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THE COMMITMENT OF THE LIBERAL AND MASONIC RULING CLASS TO SECULARIZE EDUCATION IN ITALY

Abstract. Либеральный правящий класс, возглавивший Италию после воссоединения, вел настоящую борьбу за секуляризацию школ и освобождение их от влияния католической культуры. Это упорство находит свое объяснение в сильном влиянии масонства, которого придерживались многие либералы.

The liberal ruling class, which led Italy in the aftermath of reunification, waged a real battle to secularize the schools and free them from the influence of Catholic culture. This persistence finds its explanation in the strong influence exercised by Freemasonry, to which many liberals adhered.

Keywords: The Secularization of Education, Nineteenth-Century Italian Liberalism, Masonic Anti-Christianity.

Italian liberalism, both in the conservative version of the historical Right and in the progressive version of the historical Left, showed a considerable aversion towards Catholicism from the very beginning. The three key figures of the Italian Risorgimento, Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour, stood in different positions, but all animated by the goal of reunifying Italy. Mazzini, the intellectual of the trio, was greatly influenced by the socialist and humanitarian ideals that were widespread in Europe at the time; Garibaldi, the leader, was fascinated by the revolutionary adventure and libertarian ideals; Cavour, the political mind, was a skilled administrator and a strategist determined to achieve his goals.

None of the three recognized Catholicism a decisive role in giving form and content to Italian culture. Mazzini tended to forms of spiritualism centered on an abstract idea of humanity; Garibaldi, a first-rate Freemason, was openly hostile to the Catholic tradition. Finally, Cavour didn't scruple to attack the religious orders and strip them of their possessions, casually cashing in on the excommunication that followed the approval of the Siccardi laws.

Fatally, one of the contexts of greatest friction between liberalism and Catholicism was the educational one, decisive for forming Italians. On the eve of unification, the Church could count on a consolidated network of schools of all grades, spread throughout the country. The education imparted to young people in Catholic schools, being incompatible with liberal secularism, soon became the subject of an orchestrated smear campaign. In particular, it was the Jesuit order that was reviled for its fidelity to the Holy See and for the influence exercised both on the people and on the ruling classes.

The historical Right, once the political objective of reunifying the peninsula was reached, didn't take long to extend the Casati law, approved in 1859, from the Savoy territories to the whole of Italy.

The drafter, Gabrio Casati, a conservative liberal involved in the forty-eight uprisings, demonstrated balance and thoughtfulness, introducing the principle of gratuitousness and compulsory nature for the first two classes of elementary school. Of course, the decision to take over the opening and management costs to the municipalities, in the aftermath of the unification often lacking the necessary funds, didn't favor compliance with the provisions of the law, but in any case it was the first step towards the literacy of the Italians.

The Milanese nobleman didn't forget religious teaching, entrusted to the teacher supervised by the parish priest in elementary schools, to a spiritual director in secondary schools and to a disciplinary teacher in normal schools, specially designed for the training of teachers.

Many criticisms were leveled at the law, accused of giving greater weight to classical education than technical education and of neglecting elementary schools for the benefit of higher and university education. Beyond the defects, which also indisputably limited their incidence, the Casati law was the first to deal organically with the problem of education in Italy, anticipating the broader synthesis due to the work of Gentile in 1923.

In 1877 the Left government intervened to reformulate the compulsory schooling, raised from two to three years of elementary school and made effective by the fines imposed on non-compliant persons. One of the most relevant aspects of the Coppino law was the reform of religious education, previously guaranteed by Casati. In the changed political framework, the Papal State had no longer existed for seven years, the Italian school was directed towards an increasingly marked liberal secularism. Both the author of the law, Michele Coppino, university professor and exponent of the transformation left of Urbano Rattazzi, and the then president of the council, Agostino Depretis, were initiated into Freemasonry, who didn't miss the favorable opportunity to deal a hard blow to the Catholic education. The law of 1877 didn't go so far as to explicitly deny the teaching of religion in classrooms, but foreshadowed its replacement with new disciplines, such as physical and civic education, which effectively marginalized Catholicism as a subject of study.

