

Centenary (Italy)

By [Barbara Bracco](#)

This article illustrates the main characteristics of the long commemorative cycle dedicated to the centenary of the Great War in Italy and its success compared to other anniversaries of national and international history. It examines the following aspects: the quantity and type of the initiatives promoted, where they took place, the institutions that supported them, and how Italian citizens reacted to these events.

Table of Contents

- [1 Introduction](#)
- [2 Institutions of Memory](#)
- [3 The Contents of Commemoration Events](#)
- [4 Conclusions](#)

[Notes](#)

[Selected Bibliography](#)

[Citation](#)

Introduction

The centenary of the Great War was perhaps the most “celebrated” historic event in the recent life of the Italian Republic. Compared to the 150th anniversary of the unification of [Italy](#) (2011) as well as the 60th and 70th anniversaries of the end of the Second World War, the 1914-1918 conflict generated an incredible amount of attention. Public and private institutions designed and implemented a rich array of initiatives. In addition to the official commemorations of the presidency of the republic, the ministries of defence and education, municipalities, regions, [universities](#), and public and private cultural centres of all kinds promoted conventions, [exhibitions](#), documentaries, [film](#) festivals, and much more.

This essay illustrates the main characteristics of Italian [commemoration](#) of the Great War: the sheer number of initiatives promoted, where they took place, the type of events, and their reception. It probes whether and how the centenary provided an occasion for real historical and cultural reflection in the public sphere.^[1]

The “Mission Structure for Anniversaries of National Interest” reports to the council presidency. It was founded on the occasion of the anniversary of the unification of Italy and is tasked with coordinating celebratory initiatives throughout the country. According to data provided by the Mission Structure, it sponsored and lent financial support to 1,570 initiatives.^[2] The following regions were the most prolific in terms of events: Lazio (156), Veneto (200), Trentino (eighty-seven), Lombardy (190), Tuscany (ninety-one), and Puglia (seventy-two).^[3] There were many events, especially in 2014-2015 and 2018, which did not obtain institutional and financial support from the Mission Structure. Therefore, it would hardly be surprising if a total of 4,000 or more commemorative events took place. In addition to military shrines and institutional venues (such as town halls, schools and universities), cultural centres large and small (from Italian [Red Cross](#) divisions to neighbourhood committees) all hosted conferences, debates, film festivals, and exhibitions. Almost every single Italian city held its own event during the four-year period of the centenary. Classrooms, university lecture halls, cinemas, auditoriums, [museums](#), small clubs, and parish oratories, even in the smallest of towns, were transformed into public spaces of [memory](#) as well as national and international history, at least for a day.

These estimates do not take into consideration the countless programs and documentaries hosted by the Italian national broadcaster, *Radiotelevisione italiana* (RAI), which recently introduced RaiStoria, a channel entirely dedicated to history. In 2014, and particularly in 2015, most of RaiStoria’s airtime paid special attention to the Great War. The most significant programs include those presented by the journalist and historian Paolo Mieli, *Passato e Presente (Past and Present)*; documentaries such as the twenty-episode *1914-1918. La Grande Guerra (1914-1918. The Great War)* and *Cesare Battisti, l’ultima fotografia (Cesare Battisti, the Last Photograph)*; and a few films like *Torneranno i prati (The Fields Will Return)*, produced by RAI, directed by Ermanno Olmi, and inspired by [Federico De Roberto’s \(1861-1927\)](#) story *La paura (The Fear)*^[4] and the more modest *Fango e gloria (Mud and Glory)*.^[5] At least one programme per day was aired on television, perhaps more if we take into account programmes on paid television channels like Sky, with its frequent international documentaries. Numerous broadcasts on the topic, aired almost daily on public and private radio, eschew quantification.

There were also countless publication initiatives from large Italian newspapers which published or republished Italian and international [literature](#) on the Great War, including DVDs with footage or images, which were often previously unpublished. The ample offering of commemoration initiatives was perfectly matched, in quantitative terms at least, with published output on the theme. An analysis of the national [library](#) system shows that more than 4,000 books were published (ranging from scientific [historiography](#) to educational works) during the years of the centenary, to which we

should add the inserts of academic and non-academic journals not specifically dedicated to the Great War, which cannot be approximated.

