

From quality to ideology: Italian governmental policies on primary school history textbooks (1923–1928) and the international debate on cosmopolitan history teaching

Beatrice Partouche

Department of Education Science, Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Rome, Italy

Received 3 July 2025
Revised 30 October 2025
Accepted 17 December 2025

Abstract

Purpose – This article aims to analyse Italian governmental policies on primary school history textbooks between 1923 and 1928, positioning them within the broader international discourse on cosmopolitan history teaching post-First World War. It investigates how an initial focus on pedagogical quality under the Gentile reform progressively shifted, with the Fascist regime transforming textbook selection into a tool for nationalist and ideological indoctrination. The study highlights Italy's divergence from internationalist ideals and the co-option of educational quality control mechanisms for political ends.

Design/methodology/approach – This study employs a historical analysis, examining primary sources such as Italian governmental decrees and reports from the Central Textbook Examination Commissions. It also integrates Italy's engagement with international forums, including the League of Nations, the Third International Congress of Moral Education, the Carnegie Endowment's investigation, and the 1928 Report on Nationalism in History Textbooks. The methodology involves comparing Italian policy developments with international initiatives to reveal their contrasting trajectories regarding history education.

Findings – The findings reveal that while early Fascist educational reforms initially emphasised pedagogical quality, the regime swiftly instrumentalised textbook selection and approval processes to propagate nationalist and Fascist ideology. Italy increasingly diverged from international efforts advocating for cosmopolitan and peaceful history teaching, exemplified by critical reports from Italian textbook commissions contrasting with international ideals. This culminated in the adoption of state-mandated textbooks, ensuring complete ideological conformity and demonstrating the regime's co-option of educational control.

Research limitations/implications – A limitation is the specific focus on primary school history textbooks and a defined timeframe (1923–1928), which may limit broader generalisations about the entire Italian education system or longer historical periods. Future research could extend this analysis to secondary education or examine the long-term impact of these policies. The implications include highlighting how political shifts can rapidly commandeer educational systems, underscoring the constant need for vigilance against ideological manipulation in curriculum development.

Practical implications – This research offers practical insights for contemporary educational policymakers and curriculum developers. It demonstrates the critical importance of safeguarding educational autonomy and pedagogical integrity against political interference. Understanding historical instances where education was co-opted for ideological purposes can inform strategies to ensure that history teaching fosters critical thinking, balanced perspectives, and international understanding rather than narrow nationalism or partisan indoctrination. It reinforces the need for transparent and academically driven textbook review processes.

Social implications – The article underscores the profound social implications of history education, particularly its capacity to shape national identity and inter-group relations. The Fascist regime's use of textbooks to instil nationalist and militaristic values showcases how education can be leveraged to foster division and prejudice. Conversely, the international efforts for cosmopolitan history teaching highlight education's potential to promote peace, solidarity and mutual understanding among diverse populations, emphasising its crucial role in societal cohesion and global citizenship.

Originality/value – The originality of this article lies in its dual focus: it reconstructs the internal evolution of Italian educational policies – moving from the pedagogical concerns of the Gentile Reform to Fascist ideological indoctrination – while simultaneously placing these events within the broader international debate on 'cosmopolitan' history teaching. By analyzing the reports of the Central Textbook Examination Commissions alongside the activities



© Beatrice Partouche. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at [Link to the terms of the CC BY 4.0 licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

History of Education Review
Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 0254-5649
p-ISSN: 0819-6691
DOI 10.1108/HER-07-2025-0025

of international bodies like the Carnegie Endowment and the Foreningen Norden, the study reveals how the Fascist regime strategically co-opted quality-control mechanisms to serve political ends. This comparative approach provides a unique perspective on the failure of transnational educational reforms to influence domestic policy during the 1920s.

Keywords School textbooks revision, Gentile reform, History teaching, Peace education, Fascist education, Foreningen Norden, Educational policy, Nationalism, Internationalism

Paper type Research article

We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians [1]

With the political unification of the territories of the Kingdom of Italy [2], the Casati Law of 1859, which regulated public education in the Kingdom of Sardinia, was extended to the whole country, ending the legislative fragmentation that had caused vast educational disparities (Santamaita, 2010). Although the Casati Law established a necessary centralised framework, it faced considerable political and administrative challenges and left many structural issues unsolved. Despite compulsory education mandates, strong regional disparities persisted – demonstrated by the extremely different illiteracy rates between North and South – since rural areas suffered from a lack of adequate school buildings and qualified teachers. Furthermore, the national government offered no support to local governments, who bore the full administrative and financial responsibility of education. These disparities, combined with the government’s desire to achieve political, linguistic, and cultural integration, put special pressure on the education system to promote national unification. Unresolved issues also plagued teacher training (Partouche, 2022). Without going into too much detail of the cultural and professional conditions in which both female and male teachers worked in the second half of the 19th century, it is worth mentioning that their level of professional training was extremely limited, such that there were often even semi-illiterate teachers, especially in girls’ schools (Santoni Rugiu, 1982). In this context, the school textbook was an indispensable teaching tool not only for the student but above all as a support and guide for the often underprepared teachers (Catarsi, 1994). Moreover, it served the desire of the government to create a uniformity of methods and content, to complete the unification of Italy by building a national feeling among the Italians; school textbooks were strategic tools to achieve this aim (Barausse, 2008; Chiosso, 2011; Santamaita, 2010).

The textbook in post-unification Italy

In this initial situation of uncertainty and fragmentation, the government sought to control the quality and uniformity of school textbooks. It is no coincidence that the Casati Law tasked the Higher Council for Public Education with “examining and [proposing] for approval by the Ministry the books [...] intended for public schools” [3]. There were too many different books, issued by publishers who did not guarantee a uniform quality of the product, especially regarding school textbooks for primary schools (Ascenzi and Sani, 2005). In addition, the government understood the need to suppress textbooks that were poorly written – both in terms of form and content and lacking in pedagogical and scientific criteria – and end the common practice of frequently changing the assigned texts, to the financial detriment of many families. Textbook authors and publishers resisted the State’s attempts to revise the school textbook adoption system. In the 60 years between Unification and Fascism, many inconclusive attempts were made to resolve this situation (Barausse, 2008).

It was not until the Gentile reform of 1923 that the long-standing issue of national textbook selection was structurally addressed.

These national developments occurred in the midst of fervent international efforts to promote cosmopolitan and pacifist history teaching, creating a complex dialogue between domestic and international agendas.

The international context

At the same time as the Italian government was seeking to entrench national standards for primary education, the international community launched a debate about the creation of a

shared international model based on the cosmopolitan values of peace and cooperation between peoples in opposition to the prevailing nationalistic teaching approach based on the cult of the homeland and particularly national values ([Amalvi, 1979](#)).

