

Paolo Mattera

Social Insurance in France and Italy after World War I: A Proposed Multifactorial Interpretation

(doi: 10.1409/99936)

Contemporanea (ISSN 1127-3070)

Fascicolo 4, ottobre-dicembre 2020

Ente di afferenza:

Università di Napoli Federico II (unina)

Copyright © by Società editrice il Mulino, Bologna. Tutti i diritti sono riservati.

Per altre informazioni si veda <https://www.rivisteweb.it>

Licenza d'uso

L'articolo è messo a disposizione dell'utente in licenza per uso esclusivamente privato e personale, senza scopo di lucro e senza fini direttamente o indirettamente commerciali. Salvo quanto espressamente previsto dalla licenza d'uso Rivisteweb, è fatto divieto di riprodurre, trasmettere, distribuire o altrimenti utilizzare l'articolo, per qualsiasi scopo o fine. Tutti i diritti sono riservati.

Social Insurance in France and Italy after World War I: A Proposed Multifactorial Interpretation



Paolo Mattera

Abstract

The origins of France and Italy welfare states can be studied using a comparative approach. In fact, both countries' social systems were restructured in the wake of the Great War. Secondly, over time these two countries built two deeply similar social protection systems hinging on the «occupational» model, made up of insurance schemes for specific professions.

This essay has essentially two objectives. The first is to understand whether there effectively was a concrete nexus between *warfare* and *welfare* in France and Italy and, if so, to what extent. Second, what combination of factors led to the two resulting «occupational» systems of social protection, which were extremely fragmented and divided according to occupation.

Keywords: Welfare State in France and Italy – Social Insurance – Warfare-welfare Nexus.

The development of social policies and the creation of welfare systems were international phenomena that could benefit from study using a comparative lens. This would indeed allow similarities and differences to be pinpointed, thereby achieving the dual outcome of providing more accurate descriptions and offering possible interpretations that are broader and more in-depth¹. The comparative approach has

¹ In the vast amount of literature on comparison, cf. essays with more specific recommendations regarding comparison in historical research: T. Skocpol, M. Somers, *The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry*, «Comparative studies in society and history», 1980, XXII, pp. 174-197. For

recently fueled very lively debates that have provided new impulses for more sophisticated works, both empirical and conceptual. The methodological grounds of comparative history have been criticized in favour of a transnational approach. However, scholars have increasingly called for a synthesis that can be defined «a triple sequence composed of historical comparison, the study of cultural transfers, and transnational history»². According to Christoph Conrad, there is now little doubt that «comparative historical studies and collective cross-national research projects have [...] promoted a less parochial point of view on the development of any specific country, and more particularly on any specific national welfare state»³.

What type of comparison should it be? The vast amount of literature on comparative history converges on the fact that analyses may be divided into two different types: comparison by contrast, aimed at providing a more precise description of individual cases, and a comparison of similarities, the goal of which is to define «rules of thumb» for the phenomenon examined⁴. This essay applies an integrated approach that aims to identify the roots and dynamics of the development of the welfare systems of two of the most important and far-reaching social protection systems in Europe: those in Italy and France.

Why compare Italy and France? First of all, both countries' social systems were restructured in the wake of the Great War: were these two events connected or the result of a causal link? Secondly, over time, these two countries built similar social protection systems that hinged on the *occupational* model, which comprised of insurance schemes for specific professions. By comparing France and Italy, therefore, this essay is able to ask whether there are factors that, in the history of welfare systems, directed their development towards similar models albeit in different countries. At the

Marc Bloch's reflections on comparison, cf. the analyses in H. Atsma, A. Burguière (eds.), *Marc Bloch aujourd'hui. Histoire comparée et sciences sociales*, Paris, Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études des Sciences Sociales, 1990 and W.H. Sewell, Jr, *Marc Bloch and the logic of comparative history*, «History and theory», 1967, VI, pp. 208-218.

² Ch. Conrad, *Social Policy History after the Transnational Turn*, in P. Kettunen, K. Petersen (eds.), *Beyond Welfare State Models. Transnational Historical Perspectives on Social Policy*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2011, p. 219. See also, P. Clavin, *Defining Transnationalism*, «Contemporary European History», 2005, 14, pp. 421-459; K. Bertrams, S. Kott (eds.), *Dossier: Actions Sociales Transnationales*, «Genèses», 2008, 2, 71, pp. 2-10.

³ Ch. Conrad, *Social Policy*, cit., p. 219; see also D. Cohen, M. O' Connor (eds.), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective*, London-New York, Routledge, 2004; M. Werner, B. Zimmermann, *Beyond Comparison: «histoire croisée» and the challenge of reflexivity*, «History and Theory», 2009, 45, 1, pp. 30-50; L. Hantrais, *International Comparative Research. Theory, Methods and Practice*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

⁴ See C. Tilly, *Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons*, New York, Russel Sage Foundation, 1984. Also cf. G.M. Fredrickson, *Comparative history*, in M. Kammen (ed.), *The Past Before Us. Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, Ithaca-New York, Cornell University Press, 1980, pp. 457-475. Finally, cf. M. Salvati, *Storia contemporanea e storia comparata oggi: il caso dell'Italia*, in «Rivista di storia contemporanea», 1992, 2-3, pp. 486-510.

same time, this comparison enables us to probe the basic concepts that undergirded the different welfare systems in each country.

With this approach, this essay speaks to two different bodies of literature. The first is welfare-state research in political science: for welfare, the vast quantity of literature now available offers a variety of theoretical models that mainly distinguish between the *occupational* and *universal* system and include the debates on the change factors or the cases of *path dependence* of the different social protection mechanisms⁵. However, often these models, aimed at comparing a large number of different cases, forego in-depth research and rely mainly on theoretical debate and published sources. Therefore, in order to achieve the goal of comparison, rooted in basic notions that are clear, using the methods specific to historical research, rooted in the in-depth study of primary sources, more well-defined time periods and more specific phenomena can be analysed. Here the second, purely historiographical body of scholarship comes into play regarding the *warfare-welfare* nexus, or the causal relationship between the war effort and the extension of social protection⁶. For a long time, at least for some countries, the topic of the welfare state had hardly been explored by historians; however, recently, both in France and in Italy, new studies, focusing also on World War I, have emerged⁷.

The sources selected for this study are numerous and varied for a very specific reason: to weave together a reconstruction of the decision-making processes that occurred at the political-institutional level and an analysis of the pressures coming from society. There is one potential challenge to this approach: while it is relatively less difficult to find the parliamentary debates, is it far more arduous to reconstruct trends in public opinion, which leave fewer traces in traditional sources. It was therefore necessary to broaden the range of sources consulted, especially in terms of archives. In the first place, both in France and Italy, the reports of the prefects informing the Ministry of

⁵ M. Ferrera, *Modelli di solidarietà. Politica e riforme sociali nelle democrazie*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995; G. Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990; P. Pierson, *Increasing Returns. Path Dependence and the Study of Politics*, «The American Political Science Review», 2000, 2, pp. 251-267; P. Pierson (ed.), *The New Politics of Welfare State*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001; for an outline of the interpretation of the situation in Italy, see M. Ferrera, V. Fargion, M. Jessoula (eds.), *Alle radici del welfare all'italiana*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2012.

⁶ W. De Maria, *Combat and Concern: The Warfare-Welfare Nexus*, «War and Society», 1989, 1, pp. 71-86; H. Obinger, K. Petersen, *Mass Warfare and Welfare State. Causal Mechanism and Effects*, «British Journal of Political Science», 2015, 47, 1, pp. 205-227 and H. Obinger, K. Petersen, P. Starke (eds.), *Warfare and Welfare. Military Conflict and Welfare State Development in Western Countries*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018; cf. also the now classic book by A. Milward, *The Economic Effects of the Two World Wars on Britain*, London, Macmillan, 1974.

⁷ For France cf. (also for the numerous bibliographical references) the monographic issue *Grande Guerre et protection sociale*, «Revue d'histoire de la protection sociale», 2016, 1; for Italy cf. G. Procacci, *Warfare-Welfare. Intervento dello Stato e diritto dei cittadini*, Roma, Carocci, 2013 and the extremely in-depth study of war pensions by F. Quagliarioli, *Risarcire la nazione in armi. Il ministero per l'Assistenza militare e le pensioni di guerra (1917-1923)*, Milano, UNICOPLI, 2018.

the Interior of the «public spirit» in their respective provinces were very useful. What is more, for France the problems of the work world and the point of view of common citizens may be seen in the documents of the Ministry of Labour kept in the Archives Nationales. To study the action of the trade associations, the archives of the associations kept in the Centre des Archives Contemporaines and the proceedings of the parliamentary commissions were very helpful. Finally, for Italy the documentation of the Ministry of the Treasury was invaluable, as it contained the letters common citizens had sent to the authorities to submit their requests and present their problems.

