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AMERICAN PUBLICITY IN ITALY

CHARLES E. MERRIAM

University of Chicago

The great war developed many new weapons—the submarine, the aeroplane, the long range gun, the tank, the deadly gas; but one of the most novel and deadly was the propaganda—the psychological working on the war will of the enemy. It was developed first and effectually used by the Central Powers against France, England, the United States, and with terrible results in Russia and Italy. But the Allies were not far behind, and by the close of the war had caught up with their foes and probably surpassed them. In the summer of 1918, the German press complained of the relative weakness of their propaganda, and declared the enemy's pen and propaganda were worse than his sword.

After the work of the Committee on Public Information, under Mr. George Creel, had been under way for a number of months in the United States, it was deemed advisable to establish branch offices of the committee in many European countries for the purpose of explaining the war aims and preparations of our country. Such offices were established in England, France, Italy, and eventually in some thirty-two foreign countries, in charge of Mr. Will Irwin and later of Mr. Edward Lisson. For the purpose of organizing the work in Italy, the writer was sent over by the committee, arriving in Rome about March, 1918, and returning in October.

The situation in the spring of 1918 was anything but favorable. The Italian army had suffered a disastrous defeat in October, 1917, in the battle of Caporetto. Italy had passed through a cold and hungry winter, and now the massive attacks of Ludendorff were smashing through the lines in France and Belgium. What made the situation still more serious was the fact that the Italian defeat at Caporetto had been caused to a large extent by enemy propaganda. For many weeks an elaborate campaign had been carried on in Italy against the war. Many letters were sent to soldiers urging them to return to their homes. Bogus copies of Italian newspapers were printed, containing stories of discontent and disturbance pointing to revolution all over Italy, and finally certain Austrian troops were brought down from the Russian border for the purpose of fraternizing with the Italians. These Austrian troops had absorbed the bolshevik idea of immediate peace, and had endeavored to communicate it to their Italian enemies. And at a critical moment they had been able to open up a gap in a strategic point on the Italian line. Thus in a very real sense the military results of hard fighting on the part of Italy for many months were almost undone by the subtlety and audacity of the enemy propaganda.

But this effort of the Germans and Austrians was not merely the work of a day. A generation back economic penetration of Italy by Germany had begun, and in the course of years had extended its ramifications through the industrial life of Italy from one end to the other. The industrial relations between Italy and Germany had been put on a most friendly and intimate basis, and were even closer than their political connections.

Again, the official Socialist party had refused to vote for a declaration of war or to assist the conduct of military operations in any manner. Some of the most notable leaders of the Socialists had broken off from the party and had formed a separate organization known as the Social Democratic party. But on the whole the strength of the organization remained unimpaired and it constituted a powerful nucleus of opposition to war during the entire period. Italian Socialism furthermore was not built on highly organized unions of labor, which under the industrial

conditions in Italy did not exist on a large scale, but found much of its strength in the rural regions where the peasants were bitterly opposed to the large land holdings of the proprietors and were taken with the cry of, "The land for the peasants." The traditional hostility between the church and the state in Italy did not improve the situation, so far as the solidarity of the national effort was concerned. The political leader of Italy, Giolitti, who was said to control two-thirds of Parliament, was bitterly hostile to war, and did everything in his power to prevent it. Only by a series of popular demonstrations did the Parliament finally yield to the overwhelming public sentiment, breaking the grip of Giolitti and assuming the responsibility for a declaration of war. The combination of Giolittians, Socialists powerful in rural as in urban districts, and underground business interests, was a powerful one, and made itself felt in weakening the war will of Italy.

This powerful combination worked upon a much weakened people. No nation made greater sacrifices in the European war than did Italy. Not a rich state, and meeting its financial obligations with difficulty in times of peace, the extra war burden was carried by the Italians only with the very greatest difficulty. Not having coal nor steel nor oil, from the outbreak of the war Italy suffered the lack of these vital necessities of modern industry and of modern war. On the other hand, their exports of fancy cotton and silk goods, fruits, wines and art products were largely cut off, partly through failure in production, partly through lack of a market, and partly from lack of shipping facilities. The result of these combined forces was a tremendous economic pressure upon Italy to end the war. Continuance was made possible only by heroic sacrifices in which every man, woman and child participated. In a very literal sense the Italian people all took part in the war. Not only were five million men mobilized, but many others were drawn into war industries, leaving the ordinary work to be performed by old men, boys and women. The shortage of coal was made good by endurance of cold. The shortage of food was made good by hunger. Adding to all this the wide extent of German influence, the Italian catas-

trophe in October and the grave reverse of the Allies in March, it is easy to see that the Italian situation was perilous in the extreme. The Central Powers confidently expected Italy to go the way of Russia, before the end of 1918, as a result of military defeat and internal disintegration.