The First World War triggered a moral and geopolitical upheaval that favoured the pacifist associations long committed to creating a world without conflict and promoting an education that would instil in the new generations a spirit of solidarity between peoples. Pacifist intellectuals blamed the teaching of nationalist history, which manipulated young people into embracing fiery nationalistic ideals for encouraging the warlike impulses that exploded in the First World War ([Dotation Carnegie pour la paix internationale, 1923](#); [Pirenne, 1923](#)).

The early postwar years were characterised by an international development of elementary schooling, despite due differences and widespread difficulties, affecting a large part of the youth population. Both politicians and educators saw young people as a mass to be moulded and bent to the needs of politics. In this context, the teaching of history seemed particularly crucial in determining the orientation of the generations to come. For this reason, history textbooks came under greater scrutiny than those in other fields ([Verga, 2007](#)).

The main objects of international attention were primary school textbooks ([International conference for the teaching of history, 1935](#)), which were the most widely used. In many cases they were the only educational materials that children might ever be exposed to. As the French historian Jules Prudhommeaux explained, in his country, school textbooks were probably the only books that children of the working class would ever read. In fact, these children were mostly destined to work after the end of compulsory schooling and would have had “no intellectual nourishment other than the textbook laboriously deciphered on the classroom benches”, as evidenced by the fact that once they left school many former students “had become almost illiterate again”. Thus, the choice of the textbook and the choice of passages contained in these textbooks gave teachers and authors the power to impose on an entire generation of pupils a specific and discrete store of knowledge. The crucial importance of this fact could not be overlooked ([Prudhommeaux, 1928](#), p. 5).

The same concern had been expressed by the Belgian historian Pirenne during his opening speech at the 5th International Congress of Historical Sciences ([Erdmann, 2005](#)), where he had strongly condemned his fellow historians. Addressing the participants, he had launched a general accusation against “history”, which was responsible for manipulating and instrumentalising the past for political ends. This was nothing new in itself, but history was now in a position to dramatically increase its power of persuasion due to the fact that the subjects to be involved were no longer just the small part of the bourgeois population that could afford to study, but – with the advent of compulsory schooling – was now addressed to all citizens and all social classes.

Il ne s'agissait plus pour elle d'agir sur quelques diplomates: elle devait convaincre de la justice de leur cause ces multitudes de citoyens qui votent et qui combattent. Il ne lui suffisait plus, comme jadis, d'interpréter des généalogies princières et de discuter des traités: elle devait soutenir le courage et la conviction des peuples en évoquant tout leur passé au profit de la guerre, en leur montrant dans leurs adversaires des ennemis naturels et héréditaires, en les dépeignant depuis les temps les plus reculés comme s'ils avaient toujours été aux prises, comme si la grandeur des uns entraînait nécessairement l'asservissement des autres, comme si, enfin, leur civilisation leur appartenait en propre, était la manifestation exclusive de leur génie, la création originale de leur esprit, et comme si son existence même était l'enjeu de la lutte ([Pirenne, 1923](#), p. 6) [4].

Therefore, cosmopolitan critics of history teaching argued that the excessively patriotic approach to history used in most schools had “made the Great War possible, and perhaps even inevitable”. It was therefore not “the peoples who were responsible for the massacre but the teachers in all countries who had failed to do the schooling”, spreading “the poison called history” ([Osborne, 2016](#), p. 216).

Investigations and revisions

The turmoil of these post-war years generated activities aimed at investigating the contents of history textbooks and correcting their nationalistic flaws. Local, national and international organisations worked to improve the teaching of history with a view to facilitating peaceful human relations. These included the League of Nations, which as early as 1921 recommended (however cautiously) the cosmopolitan reform of national history textbooks.

[. . .] in the education normally imparted in most countries, there is, through no one's fault but simple tradition, a tendency to glorify military exploits to excess and to take an excessive interest in that country's wars and its quarrels with its neighbours. Sometimes disdain for other nations develops in the minds of children. In our eyes, this is real poisoning. This is not patriotism, and we must try, tactfully and prudently, each in his own country, to eradicate this feeling ([League of Nations, 1921](#), p. 311).

Many national reform efforts grew out of this international appeal. The section that follows will examine some of the most important ones.

Foreningen Norden

The first initiative was conducted by the *Foreningerne Norden*, the national associations [5] that formed in Scandinavia in the aftermath of the war to strengthen international cooperation between Norway, Sweden and Denmark at first, and then Finland and Iceland joined soon after. Since the primary objective of the associations was to promote mutual understanding and foster knowledge between the peoples of the Nordic countries [6], they naturally focused attention on national history textbooks and their influence, both positive and negative on international relations.

The impetus for the first thoroughgoing revision of school textbooks was an article that appeared in October 1919 in a Norwegian magazine specialising in higher education ([Refsdal, 1919](#)), in which the author, I.A. Refsdal, critically reviewed a chapter on contemporary history that had been recently added to a Swedish Gymnasiums textbook ([Odhner, 1918](#)). Focusing on recent diplomatic relations between Sweden and Norway, the author pointed out the text's crude misrepresentation of events. The central problem, however, was not so much the falsification of facts, but the narration of historical episodes in a biased manner, always emphasising the reasons for one's own nation alone in the case of conflicts, and always orienting the reader's opinion in favour of one's own country at the cost of creating prejudice towards other peoples.

Feeling responsible to its neighbours and wishing to set an example, the Norwegian *Foreningen Norden* responded to Refsdal's reflection [7] by launching an initiative to revise its history textbooks and invited the Swedish association to follow. It sought to remove all passages that might be offensive and instead emphasise the progress that had been made in terms of peaceful relations between nations ([Meddelelse fra Foreningen Norden, 1922](#)).

In the following years, the associations encouraged the authors of school textbooks to cooperate more closely with their foreign colleagues to find an interpretative agreement on the most controversial historical events. It was agreed that in the event of an intractable interpretative disagreement, all points of view and their reasons would be made explicit in the books. The associations offered to act as intermediaries in the event of lack of direct contact between authors ([The International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, 1933](#)).

These revision activities continued over the following years, and in 1931 a mutual Scandinavian textbook revision project was carried out, so that each national committee could point out harmful contents to the other ([Åström Elmersjö, 2015](#); [Vigander, 1950, 1967](#)).

L'esprit international et l'enseignement de l'histoire

Italy was actively involved from the outset in international debates, as exemplified by its participation in the International Congress of Moral Education, which gathered scholars and educators from various countries to discuss shared challenges and approaches in history teaching.

The Third International Congress of Moral Education, held in 1922 in Geneva (Claparède, 1929; Reverdin, 1922), was dedicated to the international spirit and the teaching of history, as was part of the following congress hosted in Rome in 1926 (*IV Congresso internazionale d'educazione morale: Roma, 1926*). The concerns of the scholars were the same as those expressed so far, and the debate centred on proposals for a cosmopolitan approach to teaching history. Henri Reverdin, in the preface to the conference proceedings, summarised the speeches of the participants, who had come from all over the world to report on the teaching of history in their own countries. He saw in the different national contributions a common vision; the speakers were united in calling for a reform of teaching history that would foster greater cooperation between peoples.

