

HISTORY CORNER

.... gli allor ne sfronda ed alle genti mostra
di che lacrime grondi e di che sangue....
(U. Foscolo: *I sepolcri*, 157-158)

Ciro Caldera, from a University Chair to Exile

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*Putting pen to paper to outline the vicissitudes that characterised the life and professional career of **Ciro Caldera**, a brilliant colleague, who in 1924 directed the Ear Nose and Throat Clinic of the University of Pavia, seemed a due tribute. Overdue because to be fair and honest we cannot but put the records right posthumously for someone, who was victim of heavy persecutions and forced into exile due to his opposition to Fascism and then, as we will see, before and after the fall of the Fascist regime shamefacedly ignored by colleagues and authorities.*

The more distasteful part of this story is that, after the forced expatriation to Australia for his antifascist ideas, **Ciro Caldera** did not receive any acknowledgement from the so called democratic governments, that for many years had exalted and favoured those, often in reality a sham, who boasted a past of fighting against the totalitarian tyranny.

On the contrary, little attention was given to **Ciro Caldera** and, from a certain point of view, there was an unjustified aggression with the medieval form of a true *damnatio memoriae*. In fact, in the specialist literature after 1929, the first mention of him is to be found in the volume by D. Felisati and colleagues (41) but that, being fragmented, did not dwell on the causes and repercussions of that political situation. Furthermore, it is relevant that only seven sources refer to **Ciro Caldera** and five of these were published in Australia.

Chronology

Ciro Giovanni Caldera was born in Bussoleno (Turin) on December 12th 1886 to Giuseppe, commanding officer of the Carabinieri, and to Caterina Giacone (25). After his degree in Medicine, in Turin in 1910, he devoted himself to the study of otolaryngology under the guidance of Giuseppe Gradenigo, working as an assistant at the ENT Clinic of the University of Turin directed by his same mentor.

Gradenigo appreciated the expertise of his student and was a guiding light in his career up until he achieved a *Libera Docenza* (recognized university teacher but not on the regular staff) in 1915 and taught at the ENT Clinic at the University of Modena (1917-1922). The young specialist also gained the esteem of Professor V. Grazzi, collaborating, starting from 1910, with the *Bollettino delle Malattie, dell'Orecchio, della Gola e del Naso* (Bulletin of Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases) with hundreds of reviews on foreign articles and with numerous personal contributions. Grazzi also in 1928 and 1929 demonstrated his friendship, publishing in the Bulletin two works sent from Australia and by including his name in the list of col-

laborators printed on the cover. Unfortunately, Professor Grazzi died that same year and when the Bulletin reappeared, re-launched under the direction of A. Orlandino, Ciro Caldera's name had disappeared from the magazine cover once and for all (35).

In 1915, Ciro Caldera put his name down to be chief physician at the ENT hospital in Verona together with U. Turini, C. Bruzzone and G. Marcato, a selection that did not take place due to the beginning of the war. At the end of the war, in which he took part in with the rank of captain as a medical officer, a royal decree on September 1919 interrupted the suspension and the selection took place. The examining committee, made up of V. Grazzi, F. Brunetti and L. Silvagni, found Ciro Caldera, who had remained the only candidate due to the withdrawal of the others, appropriate for the position, that was assigned to him beginning in 1920 up until 1923 (35).

In 1922 Ciro Caldera, already author of a number of publications on different subjects relating to his specialization, was a speaker at the 29th National Convention in Perugia of the Italian ENT Association (at the time called S.I.L.O.R.). On that occasion, he made a very innovative presentation for the time: *Organic methods of treating sarcoma in the primary breathing tracts*. His presentation proved to be exacting and well balanced, receiving general appreciation and approval as evidenced in the subsequent energetic debate that terminated the meeting (34).

Later in 1923, Ciro Caldera was summoned to manage, as an extraordinary Professor, the ENT Clinic of the University of Pavia, after being selected by a commission made up of G. Gradenigo, S. Citelli, V. Grazzi, Gh Ferreri and G. Pagliani. This accomplishment, as the former, was mentioned by Professor Grazzi in the Bulletin.

