

Andrea CARTENY*

AFTER THE WILSON'S 14 POINTS: THE OPPRESSED
NATIONALITIES AT THE CONGRESS OF ROME
(APRIL 1918)

ABSTRACT: After the Wilson points, in Italy too emerged in the public discourse the question to support or not the „oppressed nationalities” in Austria-Hungary. Luigi Albertini and the newspaper „Il Corriere della Sera” led this strategy, which meant to pass the positions of the London Pact and to prepare Italy to negotiate the Eastern claimed territories with new nations, as Yugoslavs. The Torre-Trumbic agreement was the important result of this action and political base for the Congress of Rome, in April 1918. This Congress was the beginning of the real support to the nationalities against Habsburgs. The propaganda over the enemy's trenches was fruitful: with more than 50 millions of posters and quite 10 millions of newspaper launched over the lines, Italian army called to a mass desertion the no German/Hungarian soldiers (then belonging to the „oppressed nationalities”, e.g. Yugoslavs, Romanians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks). This factor was one of the most relevant for the final victory.

KEYWORDS: *nationalities, Congress, 1918, Rome, Albertini, Italy, Eastern front, Austria-Hungary, desertion, propaganda, Yugoslavs, Romanians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks.*

If the year 1917 represents a crossroad for the history of the Great War (in Spring, the United States joined the Entente and president Wilson's vision of the war soon became an important political factor; in Autumn, the Bolshevik Revolution and Lenin's call for a just and democratic peace for Russia introduced a new “devastating” element in the political perspective of the war), his main consequences is, at the beginning of 1918, the United States

* Autor je profesor istorijskih nauka na univerzitetu La Sapienza u Rimu i univerzitetu Teramo.

moral mission launched with the Wilson Fourteen points' speech, on 8th January. Until January 1918, the Italian government had no official objection to the Anglo-Saxon statement for the right of Austria-Hungary to survive.¹ But the real position of several Italian circles was – before and after the defeat of Caporetto (1917) – a strong support to the oppressed nationalities and an evident criticism versus the English and American “Austrophilia”.

In any case, World War I was also the historical framework in which the perspective of Great Powers about the surviving of Habsburg Empire changed. Until 1917, in France, England and United States, the governments were still interested in saving the Habsburg Monarchy, while Italy, in that context, carried out a strong action intended to give it “the coup de grace”, destroying Austria-Hungary militarily and politically through a “policy of nationalities”.² Before the Austrian declaration of War to Serbia (July 1914) only few were thinking about the “dissolution” of the Danube Monarchy:³ even in the very last weeks of war, within the Entente's Powers there was still the consciousness of the role played by the Habsburg Empire, considered a pillar of stability for the Balkan. About the legitimacy and consequently, the loyalty shown by Austrian citizens of different nationalities, it is important to underline that until the War, the political leadership of Slavic and Romanian national groups were favourable to the legal idea of the State, since the country in which they lived was a great military power and the minimal life conditions – not only social and economical, but also political and cultural – were relatively safe (in any case, “much better than in Russia and in Romania”).⁴ The beginning of 1918 was strongly marked by the United States moral mission launched with the Wilson Fourteen points' speech, on 8th January, in which he stated: “*The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development*”.

The opposition between Wilson's national principles and the emerging Bolshevik government lead by Lenin, were then expressed in Lenin's ideological platform of “national and social revolution”. President Wilson opposed to the Socialist image of revolution a free choice for a “national revolution”,

¹ See *Il Giornale d'Italia*, January 10, 1918. The Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sidney Sonnino, was to respect the London Pact preserving the existence of Austria-Hungary. It's interesting to note that on 7th January even the position of Benito Mussolini, the pro-war director of the newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia*, was to appreciate the speech of Lloyd George favourable to Austria and support a “tetralistic” project for Austria (aiming to create a state with four entities: Bohemia, Austria, Hungary, Croatia), actually renouncing to the dissolution of Austria, as he declared on 12th January.

² See L. Valiani, *La dissoluzione dell'Austria-Ungheria*, Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1966, p. 9.

