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Federico Imparato, *La „chiave dell' Adriatico“*. Antonio Salandra, Gaetano Salvemini, la Puglia e la politica balcanica dell' Italia liberale durante la Grande Guerra (1914–1918), Rubbettino Editore, 2019, 422 pp.

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In his latest study, Federico Imparato has reaffirmed his place among those historians who treat their subjects in a complete and well-rounded manner and who write about them in a clear and easily understandable style. Studying the interdependence of the phenomenon of public opinion—which can be deceptive and readily subject to change—with the political decisions of state officials can be a difficult task for historians. However, Imparato has met this challenge in his investigation of Italian foreign policy in the Balkans from 1914 to 1918. Even with all the limitations in his approach and certain shortcomings in the concept of his work, by using a variety of sources, Imperato has managed with flexibility to present the intersections, dilemmas, diversions, and constants of Italian foreign policy in the Balkans and, in particular, to the areas he gave the most attention: Albania, Greece, and what later became the Yugoslav state.

Most of *La „chiave dell' Adriatico“*. Antonio Salandra, Gaetano Salvemini, la Puglia e la politica balcanica dell' Italia liberale durante la Grande Guerra (1914–1918) focuses on the southern Italian region of Puglia and its role in Italian military operations and geostrategic planning during the war, as well as the ideological and political currents in the area. One gets the impression that Puglia has not been examined recently as a topic of a separate monograph in Italian historiography. Puglia is always somewhere in the background in all five chapters, each with a long title. Apart from the introductory material, all of the chapters focus on the Italian occupation of southern Albania and on Italian relations with Serbia and Montenegro and Greece, as well as to the “Adriatic and the Mediterranean issues” of the postwar order. Imparato follows various events in the Balkans in which Italy participated through a comparative study of the important political newspapers from the region (*Corriere della Puglia*,

*La Rassegna pugliese*, etc.), the intellectual elite (primarily Gaetano Salvemini, but also others such as Leonardo Azzarita, Martino Cassano, Sergio Panunzio, etc.) and their perceptions of the war and Italy's role in it. These events and processes include the occupation of Vlorë and southern Albania from 1915 to 1916; the transfer of sanitary, field, and military missions to Vlorë/Durrës and the occupation of Sazan Island (the trigger for Albanian hostilities towards Italy); the naval war against the Austro-Hungarian fleet in the Adriatic Sea; the bombing of Puglia ports; connections with Essad Pasha Toptani; participation in the rescue of the retreating Serbian army; refraining from sending assistance to the Venizelos fraction in Greece; clashes with Panhellenic rebel *komitas* in Ioannina; the convention in Argirocastro; the Salonika front and Italian participation in it; conflicts with France over territorial gains in Asia Minor; the Tittoni–Venizelos Agreement; and the Paris Peace Conference.

What new perspectives and conclusions concerning the role of Italy in this period does Imparato present us with?

The first of these is discussion beginning among Italian intellectuals concerning the economic backwardness in Mezzogiorno. Industrial development in the south would help Italian trade and culture penetrate the Mediterranean. The most important cities in this process would be Taranto, Brindisi and Bari, and the main task for the new, small, ambitious, and heterogeneous southern Italian bourgeois class was to raise awareness of their geostrategic importance.

Second is choosing Gaetano Salvemini and Antonio Salandra as two points of intersection in the study of this time period. They represent two branching-off points of the Italian geopolitical role in the upcoming war, and were chosen with reason. Imperato describes them as ideological antipodes to Giolitti's liberalism and proponents of a more active Italian foreign policy (known as democratic interventionists). He also notes that they both came from the south of Italy, and they followed events in the East, and especially on the Balkan Peninsula with great interest—one from the intellectual sphere and the other from the political.

Antonio Salandra was the first Italian Prime

Minister to have been born in Puglia. Even though he didn't serve for long (1914–1916), he wanted to find an exit from the internal crisis by relying on broader cooperation among the Social Reformists, Radicals, and Liberals—a task in which he would not succeed. The decision not to involve Italy in the conflict during the July crisis of 1914 was a reflection of political skill in heeding the advice of the conservative part of the Italian political elite, of whom Antonio di San Giuliano and Tommaso Tittoni were the most prominent, and which was unprepared for a war on two fronts—land and naval. The idea of inviting Sidney Sonnino to his cabinet as Minister of Foreign Affairs was a forced but wise decision, although Sonnino's intransigence in defence of Italy's territorial demands would prove to be a failure at the Paris Peace Conference.

Gaetano Salvemini, a native of Molfetta and an Italian historian, writer, publicist, and intellectual of wide erudition, came to be known as an advocate of democratic interventionism and a fierce critic of the so-called *Libisti*. Salvemini was initially opposed to the radical overthrow of the old European order and accepted the importance of the Central Powers, but as the war progressed, his views changed. He engaged in heated debates with nationalists over Italy's irredentist aspirations and the war in Libya, though he shared their aversion to the “unreasonable” pacifism of the Socialist Party. He supported Albania's 1914 declaration of independence issued in Gjirokastër, although it would later prove problematic for Italian interests there. He denied Italy's right to Dalmatia and Alto Adige, but he promoted the idea of economic monopolies in Asia Minor and the implementation of Wilson's Fourteen Points. He attacked Sonnino in his newspaper *Unità* and in numerous other articles as the main culprit behind the political blindness that had caused the Italian catastrophe at Versailles. In the *Corriere della Sera*, Salvemini also led a fierce campaign against Sonnino's unyielding policy towards the South Slavs, and participated as a publicist in the 1917 *Congress of Oppressed Nationalities of Austria-Hungary* in Rome. After the war, democratic interventionists were harshly attacked

as *renunziatari*, although at one point they, together with nationalists, had exerted extreme pressure on Salandra's government to enter the war, albeit with different motives.

