

# World War I and the Birth of a New World Order



# World War I and the Birth of a New World Order:

*The End of an Era*

Edited by

Ioan Bolovan and Oana Mihaela Tămaş

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## INTRODUCTION

IOAN BOLOVAN AND OANA MIHAELA TĂMAȘ

In the summer of 1914, the Great Powers launched a war that proved to be the most devastating one in human history until that point, due to the large number of victims, to the multiple economic, political, demographic consequences, etc. It is not surprising that historians have given it due attention, trying to reconstruct all its implications for human evolution. The First World War was so exceptional because it was, first and foremost, the first industrialized conflict on a very large scale, the industrialization of the war adding a new dimension to the battles and generating the concept of "total war". People used mechanized weaponry, fighting became anonymous, new weapons of mass destruction were introduced for the first time (toxic gas, submarines), and the problem of supply reached unprecedented proportions. Neither party could assume a quick victory, so the war was prolonged for an extremely long period of time. More than ever, the entire nation became integrated as a fighting unit. Because the internal front became as important as the "hot" one, and the civilians ensured the economic and moral support for the soldiers and the ships, the home front also became a military target, whose breaking through continued to be a constant concern to ensure complete victory<sup>1</sup>. In recent decades, historical writing about the first great world conflagration has seen a new increase in interest due to the fact that researchers also came to concentrate on the cultural impact on the war. This began to be seen as a fundamental experience defining modern society, one which broke barriers, changed traditions, removed certainties and led to the dissolution of the great imperial powers of the time<sup>2</sup>. Jay M. Winter, a true

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Chickering, Stig Förster, eds., *Great War, Total War. Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6 sq. The dissolution of the great empires to date.

<sup>2</sup> Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4. For an analysis of the paradigm shift in approaching the First World War in universal historiography, see Jay Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. I-III (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

veteran of the renewal of universal historiography on World War I, drew attention to the fact that the state "took advantage" of the exceptional war state in order to expand its influence in all areas of domestic and community life<sup>3</sup>, and that the common people also tried to survive the pressure of war through attitudes sometimes on the edge of the traditional moral limits and of certain norms prescribed by the state and/or the church. From another point of view, the war contributed to the individual as well as the collective social disciplining, the rules of behaviour and movement of those years, of austerity and of sobriety, having modelled the character of the time and later on.

Not long ago, we marked 100 years since the end of the Great War involving many nations around the globe. Romanians from Austria-Hungary (more precisely from Transylvania and Bucovina), from Russia (Bessarabia), from a number of Balkan countries - representing at least half of the total number of Romanians - had already sacrificed goods and lives in the conflict starting from the summer of 1914. Romania (the Old Kingdom) went through two years of neutrality, but in the summer of 1916, it also entered the war on the part of the Entente for the liberation of Transylvania and Bukovina. As a result, about half of the Romanian nation, starting with 1914, and all Romanians, starting with 1916, sacrificed themselves in this war (1914-1919), paying their duty in suffering, goods and, above all, blood for the homeland and for restoring peace. Fate wanted Romania to obtain, by the will of the people and through the force of circumstances, almost everything that could be hoped for under ideal circumstances (i.e. Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania) and the country reached an area of almost 300 000 square km. The year 1918 was thus the "astral hour" of Romania and Romanians (paraphrasing the Austrian Stefan Zweig, whose book is titled "The Astral Hours of Humankind").

The Great War changed, once and for all, geopolitical borders, economic systems, social structures, technology, and mentalities. Four great empires disappeared from the world map, and new states, with new frontiers, emerged on their ruins. The political order of Europe, and of other parts of the world as well, was deeply restructured. The Great War shook the social order of the world. The aristocracy lost its dominant position, and the middle and working classes began to claim an increasingly important role in society. The enormous loss of life recorded during the war also created opportunities for the emancipation of women: access to higher education, occupations previously reserved for men,

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<sup>3</sup> Jay M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 5.

voting rights in some states of the world. The very way of waging war underwent irreversible changes - the old weapons and strategies were replaced by others, in which technology played an essential role, in which cavalry attacks were replaced by tanks, planes and submarines.

A century ago, small countries and peoples thought in terms of defending the rights of their nations, of the victorious national spirit facing the great multinational empires, of the peoples' right to self-determination, and of the formation of unitary national states. This was the spirit of fairness dominating at the time; consequently, the terrible conflict was called by the Romanians "The Great War of Reunification of the Nation". By this war, in which hundreds of thousands of Romanians died, we redeemed ourselves as a people, succeeding in gaining our dignity and the right to a middle-sized kingdom in Europe, to a country that has become the true shelter of the Romanian people.

The year 1918, with few shadows and many lights, brought not only the fulfilment of the Romanian national state but also that of other nations. We mention that in those years the disintegration of multinational empires and the emancipation of frustrated peoples were prepared, after centuries of oppression. Thus, from the Old Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian empires, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (named Yugoslavia after 1929), Romania, Austria, Hungary, Germany, and the Baltic states were born or reborn. All these fundamental changes, as the map of Europe had not seen since the Westphalian Peace (1648), were carried out according to precise rules, agreed by the international community, and then approved by the 1919 - 1920 Peace Conference in Paris. The extensive territorial and political changes that took place in the years of the war and, especially between 1918 and 1920, have two components, namely an internal and an international one. The internal component is based on the desire of the ethnic majorities (formerly considered minorities) in certain regions to live in their own states or in states inhabited by the same ethnic groups. The Romanians included in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and those in the Tsarist Empire joined the Polish, Czech, Slovak, Croatian, Serbian, Baltic, Ukrainian, etc. in this evolution without great differences or peculiarities. The Romanians organized themselves, chose their own representative bodies - political and military (of public order) - and, where possible, took over the local control over the territory. Such central representative bodies, recognized by the international community as legal, decided the fate of Bessarabia, Bucovina and Transylvania (the "Counsel of the Country" in Chişinău on 27 March / 9 April 1918, "General Congress of Bucovina" in Cernăuți, on 15/28

November 1918 and the "Great National Assembly", through the 1228 voting delegates in Alba Iulia on 18 November / 1 December 1918).