On this methodological and archival basis, the essay has essentially two objectives. The first is to understand whether there effectively was a concrete nexus between *warfare* and *welfare* in France and Italy and, if so, to what extent. Second, what combination of factors led to the two resulting *occupational* systems of social protection, which were extremely fragmented (albeit in different ways) and divided according to occupation.

Before the war: Slow, gradual changes

To grasp the importance (if any) of the war, a glance back at the pre-existing situation is in order. At the core of this situation were independent welfare schemes that were *voluntary*. However, in Germany, Bismarck – as is known – added *compulsory* insurance for some groups of workers, thereby giving rise to a social insurance system defined as *occupational*⁸. Over time a second model began to take shape as well: in Great Britain in 1908 the government headed by Herbert Henry Asquith issued the Old Age Pension Act, which triggered the transition from workers' insurance to *social insurance*, set up in such a way that was to be defined as *universal*⁹.

Within this European framework, France and Italy had begun to develop their systems relatively late. In France, since the nineteenth century a «tripartite» system had taken shape, made up of independent welfare, employer paternalism and mutualism. Mutual funds grew considerably and founded the *Fédération Nationale de la Mutualité Française*¹⁰. State intervention was subsequently introduced (thanks to the initia-

⁸ G.A. Ritter, *Storia dello Stato sociale*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1999, pp. 60-64. J. Tampke, *Bismarck's Social Legislation. A Genuine Breakthrough?*, in M.J. Mommsen (ed.), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany*, London, Routledge, 1981, pp. 91-107.

⁹ P. Alcock, *Social Policy in Britain*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003; B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

¹⁰ Cf. M. Dreyfus, M. Ruffat, V. Viet, D. Voldman (in collaboration with B. Valat), *Se protéger, être protégé. Une histoire des Assurances sociales en France*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006, pp. 20-56; M. Dreyfus, *La protection sociale libre et volontaire, notamment mutualiste jusqu'aux années 1930*, «Vie Sociale», 2015, 2; Id., *Bonnes Feuilles: liberté, égalité, mutualité. Mutualisme et syndicalisme*, «Mouvements», 2002, 1.

tive of Alexandre Millerand), mainly with the law on workers' and farmers' pensions (*Retraites Ouvrières et Paysannes*), which in 1910 introduced compulsory insurance. However, due to strong political and financial opposition this insurance was limited to poorer employed workers and provided for very small pensions. Because of this, on the eve of the war, there were very few recipients¹¹.

In Italy, at the end of the nineteenth century compulsory accident insurance and the law on voluntary old-age insurance were the precursors to the reforms introduced in the first phase of the Giolitti era, which began with the 1902 labour law regarding women and children. This initial burst of activity quickly ran out of steam due to the concentric effect of disagreement within the socialist movement and the ongoing diffidence of the most conservative sectors of the Liberal area. Therefore, it was only in 1910 after long-drawn-out debate that the parliament approved the creation of the Maternity Fund, without however reaching agreement on any broader plans for illness insurance¹². Despite this measure, which in 1912 set out the state monopoly over life insurance, the social protection system in Italy was still very weak and fragmented overall, with expenditures of only 1.5 per cent of the public budget and a healthcare system that was still dominated by the Italian charitable institution *Opere Pie*, largely controlled by the Church¹³.

To sum up, France and Italy had undergone some significant changes that were however very slow and partial, leaving numerous areas uncovered and with substantial shortcomings. There was a great deal of strong resistance and opposition, both cultural and organisational, that was not counterbalanced by strong pushes for reform capable of exerting pressure within a network of power relationships that showed no signs of speeding up this process in the near future. These were the development dynamics underway at the outset of the war.

¹¹ B. Dumons, G. Pollet, *L'État et le retraites. Genèse d'une politique*, Paris, Belin, 1994. For more details, cf. G. Pollet, D. Renard, *Genèse et usages de l'idée paritaire dans le système de protection sociale française*, «Revue Française de science politique», 1995, 4, pp. 545-569; B. Dumons, G. Pollet, *La naissance d'une politique sociale. Les retraites en France (1900-1914)*, «Revue Française de science politique», 1991, 3, pp. 627-648; P. Saly, *Les retraites ouvrières et paysannes (loi de 1910)*, in M. Laroque (under the supervision of), *Contribution à l'histoire financière de la sécurité sociale*, Paris, Comité d'histoire de la sécurité sociale, La Documentation française, 1999.

¹² V. Strinati, *Origini e istituzione della Cassa di maternità*, «Studi Storici», 2004, 2.

¹³ In the extensive bibliography on this topic, cf. E. Bartocci, *Le politiche sociali nell'Italia liberale*, Roma, Donzelli, 1999; A. Cherubini, I. Piva, *Dalla libertà all'obbligo. La previdenza sociale fra Giolitti e Mussolini*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 1998; F. Bonelli, *Appunti sul Welfare State in Italia*, «Studi Storici», 1992, 3, pp. 669-680. For the state financial statements cf. E. Luzzati, R. Portesi, *La spesa pubblica*, in S. Cassese (ed.), *L'amministrazione centrale*, Torino, UTET, 1984. On the *Opere pie* cf. G. Farrell-Vinay, *Povertà e politica nell'Ottocento. Le Opere pie nello Stato Liberale*, Torino, Scriptorium, 1997.

The war created conditions of dire need within society. In Italy the soldiers were «an army of invalids from wounds, malaria, tuberculosis, neurasthenia, physical wasting» all in need of help and assistance¹⁴. Yet this problem was not limited to veterans. There was an increasingly steady flow of reports from prefects on the wretched conditions and consequent latent unrest within the civil population as well¹⁵. In the end, many mayors and deputies received petitions and written pleas from citizens¹⁶. The tone and content of the reports from the prefects in France were similar. In the first half 1920, reports were still coming in from various departments containing accounts, not only of the great suffering caused by deaths, but of the hardship suffered by families with invalids as well as families who, having lost the father, sons or brothers, had also lost the breadwinner and other supporting members of the family¹⁷. To make matters worse, there was also an outbreak of Spanish flu, which made the need for health assistance acute¹⁸. With demobilisation, not only did millions of men return home from the trenches in search of jobs; workers sent away from the war industries also suffered great hardship. As a result unemployment skyrocketed, which in Italy was a great cause for concern in terms of the maintenance of public order¹⁹. Likewise, in France, as the prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône pointed out «the unemployment crisis strikes hard, as is happening» and he underscored, «everywhere»²⁰.

¹⁴ Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (ACS, PCM), 1922, f. 1, sf. 1/1, report by Pio Carbonelli to Prime Minister Nitti, 9 May 1920. On Pio Carbonelli and military assistance efforts during the Nitti government, cf. the excellent in-depth study by F. Quagliarioli, *Risarcire la nazione in armi. Il Ministero per l'assistenza militare e le pensioni di guerra (1917-1923)*, Milano, UNICOPLI, 2018, pp. 333-338.

¹⁵ Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Affari Generali Riservati (ACS, MI, DGPS, AGR), 1914-1918, b. 42, fortnight reports of the prefects of Bergamo, Piacenza and Turin, 1 November 1918; *ibidem*, b. 55, report of the prefect of Milan, 5 November 1918; *ibidem*, b. 56, report of the commissioner of Rome, 31 October 1918.

¹⁶ ACS, PCM, 1917, f. 1/2/521, cf., for example, deputy Giuseppe Roberti's letters to the prime minister, 22 January 1917, and from deputy Edoardo Ottavi (including the annexed petition) of 27 January 1917, of deputy Giuseppe Micheli, 6 February 1917, of the mayor of Moncalieri, 19 February 1917, of the Venice assistance committee, 27 February 1917, the daily agenda of the Milan city council, 8 March 1917.

¹⁷ Archives Nationales Paris, Ministère de l'Intérieur, Série F7, Police Générale (ANP, MI, F7, PG), f. 12998, report of the prefect of Nantes, 22 January 1920, f. 13030, report of the emissary from the Ministry of the Interior to Bordeaux, 25 January 1920, report of the prefect of Tolosa, March 1920, f. 1297, summary report of the Ministry of the Interior, June 1920. See P. Bette, *Veuves Françaises de la Première Guerre Mondiale. Status, itinéraires, et combats*, Thesis, Université Lyon 2, Lyon, 2012.

¹⁸ E. Tognotti, *La spagnola in Italia. Storia dell'epidemia che fece temere la fine del mondo*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2016; P. Darmon, *Une tragédie dans la tragédie. La grippe espagnole en France*, «Annales de Démographie Historique», 2000, 1, pp. 153-175.

¹⁹ Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Categorie Annuali (ACS, MI, DGPS, CA), 1919, b. 41, f. 296, Bonicelli to the prefects, 2 February 1919.

²⁰ ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12975, report of the Bouches-du-Rhône department, 7 January 1920. On the post-war economic crisis, cf. H. Bonin, *Histoire économique de la France depuis 1880*, Paris, Masson, 1988.

