

achieved considerable success during the time that it mattered.

Some lies which were little known here seem to have circulated successfully and been swallowed down in America, such as : poisoned sugar-candy dropped by German aeroplanes for children to eat ; the outraging of nuns in Belgian convents ; the clipping of a chaplain's ears by Uhlans ; and the German deification of Hindenburg by the hymn "Hindenburg ist unser Gott" (someone with insufficient knowledge of, or ear for, German having heard Luther's hymn "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott"). Persecution of Germans and everything German was undertaken with zeal ; Wagner was unfavourably compared to Sousa, the danger of sauerkraut was emphasized and people rooted up "bachelors' buttons" from their gardens, as being a German national flower. The frenzy with which the whole propaganda was conducted in America surpassed anything we experienced here. America being a land of extremes, colour and emphasis have to reach an exceptionally high pitch before anyone takes much notice.

In October 1918, some of the lies having become too absurdly preposterous, General Pershing and the War Department of the United States authorized the publication of the following cablegram :

A St. Louis (Missouri) paper recently received here states that a sergeant, one of fifty men sent back in connection with the Liberty Loan campaign, is making speeches in which he states : "The Germans give poisoned candy to the children to eat and hand-grenades for them to play with. They show glee at the children's dying writhings and laugh aloud when the grenades explode. I saw one American boy, about seventeen years old, who had been captured by the Germans, come back to our trenches. He had cotton

in and about his ears. I asked someone what the cotton was for.

“ ‘The Germans cut off his ears and sent him back to tell us they want to fight men,’ was the answer. ‘They feed Americans on tuberculosis germs.’ ”

As there is no foundation whatever in fact for such statements, based on any experience we have had, I recommend that this sergeant, if the statements quoted above were made by him, be immediately returned for duty and that the statements be contradicted.

PERSHING.

The American version of the crucifixion story¹ arose from the following statement of an American soldier :

It was on October 23, 1918, that our detachment, the Fifth Marines, Second Division, entered Suippes, situated north of Châlons and west of the Argonnes Forest, the village having just been evacuated by the Germans. There we found a naked girl nailed to a barn door. In addition about half of the coffins in the village churchyard had been torn from the graves and been opened, apparently with the idea of despoiling them.

When the soldier was pressed to give more precise details, he referred to the number of the *Pittsburg Sunday Post* of February 2, 1919, in which a description of the alleged incident, accompanied by drawings—not photographs—was given.

The matter having been referred to the German State Archives, it was stated, on September 27, 1924 :

During the year 1918 no Germans were in Suippes, situated on the Suippes and north-east of Châlons. The German front, especially in October 1918, ran north of Souain. That village was in possession of the French and the village of Suippes lies seven kilometres behind to the south.

¹ See page 91.

A Catholic clergyman in Suippes, replying to an inquiry, dated February 18, 1925, answered :

Your American soldier could not have seen that a young girl had been crucified, for there is nothing whatever known here about this tale. That graves have been despoiled is possible, but not in the cemetery of Suippes.

In spite of the denial of the story by General March at Washington, it was introduced as the basis of a war propaganda drama which had the blessing of President Wilson.¹

Hideous cruelties, attributed to German submarine commanders, were also widely circulated. In April 1923 Admiral Sims stated, in the *New York Tribune* :

There exists no authentic report of cruelties ever having been committed by the commander or the crew of a German submarine.

The Press reports about cruelties were only meant for propaganda purposes.

Traces of the deluge of falsehood still linger to-day among the more ignorant sections of the population. But far greater is the resentment of the disillusioned, who recognize now the quagmire of falsehood from which the whole war-fever emanated.

Mr. Kirby Page sums up the activities of the Committee of Public Information :

An examination of all this propaganda reveals the exaggerations and misrepresentations to which the American public was subjected. . . . Every Government systematically planned to deceive its own people, and a rigid censorship prevailed everywhere.

¹ *Duty to Civilization*, by Francis Nielson.

An interesting volume on the technique of propaganda has recently been published by Professor Lasswell, of Chicago,¹ from which the following passage may be quoted:

So great are the psychological resistances to war in modern nations, that every war must appear to be a war of defence against a menacing, murderous aggressor. There must be no ambiguity about whom the public is to hate. The war must not be due to a world system of conducting international affairs, nor to the stupidity or malevolence of all governing classes, but to the rapacity of the enemy. Guilt and guilelessness must be assessed geographically, and all the guilt must be on the other side of the frontier. If the propagandist is to mobilize the hate of the people, he must see to it that everything is circulated which establishes the sole responsibility of the enemy.

