

# Waiting for war: Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, 1914-1918

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In his *Modern Spain 1875-1980*, Raymond Carr wrote that “in all countries of Southern and Eastern Europe the strains imposed by the Great War of 1914-1918 proved too great for democratic and quasi-democratic regimes.”<sup>1</sup> While undoubtedly true, these words should not be read to mean that the war was necessarily a catastrophe imposed by the Great Powers on these countries: Many within them saw the generalized European war – the result of the existing alliance system which turned an Austrian-Serbian dispute into something very different – as a unique historic opportunity to be seized in order to pursue concrete, often expansionist, goals. Interventionism, in other words, was a policy choice freely pursued. When the First World War began officially, on 28 July 1914, the countries of southern Europe were by no means unaccustomed to armed conflict. Whether in the colonial sphere (in the cases of Portugal, Spain, and Italy) or against one or more European powers (in the cases of Italy and Greece), all four of the countries covered in this article had recently been engaged in sometimes defensive, but more often than not aggressive, military action – so much so that the chronological limits of the First World War are beginning, in the opinion of many historians – to fray at the edges, not because of actions undertaken by the Great Powers, but because of the activities undertaken by their southern neighbours.<sup>2</sup> All four

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countries would indeed find it impossible to contain the internal political, socio-economic and cultural tensions unleashed by the war which, beginning in the Balkans, quickly spread across Europe, from France and Belgium to Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and beyond. These countries willingly brought difficulties onto themselves, since interventionist figures saw in the war a shortcut to the fulfilment of their hopes for territorial aggrandizement, domestic political ascendancy, and a new status among the victorious nations, acting sometimes with astonishing recklessness, whatever the opinion of others. The consequences of this “pre-war” situation would, in all four cases (even if Spain was to remain neutral), have a dramatic impact on wartime and post-war politics. Erez Manela has written eloquently of a “Wilsonian Moment” in 1919, when the eyes of the colonial world turned to the American President in the hope that, at the Paris Peace Conference, he might deliver self-determination.<sup>3</sup> There was a similar moment of shared cross-border euphoria which began in 1914: an “interventionist moment”, extensible to other countries as well (Bulgaria and Romania, both of which would enter the war voluntarily), when the nations of southern and eastern Europe awoke to new possibilities and dreamed of a different future for themselves in a Europe – and an Africa and an Asia Minor – whose borders had been redrawn and whose balance of power had been fundamentally altered. The purpose of this article is to posit the existence of this “interventionist moment” and to suggest, through a comparison of four countries, its broad parameters.

Italy entered the war in 1915; Portugal in 1916, and Greece (officially) in 1917. Spain did not intervene, although the possibility of doing so was envisaged on a number of occasions, notably under the stewardship of Liberal leader count Romanones (1915-1917). All three that entered the war did so on the Allied side and, should Spain have joined the conflict, it would have followed suit. Most late-comers did; only Bulgaria bucked this trend. All four countries were the subject of intense propaganda and related covert activity by both the Allies and the Central Powers, either to join one of the coalitions or at least to remain neutral. Informal and formal contacts were maintained by the belligerents’ official and unofficial representatives with an enormous range of personalities, from crowned heads of state to anarchists, all in the hope of swaying the political decision-makers one way or another, whatever the cost to the neutral country’s internal stability and future prospects. In the cases of Italy and Greece, moreover, promises made by the Allies included irresponsible guarantees of territorial aggrandizement at the expense of the defeated foes, in a manner ill-befitting a war waged for Law, Civilization, and the rights of small nations.<sup>4</sup> But it was not just foreign meddling (diplomatic contacts at the highest levels of decision-making, subventions to

interventionist newspapers such as Benito Mussolini's *Il Popolo d'Italia*, money distributed among professional revolutionaries) that was to shake these countries to the core. Such interference – the “German gold” so often encountered in Portuguese documents<sup>5</sup> – raised political violence to unprecedented heights and, in the case of Greece, brought about the terrible “national schism”. By 1916, Greece had two governments, one in Athens and the other in Salonika, pursuing totally different foreign and domestic policies. Politicians in all four countries identified the war as an epoch-defining event, a unique window of opportunity which could not be missed either by themselves, their political party, and their country, in order to fulfil their wildest ambitions. In this regard, foreign interference merely fell on already fertile soil, since interventionism and anti-interventionism, currents present in all four countries of southern Europe had, first and foremost, domestic origins. This is all the more striking given both the speed with which the war had become a strategic stalemate and the level of casualties being endured by the combatant nations. The short-war mirage that had gripped the combatants in 1914 – the idea that the troops would be home by Christmas – was indeed a powerful one, and lasted well into 1916, despite mounting evidence to the contrary. Time and time again, the “latecomers” entered the war only to find that their armies were totally unprepared for what awaited them, and that all they managed to achieve was the creation of a new stalemate.