At the age of 37, he reached the apex of his professional career, holding one of the most prestigious Chairs. Everything seemed to be going in the right direction and a promising future was already foreseen, both from the scientific and professional point of view, but it was not to be.

Due to his socialist political beliefs and being a Freemason - he was a member of the Loggia di Palazzo Giustiniani with the rank 32 - he began to experience the hostility of the fascist regime. He, on the other hand, did nothing to hide his ideals and his opposition towards a political party that, at the time arbiter of absolute power, did not permit free speech contrary to that of the regime (15).

For Ciro Caldera, as for the other opponents, life became very difficult, threats and intimidation forced him to resign, after only one academic year, and to go back to Verona dedicating himself to private profession. His decision was not enough to halt the persecutions that reached a peak when in 1925 his house was burnt down, according to his Turin colleague Vincenzo Palumbo his assistant at the time and then, for years, devoted friend (29). Finally, in 1926, seeing no other option, although reluctantly, he decided to leave Italy on a ship leaving from Genoa and he

disembarked for Perth, in Western Australia, on May 31st of that same year (27). There, he found a job in the hospital of Fremantle and then in the Mount Hospital, working at the same time also privately and, within a few years, he became one of the most renowned specialists in the city (14, 24, 46, 47). Ciro Caldera was allowed to work as a doctor thanks to the agreement of reciprocity of the degrees in medicine between Great Britain, Japan and Italy signed at the end of the 19th century and still valid in the 1930s. In 1931, he applied for and was given Australian citizenship (14) but, despite this, during the 1930s, the Italian political police continued to keep an eye on him to see if even in Australia he was carrying on antifascist propaganda (records from 14 to 24). In a letter of 1945, in which he wrote about his life in Australia in the previous decade (9), Ciro Caldera also told of attempts to sabotage his car with the intention, according to him, of prejudicing his safety. He also added that in those same years, he was asked to go back to Italy with the promise of a university Chair in Rome or Naples provided he joined the fascist party. From the history of Fascism, it is well-known that in the early 1930s similar offers were often made to and accepted by leading personalities, giving the impression that the regime had consolidated and, in some measure, become more moderate. This information from Ciro Caldera himself is not confirmed by other sources but, in the files on him still kept in the General National Archives (records from 14 to 24) and examined by us for information on Cresciani (39, 40) we found that he, during the 1930s, was kept under surveillance by the staff of the Italian embassy in Australia and by the consulate in Perth. In reality, although these offices denied any such documentation (31, 32) when D. Celestino asked them, copies of their reports (preserved in the aforementioned archives) without doubt demonstrate that Ciro Caldera, up until 1939, continued to declare himself antifascist (24) and was a Freemason (dissolved in 1925 in Italy) and attended the Loggia in Perth (15), he subscribed to the Free Italy Association (15), and ideologically he was close to the movement of Justice and Freedom (23) and he earned substantially from his private medical profession (24). Those who wrote these reports declared that he could not be considered dangerous for the regime due to the fact that, even in private conversation, he did not express negative judgements on Italy. The Fascist authorities manifested their hostility against the exiled during the 1930s by the use at least four pointless and loathsome measures:

Pressure on relatives in order to convince him to renounce his ideals (14, 15, 16);

Land registry inspection for eventual expropriation of his property (14);

Tight censorship of correspondence sent to Italy (19);

The instruction for refusal of entry at the frontier for any possible attempt to enter the country (21).

Regarding the land registry check for the property of Ciro

Caldera, we can add that it did not give rise to any outcome because these had been sold two or three years before leaving Italy. For this check we must thank Dr Riccardi Di Pasquale who carried it out at the Provincial Land Registry in Turin (30).

Meanwhile (February 11th 1939), at the Registrar's office in Perth, Caldera married Irene Hilda Smith of 34. The couple did not have children and the widow lived until May 13th 1996 (27).