Mr. George Creel was, in the United States, the equivalent to Lord Northcliffe. His bureau was subsidized by public money, and in the book in which he relates the amazing activities undertaken, he gives some idea of the field covered when he says: "The service cost the taxpayers \$4,912,553 and earned \$2,825,670.23 to be applied on expenses."²

(D) ITALY.

Propaganda in Italy took rather a different form. The task of the Government was to formulate a policy which would justify Italy's entry into the war and give the people expectation of definite gain. While, therefore, certain atrocity stories such as the Belgian baby without hands were circulated, it was not so much moral indignation which had to be stirred as political ambition which had to be satisfied.

¹ *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, by Harold D. Lasswell.

² *How We Advertised America*, by George Creel.

The future of Dalmatia was the chief point of focus. Round this the Government and the Press worked up a great campaign of falsehood.

Mazzini once said, "Istria is ours ; necessary to Italy just as the ports (*porti*) of Dalmatia are necessary to Southern Slavs."

Mazzini's name counted, and this saying was reproduced in Baron Sonino's paper, the *Giornale d'Italia* (March 11, 1918), : "Istria is ours ; necessary to Italy just as the forts (*forti*) of Dalmatia are necessary to Southern Italy."

When the falsity of this statement was pointed out in the Chamber, the reply given was that it was "a fault of the printer."

Nicolo Tomasso, a patriot of Dalmatian origin, who, till he died in 1873, was in favour of a Southern Slav confederation, was also declared, without a vestige of evidence, to be in favour of the annexation of Dalmatia by Italy.

An even more ridiculous fabrication was the publication in a Milanese newspaper of a long letter from no less a person than Abraham Lincoln, said to have been written in 1853, in which the American President assigned to Italy the entire Eastern coast of the Adriatic, as well as Corsica and Malta. Mazzini, who had been reduced to tears on reading it, had translated the letter with his own hand, and Carducci and de Amicis had expressed their admiration of it. It seemed curious that such an important document should never have been heard of before. But unfortunately Abraham Lincoln, in specifying the various territories which should be assigned to Italy, used the expressions "Venezia Tridentina" and "Venezia Giulia," designations which were used for the first time in 1866, and

only came slowly into common use in subsequent years. The letter was subsequently condemned as a clumsy forgery.¹

In 1918 an article appeared in the *Rassegna Italiana* in which a large number of famous Italians, from early Roman times onward, were quoted as being in favour of Dalmatia becoming an integral part of Italy. A painstaking research into the writings of every one of the notables mentioned produced the result that without a single exception they had all declared themselves in precisely the opposite sense.

On one occasion an impressive old man with a white beard was placed outside a meeting called in favour of the annexation of Dalmatia, who, with tears coursing down his cheeks, explained how he had been persecuted by the Dalmatians. As a matter of fact, he came from Rome.

On October 8, 1916, the *Stampa* of Turin produced a declaration from Lugano, said to have been issued by anti-Italian Yugo-Slavs, to the following effect :

The present war shows that the small States cannot have an independent life without facing great dangers to their national existence. Therefore the Yugo-Slavs recognize that it is impossible to form an independent Serbian kingdom which embraces all the Yugo-Slav territories. They desire that the unification of Slav territories should happen in triune form, namely, that the Slav countries should be included in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, with the same rights and duties and in the same situation as Hungary.

The object of this was to incite anti-Yugo-Slav sentiment and to further Baron Sonino's policy of the retention of Austro-Hungary as a federal State. The document was a forgery, but was reproduced throughout

¹ *Dal Patto di Londra alla Pace di Roma*, Gaetano Salvemini.

Italy. *L'Unita* invited the *Stampa* to state the source of its information, but no reply was ever given.¹

A series of telegrams was sent from the various districts of Dalmatia to the Prime Minister asking that Dalmatia might be annexed to Italy. These were all sent under the instructions of the Italian military authorities. The actual orders were subsequently discovered and published, urging that telegrams should be dispatched "expressing the keen desire of the population for annexation to Italy."