It is important, given the aim and comparative nature of this article, to consider the interventionist current in each of the four countries being discussed.<sup>6</sup> The Portuguese Republic was a mere four years old by the time war was declared. The country's diplomacy rested on the ancient alliance with Great Britain, generally understood to represent the ultimate guarantor of Portuguese independence and territorial integrity. Ironically, though, Britain had been traditionally identified by many of the republicans now in power as a colonial rival which exercised an unwanted and humiliating protectorate over Portugal and its overseas domains.<sup>7</sup> In August 1914, the Portuguese parliament was very quick to proclaim its willingness to stand by Great Britain should she ever require Portugal's help in the conflict. When such a request arrived in October 1914, the government – an independent cabinet led by Bernardino Machado brought into being at the close of 1913 to reconcile warring republican factions and to hold free and fair elections – found it impossible to mobilize the division it promised the Allies. This was due to the poor state of the army and the need to defend Portugal's colonies, where a series of border clashes with German forces had already occurred.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the matter was momentarily parked, Portugal remaining a non-belligerent. For interventionists such as Afonso Costa, leader of the Democratic party, the largest

in Portugal, this was unacceptable; the party withdrew its confidence from the cabinet and forced its resignation. Interventionists, be they politicians, military men, or intellectuals, presented the war as a desirable course of action because of a number of reasons. Firstly, the European war was portrayed as a progressive and even humanitarian cause, insofar as the triumph over Prussian militarism and political reaction would lead to a better world, and indeed, possibly the end of war itself. Secondly, intervention was deemed essential for the defence of Portuguese territory in Africa, on which the country's future was seen to depend (there being few voices that criticized Portuguese colonialism from the same progressive and humanitarian standpoint). Finally, the war would play a part in the stabilization and strengthening of the republican regime, whose existence since 1910 had been a troubled one.<sup>9</sup> Interventionists in Portugal, to be found on the left of the political spectrum, were generally content with their regime, believing that through the Republic the traditional enemies of the people had been put to flight; there remained now the task of doing the same throughout Europe in order to usher in a new age. This opinion, arrived at in the first weeks of the conflict, did not change as the fighting evolved into the stalemate of trench warfare. Interventionists did not believe that what Portugal could bring to this stalemate was something that should be debated publicly.

The ensuing government, largely Democratic, was designed to achieve three ends: defend the regime from all enemies; hold elections (keeping in mind that traditionally, in Portugal, those in power won elections, as a result of which no party was trusted by the rest to organize them); and, finally, take the steps necessary to bring Portugal into the conflict, by preparing the required military force. Weakened by serious doubts about its constitutional legality, it was blown off course by the army, a corporation which did not enjoy a happy relationship with the regime and whose officer corps chose this delicate moment to protest against civilian interference in barracks life, as well as politically motivated promotions and appointments. Because of its timing, the army's dramatic protest clearly set out to derail the interventionist programme.<sup>10</sup> The President of the Republic, deviating ever further from constitutional practice, invited a trusted old friend, General Pimenta de Castro, to restore calm and hold impartial elections. Pimenta de Castro, who had no intention of intervening in the European war, but who continued to cooperate with Britain when asked, was immediately described as a traitor and a dictator by the Democrats. Before elections could be held, a very violent revolution overthrew Pimenta de Castro on 14 May 1915, paving the way for rapid elections overseen by the Democratic party and as a result, an absolute majority in both houses of parliament by that same formation, which completed a

sweep of political offices by electing their candidate, Bernardino Machado to the Presidency of the Republic. All that remained now, as far as the interventionists were concerned, was for London to renew its invitation for Portugal to enter the conflict. To make sure that this time Portugal could respond, steps were taken to assemble and train a division. The months passed, however, and no such invitation arose – until at last, early in 1916, London informed Lisbon that henceforth British shipping would be reserved for Allied use, suggesting simultaneously that Portugal make use of German vessels which, at the start of the conflict, had found refuge in Portuguese waters. Afonso Costa's government, having secured a pledge from London that the seizure of the ships would constitute an act carried out in accordance with the ancient alliance, then ordered a military operation to seize the nearly eighty ships scattered from Lisbon to the Far East, eschewing any negotiation with Berlin over the matter; war, predictably, was the result.