³ Ibidem, p. 10.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 18.

in which peoples had the bourgeois right to choose the form of Government too.⁵ This appeal was addressed to Austria-Hungary's peoples as well. The situation of Austria-Hungary was indeed very difficult and any call for "national independence" could have important consequences. Vienna and Budapest seemed to be the very weakest point of the Central Powers, just when the military situation of the Entente appeared to be compromised, after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed on 3rd March 1918 by the representatives of the Central Powers and the Russian Bolshevik regime; an episode which motivated the fear of a renewed and devastating German initiative on the Western Front.

"Austrophilia" or "all against Austria"?

An evident criticism versus the English and American "Austrophilia", first of all through the position of the influent newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* and of the group headed by Luigi Albertini was present.⁶ In several articles, as that of 16th January, until that of beginning of February entitled *Sulle direttive della storia*,⁷ Albertini and *Il Corriere* attacked the official Italian position about the London Pact, criticized the Italian pro-Vienna attitude in the Second Balkan War,⁸ and called Italy to support directly the Southern Slavs, that was to find an agreement with the Yugoslavs against the Habsburgs and to "renounce" (from this word the pejorative definition of *rinunziatari* for the *Il Corriere*'s group). This target gained new supporters, with a constructive confrontation with the Mussolini's newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* and with Gabriele D'Annunzio, then supporting an extreme nationalistic position.⁹ The first result of this policy was the enrolling of the Czech-Slovak legion, enlisted by the propaganda of the National Council, animated by Masaryk, Beneš and Štefanik. The Czech and Slovak soldiers were separated from the other Austro-Hungarian prisoners in Russia, Serbia and Italy, to be re-employed at the trenches.¹⁰ Eventually, on 9th March

⁵ E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

⁶ L. Albertini, *Venti anni di vita politica*, Voll. 5, Bologna: Zanichelli, 1950-1953, Parte II: "L'Italia nella Guerra Mondiale" – Volume III: "Da Caporetto a Vittorio Veneto (ottobre 1917-novembre 1918)", Bologna 1953, Ch. VI, "Il Congresso dei popoli oppressi". Albertini was an important Italian columnist, director of *Il Corriere della Sera* and Senator of the Kingdom.

⁷ L. Albertini, "Sulle direttive della storia (Il problema dell'Austria)", *Il Corriere della Sera*, 3 February 1918. See Albertini, *Venti anni di...*, cit., pp. 237-239.

⁸ About Italy and the Balkan Wars, see A. Biagini, *L'Italia e le guerre balcaniche*, Roma: Ufficio storico S.M.E., 1990.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 244, where it is also quoted a letter of D'Annunzio of 19th January ("Mi felicito del vigoroso stile con cui il Corriere difende la nostra causa [...]").

¹⁰ As a matter of fact, because of the opposition of Sonnino, of the Minister Francesco Saverio

1918, thanks to the action of Bissolati, Orlando and Nitti were in accordance with the Army Intelligence to form a Czech legion.¹¹ In March a strong and new action towards Austria-Hungary was necessary, and the Allies had the choice between two different policies:¹² the first option was “*to work for a separate peace with the Emperor [...] and leaving its territory almost or quite intact*”. This solution was “*tried without success*” because of the Habsburgs ties with Germans were very strong and because the Entente cannot offer them acceptable terms without breaking with Italy. The second option was “*not primarily or even [...] necessarily anti-Habsburg: it is not opposed to the interests of the Roman Catholic religion; and it is in the harmony with the declared aims of the Allies*”.¹³ This policy, based on a simple count of nationalities of the Empire, considered the balance between Germans and Hungarian (21 millions) and the groups that could oppose to them, Slavs and Romanians anti Germans (31 millions). This meant to use the formula of “government by consent of the governed” instead of “self-government” or “autonomous development”. Moreover it avoided the idea that the Allies do not wish to dismember Austria, using the existing anti-German agencies (Czech-Slovak, Yugoslav, Polish organizations and committees), and in accordance with the present tendency of the Italian Government to shelve the policy of the London Pact of 1915, to adopt a policy of agreement with the “*anti-German races*” of Austria-Hungary while should have been encouraged. Still, many did not wish to form a number of small, disjointed States, but to create a non-German confederation of Central-European and Danube states while the Germans of Austria should be free to join the “*confederated States of Germany*”.¹⁴

Nitti and of general Armando Diaz, Italy began only later its propaganda for nationality rights behind the enemy lines and in the trenches. The charisma of Milan Štefanik, a Slovak agitator for Czech-Slovak independence and his influence on the Prime Minister (and Minister for Internal Affairs) Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, strongly supported by Leonida Bissolati – all sponsors of an action for the nationalities – was very important. Bissolati, a former Socialist, was a democratic “interventist” Member of the Italian Parliament and his role in support of the nationalities was very important as well. See *ibidem*, pp. 250-251.

