

Chapter 12

**ITALIAN MEMORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY,
AND WORLD WAR I**

1914–2019

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The Great War played a central role in the construction of Italian public memory, for two main reasons. On the one hand, it was considered from the outset as the final act of the Risorgimento, since the war had finally succeeded in making the natural boundaries of the peninsula coincide with its political borders. On the other hand, the war also marked the start of a new phase of history, thanks to the prestige and new international standing that victory had brought to Italy.

Even after interest in the political and diplomatic events that had made it possible to achieve these two fundamental results had dissipated between the 1950s and 1960s, attention to this period never disappeared. Rather, following the realization that the unique feature of the Great War was its total mobilization of the available human and material resources—and that for precisely this reason it was a true “test-bed of humanity” from a social, cultural, political, and institutional point of view—the years between 1915 and 1918 inevitably also became a fundamental “historiographical laboratory.”¹

Italian Memories of the *Grande Guerra* 1918–2018

The celebration of 4 November 1918, the day when the armistice with Austria-Hungary came into force, is the only date that has been kept through all phases of Italian history from 1918 onward. The occasion was proclaimed a national holiday and Victory Day in October 1922. It retained this role under fascism, though in a subordinate position with respect to 28 October (the anniversary of the March on Rome); it reclaimed its central status immediately after the fall of the dictatorship, and shortly thereafter was included in the republic's calendar as the Day of National Unity.

The fact that the Victory Day celebrations were only formalized in 1922, however, was because the fierce arguments that had broken out between 1914 and 1915 among those for and against intervention in the war erupted again even more violently after its conclusion. On the one hand, the socialists, influenced by the myth of the Bolshevik revolution, launched a violent attack on the bourgeois institutions, accusing them of having led the working classes of all of Europe to the “slaughterhouse.” On the other, the nationalists and the fascists claimed for themselves the merits of having brought the country to war, having struggled to keep it united during its ordeal, and, therefore, having led it to victory. In the middle, so to speak, were the liberals, who, while considering themselves the true drivers of the success achieved, could not compete with the nationalists and fascists on the symbolic use of the war. In part to prevent the victory celebrations becoming an opportunity for the latter to legitimize themselves, Francesco Saverio Nitti's liberal government decided in 1919 to postpone the celebration and to avoid holding public ceremonies. The first anniversary thus passed in the silence of Italy's institutions and in the conflict between opposing visions of what the war had meant for the country.

However, in the face of the pressure exerted by many liberal-led local administrations committed to celebrating the victory independently, and as a response to the success of the Socialists in the 1919 elections, a major event was organized on 4 November 1920 in Rome. The ceremony was held in the presence of the king in Piazza Venezia and on the Vittoriano, which on this occasion was renamed the “Altar of the Fatherland.”²

Having thus paved the way, the same day of the following year saw the grand ceremony culminating in the burial, again in the Altar of the Fatherland, of the remains of the Unknown Soldier. This was the most significant effort on the part of the liberal ruling class to construct a “religion of the fatherland” based on popular support and alternative to that of the fascists. In the following year, just weeks before the March on Rome, the Anniversary of Victory was finally instituted.

After the fascists came to power, the celebration, though maintaining an important role, was overshadowed by 28 October. The militarization and fascistization of the ceremonies, with fascist “martyrs” being equated to the soldiers who had died in combat, were completed during the 1930s, when, not coincidentally, even the King’s presence became increasingly sporadic or silent.³

Since the alleged continuity with the Great War and the Victory nonetheless represented one of the most powerful instruments for the legitimization of fascism, the regime devoted enormous energy to its “sanctification.” Indeed, even before, no one had wished to forget. Not even those who, like the socialists, railed against the deaths and destruction caused by the war. In those areas where the party was most strongly established, socialist administrations inaugurated monuments and plaques that, while commemorating the fallen, condemned their “pointless” sacrifice.⁴ But this effort to construct a countermemory of the war was doomed to failure: inscriptions and monuments were quickly prohibited and removed by the prefects, who did not intend to allow the fatherland to be “denigrated.” Those that remained were removed under fascism. The latter, incidentally, in line with fascism’s vitalist and warmongering vision, did not spare harsh criticism for the representations (typical of the Catholic figurative tradition) of mourning mothers, wounded soldiers, or dying combatants slumped to the ground that still today characterize many of these memorials.⁵

The effort to celebrate the Great War as the event that regenerated the country drove fascism to embark upon an intensive project—developed especially since the tenth anniversary of the victory—to design and construct war cemeteries, celebratory monuments, and remembrance parks in which school pupils planted a tree for every local soldier who had not returned home. In towns, local governments, veterans’ associations, or individuals constructed monuments in memory of the fallen, but the birth of the great military cemeteries was concentrated on the battlefields and was the work of the state.

These shrines, vigorously promoted by the Duce himself, were the place where the long-forgotten virtues Italians were supposed to have rediscovered during the conflict were celebrated: heroism, discipline, self-sacrifice, voluntary subordination to the needs of the nation. But they were also the place to remind everyone that the fallen had not “disappeared” but were still present in the memory and life of the nation itself. Italy would not forget those who had shed their blood for her, as clearly shown, even today, by the word “present” repeated over and over again on the stepped tombs of the cemetery of Redipuglia in the province of Gorizia. The work to recover the remains and to construct a genuine sacred path

to be followed on a sort of pilgrimage—with about forty stations, comprising shrines, monuments and cemeteries—was completed only at the end of the 1930s.⁶

The Great War continued to occupy a prominent place even after Mussolini's arrest on 25 July 1943, albeit with very different political motivations. For the antifascists, 4 November was from the outset the date used to legitimize the fight against Nazi-Fascist despotism through the memory of what the Italians had achieved against the authoritarianism of the Central Empires.

In 1944, in recently liberated Rome and in the presence of both the various branches of the military and representatives of the partisan movement, the Bonomi government thus resumed celebrating the anniversary on the Altar of the Fatherland. To connect the war of 1915–18 to the patriotism that was now to guide Italians in their struggle against the German invader, it was decided that the orphan of a partisan would lead a blind veteran of World War I. Furthermore, the official speech was delivered by the 1918 prime minister, the President of Victory, Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, while Bonomi spoke in the evening on the radio.⁷

This link between past and present was facilitated by the fact that the reformist socialist Ivanoe Bonomi had been a staunch interventionist in 1914–15 and later head of the government that in 1921 had organized the transfer of the remains of the Unknown Soldier to the Altar of the Fatherland. This was clearly an attempt to legitimize the new state emerging from the ruins of the totalitarian regime, on the basis of continuity, after the fascist interlude, with liberal Italy. This theory was espoused forcefully at the time in some writings by the philosopher Benedetto Croce.⁸

But there were other objectives as well: first, to remind a country demoralized by military defeats—invaded by two foreign armies at war with one another (the Anglo-American and German armies), bewildered and wounded by the massive bombings of its cities—of its capacity for resistance, crowned by the success of Vittorio Veneto. And, second, to establish a contrast between the fascist war—immediately described as not wanted but suffered by the Italians—and that of the nation, fought by the whole country as a single man between 1915 and 1918.

Since then, the latter perspective has dominated. Not coincidentally, while the protagonists, places, and battles of World War II were rapidly forgotten, 4 November continued to be celebrated until the mid-1970s not just in barracks and in the streets but also in schools, which continued to teach the songs composed and sung between 1915 and 1918. Even on the local level, traces of the Great War have remained strong, as is evident even today in every town of the peninsula, both in the names of

squares, streets, and public parks and in the presence of a monument, or at least a plaque, commemorating the names of the fallen.

However, shortly afterward, the tensions of the Cold War began to be felt. The partisan movement, in which the communists had had a significant weight, disappeared from the national celebrations of the war, which focused increasingly on the central role of the armed forces and the re-consecration of the monuments, plaques, remembrance parks, shrines, and war cemeteries that fascism had for twenty years identified with its own history.

Indeed, as noted by Maurizio Ridolfi, ever since the late 1940s, official celebrations began to equate the “fallen of all wars” and thus to place plaques listing the dead of 1940–45 alongside those commemorating the fallen of 1915–18. While this was intended to marginalize the political motivations that had inspired that choice, by celebrating the sacrifice made at the cost of one’s own life, another objective was also to initiate a process of pacification to overcome the ideological disputes that had torn the country from the advent of fascism onward.

In any case, as had already been the case after World War I, alternative and conflicting memories rapidly emerged alongside the official memory of the Great War. The Cold War and the failure to assign the city of Trieste to Italy until 1954, for example, fed the dispute between those who, like the governing parties, used the patriotism linked to 4 November to demand acknowledgment of the Friulan city’s Italian identity and those who, like the communists, distrusting everything they knew about nationalism, preferred instead to take this as an opportunity to express their revulsion against past wars.⁹

Within this context, the institutional calendar of national holidays was established in 1949. And while 4 November was proclaimed the “Day of National Unity,” it was to be understood, as became clear as the years passed, above all as the Day of the Armed Forces. This link, or more accurately this identification of nation and army that had emerged during the Great War and that had also been celebrated by fascism, thus returned to the forefront. However, in contrast to the twenty-year dictatorship of Mussolini, the central role of the military was now accompanied by a growing involvement of civilians through the opening, on 4 November, of barracks to the public, visits to air force bases and naval vessels, pilgrimages to monuments and cemeteries, the participation of school groups, concerts held by military bands in city squares, sporting competitions, the opportunity for families to host conscripts for lunch, and much more. The 1950s and 1960s were perhaps the period of greatest participation in this national holiday.

Furthermore, at the end of the decade, the Order of Vittorio Veneto was instituted to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war, assigning the title of knight and a gold medal to veterans, alongside an annuity to those who had obtained the cross of merit and had completed at least six months of military service between 1915 and 1918 or in previous wars. 1968 also saw the creation, at the behest of Prime Minister Giovanni Leone, of a National committee for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the victory, whose results did not, however, live up to expectations. These years, indeed, as we shall see later, saw the emergence of a gradually widening gap between the memory of the war passed on by institutions and the image that, thanks in part to the renewal of research and the growth of the student protest movement, was spreading in large sectors of the general public.¹⁰

The development of a militant antifascist mass movement among the young, which characterized the country from the early 1960s onward, made the central role still played by the army in the celebrations increasingly less acceptable, and even more so the rhetoric equating the “fallen of all wars.” How could one place the Great War wanted by the “bourgeoisie,” those unleashed by fascism, and the “people’s” war of the partisan movement on the same level? Not coincidentally, in the 1970s, 4 November also became an opportunity to hold demonstrations demanding the institution of conscientious objection to military service. In this political climate, and due in part to the economic and social crisis sweeping the country, 4 November was downgraded in 1977 to a non-holiday, and the celebrations were moved to the first Sunday of the month.

