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“La seconde ville de l’Empire”.

The educational network in Rome during the Napoleonic Years

On 17th of May 1809, Rome is officially annexed to the French Empire. A ‘Consulta straordinaria’ is set up to rule the new province. Chaired by general Miollis, who had already military occupied the city a year before, on February 1808, the ‘Consulta’ will be the most important governmental institution till the 19th of February 1811. On that date, the ‘Consulta’ was replaced, concentrating all the powers in Miollis’s hands, as lieutenant of a general governor who was never appointed. At that moment, Rome was already mentioned as ‘la seconde ville de l’Empire” (17th of February decree), and assigned to the ‘King of Rome’, that is the future child of Napoleon and Maria Luisa Habsburg-Lorraine. Since the 5th of July 1809, pope Pius VII was arrested and confined in Savona (Liguria), and the papal government completely dismantelled. The new province was divided into two departments, the first called Tevere and the second called Trasimeno. Finally, on 17th of April 1810, another decree suppressed the religious orders, except for the few-ones that were involved in the social field, such as hospitals and education¹.

This is briefly the frame in which we are going to insert our observations about the Napoleonic attempt to re-build the educational Roman system. We will see that it was not a revolution from the foundations. Luckily for the historian, the Napoleonic bureaucracy made an extraordinary effort to rightly identify the existing educational institutions, in order to set up a new network of them. We have a huge number of documents on that effort between the ‘Archivio di Stato’ in Rome and the ‘Archives nationales de France’ in Paris. Unfortunately, this attempt was weakened by the administrative, social and military problems of the new province. The ex-Papal States, quite far from the European war scenario, were nevertheless used as a source for soldiers and financial aids towards the Napoleon’s imperialistic plans. The mandatory conscription of the year 1810 causes, for example, a great opposition among the families, and that was one of the

1 M. Caravale, A. Caracciolo, *Lo Stato pontificio da Martino V a Pio IX*, in *Storia d’Italia*, diretta da G. Galasso, XIV, Utet, Torino 1978. See also the classical L. Madelin, *La Rome de Napoléon: la domination française à Rome de 1809 à 1814*, Plon Nourrit & C., Paris 1906.

reasons of the rise of the banditry, that made the travels insecure during all the Napoleonic age². If you add to that the loyalty to the papal power, here they are the most awesome reasons of the weakness of the French administration in the so called 'Etats romains'. It should be noted that the attempt to militarize the entire society, that was one of the Napoleonic aims, affected also the educational institutions, especially the 'licei' (high schools), intended to grow a loyal ruling middle and upper class.

The reform of the educational institutions in Rome, and in the Tevere Department in general, is a good observation point of the French attempt to update the Italian society, especially in the area that they considered the most conservative of the peninsula. Only the Piedmontese military aristocracy was in the highest regards in Napoleon and his officials minds. A great contempt was put against the Genoese and the Parmensi. And they saved Tuscany and Rome only for their classical antiquities and Renaissance beauties. However, the aim to spread out the French civilization was common, good or bad, to all the subdued territories. The difficulty was that in Rome, as far as the educational field, they found some of the most well known institutions around Europe, particularly on the level of higher education. Reading the letters between Rome and Paris, several times is noted that the 'second city of the Empire' must have again an educational system up to its status. And the Revolution has taught that the education is strategic to change the society and to build a newer and fairer one.

So, in order to introduce our subject, it will be useful to begin with a panoramic view on the novelties that the revolutionary era (including the Napoleonic Empire) has brought in the educational domain³. After that, we will briefly outline the attempts of applying this novelties to the ex-Papal State.

Condorcet, Talleyrand, Daunou, Lakanal, Sieyès, Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau: here only a few names of the 'revolutionaries', who submitted a project of educational reform to the 'Comité d'instruction publique' during the Nineties. The great novelty was the general acknowledgement of the predominant role of the State in the schooling system. Le Peletier went as far as to suggest a free of charge and compulsory school attendance for both the sexes. These two achievements

2 M. Broers, *Noble Romans and Regenerated Citizens: the morality of conscription in Napoleonic Italy, 1800-1814*, "War in History", 8, 2001, pp. 249-270.