What should be remembered in the context of this article is the bitterness of the debate over intervention, the frustration felt by interventionists over not being able to go to war at a moment of their choosing (such as the December 1914 clash with German forces at Naulila, in southern Angola) and the wounds inflicted as a result on the republican body politic. Equally important was the undisguised hostility of much of the officer corps towards the interventionist cause, which threatened to send the Army to the Western Front for as yet unclear reasons. All the talk of a redemptive blood sacrifice naturally made those who would be called upon to make it nervous – but these warning signals were not heeded by the interventionists.

Italy saw the shortest, but by no means least intense, interventionist debate.<sup>11</sup> It is also the best known of these debates among international scholars, given Italy's significant part in the war and the important role played by Benito Mussolini<sup>12</sup> in the interventionist crisis. Italy, of course, was a member of the Triple Alliance (renewed as late as December 1912) but, not having been consulted by either Vienna or Berlin during the July Crisis, it decided to remain neutral. Italy was still recovering from the so-called "red week" of June, when peasant agitation and clashes with landowner-backed militias set fire to the provinces of Romagna and Emilia, the army being forced to restore peace. When we consider Portuguese intervention in the conflict and compare it to Italy's, we are struck by the diversity of motivations and actors in the latter case. In Italy there were multiple interventionisms, all vying for Allied and popular attention, and frequently contradictory in their ultimate intentions. In the Italian case, we are forced to consider, for example, the state of mind of leading ministers – Prime Minister Antonio Salandra and, after October 1914, Foreign Minister Sidney Sonnino.

In the summer, Sonnino had publicly called on Italy to join its allies in the fight but he subsequently changed his mind, thanks to the failure of the Schlieffen Plan and Austria-Hungary's own difficulties. This was revealed that same month when Salandra, addressing Italian diplomats, described his actions as being guided by *sacred egoism*.<sup>13</sup> Salandra and Sonnino looked forward to war, seeing it as a means of expanding Italy's borders while twinning the resulting mass patriotism with their narrow and elitist vision of Italian politics, thus defeating both their rival in the Liberal party, Giovanni Giolitti, and the mass movements now appearing, specially on the Left. Meanwhile, a largely venal press stood open to subventions from the large industrial concerns which hoped to drive Italy into the conflict so that lucrative war contracts might follow. On the extreme Right, stood nationalists and their supporting coterie of artists and intellectuals with Marinetti's Futurists and Gabriele D'Annunzio at their head.<sup>14</sup> For these men, war would purify and rejuvenate Italy, allowing it to make a clean start without all the dead weight accumulated over centuries of subservience to others. These intellectuals did not lack contempt for democratic politics, liberal values, and the rising working class, identified as a domestic enemy.

But it was not just the Right that was demanding war; many on the Left were also calling for intervention, for reasons which would have been intelligible to their Portuguese counterparts. Radicals and republicans were lured by the thought of fighting alongside the democracies against the old order, believing that this would in some way bring about the democratization of Italian politics. For many of these men, moreover, the old Mazzinian fire still burned bright, and they were not insensible to what they perceived as the cries of *Italia irredenta*. Further still to the Left, revolutionary syndicalists like Alceste de Ambris and Filippo Corridoni saw the war as a revolutionary event: once the people had tasted power – by having a gun in their hand – and had come to understand that there was more to the world than their village and their plot of land, they would be radicalized and brought into the modern age, becoming an unstoppable political force. By November 1914, having broken with the Italian Socialist Party, Mussolini was firmly in the interventionist camp.

In other words, while the Government and its backers were working towards war in order to stabilize the political situation through territorial conquest, most other interventionists were working towards war in order to overthrow that same situation, with different levels of radicalism. In February 1915, the Italian government sent an emissary to London to open negotiations on the subject of Italian intervention.<sup>15</sup> There was only one issue to be resolved: what would Italy receive from its participation in the conflict? The gains eventually promised in the Pact