Due to the sheer magnitude of the war and the economic upheaval during the immediate aftermath of the war, this hardship permeated the entire population. Not only were the groups traditionally vulnerable to fluctuations in the market affected, such as workers in manufacturing plants; portions of the small and middle bourgeoisie were also impacted, such as farmers who owned small plots of land, artisans, business owners and employees. Yet unemployment was not the only cause of the crisis: inflation was eating away at the savings of the middle classes, undermining their ability to safeguard themselves through voluntary welfare schemes and in France, for instance, pushed them to call for public action in defence of their social position²¹. Such acute and widespread suffering throughout all the social groups was therefore generating the potential grounds for grievances that, at least as far as assistance, welfare and healthcare were concerned, had the potential to become interclass grievances, overcoming long-standing class barriers.

One common element in this stew of contradictory, bottom-up pressures was the notion that citizens deserved to be compensated for the extraordinary efforts they had made during wartime. What has aptly been defined as a «contracting mentality» was becoming more and more widespread²²: having performed their *duty* during wartime mobilisation gave them the *right* to have their needs acknowledged and have something done to alleviate their suffering²³. Without a doubt, mass recruitment played a significant role in this²⁴. This is not the only explanation, though. World War I was a modern, total conflict that created great upheaval in the daily lives of millions of people, and as a result people developed a very different awareness of themselves and their rights. The first to realise this were the French state officials²⁵. In Italy even the military commands (which usually had little inclination to acknowledge the reasons for grassroots initiatives) sent a letter to the prime minister claiming that the Italian people «were demanding those economic and social improvements that comprise the programme of any democratic government»²⁶.

Therefore, the crisis and the subsequent mass mobilisation put strong pressure on the existing social protection system and laid bare its shortcomings. This is where the second factor for change comes into play. Even though there were considerable

²¹ ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12975, report of the prefect of Marseille dated 1 April 1920, f. 12987, report of the prefect of Bordeaux dated 3 April 1920, f. 12998, report of the prefect of Nantes dated 3 April 1920.

²² F. Quagliaroli, *Risarcire*, cit., pp. 416-417, 480-481.

²³ ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12967, monthly summary reports, June and August 1920; Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Serie Speciali (ACS, PCM, SP), *Prima guerra mondiale*, b. 206, letter to the prime minister from the Information Service of the Royal Army, 20 March 1919.

²⁴ Cf. A. Rasmussen's observations in *Expérimenter la santé de grandes nombres: les hygiénistes militaires et l'armée française (1850-1914)*, «Le Mouvement social», 2016, 4, pp. 71-91.

²⁵ ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12987, report of the prefect of Bordeaux, 3 April 1920; f. 12975, report of the prefect of Marseille, 1 April 1920.

²⁶ ACS, PCM, SP, *Prima guerra mondiale*, b. 206, report of the prime minister, 20 March 1919.

differences between the two countries, their respective systems shared – as has been noted – the common trait of being the fruit of the progressive stratification of different organisations and rules that often overlapped contradictorily and left large swaths of the population unprotected. Hence, there was an ever-widening gap between the demand for social services and the fragmented nature of the services offered. So this collective mobilisation pushed for action to be taken to extend coverage and adopt a more rational approach to the existing coverage.

New stimuli for change were also coming from the rest of Europe. This is what gave rise to the third factor for change²⁷. In Great Britain, for example, the new *Health Committee* was created based on what was to become the Ministry of Health after the war²⁸. What is more, in the meantime the International Labour Organization had been established, which over the years was to progressively boost efforts to extend labour protection laws²⁹. International developments influenced the debate in Italy and France, albeit in different ways. In Italy the more in-depth awareness of these models seemed, for the moment, limited to specialists and the few politicians involved, particularly the reformist socialist Angiolo Cabrini and liberal jurist Luigi Rava³⁰. The push to make social insurance compulsory was then reinforced by the fact that, in the areas referred to as the «unredeemed» provinces under the rule of the Habsburg Empire, illness insurance was compulsory, and therefore victory or annexation would pose the problem of the disparity between those citizens and the citizens from the rest of the peninsula³¹.

In France the same question was posed but with far greater urgency and for a peculiar reason: the Alsace-Lorraine region, annexed by Germany after 1870 and returned to France as a consequence of the war. In this region, the social insurance

²⁷ Cf. J. Kocka, *Facing Total War: German Society (1914-1918)*, Providence-Oxford, Berg, 1984. On the conditions on the German domestic front and on the impact of government policies, cf. finally J.M. Winter, *Some Paradoxes of the First World War*, in R. Wall, J.M. Winter (eds.), *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 9-42.

²⁸ N. Whiteside, *Industrial Welfare and Labour Regulation in Britain at the Time of the First World War*, «International Review of Social History», 1980, 25, pp. 311-328; K. Burk (ed.), *War and the State: The Transformation of British Government*, London, Allen&Unwin, 1982.

²⁹ Société des Nations, *Conférence Internationale du Travail*, Genève, 1921. Cf. T. Cayet, P. Fridenson, *Rationaliser le travail, organiser la production: le Bureau international du Travail et la modernisation économique durant l'entre-deux-guerres*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010. G. Rodgers, E. Lee, L. Swepston, J. Van Daele, *The International Labour Organization and the quest for social justice, 1919-2009*, Geneva, ILO, 2009; R. Tosstorff, *The international trade-union movement and the founding of the International Labour Organization*, «International Review of Social History», 2005, 50, 3, pp. 399-433.

³⁰ Cf., for example, Camera dei Deputati, Atti Parlamentari (CD, AP), 18 February 1918, speech by Luigi Rava, pp. 15801-15805; *Secondo Convegno Nazionale per le pensioni di guerra*, «Rassegna di assicurazioni and previdenza sociale», 1916, 10, October 1917, pp. 1916-1922; A. Cabrini, *Le pensioni di guerra. Dal ritocco alla riforma*, «Nuova Antologia», 16 August 1917, pp. 411-418. Cfr. A. Rapini, *Il discorso politico di Luigi Rava: lavoro, democrazia, riforma sociale*, in P. Mattera (ed.), *Momenti del welfare in Italia. Storiografia e percorsi di ricerca*, Roma, Viella, 2012, pp. 17-53.

³¹ For the insurance system in place in Austria, cf. F. Conti, G. Silei, *Breve storia dello Stato sociale*, Roma, Carocci, 2005, pp. 63-64.

system introduced during Bismarck's time was still in place and was much broader in scope – as has been seen – than the one created by the Paris government. How could the disparity of treatment between the Alsace citizens and the citizens of the rest of the country be handled? In January 1919 the French government sent one of its most brilliant officials, Ferdinand Dreyfus, to Alsace-Lorraine to write a report. In the end, an extremely long document was drawn up, including tables and statistics⁵². The mere presence of this report and its detailed arguments and data provide very eloquent proof of just how thorny this issue was. Another factor that increased the pressure were the prefects' reports, poised to provide evidence of the anxiety felt by Alsace workers about the future of the rights they had acquired⁵³. The industrialists in the area were no less anxious, concerned that the cost of social legislation would make them less competitive than the entrepreneurs in other departments⁵⁴. Political science literature on welfare often underscores the imitation of foreign models as an important factor in the evolution of social protection systems⁵⁵. And in the case of France immediately after the war, this foreign model arrived directly onto French soil, thereby exerting pressure that was far stronger.

One of the most significant developments introduced by World War I generated a new stimulus for change: the enlargement of State structures and competences. In a «total» conflict, countries' ultimate destiny depends on their ability to mobilise all their resources. This entailed increasing public intervention significantly. According to Riccardo Bachi's observations in Italy, the first level of action was «colossal economic activity» revolving around the war industry. However, this was not enough. Bachi went on to note that «the current war is being fought by vast masses of men [and] since there are millions of participants, the number of dead and, albeit still alive, wounded or in any case maimed or unable to work is absolutely relevant»⁵⁶. As a consequence, initiatives for assistance and welfare soon began to form on a second level. On the peninsula, important measures were taken, such as the establishment of life insurance for war veterans, the launch of war pension reform and requiring *compulsory* contributions to the fund covering workers injured in plants used to manufacture war supplies: a measure that made it difficult to justify the disparity of treatment compared to other groups of employed workers⁵⁷.

⁵² Centre des Archives Contemporaines, Ministère des Affaires Sociales (CAC, MAS), 19760145, *Rapport sur la situation financière de l'Institute d'Assurance Sociale de l'Alsace-Lorraine*, 10 March 1919.

⁵³ ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 13050, report of the Mosella department, September 1919; *ibidem*, f. 12967, monthly summary report for June 1920.

⁵⁴ Centre des Archives Contemporaines, Associations (CAC), AS 39, memorandum, 1919.

⁵⁵ Cf. (also for further bibliographical references) J. Alber, *Continuities and Change in the Idea of the Welfare State*, «Politics and Society», XVI, 1988, 4, pp. 451-468.

⁵⁶ R. Bachi, *L'Italia economica dell'anno 1917*, Città di Castello, Lapi, 1918, p. 201.