With the beginning of the war the surveillance of the Italian consulate on Ciro Caldera came to an end. From Australian sources, we know that he actively assisted fellow citizens prisoners of war in Australia and helped the settlement in Perth of Dr Elnihovici, who had obtained his degree in Pavia in 1924 with a thesis assigned to him by Ciro Caldera himself. This refugee was a Ukrainian Jew which explains why he had fled so far for shelter. He arrived in Perth on August 8th 1939 on the passenger ship *Città di Genova* but when, at war terminated, he returned to Italy he could not travel onboard of the same ship as it had been torpedoed in the Ionian Sea on January 23rd 1943 (45)*. In 1949, he returned indefinitely to Australia where he found his mentor and where they both died in old age (47). As Gentili recalls (43), the two exiles were held in high esteem not only for their professional competence but also for their cultural activities and for their generosity towards poor patients.

After the fall of Fascism and the liberation of Rome, Ciro Caldera (13) wrote to the Ministry of Education (in November 1944), asking to have his job back. Evidently, he thought a radical change had come about in Italy and that nepotism, favouritism, corruption and collusion had suddenly ended. He ingenuously thought that a new era had been born based on honesty and aiming at compensating the wrongdoing thanks to an effective and rapid system of justice and a trustworthy and efficient bureaucracy. As is more than clear today, it was a colossal disillusion that led him, in the autumn of 1944, to resign from the group of honorary doctors of the hospital of Fremantle for "health reasons" (42, 46). His request was accepted but, nevertheless, Ciro Caldera continued to work until 1973 with that same role. His letters addressed to the Ministry had only generic replies and nothing more than those sent to colleagues and politicians. He only received vague replies on competent bodies at disposal to examine his requests, with the promise that, when the situation would allow, he would have seen his request accepted. In fact, Ciro Caldera did not have important letters of recommendation, or influential friends who could intercede on his behalf, and it is still evident today how important these are for the public administration of Italy.

As appears from the testimony of those who knew him, the official records of the Police and the consular authorities, Caldera was always shy, reserved and dignified, had few friends and he did not get involved in politics, although firmly and constantly being of his own ideas. He was not accustomed to compromise, or to beg for favours, but he just believed that what he was asking for was his right. Maybe he was just incapable of believing that in Italy, under any regime and in any era, the classic mentality would have survived, that both in the past and today nepotism is more important than merit. And this is what in fact happened: probably the contemporary ministers, V. Arangio-Ruiz and R. Molè (the former a member of the Liberal Party and the latter a member of the Democratic Labour and ministers from 1944 to 1946 of Public Education in the governments of Iv. Bonomi, F. Parri and A. De Gasperi) left the matter to be solved by the important ministerial bureaucrats who pronounced a negative judgment on his request for reinstatement to his job. The refusal was justified by the fact that Caldera had now British citizenship and by the alleged spontaneous resignation in 1924 (13). All of this despite the honest and the unambiguous report by Plinio Fraccaro** Chancellor of Pavia University who stated (10): 1) those resignations were only formally voluntary; 2) that Ciro Caldera suffered political persecution and 3) he was well-known in Australia as a "dignified anti-fascist".

The supposed lack of evidence on the persecution he suffered was only an evident excuse due to the fact that it is evident from our research that this proof had never been conscientiously searched for. Just one morning was enough for D. Celestino at the National Archives in Rome to find the official and indisputable records about the whole story in the space of a couple of hours (Ministry of Internal Affairs Central Political Casebook, file no. 6903). Remembering that the return of the exiled in some ways would have caused trouble to other aspiring candidates to that Chair, it is evident that the entire matter had been handled by ministries and directors of Public Education with the sole aim of maintaining the status quo. Unfortunately once again, the new democratic Italy proved to be similar to the *Italiotta* of the Fascist period, and more than ever determined not to become the homeland of righteousness but the homeland of its opposite.

Frustrated and upset by these replies, Ciro Caldera did not want to return to Italy and spent the rest of his long life in Perth, cultivating his profession to such an extent that he was considered one of the best Australian specialists. He worked as a Honorary Doctor in the Hospital of Fremantle until 1973, also dedicating himself to stamp collecting

*The information about the sinking of the *Città di Genova* ship was provided by Marine Officer Idamo Rossi to whom we are grateful.