of London, signed secretly on 26 April, were considerable: Trent and Trieste, the Cisalpine Tyrol, part of Dalmatia and its islands (but not Fiume), and a share of Ottoman territory. Italy's disputed claim to the Dodecanese was recognized.<sup>16</sup> In the Pact, Italy promised to be at war in one month's time. Only on 4 May did Salandra renounce membership of the Triple Alliance. Other ministers did not know what was happening and neither did the army, which was not asked to take steps to prepare for the coming conflict. The King eventually approved the Pact and signed it. It is worth pausing for a second at this point: Italy went to war because of the actions of a small handful of men, acting on their own initiative – men who knew, courtesy of police and prefects' reports, that the country as a whole did not want war. Giolitti's Liberals, Socialists, Catholics: all were united in opposing Italian participation in the conflict, and all understood that there was no direct threat to Italy from either side. In his *Dynamic of Destruction*, Alan Kramer writes, "While ordinary Italians rejected violence for the sake of violence, Salandra embraced it, deliberately flouting the will of the majority in a show of decisiveness. He aimed to destroy the Giolittian system, split and defeat the Socialists, and integrate political Catholicism through war."<sup>17</sup> The politics of pre-war Italy were indeed finished, but not in the way Salandra hoped. We should not simply see in Salandra the embodiment of bellicose Italy and in Giolitti a committed pacifist. As war broke out in Europe, Italy had 60,000 soldiers deployed in Libya, containing the local insurgency. They had not been sent there by Salandra but by Giolitti, in an act of imperial aggrandizement (with a degree of social imperialism thrown in) with untold consequences, and under the most spurious of motives – Ottoman neglect of the territory.<sup>18</sup> Surprised by an Arab insurrection against their presence, the Italians reacted with ever greater fury; encouraged by Italy's example, the Balkan states also turned to war, first against an obviously enfeebled Ottoman Empire, and then among themselves for the spoils.

Greece was the last of the three countries to enter the war, but the one which suffered most as a result of the interventionist crisis. In 1910 Eleftherios Venizelos, the Cretan-born leader of the Liberal party, became prime minister; behind him stood the professional and commercial sectors of the Greek middle classes.<sup>19</sup> The Balkan wars (1912-13) had seen the emergence in Greece – and the surrounding states – of a distinct war culture, bringing together nationalist, cultural, and religious elements. In this the Balkan Wars prefaced the European War about to start, down to the blurring of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants.<sup>20</sup> Greek troops participated in well documented and reported atrocities against Bulgarians, Muslims and Jews in and around Salonika;<sup>21</sup> the once homogeneous nation, like its neighbours, had now incorporated significant minorities,



whose presence it did not desire. A report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, conducted in the aftermath of these conflicts, apportioned blame for the atrocities to all participants.

In the aftermath of the Balkan Wars, the eyes of Greece's nationalist sectors, at the heart of which stood the aforementioned Liberal party, turned to "irredentist Greece": northern Epirus (southern Albania), scattered Aegean islands and those parts of Asia Minor which, under Ottoman rule, housed sizable Greek populations. Upon the outbreak of the Great War, Venizelos, dreaming of this "Greater Greece", and articulating almost messianic thoughts of a Greek rebirth<sup>22</sup>, met with the British minister in Athens and offered him an army of 250,000 men, the Greek fleet, and access to his country's ports – but London, wary of provoking Greece's rival, Bulgaria, into joining the Central Powers, played for time. Eventually the Foreign Office would alter its stance, trying to hammer out a deal. Bulgaria, in return for neutrality, would receive Greek-held Kavalla. Greece would be compensated with, among other things, northern Epirus, Smyrna and the surrounding Anatolian territory (although no specific details of the exchange were worked out).

Greek interventionism was thus based on nationalist and expansionist aspirations, for the most part the preserve of Venizelos's Liberals, located on the left of Greek constitutional politics. Not everyone was convinced by Venizelos' vision: the Court, royalists, and "old politicians" (those in power before Venizelos's arrival from Crete) understood that Venizelos' success meant their doom. They distrusted British promises on the matter of Smyrna, and were by no means convinced that the Allies would win the war (this was also the case among many leading officers, including future dictator Ioannis Metaxas, then acting Chief of the General Staff, who had studied in Germany). Anti-interventionists could not countenance the surrender of any Greek territory, no matter how recently acquired, in return for hypothetical gains elsewhere, and would agree to war only if Greece was completely protected from invasion, and the Ottoman empire was dissolved, after an Allied victory. The resulting clash between the two groups would be known as the "national schism", and its consequences would be tremendous. Remarkably, and unlike Afonso Costa, Venizelos was able to win elections on an interventionist ticket while in opposition.

Greece's wartime trials and tribulations are too complicated to detail here. Suffices to say that, thwarted by King Constantine, Venizelos and his supporters launched a Committee of National Defence, or *Ethniki Amyna* (from October 1916 onwards termed a provisional government), which raised its own army of 60,000 men and declared war on the Central Powers, contributing to the defence



of Salonika, occupied since 1915 by the Allies. The rival administrations controlled their own portion of Greece, King Constantine strongest in the older part of the country and Venizelos strongest in the islands and the “new” territories. Meanwhile, relations between the King and the Allies deteriorated rapidly, so that in June 1917, after a blockade of Greek ports and a number of violent incidents, Constantine was expelled to Switzerland by the Allies and replaced by Crown Prince George, his second son. A triumphant Venizelos returned to Athens and formally declared war on the Central Powers. Addressing the so-called “Lazarus Chamber”, recalled after its earlier dissolution by the King, Venizelos explained his actions: “Greece knows that I have never promised her anything unattainable. Greece knows that I have never failed to keep my word. By taking part in this world war alongside democracies impelled to unite in a holy alliance [...] we shall regain the national territories we have lost; we shall reassert our national honour; we shall effectively defend our national interests at the Peace Congress and secure our national future. We shall be a worthy member of the family of free nations that the Congress will organise, and hand on to our children the Greece that past generations could only think of.”

