
Social Portrait of First World War

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Abstract: *This article draws an outline of the social and political currents running background during the First World War. We intend to appreciate values and ideas that we have inherited from those times.*

At the beginning of this dissertation it has been traced a historical framework of this struggle for the reader to take charge of his size. The following text in the body seeks an introduction to social status and then it will be broken down by fronts, without being exhaustive, but to provide an outline of what was happening then. The fronts discussed in the text are the Western Front, the Italian and finally the Middle East through films of British, French and Australian filmmakers of the allied side. On every front we analyze films that portray interesting aspects that are credible to what might happen to the protagonists of this inside story.

1. Introduction

In the bloody conflict that lasted from July 28, 1914 until November 11, 1918, a total of fifty-two months seventeen countries participated, including the most powerful at the time and a large part of the population of these countries was involved in the conflict.

According to Gilbert (2004:13) the First World War had an approximate cost of almost fifteen million lives in total, between military and civilians, a figure that puts us on notice about the human and economic wear of this conflict. Even so, there is a discussion about which of the two World Wars, the First and the Second, was the most dramatic in terms of lack of respect for human rights in the treatment of members, military and civilian of the opponent side. Hobsbawm (2002) points to the Second because only 5 percent of those who died in World War I were, in fact, civilians. It was always thought in terms of respect for human rights that WWII has been worse, especially if we think of Nazi death camps, although in the first War they were committed abuses such as occurred in the assault on the Sabac Serb population at the hands of the Austrian army, where the soldiers rounded up civilians, then they shot, slaughtered children and raped women (Gilbert, 2004:77).

Despite its remoteness in time, in the First World War were at stake concepts that continue to shape our values and world views today. In this article we address the social portrait of this war in a time of change, in its various fronts, through historical research and review, by way of illustration, classic feature films about the war. Therefore, the methodology of this work will consist, first, in a synthesis of the historical literature review regarding the contest and, on the other hand, in the selection, viewing and interpretive analysis of some films from the thirties of the twentieth century until the early years of this century. We believe that they have followed in their vision of the socioeconomic strife picture of that era of the early twentieth century.

If we recall the facts, the war started by the Balkan conflict following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo. Due to that fact the Austro- Hungarian Empire, with the support of the German Empire declared war on the Kingdom of Serbia. Then Russia mobilized militarily and the German Empire declared war then. The bout was established between major empires. The side of the Allies consisted of: the Russian Empire, France, UK, Belgium, Japan, Italy, USA, Portuguese Republic, the Kingdom of Greece, the Kingdom of Montenegro, the Kingdom of Romania, the Kingdom of Serbia and United States of Brazil. The other side, the party of the Triple Entente or Central Powers consisted of: the German Empire, the Austro -Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Bulgaria. The reasons for the war Sesé summarizes:

In the case of the Great War would be wrong to award all the blame on the military rivalries, diplomatic, territorial or economic. They also had very strong cause of the conflict a set of ideas, as the cult of moral and patriotic values that carried the germ of militarism and xenophobia or the awakening of national consciousness against other ethnicities before closer. These postulates were the breeding ground of a group climate that led to the vast majority to think that war was the fastest way to solve all your problems, sometimes antagonistic and thus, all world problems.

The battles took place in several fronts located in Europe, Asia (briefly in China and the Pacific Islands) and Africa. People often speak of : the Western Front , the Eastern Front , the Italian front , the Balkan front , the front of the Middle East, the war in Africa , the war in the Far East and the Pacific and the war at sea.

United States had the most benefits from this war, so long and expensive economically for everyone, as evidenced Mazzei:

Remember that U.S. supremacy is not from a superior industrial or technological development, but is a product of the First World War, from which he emerged as the great global financial creditor.

A significant change of the First World War was the virtual disappearance of the encounter in battle "chivalrous " face to face . The two opposing sides invested great resources in inventing ever more dangerous weapons, causing great alarm among the participants in the contest and in the families of these. These developments highlighted: tanks, planes, and gases, as Rio - Chiriboga point and Franco -Paredes:

The German Army developed a program for the creation of biological weapons during the First World War. The *Bacillus anthracis* and *Burkholderia mallei* were used by the Germans to contaminate cattle was exported to Russia.

Also Nievas (2007:5-6) confirms the use in this contest of psychological warfare, whose prospects had already been studied by social scientists as the German Max Weber showed in these words :

There can be no peace in the economic struggle for existence only to confuse appearance with reality can believe that the peaceful enjoyment of life is what will the future hold for our descendants (...) It is our mission to teach our successors the way to peace and human satisfaction, but rather to show the eternal struggle for the maintenance and cultivation of our national integrity.

However, according Nievas the professionalization of this procedure and incorporation into the military structures of sociologists, communication experts, psychologists, anthropologists to try to confuse the enemy, gaining allies and strengthen own side perspective , did not occur until World War (Nievas , 2007:5-6) .