All these acts of will of the Romanian nation were then approved by the world forum recognized to do so, namely by the Peace Conference in Paris, between 1919 and 1920. The other peace conference, after the Second World War, between 1946 and 1947, again confirmed the decision made by the Romanians in 1918 and ratified in 1919-1920, except for the territorial kidnappings carried out by the Stalinist regime during and at the end of the war (northern Bucovina, Herța and Bessarabia).

We hope that this book will give the historians reading it, coming from the winning countries of 1918 but also from the defeated ones, the opportunity to analyse the historical phenomena of those years. The Romanians - most of them - were trained at that time to fight for the formation of their national state, as were the Italians, Germans, Poles, Serbs, Czechs, Slovaks, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, etc. They did not do it any better or any worse than others. In their struggle, they were neither more aware nor more enthusiastic, nor more apathetic or more reluctant than others, than their neighbours.

For Romania, the end of the war meant a huge chance to unite all the Romanian historical provinces within the borders of the same state, and to rebuild itself as a genuine regional power. The centenary of this pivotal moment for the Romanian people provides a good opportunity for a retrospective re-evaluation of this event, whose lasting effects still make themselves felt in some areas today.

In 2014, in order to celebrate the great event in the history of humankind, namely World War I, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, started an extensive programme called "Romania 100 at UBB", through which several national and international conferences were organized, which enjoyed the participation of well-known specialists from Romania and Europe. At the same time, were organized exhibitions dedicated to the Great War, workshops and, last but not least, books were published (monographs, war journals, editions of documents and collective volumes) dedicated to this event. Nothing of this would have been possible without the colossal work and devotion of a large team of World War I specialists, museographers, and scholars, who dedicated their time so that this event is properly celebrated.

The intention of the organizers was to stimulate the interest of historians in aspects such as the demographic losses due to the war (among which the institution of family occupied a central place: the repositioning of gender roles, behavioural changes, etc.), from the perspective of social and cultural history and not least, of historical

demography. The Great War was a moment of disruption not only in the demographic behaviours and practices of individuals, with immediate visible effects, as well as in the long-term evolution of the society, but also in terms of international relations, diplomacy, reorganization of the world based on the principle of nationality and democratic values. Multinational empires disappeared from and new states appeared on the world map. There were also put in place the foundations of the League of Nations and of an international system for the protection of minorities, which remained, after tracing the borders, outside the national states resulting from the 1919-1920 Paris Peace Conference. These issues were also brought to the attention of the specialists present in Cluj-Napoca, and the honest and professional dialogue between the historians and the different methodologies was the biggest gain for the participants attending the October 2018 conference. Last but not least, the presence of students and doctoral students, alongside dedicated specialists, represented an important life experience. The First World War caused mutations that were certainly much broader than those approached by the nearly one hundred historians who presented papers in the various panels or in the plenary sessions.

This book aims to enrich the readers' perspective on World War I in Eastern Europe, by bringing together contributions from authors from all over Europe, from UK to Italy to Romania and Moldova, who specialise in the history of this area. The coordinators' task to select from these papers a limited number of texts for this volume was a thankless one, certainly marked by a certain subjectivism. We tried to "privilege" a few topics that somewhat dominated the panels and debates of the conference. For this volume, the co-ordinators selected a collection of researches that together, formed a book that provides a rich and unique collection of seventeen essays, a retrospective approach, and a re-evaluation of this event, whose lasting effects still make themselves felt in some areas today. Case studies, memoirs, journals and the press of the time, are all examined to paint a vivid picture of the Great War in Eastern Europe, and particularly in Romania. The chapters of the book offer fresh perspectives on topics connected to the war, including the contribution of women and the emancipation opportunities for them, the social changes that occurred, and the propaganda of the time that took place on Romanian territory. It also reviews the League of Nations and the protection of international minorities, especially in those regions where new boundaries were created, and where the application of national self-determination still left substantial communities outside the frontiers of the respective States.

The editors chose to structure the papers in 3 chapters, trying to achieve a balanced division of studies. This collection includes new

studies about the role of women in the war (with a case-study of Queen Mary of Romania's role in the Great War) and the emancipation opportunities the war brought about for them, propaganda, press, memories, but also about the consequences of the war.