Of the enormous effort made for the centenary, few permanent signs will remain. Apart from the restoration of military memorials (still in progress) and some museums (new or rebuilt under the so-called "*Museo diffuso*" promoted by the Mission Structure) in the northeast, the memory of the Great War will not have a central place. Therefore, when faced with impressive figures on centenary events, it is necessary to enquire where they actually took place. As previously mentioned, certain areas and cities in Italy were veritable catalysers of the anniversary. There appear to be two main epicentres: Rome and the area of Veneto, Trentino, and Friuli Venezia Giulia embraced their central role in celebrations. However, these were far from the only locales to stage significant commemorative events. Large cities like Milan and Turin, as well as small towns in the north, south, and centre of Italy commemorated the Great War in a swathe of initiatives, ranging from high-impact to modest events. Small towns, such as those in the Bergamo province, Lombardy, or Puglia (where more than seventy events took place), often showed high levels of activity, with the organisation of small exhibitions or conferences. They were characterised by a particular degree of commitment, success, and motivation, which will be discussed in greater detail further on. Apart from a few exceptions (often the result of scarce financial resources, as in the case of Calabria), it is safe to say that the Italian Republic found itself in the thralls of a "celebratory frenzy" unrivalled in recent history. In contrast with their lack of interest in anniversaries, towns, small cities, and Italian provinces contributed immensely and showed particular regard for initiatives celebrating the Great War, worthy of historiographic, civil, and cultural reflection. The celebratory frenzy of some southern regions (like Puglia and Campania to some extent) almost appears to be a cultural (and perhaps political) manifestation of neo-bourbonic (anti-unification) pulsations expressed on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy.

Institutions of Memory

A range of institutions were involved in the historic commemorations. The commitment shown by the presidency of the republic is particularly worthy of mention, starting with the inauguration of a celebratory cycle in the summer of 2014. Although the centenary of the Italian war actually began on 24 May 2015, the presidency of the republic made a very precise political and cultural decision to connect the Italian centenary to the European framework. The concert held by the conductor Riccardo Muti with [Giuseppe Verdi's \(1813-1901\) Requiem](#) on 6 July 2014 in Redipuglia, attended by the presidents of Slovenia and Croatia and the president of the Austrian Republic's federal council, marked the start of the official celebrations. Giorgio Napolitano, who was president at the time, stated:

We effectively feel included in a European duty and commitment for celebration and reflection. European countries which once fought bloody battles on opposite fronts, are now united in a great project and a melting pot of community integration, the European Union, which contains twenty-eight member states and is open to further natural

completions. Therefore, they should reflect on the issue of common commemoration and on the lesson to be learnt, to enable the growth of their common identity heritage.^[6]

Once more in the domain of [music](#), on 27 July 2014, the presidency of the council of ministers sponsored another initiative. From sixteen different locations, representing sixteen states, sixteen musicians (including Paolo Fresu on the Folgaria Plateau for Italy) played “The Silence.” This extraordinary musical relay was clearly grounded in a European and above all [pacifistic](#) ethos.^[7] This was also palpable in a speech by the new president of the republic, Sergio Mattarella, who, on the occasion of the centenary of Italy’s entry into the war on 24 May 2015, at a location laden with commemorative significance, declared:

We are on Mount San Michele, on behalf of the Italian population, in memory of the soldiers and victims of the entire conflict, to honour them, remember their suffering and desire for peace. This is the meaning of the tricolour flag on display on these days.

Far removed from any [nationalistic](#) triumphalism, President Mattarella described the First World War as a decisive and dramatic turning point in Italian history. It is still important to study it because “we mustn’t be scared of the truth. Without truth, without historic research, memory would be destined to fade away. Celebrations would risk becoming vacuous rhetorical exercises.”^[8]