** Plinio Fraccaro (1883-1959) reader in Ancient Roman and Greek History in Pavia from 1915. Elected Chancellor by Badoglio's Government (5/09/1943) he was dismissed during the Italian Social Republic on 14/02/1944 and then reinstated in his job (15/04/1945) which he continued until his death (1/11/1959). He had always been antifascist and he never joined the NFP. From the recorded dates, it is evident that he was in Pavia at the same time as Caldera was forced to resign and take shelter in Australia. It is worth underlining that, when he had the power to do so, Fraccaro reinstated some Readers expelled from the University following the racial laws in 1938.

and the study of Esperanto for which he organized in Melbourne the world convention in 1959 (38), further to the activities of the Dante Alighieri Association and the Italo-Australian Cultural Association in Perth (27). He died on August 9th 1984 at nearly the age of 100 and his ashes are in the Karrakatta cemetery. At the funeral a great number of Italians living in Australia and Australians, who held him in high esteem attended, from the official Italy neither a flower nor a word.

Commentary

The life of Ciro Caldera, in reality, cannot be considered unique as it is similar to that experienced by many an expatriate, persecuted or exiled for political reasons, in any period and in any locality.

The peculiarity in his case, as aforementioned, is in what came about after the fall of the Fascism, which corresponded to a period in which Ciro Caldera thought it possible to be reinstated in his university Chair. On the one hand it is not uncommon that an absolutist regime tried to free itself of adversaries, on the other hand it seems incredible that the authority, political and/or academic, established after the dictatorship, did not feel the duty to compensate the wrong done to an opponent of the regime. Ever more so as this happened in the post war period when it seemed that the purge would have given back the dignity and the position to those who had lost it for political reasons. As today is evident, the purge was initiated but, in a short period of time, it became evident that the wrong done to the exiled was no longer of interest and any possible benefit was reserved for those who remained in Italy working (silently) against the regime, and passed to the side of the winner at the right moment.

So while many turncoats and antifascists of the last minute received unmerited honours and advantage, Ciro Caldera was soon forgotten. Making it easier for all to forget was his dignity that, after the aforementioned events, led him to cut any contact with Italy, apart from some letters addressed to his friends. However this does not justify the veil of oblivion covering this singular personality, never to be unveiled. We would have thought that his colleagues and in particular the ENT association would have remembered him in some way and at least prevented his life story and name from being forgotten.

In conclusion, our intention is to bring back to light both for the restitution of dignity to someone who had been deprived of it, and to mitigate the shame felt even on writing about such an unpleasant series of events.

The abovementioned events are piteous but not unique and, in the impossibility of changing the past, the hope remains that it will be possible to include the name of Ciro Caldera amongst those 12 out of 1225 glorious university teachers (44) who refused to swear loyalty to the Fascist State and that the newly born democratic state awarded

with only insincere words and the refusal to reinstate them in their jobs.

Acknowledgements

We would particularly like to thank our colleague Dr Vinciarlo Palumbo, from Turin, who has donated to the Library and the Museum of SIO publications, records and old surgical instruments once owned by his father Vincenzo, schoolmate and then assistant to Ciro Caldera in Pavia in 1924. These donations have been decisive because they initiated the idea for the research on which this article is based.

Our gratitude goes also to those, in Italy and in Australia, who have provided us with precious unpublished information that allowed us to create a more humane and less artificial profile of the personality of this exile. We believe it only right to make here a list of all their names and the institutions to which they belong: Reader Paolo Ferrari (University of Fremantle, WA), Prof. Marco Manfrin (University of Pavia), Dr Franco Barbieri (Verona Hospital), Mrs Clelia Doeve (Cultural attaché at the Australian Embassy in Rome), Mrs Cheril Hamill (Library of Fremantle Hospital), President Enzo Sirna of the Italo-Australian Cultural Association in Perth (WA), Mr Brian Stewart, and Mrs Steve Howell (State Library of Western Australia, Perth).

The sources

The bibliographic references in the text indicate, with only one number (from 1 to 47), the records, letters and printed works from which the article has been prepared. In particular, records 1-13 come from the Personnel Office of the university of Pavia, records 14-24 from the Central Archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, records 25-33 are the written replies to our requests for information and, finally, records 34-47 printed works.