It was believed by many that the most effective way of maintaining the morale of the Italian people, and the only way, would be to spread among them the news of the war preparations and the war purposes of the United States. Of these they were largely uninformed, and in general were highly skeptical. The anti-war propaganda constantly spread among the people such arguments as these: That the Americans were an industrial people and unwilling to enter into war! that America had no army and did not desire one! that she could not raise an army if she wished! that if there were an army it could not be transported owing to the shortage of shipping and the activity of the submarine! and finally, that if there were an army and if it were transported, it would not be a formidable military weapon because of the inexperience of the soldiers and the officers. The Americans, they said, will probably be willing to lend Italy more money, which must some day be repaid, to send over perhaps a larger amount of ammunition or of supplies, or even to send a division or two of troops, who would endeavor to make noise enough for an army. But that as an actual fighting factor in the war the United States was negligible. It was also whispered around that the United States had sinister purposes in entering the war—the capture of European commerce, the annexation of territory, or some other unspecified kind of compensation, sure to be demanded in the end.

It was to meet these arguments that the office of the Committee on Public Information was established. Its general principle and method of procedure was very simple; namely, to tell as quickly to as many people as possible, in as vivid a way as possible, the story of America's war preparations and war purposes. Proper execution of this plan, it was confidently believed, would go a long way toward improving the confidence of the Italian people in ultimate victory, and strengthen their tenacity

in continuing the conflict. As On. Galenga, in charge of the Italian foreign propaganda, said at our first interview: "I hope you can produce such a situation that when one says to the average Italian, 'You know America is coming into the war,' he will reply, 'Basta—enough.' " "At the present time," he added, "almost everybody doubts it."

The Italian government, as is well known, was a coalition government, put together for war purposes. Its head was On. Orlando, professor of political science in the University of Naples, for many years a member of Parliament, a brilliant orator and of liberal tendencies. The minister of foreign affairs was Baron Sonnino, an active factor in the building of modern Italy—English, Jewish and Italian in race, conservative in tendency and skilled in diplomacy. The secretary of the treasury was On. Nitti, professor of political economy in the University of Naples, of broad parliamentary experience, representing the liberal financial elements of Italy. The Socialist party was represented by On. Bissolotti, minister of pensions. This varied combination of political interests and elements was valiantly leading the desperate struggle of Italy during the most difficult days of the war.

Italian propaganda was organized in three branches: the external or foreign propaganda was in charge of On. Galenga; the internal propaganda was in charge of On. Commandissi; and the army propaganda was in charge of Col. Siciliani. In the conduct of its work the committee was in close touch with all of these officials, particularly, of course, with the propaganda office, and received from them the most cordial coöperation and support.

We also worked in coöperation with the diplomatic staff under Ambassador Page, and the consular staff of the American government, with the military mission, and, later, with the American regiment. The American Red Cross, under Col. Perkins, and the Y. M. C. A., under Dr. Nolles, were, of course, not intended for propaganda purposes, but were of great assistance in many ways. British and French representatives were also helpful at various points, and always cordial in their relations.

Our office staff of some fifty persons was organized in four departments: (1) the department of the press; (2) the department of speakers; (3) the department of pictures; and (4) the Austro-Hungarian service. Our staff included officers detailed from the American and Italian armies, and various others. Among the Italians who were most active were Capt. Cohen, a journalist, Capt. Tozzi, Lieut. Pecorini, author of *Gli'Italiani in America*, and Contessina Loschi.