However, there were also some positive developments. In these same years, the election of Sandro Pertini, a reserve officer in World War I and later an antifascist leader and partisan in the World War II, as president of the republic in 1978 helped to render possible the gradual reconciliation of left-wing political forces with the celebrations and their definitive recognition of the Great War as a milestone in Italian history, symbolically connecting the Risorgimento to the resistance.

This reconciliation accelerated in the 1990s thanks to two connected factors: first, the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the consequent change of name of the Communist Party and the end of the ideological conflicts that had accompanied its history. Second, the need to defend those political mainstays that had hitherto protected the democratic system from the criticisms unleashed after the election of parties falling outside the spectrum of forces that had founded the republic: the postfascist Alleanza Nazionale, Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, and the Lega Nord of Umberto Bossi.

In addition, the need to present a front that was as united as possible with respect to the accelerating process of European unification and the commitment to countering the secessionist ambitions of the Lega Nord conferred unprecedented importance on the issue of national identity, whose weakness has always been considered one of Italy's main vulnerabilities. For substantial swathes of the general public, the mainstream press, the intellectual world, and, albeit in a more contradictory manner, the larger political parties, the construction of a more pacified collective memory thus began to seem a pressing need.

Indeed, the heated controversies typical of recent decades have slowly but progressively faded away. In this context, a fundamental role was played by the efforts of recent presidents of the republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and Giorgio Napolitano. They devoted many of their efforts to making the symbols and anniversaries related to the achievement of national unity and the establishment of democracy shared reference points. In this regard, their successor, Sergio Mattarella, who had been elected president of the republic in 2015, alluded quite extensively to the Great War, although with a more marked attention to the reality experienced by combatants and civilians, a reality very "different, at the proof of the facts," to the "bright dream of glory," the myth of victory, upheld by intellectuals and poets in the months before the entry into war. "We must not be afraid of the truth—he added in his speech on the occasion of the centenary of Italy's entry into the conflict—without truth, without historical research, memory would be doomed to pale. And the celebrations would risk becoming a vain rhetorical exercise."¹¹

Today, some national holidays, such as Liberation Day (25 April 1945) and that of the republic (2 June 1946), still mobilize large numbers of people, while 4 November, though recovering with respect to the period of the late 1970s and 1980s, has a more modest appeal. Yet not only has 4 November once again become a symbolic and ritual anniversary for the whole country, but the Vittoriano, closed in 1969 after one of the attacks presaging the "strategy of tension" of the following decade, was reopened to the public in 2000 in part as a venue for cultural events. The Altar of the Fatherland, which forms part of the monument, has since become the stage for the majority of state commemorations, during which it has also become customary to hear "La Canzone del Piave" again.

The approval of Law No. 78 in 2001 was also indicative of that trend, insofar as it insisted, as its first paragraph stated, on "the historical and cultural value of the remains of the First World War."¹² More recently (and arguably more importantly), the rediscovery of World War I was demonstrated by the hundreds upon hundreds of local and regional initiatives organized across Italy from 2014 to 2018. These included, among

other things, numerous school projects whose objective was to rediscover the World War I-related cultural heritage at the local level or to collect (and eventually to put on the internet) letters or other documents of the pupils' families during the war. Quite an important activity was also the restoration of various monuments and memorials throughout the country. Nine thousand monuments to the fallen were recensed and catalogued by another project, whose database is now available on the website of the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione.¹³ Last but not least, there were different civil society initiatives aiming at promoting the memory of the Great War and developing a culture of peace.¹⁴ Overall, it seems that the rediscovery of the memory of the *Grande Guerra* in the last years has been accompanied by a rather consensual interpretation of the war as a catastrophe and that the wounds opened by opposing and conflicting visions of the Great War have been overcome.

Historiography of World War I

Early Historiography

We have seen that the conflict, from its conclusion, was immediately interpreted as the point at which Italy finally succeeded in redeeming itself from a past of servitude and decadence. In other words, thanks to World War I, or, rather, the Fourth War of Independence after those of 1848–49, 1859, and 1866, the geographical, political, and above all moral unification of the country had finally been achieved.

This reading of the war was given official expression from the start, as early as 1915, with the work to collect testimonies and historical documents, including the diaries and letters of soldiers, organized by the National Committee for the History of the Risorgimento.¹⁵ There were also several attempts to write an immediate, spur-of-the-moment history (or more accurately chronicle) of the present day; this was true, for example, of the *Storia della Grande Guerra d'Italia*, published in twenty-four volumes between 1916 and 1921.¹⁶ At the same time, the fact that after the war Italy could be considered one of the world's major military powers appeared to be a confirmation that another milestone had also been reached, that envisioned by the nationalist movement in the early twentieth century: the goal of a "Greater Italy," in other words a nation finally capable of regaining its rightful place among the great nations.¹⁷

There were thus two different coexisting narratives on the role played by World War I in Italian national history: the nationalist and antiliberal narrative of fascism and that linked to the liberal Risorgimento tradition. The former, as is known, made the conflict one of its most potent founding

myths, as the source of legitimacy of a new ruling class made up of the men who had fought in the trenches. However, one might argue that the two narratives shared in essence the same patriotic glorification of the war.

To be sure, this shared ground had been defined, on the level of politics before that of historiography, even before Italy entered the war. During the so-called “radiant days” of May 1915, the complex galaxy of groups supporting Italy’s intervention in the war—uniting people of very different political faiths: syndicalists and revolutionary socialists, anarchists, republicans, radicals, reformist socialists, nationalists, liberals, and even sectors of the Catholic world—joined in noisy and sometimes violent demonstrations in the streets of Rome and other major cities, with the aim of countering the neutralism of parliament and dragging the country into war. At the very same time, patriotic motivations (to unify Italy and liberate the “unredeemed” brothers, still under the Austrian yoke) were combined and confused with the desire to win for the country a leading role on the international stage.

In the dramatic days of the “radiant May,” anyone who dared to express disagreement with participation in the conflict—like the majority of the socialists, the liberal followers of Giovanni Giolitti, and most Catholics—was painted by the interventionist minority as a traitor who had sold out to foreigners, an enemy, a “defeatist.”¹⁸ After the war, the fascist regime institutionalized, so to speak, this criminalization of the neutralist movement, particularly by attacking the socialists.

Yet before this nationalistic-patriotic vision came to dominate unquestioned, there was a time when the possibility of telling the story of the conflict outside—or rather, against—its myth emerged. This was the immediate postwar period and in particular the summer of 1919, when a strong wave of popular protests against high inflation aggravated a general strike in solidarity with revolutionary Russia. In these weeks, socialist propaganda abandoned the cautious approach of the Partito socialista italiano between 1915 and 1918, and unleashed fierce attacks on the myth of the patriotic war, now seen as a conflict wanted by the bourgeoisie to curb the gradual emancipation of workers and enrich the “possessing classes” at the workers’ expense.

This controversy was compounded by the publication of the Committee of Inquiry on Caporetto, commissioned by parliament to investigate the causes of the disaster. Made public in August 1919, the report revealed the enormous responsibility of the military command, and especially of the supreme commander, Luigi Cadorna, with respect to the strategic mismanagement of the conflict. By underestimating the human price to be paid, the high-command had continued to consider mass assaults as possible means to victory. Furthermore, it had created a system based

solely on repression and the serious underestimation of a strategic element: winning the support of soldiers as a powerful individual and collective motivational factor.¹⁹

The investigation's findings momentarily gave new force to the criticisms of those who had opposed Italy's entry into the war: the Catholics and above all the socialists. At the same time, however, and in reaction, it also increased the anger of those who had viewed the conflict as an opportunity to rebuild the country and who saw, in its denigration, the triumph of antinationalist forces. The latter were thus charged with first having boycotted the war effort and then of aiming to destroy that sense of unity that the sacrifices, deaths, and victory had finally succeeded in creating in Italy.

At the same time, strong criticisms of the dominant view of the conflict also emerged among Giolitti's supporters. The latter, moreover, who had seen parliament (where they held strong positions) being systematically bypassed by the executive branch during the war years, had an interest in investigating the role and influence of the liberal-conservative parties (which had pushed for Italy's entry into the war) on the conduct of the war and the government.

However, popular protests and the fear that a Bolshevik-style revolutionary movement might break out in Italy as well rapidly quelled internal differences within the bourgeois forces.²⁰ As a consequence, all critical views were shelved and replaced by a hagiographic and celebratory vision, with the aim of making 1915–18 the “shared ideological background” to which all Italians were to refer. The twenty years of fascism saw the definitive consolidation of the stereotype of the Great War as the “patriotic war” by definition and, at the same time, as a war inspired by a desire for the “rightful” recognition of the role that Italy aspired to play on the international stage.

This stereotype began to be questioned only during the 1960s, when “critical” historiography, born at this point, started off from the conclusions of the commission's final report to dismantle the sugarcoated version of the “patriotic war” that had hitherto dominated unchallenged.