⁵⁷ INPS, *Settant'anni di previdenza sociale, cinquant'anni dell'Assicurazione generale obbligatoria per l'invalidità e la vecchiaia*, Roma, 1970.

In addition, there were dramatic changes in healthcare. Since it had been forced to tackle exceptional and very far-reaching problems, there were new attempts to centralise medical services, thereby demonstrating the potential of a healthcare system coordinated by the State³⁸. Therefore, these initiatives provided an important precedent and laid the foundations for the further extension of social protection to other groups of citizens, proving in the end that it was indeed *possible* to have an ever-present State.

However, many measures had one initial flaw: many of them had been adopted during a state of emergency, and because of this, they were often disjointed or, because they had been hastily created, rife with inconsistency and contradiction. The letters sent by mayors and deputies to the Italian prime minister indeed proved that the procedures were tortuous and bogged down by red tape, also because competence was shared between the Ministry of War, the Court of Auditors and the Ministry of the Treasury³⁹. In France the reports sent by the inspectors from the Welfare Ministry stated that, because they lacked coordination and control mechanisms, many measures were not applied⁴⁰. To sum up, not only did the stable presence of the State seem *possible*; it also seemed *necessary* in order to fill the numerous gaps and coordinate the various activities.

Who took into consideration all of these factors in order to formulate concrete proposals for reform? The expansion of the bureaucratic structure of the State had facilitated the formation of a group of specialists and officials, often with great expertise, who were acutely aware of the need for social reform. During the conflict in France two new ministries had been created – the Ministry of Pensions and the Ministry of Hygiene, Insurance and Social Welfare – which enjoyed the collaboration of specialists of great merit such as Ferdinand Dreyfus (who had also worked on the report on Alsace-Lorraine), Étienne Clémentel and Georges Cahen-Salvador, who had been trained in the principles of solidarity inspired by influential intellectuals such as Léon Bourgeois, Célestin Bouglé and Léon Duguit⁴¹.

³⁸ For Italy, cf. the in-depth analysis by B. Bracco, *La patria ferita. I corpi dei soldati italiani e la Grande Guerra*, Firenze, Giunti, 2012. For France, cf. V. Viet, *La Santé en guerre. Une politique pionnière en univers incertaine*, Paris, Presse de Science Po, 2015; S. Delaporte, *Les médecins dans la Grande Guerre*, Paris, Bayard, 2003; G. Brégain, *Un problème national, interallié ou international? La difficile gestion transnationale des mutilés de guerre*, «Revue d'histoire de la protection sociale», 2016, 1, pp. 110-132; S. Bertschy, *De la médecine de guerre à la médecine en guerre. Administration des blessés et malades de guerre et métamorphoses du champ médical en 1914-1918*, Thesis, Université de Montpellier, 2018.

³⁹ ACS, PCM, 1917, f. 1/2/521.

⁴⁰ Cf. Archives Nationales Paris, Ministère du Travail, de l'Hygiène, de l'Assistance et de la Prévoyance Sociale; Série F/22, Travail et Sécurité Sociale (ANP, MTHAPS, F/22, TSS), f. 402.

⁴¹ On the new ministries, cf. M. Dreyfus *et al.*, *Se protéger*, cit., p. 51. On the influence of the solidarity cultural movement, cf. E. Jabbari, *Pierre Laroque and the Welfare State in Postwar France*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 13-19.

In Italy Luigi Rava began stepping up his efforts in this area⁴². Yet the turning point came – unsurprisingly – in the autumn of 1917 (after initial grassroots protests) at the outset of the work of the Commission for the Study of Compulsory Insurance against Illness (also called the Abbiate Commission, after its president). Finally, in November – after the military disaster at Caporetto – the new government headed by Vittorio Emanuele Orlando decided to establish the Ministry of Military Assistance and War Pensions, headed by the reformist socialist Leonida Bissolati⁴³. The new minister undertook measures that expressed very modern, secular notions of family relationships, in that it introduced the figure of the woman «likened to a widow» in order to provide pensions to women who had not yet married soldiers who had died in the war and equated «natural» children, born out of wedlock, with «legitimate» children⁴⁴.

In both countries the efforts of specialists and politicians shared one common idea: World War I was considered a vehicle for modernity that, because of the combined effect of the people's mobilisation and State intervention, was potentially a factor – certainly tragic but decisive – that brought the masses together within the institutions. In this way, millions of citizens were to come into contact with a bureaucracy that was better organised and more efficient, capable of responding to needs by acknowledging new rights and offering new safeguards.

In order to create a concrete outlet for all these stimuli, in the end one last push for change was needed: strong, convinced political initiative. In Italy Bissolati expressed his hope that «from its temporary function as military assistance» they could build «the sound foundations of the Ministry of State Assistance by unifying the existing institutions for pensionability and welfare»⁴⁵. This speeding up of the process was slowed down by Bissolati's resignation over disagreements with the foreign minister Sidney Sonnino and then by the fall of the entire Orlando government. However, in just a few days the solution was found and on 25 June 1919 a new executive headed by Francesco Saverio Nitti was formed and backed by a progressive parliamentary majority, including the liberal followers of Giovanni Giolitti, democrats, radicals and minister Cesare Nava, representing the Catholics, whereas Filippo Turati's reformist socialists, albeit part of the opposition, opted to adopt an attitude of benevolent expect-

⁴² L. Rava, *Le pensioni di guerra in Italia e all'estero*, «Rassegna di assicurazioni e previdenza sociale», June 1916, 6, pp. 915-916. Cf. also F. Quagliarioli, *Risarcire*, cit., pp. 55-61 and A. Rapini, *Il discorso politico di Luigi Rava*, cit., pp. 40-43.

⁴³ Cf. G. Sabbatucci, *Bissolati, la guerra e il dopoguerra*, in M. Degl'Innocenti (ed.), *Leonida Bissolati. Un riformista nell'Italia Liberale*, Manduria, Lacaita, 2008, pp. 116-118; cf. also G. Melis, *Due modelli di amministrazione tra liberalismo e fascismo. Burocrazie tradizionali e nuovi apparati*, Roma, Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage, 1988, pp. 18-20.

⁴⁴ Cf. F. Quagliarioli, *Risarcire*, cit., pp. 280-281.

⁴⁵ Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero del Tesoro, Direzione Generale per le Pensioni di Guerra (ACS, MT, DGPG), b. 30, f. 70/b, circular expressing Bissolati's greetings to the ministry officials, 1 June 1919.

tation. These seemed to be favourable conditions for a leftward shift towards bolder social policy. After all, since 1917 the new prime minister had underscored the war's potential to provide a push towards democracy: «These masses of men [...] when they come back here, will come back and demand their full rights as citizens; and now that they are on the great road of history, nothing will distract them»⁴⁶. Therefore, at the outset of his term he sent a circular to the prefects inviting them to foster peaceful solutions «in the event of unrest among workers that is economic in nature»⁴⁷. On the other hand, the newly elected prime minister, forced to act in a state of social emergency, decided to reinforce security systems to ensure the «unyielding maintenance of public order»⁴⁸. So when confronted with uprisings over the high cost of living, he changed his line and encouraged the prefects «to block any further attempts of violence»⁴⁹. The enigma that remained to be solved was whether this difficult balance between social policy and «public order» policy was to hold up and to what extent it was to influence plans to reform welfare.

In France the political context was even less clear. Support for the socialists and radicals dropped in the 1919 elections and victory went to the heterogeneous right-wing «national bloc», which did not seem, because of its political culture and ideological origins, inclined to take new initiatives by creating new social laws. Then again, the new Chamber of Deputies was made up mostly of former soldiers (giving rise to the name «Blue Horizon Chamber», referring to the colour of their uniforms) who, regardless of what party they belonged to, seemed to be sensitive to arguments regarding welfare and assistance for those who had been involved in the war⁵⁰. Against this backdrop of contrasting stimuli, there was Alexandre Millerand who – as has been seen – had long espoused very pragmatic reformist stances. Appointed as special commissioner to the Alsace-Lorraine region, he had met with the local workers' associations, assuring them that their rights would be upheld. Upon his return to Paris, he found himself at the centre of the crisis generated by the resignation of Georges Clemenceau after his defeat in the presidential elections and managed to garner enough consensus in parliament to be elected prime minister⁵¹. One of his most significant decisions was to appoint as minister of labour an industrialist from Alto Reno who was trying to extend the laws on social insurance in Alsace-Lorraine

⁴⁶ CD, AP, XXIV Legislature, sitting of 20 October 1917, speech by Francesco Saverio Nitti, p. 14792.

⁴⁷ ACS, MI, DGPS, AGR, b. 375, Nitti to the prefects, 27 June 1919.

⁴⁸ F. Barbagallo, *Nitti*, Torino, UTET, 1984, p. 320. Cf. also F. Fabbri, *Le origini della guerra civile. L'Italia dalla Grande guerra al fascismo (1918-1921)*, Torino, UTET, 2009, pp. 70-74.

⁴⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS, CA, 1919, b. 44, Nitti to the prefects, 15 July 1919.