3 J.-O. Boudon, J.-C. Caron, J.-C. Yon, *Religion et culture en Europe au 19e siècle (1800-1914)*, Colin, Paris 2001.

will be rapidly suppressed after the Termidor in 1794. So that in the second half of the Nineties, the private schools could flourish again. But they also established some important educational institutions: the 'Conservatoire des arts et metiers', the 'Ecole central des travaux publics' (then 'Ecole polytechnique'), and the 'Ecole normale' (1794-95). In that way, the attention for the arts and crafts education and the formation of a teaching staff was well strengthened. These 'écoles', together with the famous 'écoles militaires' (Saint-Cyr *in primis*) will be the chief institutions in their disciplines during the following years.

There are three main reference points not only in the French, but also in the European history of education in approximately a decade, from 1795 to 1806: the act of the '3rd Brumario of the IV year' (25th of October 1795); the one of the '11th Floreale of the X year' (1st of May 1802) and the foundation of the 'Université imperial' (Imperial University) on the 10th of May 1806. Especially the second and the third ones will represent a turning point also for the history of education in other European countries, Italy included⁴.

The act of the 1795 is the so called French 'schooling charter' for the latest years of the Eighteenth century: it declares the academic freedom, except for the teaching of religion; and it puts the primary schools under the mayors control, even though, paradoxically, almost the only book in schools will be the catechism and the most engaged teachers, the parish priests. The secondary education was, on the contrary, based on the so called 'écoles centrales', that were more successful, above all because they decided to favor the national language and the scientific disciplines. But, in their turn, they were weakened by their too strong lay character, that pushed the catholic families to choose the private schools for their scions.

After the coup d'Etat in 1799, the well known chemist Antoine-François de Fourcroy, with the personal involvement of the 'Premier Consul', draws up the act of the 1st of May 1802, establishing for the first time the 'licei' in the European history⁵. During the debates, it is assumed that Napoleon said that he 'voyait dans l'établissement de l'instruction publique une source de pouvoir', as the politician Pierre Louis Roederer has recorded in his writings. And actually the 'licei' were conceived as the main institutions in order to build a new middle and upper class. There was no more academic freedom, because all the secondary education was

4 On this subject, it is still useful A. Aulard, *Napoléon Ier et le monopole universitaire. Origine et fonctionnement de l'Université impériale*, Colin, Paris 1911.

5 *Napoléon et les lycées. Enseignement et société en Europe au début du XIXe siècle*, actes du colloque des 15 et 16 novembre 2002 organisé par l'Institut Napoléon et la Bibliothèque Marmottan à l'occasion du bicentenaire des lycées, sous la direction de J.-O. Boudon, Nouveau Monde-Fondation Napoléon, Paris 2004.

under the control of the prefects. The so-called 'écoles ou collèges communaux', ruled by the mayors, and the 'licei', sponsored by the State, were the two branches of this secondary schooling system. It should be noted that, during the discussions upon the establishment of the 'licei', Napoleon specifically refers to the discipline of the religious orders, together with that of the army. Alphonse Aulard wrote correctly that the 'liceo' had to be an institution "à la fois militaire et monacale"⁶. Greek and Latin, rhetoric, logic, ethics, mathematics and physics were the basic courses, but together with drawing lessons, military exercises and good manners: exactly the same courses of the ancient Jesuit colleges, like the Collegio Romano in Rome or the Collegio Tolomei in Siena, that attracted students from all around Europe. Furthermore, ancient and French history was for the first time mandatory among the courses⁷. Nevertheless, there was a renewed weakness: the lesson of religion was re-introduced, but only as a general course of history of religions. That's the reason why many catholic families preferred to send their scions to the private schools, even though the level of the provided education was worse.

Much less attention was paid to the primary and feminine education. On the contrary, many municipalities, because of the lack of teachers, decided to entrust their primary schools to the 'Frères des écoles chrétiennes', the famous congregation founded by Jean-Baptiste de la Salle at the end of the Seventeenth century. As the 'Maestres pie' (Pious Matrons), that we will meet in the ex-Papal State, the 'Frères' were not a religious order, but a congregation of lay men, who dedicate their lives to the education of the poor children. This peculiarity was a successful issue in the post-revolutionary European world, at least inside the territories ruled by the French. Similar decisions were taken for the feminine education. During the Empire, as Rebecca Rogers has correctly underlined⁸, there was a significant increase of the feminine congregations dedicated to the social affairs, like hospitals, jails and schools. So the Soeurs de la Charité, the Soeurs Hospitalières, those of Saint-Thomas, of Saint-Charles, the Valelottes, are only some of the congregations involved in the attempt to re-build a sort of 'social fabric', ravaged by the revolutionary years.