The news service was placed in charge of Mr. John Hearley, who had been for a number of years the United Press representative in Italy, and was unusually well equipped and effective. This division received daily, either by cable or wireless from the New York office under Mr. Walter Rogers, a news service which was distributed to the various papers of Italy through the Agenzia Stefani, the largest press association of the country. These daily news items were also mimeographed and about two hundred copies mailed to certain persons in military, journalistic, educational and governmental circles. The committee received and distributed also a weekly feature service known as the Poole Service. On the basis of this various articles or material for articles were supplied to Italian newspapers or magazines. In April, American news had been almost entirely lacking in the Italian papers, but as a result of the committee's campaign, very wide publicity was given to the war preparations in America. Not only the military preparations, but shipbuilding, food conservation, Liberty Loans, Red Cross work, and many other types of civilian service were emphasized; and also the spirit of the war movement in America. Interviews were obtained from many prominent persons regarding the work undertaken by the government and the temper of the people. Especially helpful were strong statements from Cardinal Gibbons, Cardinal Farley and Cardinal O'Connell.

One of the anti-war features that caused most trouble was the Mooney case. The anti-war party had made much of this, and scarcely a day passed that some local labor union did not adopt a resolution requesting the American government to free Mooney and prevent his being made the victim of capitalists. To cover

this case a cable was secured from Mooney himself in which he declared that while he felt an injustice was being done him it was not the fault of the President, that he believed he would eventually receive justice, and that he hoped none of his friends in Italy would use his case as a basis for German propaganda. This did not still the waves but it quieted them.

In order that the accounts of American war preparations might be made more real and genuine to the Italians, the Italian foreign propaganda office was invited to select a number of representative Italian journalists to visit America as guests of the committee and to be shown in detail all of the war preparations. This was agreed to, and some eight representative newspaper men were chosen and made the tour of America under the direction of the Committee on Public Information. They saw America at a highly favorable moment, and brought back most enthusiastic accounts not only of the large-scale preparations but of the spirit and enthusiasm of the people. In return, a delegation of American journalists was invited by the Italian government to visit Italy and describe the war work of that country; but before this project could be carried through the armistice cut short the work. In the same connection, it may be pointed out that the committee suggested the beginning of the campaign of letter-writing on the part of former citizens of Italy. This idea was taken up and carried out, and as a result thousands of letters were sent back to Italy describing the war work and war spirit of America and bringing conviction to those who doubted whether the United States would really take an active part in the war.

In this work of publicity the committee obtained the cordial coöperation of the Italian officials and of the Italian journals. Many of these publishers were visited personally and the purpose of our mission and our method of procedure were explained to them. We received many extremely valuable suggestions from them, and in fact would have found it difficult to make any progress without their very generous and friendly support. We explained to them that the committee was not there to advertise America but to help win the war, and we invited counsel as to the best procedure to bring this about. Some of the journals, notably *L'Avanti*, the

leading Socialist organ in Italy, were bitterly opposed to the war, but even *L'Avanti* used much of the committee's material which had distinct news value, even though it did not help the general policy of the paper. Under the news department were also circulated a number of pamphlets, and a small booklet was published containing the leading facts regarding America's war undertakings. Later, on the receipt of a great many requests, extracts were printed from the speeches of President Wilson, for which the demand could never be satisfied. In general, however, the newspapers and periodicals were found more effective than the pamphlets, of which many different types in large quantities had already been printed and circulated particularly by the Italian and English governments.

The department of speakers was in charge of Professor Altrocchi, professor of Italian in the University of Chicago. In this work he was very ably assisted by Mr. Kingsley Moses. This department reached thousands of Italians in all parts of the country by word of mouth—our estimate is one million. Some of the speakers were sent over from America for the express purpose of aiding the committee; others were obtained through the courtesy of the Y. M. C. A. and the Red Cross; and we had also a number of native Italian speakers. Among those who came from America were Congressman La Guardia (in the aviation service), Senator Cotillo of New York, Arthur Bennington of the *New York World*, Judge Ben Lindsey, Professor Sartorio, Professor Panuzio, Judge Cravates, and Nelson Gay. These speakers at first covered the larger cities. Later they were routed to cover various local sections in greater detail. Professor Altrocchi personally spent much time in Tuscany, Senator Cotillo in Naples and vicinity. Panuzio made a tour of Sicily. Mr. Bennington covered the Umbria, Romagna and other territory. Various sections of northern Italy were covered in the same way. Professoressa Ranconi, a prominent Italian social worker, rendered excellent service in the crowded sections of the cities, and also among peasant women and school children. With a number of her associates she held frequent conferences in popular halls, workshops and rural centers. Wherever possible

moving pictures or lantern slides were used to illustrate these discourses. Through these speakers thousands of Italians were informed directly of the war work of the American government in detail. All speakers were instructed to deal simply with bare facts as to preparations, and also as simply as possible with the underlying purposes of America in entering the war. Facts regarding the American war participation were also supplied to many Italian speakers, who made good use of them. These speakers were not under the jurisdiction of the committee, and the only relation we had with them was that of cordial coöperation in the common cause.