Chapter I deals with the issues of propaganda and women at war. First, Veronica de Sanctis analyses in a comparative manner the British and Italian propaganda during the First World War. As the illusion of a short conflict and rapid victory collapsed in the face of mass casualties and a military stalemate, World War I forced the mobilization of all state resources – military, economic and psychological. Victory at that time appeared to depend on winning on two fronts: the battlefield, and the hearts and minds of ordinary people. In this context, propaganda became an essential and systematic weapon working to favorably or negatively influence domestic and foreign public opinion on the reason, necessity and justice of the conflict. While propaganda addressing the home and the war fronts has been extensively studied, the author examines in a comparative approach common themes, methods and instruments used to win over the international public opinion, especially among the Allies themselves. In this context, the Italian case study – because of its alliance switch – is emblematic both for the propaganda delivered in the country by the British Government and for the activities carried out by Italians in the United Kingdom, a specific aspect of Italian propaganda not comprehensively studied yet.

Then Ernest H. Latham Jr. writes about propaganda in Germany, within the wider context of biological warfare, which caused horror and scandal in the German legation. The author recounts the recovery of explosives and materials used for biological warfare from the grounds of the German Legation in Bucharest in 1916 and their immediate incorporation into British anti-German propaganda during World War I. In the post-war period it contributed to the Geneva Protocols of 1925. The issue of biological warfare became a major concern with German rearmament after the Nazi party came to power in 1933. The conclusion of the paper recalls a conversation the author had with an American foreign correspondent discussing the effects British propaganda in World War I had on early awareness of the Nazi Holocaust.

Next, Oana Alina Smigun looks at the status of women during war, caught between propaganda, the home front, the war effort and the emerging political premises. Women's image in the collective mentality of the First World War period is torn between good and evil, between the angelic and the demonic, between the sacred and the profane. Women are the central character in most propaganda images, especially postcards and

posters. Women are present in propaganda images in real-life situations, from the loving wife and mother awaiting for her beloved soldier (or even praying for his safe return) to demi-mondaines and promiscuous ladies who can't wait for their lovers to come home from the front in a long awaited furlough. However, on the home front, women start to play a real leading role. Due to the lack of men, they worked in the factories, sometimes for lower wages and longer hours. The French "munitionettes" do this due to the need to help make ends meet by bringing the much-needed money in the household, deprived of its main income source, the man, but also in order to bring their contribution to the war effort. They plough the fields, in France as well as in Romania, their allocated tasks being all the more time consuming and wearisome since the cattle used for these activities has now been requisitioned. Moreover, some of them are courageous enough to do dangerous jobs on the front lines. They become nurses, helping to ease the pain and suffering, both physical and emotional, of all the sick and the wounded. Some of them even fight alongside men, in the trenches and in the front lines, especially on the Eastern front, in Serbia, Romania, or Russia. Deprived of their belongings, forced to work, deported, raped or even killed, women are the first victims of the occupation. Women's war effort cannot be overlooked, as well as the changes it will bring upon society after the war. More and more aware of their abilities, women will have the courage to raise their voice, to cut their hair and to shorten their dresses, shaping the future society in their yet incompletely achieved goal to replace patriarchy with absolute gender equality.

Cecilia Cârja and Ioana Mihaela Bonda further explore the role women played during the events of 1918 by looking at their involvement in the Great Union. The Assembly in Alba Iulia on December 1, 1918 confirmed and legalized the decision of the Romanian Transylvanians to unite with Romania. Organized based on democratic principles, the Assembly brought together representatives of all social and professional categories. Among the 1,228 delegates endowed with the right to vote for the union of Transylvania with Romania, there were also a significant number of women. This was their first participation in an entity with political decision prerogatives, and this was in fact the first participation of the Romanian women of Transylvania in the public life of the province. As representatives of women's associations or reunions, of grade school teachers or students, they went to Alba Iulia with the purpose of expressing their decisive vote for the accomplishment of the national ideal. Their participation in this historical event can be regarded also as a stage of major importance for obtaining suffrage, which happened 20 years later,

through the Constitution of 1938. Beside their participation in the Assembly, in this paper the authors also outline a few career paths of some of the participants, before 1918 and then in Great Romania.

The next paper explores the role played by the highest-ranked Romanian woman, namely Queen Marie of Romania. Ioana Nicoleta Găurean looks at the role played by the Romanian Queen. Throughout the Great War, Queen Marie of Romania has been an ardent supporter of the Allied cause. Nonetheless, the manner in which her unwavering loyalty affected her position in Romania varied according to the phases of the war. During the Romanian neutrality years, Queen Marie's influence grew steadily as she was actively involved in drawing her country nearer to the Allies. Once Romania entered the war, she relentlessly supported the war efforts through medical activities, charity works, publications, propaganda, and even direct involvement in the processes of political and military decision making. In all these spheres of activity, 1917 has been Queen Marie's year "in power". However, the Bolshevik Revolution ended the war on the Eastern Front, and Romania was constrained to conclude a separate peace with the Central Powers. Unwilling to have his name and his party involved with the separate peace negotiations and treaty, Queen Marie's political ally, Prime Minister I.C. Brătianu, resigned. As the new government was led by General Alexandru Averescu, a hero of the Romanian Army, the Queen hoped Romania would still opt for armed resistance. However, General Averescu's opinion was that regardless of how great the military effort and cost would be, Romania had no real prospect of succeeding. Thus, the Queen's idealistic desires of resistance collided with the General's realistic military calculations. At the dawn of 1918, the fervour with which Queen Marie believed in the final victory of the Entente was no longer compatible with the official position of the Romanian Government. One by one, the Queen's former political and military allies ceased supporting her war efforts. Left without other options, Queen Marie became a strong voice of the opposition and thus sought to actively boycott, and in several occasions to even hinder, the activity of the Romanian Government. This article will focus on the relationship Queen Marie had with the Romanian factors of political and military power in 1918.