Some conference speakers denounced textbooks that focused disproportionately on military history:

It almost seems as if the past is made up of nothing but battles, peace treaties and more battles. On the other hand, we do not pretend to bring everything back to economic fluctuations or the history of ideas alone. It is important for us to place all human manifestations in their proper place: language, beliefs, religion, values, philosophy, science, art, law, institutions, industry, trade; it is the multifaceted and complex way that we must show the pupils. Let them see through what vicissitudes men have triumphed over the indifference or hostility of nature, at the cost of how much patience they have worked out civilisations, and how they have created their most admirable works (Reverdin, 1922, p. 6).

Reverdin argued that in teaching history, importance should be given to ordinary men and not only to people who had demonstrated exceptional intellect or were famous for having been monarchs or having performed extraordinary achievements. He felt it was necessary for the students to appreciate the importance of everyone's ordinary work and the contribution that, for example, "each craftsman gave to the great artist or the deckhand to the navigator" (Reverdin, 1922, p. 5).

In the spirit of the conference and the ideal he wanted to promote, Reverdin called for the elimination of anything that restricted pupils' views, that fostered ignorance, injustice or animosity. At the same time, it was also important to address the crimes, harms and errors carried out by men in the name of "good causes", because "history wants to be respected" (Reverdin, 1922, p. 10).

Reverdin therefore called upon educators to acknowledge the negative effect of wars, the deaths they had caused, their often fratricidal nature and their necessary agony. Teachers were encouraged to educate their pupils to sympathise with people of all classes, parties, races, faiths and beliefs, beginning precisely by freeing themselves from the prejudices of time and place; while remaining true to their convictions, "it is necessary to exercise the most enlightened and conscious tolerance every day". Whether teaching about their own country or others, teachers should always aim to be truthful and fair, giving everyone their right place in history (Reverdin, 1922, p. 11).

The Congress approved several proposals, including one for an international investigation into school textbooks (Cicchini, 2004, p. 651) and another, sponsored by Francesco Orestano [8], for drafting a universal history book compiling international texts (Claparède, 1929).

The commission of specialists that was appointed to carry out the work was made up of eminent personalities from a dozen countries but was not able to realise its aims due to a lack of funds and organisational difficulties (Claparède, 1929).

Enquête sur les livres scolaires d'après la guerre

The European division of the Carnegie Endowment (Giretti, 1925; Prudhommeaux, 1921; Taft, 1925; Tournès, 2010), one of the many international peace organisations that arose in the decades between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, promoted an investigation into the spirit in which school textbooks, published in the post-war years and in use in schools in the former belligerent countries, described the First World War, its causes and

its consequences ([Dotation Carnegie pour la paix internationale, 1923](#)). The work began in 1921 and was published in 1923 in a volume entitled *Enquête sur les livres scolaires d'après la guerre*.

The work was carried out by national representatives, one for each of the countries involved, who examined the relevant school textbooks and submitted a national report. It emerged that the history texts of each country expressed a high level of national pride. German school texts were full of patriotism, exalting militarism and war, and promoting a cult of the state as a material power. In the school texts analysed in France and Belgium, there was an attitude of pride in having resisted the ferocity of the enemy, fought for the good of the nation and preserved the values of freedom and justice.

The report on the Italian texts was assigned to Clarina Della Cella, a schoolteacher of Italian history and literature at the *Scuola Normale* in Genoa. She analysed around 70 textbooks selected among hundreds ([Dotation Carnegie pour la paix internationale, 1923](#), p. 25). Prudhommeaux found in them a general attempt to convince young Italians that the country had been penalised in the distribution of the “fruits of victory”. This narrative of a “mutilated victory” [9] would fuel the patriotic exaltation of which Fascism, in his view, was the “brutal consequence” ([Dotation Carnegie pour la paix internationale, 1923](#), p. 26).

Instead in Della Cella's view, the Italian textbooks were generally reasonable, fair and measured. None of these books celebrated war for its own sake in a militaristic or excessively nationalistic sense, none of them fomented hatred of an enemy. Often, on the contrary, the former enemies were described with words of pity and respect. War was presented to boys and young men as a “painful necessity imposed for the defence of justice, as the expression of the universal law of sacrifice, as the terrible test through which men learn more and more that they are all brothers”. The report went on to affirm how it was not “the cruel and merciless part of war” that was emphasised in these books, but “its painful part, the generous self-denial and absolute and constant devotion that it demands”. The hero is not the one who kills blindly, but the one who offers himself in sacrifice. War heroes are exalted, shown as pure victims, as martyrs.

Della Cella reported that Italian textbooks preferred accounts of generosity, humanity and the search for goodness amidst the horrors of war. In her estimation, the cruelty of, for example, German military methods, was only mentioned reluctantly and was done so in terms that did not contrast with the general tone of moderation and appeasement ([Dotation Carnegie pour la paix internationale, 1923](#), p. 360).

The general comments went on to justify acts of war as “necessary evils for the greater good” and Della Cella made it clear that she did not approve of the initial Italian neutrality in the war. At the same time, she claimed to regard war as an abomination, even quoting Garibaldi that war is “the most monstrous thing that exists in the world” and that only slaves have the right to do against their oppressors.

She claimed that the prudence of editors and authors had led to patriotism being expressed by exalting Italy's cultural greatness, celebrating artistic and civil glories at the expense of military ones.

Della Cella also emphasised what she characterised as Italians' love and understanding towards other peoples. Her report makes frequent references to the “tolerant character of Italians”, of “their desire to understand others”, of “the character of their civilisation which was never strictly national, but rather open to the outside world, with a marked tendency towards universality”. This love that Italians showed towards others, the sense of piety and hospitality towards the needy, was widely represented in school literature ([Dotation Carnegie pour la paix internationale, 1923](#), p. 367).

She undoubtedly felt that the ideals promoted by Carnegie were fully represented by the *Risorgimento* ideals embedded in the Italian textbooks.

Reading the lengthy report and analysis of the texts, it is evident that the Genoese schoolteacher had largely misrepresented or ignored the aims of the commissioner. She instead seemed to share many of the orientations present in contemporary textbooks, despite these

volumes rarely reflecting the principles of the Carnegie Endowment (Accardo and Baldocchi, 2004).

Indeed, all Italian textbooks, with few exceptions, affirmed the need for the reconquest of *irredent* lands, the necessity of intervention in the war, and the sacredness of the soldiers' martyrdom; they suggested that because of its culture, history, wealth and traditions, Italy deserved a special destiny. The impression is that in her report, the Genoese schoolteacher distorted the meaning of the concepts of peace, international solidarity and brotherhood among peoples, to bend it to Italy's nationalist interests (Berardi, 1958).

The work of the Central Textbook Examination Commission

During the same months in which the Carnegie Endowment was commissioning national reports on the history textbooks of the former belligerent countries, the Italian government was introducing the vast school reform named after Giovanni Gentile, newly appointed Minister of Education. This was an ambitious, far-reaching and important project, which has had a lasting impact on Italian public education. Especially interesting for our purposes here is the specific work of the Central Textbook Examination Commission, chaired by Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, General Director of Elementary Education.