¹¹ See L. Bissolati, *Diario di guerra. Appunti presi sulle linee, nei comandi, nei consigli interalleati*, Torino: Einaudi, 1934, pp. 103-104. In fact, for urgent necessity of these unities, by January 1918 the Supreme Headquarter used almost 2,000 Czech prisoners of war on the front as scouts.

¹² *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* (DDI), V Serie, Vol. 10 (1° gennaio – 31 maggio 1918), Roma: Commissione per la pubblicazione dei documenti diplomatici - Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1985, doc. 425, “L’Ambasciatore a Londra, Imperiali, al Ministro degli Esteri, Sonnino”, R.S. 1036/335, London, 18th March 1918. Attachment: “Propaganda in Austria-Hungary (Segreto)”.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 358.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 358-359.

The Torre-Trumbić agreement

The diplomatic negotiations focused on the Italian and Yugoslav question, specially about the boundaries in Istria and Dalmatia. The first meeting was held in London in previous months, through some important pro-Yugoslav circles and the action of historians and columnists, as Wickham Steed and Robert Seton Watson.¹⁵ Ante Trumbić, a Dalmatian leader of the Yugoslav National movement, was the Slav delegate and the real counterpart of the Italians in the meetings with Orlando. The adherence to the policy of the nationalities was officially inaugurated by Orlando in his speeches at the Parliament of 12th February and of 4th March 1918. In this historical circumstance, propaganda in favour of all the “oppressed” peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, came the idea of a group of journalists, as Albertini, Giuseppe Borgese and Giovanni Amendola to organize a congress of nationalities’ representatives to be held in Rome. In February there was a preparatory briefing at the Trento and Trieste Society in Rome, attended also by Senator Francesco Ruffini, several Italian deputies, professor Maffeo Pantaleoni and others. Then an Executive Committee for the organization of the Congress was constituted and Albertini’s proposal to send the journalist and Deputy Andrea Torre to London to meet Trumbić was accepted as well.¹⁶ The difficult negotiation between Torre and Trumbić, together with Borge-se, Steed and Seton Watson, was successfully achieved on 7th March, on the base of a seven points statement. Three of them, as general propositions, were concerning the right for each people to constitute his nationality in a unitary state and in full political and economical independence; the common recognition that Austria-Hungary was the main obstacle to their aspirations and national rights; the common help against the oppressor. Moreover, the representatives of the “*Italian and Yugoslav Peoples*”, agreed that relations between the Italians and Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, also known as “*the nation of Yugoslavia*”, had to start from the recognition of the unity and independence of the Yugoslav nation. It was put side by side with the idea that the completion of the national unity of Italy was the vital interest of the Yugoslavs. They also stated that the liberation of the Adriatic Sea and its defence against all present and possible enemy was very important for both peoples and that they would friendly collaborate. Article 7 of the declaration also stated that to those minorities that could be included within the new boundaries

¹⁵ *The Times* and *The New Europe* were the most active in this pro-Slavic action.

¹⁶ See Albertini, *Venti anni di...*, cit., p. 267. In his book, Albertini underlines that Torre was sent not only with the “consensus” but with the “agreement” of the Government, even if the travel’s costs were covered by private subscription.

of the other state, “*will be recognized and guaranteed the respect for their language, their culture and their moral and economic interest*”. Following a common vital interests and the idea of “*Adriatic freedom*”, the common aim to solve friendly the territorial controversies on the base of principle of nationality and peoples’ rights to decide of their own destiny were the key point of the negotiation. Anyway this was enough for the organization of a congress in Rome.¹⁷ However, before the departure to Rome, Trumbić showed to be extremely awarded about all the plan¹⁸ and the Southern Slav delegation was made up with attention by the Serb Prime Minister Nikola Pašić.¹⁹