The second chapter addresses aspects of war in the press of the time as well as in the memoirs written at a later time. First, Ioana Dăncilă Ineocan's paper looks at the way in which the memory of the war of 1848 was resurrected during the 1918 revolution in Transylvania. At the end of the war, in Transylvania, a region belonging to Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, a spectacular turn of highly politically-effervescent events took

place, wherein multiple scenarios were considered, and various competing national projects violently intersected. This turmoil of late 1918 was interpreted at the time, but also later, as a mark of a revolution. The transition of status, in the case of such a multiethnic area, involved a series of inherent crises in terms of political positioning and re-positioning in a context which was still particularly unstable, both externally and internally. Dăncilă Ineoan's paper investigates the means by which this power change happened in the region, exploring especially a historical parallelism intensely circulated at that time - 1848/1918. The resurrection of some themes of the revolution of 1848 in the discourse of the revolution of 1918 and the articulation of these past memories with highly motivating value for the community represents an interesting cultural frame on the movements that took place in Transylvania at the end of the Great War.

Andrei Emilciuc then analyses the formation of anti-Romanian rhetoric in the Bolshevik press during the Focșani Armistice (27 November (10 December) 1917 – 24 April (7 May) 1918). The author looks at the causes imputed by the Bolshevik press organs, so as to motivate the hostile position taken towards Romania by the Soviet Government from the very beginning of its establishment. As the Bolsheviks took over the Russian army's official press organs, they suffered not only a shift in the title, but also in the attitude towards Romania, which was still formally an ally. One of the main causes, presented with much pathos, was the participation of Romanian soldiers in the suppression of the Bolshevik movement within the Russian army on the Romanian front. The meetings of the revolutionary committees set up on the Romanian front and their decisions directed against the "crimes of the Romanian generals" are constantly reproduced. Another imputed cause concerns purely political considerations, coming in the spirit of the propaganda for the export of the revolution, and of defending the people "oppressed by the Romanian ruling class". Finally, strong points of accusation are the imputed covert signing of a separate peace treaty with the Central Powers and the entry of the Romanian troops in Chișinău in January 1918. During the interwar period, these motives, born during the period of establishment of the Bolshevik regime, would become clichés of the Soviet foreign policy discourse.

The next paper concerns religious aspects in the memorial works from Bistrița-Năsăud County about First World War. Iuliu-Marius Morariu uses memorial works from Bistrița-Năsăud County dedicated to the First World War (in Transylvania they were the only sources that could not be censored by Austro-Hungarian authorities and, because of this fact, they constitute a very important source in understanding the universe of war,

the atmosphere of the battlefield but also the main feelings that the Romanian soldiers had) in order to try and understand how the war reflected the religious feeling and how religion is reflected in their memorial notes. He used works dedicated to this topic by other researchers from the historiographical area and also memorial sources written by people coming from the Bistrița-Năsăud Department like the Anchidim Șoldea, the leader of the 301st Honved Regiment, corporal Vasile Măgherușan, journalist Gustav Zikeli and others. He also addresses how the evolution of the front influenced their religious feelings, intensifying or diminishing them, and also presents the role of religion for people who write memorial works about First World War without being an active part of the battle. Being a piece of qualitative research that investigates the sources from this area from the aforementioned space, this article not only brings to attention an aspect of research that has not been investigated enough until today, but also tries to present a deeper aspect of it, namely the religious one.

In the next paper, Ion Gumenâi and Lidia Prisac look at the situation of the Armenians from Bessarabia, who were caught between separation and unity in the context of the Great Union. The Great Union was the main event in the context of the political project for the building of the Romanian national unitary state. The issue should be seen in the light of the fact that Romania, after the First World War, embraced within its borders very different regions with a completely non homogeneous population, including in this respect a significant variety of ethnic or ethno-confessional minorities whose number grew from the 8% of the Old Kingdom's population to 28% of the population of the new Romania. Establishing a unitary regime for all national minorities within Greater Romania became one of their most stringent priorities in asserting territorial unity. Until now, however, the totality of the ethnic communities of Bessarabia, for example, have reacted differently to having to fit within the limits of the new Romanian national state. This paper refers to the situation and attitude of the Armenian community in Bessarabia before and after the 1st of December 1918, which will be largely analyzed on the basis of archive documents. In relation to the rest of the ethnic communities, the Armenian community of Bessarabia was to adapt to new socioeconomic circumstances, on the one hand, and to confessional ones on the other.

Raluca Tomi captures the manner in which the simple people perceived the transformations of the Romanian society between 1916 and 1920. Her analysis is based on the original documents in the Iorga Archives. In the paper, the author captures the dilemmas of the generation

of the trenches about: Romania's entry into war on the part of the Entente or Central Powers, the way to accomplish a Great Romania, opinions on the implementation of the structural reforms, the position towards the Bolshevik Revolution, the way in which the Romanian administration was perceived in Bessarabia, Transylvania, Banat etc. Scattered in libraries and archive funds, the Iorga Archive is a source of knowledge of the history of Romanian society at the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Whoever reads the pages of the documents discovers a huge volume of: correspondence (with senders from all social categories), official documents of the Romanian state during the Iorga cabinet, draft laws, laws, programs and invitations to various scientific and cultural events, photographs, press, business cards, posters, cartoons etc. These documents are added to invaluable manuscripts, which testify to the toil, the creative joy of the scientist, for whom the living breath of the past influenced the present and made sense to the future. The letters of ordinary people are important echoes of everyday life, the correspondence in which palpitate all the little destinies, which together make up the features of a generation.