We have already mentioned the longstanding need for the national government to intervene in the selection of textbooks in order to screen out the many low-quality ones on the market. If it was true that "the teaching approach of the Italian school was essentially composed of programmes and publishers", "reforming the programmes [would have been] useless without reforming the publishers, or rather the production of textbooks" (Lombardo Radice, 1925, p. LXII). Lombardo Radice considered it essential to carry out a "purge of teaching materials" (Lombardo Radice, 1926, p. 285). His aim was to select qualitatively good texts, to correct inaccurate ones and suppress books that had too many inaccuracies to be cured.

The Commission began its work in the early spring of 1923 and by June it issued its first partial report, prepared by Giuseppe Prezzolini – on history and geography textbooks [10], including a list of rejected and approved texts (Ascenzi and Sani, 2005; Genovesi, 2009).

The judgements contained in this first report, as well as in the subsequent ones, were extremely harsh; the Commission identified all sorts of inaccuracies in the texts that it examined, from lexical and grammatical errors to historical ones; furthermore, the language used in the texts was deemed unsuitable for the age of primary school pupils. Although the authors had already made a selection, discarding a large part of their production, "what remained often testifies to commercial interests, educational unpreparedness, intellectual inadequacy, and sometimes even a lack of moral integrity. In many books [...] one feels that the author did not intend to write for children, with whom he has no experience" (Lombardo Radice, 1926, pp. 312–313).

According to Prezzolini, the textbooks were on the market, despite the authors' inability to avoid "manifest historical errors", only because the publishers knew that no one was regulating their product. The report criticised the "moral misery" of the textbooks, their "lack of any spiritual directive" and their "inability to rise above the faded repetition of anecdotes, biographies, narratives, dates, which are found mechanically" in their contents. He believed, in short, that the textbooks were all written to simply follow the "recipe of the curriculum".

On the other hand, regarding the descriptions of historical episodes and the use of gruesome details, Prezzolini and Della Cella testify to discordant realities; if for the latter, the texts were full of examples of heroism and goodness, the report of the Central Textbook Examination Commission states the opposite.

Writing for children, the most mediocre authors take pleasure in diligently narrating tales of ugliness, cruelty and atrocity. Good taste and a sense of morality are equally offended by the Ancona mother who "offers her nipple" to a soldier to feed him, as by Carlo Zima doused in turpentine and burnt by the Austrians. The illustrators compete with the authors in this pandering to the audience. This is not to say that a false and fluffy history should be written instead, all smiles and serenity, but we must not stop at

the atrocious and brutal details of an event but rather [seek] to bring out what is positive in them, what is worthy of admiration, of effort and sacrifice for the public good. [...] Our history is not exclusively the struggle of the nation against barbarians or of the people against tyrants, as it appears from most of the examined books (Lombardo Radice, 1926, pp. 315–316).

The Prezzolini report stands in sharp contrast to Della Cella's report for the Carnegie Endowment, clearly rejecting its vision of Italian textbooks as perfectly fulfilling messages of peace and brotherhood, high moral values and the exaltation of goodness and friendship between peoples.

Although Lombardo Radice declared his satisfaction at the work of the first Central Textbook Examination Commission, stating that in little more than a year there had been an "immense improvement" in all aspects of content and form, describing it as a "miracle", there was still more work to be done (Ascenzi and Sani, 2005, p. 5).

A new Central Textbook Examination Commission was formed every year until 1928 [11].

Concurrent with the Commission's ongoing work and subsequent reports, the international community launched further inquiries into the ideological orientation of history textbooks.

The Report on Nationalism in History Textbooks

During this time, the international initiatives continued apace, including the Report on Nationalism in History Textbooks, published in 1928 as a result of the joint efforts of two interdenominational organisations: the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship, and the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work. The German–Swedish Ecumenical Commission aimed to extend and continue the work carried out by the Carnegie Endowment, laying its hopes on the fact that the peace work undertaken in schools, which was very poorly represented in the school textbooks of 1923, had in the meantime made "considerable progress" (Report on Nationalism in History Textbooks, 1928, p. 9). The aim was to consolidate efforts against nationalist propaganda in education by committing to the following:

- (1) finding a uniform way to deal with the obvious presence of nationalist propaganda in textbooks,
- (2) eliminating all false claims about other nations,
- (3) avoiding double standards of moral evaluation between one population and another,
- (4) avoiding offensive statements about other peoples,
- (5) encouraging the study of other peoples from a sympathetic point of view, especially regarding political progress and cultural and religious aspects,
- (6) encouraging the publication of research results in specialised journals (Report on Nationalism in History Textbooks, 1928, p. 7).

The participating countries were sent a circular in the autumn of 1927, in which they were asked to send the relevant organisation: a list of the most popular textbooks in the country; a list of text dedicated to ethnic minorities that included statistics on the proportion of books dedicated to them; a general analysis of trends in the teaching of history (both from a national and international point of view) including a few illustrative quotations. The absence of reporting guidelines made it difficult to observe and measure this progress. The estimation of the tendencies that prevailed in these textbooks was extremely variable. What, in one country, seemed "increasing moderation" was seen, in another, as "mistaken spirit of aggression", and vice versa. Neutral countries such as Denmark and Switzerland confirmed their lack of nationalist or chauvinist content in their school textbooks and even explained the methodology with which controversial issues were dealt with, stating that their arguments were certainly balanced. With regard to the textbooks of the former belligerent countries, F.C. Moore stated

that in England, much attention was paid to its *Dominions*, but very little space was given to the history of everything outside its Empire. In Belgium, the strong nationalism expressed in school textbooks during the war had been sanctioned; however, the war spirit still seemed to dominate the textbooks in this country. For France, a report by Prudhommeaux stated that teachers had freedom of choice over textbook adoption, allowing them to boycott books that propagated war ([Report on Nationalism in History Textbooks, 1928](#)).

While accepting the invitation of the ecumenical organisations, Italy did not send an original report on the subject, nor did it appoint an expert to deal with the issue. Instead, the Ministry of Education simply sent the reports of the Central Textbook Examination Committee written between from 1924 to 1927, together with a few selected extracts from the approved textbooks.

The international organisation took care to select the most significant parts and the most representative quotations from the reports sent by Italy, but these did not correspond to the pacifist spirit that was hoped for, quite the opposite. If the work carried out for the Carnegie Endowment by Clarina Della Cella had already diverged from the reports of her colleagues – leaving the reader in doubt as to whether she had misinterpreted the sense of the work she had been commissioned to do – on this occasion Italy, in addition to showing little interest in the enquiry, affirmed with its contribution the exact opposite of what was being sought: not only had the nationalistic spirit *not* been attenuated in school texts, but rather it was being strongly encouraged, praising authors who extolled the nation, Fascism and military valour and criticising works that were excessively neutral or pacifist ([Ascenzi, 2009](#)).

