

STELLA D'ITALIA NEWSPAPER AND THE DEFENSE OF ETHNIC ITALIAN SCHOOL (1902-1904)

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Abstract

This article analyzes two recurrent elements on the three first-year issues (1902-1904) of *Stella d'Italia*, a Porto Alegre's newspaper edited in Italian, specifically the dissatisfaction with the condition of the Italian education in Porto Alegre, and the fuss involving the Italian consul Enrico Ciapelli, which resulted in the interruption of school materials being delivered to Italian schools kept by the Italian societies that supported the newspaper. The polemic issue, which was not described in the consul's official reports, resulted in indictment against the consul. The indictment, which was supported by the newspaper editor, accused the consul of neglecting the Italian school and his countrymen. Taking into consideration the lack of literature on ethnic Italian schools in Porto Alegre, *Stella d'Italia* newspaper is particularly important due to the frequent articles on education on its pages. Its remarkable opinion and care about this type of school throughout the texts which, in most cases, were written by Editor Adelchi Colnaghi. Colnaghi's appeals and considerations related to the defense of the Italian school, his diagnosis about the school difficulties as well as the Italian education conditions in Porto Alegre were many times published in the newspaper. Colnaghi was convinced of the Italian school importance, but from the newspaper's perspective, very little was done about it and, sometimes, some things were done even against it.

Key-words: *Stella d'Italia*, Adelchi Colnaghi, Enrico Ciapelli, ethnic Italian schools.

O JORNAL *STELLA D'ITALIA* E A DEFESA DA ESCOLA ÉTNICA ITALIANA (1902-1904)

Resumo

O artigo analisa dois elementos recorrentes nas edições dos três primeiros anos do jornal porto-alegrense *Stella d'Italia* (1902-1904), editado em italiano, a saber: o descontentamento com relação ao estado em que se encontrava a instrução entre os italianos e ítalo-brasileiros em Porto Alegre e a polêmica com o cônsul italiano Enrico Ciapelli, que resultou na suspensão do envio de material às escolas italianas, mantidas pelas sociedades italianas apoiadoras do jornal. A polêmica, não relatada nos relatórios oficiais do cônsul, teve como elemento detonador a acusação, sustentada pelo editor do jornal, de que o cônsul pouco se interessava pela escola italiana e pelos compatriotas. Considerando-se a escassa literatura sobre as escolas étnicas italianas de Porto Alegre, o jornal *Stella d'Italia* tem particular importância pelo destaque frequente à temática da educação e pela marcante opinião e zelo do editor, Adelchi Colnaghi, pela escola étnica italiana. Os apelos e considerações de Colnaghi na defesa da escola italiana, seu diagnóstico sobre as dificuldades da mesma, bem como o estado da educação entre os italianos em Porto Alegre foi reiterado, muitas vezes, nas páginas do jornal. Colnaghi estava convencido da importância da escola italiana, mas na perspectiva do jornal pouco se fez pela mesma e, às vezes, se fez contra.

Palavras-chave: *Stella d'Italia*, Adelchi Colnaghi, Enrico Ciapelli, escolas étnicas italianas.

EL PERIÓDICO *STELLA D'ITALIA* Y LA DEFENSA DE LA ESCUELA ÉTNICA ITALIANA (1902-1904)

Resumen

El artículo analiza dos elementos recurrentes en las ediciones de los tres primeros años del periódico portoalegrense *Stella d'Italia* (1902-1904), editado en italiano, a saber: el descontentamiento con relación al estado en que se encontraba la instrucción entre los italianos y los ítalo-brasileños en Porto Alegre y la polémica con el cónsul italiano Enrico Ciapelli, que resultó en la suspensión del envío de material a las escuelas italianas, mantenidas por las sociedades italianas que apoyaban al periódico. La polémica, no relatada en los informes oficiales del cónsul, tuvo como elemento desencadenador la acusación, sustentada por el editor del periódico, de que el cónsul poco se interesaba por la escuela y por sus compatriotas. Considerando la escasa literatura sobre las escuelas étnicas italianas de Porto Alegre, el periódico *Stella d'Italia* tiene particular importancia por el destaque frecuente a la temática de la educación y por la fuerte opinión y celo del editor, Adelchi Colnaghi, por la escuela étnica italiana. Los llamamientos y consideraciones de Colnaghi en defensa de la escuela italiana, su diagnóstico sobre las dificultades de la misma, así como el estado de la educación entre los italianos en Porto Alegre fue reiterado, varias veces, en las páginas del periódico. Colnaghi estaba convencido de la importancia de la escuela italiana, pero en la perspectiva del periódico poco se hizo por la misma y, a veces, se hizo contra ella.

Palabras clave: *Stella d'Italia*, Adelchi Colnaghi, Enrico Ciapelli, escuelas étnicas italianas.

LE JOURNAL *STELLA D'ITALIA* ET LA DÉFENSE DE L'ÉCOLE ETHNIQUE ITALIENNE (1902-1904)

Résumé

Cet article analyse deux éléments récurrents dans les éditions des trois premières éditions des trois premières années du journal de Porto Alegre *Stella d'Italia* (1902-1904), édité en italien, à savoir: le mécontentement lié à l'état dans lequel se trouvait l'instruction parmi les italiens et les italo-brésiliens à Porto Alegre et la polémique en ce qui concernait le consul italien Enrico Ciapelli, qui a résulté dans la suspension de l'envoi de matériel aux écoles italiennes, maintenues par les sociétés italiennes, qui soutenaient le journal. La polémique, pas relatée par les rapports officiels du consul, a eu comme élément détonateur l'accusation, sustentée par l'éditeur du journal, qu'il ne

s'intéressait pas suffisamment à tout ce qui concernait l'école et ses compatriotes. Considérant la littérature faible sur les écoles ethniques italiennes à Porto Alegre, le journal *Stella d'Italia* a une importance particulière à cause de la mise en relief fréquente du thème de l'éducation et de l'opinion marquante et le zèle de l'éditeur, Adelchi Colnaghi, pour l'école ethnique italienne. Les appels et considérations de Colnaghi en défense de l'école italienne, son diagnostic sur ses difficultés, ainsi que l'état de l'éducation parmi les italiens à Porto Alegre ont été réaffirmés, plusieurs fois, dans les pages du journal. Colnaghi était convaincu de l'importance de l'école italienne, mais dans la perspective du journal, peu a été fait pour elle et, parfois, on a même fait des choses contre l'école italienne.

Mots-clé: Stella d'Italia, Adelchi Colnaghi, Enrico Ciapelli, écoles ethniques italiennes.

The topics presented in this article are part of a wider research project which investigates the Italian ethnic schools of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, especially the schools of the old Italian settlements of Rio Grande do Sul - Caxias, Conde d'Eu and Dona Isabel - and the schools of Porto Alegre.

In our investigation of these schools, particularly the ones of Porto Alegre, we consider relevant the issues of the journal *Stella d'Italia*¹, from here on referred to simply as *Stella*, published in Italian, of which the editorial line promoted a bruising discourse in favor of the Italian schools, the ethnic education and the role of education as necessary to maintain Italianity.