Sergiu Musteață writes about the way in which the Great War was presented in the history textbooks of the Republic of Moldova. Generally, the end of the First World War, the destruction of the multinational empires and the creation of new nation states, has been and is being interpreted as a paradigmatic and positive turning point in history. Empires and monarchies perceived as oppressive and socially and ideologically backward were replaced by progressive societies where women got a right to vote, national self-determination became a reality and parties suppressed hitherto could freely function and agitate. This general attitude was severely contested by a number of more or less influential intellectuals.

The third chapter of this book explored the consequences of the war in the new Eastern Europe. Pasquale Fornaro writes about two proposals for a solution to the nationalities question in central Europe against the background of the World War I. The question of nationalities aspiring to their full self-determination was a very complex knot to untie, before the outbreak of the First World War, for the governments of the multinational Empires and for the European diplomacies. The problem was particularly serious in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where the *Ausgleich* of 1867 ended up becoming a summit agreement between the two dominant nations. This provided a basis for the birth and development of nationalist movements that radicalized their positions over the years, until the time when the beginning of the war brought these movements, and individuals

too, faced with a choice of sides which, in most cases, turned into a sharp separation of these "silent" alien nationalities from their ancient loyalism. In this context not a small number of intellectuals and politicians, critical consciences of the anachronistic structures of a State power linked to the supremacy of a dominant nation, played in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a peaceful but strongly critical action against the persistence of that ideology. An important intellectual contribution, among them, was offered by two thinkers belonging to this Austro-Hungarian world in crisis: the Jewish-Hungarian radical sociologist Oszkár Jászi, and the Czech philosopher and politician Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the future founder of the Czechoslovak State in October 1918.

Then Marc Stegherr looks at the post-WWI order and its conservative critics. Generally, the end of the First World War, the destruction of the multinational empires and the creation of new nation states, was and is being interpreted as a paradigmatic and positive turning point in history. Richard Count Coudenhove-Kalergi or Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn condemned the new era as the start of the end, as a decline of Europe into the abyss of racial hatred, nationalism, atheism and pseudo-scientism. The philosophical interpretation was complemented by literary ones, written by Stefan Zweig or Joseph Roth. While enthusiasm abounded on the republican side, in all the countries of the former Habsburg Empire, a small but intellectually productive counter-interpretation of the new era emerged, which was in due course rejected as reactionary and out of touch.

Giuseppe Motta addresses the status of minorities following the conclusion of World War I. The new settlement of Eastern European frontiers and the birth of the League of Nations represented the beginning of a new era, when, for the first in time in history, peace and diplomatic cooperation were in the hands of an international organization. The League's activity also included the protection of international minorities, especially in those regions where new boundaries were created and where the application of national self-determination still left substantial communities outside the frontiers of the respective States. The analysis of the League's actions for the protection of minorities shows at the same time the deep connection found between the troublesome atmosphere of interwar Europe and the problems affecting the international security system, the internal problems of the new national-States and the controversies jeopardizing the stability of international relations. The minorities were the legacy of the old order and a serious problem conditioning the success of the new one: the victims of peace who were soon to become the victims of a new tragic conflict.

Alessandro Vagnini's paper focuses on the diplomatic route to Albania's independence. The end of WWI for most of Europe did not mean a return to a state of peace. For what it concerns Albania, the situation on the ground seemed rather confusing despite the presence of Italian occupation forces. The occupation of the country was in fact reserved for Italy, the only exception being Shkodër, for which international administration was envisaged. Despite this, Serbian troops were already established in the north, a fact that eventually led to some incidents and presaged further problems with the Yugoslavs. Moreover, the various factions in Albania were initially unable to agree on the future of their country. By 1920, a widespread conflict and the progressive opposition to the Italians led eventually to open a clash and the recognition of Albania's independence, which however for many years would be threatened by neighboring countries. This paper intends to explore the stages of the formation of an Albanian independent government in the period between 1919 and 1920, focusing in particular on the role of the main diplomatic actors, both at a bilateral level and at the Paris Peace Conference, where the conflicting ambitions of Great and Smaller Powers so often clashed with each other.

Alex Marshall addresses in his paper the New World Order that was coagulating in the aftermath of World War One. The historiography of the First World War and its consequences continues to grow. Among the biggest questions around the subject remains its impact on the international system in general and the issues and problems it both raised and posed not only for peacemaking, but for international regulation and global governance as well. Recent anniversaries of the end of the war, the centenary celebrations of independence of a number of post-war states, and events to mark the hundredth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, have also revived debate about both the true nature of the war, and its longer-term consequences. These debates have moved beyond the linkages between the First World War and the outbreak of World War Two and are now also closely intensely interlinked with debates about the nature of world order and European affairs today. This paper aims to offer an overview of the recent debate on both the era and the interwar period in general.