The Congress of Rome

The Congress of Rome began on 8th April 1918, in coincidence with the controversy Clemenceau-Czernin caused by a speech on 2nd April of Ottokar Czernin, Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and by the Austrian attempts to negotiate a separate peace.²⁰ The arrival of the foreign delegations (Romanians, Poles, Czech-Slovaks, Yugoslavs) took place smoothly and was guaranteed by the Italian Army.²¹ The idea of the Congress was well accepted by the Italian Parliamentary Fascio, by Dante Alighieri Society, Social-Democracy Irrendentist, Latina Gens etc. and by several Members of Parliament: as Senators Albertini, Della Torre, Volterra, Deputies

¹⁷ The French Committee for the oppressed nationalities, with the Member of French Parliament Franklin Bouillon and Jacques Fournol, tried unsuccessfully to organize the congress in Paris.

¹⁸ DDI, V Serie, Vol. 10, doc. 432, “L’Ambasciatore a Londra, Imperiali, al Ministro degli Esteri, Sonnino”, T. GAB. 696/120, London, 20th March 1918.

¹⁹ The delegation was formed by former Ministers, as Stojan Stojanović, not so close to the Trumbić circle: DDI, V Serie, Vol. 10, doc. 491, “Il Ministro presso il Governo serbo a Corfù, Sforza, al Ministro degli Esteri, Sonnino”, T. GAB. 793/38, Corfù, 2nd April, 1918.

²⁰ See Albertini, *Venti anni di...*, cit., pp. 226.

²¹ Archivio Ufficio Storico Stato Maggiore Esercito (AUSSME), *Fondo F-1 Prima Guerra Mondiale, 1915-18*, Comando Supremo (vari uffici), Busta 246, fasc. 7, “Rappresentanti nazionalità appartenenti alla Monarchia A.-U. intervenuti al congresso di Roma (9-10 aprile 1918)”, f. 1. The delegations were noted as: “*Romeni: Floresco, Vice Presiddente della Camera Romana; Mironesco, Senatore; Draghicesco: Direttore della “Indipendence Romaine”; Mandresco; Lupu.*

Czechi-Slovacchi: Benes; Stefanic; Hlavacec; Vesely; Ossursky, Rappresentante degli Slovacchi d’America.

Polacchi: Sayda, Rappres. dei Polacchi della Posnania; Mozelewsky, Rappres. del Consiglio Nazionale in Svizzera; Zalesky; Zmorski, Dep. al Reichstag; Loret.

Jugo-Slavi: Ante Trumbic, Presid. Comitato Jugo-Slavo; Mestrovic; Banianin; Gregorin; Trinastic, Rappres. degli Sloveni; Ambresiac, Rappres. degli Slavi della Dobrugia; Gazari: Dalmata; Stoianovic / Petrovic: Rappres. della emigrazione Jugo-Slava in Svizzera; Ivimaestic.”. Thanks to the Archivist Dr Alessandro Gionfrida for the support in the files research.