We analyzed two recurrent elements in the issues of the first three years of the journal, 1902 to 1904²: a) the discontent regarding the condition of the instruction among the Italians in Porto Alegre; b) the controversy involving the Italian consul Enrico Ciapelli which led to the interruption of the sending of materials to Italian schools maintained by Italian societies which supported *Stella*. The polemic, absent from the official reports of the consul, has been triggered by the accusation, held by the journal's editor, that the Italian consul cared little for the Italian school and compatriots.

Considering the scarce literature on the ethnic schools of Porto Alegre, we understand that the journal *Stella* is of particular importance by the frequent attention given to the education topic and the remarkable opinion and zeal of the editor, Adelchi Colnaghi, for the Italian ethnic schools.

The press is, probably, one of the media through which it is possible to have a better understanding of the educational realities, once the set of problems of that area manifests itself through it:

The press' own features (the proximity to the happenings, fleeting and controversial character, the will to intervene in reality) are the ones that grant it this unique and irreplaceable statute as source to the historical, sociological study of education end pedagogy. (Nóvoa, 2002, p. 131)

The press favors a wide view into the city's experience, its characters, the public and private spheres, the elements of everyday life and ephemera of the cultural and educational elements important to the researcher. Vieira (2007), commenting on the possibilities of recognition and questioning of the past through the press, argues that in it "we find political projects and worldviews besides catching a glimpse, to a large extent, of the complexity of the conflicts and social experiences" (p.13).

It is clear that we must situate the documents, the newspaper in particular, as a bundle of relations, like the result of conflicts and negotiations rendering questions,

¹ The studies carried out so far have been possible thanks to professor Mario Gardelin, known historian of the Italian colonization, who has provided the collection of copies of the newspaper *Stella d'Italia* of the years 1902, 1903 and 1904. Aside from some newspaper editions available at the Museum of Social Communication José Hipólito da Costa of Porto Alegre, others were not found.

² Another recurring element in the whole year 1904 is the need for a standard program for the Italian schools of Rio Grande do Sul. The editor started a campaign in the newspaper for teachers and authorities to submit a proposal to unify the teaching of Italian schools. Colnaghi stated that "it is certain that, to progress, to solidify to produce beneficial effects, our schools must obey an identical program and our teachers should pursue a common goal. [...] It is therefore of great interest that our school programs match up so that the subjects of a class are identified in any of the others, thereby forming a homogeneous and disciplined whole" (*Stella*, 24 jul., 1904, p. 1).

happenings and ways of thinking both visible or invisible. Vieira (2007) states that it is necessary for the newspaper “to be understood as an enunciation, i.e., as an intervention that aims at demarcating and fixing ways of thinking which are expressed as values, judgments, sorting modes, anyway, justifications for social action” (p. 14). The duty of the researcher is to realize and explain the diverse discourses with claims of truth and reflecting reality, present in that mediatic vehicle, relating said and unsaid elements, surrounding himself with discourse analysis tools, among others, capable of questioning the linearity between narrative and event.

The newspaper, the editor and his position

In the article *Il giornalismo coloniale*³, after enumerating Italian journals⁴ and exalting journalists, the text evidences *Stella* and praises its founding editor, especially for his support to the Italian schools:

In the list of Italian newspapers and journalists that I have previously enumerated, without a written note, confined only to memory, - and here the justification of any probable omission or inaccuracy that I might have fallen into - it is just to highlight the honest position of the dean of the Italian journalism in Rio Grande do Sul, position held by *Stella d'Italia*, from Porto Alegre, with its 23 years of existence and a honest and austere program inspired by the independent character of its founder and director, Adelchi Colnaghi, for the sake of Italianity and the Italian interests in the state, to which he unselfishly wholly dedicated himself. He has been an indefatigable prop of our colonial (settlement) institutions, especially of the schools, and a reliable spokesperson of 22 Italian associations of the state, which delegated him their representation in the Congress of Italians Abroad, held in Rome in 1911. (Cinquantenario⁵, 1925, p. 446)

The perspective of enthusiasm for Italy marks the newspaper, being the discourse for the sake of Italianity a *continuum* in the researched years, as well as repeatedly reinforcing the defense of the support to the Italian language among compatriots and Italian-Brazilians.

The long article *Parliamo italiano*, of August 24 of 1903, is emblematic and reflects the characteristic triumphalism of the narratives of the time in relation to the immigrants:

Let us speak Italian, and where possible let us endeavor to teach it to others as well. Let us diffuse our language and our mores so, in a few years, without effort and without fight we will find ourselves better estimated

³ Giron and Pozenato (2004), with the essay *100 Anos de Imprensa Regional: 1897-1997*, present a complete picture of the newspapers published in the former Italian colonial region of Rio Grande do Sul. According to the authors, this article was the first regional journalistic essay of the state on the Italian press.

⁴ According to Possamai (2003, p. 12), “the large number of Italians in Porto Alegre enabled the emergence of several newspapers that circulated however briefly”. The author reports that in 1890 emerged *L'italiano* and *L'Avvenire*; between 1891 and 1895 circulated the *Corriere Cattolico*, published in Italian by the publisher of the German Catholic newspaper *Deutsche Volksblatt*. In 1895 the newspaper *L'Italia*, followed by *Progresso* in 1897 appeared; in 1902 *Corriere Italiano* appeared; it changed its name to *20 Settembre* in 1904 and stopped circulating in 1905. In 1906, the newspaper *Il Tempo* was released and in 1913 *L'Araldo Coloniale*, which lasted for a year. *Il Commercio Italiano*, *L'Eco delle Colonie*, *La Cometa*, *La Patria Italo Brasiliana*, *Favilla*, *La Frusta* and *La Verità* can also be cited. A more detailed list is in Trento (1989).

⁵ Commemorative work of the 50th anniversary of Italian colonization in Rio Grande do Sul entitled *Cinquantenario della colonizzazione italiana nel rio grande del sud*. Porto Alegre: Livraria do Globo, 1925.

than we currently are [...]. Let us contribute by maintaining the schools we have and strengthen them! Let us enforce our children to attend them constantly, to speak our language, to respect their teachers, to venerate the fatherland of their parents. (*Stella*, 24 aug., 1902, p. 1)

The subjects of the newspaper, or articles concerning the institution or Italian school, mainly the ones in Porto Alegre, ordinarily occupy the main page and are always featured.

In numerous issues, the editor Adelchi Colnaghi took up the discourse of education as the redeemer and promoter of civility amid the compatriots. He revealed his preoccupation on the little importance given to the Italian schools in the capital [Porto Alegre], and particularly criticized the lack of effort by the authorities regarding their continuity.