⁵⁰ G. Candar, *Histoire politique de la III République*, Paris, La Découverte, 1990, pp. 81-94; R. Brizzi, M. Marchi, *Storia politica della Francia repubblicana*, Milano, Mondadori, 2011.

⁵¹ J-L. Rizzo, *Alexandre Millerand. Socialiste discuté, ministre contesté et président déchu (1859-1943)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2013.

to the rest of France: Paul Jourdan⁵². It seems that this was how the conditions were created for another stimulus for reform.

Acceleration: Occupational systems with proto-universalist variants

The two years after the end of the war were marked by intense reform efforts. In Italy on 21 April 1919 the Orlando government, albeit already in dire straits, issued Decree no. 603, the scope of which has been underscored in many studies because it introduced the compulsory nature of protective insurance for employed workers⁵³. Regarding financing, this decree provided that in addition to the central pillar made up of entrepreneurs' and workers' contributions (according to the standard compulsory insurance scheme), State contributions were also to be added of one hundred lire a year for each person enrolled. This achieved two goals: the number of recipients went up sharply and the amount of the contributions grew. On the wave of these innovations, the Nitti government issued the 19 October 1919 decree instituting an insurance scheme against unemployment⁵⁴.

In the meantime, the reports of the two labour commissions were beginning to pile up on the prime minister's desk. The first commission focussed on the reform of healthcare and was presided over – as has been seen – by Abbiate, who proposed «a sort of national healthcare service *ante litteram*»⁵⁵. The second was the commission to study initiatives to implement during peacetime, or the *Commissionissima*, as it was known, instituted in the spring of 1918⁵⁶. Luigi Rava was appointed to head the tenth subcommission on social welfare: a significant choice, due to his well-known reformist opinions. Rava guided the work of the subcommission towards «bold reform» and proposed a plan to radically transform welfare⁵⁷. But what scheme would be adopted? Rava stood his ground and explained that he wanted to bring all the insurance schemes together

⁵² On Jourdan's efforts and role, also over the following years, cf. P. Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 48-49.

⁵³ Cf., E. Gustapane, *Le origini del sistema previdenziale: la cassa nazionale di previdenza per l'invalidità e per la vecchiaia degli operai (19 novembre 1898-28 luglio 1919)*, in INPS, *Novant'anni di previdenza in Italia: culture, politiche, strutture*, Roma, INPS, 1988, pp. 87-89; F. Mazzini, *Il sistema previdenziale in Italia fra riforma e conservazione*, in A. Orsi Battaglini (ed.), *Amministrazione pubblica e istituzioni finanziarie*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1980, pp. 447-553; E. Bartocci, *le politiche sociali*, cit., pp. 230-231; A. Cherubini, *Storia della previdenza sociale in Italia (1860-1960)*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1977, pp. 252-253.

⁵⁴ M. Alberti, *Senza lavoro. La disoccupazione in Italia dall'Unità a oggi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2016, pp. 73-74.

⁵⁵ I. Pavan, *War and the Welfare State: The Case of Italy from WWI to Fascism*, «Historia Contemporanea», special number, *Welfare y mutualismo en la Europa contemporanea. Estudios sobre Italia y España*, 2019, 61, 3, pp. 855-872.

⁵⁶ A.M. Falchero, *La «Commissionissima». Gli industriali e il dopoguerra*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 1991.

⁵⁷ L. Rava, *Sezione X. Legislazione sociale e previdenza*, in *Studi e proposte della prima Sottocommissione presieduta del Sen. Vittorio Scialoja. Questioni giuridiche, amministrative e sociali*, Roma, Tipografia Artigianelli, 1920, p. 444.

into one «global» scheme that was compulsory and capable of providing coverage for *all* workers: not just for employees, but for the self-employed as well⁵⁸.

In France the process was longer, but the results were even more radical. Georges Cahen-Salvador was appointed to draft a bill that in the end was submitted to the offices of the Chamber of Deputies in March 1921. In the meantime, Millerand had risen to President of the Republic and offered his political backing along with Minister of Labour Daniel Vincent. The Cahen-Salvador plan proposed extending social protection to *all* workers: with compulsory insurance for salaried workers and voluntary insurance for the self-employed. The services provided for *old-age pensions*, financed through *capitalisation*, and *healthcare*, financed through *allocation* (pay-as-you-go): workers paid contributions that were not accumulated and capitalised, but rather immediately used – hence *allocated* – to care for the ill⁵⁹. This plan had a pyramid organisational and administrative structure, with a general fund at the top as a guarantee that was to be administered by the State, then regional funds that coordinated the funds of the cantons or municipalities, which could be publically or privately managed but could no longer be regulated independently – as had been done up to that point – because they now had to comply with common rules decided centrally and that had to ensure worker representation⁶⁰.

The plans submitted proposed major innovations. In both countries, the proposals introduced the principle of *compulsory* insurance that, given the rules and dynamics of pre-war development, was an innovation with far-reaching effects. But these were not the only, albeit significant, changes. At first glance, the mechanism implemented looked like an insurance scheme divided up according to profession and hence – to use the language of political science – an *occupational* system. Yet both plans had additional features that introduced substantial variants into the existing *occupational* system. The supplementary texts and bills insisted that the goal was to reach *all* workers and their families. This is where the second innovation comes into play: *solidarity*, understood in such a way that broadened the scope of protection considerably: «professional solidarity» the French text pointed out «between workers and entrepreneurs [...] social solidarity between the old and young, between those with more or fewer means, between bachelors and breadwinners, between professions with greater risk and those with less; [...] finally, national solidarity that legitimises

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 446–470.

⁵⁹ Assemblée Nationale de la République Française, Service des Archives (ANRF, SA), *Les Assurances Sociales. Le nouveau projet de loi*, report, March 1921, pp. 10–18. On the innovativeness and pitfalls of the «allocation» system, the literature is endless. In order to simplify this footnote, please see (also for further bibliographical references) F. Nullmeier, F.X. Kaufmann, *The Post-War Welfare State Development*, in F.G. Castels, S. Leibfried, J. Lewis, H. Obinger, C. Pierson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 81–102.

⁶⁰ ANRF, SA, *Les Assurances Sociales*, cit., pp. 30–39.

and determines the conditions for State intervention»⁶¹. The Rava Commission was even more explicit: «This Section believes that the social protection schemes that the State has been called to implement for the *working classes* must also be reflected in other protection schemes that benefit the *middle classes*»⁶². Considering that the war had caused great suffering for all the social groups, the plans for reform proposed two different types of solidarity mechanisms: *horizontal* mechanisms between different groups within the same social class, extending protection to employed workers in both industry and agriculture, and *vertical* mechanisms, from the proletariat to the middle classes, towards social groups that were better off «acknowledging» Rava reiterated, «that the war had caused great upheaval in the economic life [...] of the middle classes, which are the connective tissue of the economic and social life of the nation»⁶³.

This is where the third significant innovation came into play: the role of the *State*. Common rules needed to be set out to render treatment more uniform. Organisational changes also needed to be made and management centralised from the top down to remedy the problems generated by the many overlapping laws that had been made over time. Finally, greater financial resources were required for insurance in order to ward off the risk that extending limited resources to a greater number of people would result in insufficient services.

Hence, all three of these new developments: *compulsory* insurance and interclass *solidarity*, when combined with *State* intervention, had the effect of creating variants within the existing *occupational* protection system that could be defined as *proto-universalist*, oriented towards workers as *citizens*, without distinguishing between professional groups⁶⁴. And this is where a truly drastic shift in the paradigm may be seen, which seems closely connected to the war. According to the now largely shared interpretation, it was no longer individual groups of workers that needed protection, but rather the whole population.

In this way, the shock of the war, which generated pressing stimuli for change, led to reform plans that deeply transformed the social protection systems in Italy and France. Now, however, these proposals had to be translated into concrete action and make it through the sifter of the parliamentary vote.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 7-9.

⁶² L. Rava, *Sezione X. Legislazione sociale e previdenza*, cit., p. 457.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 468.

⁶⁴ The term *proto-universalism* has been borrowed from I. Pavan, «*Nelle trincee e sui campi*». *Guerra, dopoguerra e Stato sociale in Italia (1917-1921)*, in L. Cerasi (ed.), *Le libertà del lavoro. Storia, diritto, società*, Palermo, New Digital Frontiers, 2016, p. 162.

The main measures proposed in Italy had been issued by the government in the form of decrees that required parliamentary approval to be converted into law. However, over the coming months, these decrees were not converted, causing them to lapse. In France, the Cahen-Salvador plan seemed to have started off with the best of intentions. However, when put to the test of parliamentary debate, it came up against a wall of opposition and a crossfire of vetoes. As a result, it had to be completely re-drafted, substantially changing the spirit of the plan.

Why was there such a swift shift in direction? The interpretation put forward in this essay is that, while in the previous months numerous pushes for change had been emerging, factors slowing down or blocking this change were likewise taking shape that gradually began surfacing over the subsequent months. Further obstacles were quickly added to these until political and social balances and power relations changed fundamentally. The timing and ways in which this occurred were different in Italy and in France. Therefore, the events that took place in each of these countries need to be addressed separately for a moment.