The Postwar Period and Fascism

After the end of the war, in Italy as elsewhere, there was a flood of publications, mostly of an essentially hagiographic and celebratory nature. These were more interesting from the point of view of the birth, consolidation, and dissemination of the myth of the war than from that of historical analysis. At any rate, from the early 1920s, studies focused almost exclusively on the events and on military aspects. Political issues,

by contrast, were examined essentially as a background to the conduct of the war.²¹

Indeed, though it is true that military history was traditionally kept separate from political history, it was mainly the atmosphere, the lacerations of the postwar period, and subsequently the coming to power of fascism that rendered a complex and nuanced reconstruction of Italian political life between 1914 and 1918 impossible. The works most attentive to the contradictions within the ruling class and the political parties written in these decades were published only after the fall of the dictatorship. This is true of the works of Luigi Albertini, until 1925 editor of *Corriere della Sera*; Olindo Malagodi, editor until 1923 of the Giolittian *La Tribuna*; and Sidney Sonnino, foreign minister from 1914 to 1919.²²

In the 1920s, all those aspects that had aroused bitter controversy in the war years were thus quickly set aside. Censorship, and more often self-censorship, also affected the new editions of the most famous memoirs published immediately after the war; these were harshly critical of both the conduct of the war by politicians and the military High Command, and of its distorted narration by the press. Their gritty realism, denouncing the absurd massacres of young soldiers in futile frontal assaults against the enemy trenches, the appalling lack of hygiene and inhumane lives of combatants, were toned down and not infrequently deleted from the reprints of the late 1920s and 1930s.²³ As Mussolini clarified, in response to a request of General Angelo Gatti, who wanted to write a work on Caporetto, "It was not time for history, but for myths."²⁴

The most significant exception to this tendency to neglect political issues was the writings of the former chief of staff, Luigi Cadorna, who had been dismissed as a direct consequence of the precipitous retreat of Caporetto in October 1917. In his most important books, published in the first half of the 1920s, there continued to be room for criticisms of "defeatists" and governments, incapable, in his opinion, of running the country with the necessary firmness and therefore responsible for Italy's temporary defeat.²⁵

The freedom to criticize enjoyed by the "generalissimo," a freedom denied to others, was probably made possible by two factors: the enormous prestige that, despite everything, he continued to enjoy until his death (Mussolini appointed him, along with Diaz, "Marshal of Italy" in November 1924 in order to pacify the memory of the war and erase all controversy, as well as to secure the support of the army), and the desire, shared by large sectors of the army, to shift onto others all blame for a defeat (Caporetto) that had brought Italy to the brink of surrender.

In any case, the impossibility of escaping the stereotype of the world war as the completion of national unity and as the re-conquest of a prom-

inent place on the international stage made it impossible to tackle the appalling conditions experienced by soldiers at the front. Even historians of an antifascist bent—to whom the regime, more self-confident, granted some freedoms in the 1930s—such as General Roberto Bencivenga or Adolfo Omodeo, shared the same attitude.²⁶ The actual war experience tended thus to be disregarded by historians, who left this aspect of the war to those who had lived through it.²⁷

Even the investigation of Italian foreign policy remained sketchy, given both the considerable political weight that discussions of this kind would have had in a fascist regime extremely sensitive to such issues and because it was hampered by the failure to publish collections of diplomatic documents, as many other countries had done. Indeed, the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remained only partly accessible—and to few scholars—for decades: until the mid-1970s, the only volume of diplomatic documents published was that relating to the period from May to October 1915.

In the field of economic history, the situation was entirely different, given the publication in Italy too of a series of studies sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation, directed by the prestigious figure of Luigi Einaudi and involving the participation of leading Italian scholars and experts on this topic.²⁸ Again, however, the impressive collection of data and analyses that long led to these works being considered a useful starting point for the various areas covered was accompanied by an overall interpretation of the years of conflict that did not challenge the official view of a war fed by the patriotic efforts of the entire country.

The Aftermath of World War II

Naturally, after the fall of the fascist regime, only the latter of these two dominant interpretations—the Great War as a war waged to consolidate the Italian position in the international system or as a “patriotic war”—could be used as a powerful historical example in the attempt to educate Italians in nationhood.²⁹

The myth of the patriotic war, as shown by the identification of 4 November as a national historic date, thus continued to survive, though in a profoundly changed context. This continuity was certainly encouraged by several factors: first, the very limited purge of former fascists after the fall of the dictatorship, directed at leading figures in the institutions, the army, the judiciary, and the public administration, including schools and universities; and second, the need for antifascist political forces—who were ideologically deeply divided—to find an area of common ground. This common ground was Italy’s unitary tradition and thus the Risorgi-

mento, as tellingly shown by the nickname “second Risorgimento” given to the war of resistance against the Republic of Salò and its Nazi allies.

As concerns research topics, these initially focused particularly on two fundamental issues: the period leading up to the “rebirth,” in other words the resistances and uncertainties encountered in the months during which Italy had remained neutral, between August 1914 and May 1915; and the consequences of the conflict, namely the milestones reached and its frustrated hopes (the “mutilated Victory” according to Gabriele D’Annunzio’s famous expression). This was encouraged by the publication of many of the major protagonists’ memoirs of the years between 1914 and 1918. Besides those already mentioned, by Albertini, Malagodi, and Sonnino, those by Vittorio Emanuele Orlando and Ferdinando Martini, minister of the colonies until 1917, also appeared.³⁰

One topic that attracted immediate attention was the oscillation of Italian foreign policy in the early months of neutrality. Indeed, for the second time since 1914–15, Italy was, in 1943, again accused of having “waltzed over” to the other side. These new studies claimed that a key reason for this was that Austria-Hungary, supported by Germany, had ensured to Italy at least their benevolent neutrality—too little and too late.³¹ A few years later, a major study by Alberto Monticone reconstructed the widespread attempts by Germany to bribe politicians and the editors of Italian newspapers to support her cause.³² Similar attempts were made by France, aimed especially at Mussolini and his *Il Popolo d’Italia*, as already demonstrated by the first volume of Renzo de Felice’s biography of the future fascist leader.³³

From the mid-1950s, however, new topics began to emerge, and some scholars showed how strong and deep were the breaks between the Italy of the Risorgimento and that of the second decade of the twentieth century. Despite the rhetoric of the official celebrations and the customary image of the “patriotic war” imparted by school textbooks,³⁴ within a few years the idea of the “fourth war of independence” began to be seriously challenged.

This point of view, espoused by Alberto Caracciolo³⁵ among others, was also indebted to some insightful considerations developed by Palmiro Togliatti, the secretary of the Communist Party, in his 1950 essay “Discorso su Giolitti.” Here Togliatti pointed out that Giolitti’s defeat of 1915 was caused not merely by “the incoherent shouting of demagogic intellectuals and amateur politicians who have lost their heads” but by an Italy different from that of 1900: the “Italy of the great industrialists nourished by protective tariffs and government contracts, producers of battleships and merchants of cannons, the imperialist Italy” whose “imperialist appetite” had been stimulated by the Libyan war.³⁶ In this context, it has

been argued, not without oversimplification, that Italian heavy industry and finance had considered territorial and commercial expansion via the war as the most reliable guarantee of a rapid and powerful development of Italian capitalism. This was the true origin of the crisis and later of the collapse of the Giolittian system.

Even the Pact of London was interpreted along these lines, given the need for big business in the financial and industrial sectors to conquer areas of influence sufficient to fuel its growth, but not too far from home, given the still limited development of the country. The problem was taken up again in the following decades in part by analyzing the strong influence that some industries—like steel and automotive—and some lenders—like the Banca di Sconto—exerted on political parties and institutions, both in pushing them into the war and during its progress.³⁷ The focus on “interests” as the dominant factor, or rather as the root cause of the conflict, thus took the place of the focus on patriotic “ideals.”

Another issue brought to light by the historiography of this period, already stressed by fascist journalism, was the relationship between the “radiant days” of May 1915 and the political climate prevailing in the country between 1919 and 1922. Leading the way was Luigi Salvatorelli in a famous essay published in 1950, which spoke of a “first” coup, that of May 1915, and a “second” coup with the March on Rome in October of 1922.³⁸

In the 1960s and 1970s, thanks also to the possibility of finally consulting the historical archives, this new interpretation of the war was developed and revised. The works of Brunello Vigezzi, for example, showed that these two viewpoints—the patriotic war versus the war to consolidate Italian influence—were not mutually exclusive but overlapping.³⁹ The scholar stressed that the expansionist aspirations of much of the ruling class coexisted with the patriotic and Risorgimento education imparted in the kingdom’s schools. This education had a profound effect on the behavior of combatants during the conflict.

Nonetheless, the image of the “fourth war of independence” was abandoned, in part because its basic premise was a belief that the vast majority of Italians had been hostile to Austria-Hungary. This was definitely disproved by the studies undertaken from the 1960s onward. In addition, an important document tracked down by historians only in the late 1950s and that strongly conditioned later historiography showed clearly that the ruling class had been aware that most Italians did not want the country to enter the war. The reports sent by prefects to Prime Minister Antonio Salandra in response to his circular of 12 April 1915 had evidenced that neutralism was absolutely dominant in the peninsula.⁴⁰

Indeed, one might say that precisely this awareness of being a small minority isolated from the rest of the nation had made a crucial contribu-

tion to radicalizing the positions of interventionists and heightening their contempt for a country “sick” with poor self-awareness and indifferent to this important opportunity that history had once again given Italy to help shape the present and the future of the continent. It was hardly a coincidence that these reports remained buried for forty years in a drawer and that Salandra himself made no mention of them in his own memoirs.⁴¹

Starting from these new facts, it became something of a historiographical commonplace to insist on the conservative project that drove large sectors of the ruling class to see the war as an opportunity for an “authoritarian” turn of the liberal state, in order to create a “Prussian-type power bloc” capable of putting a brake on parliament and giving the king back his central role. In this vein, scholars thus began to give new weight to domestic political motivations as fundamental in pushing Italy to enter the war.⁴² Earlier than in other countries, where the image of a national war still dominated, Italian historiography thus began the process of freeing itself from interpretations of 1914–18 based on the myth of the “people’s war.” Like all myths, it had contributed significantly to hampering historical analysis.

New studies demonstrated that the ways in which the decision to go to war was made—a highly elitist and minority decision with respect to dominant sentiment in Italy—influenced the conduct of the war itself. The evident distance of the ruling classes from the common people heavily conditioned both the methods of combat and the relation, wholly hierarchical and authoritarian, between officers and their troops.