Finally, we come to the country that resisted the interventionist temptation, but which was nevertheless deeply affected by what might be described as “pre-war” tensions: Spain.<sup>23</sup> When the First World War started, Spain was governed by a Conservative party government led by Eduardo Dato. This was a weak cabinet, since it rested on a smaller majority than was the norm in Spain, and had to worry about defections of its backbenchers to Conservative rival Antonio Maura’s own parliamentary group. This government immediately declared Spain’s neutrality in the conflict. After all, who could Spain fight, with its inefficient, top-heavy army and exposed shores? According to Francisco Romero Salvadó, most of the “dynastic” politicians, whose two parties, Liberals and Conservatives, had governed Spain for decades, were opposed to intervention in the conflict, recognizing “her political and diplomatic isolation as well as the economic weakness and military disorganization of the country” – to which could be added the hope of emerging as the promoter of peace in case of a military stalemate.<sup>24</sup> This does not help us to understand why Spanish politicians were able to reach this apparently enlightened conclusion when others around them saw in war a transformational event: after all, Portugal’s diplomatic isolation was not smaller, her military no more effective, and her economy no more productive. But Romero Salvadó also writes, “the most Germanophile voices in the country were those of the clergy, the army, the aristocracy, the landowning elites, the upper bourgeoisie, the court, the Carlists and the *Mauristas*. All regarded a victory of the Central

Powers as a triumph for those who defended such Catholic and traditional values as monarchism, discipline, authority and a hierarchical social order.”<sup>25</sup> These groups understood that siding with Germany was out of the question, and chose, as a result, to insist on the preservation of as strict a neutrality as possible. The exalted place of the army in the restoration system, enhanced by the Alfonso XIII’s identification with the corporation, as a result of his education, was actually the key factor in keeping Spain out of the war.<sup>26</sup> Aware of its shortcomings and fearful of the social tensions that might be unleashed by participation in the conflict, the army – increasingly engaged in Morocco, in any case – preferred to stay out of the European conflagration, and was sufficiently powerful to impose its will.<sup>27</sup> As the King’s position within the Canovist system was paramount, his views also mattered. Alfonso XIII initially settled upon the desire to play a mediating role in the war but was sufficiently frightened by the Bolshevik triumph in Russia to move closer to a germanophile position, one which demanded a strict neutrality for Spain.<sup>28</sup>

Still, some dissenting voices could be heard, especially among those who also had no hope of taking power under the existing regime. Alejandro Lerroux’s Radical party, republicans and socialists believed that the war, being a mass event, would serve as a modernizing force, awakening the Spanish people as a whole and driving them to demand – in return for the military service and sacrifice – a more competent and fair system of government. But from more established circles could also be heard count Romanones’ voice, in his famous article “Neutralidades que matan”: “Neutrality unsupported by the neutral’s own force is at the mercy of the first strong state which finds it necessary to violate it [...] The Balearic and the Canary islands, the Galician coasts are undefended [...] If Germany wins, will she thank us for our neutrality? No, she will try to rule the Mediterranean.” The reaction to the article was negative, however, and Romanones momentarily distanced himself from its content. For much of his premiership, his interventionist instincts would be kept in check. The powerful conservative bloc was sufficiently powerful to again thwart Romanones, when, early in 1917, he adopted a more bellicose posture, warning Germany that the sinking of any more Spanish merchant vessels would lead him to break off diplomatic relations with Germany. In April of that year Alfonso XIII replaced Romanones by another Liberal, García Prieto. This prime minister understood that no change to Spain’s neutrality would be tolerated.

What this contest of ideas did achieve was a further blow to the consensus politics that had run Spain in the Restoration period: If participation in the war, or neutrality, were indeed a matter of life and death for the country, then being in

power and having one's say heard and respected was more important than ever before. Politics was finally seen to matter. The debate on intervention lasted for the whole of the unexpectedly long conflict, occurring outside the *Cortes*, which were usually closed because the country, for the sake of order, was governed by emergency decrees.