Personnel Office of the University of Pavia, reader Ciro Caldera

1) Ref. 13360; 28 June 1923; Ministry of Education informs the Chancellor of Pavia that Ciro Caldera, winner of the contest for the university chair of ENT, is nominated Extraordinary Lecturer from 16 October 1923.

2) Ref. 2445; 1 July 1923: Chancellor of the University of Pavia informs C. Caldera of nomination as head of the university course in ENT, as Extraordinary Lecturer.

3) Letter signed by Ciro Caldera (27 May 1924) to the Ministry of Education resigning from his post for "family reasons".

4) Ref. 1816; 5 June 1924: Chancellor of the University of Pavia transmits the request for one year's leave by Caldera and confirms the family and research reasons to the Ministry of Education.

5) Ref. 9198; 16 June 1924: Ministry of Education confirms to the Chancellor of Pavia the acceptance of the request by Reader Caldera, 1 August 1924 – 15 October 1925.

- 6) Ref. 14109; 8 September 1924: Ministry of Education, attaching the opinion of the Court of Auditors, confirms the leave only from 1 August 1924 to 15 October 1924.
- 7) Ref. ?, 17 October 1924: Chancellor of Pavia conveys the resignation of Caldera to the Ministry of Education from 15 October 1924.
- 8) Ref. 17283; 30 October 1924: Ministry of Education informs the Chancellor of Pavia of the acceptance of Caldera's resignation.
- 9) 15 August 1945: copy of Caldera's letter to Senator A. Banfi including a report on his life as an exile in Australia.
- 10) Ref. 2364; 12 October 1945: Plinio Fraccaro, Chancellor of Pavia, brings to the attention of the Ministry of Education not only that the problem of Caldera's reinstatement had not been resolved, but also that "his resignation was, without doubt, due to the fascist persecutions, even in Australia".
- 11) Ref. 13187; 3 November 1945: Ministry of Education informs the Chancellor of Pavia that it is awaiting the report from the Turin and Verona Prefects before making a decision.
- 12) Ref. 17377; 21 December 1945: Minister of Education (Molè) requests from P. Fraccaro further information on Caldera's resignation.
- 13) Ref. 4099; 24 September 1946: Minister of Education informs the Chancellor of Pavia and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the reasons why Caldera could not be reinstated: 1) had British citizenship; 2) voluntary resignation.

*Ministry of Internal Affairs Central Political Archives.
File no. 6903*

- 14) Ref. 1963, 22 July 1930: The Vice Consul for Western Australia (Perth) informs the Prefects of Turin and Verona of the antifascist propaganda by Caldera in Perth and suggests making pressure on his Italian relatives in order to force him to change his attitude.
- 15) Ref. 29957, 5 May 1934: The Department for Public Safety notifies the Central Political Archives of the "treacherous and slanderous antifascist propaganda" by Caldera besides his being part of the Freemasonry and of the former servicemen association "Italia Libera".
- 16) Ref. 05038, 22 June 1934: The Prefect of Verona informs the Central Political Archives and the Turin Prefecture of the antifascist role played by Caldera in Australia and includes a photo and description.
- 17) Ref. 05038, 28 June 1934: The zealous Prefect of Verona adds that Caldera's name had been cancelled from the list of known subversives in the Province of Verona because he was neither born there nor resident in that province.
- 18) Ref. 6149, 20 November 1934: The General Consul of Australia briefs the Central Political Archives on the attitude of Caldera towards the regime.
- 19) Ref. O50??, 23 April 1935: From Verona comes notice of a letter from Caldera to a colleague in the city that had been intercepted. There was no political content.
- 20) Ref. 317278, 17 September 1935: The General Consul of Australia informs the Public Security Command and the Prefect of Turin and Verona of the attitude of Caldera in Perth.
- 21) Ref. 02650, 11 October 1935: The Prefect of Turin informs the Prefect of Verona and the Public Security Command of his request to include Caldera in the list for refused entry on the Italian borders.

