on political compromise. As a result of this there has been a growing sense of dissatisfaction towards 'Italy of the Resistance' which has led from 1967 to the present time, to the student protest which was then, in the first place, a crisis deriving from lack of confidence in the parties which claimed to be innovative or revolutionary, and in the second place a revolt against the whole 'party system' [...]. The young people are perfectly right: when they argue against the Resistance they are arguing with a certain image of the Resistance which we have given them, an ambivalent image [...], on the one hand mythicized and on the other apparently revolutionary [...]. If we see the Resistance in this way we understand why it has had little effect [on the formation of the democratic conscience of the young]». *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30. See also the interesting observations formulated, in the course of the Ferrara conference, by Antonio Santoni Rugiu on textbooks and, in particular, on history handbooks: A. Santoni Rugiu, *L'autoritarismo nei libri di testo della scuola italiana*, *ibid.*, pp.34-52.