Colnaghi was permanent inspector of schools run by Italian societies and private teacher of accountancy, and of Italian and French languages, at his home or as a homeschool teacher, as we read in numerous ads from *Stella*. According to Possamai (2005), Colnaghi was a member in the third degree of the Masonic Lodge Ausônia, set in Porto Alegre in 1895 and closed in 1903, which “brought him a constant opposition from Catholic publications, accusing his newspaper of divulging Masonic ideas” (p. 173). His texts reveal cultured language, argumentative firmness, proactive stance, severe and scathing criticism. Colnaghi became known for his irreverence and independence. He died in Milan in 1917.

Over the analyzed years, it was observed that the newspaper often published information about class schedules, vacation time, data on inauguration events, information about the school year and final exams. There were also letters from schoolteachers of the Italian settlements, birthday announcements from the schools and description of their solemnities, announcements for parties held in order to raise funds for the schools, advertisement of books, offer of private lessons, correspondence from other schools, and letters of consular officials on education. Italian religious schools were announced together with cultural events related to the schools, tributes to teachers and news from the countryside, for example, the dismissal of a teacher in Caxias do Sul.

Most Italian newspapers in Porto Alegre had a short life. *Stella*, which circulated for more than two decades, was an exception. According to Possamai (2005) the Masons, who were among the immigrants those with more schooling, owned most of the newspapers⁶. These defended the liberal positions of the Italian state, promoted the celebration of national holidays between Italian immigrants, cause of constant friction with the ultramontane clergy⁷ and Catholic newspapers, as the *Correio Riograndense*⁸. *Stella* was, professedly, a liberal and anticlerical newspaper.

⁶ According to Possamai (2005) Italian newspapers did not reflect much the interests of the community, and it should also be added that rare Italian immigrants knew the language, since in communication within the family they would make use of regional dialects, while Portuguese would be used in communicating with members of other existing communities in the city.

⁷ For the newspaper *Stella d'Italia* the church was “piaga delle colonie” [the plague of the colonies]. Noted in the newspaper *Il colono italiano* on 11.02.1911 (cfe. Azevedo, 1994, p. 259). Paradoxically, we found that Adelchi Colnaghi was one of the directors of the *Il Corriere Cattolico* newspaper, published from 1891 to 1895 in Porto Alegre, whose activity in this newspaper was revoked (Suliani, 2001, p. 285).

⁸ *Correio Riograndense* was a catholic newspaper founded in 1909 and until 1941, it was published in Italian. It was weekly issued and it was guided by the defense of Catholicism.

If not for the whole information of the newspaper in a given period, it may be thought, in a cursory reading of some articles of *Stella*, that there were hundreds of students in each school of the capital and student effervescence. The reality, however, was different: few students and many difficulties. The article *Il grave problema delle scuole italiane*, of January 8th, 1903, points some difficulties: few students, on this date 161 students attended the schools Scuola Principessa Elena and Umberto I, little support from the Italian government, teachers with poor training, lack of teaching materials and lack of skilled and capable school inspectors:

They [rulers] ignore, after all, that our Colonies lack skilled and capable school inspectors; ignore that our rare teachers abandoned entirely to themselves, cannot get more than mediocre results. They are deprived of direction, deceived by continuous changes in the texts, hindered by the very nature of their students, which, in contact with Brazilians, learn everything, except Italian. (*Stella*, 8 jan., 1903, p. 1)

In an open letter to prospective members of the newspaper and to the community in general, dated February 7, 1902, the editor of the newspaper announced that on March 30 of that year he would start the activities of the newspaper with two weekly issues:

Porto Alegre, February 7, 1902.
Distinguished Lord.

When, last year, a group of honest and courageous compatriots gathered in the commission promoters of a new newspaper, a letter was issued which object is here signed; by their own goodness, I was invited to take part for they expected to soon see the rise of a worthy journal of the Italian community in this state. Unfortunately, a number of unforeseen circumstances led most of the primers to abandon the project; as usual, the noble initiatives fall. However, the reasons adopted now, that were in that circular letter, were not totally lost. A number of patriots and modest compatriots - modest to the point of hiding their own names yet convinced of the need for a newspaper that, far from political and party ties, could actually translate the aspirations and ideals of the Colony and the Fatherland, always striving for the affirmation of our name and our rights, taking up the former project, boldly decided to translate it into fact. Having collected the modest capital, they delegated the duty to Mr. Benvenuto Crocetta from the Fatherland, who, in turn, offered to the undersigned signatory the direction of the future journal. Knowing how hard and thorny this enterprise is, however, I accepted it, after the encouragement of many friends and the burning desire to collaborate with the moral and material increase of the Italian community residing in these fertile lands. Will I be able to do it? Right, my ability is limited; but if I ask the ardent affection I feel for the country and the effective and powerful help of dedicated and sincere friends; and if I do not lack the moral support of our benefactor Associations or the esteem and the comfort of fellow citizens, I am almost certain of leading to a successful conclusion the work to me entrusted. Considering the whole, when a man gives as much as he humanly can give, there is at least for himself, the comfort of his own conscience. Struggle, struggle constantly, until sacrifice; stir up high, very high, the Italian name, pay it respect and love anywhere: these are the principles that inspire the "STELLA D'ITALIA" and its collaborators. On next 30 March, starts the biweekly publication to which I dare call from now your benevolent attention and the attention of your friends. I am aware of your patriotic feelings and I appeal to them frankly. The final triumph of Italian

journalism in this state and the affirmation of our community before our hospitable brothers partly depends on your support. Always yours, Adelchi Colnaghi - founder.

NB. - For information and clarifications, head to the provisional headquarters of the newspaper "STELLA D'ITALIA" - Praça Senador Florêncio (formerly "Da Alfândega") number 321 - where the mail can still be addressed to. (Colnaghi, Stella, 7, February, 1902)

The text of the *Open letter* reappears in the front page of the first edition of the newspaper, published on March 30, 1902, as announced. The newspaper remained in operation until 1923, with biweekly publication, with some exceptions in which there was only one weekly edition. Entitled as an independent, it came out on Thursdays and Sundays, with 8 pages, in tabloid format, in Italian, with rare texts in Portuguese. It is reported that *Stella* "never had a greater circulation than 1,500 copies" (Bertaso; Lima, 1950, p. 60). At the top of the first page appeared the inscription *Published under the auspices of Italian societies established in Rio Grande do Sul*, followed by the names of supporter associations: *Vittorio Emanuele II, Principessa Elena di Montenegro, Palestra Umberto I, Ausonia, Circolo Italiano Filarmonico (Porto Alegre), Giuseppe Mazzini (Tristeza), Principe di Napoli (Caxias do Sul)*.

Other Italian associations added to the cause of the newspaper, sponsoring it. In this sense, it is observed that, from October 1902, Società Stella d'Italia, from Garibaldi and Società Luigi Amedeo di Savoia, from Arroyo Grande also became sponsors. In 1903 we find as supporters Mutua Cooperazione, from Rio Grande, Vittorio Emanuele III, from São João de Montenegro, and Circolo Giovine Italia, from Porto Alegre.