The European and pacifist themes strongly present in President Mattarella’s speech did not prevent him from honouring the armed forces, nor from uttering a rare reference in official celebrations: the Italian victory. Evidently without any nationalistic intent, in his usual end of year speech (which, like every year, was aired on television on 31 December 2017), the president recollected the conclusion of the First World War and “the end of the terrible suffering inflicted by that war,” while also remembering the victory, which came at such a high price.^[9] The balance struck by both presidents between the remembrance of the suffering (not just Italian) caused by the First World War and of Italy’s role, including in military terms, within the context of Europe a century ago as well as today, was undoubtedly a result of their institutional role, as well as different and to a certain extent concomitant cultural policies from which they originate. Heirs of internationalist and supranationalist political traditions, while also having especial regard for national history, both Napolitano the former communist and Mattarella the former Christian democrat succeeded in embracing the central, painful, controversial, and even progressive aspects of the Italian war within the broader and more complex European context.^[10]

It is hardly surprising that major official events of the presidency of the republic over these four years were held in strongly symbolic places. In addition to the [Vittorio Emanuele II Monument](#) or “Altar of the Fatherland” where the president pays his respects to the unknown soldier each year on 4 November, the large military monuments in the northeast (Redipuglia) and south (Bari’s Military Monument of the Overseas Fallen Soldiers, the final resting place of the remains of 75,000 soldiers, which was visited by the President of the Senate Maria Elisabetta Alberti Casellati), were locations favoured by the presidency of the republic. These monumental complexes constitute an evident

physical scar on the territory and at the same time a bridge, an intersection with countries which were once enemy nations. Areas along the northeastern border were and still remain a crossroads of Italian and European history. President Mattarella recalled this in Trieste, where the concluding ceremony of the centenary was held. After the procession of armed forces, in the presence of military representatives of many former belligerent states, the head of state addressed the public, referring to Trieste as the symbolic place of completion of national unity. In line with a traditional interpretation of the Great War, which perceives the conquest of Trento and Trieste as the final acts of the Risorgimento, Mattarella also read deeper into the city's history. Above all, he identified it as the historic bridge between Italy and Central Europe, a melting pot of cultures and traditions, sometime in apparent conflict, which now peacefully coexist in the heart of Europe. He also referred to Trieste as an element of continuity from a different point of view. [Benito Mussolini \(1883-1945\)](#) announced the racial laws on 18 September 1938 in the same square where the last rite of the centenary took place – Piazza Unità d'Italia.^[11] In somewhat firmer terms compared to other occasions, the president of the republic interpreted this geographic connection as underpinning the sense of the short Italian century, a process full of glorious episodes but equally weighed down by political catastrophes. The president's words were laden with references to the contemporary Italian and international climate, which, on the centenary of the foundation of the Italian Fasci of Combat and the March on Rome, can be re-proposed for historiographic and civil reflection.^[12]

The Italian parliament was practically absent from commemoration and public debate on the war. Apart from a few isolated declarations by deputies and senators or the display of the flag on 1 November 2018 by the Fratelli d'Italia party in the Chamber of Deputies – immediately stigmatised by the president of the chamber as an act of political provocation – the centenary amounted to little more than an opportunity for occasional and insignificant political instrumentalization.^[13] In other words, the institutional leaders (and a large portion of the Italian political world) have taken up the narrative which, since the foundation of the republic, has marked the memory of the Great War: that is, inserting the First World War into the complex fabric of Italian (and European) history, recalling the most dramatic (and often senseless) moments of that experience, but also the path of the Italians towards political and moral unity.^[14]

The heads of state, the presidency of the republic and [government](#) (on which the “Mission Structure” depends for anniversaries of national interest and whose scientific committee is chaired by the former president of the senate, Franco Marini) were not the only institutional entities to promote commemorative events. As previously mentioned, municipalities, regions, and local administrations of different political orientations were extremely active in organising and supporting initiatives of all kinds. More than with a direct political purpose, these administrations appear to have responded to a cultural need to appropriate part of national history. As we will see from the types of events, along with their historic and historiographic content, recounting and illustrating the local effects of the First World War appears to have been one of the main objectives of these institutional entities. Many of the provincial initiatives asserted that the Great War happened here too, it passed through the area, leaving indelible signs. In the words of [Nicola Labanca](#), this attitude occasionally culminated in an

“apotheosis of localism”: from global conflict, there was often a shift to a war of regional or even town-sized dimensions. It is also true that a considerable number of events organised at a local level commemorated national [sacrifice](#) as the international tragedy of war. Small Italian municipalities succeeded in embracing the occasion for a broader reflection on the meaning of the Great War. Schools and universities in particular became mobilised in commemorating the transnational nature of the Great War. Educational institutions, albeit with modest means and resources, promoted or hosted workshops, conventions, and exhibitions which, sometimes in a very scholastic manner, succeeded in transcending the simple “localistic” tribute format, interpreting the war experience in much broader terms. Private entities were equally significant in this sense. Large foundations, along with the smallest of cultural associations (including a few [sports](#) clubs), dedicated themselves to discovering aspects and themes of the war experience.