The weakness of the schooling system was the reason that decided the foundation of the Imperial University, in order to have a better control on it and to train teachers devoted to the new Empire.

6 A. Aulard, *Napoléon Ier et le monopole universitaire*, p. 93.

7 J.K. Burton, *Napoleon and Clio: Historical Writing, Teaching and Thinking during the First Empire*, Carolina Academic Press, Durham 1979.

8 R. Rogers, *From the salon to the schoolroom: educating bourgeois girls in nineteenth century France*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park Pa. 2005.

During the debates, it must be stressed that Napoleon precisely referred to the Jesuit example: "il y aurait un corps enseignant si tous les proviseurs, censeurs, professeurs de l'Empire avaient un ou plusieurs chefs, comme les Jésuites avaient un général, des provinciaux, etc. [...] Tout le monde sentait l'importance des Jésuites; on ne tarderait pas à sentir l'importance de la corporation de l'enseignement, lorsqu'on verrait un homme, d'abord élevé dans un lycée, appelé par ses talents à enseigner à son tour, avançant de grade en grade, et se trouver, avant de finir sa carrière, dans les premiers rangs de l'Etat"⁹. Between 1806 and 1808, the Imperial University is established, with a 'Grand-Maître' in Paris and several academies (34 in 1812) around the Empire. In Italy the academies of Turin, Genoa, Parma and Pisa were quite rapidly set up. The Academy of Rome will be organized, but it could not begin to operate, as we will see. The choice of the 'Grand-Maître' by Napoleon was clearly political: instead of the protestant Fourcroy, the real maker of the University, he chose the catholic Jean-Pierre-Louis de Fontanes, in order to strengthen the alliance with the pope and in general to cherish the catholic 'party'. The new 'licei', coming from the University regulations, were defined by the weakening of the scientific courses, the insertion of the christian (but at last catholic) religion and the only great novelty of the course of philosophy, that became compulsory.

Nevertheless, neither these renewed 'licei' could beat the competition not only of the private colleges, but especially of the so called "petits séminaires". Their foundation, after the Concordat in 1801 with pope Pius VII, was a sort of picklock devised by the bishops to continue the traditional role of the Church in the educational domain. In fact, these seminaries received above all lay students not addressed to the ecclesiastical status. Napoleon was very concerned about this competition when, after having ordered to the prefects a survey in 1810, the result was that almost a half of the students attended the private schools and the seminaries, instead of the municipal public colleges and the 'licei'. That's the reason why, on November 1811, he issued a decree that obliged only one seminary per department, causing many troubles, especially where the education was almost entirely entrusted to the ecclesiastical institutions, like in the Roman departments, as we will see. But the escape route for many bishops was found in the feebleness with which the catholic Fontanes decided to enforce the decree. After having briefly deepened the institutional frame of the French educational reforms, we can now focus our attention on the 'Etats Romains'.

9 A. Aulard, *Napoléon Ier et le monopole universitaire*, pp. 147-148.

The Napoleonic years in Rome have drawn the attention of several scholars, also on our subject¹⁰. But these essays were interested only in deepening the institutional history or the pedagogical field, that is the history of the pedagogical ideas. A social history of this great attempt to update the schooling system in the Tevere Department is still waiting for its historian. This paper and the researches made in Rome and in Paris aim to be a little step towards this goal. In fact, between Rome and Paris we can find so many documents on this very short period of time, that it is quite extraordinary not to use them in manifold ways. The historian is now aware that we cannot completely put our trust in this typology of sources, that is the statistics and the general surveys. We have to consider the misunderstandings in answering the questionnaires, the resistances and the oppositions in replying to them. But, using these statistical data in a critical and well-aware way, we can nevertheless build a quite persuasive panorama on our topic. It will always be a puzzle with many lacking items, but which sort of history is not like that?

By the way, a first huge survey is set up in Rome between the second half of 1809 and 1810. The French bureaucracy makes an extraordinary effort to report all the Roman educational institutions, with the larger level of information about them as possible. From the primary schools to the famous academies, the Roman schooling system is almost completely depicted, like a painting, or better like a puzzle, but an almost complete one. In fact, despite their precise commitment, the Napoleonic officials repeatedly point out that they continue to find a sort of passive resistance from the chiefs of these institutions, especially as far as the financial subjects. The monitoring of the survey was entrusted to Joseph-Marie de Gerando, one of the member of the 'Consulta', but also a philosopher and a pedagogical thinker.