Finally, in 1964, the publication of General Angelo Gatti’s war diary brought to light, with its vivid descriptions, the mutinies, summary executions, and decimations of soldiers, together with the uncertainties and confusion of the military commanders, a reality that was known but had hitherto generally been considered marginal.⁴³ From then onward, rather than the celebration of the unanimous support for the conflict, scholars began to stress also (and often above all) the expressions of dissent and insubordination by soldiers and, with them, the repressive and coercive policies implemented by the military commands to prevail over the common people, at once idealized—through the infantryman-peasant stereotype—and feared as unpatriotic. Of these masses, obedience and discipline were expected, but also, paradoxically, disobedience and rebellion if anyone showed reluctance to resort to the iron fist at the smallest signs of resistance to the commands of the elites.⁴⁴

This new historiography, which emerged alongside the wave of student protests in the late 1960s, brought to light the seriousness of the delay with which the ruling classes had become aware of the need to actively integrate the common people into the state. Indeed, it was only after the

defeat of Caporetto, in the autumn of 1917, that a new type of authoritarianism appeared, a “reformist neo-authoritarianism” with a very specific purpose: to weld together “the nation and the people in a politically authoritarian and socially reformist framework.”⁴⁵

As Forcella and Monticone showed in open contradiction with the “liberal-risorgimental” interpretation of the war, there were 100,000 trials for draft dodging during the war, 340,000 trials for offenses committed under arms, and 60,000 trials of civilians for military offenses. In addition, between 1915 and 1918, Italy’s Supreme Military Court, in an army of over 5 million men, issued 4,028 death sentences, almost 3,000 of which were given out in absentia and just over 1,000 in the presence of the accused. Of these, as many as 750, and thus about 75 percent, were actually executed. In Italy 15,345 life sentences were handed down, 15,096 of which for desertion. Furthermore, alone among the warring countries, Italy gave permanent authorization to officers not just to carry out summary shootings, in other words without any trial, but even decimation if it proved impossible to identify precisely those responsible for serious crimes.

More recent studies on these issues have revealed that, despite the imprecision of the figures, given the interest of the commands in concealing these episodes, decimations and on-the-spot shootings led to approximately 300 deaths that need thus to be added to the abovementioned 750 executions.⁴⁶ In any case, we might also include machine-gunning and bombing to stop fleeing troops or those who had disbanded before the enemy among the summary executions, and this would significantly raise the total number of deaths.

Cadorna’s rigidly offensive strategy, resulting in the continuous repetition of frontal attacks, was thus interpreted as having been dictated by specific political requirements: firstly, the “imperialist” character of the war, which rendered a radically offensive conduct necessary to conquer territorial objectives (especially Trieste, which would have opened the doors of the Balkans, a goal also pursued by the expeditions to Thessaloniki and Albania) to crown the expansionist dreams of that part of Italy’s ruling class that had wished the country to participate in the conflict. Secondly, there was a belief that only major military victories would strengthen the anti-Giolittian power block and definitively marginalize the Piedmontese statesman. The latter, indeed, was still an essential reference point for parties that remained neutralist or in any case favorable to a separate peace that would take Italy out of a war that was proving more and more expensive in human and economic terms, and was increasingly destabilizing both socially and politically.⁴⁷

The year before the publication of *Plotone d’esecuzione*, another work had already appeared that attempted to investigate, albeit indirectly, the

true reality experienced by soldiers: *I vinti di Caporetto*. The book collected the memoirs of officers in direct contact with the troops to reconstruct aspects that had hitherto been excluded from the history books: the explosion of protests, attempted mutinies, episodes of insubordination, and all the other forms of dissent that the documentation presented made it possible to track down (self-harm, songs of protest, fraternizing with the enemy, the spread of draft dodging and desertion, etc.). The editor of the anthology was interested in collecting the echoes “of the mute dissent and practically helpless anguish of the subaltern masses forced into the war.”⁴⁸ Additionally, these studies led to the questioning of another dominant stereotype: namely, that the mass of combatants, mainly peasant-soldiers, was passive and resigned but ready to obey, like children, if guided with the necessary firmness by those with the skills to do so.

The prospect of broadening the analysis from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom was also achieved thanks to an innovative overview of those years, *Storia politica della Grande guerra 1914–1918*, by Piero Melograni. Here, the scholar examined the extraneity to the war not only of the peasant world, as was now generally accepted, but even of those urban contexts that had nonetheless seen numerous noisy interventionist demonstrations in May 1915. Political history was thus transformed from a history of parties and elites into one of civil society in all its various expressions: the peasants at the front and the workers in the factories, the High Commands and junior officers, the front line and the rearguard, large cities and small villages. This despite the conviction, expressed in this work, that the hold on the Piave until the final victory at Vittorio Veneto showed that their distance from the masses was eventually overcome and metabolized by the institutions,⁴⁹ a claim with which critical historiography in no way agreed.

The studies by Forcella and Monticone, like that by Melograni, revived interest in the military dimension, which the fall of fascism had generally marginalized in research. But the start of the youth protest again drew attention away from this sphere in favor of political, social and cultural history.⁵⁰

Another important step taken in those years was a later work by Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande Guerra: Da Marinetti a Malaparte*. Here, using war literature as a historical source, the scholar in many ways anticipated the approach taken by a text of great international success like that of Paul Fussell, published some years later. Furthermore, attempting to identify the complex interplay between the different images of the war and the expectations invested in it between the early years of the twentieth century and the end of the conflict, he began to define the outlines of that

“generation of 1914,” launched as a historiographical category at the end of the decade by Robert Wohl.⁵¹

Analyzing magazines, writings, diaries, and accounts of the war by more or less well-known intellectuals, many of whom participated in the war, Isnenghi reconstructed the myth of the war in all its different facets: the war-as-medicine, as a means of healing a country that was sick because it lacked the necessary social cohesion to become great; the war-as-party of the Futurists; the regenerative war-as-ascent of those who dreamed of building, through conflict, a nation free of individualism, materialism, and selfishness; the war-as-order, needed to restore vigor to a fragmented country and ensure the emergence of a new anti-Giolittian and anti-socialist ruling class; the war-as-cataclysm, to be accepted as a natural disaster; and the war-as-integration, as a tool for broadening the foundations of the state through the direct participation of the peasant masses in the life of the country.⁵²

To illustrate the link that the new generation of historians was beginning to cultivate with new trends in international historiography, we could mention a third book by Isnenghi, *Giornali di trincea*, where we see the influence of the debate on the “nationalization of the masses” sparked by George L. Mosse in the mid-1970s. Also evident was the connection with the debate, closely tied to the Italian context, over support for fascism, which had erupted after the publication in 1975 of a famous book-interview by Renzo De Felice.⁵³ Indeed, in his study Isnenghi dwelled precisely on the attempt, especially after Caporetto, to impart a “national education” to the combatants using the instruments of mass culture.⁵⁴

The specificity of the Italian historiographical debate over support or dissent, the integration into the state or the extraneity to it on the part of the masses, lay primarily in two factors: the negative judgment pronounced on the effective capacity of the ruling class to reach and influence the common people, except through force and repression, and the emphasis on the latter’s cultural “autonomy” from the establishment. Moreover, these were the years when the study of the “lower classes” was gaining increasing space on the international level, a space that in Italy was also conditioned by the strong theoretical influence exerted by the workerism of Mario Tronti and Toni Negri on the circles of the so-called New Left.

Indeed, workerism placed the notion of the “autonomy” of the working class at the center of its analyses. Glorifying “autonomy” and with it class “spontaneity” was equivalent to affirming that the working classes were bearers of needs, values, and behaviors alternative to those of the dominant classes, and that these needs, values, and behaviors had never found effective political representation, not even in socialist parties and trade

unions.⁵⁵ The new field of investigation for historians at this time thus became the dialectics between the complex system of social control put in place by the ruling classes and the masses, never fully tamed but always ready to find new ways of expressing their disadvantages and extraneity to the dominant system.

In conclusion, this new attention to leadership from below—supported in the field of history not just by notions derived from studies of the French Revolution but also by the enormous popularity in Italy of the works of Michel Foucault, Eric J. Hobsbawm, and Edward Thompson—led historians to see the so-called “lower classes” as a subject and no longer an object of history.⁵⁶ The main subject of history now no longer consisted of the ruling classes or the elites but of the “lower classes,” just as the focus of analysis was no longer political history but social history. This perspective was also legitimated and furthered by the publication of the monumental *Storia d'Italia* by the Einaudi press in the early 1970s. This work evidenced the strong influence that the historiography of the “Annales” was beginning to exert on Italian historiography: political history lost its central role to the advantage of “material history,” social history, and the study of the “collective sensibility.”⁵⁷

Naturally, this generalized renewal of Italian historiography also extended to the analysis of 1915–18. The “home front” gradually became one of the favored fields of investigation.⁵⁸ While the total mobilization that took place between 1915 and 1918 represented the true focus of the historiographical renewal of these years, the analysis naturally extended to the role of the state in the economic management of the war.

After Paolo Spriano’s pioneering 1960 study of working-class Turin, research on these issues had gradually petered out.⁵⁹ Thanks to this new trend, however, light was shed on the appalling conditions in which workers had found themselves, with decreasing real wages, the intensification of production rates and longer working hours, the control over factories entrusted to the military, the resulting ban on strikes and all other forms of protest, and the equation of abandonment of the workplace with desertion. In 1978, however, a major conference held in Vittorio Veneto, one of the cities symbolizing the conflict, strove to go beyond what was now emerging as the “historiography of dissent” and attempt to keep together two aspects that were tending to diverge: the quest for support on the part of the ruling classes (by identifying appropriate instruments and mediators, such as parish priests, army chaplains, committees for civic assistance, the cinema) and the forms—explicit or, more often, masked and silent—of dissent on the part of the working classes. The subtitle of the book collecting the conference proceedings was explicit from this point of view: “Materials for the analysis of social insubordination and national

education.” Here, social history became the focus of attention, but starting from a wholly political question: how had a minority managed to drag into the war that majority of Italians who, although initially opposed to it, had nevertheless accepted it and fought?⁶⁰ And indeed, the state was again studied also in terms of its capacity for control and mediation. This new line of inquiry was also reinforced, as we have already seen, by the influence of the studies that appeared in these years on the issue of support during the fascist regime.⁶¹

This conference represented an important turning point because the topics tackled here resumed a discussion that had begun in the previous decade but broadened it, setting the stage for historiographical research in the following years.⁶² The important achievement of these studies was the destruction of another founding myth of the historiography on the war: that army and country had undergone two fundamentally different and unconnected experiences. Indeed, antisocialist propaganda during the war first and later that of the fascists had significantly exploited the contrast between peasant-soldiers, sent off to war, and workers-shirkers, who had remained safe at a distance from the front and on top of that enjoyed rising wages. This contrast was long taken for granted and thus accepted.