As for the Italian associations, like the supporters of the newspaper, they were, according to Luchese (2007), the associations that in both cities and colonies were formed among immigrants, because they felt the need to know, unit, and help each other in an environment where the difficulties multiplied. Initially, the knowledge of the Portuguese language was scarce. Italian companies in Rio Grande do Sul, in general, were intended to unite and protect the Italians, keeping the nationality as an essential characteristic. The mutual aid served them as the basis of existence in a new environment, different from the one left in Italy and that required work and sacrifices.

Norbert Elias (1990) suggests that we can only understand many aspects of the behavior or the actions of individual people if we start by studying the type of their interdependence, the structure of their societies, the settings that formed between them. In this sense, the associations are catalysts and order the relations.

The book commemorating the centenary of Italian immigration in Rio Grande do Sul highlights the importance of associations and points out that the earliest was the Società Italiana di Soccorso Mutuo ed Beneficenza from Bagé, founded on January 1st, 1871. In the article three of its statute purposes are enumerated, which were then adopted by other societies: "a) bail out the associates when they are sick; b) spread as much as possible the knowledge of the Italian language; c) strengthen the bonds of brotherhood among Italians who live in the city of Bagé" (Centenário, 1975, p. 274). It is estimated that statewide there were 64 Italian associations, many with their own headquarters. These were important from the point of view of the educational process among immigrants.

According to Luchese (2007; 2010), these associations, established since the early years of immigration, housed at their headquarters ethnic schools, although ephemeral.

Among the supporter Italian societies of the newspaper in Porto Alegre in the period under review, the Principessa Elena di Montenegro, Umberto I and Giovanni Emanuel kept ethnic elementary schools.

Discourses in defense of the Italian ethnic school

In an article published on the front page of *Stella*, entitled *Le nostre scuole* and subtitled *Fra cinquant'anni tutti krumeri*, we find a discouraging picture of Porto Alegre Italian colony:

In a colony like ours, where the countrymen are thousands, it is deplorable the state of neglect in which the instruction in general is left and in particular the study of Italian. In colleges and public schools, which are rather poor, there are nearly a hundred of our children. Another hundred attend the Principessa Elena di Montenegro school, maintained by the homonymous Society, and *Umberto I*, supported by Palestra. The others are roaming the roads or staying at their own homes where, aside from ignorance, there is disaffection for all they know of Italian. It is not necessary to possess a great deal of intelligence to see the slow but steady moral impoverishment of our collectivity by fault of the aforementioned evils [...]. Considering altogether, boys and girls, aged between six and twelve, count a thousand souls. Two hundred, ones better than others, learn to read and write. Eight hundred, like parasite herbs, grow amid an uncultivated field, subjected to the rudest housework, which is disproportionate to their fragile and delicate organisms. Others wander the streets of the city, filled with mediocre, menial things. (*Stella*, 28 aug., 1902, p. 1)

Colnaghi uses the term *krumeri*⁹ recurrently in the paper to indicate the state to which the descendants of Italians would arrive if education were not valued. In the same article it is evident that there were many children in the squares forming a “desperate crowd to sell the first lottery tickets, a newspaper or simply to buff shoes” (*Stella*, 28 aug., 1902, p. 1) and that if they were invited to go the school, they said that “their parents do not want them to or simply turn their backs” (*Stella*, 28 aug., 1902, p. 1). Worried about the future of the Italian identity, he asks: “what will happen in ten years with these abandoned children? What will become of our Italianity after our old ones will have, one by one, ceased to live?” (*Stella*, 28 aug., 1902, p. 1). The author concludes that, “fortunately some parents with hearts filled with love and faith make superhuman efforts and immense sacrifices to send their children to learn to know the country and to speak the harmonious tongue and send their children to the Italian school” (*Stella*, 28 aug., 1902, p. 1). Further, he argues that the existence of the Italian school is owed to those few and brave parents:

To these [parents he existence of the schools *Principessa Elena di Montenegro* and *Umberto I*: the first directed by Mrs. Camila Roncoroni, the second by Mr. Peter Riva. Amid the almost general indifference, those two

⁹ *Krumeri* is jargon used among Italian typographers to designate unskilled workers who replaced other workers on strike, also called scabs. It is an expression of contempt and suggests disability. Another meaning is the idea of wild and unable by *antonomasia*, in reference to an ethnic group in Tunisia that had no ability to manage their companies.

modest teachers strive - under the auspices of the two associations - to keep alive and enliven in the hearts of their students the sacred fire of patriotism. You should see how those little beings are interested in the study and seek to make progress; and you need to observe with how much affection they surround their teachers from which they only learn useful knowledge. [...] It is in those classes that, balanced and powerful, the breath of Italian identity still remains. Out of them, all is indifference, selfishness and brutality. The large mass is, and is kept, refractory to truly civil principles. School and society are (for the masses) synonyms of sacrifice and boredom. If this goes on and immigration does not receive fresh blood into the veins of our community, the new generation in fifty years will be wild. Whose fault is it? (*Stella*, 28 aug., 1902, p. 1)

Colnaghi refers to Italian schools in Porto Alegre in the period from 1902 to 1904. Let us set the context: on November 11, 1893, an Italian society that, in 1896, took the name of Società Italiana di Beneficenza e Istruzione Principessa Elena di Montenegro¹⁰, was founded in Porto Alegre with the initial name of Bella Aurora, in honor of the marriage of the prince of Naples to Elena of Montenegro. Since 1893 the company operated as a shelter, as school for immigrants' children as well as a cultural center for Italians and descendants, mainly from Morano (Constantino, 1991). The embryo of that society already functioned and was called Scuola Italiana Campo da Redempção, which had been organized in January 19, 1891. This date is probably the origin of Scuola Principessa Elena di Montenegro, to which Colnaghi refers. The same author describes these name changes and a bit of the history of this society in an article published on November 5, 1903, on the tenth anniversary of foundation of the society. It should be noted that the administrator of the newspaper, Benvenuto Crocetta, was the secretary of the Società Principessa Elena di Montenegro, there of his close relationship to what concerned the life of this society and the school kept by it, and the references in *Stella*.

The first headquarters of the society was a house on Coronel Carvalho Street, in the state capital. The building was completed and opened on September 20, 1908 and always gathered descendants of the various migratory currents from Italy.

¹⁰ Even during the period of the world wars, that society survived while so many others disappeared. In 1951, the society withdrew the words principessa and italiana from its name, now, in Portuguese, Sociedade de Beneficência e Instrução Elena de Montenegro. In 1961 its name was changed to Centro Ítalo Brasileiro, better known as CIB, bearing this name until 1990 when, due to the need for amendment to the statutes and the expansion of its membership, it adopted the current name - I Sociedade Italiana do Rio Grande do Sul. Over the years, its functions have been extended, now responsible for Italian language courses, cultural, gastronomic and folkloric activities.

Image 1 -
Construction of the headquarters of the Società Italiana di Beneficenza and Istruzione Principessa Elena di Montenegro in 1908¹¹.



Source: Archives of the Instituto Cultural Judáico Marc Chagall.