Having examined the interventionist debate in the four countries mentioned in the title, what conclusions can be drawn about their situation that might help our understanding of prewar situations, and the identification of the "interventionist moment"? The first is that in all four countries the outbreak of war among the Great Powers was identified as a historically significant moment, a moment of enormous transformative potential. For these four insecure but ambitious countries, two old, two new, 1914 was a unique opportunity to reinvent themselves, to forge anew the bond that held citizens together, to right perceived historical wrongs by the force of arms and the purchase, through a blood sacrifice, of greater moral authority. This was true even in Portugal, where the young republican regime had cultivated since its inception an anti-militaristic rhetoric (although this was belied by continued military action in Africa, seen as a sphere apart). With every month that passed, this sentiment spurred those who shared it to ever more dramatic actions in search of their desired outcome. History was being made and they could not absent themselves from it. This is an attitude that we tend to associate, say, with Mussolini in 1940: but it was undeniably true of Mussolini in 1915, many other Italians, and interventionists all over southern Europe during the Great War.

The second conclusion is that war bred more war. All four countries had been involved in significant military conflicts in the recent past, and had no instinctive fear, or loathing, of it. There was as yet no clear identification of war as an evil in itself, whatever about the aforementioned official attitude in Portugal. In the Introduction to his *Dynamic of Destruction*, Alan Kramer writes, "in the seldom studied period 1911 to 1914, many of the ideas of a militant, sometimes racist, nationalism, were not only developed in theory but tried out in practice, starting with Italy's invasion of Libya and ending with the mass atrocities committed by all sides in the Balkan Wars." One might tentatively extend this statement so as to encompass European colonial campaigns, such as those of Portugal and, in Morocco, Spain. A third conclusion is that it was not easy – except perhaps in Spain – to oppose the coming of war. In some cases, one did so at the risk of one's life. The virulence of the language employed by interventionists was total (see, for example, D'Annunio's speeches in May 1915), and their toleration of opposing arguments non-existent. To achieve their aims, interventionists rode roughshod

over any and all obstacles standing in their way, including the easily verifiable will of the nation. Moura Pinto, a Portuguese opposition deputy, stated in the secret sessions of the Chamber of Deputies, in July 1917: “The mystery of our intervention in the European war and the mysterious way we brought it about, keeping the country in the most absolute ignorance of its fate, brought about the most frightening state of confusion registered in our History and was the sole source of hatreds which will never be extinguished within the present generation, complicating, perhaps irrevocably, the country’s political problems.”<sup>29</sup>

Carr’s words, quoted at the start of this paper, give the idea of partially liberal regimes destroyed by the war as hapless victims of external circumstances, but that is not as most of them should be viewed. Just as small countries had, in many ways, and through their rivalries and ambitions, helped to bring about the Great War, playing the Great Powers off against each other, so too interventionists sowed the seeds of their – in some instances very rapid – demise by insisting on a course that not all in their respective countries agreed with, and which set them on a fundamentally undemocratic track. Coercion, censorship, accusations of treason, divisions and fractures of society were the new order of the day, during the “interventionist moment”, in order to overcome recalcitrant rivals and to force the majority of the population to endure the hardships of wartime.