Slavophobe opinion was encouraged by every sort of device. Baron Sonino, for instance, in March 1918, declared, through his organs, that it was impossible to come to any accommodation with the Yugo-Slavs with regard to the Pact of London, because they insisted on claiming not only Dalmatia but also Pola, Trieste, and Udine. He had actually received specific assurances from M. Pashitch that these latter districts should remain in Italy's possession.

A good instance of a *volte-face* on the part of the Press under Government pressure is afforded by two extracts from the *Popolo d'Italia*, which show how the Press was used to guide public opinion and tell one people to hate or love another people.

BEFORE ROUMANIAN DECLARATION OF WAR.

People must at last cease from describing the Roumanians as our sister nation. They are not Romans at all, however much they adorn themselves with this noble appellation. They are an intermixture between the barbarous Aborigines, who were subjugated by the Romans and Slavs, Chazars, Avars, Tartars, Mongols, Huns, and Turks, and so one can easily imagine what a gang of rascals has sprung from such an origin. The Roumanian is to-day still a barbarian and an

¹ *La Questione dell'Adriatico*, by Maranelli and Salvemini.

individual of very inferior worth who, amid the universal ridicule of the French, apes the Parisian. He is glad enough to fish in muddy waters where none of those perils exist which he seeks to avoid as much as possible, as he has already shown in 1913.

The same newspaper wrote *after the declaration of war* :

The Roumanians have now proved in the most striking manner that they are worthy sons of the ancient Romans, from whom they, like ourselves, are descended. They are thus our nearest brethren who now, with that courage and determination which are their special qualities, are taking part in the fight of the Latin and Slav races against the German race. . . . Nothing else indeed could be expected from a people which has the honour of belonging to that Latin race which once ruled the world.

Before Italian intervention, the Press in Italy was, as may well be imagined, a mass of contradictory reports from belligerents on both sides, charges, counter-charges, atrocity accusations and denials, scares, spy stories, and every conceivable item of "news" which percolated through not only from Great Britain, France, Russia, and the Central Powers, but from the factories of more lurid and sensational reports in the Balkans.

Utterly unreliable and contradictory reports were published day by day with regard to the treatment of Cardinal Mercier. The papal authorities had to deny the existence of a radio-telegraphic station in the Vatican. Great excitement was caused by the reported existence of a secret bomb factory in an international school directed by Benedictines on the Aventine, which was proved by police investigation to be without foundation (*Corri re della Sera*, May 11, 1915). A Milan evening paper reported that German spies had been discovered

and arrested by carabinieri while making maps on the railroad lines. These were found to be Milanese citizens testing a camera, and they were released at once.

Statements in the Press reporting that French willingness to treat with Germany had been prevented by British threats of reprisals (January 1915) had to be denied by the British and French Embassies in Rome.

A good instance of suppression producing falsehood can be found in a garbled report of a Parliamentary question in April 1915.

Mr. Chancellor asked the Under-Secretary for War :

Whether there was any official information showing that two hundred men belonging to one cavalry regiment became seriously ill with symptoms of blood-poisoning after inoculation against typhoid ; if so, will he say whether two or three of them died ; whether the two doctors who performed the inoculation were, on inquiry, found to be Austrians, tried by court martial and sentenced to penal servitude. . . .

Mr. Tennant replied :

There is no official information corresponding in any way to the statements in the first three parts of the question. No one has heard of the Austrian doctors who have been sentenced to penal servitude.

The question *without* the categorical official denial of the story was reproduced as a statement in the *Corrière della Sera*, April 18th, the object being, of course, to fan up anti-Austrian feeling.

Every report of Italy's possible adherence to one side was authoritatively denied by the other side, and various suggested bribes of territory were constantly appearing. False reports of engagements and preparations in the Balkans and elsewhere helped to keep the minds of the unfortunate Italian people in utter confusion.

* * * * *

War lies from Russia, the Balkans and other parts of the world have unfortunately been beyond the reach of a collector. While some of them may have been more lurid and fantastic, they would, if recited, hardly serve by comparison to mitigate the foulness of the streams of falsehood which found their source in the great civilized Christian nations of the world.

Is further proof needed that international war is a monster born of hypocrisy, fed on falsehood, fattened on humbug, kept alive by superstition, directed to the death and torture of millions, succeeding in no high purpose, degrading to humanity, endangering civilization and bringing forth in its travail a hideous brood of strife, conflict and war, more war? Yet statesmen still hesitate to draw the sword of their wits to destroy it.

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