Agnelli, Canepa, Di Cesarò, Di Scalea, Federzoni, Martini, Scialoia, Tascia di Cutò; many journalists and activists as Borgese, Forges-Davanzati, Giuriati, Lazzarini, Lorenzoni, Mantica, Mussolini, Ojetti, Pantaleoni, Paternò, Prato, Prezzolini, Salvemini, Silva, Spada. There were also some foreign representatives, from France (Franklin Bouillon, Albert Thomas, Fournol, De Quirielle), England (Steed, Seton Watson), United States (the Ambassador Nelson Page), but the main figures were among national delegation as Beneš and Štefanik (Czech-Slovaks), Trumbić and Stojanović (Yugoslavs and Serbs), Skirmunt (Poles), Draghicescu and Mironescu (Romanians). With Senator Ruffini as chairman, the delegates worked until 10th April, when Torre read the final statement, recalling the Torre-Trumbić agreement together with a Polish special declaration against Germans (the first sample of a Polish clear anti-German statement). In Rome it was said, there were delegates of 30 millions of Slavs and Latins, fighting against 20 millions of Germans and Hungarians, who wanted to create “*against the Empire of violence the building of right, of freedom and of justice for the nations*”. The declaration issued by the Congress aimed not only to a political goal but also intended to create an association of souls and work, that through culture and commerce, beyond the war should maintain the unity and sustain, with “*heart and acts of reciprocal confidence, the common faith to achieve a mission of progress and human civilization*”.²² The speeches of the many delegates and observers such as Beneš, Trumbić, Draghicescu, Zamorski, Franklin Bouillon, Thomas, Steed, were various and interesting, but what it lacked at the congress was an official intervention of the Italian government. Furthermore, in the period between the Torre-Trumbić meeting and the Congress, with the help of Steed, Clemenceau and Balfour agreed to the proclamation of independence for all the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while at the Italian High Command, General Pietro Badoglio was preparing papers to launch beyond the lines, to spread the new national policy among the enemy ranks. However, Minister Sonnino did not sustain this action and stopped it. The situation was still very confusing and contradictory and only concluding the Congress, Steed was authorized by Sonnino to say that all members of the Italian government, without exception, hoped for the success of the Congress. That was the position of Sonnino, whose indirect adhesion to the Rome Pact, as it was called the memorandum of the Congress, intended to keep the Pact of London preserving the Italian national aims. The direct sponsorship of Orlando was achieved the day after, receiving the Yugoslavs and the other delegations, and in a interview published on 25th April. The Italian Prime Minister explained that “the famous

²² Albertini, *Venti anni di...*, cit., pp. 270-271.

London Pact was negotiated against the enemy Austria”, but now “face to a friendly Yugoslav State, the situation and the intentions change”.²³

Consequences

The Congress of Rome had many interesting implications, for the Italian Government’s position in the Adriatic question as well. A lively debate followed a “line of balance” between Italians and Slavs in Istria and Dalmatia. All the observers agreed to consider the Italian attitude as a double-faced policy towards the issue of nationalities as the different positions between Orlando and Sonnino, but at the same time several columnists and many newspapers, as *Il Giornale d’Italia*, *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, *Idea Nazionale* and *La Perseveranza*, appreciated the Rome resolution.²⁴ The consequences of the Congress of Rome were relevant: firstly, the idea of a dissolution of Austria-Hungary was achieved, even through the organization of “Legions” (Czech-Slovaks, Yugoslavs, Romanians, Poles) and with an active propaganda over and beyond the enemy lines, to call for desertion and to pass to the Entente side. With the agreement between Štefanik, Orlando and Minister of War Vittorio Zupelli, the Czech-Slovak legion was officially instituted on 21st April, under the authority of the Czech National Council and under the command of the Italian general, Graziani. Of 14,000 prisoners, 11,500 (and 3,000 more later) were enlisted in a new Division.²⁵ The Central Commission for Propaganda on the Enemy, instituted in April with one officer for each nationality, led by deputies Ugo Ojetti, serving in the Italian Army as Major, and supported by Lt.s Giuseppe Donati and Umberto Zanotti Bianco, began its activities on 15th May 1918, when finally press characters in foreign languages were available; then it was possible to write in all these languages the calls and the weekly newspapers – in four pages for four languages – about the liberation of the oppressed nationalities. After the victories following 15th June, the papers were written in German and Hungarian too. The papers launch over the first line was made using rockets and airplanes for the hinterland: actually, many Austro-Hungarian soldiers captured after the battles of June had these papers with themselves. The fear of desertions led German and Hungarian officers to stand before the troops, causing a massacre among them.²⁶

²³ Interview published on 25th April 1918 in *Le Journal des débats*. See Albertini, *Venti anni di...*, pp. 272-273.

²⁴ Ibidem, pp. 275-276.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 251. On the contrary, for Yugoslav soldiers, Sonnino didn’t accept the feeling of loyalty to the King of Serbia, as future King of Yugoslavia.

²⁶ See the letter of Ugo Ojetti to Luigi Albertini, from Supreme Command on 22nd June 1918, in L. Albertini, *Epistolario. 1911-1926*, a cura di O. Barié, II vol: “La Grande Guerra”, Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1968, p. 936.

