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# Albertini, Luigi

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Albertini, *Luigi*

Italian Journalist

Born 19 October 1871 in Ancona, Italy

Died 29 December 1941 in Rome, Italy

**Luigi Albertini was a journalist and editor-in-chief of one of the most important Italian newspapers, *Corriere della Sera*. From the pages of his newspaper, he advocated for Italian intervention in the war and later became an important link between the government and military commands.**

## Table of Contents

[1 Early Life](#)

[2 First World War](#)

[3 The Post-war Period](#)

[Selected Bibliography](#)

[Citation](#)

## Early Life

Luigi Albertini (1871-1941) was a conservative liberal, close to the national and moral values of the *Risorgimento* and admirer of the Historical Right Party (*Destra Storica*). After his economic and political studies and a training period in London – alongside the administrative director of the *Times*, [C. F. Moberly Bell \(1847-1911\)](#) – in 1900 he became the editor-in-chief of *Corriere della Sera*, which, under his leadership, became one of the most important newspapers in [Italy](#) at the time.

## First World War

At the outbreak of World War I, from the pages of his [newspaper](#), Albertini supported the campaign for Italy's participation in the war alongside the Entente and fought against [neutralism](#) and its supporters, including [Giovanni Giolitti \(1842-1928\)](#), who was one of his major antagonists. Giolitti was accused by Albertini of having debased the liberal spirit of the ruling class, making the anti-systemic forces more aggressive and weakening the authority of the state. That position was linked to the "educational", "pedagogical" view that Albertini had of journalism; he saw it an instrument for the development of a national public opinion involved in the great political choices of the country.

After Italy's entry into the conflict, due to Albertini's political contacts – he was appointed senator in December 1914, and maintained especially close ties to [Antonio Salandra \(1853-1931\)](#) and [Sidney Sonnino \(1847-1922\)](#) – he often served as an intermediary and mediator between the [government](#) and military commands. This role allowed him to understand both the political and military, moral and social dynamics of the war. He persuaded himself that, to ensure the victory of Italy, it was essential to give the war a truly global significance and then to set up closer links between the soldiers and the rest of the country. For this reason, he fought against press [censorship](#), convinced it was essential to provide the nation with a comprehensive picture of political developments and of military operations of the conflict. This view was strengthened by his frequent visits to the areas of operations.

It was at the front that he became acquainted with [Luigi Cadorna \(1850-1928\)](#), the chief of staff of the Italian army. The two men were very different in a number of ways: Albertini was an exponent of the productive bourgeoisie, while Cadorna was the product of a deeply conservative military society; the former was a staunch supporter of the liberal idea of the state, the latter cultivated a deep scepticism towards the representative institutions that, in his opinion, were ill-suited to guaranteeing a fruitful cooperation between freedom and state authority. However, both men were convinced that only the experience of war would allow Italians to become a true national community. And in this sense, the educational logic that Albertini conferred on his journalistic practice became complementary and auxiliary to that educational function of the country that Cadorna had been called to fulfil from a military point of view. Albertini never denied the authoritarian traits of Cadorna's action, but they seemed to him the most suitable instrument for rebuilding a nation undermined by a decade of Giolitti's politics. The aversion to these policies, at least, united Albertini and Cadorna.

After the Austrian counter-offensives in 1916 (*Strafexpedition*) and, especially, in 1917 (*Caporetto*)), Albertini's fear of the military and moral defeat of his country convinced him that the state had to take action to strengthen the internal front and the morale of soldiers, improving life at the front and the socio-economic conditions of the Italian people. He believed that the Italian defeats were not to be attributed to military errors, but rather to the behaviour of the political class in command. Therefore the defence that, from the pages of *Corriere della Sera*, Albertini made of Cadorna's conduct (Cadorna had been held responsible for the [Battle of Caporetto](#) and was replaced by [Armando Diaz \(1861-1928\)](#)) had not only the purpose of safeguarding a person to whom he was tied by esteem and loyalty, but also to counter the rise of that ruling class responsible for the Italian defeat – a ruling class that, contaminated by giolittism, could have endangered the fate of the nation. For these

reasons as well, he slowly put aside his conservative liberalism and moved to the political right-wing.

## The Post-war Period

Albertini retained his new political position in the post-war period, too, but after clashes with [fascists](#), he was forced to quit the *Corriere della Sera*. He spent the rest of his life writing his memoirs and a book about the First World War (*The Origin of the War of 1914*). He died in 1941.

Rosaria Leonardi, Independent Scholar

Section Editor: [Marco Mondini](#)

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