Little space was devoted to the 1924 report, which essentially regretted the use of excessively childish language with unstimulating content, while the 1926 and 1927 reports seem particularly noteworthy. It is important to remember that in these few years the power of Fascism had been considerably strengthened, the so-called *leggi fascistissime* ([De Felice, 1968](#)) had been enacted which considerably restricted the freedom of citizens. This historical backdrop set the stage for the emergence of new educational policies aimed at aligning textbooks with the regime's ideological goals. In a speech addressed to teachers in December 1925 in Rome, Mussolini had very explicitly stated the function that the government intended to assign to education:

[...] the government demands that the school be inspired by the ideals of Fascism, demands for the school not to be, I won't say hostile, but not even alien to Fascism or agnostic to Fascism, demands that the entire school in all its stages and in all its programmes educate Italian youth to understand Fascism, to renew themselves in Fascism and to live in the historical climate created by the Fascist revolution ([Mussolini, 1926](#), p. 250).

So, it is not surprising that subsequent reports openly celebrated nationalism and the school's role in instilling "the character of Italianness and the primacy of the fatherland". This is seen in a statement by Balbino Giuliano [\[12\]](#), making it clear that, though the initial purpose of Lombardo Radice's Central Textbook Examination Commission had been essentially pedagogical, its current objective was now ideological.

The Giuliano Commission's report declared that the texts that had been rejected openly made "anti-national propaganda" although since the beginning of the work of selection, "considerable progress" had been made ([Ascenzi and Sani, 2005](#), p. 579). It is worth noting that the ecumenical organisations and the Giuliano Commission both used the term "progress", but with opposite meaning: for the former it was the elimination of partisanship and nationalism from school textbooks, for the latter it was the exaltation of militarism and the homeland and the elimination of "subversive propaganda".

The Italians and the international organisations also diverged over the need to pay special attention to elementary schoolchildren. The Carnegie Endowment studies emphasised the view that elementary schoolchildren lacked a critical spirit and therefore needed to be "defended from errors and immorality" ([Dotation Carnegie pour la paix internationale, 1923](#), p. 3), while students in secondary schools and universities could be trusted to form their own

opinions, independently of the teaching they received. The Italians, on the other hand, wanted children's textbooks to instil the "vivid feeling of love for Italy" and the "fervent worship of its glories" to "imprint their souls inasmuch as they carry for life the unaltered imprints of their first lessons". Balbino Giuliano, therefore, attributed to the school, especially primary school, a crucial power of determining the ideological and political orientation of future citizens.

There was an insistence on the almost divine nature of the homeland and the intellectual superiority of Italians, as if any other foreign figures were not even worth caring about, so much as Italian history and its traditions were sufficient. "One finds textbooks", the report for Central Commission lamented, that "honoured the great foreign physicists, without mentioning that physics is an essentially Italian-born science" ([Ascenzi and Sani, 2005](#), p. 581; [Report on Nationalism in History Textbooks, 1928](#), p. 179).

Concluding the section on Italy, the ecumenical organisation's Report includes quotations from the 1927 Romano Commission's report, which is substantively consistent with the findings of the previous year. The commission insisted, in fact, on the need to produce "a truly Italian book", criticising the underrepresentation of Italian authors and the disproportionate coverage given to foreigners. It reinforces the need to teach in elementary schools "the supreme ideal of the fatherland" and to "instil a passion for all that is heroic, for all the typically virile virtues" ([Report on Nationalism in History Textbooks, 1928](#), p. 179).

The chapter ends without a concluding commentary; probably, the committee that edited the text had felt that the choice of excerpts from ministerial reports and school textbooks were sufficiently eloquent.

The 6th International Congress of Historical Sciences

Over the course of 1928, the Italian government's regard for schooling and the role of textbooks became increasingly evident. This was clearly manifested in its reaction to the 6th International Congress of Historical Sciences and the adoption of the state-mandated national textbooks ([McLean, 2018](#)).

The 6th International Congress of Historical Sciences was held in Oslo in August of 1928. For the first time, a session was devoted to the teaching of history, demonstrating how this topic was gaining increasing international relevance. The fact that this subject was chosen in a conference hosted in Norway is perhaps not coincidental since it was the country that first became concerned about carrying out a revision of its school textbooks. Moreover, the conference was hosted by Halvdan Koht, an extremely prominent personality who was also very committed to this issue ([Erdmann, 2005](#); [International Congress of Historical Sciences, 1928](#); [Koht, 1962](#)).

Among the Italian participants in this event was the historian Gioacchino Volpe, who distinguished himself by a heated confrontation with the French historian Michel Lh  ritier ([Comit   international des sciences historiques, 1929](#); [Di Rienzo, 2008](#); [Erdmann, 2005](#); [Gabor, 2016](#)). Lh  ritier argued that only objective scientific history could teach the truth and therefore serve the cause of peace education. Volpe objected strongly to all of Lh  ritier's arguments, stating that if the pacifists were declaring themselves against a propagandistic history that manipulated facts to generate the enmity of peoples, their movement was doing the same to propagandise peace. In addition, he declared that international organisations had no place in telling states how to teach history ([Comit   international des sciences historiques, 1929](#)).

Lh  ritier replied that he had been misunderstood, that he had no intention of considering history a catechism for peace. Rather, his idea was that "the historian should seek nothing but the truth, that is the most truthful concatenation of facts and present them as objectively as possible". He was firmly convinced that a scientifically and objectively presented history, such as integral history and universal history, could promote the conviction that peace was preferable to war because of the nefarious consequences that war inevitably generates, always and everywhere ([Comit   international des sciences historiques, 1929](#), p. 147).

Volpe's return to Italy

On his return to Italy, Gioacchino Volpe wrote a report to the Chamber of Deputies' President Antonio Casertano [12], in which he described the Congress he had just attended in Oslo and expressed his concern about the international initiatives that were being taken in the field of history teaching.

In his report, Volpe stated that the Congress had been a "great gathering of scholars, not without significance and political ends", in which he had felt the need to be vigilant and to counter some tendencies that he thought might turn out to be insidious. Therefore, he had felt it necessary for the few Italian scholars present to be divided into the parallel sessions of the conference and to be as cautious and ready to intervene in the debates as possible.

The circumstance on which he dwelt most was his clear opposition to Lh  ritier and his thesis, revealing that his behaviour toward the French scholar had probably not been "diplomatic", but that he had felt it necessary "to come so frankly into contention" to "begin to react" against certain initiatives "[in order] to avoid the danger of one day being confronted with facts accomplished by others, but challenging for us as well, under pain of seeing the world act scandalized on our behalf, as often happens!" He argued that at any future conferences, Italy would have to participate vigorously, to combat "this 'Scientific International' that is beginning to have its network centres, organs of execution, and the support of public opinion".