Yet the historiography of these years identified the central role of the repressive element both in the army and among workers as the specific feature of Italian industrial mobilization compared to that of other countries. The ample discretionary powers entrusted to local authorities in the management of public security and the complete freedom left to industrialists in managing the technical aspects and accounts of their factories were considered the most important legacy that the war had left to the fascist regime.⁶³ However, we should not forget that restrictions in factories on civil and political rights were also accompanied by an expansion of some forms of social protection, with the establishment, for example, of bodies to mediate between industrialists and workers or the intervention of the state in overseeing health and hygiene (albeit at a minimal level). This was because the ruling class realized that a purely authoritarian management of the home front did not suffice to achieve its main aims: effective control over the working class and the necessary increase in productivity.⁶⁴

As we know, however, things were very different on the military front. Indeed, one of the most significant results of this meeting of political history and social history was Giovanna Procacci’s work on Italian soldiers in enemy internment camps.⁶⁵ Her book revealed a completely forgotten story: the fate of Italian prisoners, of whom about one hundred thousand had died in internment or labor camps in Eastern Europe and the Otto-

man Empire. Moreover, it showed that the main causes of their deaths were not injuries sustained in battle but disease. The most frequent diseases, along with tuberculosis, were those caused by malnutrition and a lack of suitable clothing.

The Italian government had refused to arrange for food and clothing to be sent to their prisoners and even rejected the help offered in this respect by France and Great Britain. Officially, the foreign minister Sidney Sonnino—strongly supported by the Supreme Command—had stated that government provision of assistance would have worsened the already compromised state budget and allowed the enemy to appropriate the basic necessities lacking in their territory. But the true reason for this choice was entirely different: Sonnino, obsessed like many in the ruling class with the idea of soldiers “running away” because of their lack of patriotism, wished to prevent the spread of the belief that, all things considered, life in prison camps was satisfactory and without the dangers of combat. Were this to happen, it was in his opinion inevitable that mass desertion would follow. And in any case, anyone who had been taken prisoner had essentially surrendered, and should thus be punished for it. For these reasons, which remained concealed for more than seventy years, the fate of Italian prisoners became something unheard of, or, in the words of the scholar, “a genuine instance of collective extermination.”⁶⁶

Within this general renewal of Italian historiography, which had found and would continue to find space in journals such as *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, *Italia contemporanea*, and *Movimento operaio e socialista*, a second crucial development was the conference held in 1985 in Rovereto, another city symbolic of the conflict. This conference marked a clear shift from the themes, by and large still dominant, of the relationships between social classes, the world of production, and material living conditions to the more interdisciplinary topic of the “history of mentalities,” to use a French expression that became extremely popular in Italy in the 1980s. Again, the themes identified by the title were clear—experience, memory, images—and evidenced the importance for the conference program of two texts published in the United States a few years earlier but which had only recently been translated into Italian: that by Fussell, mentioned above, and that by Eric J. Leed, *No Man’s Land*.⁶⁷ Both authors also attended the conference.

Their presence indicated the commitment of Italian historians to engaging more decisively, from a methodological point of view, with the social sciences and to take into account the experiences of other countries and other military fronts. Already in a 1983 conference the debate was extended—with respect to the workers and the role of the state in regulating industrial conflicts—to the experiences of Austria, Germany,

and Great Britain.⁶⁸ However, it was above all Leed's influence that urged them to broaden their approach to include anthropological issues, such as identity and the imaginary.

The general historical context also encouraged this transformation and accelerated the expansion of horizons beyond more specifically political and ideological themes. It suffices to think of the accelerating path toward European unification and the gradual fading of the Cold War. This allowed for a more pacified view—that is, less tied to the memory of nationalism and the ideological and military conflict—of those difficult years and, at the same time, encouraged an increasingly broad comparative approach, as indicated by the presence of European and American scholars at the conference. However, other factors also had an impact, such as the significant cultural changes that had taken place in Italy with the end of the decade-plus-long phase of protest that began in the 1960s and the simultaneous arrival of neoliberal policies that had appeared, between the late 1970s and early 1980s, in Great Britain and the United States. These policies also took hold in Italy—through the new central role taken on the political scene by Bettino Craxi's Socialist Party—albeit in a version whose impact was felt much more on culture and the media than on economics.

This triggered a profound reformulation of the historiographical agenda that encouraged the emergence of issues more connected to the significant development of the communications society at this time. These were immaterial issues, so to speak, relating to the use and meaning of symbols, myths, and rituals, in other words issues that, despite having already penetrated the Italian debate at least since the mid-1970s, had not yet been given adequate space in the field of research.

Thus, the 1985 conference represented and simultaneously encouraged a significant broadening of perspectives. It marked the emergence of new topics (memory, leisure time, the relationship with pain, fear, sexuality, death, and madness), new sources (oral, medical, and psychiatric; monuments and cemeteries; letters and songs; cinema, theater, and photography), and new protagonists (no longer the great collective subjects like the state, the nation, social classes and political parties, but rather women, young people, and children). These new perspectives were extremely rich, and held together by a clear thread: the link between war and subjectivity. Once placed at the forefront of historical analysis, this led to the exhaustive collection and publication of letters, diaries, and memoirs by soldiers, civilians, priests, refugees, and internees.⁶⁹

The new unearthed documents and new studies made it possible to overcome a belief that had persisted for decades: that the liberal state had demonstrated substantial inadequacy in the understanding and thus in

the management of modern techniques of communication and mass mobilization. Now, it is true that the action of the institutions revealed its limits after the military setback in October 1917, when the need to centralize and nationalize activities in this sphere became evident; and it is also true that the propaganda and welfare systems activated were more evident in the cities than in the countryside. However, there was now a growing recognition that the self-mobilization of the middle classes, on which Italy had relied up to Caporetto, had nevertheless achieved remarkable results. The Citizens Committees, established in almost all Italian municipalities by the end of 1915, had demonstrated notable initiative in the fields of welfare and propaganda. And when in late 1916 the first census of active Citizens Committees was organized, subsequently repeated in 1917, it emerged that up to the month of June 1916 more than thirty-five hundred of them were active, rising to nearly sixty-two hundred a year later.

The profound questioning of old historiographical stereotypes opened up enormous spaces for new research on how the war had been experienced, how it had changed individuals and society, and which social, cultural, and mentality legacies it had left behind. Hence, studies on local history or in any case on restricted geographical areas multiplied, questioning easy generalizations and leading to a multiplication of viewpoints and highly nuanced interpretations.⁷⁰

In this context, studies of political parties also made a contribution. From the 1950s onward, the Catholics and the Socialists had been the most researched, given their electoral weight and mass appeal both in early twentieth century and in post-World War II Italy. At this time, historiography on the Catholic movement had shown that, precisely during the war, it had basically ended up joining the patriotic front, approaching the milestone represented by its recognition by the Italian state, sanctioned by the Lateran Pacts of 1929. Research on the socialist movement, by contrast, had emphasized its continuously oscillating attitude between criticism of the war of the “masters,” the fear of favoring through its opposition the victory of strongly conservative regimes like the Central Powers and patriotic self-mobilization. This patriotic mobilization had two main motivations: a genuine desire to defend the country and the willingness to refute accusations of being “domestic enemies” in the pay of foreign interests.⁷¹

Other important studies focused on the interventionist galaxy, internally divided between the nationalists, democrats, and leftist interventionists. It was commonly believed that democrats and revolutionaries had in effect ended up submitting to the hegemony of the nationalists, above all by adopting the repressive instruments devised or enacted to subdue a country that they continued to perceive as reluctant to go to war. The

gradual shift toward the rigidly authoritarian vision of General Cadorna of a champion of reformist socialism like Leonida Bissolati, and the future convergence in fascism of many interventionists from the anarchist, republican, trade union, or socialist revolutionary spheres, and from the ranks of the liberals, Catholics, or reformists, seemed to confirm this reading.

What was not understood at the time is that during the war the various positions had in fact become mixed up, or, more accurately, had contaminated one another, laying the groundwork for a new ideology that would come to power after the war: that of fascism. The belief that the revolutionary interventionists had simply succumbed to the pressure exerted by nationalist groups actually resulted in part from an interpretative bias that weighed on fascism: that the latter did not have a cultural depth of its own but was instead an eclectic ideological phenomenon, without its own set of ideas—essentially, a mere armed wing of the most reactionary capitalism.

It was Renzo De Felice, with the first volume of his biography of Mussolini, who first departed from this then-dominant conviction. As we will see below, it was only between the 1990s and the early 2000s that a new period of research began, capable of shedding greater light on the political events of the war years and on the links between the conflict and the subsequent totalitarian experience. This change was encouraged by several factors: firstly, the gradual assimilation of the lesson of De Felice, who had finally made fascism a genuine historical topic, to be studied principally using the sources that it had produced itself and not simply, as had long been the case, through the sources and the memories of its opponents, in other words the anti-fascists. Secondly, the studies by George L. Mosse, Ernst Nolte, and later Zeev Sternhell had considerable impact. By emphasizing the contamination of the nationalist demands of the right and those for social justice typical of the left, they had begun to study the twentieth century no longer simply as the “age of extremes,” as it was termed some twenty years later,⁷² but also as a time of the convergence, dialogue, and reciprocal imitation between seemingly opposing ideologies. Fascism was, in fact, the first complete incarnation of the new political synthesis born out of this dynamic.