It was the purpose and intent of these measures to bring home personally to as many Italian citizens as possible a detailed story of the actual work being done by America in preparation for a victorious finish. In this the committee was successful, for we not only reached thousands of hearers but naturally the news traveled rapidly throughout the neighboring communities, and where a thousand people heard a speaker fifty thousand learned the news.

One of the practical and amusing tests of our work occurred in Florence. Professor Altrocchi was listening one day to a street speaker who offered to talk on any subject, and at the close of his little speech would take up a collection. Professor Altrocchi asked him to speak on the United States and the war, whereupon he proceeded with an eloquent discourse using the standard facts and figures of the Committee on Public Information.

The department of pictures—moving and still—was designed to show graphically the war work in America. Unfortunately there are thousands of persons in Italy who do not read or write, and there are thousands more who have not much time to read. And there, as everywhere, the appeal to the eye is the most direct, striking and effective. Our moving pictures included a considerable variety of American war, industrial and agricultural films. These were revised and retitled and circulated on a considerable scale. Some of them were shown by our own speakers, others by the Italian military authorities at the front, others by the Y. M. C. A., others by various patriotic associations, and of

still greater importance were the exhibits made by the Italian cinema houses. This department supplied the "Inter-Allied Weekly," the official "Pathe" of the Italian government, with film material for display in features throughout Italy, and other films were used through the efforts of the American consuls. The films showing the transformation of American recruits into soldiers and their arrival in France were particularly well received. The American war pictures from France, especially after Chateau-Thierry, were usually welcomed with wild enthusiasm. This part of the work was in charge of Lieut. Wanger and Mr. Cordner.

Under this department there was also a widespread distribution of photographs, post cards and other miscellaneous material, in charge of Mr. Byron M. Nestor, an American artist in Italy. Naturally the Italian is a great lover of pictures, and the American war photos always drew a crowd when they were exhibited in conspicuous places on the streets. There seemed to be no end to the request for post cards containing photographs of American soldiers, of General Pershing, and of President Wilson. Italian soldiers in particular were eager for the post cards, and in order to facilitate their use the committee arranged with the Italian government to frank the cards. Reprints from American photographic displays were exhibited in some three thousand Italian towns and cities, while some sixteen thousand towns and cities were reached by this department in various ways. Italo-American ribbons and buttons, American war posters, American flags were sent out by the thousand—over thirty thousand copies of "The Star Spangled Banner," which every Italian band learned to play. A small riot occurred in front of our office at one time when American flags were being handed out. A procession of Italian boy scouts was passing and some unauthorized person threw out a number of small flags, thereby breaking up the parade and requiring the services of the police.

With the soldiers at the front the situation was more difficult. Those who had been fighting in the trenches for three years were not interested in speeches and pamphlets. Fighting under very great difficulties in the mountain region, they had performed marvelous military feats, not yet fully appreciated, because not

fully told. Suggesting to General Diaz one day that greater publicity be given to their military men and measures, he replied that the Americans might think he was using Barnum's methods. The full story of the initial difficulties, the catastrophe and its check at Caporetto, of the Austrian defeat on the Piave in June, 1918, and the memorable victory in October, has never been fully told; but when it is, much greater credit will be given the Italian army than is now accorded.

During the war period the soldiers developed a psychology all their own. The Italian government, however, after the battle of Caporetto, had systematically and vigorously undertaken to improve the morale of the army. For this purpose some of the best psychologists of Italy were employed. We were in close touch with them, and did everything in our power to help the situation. General Diaz, Colonels Aymonino, Siciliano and Grossi were much interested in our work, and keenly realized its significance. They knew the bitter fruits of enemy propaganda. We assisted in the publication of some of the "trench papers," supplied American war films, and in various other ways coöperated with the Italian government.