The Contents of Commemoration Events

Compared to other important and recent national anniversaries and to the 50th anniversary of the end of the Great War in 1968, the centenary appears to have succeeded in involving almost the entire national territory. This not its only peculiarity. The 2014-2018 celebratory cycle presents original elements of commemorative form and historic/historiographic content, including official celebrations, as previously discussed. The president of the republic or the presidents of the parliament or government have always been present at institutional venues on the occasion of traditional ceremonies, paying tribute to the fallen, awarding honours to soldiers, and for displays by the *Frecce Tricolori*. As we have seen, these official rituals were also accompanied by a different interpretation of historical facts by the highest echelons of the state. Indeed, compared to speeches by President [Giuseppe Saragat \(1898-1988\)](#) on occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, Presidents Napolitano and Mattarella espoused stronger pacifist and pro-European accents. The period spanning 2014-2018 also saw a rise in interest in aspects of the history of the Great War which were largely ignored by upper echelons of the state back in 1968. Despite, or because of, the presence of numerous soldiers who had fought in the war, their suffering, tough military discipline, the status of Italians who served (and died) under the Habsburg Empire, were all absent in commemorations held on occasion of the 50th anniversary and yet were all present in presidential speeches on occasion of the 100th anniversary.^[15] The upper echelons of the Italian state appear to have engaged in a more realistic interpretation of the war’s history, thanks to that Italian historiography which, on occasion of the 50th anniversary, began studying the more brutal and distant aspects of nationalist rhetoric which, unfortunately, had far from disappeared in 1968.^[16] The temporal distance which now separates us from the First World War has evidently enabled the presidency of the republic and military leaders to examine events which unfolded a hundred years ago in a different light. On the other hand, the decision made by the civil and military upper echelons of the state to focus not only on classic military parades, but also on the renovation of great military monuments, as well as conferences and exhibitions dedicated to the “popular” history of the war, speaks volumes on the

orientation of the centenary.

Official ceremonies aside, celebratory events organised by public and private local institutions offered different historiographic and civic interpretations of the Great War when compared to the past. Reconstructions of political history were few and far between. Indeed, reasons for the conflict and diplomatic dynamics during the period spanning 1914-1918 remained confined to the margins of commemorations. A few conventions and exhibitions illustrated the war's international and military context, along with Italy's role therein. In general, the political dynamics which culminated in war and overviews of the conflict's fronts appear to have provided a mere backdrop for other kinds of historical reconstruction. Of course, at national or international conventions as well as numerous exhibitions, there was no shortage of references to prominent Italian and European figures (or American, as in the case of [Woodrow Wilson \(1956-1924\)](#)) and the geopolitical context. However, political history was marginal in celebratory events, almost as though the causes of the war, political strategies, and internal political debate among belligerent states were all acquired information, or worse still, an accessory element or insignificant backdrop.

An exception to this can be seen in especial interest in the year of Italian [neutrality](#) and the division of the country into neutralists and interventionists between 1914 and 1915. Indeed, several books, conferences, and exhibitions traced the occasionally dramatic phases of the Italian conflict over whether the country should enter the war.^[17] [Fascism](#) looms over the year of neutrality and the entire war; the centenary of its foundation was commemorated in early 2019 with a series of initiatives which inevitably intersected with the long cycle of the centenary as well as Italian and international current affairs. It is not a coincidence that the flourishing of reprints of historiographic and war memorial works included Mussolini's *Diary of War*. Upon the expiry of publication rights, it was republished by a staggering five publishing houses, complete with critical apparatuses and introductions by renowned historians. The division in public opinion and between the political parties in 1914-1915 and during the war years on Italy's entry into the conflict, the institutional machinations of the [Antonio Salandra \(1853-1931\)](#) government, and above all the role of "various [interventionism](#)" (especially from the left) remain important, although not central elements of Italian reflection on the war experience.^[18]