New Perspectives on World War I: Assessing Trends and Developments in Italian Historiography

In the past thirty years, as we have seen, once the belief became widespread that the “total war” originated not between 1939 and 1945 but in 1914, historians gradually shifted their attention to the lived experience

of those who participated in the war. Research has dealt with life in the trenches in increasing depth, as well as with the defensive reactions of the soldiers and their efforts to retain a minimum of control over their lives within an anonymous and radically depersonalizing mechanism.⁷³ Gradually, the number of studies tackling the changing role of women, with their mass inclusion especially in the world of work, as well as in the military, in the guise of Red Cross workers, “charitable ladies,” or *madrine di guerra* (war pen pals), has increased. These studies have shown that it was during the war that the sharp separation between the male and female spaces that had hitherto characterized European society began to be challenged in Italy.⁷⁴

Within this new historiographical context,⁷⁵ the ninetieth anniversary of the Great War saw the publication in Italy of two major collective works. One was the Italian translation of the *Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre 1914–1918*, published in 2004 in France and in 2007 in Italy, but with the addition of some essays on the peninsula, much neglected in the original publication.⁷⁶ The other was the two-part volume *La Grande guerra: dall’Intervento alla “vittoria mutilata,”* part of a longer work on *Italiani in Guerra*.⁷⁷

Leafing through the pages of this second work, in which Italy is central, we find a substantial survey of the fields of inquiry tackled by Italian historiography over the past twenty years. In this collective volume, in addition to taking up familiar themes such as the various political parties involved, the press, their leaders, leading intellectuals, symbolic landmarks (the Piave, Monte Grappa, etc.), and the main phases of the military conflict, we also find the younger generation as a specific social group, along with civilian internees, Italian military prisoners and the prisoners of the Italians, refugees, everyday life both in war zones and in the trenches and behind the lines, militarized factories, the *Case del soldato*, the frontline theater, war songs, and cinema. The work ends with a separate section on the legacy bequeathed by the conflict to the years immediately following it: the cult of the fallen and the rejection of war, the veterans’ associations, the memoirs of protagonists, and the memory of the war in the theater, cinema, and even families (consider the names given to children, for example: from the rarest, Esercito and Alpino, to the more frequent Guerrino/Guerrina, Guerriero, Trincea, Italia, and Cardorno, those taken from geographical references, Dalmazio/Dalmazia, Fiume, Isonzio/Isonzia, Carsio, Marnio/Marna, and Verdun, etc.).

All these themes now also appear frequently in the most recent doctoral and undergraduate theses that can be found on the relevant Italian websites. Here, too, in addition to classic themes such as the role of the Church and of the Catholic world, or the history of small communi-

ties during the conflict, we find a constant attention to the victims (the maimed, shell-shocked soldiers, etc.), propaganda strategies and those at whom they were aimed (including children), the places of memory (to adopt a French expression that has also had resonance in Italy), archaeology, popular writings, and local testimonies.⁷⁸

A significant number of the most recent studies have also focused on the themes of propaganda from above and mobilization from below. This has shed further light on the parallel and complementary processes of demonization of both the military and the domestic enemy (political opponents), and thus on the new instruments of repression and consolidation of the home front that were identified during the war years, which began to make a totalitarian regime “thinkable” (and “feasible”).⁷⁹

As is well known, a crucial role in radicalizing the conflict was played by intellectuals, and this group now increasingly tends to be studied using a comparative approach between the various countries and more particularly with attention not only to important individuals but to the “intellectual class” as a whole, with all its internal complexities.⁸⁰ The role of schools and of the Church in the patriotic mobilization is also increasingly explored, although much still remains to be done in this field (in particular, there are few studies on the effects of propaganda and its social hold in rural areas, much less studied than urban population centers).⁸¹ Recent research has also continued to delve deeper into a theme that, as we have seen, emerged already in the 1960s: the specificity of Italian legislation and repressive practices compared to those of other countries.⁸²

This theme—repression and violence on the civilian as well as the military front—is, moreover, closely linked to a change in sensibility experienced by contemporary historiography, including that of Italy, in recent decades. The “victims of war” now occupy a central place in historical reflection thanks both to the historiography, and perhaps to an even greater extent the filmography on the Holocaust, and to the impact on global public opinion of the tragedy that unfolded in the 1990s during the Balkan Wars. The images broadcast on television immediately brought to mind those of the two world wars, bringing home to everyone the dramatic impact of war violence on the civilian population.⁸³

From this point of view, the reflection on the documents produced by both soldiers and civilians has also continued to deepen, given the importance gradually taken on by subjectivity. Letters, diaries, and autobiographical memoirs increasingly appear to be key sources for understanding the magnitude and meaning of the great cultural and social transformations of the war years.⁸⁴

In this field, the work to collect such documents and make them available to scholars has also progressed considerably. Among the most im-

portant institutions, we could mention the Archivio Ligure della scrittura popolare, based in Genoa, which has been gathering these documents for nearly three decades and whose largest collection covers the period of the Great War, and the Archivio della scrittura popolare di Trento, with its journal *Materiali di lavoro* that has made “history from below” its main mission.⁸⁵

Again, in the context of studies on popular writings and the related archives, we find a substantial continuity with the new areas of investigation already developed in the final two decades of the last century. But, in the ongoing effort to identify new groups “forgotten” by history, the paths already opened up have gradually expanded. This is true, for example, of the attention devoted to the nationalization of childhood between the Great War and fascism,⁸⁶ to the young volunteers from Trento and the Adriatic who abandoned their lands to fight in the ranks of the Italian army,⁸⁷ and to the Austro-Hungarian prisoners in Italian camps.⁸⁸ The fate of the Italians subject to Austro-Hungarian rule, who were considered as unreliable by both the Italians and the Austrian-Hungarians, has also been investigated, along with the experiences of the civil population in occupied territories in general.⁸⁹ Last but not least, other research areas that have enjoyed considerable attention in the international World War I historiography have also been opened up by Italian historians: First systematically tackled in a classic study by Antonio Gibelli, the theme of the impact of modernity and technology on the culture, psyche, and body of soldiers was later taken up by Bruna Bianchi,⁹⁰ and the topic has recently been developed both through the analysis of the events and of local archives and through growing debate in the field of medicine and psychiatry.⁹¹ The issue of the mutilated and their maimed bodies, “repaired” and finally celebrated, has been covered by Barbara Bracco.⁹² Speaking of internationalization, it is also noteworthy that the centenary has seen the publication of several English-language studies on the Italian army during the conflict.⁹³

One final aspect worth mentioning that Italian historiography has recently turned to is World War I’s impact on the Italian colonial empire . . . *From Tripoli to Addis Ababa*, as one of the first books on the subject matter put it.⁹⁴ Inspired by the upsurge of “Imperial History,” this edited volume successfully embraced a variety of issues that help to understand the multiple imperial and colonial experiences of the Italian *Grande Guerra*: the Allied powers’ opposing geopolitical interests in the Mediterranean (and Red Sea) region; the consequences of the employment of Eritrean colonial troops, alongside Ethiopian voluntaries, in Libya (where they were employed in quelling local revolts dating back, for some of them, to the conquest of the region in 1911–12); the perceptions and representations

of the world war at the colonial periphery; the place of the Italian colonies in the emerging postwar order; the redefinition of Italian colonization policies as well as the way local (indigenous) authorities negotiated their involvement in the conflict; the “Holy War” against Italian domination that Ottoman propaganda provoked in the Muslim regions of East Ethiopia, which led to a civil war that did not end before 1917; finally, the impact of the Spanish flu across the Italian empire.

In conclusion, we can say that the picture offered today by Italian historiography essentially continues the themes that surfaced in the 1980s and 1990s. In those decades, in fact, social and political history gradually drew closer to one another thanks to the realization that during the war years the short-term perspective of politics and the medium to long-term perspective of economic processes, institutional evolution, and the definition of social groups and mindsets interacted and conditioned each other to an extent rarely seen at other moments in history.

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Notes

1. Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra* (1970; Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 424.
2. See Maurizio Ridolfi, *Le feste nazionali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), 150–51; Quinto Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra: Cerimonie, monumenti, memorie e contromemorie* (Roma: Donzelli, 2018), 33–35.
3. Barbara Bracco, “Il decennale e il ventennale della Vittoria: Continuità e discontinuità della memoria di guerra nell’era fascista,” in *Celebrare la nazione: Grandi anniversari e memorie pubbliche nella società contemporanea*, ed. Massimo Baioni, Fulvio Conti, Maurizio Ridolfi (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2012), 160–76.
4. See Gianni Isola, *Guerra al regno della guerra! Storia della Lega proletaria mutilati invalidi di reduci orfani e vedove di guerra (1918–1924)* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1990).

5. Claudio Canal, "La retorica della morte: I monumenti ai caduti della Grande Guerra," *Rivista di storia contemporanea* 11, no. 4 (1982): 657–69; and Renato Monteleone and Pino Sarasini, "I monumenti ai caduti della Grande Guerra," in *La Grande guerra. Esperienza, memoria, immagini*, ed. Diego Leoni and Camillo Zadra (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), 631–62.
6. Bruno Tobia, "Dal Milite ignoto al nazionalismo monumentale fascista (1921–1940)," in *Storia d'Italia: Guerra e pace; L'elmo di Scipio. Dall'Unità alla Repubblica*, ed. Walter Barberis (Turin: Einaudi, 2002), 622–23.
7. Ridolfi, *Le feste nazionali*, 164–65.
8. Now collected in Benedetto Croce, *Scritti e discorsi politici (1943–1947)* (Bari: Laterza, 1963).
9. Ridolfi, *Le feste nazionali*, 174–76.
10. For a strong critique of the attention paid to the resistance in official ceremonies, contrasting with the progressive marginalization of the "last and greatest of the wars of Independence," see Ugo D'Andrea, *La guerra 1915–18: Commemorazione cinquantenaria*, with a foreword by Gioacchino Volpe (Rome: Volpe, 1967). On the fiftieth anniversary of the Italian entry into the war (1965) and the end of the war (1968), see Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra*, 339–55.
11. The emphasis on patriotism, albeit now in a pro-European perspective, that accompanied the war experienced by many young people who saw this war as "the last war of the Risorgimento" can still be seen in the preface by Carlo Azeglio Ciampi to Mario Righoni Stern, ed., *1915–1918; La guerra sugli Altipiani: Testimonianze di soldati al fronte* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005), vii–ix. For the Mattarella quotation, see Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra*, 413.
12. Legge 7 marzo 2001, n. 78: "Tutela del patrimonio storico della Prima guerra mondiale," *Gazzetta ufficiale*, 30 Mars 2001, n. 75.
13. See Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, <http://www.catalogo.beniculturali.it/opendata/?q=dataset/grande-guerra/resource>.
14. The website *Centenario 1914–1918*, <http://www.centenario1914-1918.it/it>, provides an excellent overview over these different initiatives.
15. Ministero dell'Istruzione—Comitato nazionale per la storia del Risorgimento, *Raccolta di testimonianze e di documenti sulla guerra italo-austriaca: Relazione del Presidente On; Paolo Boselli agli onorevoli membri del Comitato nell'adunanza dell'11 dicembre 1915* (Rome: Tipografia della Camera dei Deputati, 1915).
16. Isidoro Reggio, *Storia della Grande Guerra d'Italia* (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Italiano, 1916–21).
17. Emilio Gentile, *La grande Italia* (Milano: Mondadori, 1997).
18. For a reconstruction of the events, see Brunello Vigezzi, *Da Giolitti a Salandra* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1969), and for the demonization of those opposed to the war, see Angelo Ventrone, *Il nemico interno: Immagini, parole e simboli della lotta politica nell'Italia del Novecento* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005), 5–10 and the illustrations accompanying the text.
19. *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta, R.D. 12 gennaio 1918, n. 35. Dall'Isonzo al Piave. 24 ottobre—9 novembre 1917. Relazione*, 3 vols. (Rome: Stabilimento Poligrafico per l'Amministrazione della guerra, 1919). The main volume was the second, *Le cause e le responsabilità degli avvenimenti*. A recent analysis of the commission's conclusions, based on the discovery of the notes of its members, can be found in Luca Falsini, *Processo a Caporetto: I documenti inediti della disfatta* (Roma: Donzelli, 2017).
20. Giorgio Rochat, *L'Italia nella Prima guerra mondiale: Problemi di interpretazione e prospettive di ricerca* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), 9–12.