The support of all the Allies to this strategy was complete and on the end of May the Italian Ambassador to Washington Macchi Di Celere, in a report to Sonnino, quoted the official position of the US government, stating that the State Secretary wished to announce that the Congress of the oppressed nationalities of Austria-Hungary, were followed with great interest by the U.S. Government and that the national aspirations of the Czech-Slovaks and Yugoslavs for their freedom collected the sympathy of this Government. Then Sonnino suggested to collaborate with United States to encourage Yugoslavs and Czech-Slovaks to enlist in the Legions created within the Italian Army.²⁷ On the other side, in spite of the strengthening of the censorship the troubles in Habsburg lands (as in Boemia, on 13th May) were amplified by the echo of the Congress of Rome and by the presence in Prague of Yugoslav, Italian (with Mr Conci, Vice-president of Tyrol Diet), Polish, Slovak, Ukrainian delegates.²⁸ In May, more and more meetings and small congresses, official and unofficial, were organized,²⁹ even if contrasts between different national movements were growing.³⁰

In conclusion, we can summarize the weight of these propaganda activities with some data. In six months, between 15th May and 1st November 1918, almost 51 millions of posters (of 643 manifests) and 9 millions of the weekly newspaper were launched from the Italian front over the enemy's territory, the same strategy was applied on the Western front, where Lord Northcliffe, in the Spring 1918, ordered a distribution of more than 100 000 posters every day over the German lines. This factor was one of the most relevant for the final victory.³¹ But, with the liberation of the "oppressed"

²⁷ DDI, V Serie, Vol. 10, doc. 765, "L'Ambasciatore a Washington, Macchi Di Celere, al Ministro degli Esteri Sonnino", T. GAB. 1180/124, Washington, 30th May 1918.

²⁸ Ibidem, doc. 739, "Il Capo del Servizio Informazioni del Comando Supremo, Marchetti, al Presidente del Consiglio e Ministro dell'Interno Orlando, e al Ministro della Guerra, Zupelli", N. R.R. 8717 A., Rome, 24th May 1918.

²⁹ See for example the case of the International Congress for the Oppressed Nationalities' Rights in Rome, promoted in the 2nd half of May 1918 by the "*Terza Italia – Alleanza per la difesa dell'italianità e delle nazionalità oppresse*", an association inspired by Mazzini's and Garibaldi's ideals and led by Efsio Giglio-Tos. See ASC – *Archivio Storico Capitolino*, Fondo: Gabinetto del Sindaco, Busta: 461, posizione Guerra italo-austriaca – prot. 246, anno 1918. An important echo of this events is evident in the position of the Freemasonry of Grande Oriente d'Italia (GOI). After the Congress, this institution officially stated that Italian Masons agreed with the Rome Pact and even discussed these positions before April 1918. See *Rivista Massonica*, anno XLIX, n. 4-5 - Roma, 30 aprile - 31 maggio 1918, pp. 92-98.

³⁰ DDI, V Serie, Vol. 10, doc. 720, "L'Ambasciatore a Parigi, Bonin, al Ministro degli Esteri, Sonnino", T. GAB. R. 1121/295, Paris, 21st May 1918. As a matter of fact, the difficulties for the organization of a new congress soon emerged in the contrast between Czech-Slovaks and Poles about the question of Eastern Galicia.

³¹ See Albertini, *Venti anni di...*, cit., p. 277.

nationalities, the Serb solution for Yugoslav question meant the end of the independent Montenegro.

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Summary

After the Wilson points, in Italy too emerged in the public discourse the question to support or not the “oppressed nationalities” in Austria-Hungary. Luigi Albertini and the newspaper “Il Corriere della Sera” led this strategy, which meant to pass the positions of the London Pact and to prepare Italy to negotiate the Eastern claimed territories with new nations, as Yugoslavs. The Torre-Trumbic agreement was the important result of this action and political base for the Congress of Rome, in April 1918. This Congress was the beginning of the real support to the nationalities against Habsburgs. The propaganda over the enemy’s trenches was fruitful: with more than 50 millions of posters and quite 10 millions of newspaper launched over the lines, Italian army called to a mass desertion the no German/Hungarian soldiers (then belonging to the “oppressed nationalities”, e.g. Yugoslavs, Romanians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks). This factor was one of the most relevant for the final victory.