- 22) Telespresso 3665/375, 9 November 1936. The Italian Consul in Australia (Anzilotti) makes a report on the antifascist activity of Caldera.
- 23) Prot. 5003789, 31 January 1938: Director of the Political Police, French Section, transmits the names of the subscribers to "Giustizia and Libertà" amongst whom is the name of Caldera.
- 24) Telespresso 1554, 31 May 1938: Consul Arrigi makes a report on the professional and political activities of Caldera in Perth.

Written replies to requests for more information

- 25) Municipality of Bussoleno (26 September 2005): letter to D. Celestino with the registry office data on Ciro Caldera.
- 26) E-mail (15 July 2007) by Reader P. Ferrari of the Fremantle Hospital to D. Celestino.
- 27) E-mail (18 March 2009) by Steve Howell of the State Library of Western Australia to D. Celestino.
- 28) E-mail by Cheryl Hamill (16 and 17 July 2007) director of the library of the Fremantle Hospital to D. Celestino.
- 29) Letter by Dr Vincicarlo Palumbo son of Vincenzo (18 February 2004) to D. Celestino.
- 30) Letter by Dr Riccardo Di Pasquale to D. Celestino (5 April 2009).
- 31) Letter by the Italian General Consulate of Melbourne (28 October 2005) to D. Celestino.
- 32) Letter by the Italian Consulate of Perth (25 July 2005) to D. Celestino.
- 33) E-mail by Mr Enzo Sirna, President of the Italo-Australian Cultural Association in Perth (WA), 25 March 2009, to D. Celestino.

Published works

- 34) A.A.V.V.: Atti congressi nazionali SILOR 1892-1975.
- 35) A.A.V.V.: Bollettino delle malattie dell'orecchio del naso della gola, 1894-1931.
- 36) A.A.V.V.: Archivio italiano di Otologia, 1896-1931.
- 37) Caldera C.: Il perfezionamento dell'ORL e la sua affermazione quale branca autonoma. Prolusione al corso di Clinica ORL dell'Università di Modena. Anno acc. 1918/19. Stampato in proprio, Biella, 1920.
- 38) Caldera C.: Zamenhof: Author, Translator and Pioneer of Esperanto literature in the Australian Esperantist (Centenary issue), p. 9-11. Melbourne, 1959.
- 39) Cresciani C.: Fascismo, antifascismo e gli italiani in Australia (1922-1945). Ed. Bonacci, Roma 1972.
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- 41) Felisati D. et al.: I cento anni della ORL Italiana. Ed. Giunti, Firenze, 1992.
- 42) Garrick Ph. e Jeffery Ch.: Fremantle hospital. A social history to 1987. Ed. Fremantle Hospital, Western Australia, 1987.
- 43) Gentilli J.: Italian roots in Australian soil. Ed. Italo-Australian Welfare Centre, Marangaroo, (W.A.), 1983.
- 44) La Riccia S.: *Diritto amministrativo*, II ed., pp. 14-15, Ed. Cedam. Padova, 2006.

45) Serafini F.: Ponte di comando. Ed. Gribaudo, Milano, 2002.

46) Stubbe J.H.: Medical background being a history of Fremantle Hospital and Hospital Board, University of Western Australia Press, 1969.

47) Winterton P.: Alien doctors and the Western Australian medical fraternity. Reaction to European events. In : Health and history, n° 7/1, pp 67-84. Sydney, 2005.

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Caldera C.- Balla A.: Compendio di medicina legale Oto-rinolaringologica Testa/Biella 1916.

Caldera C.: L Ozena con speciale riguardo all'eziologia e terapia Rosenberg & Sellier/Torino 1914.

Caldera C.: Ricerche sulla fisiologia delle tonsille palatine Rosenberg & Sellier/Torino 1913.

Caldera C.: Sindrome del foro lacero posteriore legata a nevrite tossica da difterite (Estratto dagli Archivi Italiani di Laringologia, anno XLIII, Fasc. 1° e 2°) [lacking data].

Caldera C.: Sopra un nuovo caso di sindrome di Schmidt e di otite interna, postume a trauma al capo (Prof. Ciro Caldera: Incaricato dell'insegnamento di Clinica otorinolaringoiatrica della R. Università di Modena; Primario specialista dell'Ospedale Civile di Verona) [lacking data].