With wide circulation in the contemporary press, the current headquarters were inaugurated at Rua João Telles, 317. In *Cinquantenario* (1925, p. 368) we read that “the Principessa Elena in the area of mutual assistance, but especially in education, has a merit title given by the colony and the homeland”.

¹¹ On the staircase, on the right, we see a group of children. Possibly school students with the teacher Camila Roncoroni.

Image 2

Current façade of Società Italiana di Beneficenza and Istruzione Principessa Elena di Montenegro, nowadays the Italian Society of Rio Grande do Sul.



Source: Personal archive.

On May 6, 1900 Società di Beneficenza ed Istruzione Umberto I emerged, with educational, instructive and mutual aid purposes. Initially its aim was to teach Italians' children, through theater and school. In 1902, Società Giovanni Emanuel appeared, through the work of Gennaro Scalzilli, who was honorary president of the Principessa Elena. The purpose of Società Giovanni Emanuel were the school and the theater. This society created Scuola Giovanni Emanuel on July 17, 1904. After a long break from their activities, the society resumed its operation in 1916, but without the school. The society Unione Meridionale Vittorio Emanuele III had also inaugurated a school in 1904, which remained in operation for four years. The activities of these four schools were often mentioned in the newspaper in the analyzed period.

Colnaghi's concern about the moral status of the Italians is corroborated by the 1905 report, written by consul Enrico Ernesto Ciapelli¹², who was in charge of the Italian Consulate in Rio Grande do Sul between 1898 and 1904:

¹² Enrico Ernesto Ciapelli was born in Italy on March 9, 1859 and died on February 27, 1932 in France. In the work *Cinquantesenario* (1925, p. 405), we identified that "Ciapelli was as consul in Rio Grande do Sul from May 4, 1898 to 7 June, 1904". In the work of Iotti (2001, p. 107) we read that "Ciapelli assumed the regency of the Italian consulate in Rio Grande do Sul on 5 December 1897, remaining in the position until January 29, 1905". The *Cinquantesenario* reference coincides with the *Stella* newspaper's description of June 12, 1904. About consuls and consular agents in Rio Grande do Sul see IOTTI, Luiza Horn. *O olhar do poder*. Caxias do Sul: UCS, 2001.

Unfortunately, the energy of our compatriots is decreasing and is becoming weaker and weaker; vices spread widely, especially drunkenness. However, we cannot blame the immigrants, because when they left Italy, no one reminded them of the duties of a civilized and moral life, except, perhaps, some good priests. There are centers, which are distant from the seats of municipalities, where there has never existed any authority, so that the people there have always lived in a semi-wild state, with no control and no guidance. (Ciapelli, 1905, p. 954)

The article by Colnaghi *Fra cinquant'anni tutti krumeri* had repercussion. On the issues of October 5 and 10, 1902, one of the corresponding agents of the newspaper in the town of Encantado, teacher Francesco Luigi Zuliani, commented on the article and added that also in the colonies the education did not go well:

Fifty years from now [we will all be] wild, you said, dear director, referring to the lack of education of our children. Unfortunately, this is true; because the current generation will grow wild not only in the capital, but also in the colonies, where the instruction is very poor. Each colonial center averages about 200 children attending school. The poor Italian settlers are not fully to blame for it. In this district, not including Planalto region and the municipality of Estrela, we have only two Italian schools. There are several settlers who make great efforts for their children to attend school, but most do not care for it [the school]. Here we have thousands of children deprived of education. Vast, populous extensions have no schools. [...] The settlers can barely cope with the basic needs of life, especially the ones in Guaporé! Therefore, they cannot pay a teacher - who cannot live on air only - or buy them books to go to school. What to do? It is not their fault! Poverty is not a crime! I cannot tell how many parents I saw crying because they could not send their children where they could be educated. And to how many, who lived far from the centers, I even lent books for them to teach their children themselves! (*Stella*, 10 nov., 1902, p. 1)

The lament reiterated in the pages of the newspaper corroborates the view defended by Luchese, that the Italians were concerned with education, so that the opposite position cannot be generalized. Whereas we see speeches asking for teachers and schools in the colonies (Luchese, 2007; 2010), in the state capital we have a newspaper claiming for urgency of education, and education in Italian.

The situation seems to remain. So much that in the report by Ranieri V. Pesciolini, *Le colonie italiane nel Brasile meridionale*, finished in 1913 and published in 1914 by order of *Italia gens*, an Italian federation for assistance to transoceanic immigrants, the thesis of Colnaghi, that the decay of Italianity is due to the lack of the Italian school, is reiterated. The report, produced years later, highlights the situation envisioned by Colnaghi:

There are six Italian societies in the capital, which together comprise about 900 members. Of these, the two most important ones, Vittorio Emanuele II and Principessa Elena di Montenegro maintain two elementary Italian schools: the others are limited to ordinary functions of mutual assistance. [...] From the point of view of national conservation, the Italian colony of Porto Alegre, as generally all urban settlements of our immigrants, leaves much to be desired. Continuous contact for various interests, with the population and with local institutions, the mixture of Italians' children, in

schools and everywhere else with the country's youth, causes a rapid process of denationalization of the Italian element. The clearest proof of the decay of the Italian identity lies in the fact that only a hundred of Italians' children attend the two above mentioned Italian schools: petty number for a colony of over 10,000 Italians! (Pesciolini, 1914, p. 29)

In fact, at the time of publication of the report of Pesciolini (1914) only two schools appear in his analysis. The school Unione Meridionale had closed down. The Scuola Giovanni Emanuel, that had started its activities in July 17, 1904 and which Stella had helped in divulging and maintenance, did not function any more. *Stella*, in its issue of June 30, 1904, announced the inauguration of this school and presented information on tuition fees and enrollment schedule.

Yet, as we see in the report, a school maintained by the Società Vittorio Emanuele II is mentioned. This society, founded on the initiative of Bartolomeo Pellerini on 1 July 1877, was the oldest Italian Society of Porto Alegre and maintained since its founding a school of Italian language subsidized by the government in Rome and that, at a non-identified date, was incorporated into the Scuola di Principessa Elena Montenegro. In the analyzed period of the newspaper, that school is not mentioned. In the same report, we read that

regarding the intellectual conditions of the Italian element sadly not all, but several colonies more out of hand, we notice regression. It is true that many of these Venetian settlers left their country being poor and illiterate. But the isolation from the civilian world in which for many years they lived in, isolation, understood in the literal sense, that is lack of education and comfort, in a primitive life system, left them, and even more their native-born children, ignorant of the modern civil progress, and this often makes their character wild and suspicious. Absorbed in the material work to acquire the land and money, deprived of people to guide them, they neglected the cultivation of the intellect. Schools have come too late and are still very poor. (Pesciolini, 1914, p. 263)

Adelchi Colnaghi stresses repeatedly, in editions of *Stella*, the need of encouragement of the Italian school by parents, as well as by Italian authorities, convinced that "every time you open a school, a temple of ignorance closes, a prison breaks" (*Stella*, 30 jun., 1904, p.1).