There was extensive commemoration of social and cultural history aspects of the Great War. The "internal front" inspired conventions, exhibitions, and many other commemorative events which aimed to highlight the participation of civil society in the war. The [mobilisation of women](#) in factories or in [propaganda](#) and of [children](#) lay at the heart of a reinterpretation whose aim was not to exalt national harmony during the war years. The contribution of women and civil society to general mobilisation was mostly interpreted as one of the most dramatic chapters of national life, and also perhaps Italians' first ever community experience.

Military history enjoyed a greater degree of success. The focus here was on the socio-military history of the more than 6 million Italians who were mobilised during the war. A hundred years on, there were no longer first-hand witnesses of the war. The complex and articulated network of public

and private institutions which became actively involved in commemorations appear to have paid homage to a definitively concluded and distant story of the past, albeit one which remained vividly present in the collective imaginary. For Italians today who identify with historiographic readings, the Great War marked a crucial turning point in European and national life.^[19] Despite or thanks to the temporal distance of facts, the Great War fascinates the sons, and perhaps to an even greater extent, the grandsons of those who fought in 1915-1918, as the primordial genesis of national life. Commemoration focused particularly on the military and human experience of young adults and youths. Sketching portraits of typical Italian soldiers was a major theme. Reprinted historiographic and memorial works and a burgeoning amount of popular writings, often previously unpublished, by Italian soldiers, shifted attention towards the lived experience of soldiers. As we will see further on, the active participation of many citizens, libraries, and archives of documents (letters, diaries as well as medals, photographs and objects), resulted in the writing of a highly popular narrative of the war years. Commemorations also stressed a story of the sacrifice of life as required by the war experience. More than 600,000 Italians died and their fate was a constant theme in local and national initiatives. An array of conventions, conferences, exhibitions, documentaries, online databases, and artistic installations, in addition to aforementioned official events, placed considerable focus on the topic of mass death in the apocalypse of war. At a local level in particular, every single region saw the inauguration of a commemorative plaque or the publication of a list of victims from a particular town or village. This reinterpretation of the war catastrophe was also rich in original and innovative contributions. Indeed, soldiers who were Italian nationals under the Habsburg Empire were conferred full historic citizenship in tribute to those who perished in the war, after years of being side-lined by historiography and educational history.

The particular and near obsessive emphasis on the internal front and trench life configured itself as a “rhetoric of the people” of wartime which evidently reflected the mood and horizons of Italians today. The centrality of suffering and mourning also conjured up a “victim paradigm,” which, years ago, in a broader context of national and international history, was identified by Giovanni De Luna as a constant characteristic of historic remembrance and commemoration, starting from the 80s.^[20] If pain or personal vicissitudes are the most popular focal point of commemoration, we should ask whether the centenary favoured not just the recovery but also a re-reading of the history of the Great War. The risk of an emotional distortion of the war experience had already been alluded to by some historians in different ways at the start of the commemorative cycle. In March 2014, in an interview for *La Repubblica*, Mario Isnenghi criticised recent Italian historiography, largely focused on the theme of suffering and mourning, which “is okay in terms of a policy of remembrance and civic education. But it's not good on a historiographic level.”^[21] In terms of commemoration and narration of the centenary, Isnenghi was also aware of the risk of

seeing only the absurd, the nonsense, the futile massacre. But we need to be careful: there's the absurdity of carnage, of “total war”, but there are also those who saw a sense and purpose in war... Today and already since the twentieth century, the prevalent interpretation of the First World War is that it was an absurd event, devoid of logical sense.^[22]

On the paradigm of “useless slaughter,” Ernesto Galli della Loggia made a controversial come-back in an article for *Corriere della Sera* dated 4 August 2014. In considering the first commemorative events, Galli della Loggia wrote,

It is all a remembrance of the blindness of politicians of those years, the lies of propaganda, the horror of the trenches, the cruelty of orders, the inhumane deprivations of daily life, the carnage of assaults, mutilations. Naturally overall, it is a critical analysis of rhetoric, myths, sombre ceremonies of mourning which flourished thereof, war cemeteries, monuments to identified and unknown soldiers, scattered everywhere. It's a retrieval of heart-rendering diaries. For Europeans of today, it appears that the conflict was nothing more than all this.^[23]