In Italy the situation developed much more quickly due to the breakdown in the Liberal system and the advent of Fascism. Opposition or resistance to changes in the social protection system had long arisen and only the gravity of the crisis brought on by the Battle of Caporetto and the aftermath of the war had partially obscured their strength. The first stumbling block – theoretical and cultural in nature – began to form starting in 1917 in the government, with the Minister of the Treasury Paolo Carcano, and in the ruling class, with liberal spokesman Emilio Storoni who, well-rooted in traditional views of the State, opposed enlarging the state apparatus and increasing public spending⁶⁵.

This cultural opposition was backed by a second type of opposition that by those pressure or interest groups which saw plans for reform as a threat to their own social position. On the frontlines were the agricultural landowners, who starting in 1918, had been airing their disapproval of compulsory insurance to the government, claiming that it undermined the hierarchy between landowners and employees. Even clearer was their aversion to the proposal of accident insurance, which was however backed by the spokespeople from the reformist unions, such as Argentina Altobelli and Ludovico D'Aragona⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ CD, AP, XXIV Legislature, speech of Minister Paolo Carcano, sitting of 11 July 1917, p. 142682; Cf. F. Quagliaroli, *Risarcire*, cit., pp. 154-157.

⁶⁶ ACS, PCM, 1918, f. 5.1.607, January 1918; see also I. Pavan, *War and the Welfare State*, cit. (which also cites documents stored in the archive of Confindustria). For the union stance, cf. S. Bianciardi, *Argentina Altobelli e la «buona battaglia»*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2013, pp. 314-319; G.M. Longoni, *La voce del lavoro. Vita di Ettore Reina (1871-1958)*, Roma, Ediesse, 2006, pp. 245-250 and 262-264.

Hence, the social parties were about to wind up in a standoff that could only be won through the government's choice of political alignment. However, Prime Minister Nitti, who was also working on a reform platform, dissolved the Ministry of Assistance, the feather in Bissolati's cap, and relegated it to the role of undersecretariat. How can this contradiction be explained? In reality, although Bissolati and Nitti both shared the spirit of reform, they had very different visions of the role of the State. Bissolati wanted to extend assistance to make state bureaucracy the nexus between the State and the masses⁶⁷. Nitti, on the other hand, wanted «mainly to avoid» creating «an assisted population» because he wanted to further a plan for reform that emphasised production in order to help modernise the country⁶⁸. These two reformers, Bissolati and Nitti, who had very divergent notions about reform, could have been allies in the name of the democratic development of the country; however, they ended up clashing. Therefore, it is no wonder that, once he became prime minister, Nitti dissolved the Ministry of Assistance.

These political-cultural stumbling blocks caused serious organisational and bureaucratic complications. Since wartime, the development of assistance and welfare had often been slowed down by the inertia of a bureaucratic corps of officials and employees who were accustomed to strict hierarchies and long, slow procedures; so much so that already in 1917 deputy Francesco Rota had written to Minister of War Gaetano Giardino to point the finger at «these deadly, enemy bureaucracies with all their regulations, their inertia, their weakness» ready to «drag some poor saps along [...] because there are 50 papers to sign and 25 commanders to hassle»⁶⁹. In order to break down the tough bureaucratic mentality of many employees and to overcome this inertia, very strong political determination was needed, with top-down orders capable of changing deep-seated attitudes. However, with the breakup of the ministry the opposite happened. The one who reported this was the Director General of Military Assistance, Pio Carbonelli, who in a letter to Nitti in May 1920 recommended «restoring these Services with the political nature that largely deteriorated with the closing of the Ministry» because when the Ministry of Assistance was downsized «all those involved [...] witnessed the impairment of the protective action of the State» causing «disorder that is getting worse every day»⁷⁰. Squeezed between pushes for reform that were still strong and an increasing number of obstacles, the road towards

⁶⁷ ACS, PCM, 1918, f. 1-3, letter from Minister of Military Assistance Bissolati to Minister of the Treasury Nitti, 11 May 1918.

⁶⁸ CD, AP, XXIV Legislature, sitting of 26 November 1918, speech by Francesco Saverio Nitti, p. 17670. On Nitti's vision of production, cf. F. Barbagallo, *Nitti*, cit., pp. 242-246.

⁶⁹ ACS, PCM, 1917, f. 1-2/520, letter of deputy Francesco Rota to Minister of War Gaetano Giardino, 25 July 1917. For a much longer quotation from the letter and other documents on the same topic, see F. Quagliarioli, *Risarcire*, cit., pp. 190-195.

⁷⁰ ACS, PCM, f. 1.1-1, letter of Pio Carbonelli to Nitti, 9 May 1920.

a new system of social protection capable of turning Italy into a modern democratic country was becoming narrower and narrower.

In France the debate developed through long-drawn-out discussions between the social parties. The first stumbling block for the Cahen-Salvador plan came from opposition by various interest groups. On the frontlines were the physicians⁷¹. The Cahen-Salvador reform actually intended to forego individual fees in favour of a *flat fee* based on the number of people enrolled in the insurance scheme «regardless [...] of the actual number of visits performed»⁷². This was pure heresy for the physicians attending the parliamentary hearings who, fearful of being demoted to mere bureaucrats paid in a way that diminished their personal prestige, raised a seemingly insurmountable wall of opposition⁷³. In the meantime, another social group was beginning to turn against the reform and this time it was from the petite bourgeoisie: the small agricultural landowners⁷⁴. Claiming that they deserved specific treatment compared to employed workers, they requested an amendment that, if approved, would undermine the very structure of the reform by creating a special regime specifically designed for their group⁷⁵.

However, the most dogged opponents were still to come, and from another front that looked back to France's past organisational heritage. Until then, the flaws of that heritage, deriving from the heterogeneous nature of the private organisations participating in the insurance, had taken their toll. After submitting the reform plan, the administrators of the private mutual aid *caisses* mobilised. Even during the drafting of the reform, the representatives of the mutual aid associations had had a fierce faceoff with the Cahen-Salvador plan⁷⁶. Therefore, at the hearing in the Chamber of Deputies, the delegates of the mutual associations, Ernest Leirolle and Georges Petit, did not mince words: with the new law «mutualism will be lost and will vanish»⁷⁷. They were then backed by the industrialists, accustomed to tapping into the private savings of the small and medium bourgeoisie to sell shares and engage in profitable speculations; they were also accustomed to managing the money deposited in welfare *caisses* established by employers for their employees in total autonomy. Now, the law made participating in the insurance schemes compulsory and hence directed the capital of

⁷¹ P. Gillaume, *Le rôle sociale des médecins depuis deux siècles (1880-1945)*, Paris, CHSS-AEHSS, 1996, pp. 116-119.

⁷² ANRF, SA, *Les Assurances Sociales*, cit., pp. 19-20.

⁷³ Archives Nationales Paris, Assemblées Nationales, Série C, Commission d'Assurance et de Prévoyance Sociales (ANP, AN, C, CAPS), f. 14646, sitting of 12 December 1921, pp. 4-23.

⁷⁴ G. Duby, A. Wallon (eds.), *Histoire de la France rurale*, vol. IV (under the supervision of M. Gervais, Y. Tavernier, M. Jolivet), *Depuis 1914*, Paris, Seuil, 1992; P. Gillaume, *Histoire sociale de la France au XX siècle*, Paris, Masson, 1995; G. Gavignaud, *Les campagnes en France au XX siècle*, Paris, Orphys, 1990.

⁷⁵ ANP, AN, C, CAPS, f. 14646, Memorandum of the National Confederation of Agricultural Associations, 2 December 1921.

⁷⁶ ANRF, SA, *Le nouveau Project de Loi. Compte Rendu des Discussions*, pp. 88-89.

⁷⁷ ANP, AN, C, CAPS, f. 164646, sitting of 7 July 1921.

the middle classes towards state-controlled funds, removing such capital from the market; what is more, it provided for worker representation in the employer's *caisses*, forcing entrepreneurs to co-manage them under public supervision. Preceded by the discontent and anxiety reported by the prefects, the industrialists' associations prepared a defence to be presented at the hearing in the Chamber of Deputies⁷⁸. In this report, the words «risk», «danger» and «threat» were repeatedly reiterated, foreboding their very tough opposition⁷⁹.

On the opposite front were the trade unionists from the *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT) who, despite their attitude of half-hearted anticipation during the drafting stages, now approved the plan because they appreciated the principles of solidarity and social security and, mainly, financing through the contributions of workers, who would thereby be made to feel responsible and morally uplifted⁸⁰. This emphasis on contributions is what paved the way for the most groundbreaking request: that the trade unions be made directly responsible for managing the protection funds⁸¹. This is what led to the standoff between the CGT and the industrialists on one crucial issue: who was going to manage the capital that had been paid in?