The polemics with the Italian consul

On December 7, 1902, on the first page, Colnaghi wrote an article contrasting information from the *Corriere Italiano*, a co-brother paper, which attributed to the Consul Ciapelli the situation of the Italian schools, as well as praising him for good results obtained. The writer of the Italian newspaper *Corriere Italiano*, was based on information from a report by Angelo Scalabrini, general inspector of the Italian schools abroad from 1896 to 1911. Displeased with the position of the writer of that report, cautious with regard to the participation of the Consul in supporting schools, and aware of their situation, Colnaghi expressed:

Leaving aside everything with regard to the schools in Caxias, Jaguary, Antônio Prado, Lajeado, Estrela, Garibaldi, etc. [...] we cannot accept and hold our tongues about what pertains to the schools Principessa Elena and

Umberto I [...]. The pretentious statement that assigns the consul Ciapelli the vitality of these classrooms is essentially untrue. Both of them existed long before the current representative had been born! They were founded with the assistance of two societies they have been named after; societies founded by honest workers and parents who carried them on their shoulders, with sacrifices, to keep and consolidate them. [...] Thanks to them, and not to our Consul, these schools live and will keep on living. These workers, it is true, distribute school supplies sent by the home government; but this is not enough to create a halo of glory on him. It is purely and simply an obligation. Now, to fulfill a duty is not, especially for a public official, and it has never been, a worthy title! [...] If Mr. Ciapelli [...] were a friend of the schools, he would spontaneously and repeatedly visit them, as his predecessors did. [...] Both schools would be dead and buried Royal Consul may invest himself in is having founded the school Patronato, a noble effort indeed, but which closure patently reveals the inability of his efforts and of his friends. When the rescue of the poor demanded them, the rich shut their doors to them. The poor only have the flag on high; kind hearted, helpful, modest men, not driven by ambition, but solely by the desire to fulfill a noble and holy duty. To them only, to their sacrifices and their patriotism, should the vitality of these schools be owed to, not to the arid protection of the consul. (*Stella*, 7 dec., 1902, p. 1)

In the issue of January 8, 1903 Colnaghi writes the article *Il grave problema delle scuole italiane a Porto Alegre*, which is peremptory in the analysis of the Italian schools, sparing no criticism of the government and particularly of its representative:

An error of our government, which is very serious, is that of naming the consuls before having made them undergo screening. In its concept, each Consul is tailored for any country; the concern that this man may be helpful or harmful to the interests, to which Italians are called to care for, does not move him. When a consulate is vacant, the first consul that the government has to offer is sent to occupy the post, and it matters little whether he is suitable or not. In our case, let us examine the effects of this bad procedure: at the doors of the Consulate of Italy two final examinations occur; at one of the schools the honorary chairman is holder; and he does not show, nor allow others to represent him. With no guidance, no moral support, discouraged, it is very difficult for entities that support the schools if the government does not send to that country the government and somebody who represents it. It will not be by doing so that Italy will be able to keep alive the flame of patriotism and of our language within large Italian communities in this country. As the vestals keep the sacred fire, schools keep the sentiment of home. Government efforts come and go, always miserably lost until it decides to leave the current bureaucratic system. (*Stella*, 8 jan., 1903, p. 1)

In the issue of February 19, 1903, Conalghi criticizes the consul for running a petition against the journal. Conalghi started the article, stating that “on a whim of the government and woe of the colony, Ciapelli, authorizing the protest against *Stella*, only exposes his nullity”. He goes on stating that he is convinced of the consul's incapacity, the duty of the honest and independent press being to rise up against those who abuse of their power:

It is the duty of the press to raise up against the men who, invested with any power, cowardly abuse it [...]. Italy, thank heavens, has plenty of capable, energetic and courageous employees, and Rio Grande do Sul

does not ignore them. Therefore, it will not be a crime to blame a consul whose foolishness and weaknesses made him lose confidence of the colony and merited in political circles, earning the epithets of *good* and *useless* consul. (*Stella*, 19 fev., 1903, p. 3)

In the issue of April 26, 1903, a reader from Santa Maria, whose name has not been disclosed, sent a letter praising the efforts Colnaghi put into incentivizing the Italian schools and criticizing consul Ciapelli's disregard of the latter. The text is emphatic towards the representative's behavior:

It's bad, though, that this noble zeal, this holy duty is perceived by few, because the culture of the mother tongue and moral education of our young children should be perceived as a prevailing need for our collective life, for which each should contribute to the extent of their own intellectual powers. Rather the effort is always of a few that commit and is usually ridiculed by many. However, do not let the good ones be discouraged; do not be discouraged, Mr. Director, of propagandizing in the Italian schools and taking into the classrooms the helping word. Although the representative of the nation does not take care of the development of Italian schools, let us do it! It is regrettable, nevertheless, that this indifference of many is a sad symptom of our colonial clutter. (*Stella*, 26 apr., 1903, p. 3)

On April 29, 1903, on the first page, with the title *Scuole italiane a Porto Alegre*, Colnaghi presents the situation of Italian schools in Santa Catarina and assigns their development "to the patriotic initiative of the royal consul, the constant and illuminating propaganda of some volunteers, and the noble and discreet sacrifice of the colony made the miracle possible" (*Stella*, 29 apr., 1903, p. 1). He concluded the article with the full reproduction of the subject matter of the newspaper *La Patria*, from Urussanga, Santa Catarina, which described the progress of the Italian school in that state.

The issue of May 14, 1903, on the third anniversary of the school Umberto I, which feast is described in detail and with enthusiasm, refers to the indictment of lack of patriotism by Ciapelli. Prosecution motivated by his absence at the celebration of the anniversary:

It is truly depressing and shocking to see a regal consul, official representative of our country, to absent himself from the parties, which all hold as an instance of great patriotism. If Sir Consul shared the feelings of the working mass, if within his heart a single fiber of patriotic love vibrated, if the fluttering of the three colors were dear to him, if the good of the colony were more than a mere utopia, passing on personal pettiness, he would descend along their countrymen and share with them the joys and pains. [...] Umberto I and Principessa Elena schools still exist despite the abandonment of Mr. Ciapelli, while the Patronato he founded dies in general indifference. The latter was supported by the rich; the other two by the poor. Under the workman's smock there is more heart than under the opulent dress coat! [...] the homeland will rejoice and we will be immensely proud of having accomplished a holy duty. (*Stella*, 14 may, 1903, p. 1)

In the issue of July 2, 1903, we can find the description of the anniversary ceremony of Scuola Principessa Elena, which then was four years old. Colnaghi lists the participants and apologies sent by some guests because they could not attend the party. As for the

consul Ciapelli, one of the guests, this was not done and neither was he represented at the ceremony. Colnaghi's indignation is clear and published in the same issue:

as for the consul Ciapelli, deaf to any rule of etiquette, he did not show nor apologized! A matter of courtesy! [...] If one day the only two schools we have for now are closed, our whole generation will be utterly lost, and our country could consider itself wild. (*Stella*, 2 jul., 1903, p. 2)