21. Aldo Valori, *La guerra italo-austriaca* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1921). It was above all some of the most famous generals who moved in this direction, such as Enrico Caviglia, *La battaglia della Bainsizza* (Milan: Mondadori, 1930); Enrico Caviglia, *La dodicesima battaglia: Caporetto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1933); Enrico Caviglia, *Le tre battaglie del Piave* (Milan: Mondadori, 1935), and Gaetano Giardino, *Rievocazioni e riflessioni di guerra*, 3 vols. (Milan: Mondadori, 1929–30).
22. Luigi Albertini, *Venti anni di vita politica*, vol. 2: *L'Italia nella guerra mondiale*, 3 vols. (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1951–53); Brunello Vigezzi, ed., *Olindo Malagodi: Conversazioni della guerra 1914–1919* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1960); and Sidney Sonnino, *Diario 1866–1922* (Bari: Laterza, 1972).
23. Among the best-known works to suffer this fate were Carlo Salsa, *Trincee* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1924), Attilio Frescura, *Diario di un imboscato* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1921), and Kurt Suckert (Curzio Malaparte), *La rivolta dei santi maledetti* (Rome: Rassegna Internazionale, 1921).
24. See the introduction of Alberto Monticone to Angelo Gatti, *Caporetto: Dal diario di guerra inedito (maggio–dicembre 1917)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1964).
25. Luigi Cadorna, *La guerra alla fronte italiana fino all'arresto sulla linea del Piave e del Grappa* (Milan: Treves, 1921), and Luigi Cadorna, *Altre pagine sulla grande guerra* (Milan: Mondadori, 1925).
26. See Roberto Bencivenga, *Saggio critico sulla nostra guerra*, 5 vols., published by various presses, 1930–38; Adolfo Omodeo, *Momenti della vita di guerra (Dai diari e dalle lettere dei caduti)* (Bari: Laterza, 1934). Omodeo's book can be considered one of the key texts of the liberal-Risorgimental interpretation.
27. See Angelo Gatti, ed., *Collezione italiana di diari, memorie, studi e documenti per servire alla storia della guerra del mondo*; the collection, which contained writings by Cadorna himself, as well as by other generals, alongside those of politicians like Antonio Salandra and Filippo Meda, was published in thirty-four volumes between 1925 and 1935 by Mondadori.
28. See, among others, Giorgio Mortara, *La salute pubblica in Italia durante e dopo la guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1925); Riccardo Bachi, *L'alimentazione e la politica annonaria in Italia* (Bari: Laterza 1926); Alberto De Stefani, *La legislazione economica della guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1926); Luigi Einaudi, *La guerra e il sistema tributario italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1927); Arrigo Serpieri, *La guerra e le classi rurali italiane* (Bari: Laterza, 1929); Luigi Einaudi, *La condotta economica e gli effetti sociali della guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1933).
29. Piero Pieri, *La Prima guerra mondiale 1914–1918: Problemi di storia militare* (Turin: Gheroni, 1947).
30. Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, *Memorie (1915–1919)* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1960); Ferdinando Martini, *Diario 1914–1918* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966).
31. Alberto Monticone, "Salandra e Sonnino verso la decisione dell'intervento," *Rivista di studi politici internazionali* 1 (1957): 65–89; and Leo Valiani, *La dissoluzione dell'Austria-Ungheria* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1966), 118–19.
32. Alberto Monticone, *La Germania e la neutralità italiana: 1914–1915* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1971).
33. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965).
34. Giorgio Rochat, "Inchiesta sui libri di testo per l'insegnamento della storia contemporanea nella scuola italiana," *Il movimento di liberazione in Italia* 101 (1970): 3–67; see also Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra*, 377–86.
35. Alberto Caracciolo, "L'intervento italiano in guerra e la crisi politica del 1914–1915," *Società* 10, no. 6 (October and December 1954).

36. Citation in Paolo Alatri, "La prima guerra mondiale nella storiografia italiana dell'ultimo venticinquennio," *Belfagor* 27, no. 5 (30 September 1972): 565.
37. Richard A. Webster, *L'imperialismo industriale italiano: Studi sul prefascismo 1908–1915* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975); Valerio Castronovo, *Agnelli* (Turin: Utet, 1971); Ernesto Galli della Loggia, "Problemi di sviluppo industriale e nuovi equilibri politici alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale: La fondazione della Banca Italiana di Sconto," *Rivista storica italiana* 4 (1970): 824–86; Franco Bonelli, *Lo sviluppo di una grande impresa italiana: La Terni dal 1884 al 1962* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975); Massimo Mazzetti, *L'industria italiana nella grande guerra* (Rome: Ufficio Storico SME, 1979); Umberto M. Miozzi, *La mobilitazione industriale italiana (1915–1918)* (Rome: La Goliardica, 1980).
38. "Tre colpi di Stato," *Il Ponte*, April 1950.
39. His most important work is *L'Italia di fronte alla prima guerra mondiale*, vol. 1: *L'Italia neutrale* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1966).
40. After having been neglected for a long time, this theme has been taken up again in Fulvio Cammarano, ed., *Abbasso la guerra! Neutralisti in piazza alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale in Italia* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2015), and Lucio d'Angelo, *Patria e umanità: Il pacifismo democratico italiano dalla guerra di Libia alla nascita della Società delle Nazioni* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016). On the tensions between neutralists and interventionists in Rome, see Marco De Nicolò, *L'ultimo anno di una pace incerta: Roma 1914–1915* (Milan: Le Monnier, 2016).
41. Monticone, "Salandra e Sonnino verso la decisione dell'intervento."
42. Giuliano Procacci, "Appunti in tema di crisi dello Stato liberale e di origini del fascismo," *Studi storici* 2 (1965): 221–39. This question has recently been revisited by Elena Bacchin, *24 maggio 1915* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2019), and, from a geopolitical perspective, stressing Salandra's objective of transforming Italy into a "great power" in the Adriatic and the Balkans, Gian Enrico Rusconi, *L'azzardo del 1915: Come l'Italia decide la sua guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005). See also Giuseppe Astuto, *La decisione di guerra: Dalla Triplice Alleanza al Patto di Londra* (Rubettino: Soveria Mannelli, 2019).
43. Gatti, *Caporetto*.
44. Enzo Forcella and Alberto Monticone, *Plotone d'esecuzione: I processi della prima guerra mondiale* (Bari: Laterza, 1968).
45. Mario Isnenghi, "Prima guerra mondiale," in *Il mondo contemporaneo: Storia d'Italia*, ed. Fabio Levi, Umberto Levra, and Nicola Tranfaglia (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978), 2:905–7. For a recent reflection on the historiography of Caporetto and the effects of the defeat on the memory of the Great War, see Nicola Labanca, *Caporetto: Storia e memoria di una disfatta* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017).
46. Marco Pluviano and Irene Guerrini, *Le fucilazioni sommarie nella Prima guerra mondiale* (Udine: Gaspari, 2004).
47. Rochat, *L'Italia nella prima guerra mondiale*, 97–100. A recent analysis of the high officer's personality and his place in the military and political culture of his time is provided by Marco Mondini, *Il capo: La Grande Guerra del generale Luigi Cadorna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017).
48. Mario Isnenghi, *I vinti di Caporetto nella letteratura di guerra* (Padova: Marsilio, 1967), 102n6.
49. Piero Melograni, *Storia politica della Grande guerra 1915–1918* (1969; Milan: Mondadori, 1998), in particular 151–53.
50. For an overview, see Nicola Labanca, "Militari tra fronte e paese: Attorno agli studi degli ultimi quindici anni," *Annali della Fondazione Ugo La Malfa: Storia e politica*