Like in Florence, one of the first steps of this attempt of reformation was to organize the field of the academies¹¹. Piranesi, Canova, Valadier, Alessandro Verri, along with many others, all were involved in the new 'Accademia delle belle arti'. This 'Accademia' will be the heiress of the well known 'Accademia di San Luca', set up in 1577 under pope Gregory XIII, or better re-established because a 'Compagnia di San Luca' existed since 1478. The new Academy was divided in three branches: 'belle arti' (arts), 'belle lettere' (literature, but not only, humanities in

10 S. Bucci, *La scuola italiana nell'età napoleonica. Il sistema educativo e scolastico francese nel Regno d'Italia*, Bulzoni, Roma 1976; P. Alvazzi del Frate, *Università napoleoniche negli "Stati romani". Il rapporto di Giovanni Ferri de Saint-Constant sull'istruzione pubblica (1812)*, Viella, Roma 1995.

11 M. Sangalli, *La Toscana 'imperiale': istruzione e società negli anni napoleonici*, in press.

general) and 'scienze' (sciences). But there are proposals to establish also a 'Conservatorio di musica', an 'Académie philharmonique', and to maintain the papal 'Chalcographie', near Fontana di Trevi. This was perhaps the less ticklish task for the French administration. It is a matter of fact that, among intellectuals and artists, they can easily find supporters and sympathizers. Canova himself, despite his touchy character, accepted to become the future 'prince' of the renewed Academy of saint Luke.

Much less easier was to organize the secondary education domain. In Rome, the French administration had found one of the most famous educational institutions in Europe, the so called 'Collegio Romano'. Ruled by the Jesuits, till the suppression of the 'Compagnia' in 1773, pope Clement XIV replaced them with the secular clergy. The 'Seminario Romano' was then brought together the 'Collegio' to optimize the human and financial resources. Hence, there was in Rome a well established ground for the future 'liceo'. But nevertheless, despite many attempts, the 'liceo' could not open its doors during the Napoleonic dominion.

Finally, the primary education. Rome, as the center of the Christianity, has always perceived the necessity to present itself and its institutions as exemplary. So, the catholic charity provided in Rome a well grounded primary schooling system. First, there were the so-called 'scuole regionarie': 52 teachers spread out within all the Roman 'rioni' (neighborhoods). They taught from reading and writing to the latin, rhetoric and Roman history. And that difference from the French schooling system was immediately perceived by the prefect of Rome, Camille de Tournon: 'comprendono in tal guisa le scuole regionarie in Roma secondo il sistema francese non solo l'istruzione primaria, ma la secondaria eziandio'¹². But there was also the schools of the 'Congregazione della dottrina cristiana', the so called 'scuole cristiane'. They taught the basic literacy to both boys and girls, by using the catechism to instill at the same time the principles of the catholic religion. Last, but not least, a good network for the feminine education: from the schools of the so called 'Maestre pie' to the 'conservatori' and 'educandati' in convents and monasteries. The 'Maestre pie', founded at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Lucia Filippini, were an interesting issue: not a religious order, they were lay women who dedicated their lives to the girls education, like the first ursulines of Angela Merici in Brescia. But, opposed to the ursulines, they had houses only almost in the Papal States, Southern Tuscany,

12 Archives Nationales de France, Paris, f 1/e, 144, the prefect of Rome to de Gerando, Rome the 24th of August 1810.

Northern Reign of Naples.

Despite this noticeable effort to control all the Roman educational field, in 1811 its re-organization by the French officials still had a long way to go. That's the reason why the 'Grand-Maître' of the Imperial University, Fontanes, decided to send to Rome Giovanni Ferri de St. Constant, director of the Academy of Angers, but above all, because of their Italian ancestors, a good choice in order to untangle the tough Roman situation. It's the same Ferri, in his letter of acceptance, to stress that he will be helped by the "avantage d'avoir à Rome des amis et des parens, et d'être d'une famille connue et considérée dans le pays"¹³. The French realized that they have to bent to the Italian patronage network, in other fields so disdained by them, in order to reach their goals.