The spiritual directors, to whom Casati had entrusted the doctrinal and moral training of the teachers, were eliminated and thus the teaching body was moved towards forms of progressivism with a scientist tinge. On the other hand, the pedagogical mind of the Coppino law was Aristide Gabelli, a well-known exponent of positivism and a firm believer in the superiority of technical-scientific knowledge over the humanistic one.

In 1877, the painful emigration of Catholic families from public schools to those run by the Church began, in the difficult (and burdensome) attempt to safeguard an education that conforms to their religious beliefs, opposed by Italian institutions.

The Masonic dominance in the strategic educational field was confirmed by the Orlando law of 1904. Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, jurist and leading exponent of the liberal period, had a leading political career, covering, among others, the position of prime minister between 1917 and 1919. As minister of education, Orlando conceived the law of 1904, which introduced some significant changes in the structure of the Italian school. The most important intervention concerned the introduction of the “popular course”, in which classes V and VI converged, a cross between elementary and middle education. Although the law provided for concessions for the needy and aid from the state for elementary schools, it failed to eliminate either the phenomenon of school evasion or illiteracy, however reducing its scope. Orlando also thought about improving the economic condition of teachers, setting minimum wages, designed to ensure the teaching staff a decent income. On the other hand, the increase in state interference in the field of education was harshly criticized by Catholics, who denounced its secularism, confirmed by the new elementary school programs, edited in 1905 by the positivist Francesco Orestano.

The subsequent law on schools, signed by the Freemason Edoardo Daneo, minister of public education, and by the philosopher and pedagogist Luigi Credaro, also confirmed the secularist inspiration of the previous ones. The most conspicuous novelty was the payment of the teachers by the state and no longer by the municipalities, often defaulting due to budget problems. The progressive impetus for the nationalization of the school, launched the day after the unification of Italy, came to fruition under the leadership of the liberal ruling class, widely and deeply infiltrated by Freemasonry and its anti-Catholicism.

Following the capture of Rome by the Italian army, the liberals set themselves the goal of securing the city that for centuries had been the capital of the papal state. In particular, the ruling class was concerned with breaking the Church’s monopoly in the field of education and welfare.

The fervent anti-Catholic zeal especially distinguished the large Masonic team, who succeeded in imposing Ernesto Nathan, in office from 1907 to 1913 as the first mayor outside the aristocratic circles. At the helm of the capital of Italy in the crucial period of building speculation, Nathan represented the link between the Jewish world and Freemasonry, of which he climbed to the top until he became Grand Master from 1896 to 1904 and from 1917 to 1919.

As mayor, he found himself managing the unclear traffic following the expansion and disruption of the urban planning sector, in turmoil for the construction of the buildings of the new power and the houses for the suddenly swollen population. Under

him many public works were started or completed, also thanks to the unscrupulous alienation of the properties of the Church. The taxation of the construction sector, which went from 1 to 3 percent, filled the coffers of the municipality of Rome, but didn't stop building speculation.

The most distinctive feature of the Nathan administration wasn't, in any case, the management of the building of liberal Rome, but the acrid anti-Catholic politics. In particular, it was the sectors of education and assistance that engaged Nathan's energies, determined to eradicate the primacy of the Church and replace it with Masonic liberalism. The Capitoline administration invested large sums for the construction of schools and custodial and care institutes, in all neighborhoods, but especially in the most populous and disadvantaged ones, reservoirs of votes and consensus for anticlerical politics.

Nathan, implacable enemy of Catholicism, by virtue of the support offered him by the political system, managed to de-Christianize a large part of the Romans, hitherto strongly tied to the figure of the pontiff and unwilling to welcome the new liberal ruling class. Thanks to the Jewish and Freemason mayor, therefore, a fundamental stage in the alienation of the Italians from their ancient religious and cultural tradition was accomplished, in view of the subsequent standardization.

In this regard, it should be emphasized the continuity of the commitment on the part of the family of Ernesto Nathan, whose mother Sara Levi Nathan, ardent Mazzinian and, in all likelihood, a lover of the "noble father" of the Italian Risorgimento, promoted with her enormous patrimony revolutionary, secular and feminist ideas, which would then be passed on to his son.

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