## NOTES

1. Raymond Carr, *Modern Spain, 1975-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 81.
2. See, for example, Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), notably Chapter 4, "German singularity?", where Italy's war with the Ottoman Empire and the two Balkan Wars are discussed at length. See also Robert Gerwarth & Erez Manela (eds.), *Empires at War, 1911-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
3. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
4. It is worth recalling, in this regard, the words of Arnold J. Toynbee, who served Britain's war effort both as a historian of German atrocities and as an advisor to the Foreign Office. In his contribution to the 1915 volume, N. Forbest *et al*, *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania, Turkey* (Oxford, 1915), he wrote: "The Balkan war of 1912 doomed the Ottoman power in Europe, but left its Asiatic future unimpaired. By making war against the Quadruple Entente, Turkey has staked her existence on both continents, and is threatened with political extinction if the Central Powers succumb in the struggle. In this event Greece will no longer have to accommodate her regime in the liberated islands to the susceptibilities of a Turkey consolidated on the opposite mainland, but will be able to stretch out her hand over the Anatolian Coast and its hinterland, and compensate herself richly in this quarter for the territorial sacrifices which may still be necessary to a lasting understanding with her Bulgarian neighbour [...] All this and more was once Hellenic ground, and the Turkish incomer, for all his vitality, has never been able here to obliterate the older culture or assimilate the earlier population. In this western region Turkish villages are still interspersed with Greek, and under the government of compatriots the unconquerable minority could inevitable reassert itself by the peaceful weapons of its superior energy and intelligence." Toynbee, "Greece", 232-33.
5. See, for example, the warning made in the Democratic party's newspaper *O Mundo* (Lisbon), on 24 July 1917, about the failure to counter the workings of German agents operating in Portugal. The French minister in Lisbon, Emile Daeschner, made regular references to German designs in Portugal in his diplomatic correspondence, writing, at the close of 1916, "J'ai eu maintes fois l'occasion de denoncer à votre excellence les mfaits de l'or allemand en Portugal. Il poursuit son oeuvre démoralisatrice. Je n'y reviens pas." Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, La Courneuve, Guerre 1914-1918, Portugal, Dossier Général, 634, letter, Daeschner to Aristide Briand, 24 December 1916.
6. Portugal's intervention in the conflict has been the subject of a number of studies. See, for example, Hipólito de la Torre Gómez, *Na Encruzilhada da Grande Guerra: Portugal e Espanha, 1913-1914* (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1980); Nuno Severiano Teixeira, *O Poder e a Guerra, 1914-1918. Objectivos nacionais e estratégias políticas na entrada de Portugal na Grande Guerra* (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1996); and Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, *Portugal, 1914-1926: From the First World War to Military Dictatorship* (Bristol: HiPLAM, 2004).
7. One leading proponent of this view was Portugal's minister in Paris, João Chagas. His part in the interventionist campaign is covered by Noémia Malva Novais in her book *João Chagas: A diplomacia e a Guerra* (Coimbra: Minerva, 2006).
8. A recent treatment of these initial clashes can be found in Paul Southern, "German Border IncurSIONS Into Portuguese Angola Prior to the First World War", *Portuguese Journal of Social Science*, vol. 6, n. 1 (2007), 3-14.

9. A definitive encapsulation of Portuguese interventionism can be found in Afonso Costa's intervention at the 23 November 1914 session of the Chamber of Deputies: "Portugal was always strong in its aspirations for progress and has rendered the world, through its effort, services which – I can say it without offending anyone or any other country – no other people has matched. Now it is being called upon to contribute to the definitive establishment of Law and Peace and even – I want to believe it – universal disarmament. It is with enthusiasm that the democratic people at the extreme western limit of Europe performs its duty, knowing well that it does so through infinite sacrifices of a moral nature, as well as the sacrifice of lives that are dear to us, which will cast many families into mourning, but which will lead to a compensation which no others will find, either exact or similar, in any other event in the life of a people or of an individual. I salute the Portugal which reawakened in 1910 and which will conquer its golden spurs, now that, confronted by a great difficulty, it has set out to resolve it. I want to express the thought that Portugal cannot affirm itself as it is and as it wants to be unless it participates in the struggle being waged in Europe, which the whole world is watching and where the effort of one represents the effort of one hundred, or one thousand, when it occurs anywhere else. And may we not forget our first and essential duties, of defending our metropolitan and colonial territory, wherever it may be threatened or invaded – but, apart from that pressing, direct and immediate duty, we have to carry out another, in the battlefields of Europe, where it will be made clear who does and does not exist. I want Portugal to carry out that duty as well, because I want the Portuguese Republic, thanks to the path we take, to exist in the consideration of the whole world, of all peoples, of all civilizations, and for all time."
10. An account of the army's actions, as well as the ensuing political crisis, is provided by Bruno J. Navarro in his *Governo de Pimenta de Castro: Um general no labirinto político da I República* (Lisbon: Assembleia da República, 2011).
11. On Italian intervention in the First World War, see, for example, Richard J. B. Bosworth, *Italy and the Approach of the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1983), Mark Thompson, *The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front, 1915-1919* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), and Giorgio Rochat, "The Italian Front, 1915-18", in John Horne (ed.), *A Companion to World War One* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 82-96.
12. See Paul O'Brien, *Mussolini in the First World War: The Journalist, the Soldier, the Fascist* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).
13. Already on 30 September Sonnino had written to the King that "It would be difficult for any government in Italy [...] to evade the responsibility before the Nation and before History of having missed, through inertia, an opportunity which is not likely to recur, and of having foregone the unification and aggrandizement of the country". A. Salandra, *Italy and the Great War, From Neutrality to Intervention* (London, 1932), 135-6.
14. On Italian nationalism, see Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009 – originally published in Italian in 1997), especially parts 1 and 2.
15. February 1915 was also the month in which Giolitti, victim of a series of attacks in the pro-government press, finally responded with the famous *parecchio* letter, published in *La Tribuna*: "Certainly I do not, like the nationalists, look on war as a piece of good fortune; I consider it a disaster to be faced only when the honour and the interests of the country are at stake. It might be, and it does not appear improbable, that in the present state of Europe much (*parecchio*) might be obtained