Francesco Guida offers a tally of the Great War, by looking at its successes and failures. The author in his historiographic approach shows us how it is not a certainty that the Great War marked the victory of the nation state everywhere. The political actors at the Paris Peace Conferences understood very well that the states that formed after the end of the multinational empires did not always correspond to the real

dwelling limits of the individual peoples. The spirit of other people was hurt by the decisions made in Paris, as is clear in the case of Bulgaria and Hungary. The victory of the nation-state was not absolute in many respects. For this, but not only, the inter-war decades were characterized by significant international tensions and, as a result, led to a resumption of pacifism and supranational projects that had already been launched in the 19th and early 20th centuries. At the same time, other aspects must be taken into consideration: like all wars, the global conflict encouraged some productions meant to support the war efforts of the belligerent countries; but the damage, the destruction, the blocking of other productive activities, as well as the "loss of work force", sacrificed on the battlefields, were impressive. Some countries took several years to reach their pre-war production quotas and at the same time tried to modernize their production facilities, and consequently their society. It is well known that the crisis of 1929 stopped this virtuous development.

In 2019, many post-war states celebrate their independence, alongside the anniversary of the end of the war.

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**CHAPTER I:**  
**PROPAGANDA, AND WOMEN ON WAR**

## CHAPTER I.1

# BRITISH AND ITALIAN PROPAGANDA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY (1914-1918)

VERONICA DE SANCTIS

### Introduction

At the outbreak of the war, Germany was the only belligerent power which had considered the importance of propaganda for warfare before 1914, and developed a full propaganda machinery. France and Great Britain, instead, entered into the conflict with nothing that could be described as an official propaganda department. Despite this, they immediately understood the importance of propaganda and established their own propaganda bureaux. Later on, once the United States entered the conflict, they developed a massive strategy, inspired by Woodrow Wilson, combining advertising techniques with psychology to create all sorts of propaganda. The Italian Government, instead, lagged behind its allies, especially in developing and implementing instruments designed to project its image abroad<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, George Creel, *How We Advertised America, The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanization to Every Corner of the Globe* (New York-London: Harper & Brothers, 1920); Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Pressepolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1968); Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971); Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American, and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); J. Michael Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy. The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Aviel Roshwald, Richard Stites, eds., *European Culture in the Great War. The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jane F. Fulcher, "Concert and political propaganda in France in the early twentieth century," Trans. Marie-Pierre Gaviano, *Annals, History, Social*

Of the major Allied powers, Great Britain's first concern was with maintaining military secrecy and security during wartime. From the beginning of the war until the end of 1916, the projection of the British image overseas was under the *News Department* of the *Foreign Office*, which favored the diffusion of news related to British foreign policy through the cooperation of the diplomatic network, as well as the support of local committees consisting of English expatriates. Dealing exclusively with propaganda was, instead, a secret *War Propaganda Bureau*, better known as the *Wellington House*, directed by the intellectual and politician Charles F.G. Masterman, which became the central organization for propaganda abroad both in neutral and allied countries. Its secrecy was essential in order to disguise from the public opinion of neutral countries the fact that the massive bulk of paper material they were receiving from Britain about the war – pamphlets, leaflets, cartoons, and even the news itself – was emanating from the *Wellington House*. Moreover, the British campaign adopted a low-key and highly selective approach based upon persuasion rather than exhortation, primarily addressing sympathetic foreigners, particularly those in influential positions in government, business, education, and the media, according to the principle "it is better to influence those who can influence others than attempt a direct appeal to the mass of the population". The Bureau was divided into four geographic sections, among which Italy had its own<sup>2</sup>.

At the beginning of 1917, a new *Department of Information* was set up, under John Buchan, to better coordinate and centralize propaganda activity abroad. By 1918, the British propaganda organization was at its most complex. A *Ministry of Information* was created in February 1918 under Lord Beaverbrook, to deal with propaganda in allied and neutral countries while the *Department of Enemy Propaganda* was formed at

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*Sciences Indiana University*, 55th year, 2 (2000): 389-413; Olivier Forcade, "Information, Censorship et Propaganda," in *Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre, 1914-1918: histoire et culture*, eds., Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Jean-Jacques Becker (Paris: Bayard, 2004); Lisa Mastrangelo, "World War I, Public Intellectuals, and the Four Minute Men: Convergent Ideals of Public Speaking and Civic Participation," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, XII, no. 4 (2009): 607-633; David Welch, *Germany and Propaganda in the World War I: Pacifism, Mobilization and Total War* (London: Tauris, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> See among others: Gary S. Messinger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Michael L. Sanders, Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War, 1914-1918* (London-Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1982); Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

*Crew House* under Lord Northcliffe to assess enemy countries and front lines.

In addressing propaganda among the allied countries, the focus will go particularly on Great Britain and Italy. British propaganda abroad has been studied with particular relevance to the action undertaken to influence the United States. Italian propaganda abroad, instead, in spite of the latest remarkable contributions, still remains an understudied topic by comparison to those related to belligerent societies. Moreover, due to its alliance switch, the Italian case is emblematic. Therefore, this paper intends to investigate, with a comparative approach, both British propaganda in Italy and Italian propaganda in the United Kingdom in order to determine a relation between these two campaigns of psychological warfare.

### **British Propaganda in Italy**

At the beginning of the war, Italy's manpower resources and its influential position with other neutral nations made it a valuable potential ally to both the Central Powers and the Entente<sup>3</sup>. Conducting propaganda in Italy first meant countering German persuasion and propaganda. In neutral countries, such as Italy, German propaganda was quite pervasive and German legations provided monetary assistance and encouragement to newspapers sympathetic to their views and even printed their own, such as the "Concordia" and "La Vittoria" newspapers in Rome<sup>4</sup>.