Dominated by a present day humanitarian “ideology” which dismisses all conflicts as senseless carnage, Galli della Loggia claims that Italians risk failing to perceive the specific history of the Great War as well as resulting changes, including positive ones:

Independence acquired by three or four European nations, the definitive collapse of social classes like the aristocracy, who had enjoyed a centuries-long dominion, a new sense of citizenship and political mobilisation which spread among millions of soldiers from popular classes, the birth of new and formidable unrest in favour of autonomy among the people and elites from Anatolia to the Persian Gulf and Nile. It is true that all wars are a “senseless massacre,” however it is important to note how they almost always generate the remarkable effect of change throughout the world. This is why they deserve to be remembered and studied by that thing which goes by the name of history.^[24]

Conclusions

The success of collections of documents, testimonials, and objects dating back to the war, good ratings for television programmes on the topic and good public turnout to numerous conferences, exhibitions, or other initiatives, particularly in small to medium sized towns, indicates that overall the commemorative cycle achieved a positive result.^[25] Furthermore, this result was a transversal success in generational terms. Participation of citizens ranging from seniors to youths, the latter often involved in initiatives organised by schools and universities, suggests that the centenary succeeded in forging a renewed connection with national history. However, there were certain limitations to the success of commemorations. The first is present in all commemorative cycles. The public use of history, an extensively and superficially exploited public heritage, risks leaving little trace on the cultural horizon of modern society. The signs of saturation on the theme of the Great War which appeared in 2018 lead us to believe that little of the centenary will remain in civic consciousness. Not even the manipulations by the extreme right parties were able to modify the narrative paradigms of the centenary, the institutional paradigm of the presidents of the republic (and a large part of the political world) centred on the difficult path of national life and European history, and on the “victimisation” narrative adopted in many local commemorations. The centenary was probably the last homage to the generations of the Great War, a farewell rite to a history now devoid of first

hand testimonials, or perhaps, for younger individuals, an element of reflection which may ripen in the years to come. Of course only time will enable us to test this hypothesis. Other limits were linked to the socio-cultural setting, mainly centred around “mourning” and the trauma of war, palpable in numerous events and identified by Galli della Loggia as well as Isnenghi. There was an evident lack of references to political and military history (in the strictest sense), but what stands out in particular is the absence of reference to the international and European contexts. Apart from references by the presidents of the republic, who also invited Italians to reflect on the theme of European mourning for a cultural re-conception of the European Union’s foundations, Italian commemoration, like almost all other European countries, focused on national remembrance (often with fascinating in-depth analysis and reflections), on its own suffering, and occasionally on its successes (more social than military). If the centenary was supposed to be Europe’s chance to rethink its own history, this chance appears to have withered away. Italy, like many other countries, contributed to this failure. Paradoxically, a more European and interesting contribution may come from the highly national centenary of the foundation of the Fasci and the March on Rome, as previously mentioned. This tragic chapter of Italian history, inextricably linked with the Great War, may inspire broader and a more aware reflection on 20th century Europe.

Barbara Bracco, Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca

Reviewed by external referees on behalf of the General Editors

Notes

1. ↑ Labanca, Nicola: Introduction, in: *Reviewing the Great War. Visual Culture and the Centenary of the First World War*, Trento 2018 (forthcoming) and Labanca, Nicola: *Discutendo di guerra*, in: *Italia contemporanea* 280 (2016), pp. 209-215.
2. ↑ The total budget of these initiatives is over 2 million euro. The costs for the recovery of the sites of the Great War and the memorials of the fallen are not known; more than 7 million euro will probably be invested in the Redipuglia Memorial.
3. ↑ In 2015, the Mission Structure issued a call for applications for funding of cultural initiatives on the subject. Only forty-five applications out of a total 793 were accepted.
4. ↑ De Roberto, F.: *La paura e altri racconti della grande guerra*, Rome 2015.
5. ↑ RaiStoria also aired many documentaries produced on the anniversary of the Great War in 1968, when some witnesses of the conflict were still living. Extensive material can be found at *La Grande Guerra 100 Anni Dopo*, issued by RAI, online: <http://www.grandeguerra.rai.it/> (retrieved: 18 September 2019).
6. ↑ Rosso, U.: *A Redipuglia il no di Napolitano alla guerra*, in: *La Repubblica*, 4 July 2014.