I was immediately confronted with a, previously ignored by me but there very visible, tendency to chain internationally, under the name of "collaboration", the activity of scholars from all over the world, creating a dense network of international associations or bodies, subjecting all to rules and controls, etc.: all, with a view to greater efficiency of work and with a view to the hoped-for friendship of peoples, world peace, etc. This tendency was represented at the Congress especially by the French and, in the forefront, by the Secretary General of the International Committee of Historical Sciences, Prof. Lh  ritier of Paris, who is very active and shrewd. Undoubtedly, he is the advocate of a political programme. Many participants in the Congress sensed this; but I think I was the only one who took a clear stand against this tendency and this programme, as much by opposing proposals for absurd collaborations and by pointing out the limits beyond which no "International Commission" but only the individual scholar, the historian with his own interpretive capacity, can operate; as by refuting at length a speech by Lh  ritier on the teaching of history. Lh  ritier wanted to make the teacher a propagandist of internationalism and pacifism and went so far as to propose appointing the usual International Commission that would establish the "recognized historical truths" worthy of finding a place in textbooks and schools. It was not difficult to shatter this ridiculous [thesis], with the full consent of many presents, especially Poles, Hungarians and Germans. The Commission was never spoken of again; but a Commission on teaching already existed, and I think some attention should be paid to what it will do. [. . .]. The impression is given of a complex, methodical work, partially open and partially hidden, moving from different points and using different means, relying on Geneva, etc. Many signs of this were in Oslo. One fine day, we might be faced with International Commissions of Control over textbooks and the history in different countries, capable of creating some hassle [13].

Volpe's concern about the interference of foreign countries in Italian textbooks could probably have been motivated by the new provisions on the subject that the government had issued starting with the Royal Decree of March 18th 1928 [14], which stated that "the history, geography, reading, economics and law textbooks for primary schools [. . .] had to respond, within the framework of the existing programmes, to the historical, political, legal and economic needs that had emerged since October 28, 1922" [15]. Substantially, therefore, the texts of the subjects listed, even if already approved by the previous Commissions, had to be resubmitted to the new Central Textbook Examination Commission to verify conformity with the provisions of the decree.

The new Central Textbook Examination Commission, set up and chaired by Fascist Party Deputy Secretary Alessandro Melchiori, having to review 876 volumes, did not publish an

analysis for each text, as had been the case in previous years, but a concise general report presenting the “unfavourable” judgements ([Ascenzi and Sani, 2005](#); [Galfré, 2005](#)):

In particular, the history and geography texts in their entirety presented very serious defects or deficiencies and did not “respond to the historical, political, legal and economic demands clarified by October 28, 1922” ([Ascenzi and Sani, 2005](#), p. 701).

The Melchiori Commission condemned the textbooks that it examined, discrediting the work of the previous commissions, and demonstrated a reversal of the initial aims of the whole operation.

The previously approved texts that underwent the new revision also revealed significant deficiencies, and further inaccuracies were added to them in the new drafting, especially with regard to the last years of history and recent administrative, constitutional and social reforms. Having eliminated the history and geography texts that revealed inaccuracies, eliminated those that did not correspond to the curriculum [...] and rejected those that appeared unsuitable for the spiritual formation of the Italian child because they were weak in the national and Fascist spirit, the Commission found itself in the painful situation of not being able to choose from the numerous history and geography books submitted for examination, any book that perfectly met the aims of the Fascist school and deserved genuine approval. [...] Faced with this unhappy outcome of its examination, the committee must express its delight at learning in the course of its work that Your Excellence has resolved to finally provide primary schools with state textbooks ([Ascenzi and Sani, 2005](#), p. 702).

The latter measure was approved by the law of 7 January 1929 and applied from the school year 1930–31; however, it seems legitimate to assume, interpreting the final part of Melchiori’s report (in which he expressed satisfaction with the government’s decision “to finally provide the primary schools with state textbooks”) that, by the time the last Central Commission for the examination of textbooks was carrying out its work, the Fascist regime’s decision had already been taken, and that such a delegitimisation of the work done up to that moment was functional to justify the validity of the measure.

This definitively ended the work of the Central Commission for the Examination of Textbooks that had been started six years earlier as part of the reform of the Italian school system prepared by Giovanni Gentile.

The case of Italy during this period exemplifies the challenges faced by state education systems in balancing pedagogical aims with political imperatives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the need to examine the content of school textbooks and to search for common guiding principles to promote international peace and understanding was not only felt by professional or philanthropic associations but was also a core concern of the League of Nations. Through the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC) ([Brzeziński, 2017](#); [Kolasa, 1962](#); [Massoulier and Monsour, 1946](#); [Prezzolini, 1928](#); [Renoliet, 1999](#); [Unesco, 1949](#); [Verga, 2007](#)), in the second half of the 1920s and in the following decade, proposals that could lead to international collaboration on the subject of education were debated. Though the League of Nations could not impose an educational model or specific content on member states, it managed to publish a memorandum ([Intitut international de coopération intellectuelle, 1932](#)) [16] entitled *La révision des manuels scolaires contenant des passages nuisibles à la compréhension mutuelle des peuples*.

This memorandum set forth the entire body of information and documentation about all the actions that had been accomplished up to that time – by both governments and international and national organisations, as well as groups of historians, educators or people involved in peace organisation processes – to eliminate passages from school texts that could be harmful to international relations and compromise understanding between peoples. It also commented upon a significant number of reports, inquiries, resolutions and legislative measures, making it the first publication to provide an integrated view of the school textbook

revision movement. It demonstrated that, despite important international efforts, the results of the enquiries had been mostly theoretical. The memorandum does not list Italian collaboration initiatives; it only notes that primary schools were required to adopt state textbooks, while for secondary schools' textbook adoption was left to the free choice of the teachers' board, on the understanding that the books had to be "in conformity with the spirit and action of the fascist regime" ([Intitut international de coopération intellectuelle, 1932](#), pp. 213–214). Ultimately, this article has demonstrated how, in the period between 1923 and 1928, Italian governmental policies on primary school history textbooks evolved from an initial emphasis on pedagogical quality to a progressive subordination to ideological aims. The Melchiori phase, in particular, marked a turning point: previous pedagogical approaches were delegitimised, paving the way for the imposition of state textbooks as instruments of Fascist indoctrination. This outcome stands in clear contrast with internationalist and cosmopolitan trends circulating in the aftermath of the First World War, which aimed to foster mutual understanding and peace through textbook cooperation and revision. The Italian sequence culminated with the decision of early 1929 (implemented in 1930–31) to adopt state-mandated textbooks, ensuring complete conformity with Fascist ideology and effectively negating the internationalist aspirations debated in contemporary forums. This *shift from quality to ideology* is central to understanding both the consolidation of the Fascist regime and the failure of transnational educational reforms to leave a mark on domestic policy during this crucial decade a sequence culminating with the formal state textbook decision of January 1929.