- without war, but this no-one outside the government is fully qualified to decide." Most Liberal MPS backed Giolitti upon his return to Rome, and he warned the King – correctly, as it turned out – that the river Po was Italy's sole defensible line to the North, urging him to accept, as a result, Austria-Hungary's latest offer: Italian-speaking Trentino, right bank of the Isonzo, Valona, Austria disinterest in Albania, autonomy for Trieste, political guarantees for Italians under Austrian rule. But Giolitti too late, for the Pact of London had already been signed.
16. Christopher Seton-Watson wrote, "Salandra and Sonnino were not imperialist megalomaniacs. They wanted strong frontiers, Adriatic security, and a balance of power in the Mediterranean." *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism* (London, 1967), 431. However, the claims staked by Italy would serve to create future tensions between itself and most Balkan powers: Greece, a future Yugoslavia, and Turkey.
  17. Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford, 2007), 121. While Salandra and Sonnino brought Italy to the verge of war in secret, interventionists of all hues continued to agitate for immediate action. Socialist anti-war marches were broken up by the government, but the message of interventionists like Mussolini was allowed to make itself heard. De Ambris and Corridoni agitated in Milan, the country's economic capital. This duality of criteria reached its peak in May of 1915 when university students invaded the parliament buildings demanding war and when Gabriele D'Annunzio, in Genoa and then in Rome, issued clear threats to the King if there was no war – actions which, for all their seriousness, went unpunished. Pro-war riots likewise were largely condoned. Industrialists, part of the urban middle class, students: these were the groups responding to the call to arms.
  18. Alan Kramer writes, "[...] in the *belle époque* the Italian State eagerly emulated the other powers' imperialism with its concomitant brutality and racism. Italy's militarism did not have the same influence in political decision-making as in Germany, but the nonchalance with which war was contemplated was easily the match of other European powers." Kramer, *ibid.*, 115-16.
  19. For a recent biography of Venizelos which focuses on his wartime experiences, see Andrew Dalby, *Eleftherios Venizelos: Greece* (London: Haus, 2010).
  20. See Eugene Michail, "War in the Balkans and the Shifting Meanings of Violence, 1912-91," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 47 n. 2 (2012), 219-239. Of the Second Balkan War Michail writes, "The clash bore all the signs of the 'integral' nationalism that would dominate European politics in the next decades. This type of destructive nationalism became synonymous with the Balkans", in part because European liberal opinion, which had cheered the first war, felt betrayed by the renewed bout of violence. Michail, *ibid.*, 225.
  21. For a contemporary account, see "Quoting Greeks Against Greeks," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 September 1913: Bulgarians authorities had released facsimiles of captured Greek soldier's correspondence, detailing the burning of villages, the massacre of prisoners, and the torturing of civilians. One published letter stated, "We have burned all the villages abandoned by the Bulgarians. They burned the Greek villages and the Bulgarian villages. They massacre, we massacre, and the Maennlicher has operated against each member of this dishonest nation who has fallen into our hands. Out of 1200 prisoners that we took at Nigrita, only forty-one remained in prison and everywhere we went we have left no root of this race."
  22. Mark Mazower, "The Messiah and the Bourgeoisie: Venizelos and Politics in Greece, 1909-1922," *Historical Journal*, vol. 35, n. 4 (1992), 885-905, p. 901: "Like the poet D'Annunzio in Italy, Venizelos stood for a new type of political action, which sacrificed collegiality and rational debate to the power of words, the force of personality and the intimate relationship between leader and the masses".



23. On Spain and the First World War, and aside from the already mentioned work by Hipólito de Torre Gómez, see Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914-1918: Between War and Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1999) and Francisco J. Romero Salvadó & Angel Smith (eds.), *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism: From Revolution to Dictatorship, 1913-1923* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
24. Romero Salvadó, *ibid.*, 6.
25. Romero Salvadó, *ibid.*, 10.
26. For a recent biography of Alfonso XIII, see Javier Tusell & Genoveva G. Queipo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII: El rey polémico* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001).
27. Romero Salvadó makes clear that there was also an openly germanophile current within the army, which “was not only confident of a final German victory but was also hoping that, if the Entente was badly beaten, Spain could, under some pretext or another, annex Portugal”. *Ibid.*, 11.
28. Romero Salvadó, *ibid.*, 13.
29. Ana Mira (ed.), *Actas das sessões secretas da Câmara dos Deputados e do Senado da República sobre a participação de Portugal na I Grande Guerra* (Lisbon: Assembleia da República, 2002), 49.