

***Rough justice as a decisive part of the penal military justice during WWI: Italian experience versus the other belligerent countries*** – IRENE GUERRINI and MARCO PLUVIANO

*University of Turin, Department of Contemporary History*

[irene.guerrini@giuri.unige.it](mailto:irene.guerrini@giuri.unige.it)

[53736@unige.it](mailto:53736@unige.it)

The paper will develop the following subjects:

Rough justice was an Italian particularity, because only Italian army had regularly applied it. We have consulted documents in the Central Public Record Office and in the Army's General Staff Archive. At the end of the first stage of these investigations we have found at least 350 victims of the rough justice, more than the double of the previous estimated victims. Besides, there were the estimated victims of shootings following regular trials, at least 750;

Rough justice had been widely applied. It and the sentences to death had the full support of the General Staff. General Cadorna was the chief of the General Staff from the beginning of the war till November 1917, after the Caporetto disaster. He made very strong pressure on the commanders to make widely apply rough justice, and decimation also;

Rough justice had been a fundamental part of the Italian repressive system. Its use had been part of a wider attempt to harden the very strict discipline in the army and in the whole Italian society. This attempt had been planned and sponsored by political, economical and military leaders to destroy the social and political advancements achieved in the Italian society between the end of XIX and the beginning of XX century;

We shall compare death penalty's use in the main armies during the war, with a particular attention to the rough justice. Italian army had the main rate of shootings, maybe except Russian and Bulgarian, and the rough justice was almost an Italian exclusive;

This different attitude between Italy and the other countries was linked to a different attitude to the consent organization. Cadorna thought that Italian people were lacking in discipline and national feeling, and only a repressive attitude could obtain obedience. Only Cadorna's successor, general Diaz, coupled repression with consent organization;

At the end, we shall examine the debate about military justice and rough justice in Italy immediately after the war. It was very harsh and the government was able to manage it only with the reintroduction of the press censorship.