Archives consulted

Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Rome, Italy
Riksarkivet (National Archives), Oslo, Norway
UNESCO Archives, Paris, France

Notes

1. It is a phrase associated with Massimo D'Azeglio, representing that although Italy had been geographically and politically united since 1861, there were strong differences between the regions and the population was a mix of different peoples, and not only because of their attachment to different traditions and languages (dialects), but also because of a poor sense of true unity. For detailed discussion, see: Hom, *On the Origins of Making Italy: Massimo D'Azeglio and "Fatta l'Italia, bisogna fare gli Italiani"* (2013).
2. The King of Sardinia was crowned King of Italy on 17 March 1861, but the territories of Veneto, annexed in 1866, and the Papal States, conquered on 20 September 1870, were still missing. For detailed discussion, see: Mack Smith, *Italy; a modern history* (1997).
3. R. D. 13 November 1859, n. 3725.
4. National associations that have the same name – Norden – but are self-governing and independent of each other. *Foreningerne* is the plural form of *Foreningen* in Norwegian and Danish (*Föreningarna* in Swedish), and it refers collectively to the associations within Foreningen Norden. The term is used here to denote the federation or group of these national associations working together in Nordic cooperation.
5. Riksarkiv, PA, BA, Statuter for Norden norsk forening for nordisk samarbeid, 1921, 1230/D/L0171.
6. Redegjørelse for Foreningen Nordens undersøkelse av historielærebøker, Riksarkivet, PA, RA, 1230/D/L0171.
7. Francesco Orestano (1873–1945) was an Italian philosopher. In 1904 he was called to collaborate with the Minister of Education Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, who in 1905 entrusted him with the task of drafting the regulations for school reform. See also Tarquini, *Francesco Orestano* (2013).

8. Gabriele D'Annunzio coined this term at the end of the First World War, to describe the dissatisfaction concerning territorial rewards in favour of the Kingdom of Italy after the conflict. See also D'Annunzio, *Vittoria nostra, non sarai mutilata!!* (1918).
9. Ministero della pubblica istruzione, Direzione generale dell'istruzione elementare, *Relazione sui libri di testo per le scuole elementari e popolari ed elenco dei libri approvati. I. Libri di testo per l'insegnamento della storia e della geografia*, Bollettino Ufficiale de Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 1923, supplemento II al n. 26, pp. 5–46. [Ministry of Public Education, Directorate General for Elementary Education, Report on Textbooks for Elementary and Popular Schools and List of Approved Books. I. Textbooks for the Teaching of History and Geography, *Official Gazette of the Ministry of Public Education*, 1923, Supplement II]
10. The committee chairs were G. Lombardo Radice (1923–1924), G. Vidari (1925), B. Giuliano (1926), M. Romano (1927), A. Melchiori (1928).
11. He was Minister of National Education (1929–1932) and member of the Italian Committee of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation before Italy left the League of Nations in 1937. See also Pertici, *Balbino Giuliano*, 2001.
12. Gioacchino Volpe ad Antonio Casertano, Presidente della Camera dei deputati, 1 September 1928, in ACS, Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri, 1929, fascicolo 14/3, 3432. [Gioacchino Volpe to Antonio Casertano, President of the Chamber of Deputies, 1 September 1928, in ACS [Central State Archives], Presidency of the Council of Ministers]
13. R. D. 18 March 1928, n. 780.
14. The date marks the March on Rome (Marcia su Roma), the event that led to Benito Mussolini's appointment as Prime Minister and the beginning of the Fascist regime in Italy.
15. The first edition was written in French in 1932, with a subsequent English edition published in 1933. There are minor differences between the first and second editions.
16. It was no longer a matter of it [history] acting upon a few diplomats: it had to convince those multitudes of citizens who vote and who fight of the justice of their cause. It was no longer enough for it, as in the past, to interpret princely genealogies and discuss treaties: it had to sustain the courage and conviction of peoples by evoking their entire past for the benefit of war, by showing them natural and hereditary enemies in their adversaries, by depicting them from the most remote times as if they had always been at grips with one another, as if the greatness of some necessarily entailed the enslavement of others. As if, finally, their civilisation belonged to them alone, was the exclusive manifestation of their genius, the original creation of their spirit, and as if its very existence were the stake of the struggle.

References

- Accardo, A. and Baldocchi, U. (2004), *Manuali e didattica della storia nella costruzione dell'unità europea*, Editori Laterza, Rome.
- Amalvi, C. (1979), "Les guerres des manuels autour de l'école primaire en France (1899-1914)", *Revue Historique*, Vol. 262, pp. 359-398.
- Ascenzi, A. (2009), *Education and the Metamorphoses of Citizenship in Contemporary Italy*, EUM, Macerata.
- Ascenzi, A. and Sani, R. (2005), *Il libro per la scuola tra idealismo e fascismo: l'opera della Commissione centrale per l'esame dei libri di testo da Giuseppe Lombardo Radice ad Alessandro Melchiori (1923-1928)*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano.
- Åström Elmersjö, H. (2015), "The Norden Associations and international efforts to change history education, 1919-1970: international organisations, education, and hegemonic nationalism", *Paedagogica Historica*, Vol. 51 No. 6, pp. 727-743, doi: [10.1080/00309230.2015.1013560](https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2015.1013560).
- Barausse, A. (Ed.) (2008), *Il libro per la scuola dall'unità al fascismo. La normativa sui libri di testo dalla legge Casati alla riforma Gentile (1861-1922)*, Alfabetica, Macerata.
- Berardi, R. (1958), "La revisione internazionale dei manuali di storia", *Scuola e Città*, Vol. IX, pp. 121-127.