The Italian declaration of war on Austria-Hungary, on 24 May 1915, did not cease the need for Allied propaganda in the country, but rather changed its nature<sup>5</sup>. It was needed to inform Italians more about the moral urgency of intervening in the war on the side of the Entente and of the exact motivations about why their government had broken away from the traditional Triple Alliance with Austria-Hungary and Germany. Therefore,

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<sup>3</sup> William A. Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword: Italy's neutrality and entrance into the Great War 1914-1915* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 155.

<sup>4</sup> Christina Loong, "TCBH Duncan Tanner Essay Prize Winner 2011 «Victory Will Be With Us»: British Propaganda and Imperial Duty in Florence during the First World War," *Twentieth Century British History*, XXIII, no. 3 (2012): 311–335, 329. For Anglo-Italian relations see among others Enrico Serra, Christopher Seton-Watson, ed., *Inghilterra nell'età dell'imperialismo* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1990); Richard Bosworth, *Italy and the wider world 1860-1960* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Luca Riccardi, *Alleati non amici. Le relazioni politiche tra l'Italia e l'Intesa durante la prima guerra mondiale* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Italy enter the war after the signing of the Treaty of London (April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1915).

the goal was mainly to convince as many Italians as possible of the justice of the British and Allied cause and the injustice of the enemy's, thus of the inevitability of Allied victory. This aim was not easy to pursue, due to the fact that Italy was deeply divided by the war and that if most Italians were anti-Austrian, few were anti-German. Indeed, Germans could have claimed to have tight cultural and commercial relations with Italy. For that reason, British propaganda in Italy concentrated on exposing Germany's responsibility for the war and its brutality in conducting it. A recurrent theme in this regard was the favoring of Latin civilization over Austro-German barbarism as in the case of leaflets such as *L'ultima atrocità tedesca*, which provides a good example of how news stories highlighting the barbarity of the Germans were used in order to win the sympathies of the Italian people. Moreover, a significant effort was put into publicizing the magnitude of Britain's war effort in response to pro-German leaflets and newspapers, which tried to persuade Italians of the futility of the Allied cause, as well as to instill a fear that the British Government was fighting a purely selfish, mercantile war in order to destroy its commercial rival, Germany; and was deliberately withholding coal from Italy and not contributing as fully as it could have, in order to help its allies. On this point, much of the most effective propaganda was constituted by the simple facts and figures of the size, achievements and sacrifices of the British army and navy, and of its contribution towards meeting Italy's needs in coal, wheat and shipping<sup>6</sup>.

In general, British overseas propaganda avoided being overt, and Italy made no exception. The diplomatic repercussion which might result from official British interference in foreign opinion, combined with the desire to avoid imitating the counter-productive methods of German propagandists, led *Wellington House* and its propaganda agents in Italy to operate beneath a cloak of intense secrecy and to obfuscate the origin of its propaganda materials which were often printed by local Italians acting under the direction of an agent of the British embassy<sup>7</sup>. By using local agents as much as possible, and by ensuring that any involvement of foreigners in the production of such materials was kept secret, British propagandists ensured that the origin of their work appeared to be the spontaneous efforts of like-minded Italians, rather than the result of foreign attempts in

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<sup>6</sup> Christina Loong, "*A Cultured English Public in Italy: Expatriates, cultural propaganda and the British Institute of Florence, 1900 to 1940*", Ph.D. thesis (Department of History: University of Sydney, 2012), 141-143.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Seton-Watson, "British Propaganda in Italy 1914-1918," *Inghilterra e Italia nel Novecento: atti del Convegno di Bagni di Lucca*, October 1972 (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1973), 119-128.

interfering with Italian opinion. They would, thereby, present more credible information and persuasive arguments than the Austrians and Germans. Among the Italians who wrote effective pieces of British propaganda were Mario Brosa's *Che cosa fanno gli inglesi* (1915), and Gino Calza Bedolo's *L'esercito inglese di un milione di uomini è pronto alla suprema battaglia* (1915). The British Ambassador in Rome, Sir Rennel Rodd, believed that outstanding individuals were the proper agents of British propaganda work in Italy. It was the opinion of the propagandists, following the example of Masterman at *Wellington House*, that cultivating a healthy support for the Allied cause was best done through Italians sympathetic to Britain, rather than by British speakers or literature. Principal propaganda methods consisted of a plethora of pamphlets, leaflets and lecture tours that featured Italian speakers touring the peninsula promoting the Allied cause. These speakers encouraged antagonism towards Austria, the traditional foe of the Italian people, and Germany over the violation of Belgium's neutrality and attacks against civilians, and also hinted that Italy would find itself losing out on valuable territories when peace was negotiated if it remained neutral. Therefore, it was important that Allied propaganda did not simply present British participation in the war but related it to the Italian experience and how it affected Anglo-Italian relations<sup>8</sup>.

During 1915 and 1916, British propaganda in Italy was under the *News Department* of the *Foreign Office* and a specific section of *Wellington House*. The Ambassador took personal charge of the propaganda mission in Rome and used his personal relationship with Italian diplomats to state the case for the Allies. Rodd coordinated the work of the secretary of the British-American Archaeological Society of Rome, an Italian with strong British sympathies, Pietro Santamaria, who translated and printed suitable material and distributed it mainly through the *biblioteche popolari*. Despite the diplomatic representatives' involvement, local committees, such as *The British-Italian League* made up of English expatriates, proved to be essential. As Philip M. Taylor has argued, the *News Department* concerned itself more with the dissemination of facts and statistics rather than leaflets or pamphlets while the production and development of propaganda material was left to local anglophiles and British residents<sup>9</sup>. In Milan and Northern Italy, these functions were performed by Donna Bettina della Valle di Casanova and her team of women who worked directly under the Ambassador. They organized the production, importing

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<sup>8</sup> Christina Loong, "A Cultured English Public in Italy," 123.