What weakened the CGT's bargaining power were however the complications within the socialist movement, whose internal divisions led to their schism with the Communist Party⁸². On the other hand, even industry had been ruffled by the internal divisions between those who wanted this standoff and those who, such as the entrepreneurs from Alsace-Lorraine, wanted to extend the rights and respective costs of their region⁸³. In order to overcome this deadlock, the President of the Chamber of Deputies' Commission for Social Welfare, Edouard Grinda, decided to redraft the plan, boosting the decision-making power of the mutual aid and employer's funds⁸⁴. Even with these changes, the plan was still very ambitious and was passed by the Chamber on the eve of the elections in April 1924. According

⁷⁸ ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12897, reports of the Gironde department, 14 June and 10 July 1921; f. 15030, report of the prefect of Bordeaux, 5 April 1921; f. 12975, report of the prefect of Marseille, 20 April 1921; f. 12992, report of the prefect of Grenoble, April 1921; f. 12998, report of the prefect of Nantes, 6 April 1921.

⁷⁹ ANP, AN, C, CAPS, f. 164646, *Audition de la Confédération Générale de la Production Française*, 3 February 1922, «Note sur le projet de loi relatif aux assurances sociales», pp. 6-22.

⁸⁰ A. Rey, *La question des Assurances Sociales*, Paris, Alcan, 1924, pp. 162-163.

⁸¹ ANP, AN, C, CAPS, f. 14646, Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), *Rapport sur le projet de Loi d'Assurances Sociales avec les modifications demandées remis à la Commission d'Assurance et de la Prévoyance Sociales de la Chambre des Députés*, 18 November 1921, pp. 4-6.

⁸² Cf. S. Courtois, M. Lazar, *Histoire du Parti Communiste Français*, Paris, PUF, 1995; J.P. Brunette, *Histoire du socialisme en France*, Paris, PUF, 1990.

⁸³ CAC, AS, 39, GIM (*Groupes des Industries Métallurgiques de la Région Parisienne*), f. 257, «Rapports, Études et Statistiques relatifs à l'organisation des services sociaux», 1921; *ibidem*, 850, Conseil d'Administration, 5 November 1925.

⁸⁴ ANRF, SA, E. Grinda, *Rapport fait au nom de la Commission d'Assurance et de la Prévoyance Sociales chargée d'examiner le projet de loi sur les Assurances Sociales*, Annex 5505, 31 January 1923.

to procedure, the plan would now be on its way to the Senate. However, the political clash between the new parliamentary majority consisting in the «leftist bloc» and President Millerand, including his resignation, topped off by a financial crisis that was generating problems for the franc, slowed down the work of the parliament once again⁸⁵. Deadlock had formed in the political-institutional leadership that could only be overcome by a bottom-up push that was strong enough to break the political hesitation.

Creating homogenous social legislation for a heterogeneous society

France and Italy in the immediate aftermath of the war are two cases that are representative of a problem characterising many of the milestones in the evolution of European welfare in the twentieth century: the challenges of creating homogenous protection systems in heterogeneous societies. Over the previous months, the widespread hardship brought on by the war seemed to have levelled the material conditions of different social classes, laying the foundations for alliances between them. The great mobilisation of 1919-1920 also seemed to have confirmed this tendency in both countries. Instead, behind the superficial facade of unity lay a reality that was far more varied. Rural areas were very diverse, and a wide range of different ownership structures and types of contracts co-existed within them⁸⁶. What is more, there was still a yawning divide between the countryside and the city. The farmers, even those who were salaried employees, did not harbour a sense of immediate solidarity and identification with workers in urban areas because they were convinced that their work was far harder and believed that the city markets were feeding off the toil of rural labour⁸⁷. Then again, among the factory workers, there were vast differences between heavy and light industry, and also between specialised workers and mere manual labourers⁸⁸. Therefore, working conditions and salaries that were very different entailed different risks and needs in terms of social protection. What were lacking were the conditions for that *horizontal* solidarity that was to prop up the plans for reform submitted.

⁸⁵ On the political and financial crisis between 1924 and 1926, cf. S. Bernstein, *Edouard Herriot ou la République en personne*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation de Sciences Politiques, 1985; J. Néré, *Le problème de le mur d'argent. Les crises du franc (1924-1926)*, Paris, La Pensée Universelle, 1985.

⁸⁶ G. Duby, A. Vallon (eds.), *Histoire de la France rurale, 1789-1914*, vol. III (directed by M. Agulhon, G. Désert, R. Specklin), Paris, Seuil, 1992; A. Moulin, *Les paysans dans la société française de la Révolution à nos jours*, Paris, Seuil, 1988; P. Bevilacqua (ed.), *Storia dell'agricoltura italiana in età contemporanea*, vol. II, *Uomini e classi*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1990.

⁸⁷ ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12975, report of the prefect of Marseille, 1 April 1920. On the self-representation of French farmers in 1921 a book came out providing an accurate account, cf. D. Halévy, *Visite aux paysans du Centre*, Paris, Grasset, 1921.

⁸⁸ Cf. A. Dewerpe, *Le monde du travail en France*, Paris, Colin, 1990. S. Musso, *Storia del lavoro in Italia*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2002.

Something which further complicated this situation was the fact that often in the countryside there was a very fine line between salaried employees and landowners: many small landowners supplemented their income by working as seasonal manual labourers, sharecroppers were not paid a salary and were proud of their management skills. What is more, thanks to the rise in prices of agricultural products, many of them had increased their earnings⁸⁹. Because of their individualistic mentality, many farmers were closer to the petite bourgeoisie in trade and craft products, pulverised into a myriad different workshops, as well as white-collar workers, the ranks of which were growing, also due to the growth in public apparatuses. Hence, there was great diversity and fragmentation among small landowners, which in turn failed to pave the way for *vertical* solidarity, between the proletariat and the middle classes.

Another rift further undermined unity in the world of work: *gender* difference. The war had thrust throngs of women into the workplace, which however clashed with the still very traditional vision of the family and female roles. In fact, during the hearings of the Chamber of Deputies in France, even union representatives referred to women as the «wives of workers»; and Marcel Laurent went so far as to warn: «if we create a regime that is not favourable towards mothers, mothers will no longer be interested in raising their children and this is a social role of eminent importance»⁹⁰.

How could unity be achieved among all these differences? The solution lay in creating just as many intersecting forms of solidarity: between workers with higher incomes to the benefit of those who were less well-off, between the young to the benefit of the old, small owners who with compulsory insurance would have to pay contributions along with workers, rather than independently amassing their savings. However, the representatives from the various groups refused this solidarity. «Wouldn't it have been fairer to more clearly define the differences?» the delegates from the French Christian unions argumentatively asked, backed by the memorandum of the agricultural associations that firmly stated: «The French people are one of the most diverse populations that exist» and therefore «wishing to subject them to regulations that are exactly the same» was «a simplistic and dangerous notion»⁹¹. In Italy those

⁸⁹ For France, in addition to the information provided in the aforementioned books, cf. what was also reported by the prefects in ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12975, report of the prefect of Marseille, 20 April 1921, f. 13030, report of the prefect of Bordeaux, 3 April 1921.

⁹⁰ ANP, AN, C, CAPS, f. 14646, *Audition de Laurent, Perrot, Bourderon et Baudoin, représentants de la Commission Administrative de la CGT*, 8 November 1921, pp. 9-10. On gender inequality in French factories, cf. also, for example, L. Lee Downs, *Manufacturing inequalities. Gender division in the French and British Metalworking Industries (1914-1939)*, Ithaca, Cornell University, 1995, pp. 7-59.

⁹¹ ANP, AN, C, CAPS, f. 14646, hearing of the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens, 21 November 1921, p. 7; Confédération Nationale des Associations Agricoles, «Memorandum», 2 December 1921, p. 4.

who were directly involved were even more explicit; and in the letters sent to mayors, deputies and ministers, citizens who were members of the bourgeoisie, working class or farmers underscored the conditions of their groups and often pointed out the advantages of the groups considered «rivals»⁹².

Because of these centrifugal pushes, reform plans lacked strong social backing. On the contrary, parties and unions had no incentive to seek points of convergence, thereby exacerbating divisions even at the political level. And it was at the political level that the most crucial standoff took place, leading to the final outcome.

Political divisions and fragmented social protection systems

In the end, in Italy Nitti decided to create a new *ad hoc* ministry: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, established in June 1920 and entrusted to the foremost specialist, Mario Abbiate. However, by then overwhelmed by social tensions and contradictions within his own majority, he resigned shortly thereafter, replaced by Giolitti, whose many years of experience seemed to provide a guarantee for his efficiency. Though, the prime minister seemed to underestimate the importance of some changes in many key sectors⁹³. Despite the urging of Minister of the Treasury Meda, it was only in March 1921 that the government decided to extend the scope of application of accident insurance⁹⁴. By then the situation in Italy, after the factory occupations and first squad attacks, was precipitating. Even the subsequent governments of Ivanhoe Bonomi and Luigi Facta, absorbed by social tensions and the political crisis, failed to take any firm action on social protection. Hence, the proposed reforms remained in cold storage.