It was soon apparent, however, that the most effective propaganda was the American uniform, and with this in mind we bent every effort to securing some force of American troops. The American ambulance unit landing at Genoa in July was received with astounding enthusiasm. Practically the entire population of Genoa came down to the water's edge to greet them. The arrival of the 332nd regiment under Colonel Wallace, a little later, was also a signal for enthusiasm throughout Italy. They proceeded at once to the front, but as far as possible we endeavored to meet the demand for small detachments at various points in Italy. All those of Italian origin obtained "leave" to return to their respective homes in Italy, where their appearance was most effective. We also secured the detail of a number of soldiers from the American Expeditionary Forces in France. These were men of Italian origin who had been wounded, and who were given "leave" to come to Italy. That they convinced their local villages and cities of the participation of America in

the war there can be no doubt, and if we could have secured a larger number of them we could have closed the argument very promptly.

Many other activities were undertaken by the Committee on Public Information in Italy. We suggested the American celebration of the 24th of May, the third anniversary of Italy's entrance into the war; and the general participation in this celebration throughout America meant much in Italy, for the Italians justly felt that their great part in the war had not been fully appreciated. The committee undertook and organized, with the coöperation of the Italian authorities, the celebration of the Fourth of July in Italy. Immense crowds assembled in all the principal cities of Italy and the enthusiasm was indescribable. There were about one hundred thousand people assembled in Rome, fifty thousand in Milan, thirty thousand in Florence, and proportionate numbers in other great centers of Italian population. We were greatly assisted in this work by the Mutilati, an Italian association of wounded soldiers, whose enthusiasm and energy were unwearying. They were one of the most effective pro-war organizations in the country, for they spoke on behalf of thousands who had shed their blood for the Italian cause, and who could speak from the basis of a definite sacrifice.

The most tenacious and sincere opposition to the war in Italy came from the official Socialist party. They were unyielding in their hostility to any form of war activity. Their formula was "neither help nor hindrance" to the war. To deal with this situation we spread abroad as much material as possible regarding the pro-war activities of American labor. Later, at our request, the American Socialist commission, visiting in England and France, came to Italy. The chairman of this commission was Arthur M. Simons, and the other members were Charles Edward Russell, Louis Kopelin, editor of the *Appeal to Reason*, John Spargo, president of the American Social Democratic Federation, and John Howitt, president of the Kansas Miners' Union. Public meetings were arranged for this commission in the leading cities of Italy, and conferences between them and the anti-war Socialists. Several important meetings were held, particularly in the indus-

trial centers of Milan and in Bologna, an anti-war stronghold. It cannot be said that any of the leaders of the anti-war Socialists changed their position as the result of the work of this commission, but certainly many of their followers were impressed with the undoubted sincerity and ability of the American representatives who spoke for American labor.

Mr. Spargo remained in Italy for two months, and very vigorously and effectively followed up the work begun by the commission. By speeches, by conferences, and by writing he kept up a continual controversy with the anti-war Socialist group. Mr. Samuel Gompers was also invited to visit Italy, and while there toured the principal cities. He was in a position to speak authoritatively as head of the American Federation of Labor; and in this capacity proclaimed the reason for labor's participating in the war, and denounced in vigorous language the opposition. The effect of the combined Socialist and labor delegations was undoubtedly great. Coinciding in time with some of the most idealistic of President Wilson's speeches, they tended to make a deep impression on any who were wavering as to the justice of the war.

The fourth section of the office in Italy was never thoroughly organized. Its duties were to carry on the American propaganda into Austria. It was not possible to obtain help for this work until August, although conferences were held with the board at Padua which had charge of this work, and some of our material was used by them. Professor Edgell, of Harvard, arrived in August, and under the direction of the office in France began the work, which, however, was not completed for lack of time.