In the issue of August 9, 1903 a note from the Società Vittorio Emanuele II was published, signed by its chairman Giovanni Berutti and addressed to the direction of the newspaper, requesting the inscription that indicated its support to the newspaper to be removed from the header of *Stella*, considering that it often argued with the regal representative:

The last general meeting of the praiseworthy society Vittorio Emanuele II decided, by majority vote, that your newspaper (until then much appreciated) should no longer continue under the auspices of this praiseworthy sodality, in consideration of the controversy arising between your newspaper and the royal consul Mr. Enrico Ciapelli. (*Stella*, 9 aug., 1903, p. 1)

In the same issue, purposely still on the first page, Colnaghi prints a letter from the president of Principessa Elena, Pietro Bonotto, praising and thanking the newspaper “for the great service it provides to the association” (*Stella*, 9, aug., 1903, p. 1). He also encourages him to “persevere in the effective propaganda he nobly carries out in name of social principles for the good of all societies and the Italian collectivity” (*Stella*, 9 aug., 1903, p. 1). Colnaghi, aware of the controversy he had raised, on the same issue exposes the two letters under the title: *Two weights and two measures: for and against the Stella d'Italia. Where is common sense?*

Commenting on Bonotto's letter, Colnaghi points out the neutralizing effect of the letters amid accusations against who “just wants to keep the good Italian name” (*Stella*, 9 aug., 1903, p. 1). In the brief Bonotto's words, Colnaghi reads “an incitement to continue in the proposed way to overcome discouragement and tame resentment against the ungrateful” (*Stella*, 9 aug., 1903, p. 1).

As to Society Vittorio Emanuele II, Colnaghi regrets that it removes its support, considering that the newspaper has always supported the disclosure of its name for the good of the colony. Using a play on words, he states “what hurts and saddens more is that Vittorio Emanuele II defends a man who, as a consul, does not console anyone, who does not see that he stirs up hatred and revenge, of few, against *Stella d'Italia* and its editors” (*Stella*, 9 aug., 1903, p. 1).

The harsh words directed to the consul in the set of publications of the newspaper led Ciapelli to address a letter to Società Umberto I, supporter of *Stella*, in which he, ominously, proposed to withdraw support given to the Scuola Umberto I, its maintained, with regard to provision of school supplies. The newspaper edition of November 26, 1903, on the first page, prints the letter from the consul sent to the president of the society, Antonio Mondin:

Porto Alegre, October 19, 1903.

Honorable sir,

The Society chaired by your lordship has under its auspices the *Stella d'Italia* newspaper, which behavior becomes increasingly inconvenient towards me. I am in sore need of having to communicate that if the name of the society continues to be included in that journal, I will be forced to suspend the supply of material to the school linked to the association. It is indeed evident that the royal government cannot subsidize a dependent of a sodality institute which, in a sense, becomes sympathetic to the insults that journal hurls against an employee with such impudence, justified only by the impunity which it judges to enjoy. As needed, and I hope that this will not happen, I will communicate to the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs this decision of mine. Please, illustrious sir, gladly accept the sense of my observation. Regal Consul: E. Ciapelli.

To which materials and subsidies Ciapelli refers? Kreutz and Luchese (2010) point out that in addition to books sent by the Italian government, also a sum of money was sent to schools administered by the consuls and consular agents. They highlight, however, that greater attention to ethnic and shipping books to schools occurred during the government of Mussolini, triggering the fascistization of education, with abundant literature concerning it (Bertonha, 2001; Giron, 1994).

Colnaghi, in an article of January 31, 1904, is scathing and notes that the help of the Italian government is irregular and not always fair:

The government is content to send school supplies in irregular periods, almost never corresponding to actual needs; consuls, vice-consuls, or their representatives, responsible for the distribution, proceed almost always motivated more by sympathy than by the sense of justice and fairness. Thus, it happens that many schools lack books while others possess in abundance to the point of making a regrettable trade. The continuous exchange of texts is therefore a very serious evil, for in a short time the few open classes will be infested by the fall of education. (*Stella*, 31 jan., 1904, p. 1)

Pesciolini's report (1914) describes that among Italian schools and elementary schools in Rio Grande do Sul, there were about sixty receiving subsidies from the Italian government: "a discrete number of these schools are subsidized by royal consulates, with books and also with money. The amount of money subsidies to the consulates is variable: in Rio Grande it ranges between 50-100 réis (85-170 lire) per year, or a little more" (Pesciolini, 1914, 283 p.). He concludes the report saying there is no way to ignore that schools have two main difficulties in the colonies: the deficiency of means and the deficiency of teachers and that "is why they continuously come and go" (Pesciolini, 1914, 284 p.).

Iotti (2010) points out that the numerous reports of consular officers demonstrate the inability of the Italian authorities to assist more effectively the subjects of the kingdom established in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, crediting the success or defeat of certain elements to their personal qualities. In this sense, "it is worth noting the emphasis on the issue of education and the establishment of charitable societies, which absence was justified by the scarcity or lack of ability or initiative of the immigrants themselves" (Iotti, 2010, p. 120).

Ciapelli, during the period in which he was consul, wrote four reports on Italian immigration in Rio Grande do Sul. Iotti (2001) notes that in the reports of the consuls there is an ongoing concern with the preservation of Italian identity and with the maintenance of ties among immigrants and the motherland. The speeches of Italianity appear in consular documents even before they became the official discourse of the Italian State. Ciapelli concluded one of his reports suggesting the implementation of Italian schools and the coming of “honest and capable teachers, who could also be entrusted the functions of consular officers, thereby also contributing to the protection of citizens beyond instruction” (Ciapelli, 1905, p. 954). Ciapelli reminded that sending these professional people had already been done and had been successful in some locations. According to Iotti (2001, p. 109) “he was probably referring to the case of Luigi Petrocchi who, since 1903, combined the roles of teacher and consular agent in the city of Bento Gonçalves”.

Of the same period, we find reports written between 1904 and 1906 by two consular agents: Umberto Ancarini, who was professor in Caxias do Sul, in the school maintained by the Society Principe di Napoli, and Luigi Petrocchi, teacher in Bento Gonçalves in the school maintained by Regina Margherita Society. Both highlight, in summary, that the school was up to a regenerative mission of youth that, uneducated, would eventually live a brutalized life and would not constitute a proud people of their country of origin.