7. ↑ Silenzio si muore, issued by Centenario Prima Guerra Mondiale 2014/2018, online: <http://www.centenario1914-1918.it/it/2014/07/27/paolo-fresu-silenzio-si-muore> (retrieved: 18 September 2019).
8. ↑ Intervento del Presidente Mattarella alla celebrazione del 100° anniversario dell'ingresso dell'Italia nella Grande Guerra, issued by Presidenza della Repubblica, online: <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/1041> (retrieved: 18 September 2019).
9. ↑ Messaggio di fine anno del Presidente della Repubblica Sergio Mattarella Messaggio di fine anno del Presidente della Repubblica Sergio Mattarella , issued by Presidenza della Repubblica, online: <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/1312> (retrieved: 18 September 2019).
10. ↑ The former President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, who concluded his mandate in May 2006, also played an important role. Heir to a political tradition grounded in the Partito d'Azione (strongly rooted in the culture of the Risorgimento), he can undoubtedly be credited with the rediscovery of history as a fundamental element of civil life. The reintroduction of certain national holidays and the idea of coordinating events commemorating national history date to his presidency.
11. ↑ Among various accounts of 4 November 2018 see Breda, M.: Mattarella celebra il 4 novembre. Ribadire la via europea, in: Corriere della Sera, 5 November 2018.
12. ↑ President Mattarella gave Corriere della Sera a very interesting interview: Breda, M.: Cento anni dopo. Parla il Presidente Sergio Mattarella. Noi, il 1918, l'Europa. Nessuno Stato ce la farà da solo, in: Corriere della Sera, 4 November 2018.
13. ↑ On this episode see the article by Rubino, Monica: Meloni lancia l'offensiva patriottica di Fdi. "Il 4 novembre torni festa nazionale, il 25 aprile è divisivo", issued by La Repubblica, online: https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2018/11/01/news/meloni_festa_4_novembre_fdi-210531022/?ref=search (retrieved: 19 September 2019). The small right wing party Fratelli d'Italia drew attention to itself on several occasions through to its "patriotic" initiatives, like the exhibition of national symbols (the tricolour flag in particular), or the calling into question of national holidays. For example, as already happened during the Berlusconi government, there was a return to proposing 4 November, a unifying holiday for Italians, as an alternative to 25 April, the day of liberation, which is notoriously divisive for the Italian right. The situation in regional councils is more complex, particularly those in the northeast, where the Great War continues to be a topic fraught with political controversy. The electoral victory of Matteo Salvini's Lega in recent regional elections in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region and Trentino are indicative of a cultural and political shift in this area of the country.
14. ↑ On the lines of continuity and discontinuity in institutional narratives, see Ridolfi, M.: Le feste nazionali, Bologna 2003.
15. ↑ On the 1965-1968 celebrations and the clashes which occurred in Trento in 1968 between students and alpine troopers on the occasion of an official event commemorating the conflict see Antonelli, Q.: Cento anni di Grande guerra. Cerimonie, monumenti, memorie e contro memorie, Rome 2018, pp. 339-374.
16. ↑ It is not possible here to extensively acknowledge the deep and significant developments in 1960s Italian historiography on the Great War. However, the following can undoubtedly be considered groundbreaking publications: Isnenghi, M.: I vinti di Caporetto nella letteratura di guerra, Marsilio 1967 and Forcella, E. / Monticone, A.: Plotone d'esecuzione. I processi della prima guerra mondiale, Bari 1968.
17. ↑ The numerous presentations of the book Cammarano, F. (ed.): Abbasso la guerra! Neutralisti in piazza alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale, Milan 2015 were occasions for public debate on the ten months of Italian neutrality.