2. State of question and Social Portrait

Few documentaries have been preserved of the First World War and we must go back to 1964 to find a series produced by the BBC with the title of "The Great War ". Some documentaries on Eastern Europe and Russia, rescued by producer Wark Clemens and impulse by historian Hew

Strachan, tried to reflect the global conflict posed by the war, as a counterpoint to Anglophone emphasis had been given to the analysis of the Western Front creating the popular conception of how essential was Britain's involvement in the conflict. These documentaries tried to recover social considerations of war that prevailed before its analysis fell into the hands of writers and novelists of the late '20s (Strachan, 2004:15-16) .

José María Sesé describes some social features as the enthusiasm of young people to enlist and go into battle, because exalted nationalism. And also this historian adds certain specific social transformations in the First World War, or in subsequent years as a result of it, such as: the incorporation of women into the workplace in general and some particular work , the exodus from the countryside to the cities , the appearance of the new rich because commercial speculation military equipment and the promotion of radical political movement following the reentry of ex-combatants, creating a social environment very prone to this type of movement (Sesé, 1998 : 904-905) . From this same social view Gilbert says the appearance, during the conflict, of antiwar feeling of certain movements, such as the British party: Liberal , labor and trade union or anti-war sentiment, as the group of Russian socialists called Social Democratic Party (2004 : 72-74), etc. .

Although in the historical-political context imperialist states still prevailed, the Russian revolution was already present at background, and therefore, the ideas attached to it: the ideology of class struggle as the effective power of change and the democratic spirit. These democratic airs were reflected in the battlefield of the First World War, where people from very different social classes were fighting together for the same reasons. Some authors like Touraine and De Freitas have referred to the development of this democratic spirit from the end of the First World War:

Only when the modernization effort leads to fighting archaic forms of social domination is when the new bourgeoisie established a partnership with the popular classes against an oligarchy resting on its old mode of production develops democratic spirit. This process has ancient origins, but has taken a particular strength in the aftermath of the First World War (Touraine and Freitas, 1996:243).

All these aspects mentioned give the keys to understanding the great social transformation that was germinating in society at that time, as discussed below.

The supply of films about World War is varied, and all she has familiarized and popularized, in a way, what happened in it to the next generations.

The films we have selected for this work are the three fronts we considered most representative. The works are run by British, American, French, Belgian and Australian directors, that is, always from the point of view of the Allies. With this selection we try to make the study of three specific cases, but non- represent this complex war as a whole, due to the varying number of nationalities involved and the various existing fronts, as we raised at the beginning of this work. We assume that this analysis are beyond other notable films as *Sergeant York* (Howard Hawkes , 1941), *Wings* (William Wellkman , 1927) , *The African Queen* (John Houston , 1951), *The Blue Max* (John Guillermin, 1966) ecc...

2.1. The Western Front

The film *The Red Baron* by American director Roger Corman (1971) was set in the year 1916, a very detailed view of the social status of the First World War, and also describes visually the offensive possibilities of air force in that contest, and the development of specialized aircraft in those years of war.

The transition from war of "chivalry and honor" to another war "cruel and shameless" is masterfully reflected by the director, through confrontation in the air of the leading antagonists of the film: the noble German, Manfred von Richthofen, and middle-class Canadian, Roy Brown. At the beginning of the war the air forces were formed following the dissolution of the detachments of cavalry, so he joined in military belonging to the nobility, who were the ones who introduced this aspect " chivalrous " to war, but as the war progressed and casualties grew, these were covered with middle-class soldiers hastened the transition in the type of war to develop in the future.

Civic behavior changed and there was no longer respected the rule of honor as toast the enemy when they have to look down if the enemy needs help, or to respect hospitals and healthcare in the attacks. All that disappeared, and gradually on both sides it was introduced lines of action in the face of France inducing: to finish enemies ruthlessly as they landed safely after being shot, to end the life of the pilot and to completely disable the appliance down, strafing and dropping bombs on hospitals and health service despite being marked with the red cross. The upper class

saw it as a loss of values , while the middle class estimated it as a change, as the triumph of new rules of action due to a new social order and the access of middle-class military command posts where the decisions were made.

Also significant is how the film portrays the propagandistic use of the media (print and audiovisual documentaries) to create the epic image of a youngster Von Richthofen and encourage the hopes of German military camp. It is also reflected very well in this film the desire for revenge of the German military, even though they knew they were losing the war, agreed to provide start another war that could fulfill their desire to form an empire and revenge British betrayal.

In one scene of dialogue between the Baron and his father, the latter socialist rants about the threat in magnified terms, and says flatly that "the army is responsible for ending the mob of socialists." On this issue qualifies us Nievas "Just over a century later, with the socialist revolution of 1917 reappeared association between Bolshevism and terrorism "(2007:3).