- Brzeziński, A.M. (2017), *The Organization and Forms of International Intellectual Cooperation within the League of Nations (1922-1939)*, Przegląd Zach, pp. 53-70.
- Catarsi, E. (1994), *Storia dei programmi della scuola elementare (1860-1985)*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze.
- Chiosso, G. (2011), *Alfabeti d'Italia*, La lotta contro l'ignoranza dell'Italia unita. SEI, Torino.
- Cicchini, M. (2004), "Un bouillon de culture pour les sciences de l'éducation? Le Congrès international d'éducation morale (1908-1934)", *Paedagogica Historica*, Vol. 40 Nos 5-6, pp. 633-656, doi: [10.1080/0030923042000293698](https://doi.org/10.1080/0030923042000293698).
- Claparède, J.L. (1929), *L'enseignement de l'histoire et l'esprit international*, Bureau français d'éducation, Parigi.
- Comité international des sciences historiques (1929), "Enseignement de l'histoire", *Bulletin of the International Committee of Historical Sciences*, Vol. 2, pp. 141-150.
- D'Annunzio, G. (1918), *Vittoria Nostra, Non Sarai Mutilata!!*, Corriere Della Sera.
- De Felice, R. (1968), *Mussolini e il fascismo. Mussolini il fascista*, L'organizzazione dello Stato fascista (1925-1929). Einaudi, Torino.
- Di Rienzo, E. (2008), *La storia e l'azione: vita politica di Gioacchino Volpe*, Le Lettere, Firenze.
- Dotation Carnegie pour la paix internationale (1923), *Enquete sur les livres scolaires d'après la guerre*, Centre européen de la Dotation Carnegie, Paris.
- Erdmann, K.D. (2005), "Toward a global community of historians", *The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences 1898-2000*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books.
- Gabor, A.B. (2016), "History of phases in textbook revisions at the 1928 Oslo conference from the Hungarian perspective", *The International Dialogues on Education Journal*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 48-55, doi: [10.53308/ide.v3i2.166](https://doi.org/10.53308/ide.v3i2.166).
- Galfré, M. (2005), *Il regime degli editori: libri, scuola e fascismo*, 1st ed., Quadrante Laterza, Rome.
- Genovesi, P. (2009), *Il manuale di storia in Italia: dal fascismo alla repubblica*, Temi di storia, F. Angeli, Milano.
- Giretti, E. (1925), "L'istituzione Carnegie per la pace internazionale", *Vita Internazionale*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 95-97.
- Hom, S.M. (2013), "On the Origins of making Italy: Massimo D'Azeglio and Fatta l'Italia, bisogna fare gli Italiani", *Italian Culture*, Vol. 31, pp. 1-16, doi: [10.1179/0161462212Z.00000000012](https://doi.org/10.1179/0161462212Z.00000000012).
- International conference for the teaching of history (1935), *Bull. International Committee of Historical Sciences (ICHHS)*, II.
- International Congress of Historical Sciences (1928), "Résumés des communications présentées au congrès, Oslo 1928: VIe Congrès international des sciences historiques", *Le Comité Organisateur Du Congrès*, Oslo.
- Intitut international de coopération intellectuelle (1932), *La révision des manuels scolaires contenant des passages nuisibles à la compréhension mutuelle des peuples*, Société des Nations, Parigi.
- IV Congresso internazionale d'educazione morale: Roma (1926), *Processi Verbali. Stab. Tip. Ditta C*, Colombo, Rome.
- Koht, H. (1962), *The Origin and Beginning of the International Committee of Historical Sciences*, International Committee of Historical Sciences, Losanna.
- Kolasa, J. (1962), *International Intellectual Cooperation*, The League Experience and the Beginning of UNESCO, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossilinskich, Wrocław.
- League of Nations (1921), "Official journal", Vol. 2, p. 311.
- Lombardo Radice, G. (1925), *Vita nuova della scuola del popolo*, Sandron, Palermo.
- Lombardo Radice, G. (1926), *Scuole, maestri e libri: raccolta di indagini essenziali*, Sandron, Palermo.

- Mack Smith, D. (1997), *Italy; a Modern History, New Ed. Rev. and Enl*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
- Massoulier, J. and Monsour, B. (1946), *L'Institut international de coopération intellectuelle (1925-1946)*, Institut international de coopération intellectuelle, Paris.
- McLean, E.K. (2018), *Mussolini's Children: Race and Elementary Education in Fascist Italy*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.
- Meddelelse fra Foreningen Norden (1922), "Den norske samarbeide og historieundervisning", *Den Høiere Sk*, No. 8, pp. 307-316.
- Mussolini, B. (1926), *Discorsi del 1925*, Alpes, Milano.
- Odhner, C.T. (1918), "Nya tiden", in *Lärobok I Fäderneslandets Historie Samt Grunddragen Av Norges Och Danmarks Historia För Gymnasiet*, Norstedt, Stockholm.
- Osborne, K. (2016), "Creating the 'international mind': the league of nations attempts to reform history teaching, 1920-1939", *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 56 No. 2, pp. 213-240, doi: [10.1111/hoeq.12181](https://doi.org/10.1111/hoeq.12181).
- Partouche, B. (2022), *La revisione internazionale dei testi scolastici di storia tra le due guerre mondiali. I casi italiano e norvegese*, Anicia, Rome.
- Pertici, R. (2001), *Balbino Giuliano*, Treccani.
- Pirenne, H. (1923), "De la méthode comparative en histoire", in *Ve Congrès International Des Sciences Historiques*, 9 Avril 1923, Weissenbruch, Bruxelles.
- Prezzolini, G. (1928), *La cooperazione intellettuale*, A.R.E, Rome.
- Prudhommeaux, J.J. (1921), *Le Centre européen de la Dotation Carnegie pour la paix internationale, 1911-1921*, Parigi.
- Prudhommeaux, J.J. (1928), *Pour la paix par l'école. Ce qui a été fait en France pour lutter contre les livres scolaires contraires au rapprochement des peuples (1923-1928)*, Edition de la paix par l'école, Nîmes.
- Refsdal, I.A. (1919), *Hva Svenske Studenter Skal Vite Om 1814 Og 1905*, Den Høiere Sk, Oslo, pp. 210-211.
- Renoliet, J.-J. (1999), *L'Unesco oubliée: la Société des nations et la coopération intellectuelle, 1919-1946*, Publications de la Sorbonne, Parigi.
- Report on Nationalism in History Textbooks (1928), "Universal Christian conference on life and work", *World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship*, Stockholm.
- Reverdin, H. (1922), *L'esprit international et l'enseignement de l'histoire*, Delachaux et Niestlé S.A., Parigi.
- Santamaita, S. (2010), *Storia Della Scuola*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano.
- Santoni Rugiu, A. (1982), "Nodi storici dei programmi elementari", in Vertecchi, B. (Ed.), *Scuola Elementare e Nuovi Programmi*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, pp. 1-14.
- Taft, D.R. (1925), "Dotation Carnegie pour la Paix Internationale. Enquete sur Les Livres Scolaires D'Apres Guerre", *Journal of Social Forces*, Vol. 3, pp. 569-571, doi: [10.2307/3005043](https://doi.org/10.2307/3005043).
- Tarquini, A. (2013), *Francesco Orestano*, Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, Treccani.
- The International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (1933), *School Text-Book Revision and International Understanding*, League of Nations, Parigi.
- Tournès, L. (2010), *La Dotation Carnegie pour la Paix Internationale et l'invention de la diplomatie philanthropique*, in: *L'argent de l'influence*, Les Fondations Américaines et Leurs Réseaux Européens, pp. 21-40.
- Unesco (1949), *A Handbook for the Improvement of Textbooks and Teaching Materials as Aids to International Understanding*, Parigi.

Verga, M. (2007), "Manuels d'histoire pour la paix en Europe, 1923-1938", in Petricioli, M. and Cherubini, D. (Eds), *Pour La Paix En Europe : Institutions et Société Civile Dans l'entre-Deux-Guerres*, P.I.E. Peter Lang, Bruxelles, pp. 503-524.

Vigander, H. (1950), *Mutual Revision of History Textbooks in the Nordic Countries*, Unesco, Paris.

Vigander, H. (1967), "History textbook revision in the nordic countries", in Schuddekopf, O.E. (Ed.), *History Teaching and History Textbook Revision*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, pp. 43-64.

Corresponding author

Beatrice Partouche can be contacted at: beatrice.partouche@uniroma3.it