18. ↑ See the article by Fiori, Simonetta: Mussolini senza copyright, tornano i diari dimenticati, in: *La Repubblica*, 12 January 2016. The most important reprints are: Mussolini, B. / Isnenghi, Mario (ed.): *Il mio diario di guerra (1915-1917)*, Bologna 2016; Mussolini, B. / Franzinelli, M. (ed.): *Giornale di guerra 1915-1917*, Gorizia 2016; Mussolini, B. / Campi, A. (ed.): *Giornale di guerra 1915-1917*, Soveria Mannelli 2016. We may also add the edition edited by Denis Vidale, Castelfranco Veneto 2015 and the anastatic reprint of the work (with an introduction by Giordano Bruno Guerri) printed by the Milanese newspaper *Il Giornale*.
19. ↑ For Italian historiography and public history see Mondini, M.: *Terra di nessuno. Il Centenario della Grande Guerra in Italia e il difficile rinnovamento dello sguardo pubblico*, in: *Allegoria. Per uno studio materialistico della letteratura* 77 (January-June 2018).
20. ↑ De Luna, G.: *La Repubblica del dolore. Le memorie di un'Italia divisa*, Milan 2011.
21. ↑ Fiori, S.: *Raccontare la Grande guerra. Isnenghi "non dobbiamo vergognarci di aver vinto,"* in: *La Repubblica*, 10 March 2014. Also Isnenghi, M.: *L'anniversario della Grande Guerra in Italia. Spunti e contrappunti a metà del guado*, in: *Italia contemporanea* 280 (April 2016), pp. 216-226.
22. ↑ Caracciolo, L. / Maronta, F. (eds.) *L'eredità della grande guerra, tra miti e realtà*, in: *La Repubblica*, 14 May 2014.
23. ↑ Galli della Loggia, E.: *La memoria cancellata. Cos'altro pensiamo tutti che sia stata la Prima guerra mondiale al dunque se non una "inutile strage"?*, in: *Corriere della Sera*, 4 August 2014. The writer Paolo Rumiz offers a pacifist reading of the Great War, Rumiz, Paolo: *L'eredità del 4 novembre cosa resta all'Italia un secolo dopo la vittoria*, in: *La Repubblica*, 2 November 2018.
24. ↑ Galli della Loggia, *La memoria cancellata* 2014.
25. ↑ On the richness of historical commemoration of the Great War, see the article by Gentile, E.: *Così finì la guerra dei popoli*, in: *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 4 November 2018.

Selected Bibliography

Antonelli, Quinto: **Cento anni di grande guerra. Cerimonie, monumenti, memorie e contromemorie**, Rome 2018: Donzelli.

Assmann, Aleida: **Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses**, Munich 1999: C. H. Beck.

Baioni, Massimo / Conti, Fulvio / Ridolfi, Maurizio (eds.): **Celebrare la nazione. Grandi anniversari e memorie pubbliche nella società contemporanea**, Cinisello Balsamo 2012: Silvana.

Baioni, Massimo; Fogu, Claudio (eds.): **La grande guerra in vetrina. Mostre e musei in Europa Negli anni venti e trenta**, in: *Memoria e Ricerca* 7, 2001.

Gentile, Emilio: **Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione delle politica nell'Italia fascista**, Rome 1994: Laterza.

Isnenghi, Mario: **Ritorni di fiamma. Storie italiane**, Milan 2014: Feltrinelli.

Isnenghi, Mario: **Le guerre degli italiani. Parole, immagini, ricordi 1848-1945**, Milan 1989: A. Mondadori.

Janz, Oliver / Klinkhammer, Lutz (eds.): **La morte per la patria. La celebrazione dei caduti dal Risorgimento alla Repubblica**, Rome 2008: Donzelli.

Labanca, Nicola (ed.): **Commemorare la Grande Guerra. Francia, Germania, Gran Bretagna, Italia**, Florence 2000: Forum per i problemi della pace e della guerra.

Ridolfi, Maurizio: **Le feste nazionali**, Bologna 2003: Il Mulino.

Tobia, Bruno: **L'altare della patria**, Bologna 2011: Il Mulino.

Citation

Bracco, Barbara: Centenary (Italy) , in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2019-09-26. **DOI:** [10.15463/ie1418.11408](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.11408).

License

This text is licensed under: [CC by-NC-ND 3.0 Germany - Attribution, Non-commercial, No Derivative Works](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/de/).