The statement of Tittone in 1912, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, is enlightening on grants to schools, considering negligible the contribution to schools subsidized by the Italian government:

In fact, these [Italian associations] founded and maintained most of our schools; and our subsidies, meager for such a large area, more than adequately helping in expenses, should be taken only as a moral support and encouragement. (Salveti, 2009, p. 547)

After these clarifications on the support, let us get back to the letter sent by the consul Ciapelli to the Società Umberto I. In response to Ciapelli’s letter and his threat, the royal society sent a letter signed by its representative, chairman, Antonio Mondin, dated October 21, 1903. The letter was published in the issue of November 26, 1903. Its contents refute the claims of the consul and expose the intention not to comply with his requests. His advisers decide they will not withdraw the name of the society from the newspaper heading. We transcribe two peremptory considerations written by the secretary Luigi Zuliani, teacher at the school:

The council expresses its opinion of not meeting the requests of your Excellency, i.e., to order Mr. Adelchi Colnaghi to remove the society Umberto I from the header of his newspaper; included in the newspaper are other older societies and if these want to withdraw their names from the newspaper, the council will think what to do. [...] As for punishing that society (according to your Excellency) by suppressing the provision of school supplies to that school [...] is an act whose many victims are children, who are not at fault and do not think like Mr. A. Colnaghi writes against your Excellency and therefore, you should not do it. (*Stella*, 26 nov., 1903, p. 2)

The Società Umberto I met on November 17 and decided that a committee would talk to the consul “charged of provoking him to make a declaration on the threat and to arrive to a final solution” (*Stella*, 26 nov., 1903, p. 3). The meeting with the consul and representatives of the society took place on November 18 and, the next day, the society met to hear the result. In the same issue of November 26, 1903, Colnaghi published the report of the committee members to the society with regard to what had happened in the meeting with the consul:

The reporter said that having asked the consul if it would be possible for the school Umberto I, during the next final exams, to have some of the books that the royal ministry had purposely sent, he obtained a denial for a formal response [...] that the consul deprived the school of such honors, because the society would not acquiesce to his request to withdraw support for the *Stella d'Italia* [...] that, besides denying the books, 500 lire for the construction of the association's headquarters were returned to the Ministry, and Umberto I after sending letter 18 (*received by the consul*) could be considered completely abandoned by him and by the home government. (*Stella*, 26 nov., 1903, p. 2)

According to the reporter, the consul was furious, not listening to the many reasonable observations of the committee, so the commission decided to withdraw convinced that he “was blind in his will for revenge without the slightest notion of evil from it derived” (*Stella*, 26 nov., 1903, p. 2). After the brief report of the committee to the Society, it was unanimously resolved to exclude the consul from the list of society's partners:

This Assembly so decides: 1. Exclusion of Mr. E. Ciapelli from the roll of the associates, due to the lack of quota payments of 7 months, based on the current statute. 2. The publication of the letters exchanged by the consul and the association in the Journal *Stella d'Italia*. 3. The publication in the same newspaper of the extracts of the three meetings of the counselors. (*Stella*, 26 nov., 1903, p. 2)

In the last consul's report on Rio Grande do Sul, written in 1905, there is no mention of the episode of his exclusion from the Società Umberto I, nor of the episode of the denial of subsidies to the school.

The polemic's outcome

In the edition of December 6, 1903 Colnaghi resumed the text that led to the uproar and invited everyone to remain firm in the conservation of schools, as these “are the holy temple of modern society and if the consul Ciapelli unreasonably denies any moral and material support, we should not be alarmed. After the storm comes the calm. [...] Let us educate our children and keep the schools” (*Stella*, 6 dez. 1903, p. 1).

In the final exams of the Scuola Principessa Elena di Montenegro, on December 27, 1903, the consul was absent and the children received the Atestato di merito “lacking the signature and the stamp of the consul Ciapelli for having categorically rejected attending, even though honorary President of the school” (*Stella*, 3 jan., 1904, p. 1). He was also absent at the final examinations of the Scuola Umberto I, in December 1903.

On June 12, 1904, Colnaghi wrote an article in which he explained that his first intention by requesting the auspices of Italian companies was to take them to the field of action and take them off a vegetative life, as they were limited to by the prescribed circle of its statutes. Thus, through the newspaper, he purposed to unite the isolated and disorganized movements and to form a “powerful mechanism to attract to itself all moral and material energies of our colony” (*Stella*, 12 jun., 1904, p. 1), as he realized that, compared to the German colonists, the Italian community lacked a lot. He stressed that the official persecution, although it had not made him abandon the once idealized newspaper program, brought problems for the societies and especially for schools, “coming to a point where the Principessa Elena was also denied the aid of school supplies” (*Stella*, 12 jun., 1904, p. 1). Colnaghi considered important for the societies to have sponsorship from the representative of the Italian government, so he believed to be better to remove from the heading of the newspaper the name of the associations that supported him “for their own good” (*Stella*, 12 jun., 1904, p. 1).

According to Colnaghi, the idea of presenting, on the newspaper cover, the reference to the societies by advertising their auspices was not intended to give him authority, but for these societies to organize themselves, to get to know each other and to form, perhaps, from the newspaper, a confluence of forces for their purposes. In that text, Colnaghi resumed elements that made up the pursuit of the newspaper, the defense of schools carried out by the newspaper and concluded that the newspaper's smear campaign ended exactly at the time of departure of the consul to other lands. He thought it was time for a change:

Last Wednesday, the sad hero of this unpatriotic campaign was leaving; on the Prudente de Moraes steamer among those who went there *to send him away*, we noted some of the little ones from the two schools mentioned that, in exchange of the bad things they received, gave him flowers. With his departure, all grudges disappear and all wrath will cease! However, with the learning of past struggles some questions affect the spirit: can we continue under the auspices of the noble societies when these pay high price for the responsibility of our writings? [...] Can we allow its further sacrifice? Do we want to continue with a fruitless struggle in which the peace of the colony perishes together with their and our noblest ideals? No: the cause ceases, cease the effects! Let us put a stone over the past and return the schools and the societies to the sponsorship of the representative of the fatherland. *Stella d'Italia* declines from the support of the societies for the common good. It is a sacrifice, but now it is no longer possible to the noble sodalities to adorn the header. Our program will continue unchanged [...]. Only time will tell if our decision will bring the desired fruits. (*Stella*, 12 jun., 1904, p.1)

In the edition of *Stella*, the text above stamped the front page; the names of the supporting societies no longer appeared. A cycle had ended.

Final considerations

We evidenced in the newspaper *Stella* the speech about the importance of education among Italians and descendants settled in Porto Alegre and the concern about the continuity of schools. It is noteworthy that *Stella*, in addition to being a source for understanding the reality of the Italian ethnic schools of the state capital in the late 19th

and early 20th centuries, reveals the fragility of these and exposes what the literature on immigration has said about the ethnic schools as for the poor support from the Italian authorities.

The reconstruction of the controversy between the newspaper and the consul Ciapelli somehow reveals the political friction to which the Italian societies were exposed, concerning the defense of their interests. It also provides elements for understanding the structure of schools maintained by the Italian societies in Porto Alegre, as dependent on a power to grant them, in addition to books and other subsidies, the reputation and the endorsement of the regal representative.

Colnaghi was convinced of the importance of the ethnic schools. Hence, he promoted and defended them in the newspaper pages of which he was the editor. Much was known about the difficulties of Italian schools, and the newspaper sought to advertise it. But, from its editor's view, little has been done. Moreover, sometimes it has been done against it.

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