- 38 (2013), special edition *La società italiana e la Grande Guerra*, edited by Giovanna Procacci, 103–30. This volume contains a collection of historiographic essays on numerous fields of study relating to 1914–18. By the same author, see also the essays “L’esercito italiano” and “La guerra sul fronte italiano e Caporetto,” in *La prima guerra mondiale*, vol. 1, ed. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Jean Jacques Becker, Italian edition by Antonio Gibelli, ed., (Turin: Einaudi, 2007). As recalled by Labanca, it should be stressed that the publication of official reports on the conflict ended only in the late eighties, *L’esercito italiano nella Grande Guerra (1915–1918)*, 7 vols., 37 tomes (Rome: Ministero della Guerra [later: Ministero della Difesa], 1927–88).
51. Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra*; Robert Wohl, *La generazione del 1914* (1979; Milan: Jaca Book, 1983); Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).
 52. Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra*.
 53. George L. Mosse, *La nazionalizzazione delle masse: Simbolismo politico e movimenti di massa in Germania (1815–1933)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1975; English edition published in 1974); Renzo De Felice, *Intervista sul fascismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1975).
 54. Mario Isnenghi, *Giornali di trincea (1915–1918)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977).
 55. The seminal work on Workerism is Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966).
 56. See the trilogy by Eric J. Hobsbawm, *I ribelli* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), *I banditi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), and *I rivoluzionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975); Edward Thompson, *Società patrizia e cultura plebea: Otto saggi di antropologia storica sull’Inghilterra del Settecento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), and, among the many works of Michel Foucault, *Sorvegliare e punire: La nascita della prigione* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976).
 57. “Presentazione dell’editore,” in *Storia d’Italia*, vol. 1: *I caratteri originali*, ed. Corrado Vivanti and Ruggero Romano (Turin: Einaudi, 1972).
 58. Renato Monteleone, for example, published an impressive collection of anonymous letters sent to King Vittorio Emanuele III with the aim of convincing him—alternating pleas and threats—to keep Italy out of the conflict or in any case put an end to the war; see *Lettere al Re, 1914–1918* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1973).
 59. Paolo Spriano, *Torino operaia nella grande guerra (1914–1918)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1960).
 60. Mario Isnenghi, “Introduction,” in *Operai e contadini nella Grande Guerra*, ed. Mario Isnenghi (Bologna: Cappelli, 1982), 8.
 61. *Ibid.*, 18–19. On Fascism, see, in particular, Philip V. Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso: Fascismo e mass-media* (Bari: Laterza, 1975).
 62. Alessandro Camarda and Santo Peli, *L’altro esercito: La classe operaia durante la prima guerra mondiale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980), and Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, *La fede e la guerra: Cappellani militari e preti-soldati (1915–1919)* (Rome: Studium, 1980).
 63. In particular, see Giovanna Procacci, “Repressione e dissenso nella prima guerra mondiale,” *Studi storici* 1 (1981): 119–50.
 64. Luigi Tomassini, “Mobilizzazione Industriale e classe operaia,” in *Stato e Classe operaia in Italia durante la prima guerra mondiale*, ed. Giovanna Procacci (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1983), 79–102.
 65. Giovanna Procacci, *Soldati e prigionieri nella Grande guerra (con una raccolta di lettere inedite)* (Roma: Riuniti, 1993).
 66. *Ibid.*, 175.
 67. Eric J. Leed, *No Man’s Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). The book was translated into Italian in 1985.
 68. See Giovanna Procacci, ed., *Stato e classe operaia in Italia durante la prima guerra mondiale* (Milan: Angeli, 1983).

69. Diego Leoni and Camillo Zadra, eds., *La Grande Guerra: Esperienza memoria immagini* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986). A comprehensive account of the historiography of the time on these issues is in Bruna Bianchi, "La grande guerra nella storiografia italiana dell'ultimo decennio," *Ricerche storiche* 3 (September–December 1981): 698–745.
70. On civilians, see the essays by Giovanna Procacci, published in the 1980s and 1990s, later collected in Giovanna Procacci, ed., *Dalla rassegnazione alla rivolta: Mentalità e comportamenti popolari nella grande guerra* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1999). On the two most important cities of Italy, see Alessandra Staderini, *Combattenti senza divisa: Roma nella grande guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995), and Barbara Bracco, ed., *Combattere a Milano, 1915–1918: Il corpo e la guerra nella capitale del fronte interno* (Milan: Editoriale Il Ponte, 2005).
71. On the socialists, see Luigi Ambrosoli, *Né aderire né sabotare* (Milan: Avanti, 1961). On Catholics, Giuseppe Rossini, ed., *Benedetto XV, i cattolici e la prima guerra mondiale* (Rome: Cinque Lune, 1965).
72. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994); Mosse, *La nazionalizzazione delle masse*; Ernst Nolte, *Nazional-socialismo e bolscevismo: La guerra civile europea 1917–1945* (Milan: Sansoni, 1988); Zeev Sternhell, *La destra rivoluzionaria, Nascita dell'ideologia fascista* (Milan: Corbaccio, 1997; French version published in 1978).
73. Lucio Fabi, *Gente di trincea: La Grande guerra sul Carso e sull'Isonzo* (Milan: Mursia, 1994).
74. Barbara Curli, *Italiane al lavoro, 1914–1920* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1998), and Stefania Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra: L'assistenza ai feriti 1915–1918* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003).
75. See Antonio Gibelli, *La Grande guerra degli Italiani 1915–1918* (Milan: RCS, 1998); Mario Isnenghi and Giorgio Rochat, *La Grande Guerra 1914–1918* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 2000), and Angelo Ventrone, *Grande guerra e Novecento: La storia che ha cambiato il mondo* (Rome: Donzelli, 2015).
76. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *La prima Guerra mondiale*.
77. Daniele Ceschin and Mario Isnenghi, eds., *Italiani in guerra: Conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni* (Turin: Utet, 2008).
78. See Pleiadi: Portale per la Letteratura scientifica Elettronica Italiana su Archivi aperti e Depositi Istituzionali (<http://www.openarchives.it/pleiadi>) and the National Book Catalogue (<http://www.opac.sbn.it>).
79. Angelo Ventrone, *La seduzione totalitaria: Guerra, modernità, violenza politica (1914–1918)* (Rome: Donzelli, 2003); Emilio Gentile, *L'apocalisse nella modernità: La "grande guerra" per l'uomo nuovo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2008), but also Daniela Rossini, ed., *La propaganda nella Grande Guerra tra nazionalismi e internazionalismi* (Milan: Unicopli, 2007); Nicola Labanca and Camillo Zadra, eds., *Costruire un nemico: Studi di storia della propaganda di guerra* (Milan: Unicopli, 2011).
80. Vincenzo Cali, Gustavo Corni, and Giuseppe Ferrandi, *Gli intellettuali e la Grande guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000).
81. See Daniele Menozzi, Giovanna Procacci, and Simonetta Soldani, *Un paese in guerra: La mobilitazione civile in Italia (1914–1918)* (Milan: Unicopli, 2010), 135–266. On the role of the Italian Church, see Sante Lesti, *Riti di guerra: Religione e politica nell'Europa della Grande Guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015).
82. Daniele Ceschin, "Gli italiani nella Grande Guerra: Un bilancio storiografico," in *Italiani in guerra: Conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni*, ed. Daniele Ceschin and Mario Isnenghi (Turin: Utet, 2008), vol. 3, 126–28, and Giovanna Procacci, "La società come una caserma: La svolta repressiva nell'Italia della Grande Guerra," *Contemporanea* 8, no. 3 (2005): 423–45.

83. Bruna Bianchi, *La violenza contro la popolazione civile: Deportati, profughi, internati* (Milan: Unicopli, 2006); Daniele Ceschin, *Gli esuli di Caporetto: I profughi in Italia durante la Grande Guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 2006), and Matteo Ermacora, *Cantieri di guerra: Il lavoro dei civili nelle retrovie del fronte italiano (1915–1918)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005). For a broad survey of the impact of war on civilians, see Enzo Traverso, *A ferro e fuoco: La guerra civile europea, 1914–1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007).
84. On the heuristic value of these sources, see Alberto M. Banti, *Sublime madre nostra: La nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo* (Bari: Laterza, 2011), and Elena Papadia, *Di padre in figlio: La generazione del 1915* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013).
85. For a rich and detailed analysis of the main collections, see Fabio Caffarena, *Lettere dalla Grande Guerra: Scritture del quotidiano, monumenti della memoria, fonti per la storia; Il caso italiano* (Milan: Unicopli, 2005); Quinto Antonelli, *Storia intima della Grande guerra: Lettere, diari e memorie dei soldati al fronte* (Roma: Donzelli, 2014). See also Federico Mazzini, “*Cose de laltro mondo*”: *Una cultura di guerra attraverso la scrittura popolare trentina 1914–1918* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2013), and Elena Riccio and Carlo Verri, *Siciliani al fronte: Lettere dalla Grande guerra* (Palermo: Istituto Poligrafico Europeo, 2017).
86. Antonio Gibelli, *Il popolo bambino: Infanzia e nazione dalla Grande guerra a Salò* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005); Patrizia Gabrielli, *La guerra è l'unico pensiero che ci domina tutti: Bambine, bambini, adolescenti nella Grande guerra* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2018).
87. Caffarena, *Lettere dalla Grande Guerra*; on volunteers, see Fabio Todero, *Morire per la patria: I volontari del “Litorale Austriaco” nella Grande Guerra* (Udine: Paolo Gaspari Editore, 2005), and Patrizia Dogliani, Gilles Pécout, and Alesio Quercioli, *La scelta della Patria: Giovani volontari nella Grande Guerra* (Rovereto: Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra, 2006).
88. Alessandro Tortato, *La prigionia di guerra in Italia, 1915–1919* (Milan: Mursia, 2004), and Luca Gorgolini, *I dannati dell'Asinara: L'odissea dei prigionieri austro-ungarici nella Prima guerra mondiale* (Turin: Utet, 2011). From a comparative perspective on the work of religious assistance to internees in the various countries, see Alberto Monticone, *La croce e il filo spinato: Tra prigionieri e internati civili nella Grande Guerra 1914–1918; La missione umanitaria dei delegati religiosi* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2013).
89. Andrea Di Michele, *Tra due divise: La Grande Guerra degli italiani d'Austria* (Bari: Laterza, 2018). A useful comparative volume that takes into account civil and military policies, the image of combatants, internal fronts, and memory politics in Italy and Austria is Nicola Labanca and Oswald Überegger, eds., *La guerra italo-austriaca (1915–18)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014).
90. Antonio Gibelli, *L'officina della modernità: La grande guerra e le trasformazioni del mondo mentale* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991), and Bruna Bianchi, *La follia e la fuga: Nevrosi di guerra, diserzione e disobbedienza nell'esercito italiano (1915–1918)* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2001).
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