Both Salandra and Sonnino believed that the war would not last long, perhaps only a few months, but as Imperato points out, in this they were misguided. Moreover, Imperato doesn't seem to have much sympathy for Sonnino's maximalist territorial claims at Versailles. It is interesting to note that, after the war, Sonnino wanted Rijeka wrenched from Austria-Hungary and left within the Croatian sphere of interest, and that he saw the significance of Serbia's access to the sea in the southern part of the Adriatic. He also saw in the *insufficiently open* attitude of the Italian diplomacy towards the Allies during 1915–1917 the causes of later dramatic events related to the occupation of Rijeka and Dalmatia, as well as the withdrawal of Italian troops from Albania and the rest of the Balkans.

It is interesting to note that *Corriere della Puglia*, the most important publication in Puglia, called for the industrialization of the southern Italian provinces (modernization of the railway system and the port of Bari), and a cultural imperialism concerning the Ottoman Empire's African holdings (Libya). Up until war broke out in 1914, it also took a rather ambivalent towards Austria-Hungary: It advocated for pushing Austria-Hungary out of the Adriatic rather than dismantling the empire entirely. In addition, a large number of the newspaper's contributors held prejudices and negative perceptions of the South Slavs. They wrote impassioned, belligerent editorials against Serbia's Yugoslav aspirations, of which Leonardo Azzarita, one of *Corriere's* editors, was an example. The fall of Nitti's government after the war contributed to *Corriere's* shift towards fascism.

The Italian army, as the author points out, would play a significant role at Vlorë and Durrës in facilitating the Serbian army's withdrawal towards the sea. Good relations between Serbia and Italy were undermined when Serbian troops entered Albania in the spring of 1915. Brindisi was the most important port from which aid was transported to the Serbian army in Durrës and

Shëngjin. Reports by the plenipotentiary Nicola Squitti on the German bombardment, and the participation of Ricciotto Canudo, a writer from Puglia, in the Battle of Vardar against Bulgarian troops shed new light on Italy's role in war-torn Serbia. In addition, Imperato emphasizes the Franco-Italian animosities regarding the division of spheres in Asia Minor, the Allied military presence on Corfu in 1915/1916, Venizelos' 1917 aspirations for Northern Epirus, and strained relations among Allied troops on the Salonica front. Through the Agreement of San Giovanni di Moriana on April 19, 1917, Italy gained the city of Smyrna and the right to political influence in the northern regions of Asia Minor, only to lose all except Adalia at the Paris Peace Conference.

Imparato touches on every aspect of war: social, demographic, economic, and geostrategic. He discusses topics such as the subdivision of the port of Otranto; Italy's illusory hope for German benevolence (Italy declared war on Germany in 1916); the geostrategic importance of the occupation of Vlorë; the naval conventions; the occupation of the Dalmatian and Ionian islands; the chronology of the naval war with Austria-Hungary; Italian intellectuals' views on the Treaty of London, the Agreement of San Giovanni di Moriana, etc. He also includes some passages about Brindisi where the main Allied fleet was headquartered.

In the chapter on Albania, *La Puglia e l'Italia nella 'lunga prima guerra mondiale' dell'Albania* (pp. 127–255), the author mentions that Luigi Cadorna was opposed to sending landing troops from Vlorë to Durrës, and that Essad Pasha Toptani had relied on Italy to prevent the return of the Young Turks to Albania (who operated from Corfu and were transferred from Puglia's ports). Furthermore, Toptani sought to facilitate trade relations with Italy during the war. Imperato points out it was a challenge for Italy to retain the south of Albania, the "key to the Adriatic" (which was achieved by sending a small military contingent on the destroyer *Etna*), while at the same time apply Article VII of the renewed Triple Alliance. The intention to colonize Albania and to appease the Albanian population, which was prone to rebellion, prevented Salandra's and Boselli's governments from actively overthrowing

the unstable Greek constitutional order as the Allies demanded. This would later come about due to strained relations between Italian troops on the Salonika front and the French Allied command, as was embodied by General Sarrail.

Imparato's book contains a clear, chronological narrative, employs a well-rounded approach, and makes considerable use of published archival and monographic materials. The author provides some new insights concerning the prevalence of a South Slavic perception in certain circles of both the Italian public and Italian diplomacy. There is also a certain amount of ambivalence towards the concept of a South Slavic state, which was predicated on the challenge of resisting a common enemy, Austria-Hungary, and the complications that might arise if it were overthrown. Although it seems that, in some segments, the title of the study does not correspond to the breadth of the topic and content, it is evident that this is an important subject to be researched. This investigation is unique not only due to an emphasis on the intellectual climate and the unquestionable influence on it by the processes of major historical events, but also because of Federico Imperato's ability connect the problematic aspects of a particular topic, such as Italian foreign policy in the Balkans, into a well-written, cohesive whole with a clear thematic structure.

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Goran Latinović, *Yugoslav-Italian Economic Relations (1918–1941)*, Faculty of Philosophy, Banja Luka, 2019, 291 pp.

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During socialist Yugoslavia, the economic history of the first Yugoslav state was quite studiously researched by numerous eminent historians (Nikola Vučo, Smiljana Đurović, Sergije Dimitrijević, Nikola Gačeša, Mijo Mirković, and others), which resulted in a series of monographs published in the second half of the