Ferri de St. Constant arrived in Rome on November 1811. He became rapidly aware of the reason of the failure of his predecessors: all the revenues from the sale of the religious orders assets were used to reduce the public debt. Laurent-Marie Janet, one of the members of the Consulta and in charge of the Public Treasury, agreed with Ferri's aims: "L'Académie de Rome doit être tracée plus en grand qu'aucune autre, parce que son influence doit être plus générale et que l'enseignement aura à triompher d'une plus grand résistance ou de doctrines plus contraires à celles de nos écoles. Rome doit devenir le centre de l'instruction publique pour toute l'Italie méridionale; c'est là où les sciences doivent s'unir avec l'étude des beaux arts et donner à cette cité célèbre une sorte de predominance par les lumières, qui répare un peu le vuide profond qu'ont laissé les ruines d'autres institutions."¹⁴. It's a pity that he also has been the responsible of the decision to divert the money of the educational domain to other, certainly more urgent, needs. But the Ferri's stubbornness will be almost extraordinary. He continued to insist within Fontanes, the Home Minister, the new 'Ministre des cultes' (Minister of religious affairs) and the Roman authorities to pursue his goal. Several interesting letters are exchanged between Rome and Paris on this subject. And, above all, the great job of Ferri de St. Constant results in one of the most interesting survey on the educational institutions in an European State, certainly comparable to that-one carried by Cuvier and Noel for the Dutch departments in 1811, studied by Wilhelm Frijhoff.

Several months were spent to choose the most comfortable place where establishing the second

13 Archives Nationales de France, Paris, f 17, 1602, Ferri to Fontanes, Angers on the 2nd of June 1811.

14 *Ibidem*, Janet to Fontanes, Rome on the 7th of November 1811.

‘liceo’, after the first-one, that is obviously the ex-Collegio Romano. Three different possibilities were progressively assessed: the building of Propaganda Fide; the Jesuit college near the Chiesa del Gesù; the piarist Collegio Nazareno. Rome must have also several municipal colleges, at least four, in order to prepare the students to attend the courses in the ‘licei’.

After the decree of the 15th of November 1811, basically against the private schooling system, and in special the ecclesiastical one, a big concern for Ferri was the destination of the funds of the suppressed seminaries¹⁵. Overheated letters were exchanged between Rome and Paris, that is Ferri, Fontanes, the Home Minister and the Minister of religious affairs. Ferri pointed out that the papal seminaries were institutions providing education not only to the future priests, but more often to the middle and upper class scions. It is their feature of ‘seminaires mixtes’ that required to use their funds to improve the foundation of lay colleges in several cities and towns of the ‘Etats Romains’. The urbane prefect de Tournon was extremely clear with the Home Minister: if also these funds will be deviate to other balance items, the danger will be that the municipalities will be able to provide only the primary education. But the Minister was well aware, de Tournon insisted, that secondary schools were essential to avoid that the “Empire des prejugués” could go on¹⁶. After a struggle of several months, finally the Minister of the religious affairs allowed to use these funds for the secondary schooling network. But we are, by that time, in the middle of 1813, and all the Napoleonic dominion, after the Russian campaign, is tottering.

The words of the prefect of the Trasimeno department, Antoine-Marie Roederer, Pierre Louis’s son, could be appropriately used also for the Tevere department: “L’instruction publique est dans ce département réduite à un état voisin de l’anéantissement. Elle est presque partout réunie aux séminaires et confiés à des ecclésiastiques qui s’occupent beaucoup plus de former des sujets pour l’Eglise que des citoyens pour l’Etat”¹⁷. The attempt to change the Roman middle and upper classes minds did not meet the goal. And it could not be otherwise, in the few years of the Napoleonic dominion. But, as Jacques-Olivier Boudon, one of the well known scholars on this subject, has underlined, these years were a turning-point also in the Roman educational field¹⁸. Their attempts of reformation were certainly a sort of ‘waiting room’ of the reform provided

15 As far as the French situation on this subject, see J.-O. Boudon, *Des concurrentes aux lycées impériaux? Les écoles secondaires ecclésiastiques*, in *Napoléon et les lycées*, pp. 291-303.

16 Archives Nationales de France, Paris, f 17, 1602, de Tournon to the Home Minister, Rome on the 12nd of January 1813.

17 *Ibidem*, Roederer to the Home Minister, on the 23rd of May 1813.

18 J.-O. Boudon, *Introduction*, in *Napoléon et les lycées*, pp. 7-14.

during the age of Gregory XVI, in 1824¹⁹. They makes aware the papal administration of the centrality of education in building a stronger and more solid State, and of the importance in having a schooling system ruled by the political power, much more than during the last decades of the 'ancien r gime'.

19 A. Gemelli, L. Vismara, *La riforma degli studi universitari negli Stati pontifici (1816-1824)*, Milan 1933.