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The Conference *Cesare Battisti Geografo e cartografo di Frontiera*, Trento 27-29th October, 2016

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Celebrations for the 100th anniversary of First World War necessarily had to include a tribute to life and works of Cesare Battisti, an irredentist native from the Trentino area as well as prominent geographer. A pupil of Giovanni Marinelli and member of the Florentine geographic school, Battisti was executed by hanging in Trento in October 1916 as a traitor of the Hapsburg empire and supporter of the Italian army. The need for a tribute was first addressed by the conference entitled *Cesare Battisti geografo e cartografo di frontiera*, which was held in Trento on October 27-29, 2016, thanks to the initiative of the Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia (Department of Letters and Philosophy) of the Trento University and the Centro Italiano di Studi Geografici (Italian Center for Geographic Studies) in Rome.

The opening of proceedings saw representatives from all Italian geographical associations unanimously favorable to reconsider Battisti's work from a different point of view. So far, different historical contexts provided separated and sometimes counterposed interpretations of his commitment as an irredentist, a scholar of geography, a political activist as well as of his sense of belonging to the nation and the state. On the contrary, Elena Dai Prà, who supported the project, highlighted in her opening speech the scientific work carried out by Battisti and his innovative approach to the Italian geographical studies.

During the first session, focusing on *La formazione scientifica di Cesare Battisti: gli studi a Firenze, la produzione cartografica*, (Scientific education of Cesare Battisti: studying in Florence, the cartographic production), the need to examine Battisti's multifaceted activity as a whole was already palpable. Massimo Quaini talked about the "major irregularity in Italian geography", underlying the close link between his socialist but at

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the same time irredentist attitude. His scientific path was retraced by Laura Cassi, who introduced the Florentine environment, and Leonardo Rombai, who also relied on his recent work on Battisti's biography. Vincenzo Cali, a previous curator of Battisti's archive, placed emphasis on the political activity carried out in Trentino, while Massimo Rossi analyzed the debate that inspired Cesare Battisti and editor De Agostini to develop the project entitled *Guida del Trentino* (A guidebook to Trentino), which was published after his death in 1919.

The second day began with a session devoted to the geographical studies conducted by the author. Francesco Micelli provided an assessment of his activity compared to the achievements of other geographers and irredentists from Trentino, with a special focus on Ottone Brentari. Davide Bagnaresi and Sergio Zilli delivered an analysis of guidebooks written by Battisti, comparing them to the coeval literary production from the German-speaking area and the activity carried out by members of Marinelli's geographical school. The case of *Guida di Levico* (A guidebook to Levico) was described by Giuseppe Rocca, while Simonetta Conti provided an analysis of toponymy in Battisti's works.

The relationship between the writer and the geographical debate beyond the Italian borders was the focus of the third session. Pieter Judson addressed the issue of the relationship between national minorities and borders areas in the Hapsburg Empire. Marco Bellabarba placed the figure of Cesare Battisti within the national movement occurred in Trentino between the 19th and the 20th century and discussed his peculiar socialist tendencies. Kurt Scharr illustrated Battisti's geographic production from the point of view of the German-speaking area, making a distinction between Ratzel's "discovery", the new regional geography of the Trentino area and the studies in human geography, with particular reference to demographic issues. After that, a round table which saw the participation of Giuseppe Dematteis, Massimo Quaini, Vincenzo Cali, Francesco Micelli and Claudio Cerreti - as a moderator, highlighted Battisti's work at the intersection of geography and policy, as well as the necessity to discuss his life and works relying on an interdisciplinary and "European" approach.

The round table was followed by the visit, especially arranged for the participants to the conference, to the exhibition entitled *Tempi della storia, tempi dell'arte. Cesare Battisti fra Vienna e Roma, (Art and History: Cesare Battisti between Vienna and Rome)*, on display at the Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trento. Finally, the fourth and last session dealt with *issues, geographic theories and scientific disclosure* in Battisti's time. Matteo Proto and Lamberto Laureti reported on how Battisti and his peer Italian geographers addressed the issue of historical, geographical, natural and political borders. Luisa Rossi outlined with clarity and completeness ways and times of the presence and intellectual stature of Ernesta Bittanti, Cesare Battisti's wife, both before and after his death, highlighting her early role in approaching geography, the support during her husband's political activity and the safeguard of his image after his execution. Tommaso Mazzoli illustrated possible forms of research on Battisti's work

using tools of humanities computing, whilst Andrea Perrone revealed his methods of scientific disclosure, with a special focus on the magazine “La cultura geografica” (The geographic culture) co-published by Battisti and Renato Biasutti in Florence starting from 1899 – the publication was unfortunately discontinued after only 10 issues.

As a whole, the conference provided an important platform for discussion and exceeded the (limited) expectations of the organizers themselves. On the other hand, the event contributed to putting back together the many different and incomplete portraits which were made of Cesare Battisti throughout the years, thus achieving a more homogeneous description of the author as a man, geographer and politician, and with a further development within a future “interdisciplinary laboratory”, a project both organizers and local authorities attending the conference pledged to carry out.