The backdrop was different when the Mussolini-led government posed the question of social policy. With Decree no. 3184 of 30 December 1923 the Fascists excluded the agricultural sector from the insurance scheme. The move dealt an extremely hard blow to the process of unifying protective insurance, but it benefited the agriculturalists who had helped finance Mussolini's political rise. Moreover, at the financial level, the government got rid of State contributions. Of the three principles put forward in the post-war reform plans, the only one that remained regarded the compulsory nature of social insurance while the principles regarding solidarity between different groups and of State intervention to ensure unity were disregarded. By getting rid of two out of three of these principles, the Fascist system of social protection totally lost its *proto-universalist* vision. Moreover, by exacerbating fragmentation between the

⁹² F. Quagliaroli, *Risarcire*, cit., pp. 265-284.

⁹³ F. Fabbri, *Le origini*, cit., pp. 227-231.

⁹⁴ ACS, PCM, 1920, f. 1-1, letters from Meda, undated and dated 29 October 1920, Giolitti's reply dated 4 November 1920.

different groups, it paved the way for the «particularism-clientelism» that was to be the hallmark of Italian welfare over the following decades⁹⁵.

In France, with the financial crisis of the mid-twenties, social hardship once again became acute⁹⁶. Moreover, the fragmentary and scattered nature of the existing legislation fostered evasion⁹⁷. In order to relaunch the plan submitted to the Senate, the leaders of the *Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière* (SFIO) and the CGT planned an awareness campaign, of which there is little trace in the sources⁹⁸. The party and the union, despite the restructuring of the SFIO by Paul Faure and Leon Blum, were actually becoming weaker and weaker due to its endless bickering with the *Parti communiste français* (PCF)⁹⁹. Not even their potential allies were inclined to jointly address these issues. The radicals had a constituency that was mainly from the bourgeoisie and submitted a programme with different priorities, such as economic modernisation, secularity and civil rights¹⁰⁰. For their part, the Catholic organisations had founded the *Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens*, which proved to have a strategy oriented mostly towards developing a network of independent organisations¹⁰¹. In the meanwhile, a cross-party alliance was forming in favour of private mutual funds due to their deep entrenchment in the local area and the vast network of interests revolving around them, which pushed many Mps to support them. The ones who took advantage of this were the new leaders of the Federation of Mutual Associations, Georges Petit (who had already taken part in the parliamentary hearings) and Raoul Péret who, a seasoned MP, succeeded in getting appointed as minister of finance in March 1926. Their strategy was not to take action against all reforms, but

⁹⁵ U. Ascoli, *Il Sistema italiano di Welfare* and M. Paci, *Il sistema di welfare italiano tra tradizione clientelare e prospettive di riforma*, in U. Ascoli (ed.), *Welfare State all'italiana*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1984.

⁹⁶ ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12968, monthly reports from January 1926, p. 4, February 1926, p. 6 and March 1926, p. 9.

⁹⁷ ANP, MTHAPS, F/22, TSS, f. 507, reports of the ministerial inspectors, 2 February 1926, 16 June 1926, 4 August 1926, 23 November 1926, 13 December 1926.

⁹⁸ ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12989, report of the prefect of Bordeaux on the Rey conference, 20 March 1926. However, the monthly reports from the same time period do not mention other important initiatives, cf. *ibidem*, f. 1268, monthly reports for February and April 1926, f. 1269, monthly report for January 1927. On the CGT's willingness to conduct the campaign, cf. A. Rey, *La question*, cit., p. 387.

⁹⁹ Cf. P. Luzon, *Les Assurances Sociales*, «L'Humanité», 8 January 1924. The polemic and clashes were promptly reported by the prefects, cf., for example, ANP, MI, F7, PG, f. 12698, monthly report for January 1926, pp. 7-14 and 22-23; f. 12989, report of the prefect of Bordeaux, 14 June 1926; f. 12993, report from the Isère Department, 29 March 1926; f. 12999, reports from the Loira department dated 20 April and 14 May 1926. On the restructuring of the SFIO, cf. J. Kergoat, *Histoire du Parti Socialiste*, Paris, Le Découverte, 1997, pp. 27-43; S. Bernstein, *Léon Blum*, Paris, Fayard, 2006, pp. 185-221.

¹⁰⁰ For a synthesis, cf. S. Bernstein, *Les Radicaux*, in J.-J. Becker, G. Candar (eds.), *Histoire des gauches en France*, vol. II, Paris, La Découverte, 2005, pp. 7-26.

¹⁰¹ ANP, AN, C, CAPS, f. 14646, Hearing of the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens, *Note présentée à la Commission d'Assurance et de la Prévoyance Sociales de la Chambre des Députés*, 21 November 1921. Cf. M. Launay, *La CFTC. Origines et développement (1919-1940)*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1987.

rather to direct their development towards their own advantage¹⁰². The big industrialists positioned themselves along the same lines, mainly regarding the initiative of the Paris metalworkers led by Pierre Richemond¹⁰³. Hence, the situation was converging towards one, specific objective: to go from a plan that was essentially controlled top-down by the State to a plan essentially managed by private associations. This coalition of interests added weight to the scale, which was still shifting, and sped up the passing of the law.

The President of the Senate Commission, Claude Chaveau, submitted a new plan that, with the intervention of Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré, was approved in the spring of 1928, just in time for the new elections. Finally, after the addition of few final amendments in 1930, the reform took on its final form. The insurance system was maintained and many salaried workers continued to benefit from it. In terms of organisation and management, however, the pyramid structure under State control that had been envisioned in the initial plan was replaced by a system based on many different funds that managed the contributions paid in and only left the State with administrative and supervisory competences¹⁰⁴.

So what is the connection between *warfare* and *welfare* in France and Italy after the Great War? First of all, the link appears to be *strong*, because in the wake of the war in both countries there was a serious conflict between «new» needs and «old» solutions. And the «new» needs were the result of the pressures exerted by the war. Based on the sources and empirical evidence, this connection seems to be present at many levels, from changes in society – which had shed light on the shortcomings in the previous systems and seemed to create potential interclass alliances – to institutional changes, because the war had led to an increase in State competences and instruments had been created for war that could be converted and used for civil purposes, up to the shifting awareness of specialists and politicians, also due to the effect of models from abroad. Something else that strengthens this causal link is also the observation that before the war the evolution in the social protection systems in France and Italy was proceeding very slowly, both because there was no significant bottom-up pressure being exerted and because at the top of the political-institutional system there was persistent bureaucratic inertia and cultural resistance. Therefore, the war seems to have been a factor that, by changing conditions on many levels

¹⁰² ANP, MTHAPS, F22, TSS, report of the president of the commission on social legislation Maurice Vangler, July 1925. Cf. also *Le Congrès de la FNMF*, «Le Mutualiste français», December 1926; *Raoul Péret Ministre des Finances*, «Bulletin Officiel de la Fédération Nationale de la Mutualité Française», April 1926, p. 1.

¹⁰³ CAC, AS, 39, 850, GIM, 30 July 1926. For the industrialists' standpoint, cf. also P. Dutton, *Origins*, cit., pp. 84-85.

¹⁰⁴ For a very broad, accurate description of the law's structure, this volume was published as a handbook shortly after the law was passed. Cf. P. Durand, *L'application pratique de la loi des assurances sociales: manuel juridique et pratique*, Paris, Dalloz, 1930.

(social, institutional, cultural and political), generated a critical mass of pressure that was significant enough to speed up the development of social legislation. As a result, plans for reform were adopted with an «*occupational*» model. However, it was then supplemented by a *proto-universalist* logic that aimed to reach both *workers* and *citizens*, with the goal of ensuring the most uniform services possible.

The initial burst of enthusiasm quickly lost steam, though, when it came up against a number of stumbling blocks within each of the countries. The opposition of social groups, lobbies and parliamentary forces, although often manifested in a confused and disorganised way, responded to two essential issues. The first was social: France and Italy were both very heterogeneous societies that as a result failed to adapt to a homogenous social protection system that entailed not only uniform services, but also costs and obligations that were common to all. The second matter was – consequently – political, because the social divisions interacted with political divisions, which mutually reinforced each other.

Therefore, although the nexus between *warfare* and *welfare* was *strong*, because it generated a powerful drive for change, it was *not strong enough* to achieve a uniform welfare system oriented towards citizens. Change was achieved, but it was not as deep as the reformers had hoped. The example of France and Italy in the immediate aftermath of the war therefore shows that in the evolution of welfare systems, each country's social conditions and internal politics plays a crucial role, which unforeseen, external factors like war can weaken but not eliminate. The explanation of the milestones and turning points in the history of the welfare state must therefore include *many different factors* and a combination of social, political-institutional and cultural dynamics that interact with each other.

Paolo Mattera, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università Roma Tre, Via Ostiense, 234, 00146 Roma
paolo.mattera@uniroma3.it