That the work of the committee helped to hearten the Italian people in a critical period of the war there can be little doubt. The final victory at the Piave, under General Diaz, showed conclusively that they did not lack either fighting spirit or technical ability. Notwithstanding their cruel sacrifices they were able to rally from what for a time seemed definite defeat. The June offensive of Austria was intended to complete the battle of Caporetto, destroy the Italian army, and eliminate Italy as a factor in the war. The writer was at the front at the time, and cer-

tainly the issue was for some days doubtful. At one time, an advance of half a mile by the Austrian troops would have inflicted a mortal wound upon Italy; but the Italian troops stood fast and in the end stopped the offensive, drove the Austrians across the Piave, and gave them a bloody check. Had the Italians possessed sufficient reserves at that time they could have followed up the victory and finished the enemy then and there. On October 24, the anniversary of the terrible defeat at Caporetto, General Diaz struck back at the Austrians, and after a severe struggle annihilated their forces. This was their final answer to the insidious efforts of the Central Powers to break down their morale.

The work of the Committee on Public Information in Italy shows the great value of international publicity. The simple work of systematically and vigorously sowing the facts proved to be of great political and military significance. Our information did not consist of lies, misstatements, half truths, or exaggerations. Our only inaccuracy consisted in understating the magnitude of American preparations. We felt that since America had a reputation as boasters it would be better to understate than to overstate, and were greatly pleased to receive, after having been in Italy for some months, a friendly criticism from an Italian who declared that the information we were furnishing did not reveal the full strength of America's effort.

Italy was won, however, not merely by military facts, but by American idealism. After we had been in Italy two months, the editor of one of the most powerful papers in the nation, when asked what progress we had made and for suggestions for improvement, replied, after many hesitations and apologies: "They say that while America is doing much she is not hurting herself. They say that you are (using an old Italian phrase) 'giving away your old clothes.' Italy is impressed with the strength and power of America, and delighted at a new ally, but thus far you have not touched the heart of Italy." But after the battle of Chateau-Thierry, when the fighting quality of the American troops was first revealed, and after the flood of "Crusaders," as they were called, had reached the million announced on the

Fourth of July, the enthusiasm of the Italians increased. And when the war purposes and ideals of America were stated in repeated messages in papers by the President, then the emotions of Italy were touched. They were doubly impressed by the fact that America, so far distant from the seat of war, so prosperous as a neutral, with nothing to gain in the way of territory, was willing to undertake, across three thousand miles of sea, an assault upon militarism and autocracy in an attempt to make the world safe for democracy and to organize the world in a League of Nations for a permanent peace. To them this appealed more strongly than the dollars or the supplies or the soldiers of America, and its effect upon the morale of the struggling and somewhat discouraged people cannot be denied.

If anything like the amounts of money expended upon military preparations were employed in the scientific study and removal of international misunderstandings, the world would be more prosperous and more peaceful. Without undertaking to say just what machinery should be used, in some organized way the perpetuation of international good will and the removal of international misunderstandings should be carried out on a large and continuing scale. International misunderstandings menace our industrial, political, social and national ideals and progress. International sympathy and understanding can be fostered and developed, systematically and persistently, and here lies the broad road to peace. Without these understandings no machinery for peace can succeed; but with them the goal is in sight.

EFFECTS OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS COVENANT

QUINCY WRIGHT

University of Minnesota

EFFECT UPON INTERNATIONAL LAW

The League of Nations covenant is designed to "promote international coöperation and to achieve international peace and security." To accomplish the first it provides organs of conference and recommendation and coördinates the numerous international unions already existing with some new ones. To accomplish the second, the members of the league covenant to refrain from acting or to act in a specified manner, in specified circumstances. "Scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations" is emphasized; thus in relation to the treaty of peace of which it is a part, the covenant is comparable to the various forms of oaths, hostages, and guaranties of previous peace treaties.¹

No intention of modifying international law is expressed. On the contrary "the understandings of international law" are to be firmly established "as the actual rules of conduct among governments." In fact, however, the character of law is dependent upon the character of its sanction. Law and organization are interdependent, and the covenant when put in operation will modify international law, though less in its specific rules than in certain assumptions upon which they have heretofore been supposed to rest.

By accepting the league, states recognize that their existence depends upon the general maintenance of law, and consequently that they must prefer the claim of that law for defense, as against the lure of an immediate national profit.² Thus, though inter-

¹ Phillipson, *Termination of War and Treaties of Peace*, 1916, pp. 207-213.

² "For as he that violates the laws of his country for the sake of some present advantage to himself, destroys that which is made for the perpetual security of what himself or his posterity shall be able to acquire; so that people which