<sup>9</sup> Philip M. Taylor, "The Foreign Office and British Propaganda during the First World War," *Historical Journal*, XXIII, no. 4 (1980): 875-98, 877-78.

and distribution of books, pamphlets and leaflets, as well as lectures. Personal contacts were a common feature of all British propaganda agents working in Italy, and it seems highly probable that they were chosen for the quality of the people they knew, in addition to their ability to oversee the distribution of material<sup>10</sup>.

Among these agents, remarkable work was done by Lina Waterfield, the niece of Janet Ross, and Edward Hutton, author of travel books covering nearly the whole of the Italian peninsula, who was sent to Italy on a special mission by the permanent undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Eyre Crowe<sup>11</sup>. They had to deal with a particular hostile environment in Tuscany and Central Italy, as Florence and the rest of the region were regarded as a stronghold of neutral and pro-German sympathy, where the whole action and work of England was misunderstood and anti-Allied sentiment and propaganda were, and would remain, worryingly high during the course of the conflict. British propagandists in Tuscany thus went further than just informing Italians of the aims of the war and reassuring them that Britain was fully committed to the war effort. It aimed at raising awareness about Britain as a nation that possesses cultural links with Italy stretching back to its support of the Risorgimento. Lecture tours provided an insight into the culture of Britain, shed light on a country that many Italians knew little about. In line with this strategy, in Florence, a remarkable initiative was the establishment of the British Institute which can be seen as a natural extension of this mission to raise the profile of British ideas and culture<sup>12</sup>.

When a new *Department of Information* was set up, with John Buchan as its head, propaganda in Italy became more systematic and professional. In May 1917, Algar Thorold was appointed Director of Propaganda and worked in Rome in close touch with the British Embassy, supervising and extending all Italian propaganda activities. One of the major developments in 1917 was the foundation of Italo-British Institutes in Milan, Florence

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<sup>10</sup> Christina Loong, "A Cultured English Public in Italy"., 135.

<sup>11</sup> On Lina Waterfield, see Lina, Duff Gordon, *Castle in Italy: an autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1962). Hutton remained in Florence for nearly two years and eventually, owing to the antagonistic feelings he had raised amongst the propagandists in Florence, he was recalled to London where he undertook Italian propaganda. On Edward Hutton, see: Dennis Rhodes, *The Writings of Edward Hutton: a Bibliographical Tribute Compiled and Presented to Edward Hutton on His 80th. Birthday* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1955); David Platzer, "Edward Hutton," *Apollo* (1996): 40-43; E. Hutton, *Fragments of an Autobiography* (Florence: British Institute Archives).

<sup>12</sup> On the origin of the British Institute, see Christina Loong, "A Cultured English Public in Italy," 149-160.

and Rome. The Milan Institute was no more than an extension of the work of Donna Bettina, who redoubled her efforts after Caporetto. The Institute was the center from which British propaganda was imported and written, translated and distributed to Italians of all classes. The institute consisted of a propaganda bureau and a reading room where British residents and soldiers on leave could read newspapers and socialize. Indeed, the institute in Milan did its work so well that another Anglo-Italian reading room was set up in Rome not long after, followed by others in Genoa and Naples<sup>13</sup>. Instead, the British Institute in Florence had a different nature, founded by a group of English and Italian men and women, including Artur Acton, Aubrey Waterfield, Edward Hutton, Herbert Trench, G.M. Trevelyan along with Guido Biagi, Gaetano Salvemini and Aldo Sorani, with the support of Algar Thorold on behalf of the British Government. By his advice, Arthur Francis Spender was summoned to direct the Institute, but Mrs Waterfield, as managing secretary, was, from the beginning, the driving force behind it. The Institute was formally opened with a ceremony on 27 December 1917. It was very different in nature and purpose from the first of the British cultural institutes to operate overseas and served as a model for the establishment of the British Council in 1934. Its chief objectives were to strengthen the intellectual links between England and Italy, to encourage the study of the English language and literature, and to make the many-sided English life known to the Italian public. The Institute started to work fully in the spring of 1918, and was formally opened in June of the same year by the British Ambassador to Rome. In his speech to the civil and military authorities of the city, the Ambassador emphasized the importance of the new institution, its permanence and its independence from the merely temporary work of political propaganda during the war. The Institute was designed to promote intellectual relations between the two countries, diffuse the knowledge of English and of the most important social and economic problems of the British Empire and offer a permanent meeting place for English and Italian scholars<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> On the results of British and German propaganda in Italy, and in Rome in particular, and on suggestions for increasing the efficiency of British work in Italy, see War Cabinet Press Advisory Committee. *Propaganda in Italy*. Report by Capitan Martin Donohoe, January 9th, 1918. FO 395/175, The National Archives: Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew.

<sup>14</sup> The Institute served as the prototype for the British Institutes which were later to be founded by the British Council in various parts of the world. Ian Greenlees, *The British Institute: Its origin and History* (Florence: Tipografia Giuntina, 1979), 6.