The western front also appears in the film by the French director François Dupeyron entitled *Officers Pavilion* (2001), based on the novel by Marc Dugain. The film revolves around the protagonist an engineer, Adrien, to which a shell will disfigure the face the first day of the war. From that moment the film tells the psychological and physical suffering of the lieutenant for four years in row officers of Val de Grace Hospital in Paris, together with other colleagues. Plastic surgery was not as developed yet and faces not just are pleasing to the eye –they had many operations many times to the point of needing to hide the affected part. The film shows when convalescents have suicidal feelings and actually one of them when he feels rejection by his family, finally commits suicide. It also portrays a strong female figure. Margarite is a brave French nurse volunteer in the war that is being disfigured and also become deaf. Margarite decides to live in a apartment because she did not want to return to frivolous world of high-born family. Her two brothers didn't volunteered in the war and she, for their high sense of patriotism, considered them cowards. The characters when the war ends must face how to deal with his new appearance, despite being featured as war heroes. The film was nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes for best picture in 2001.

In the film *Zeppelin* Belgian director Etienne Perier, (1971) portray the bombings carried out by this ship that reach great height and it was hard to take down while it was bombing. In a special mission conducted by the Germans in attacking a Scottish castle where you they saved the historic treasures, Germans make use of mustard gas against British Guardian, which is reflected the use of chemical weapons in this war. It also appears a female character with university studies, Erika, an aeronautical engineer, married to the German professor Altschul, which acquires great strength in the development of history.

Paths of Glory (1957) labeled a large perfectionism by director, Stanley Kubrick, which also portrays this front. It raises the issue of mutiny by soldiers to orders that do not seemed sensible and because of this suffering trial of war later. The mutiny is a serious offense; it breaks the military rule of obedience, a firmer rules about the hierarchy, pillar in order to have internal structure within the army and to work as one team.

According to Martin Gilbert (2004:437) the war between trenches much time allowed soldiers critical reflection about the purpose and consequences of the war, and these feelings were reflected in correspondence with their loved ones.

2.2 The Italian front

Balardini (2000) says precisely the case of an American journalist and writer, Nobel laureate Ernest Hemingway, which saw armed struggle on this front and rising of social changes. Balardini also discusses some of the social and cultural dilemmas that time among young people:

In the first war , a significant number of young men , young adult individuals are going to war , and women have to take care of the production unit and the playback unit , ie , they have to take care of the family and working. This will disrupt some common sense and settle the basis of strong cultural changes related to the place of women and men in society.

On the other hand, it appears certain defiance of a younger generation of middle class- and even some elite youth- that will lead the lost generation; “the lost generation” that, out of context, it comes today to challenge many young people. However, the Lost Generation was composed, among others, by Ernest Hemingway, whose literature, besides

being excellent, spoke of social and cultural relations strongly disruptive with the generation of their parents.

For these young people, their parents' values come into conflict with the realities effective they are seeing, and a very strong modernization also, then it will generate inadequacies in these young eyes are having about their own situation and of what society expresses about it by previous generation, and there appears a phenomenon disruptive (Balardini, 2000:15) .

The film *Farewell to arms* starring Gary Cooper is based on a novel published in 1929 by Ernest Hemingway who lived from about this scenario, then enlisted as an ambulance driver on the Italian front. In this film the director considers how an international couple is formed by infatuation and not by concert or economic interest as it was usual. It is a story set in the Italian front led by an American director, Frank Borzage (1932). The story tells about a U.S. military medical volunteer that meets a British nurse who lost her boyfriend earlier in the war. The American soldier is able to defect as long as he knows his wife is pregnant and alone. We found two social ruptures at this time. The first is the defection of the soldier for personal reasons, and the second is that they are married in secret by the adverse circumstances of the war. They marry when he is hospitalized by a priest who takes pity on the situation of them. It also portrays the hardship and cutting supplies. The nurse is an example that women can be more independent and with a health profession so needed at war time.

In both fronts, is it showed the number of deaths and injuries that claimed that war, as well as the emotional, the characters, for the loss of loved ones, friends or colleagues.

2.3. The front of the Middle East

The film *Lawrence of Arabia* directed by Sir David Lean (1961) recounts the events Middle Eastern Front during the years 1916-1918. The military intervention of the British character is stil epic and renowned in England perhaps encouraged also by the aforementioned cult film. His intervention was decisive in the Arab revolt commanded by Prince Faysal against the Ottoman Empire in the beating ended. Thomas Edward Lawrence reached up to lieutenant colonel, but his vocation was to be a archeology writer. In his tenure at the intelligence service is known for his feat of dressing up and impersonating an Arab. In his book *The Seven*

Pillars of Wisdom (1922) does not cease to amaze audience with the story of unfortunate physical abuse he was subjected by the Ottomans who captured him - in which it is assumed that they raped him, 'for had very large consequences, as he admits: "It helped me cope with a burden that the passage of time did not fail to confirm: that in the citadel of Deraa that night my integrity had been irrevocably lost." (cap . LXXX , 2007) .

The film *Gallipoli* tells the costly Australian campaign against the Turks. The film is directed by Australian filmmaker, Peter Weir (1981). They portray the illusions of six young Australians so enthusiastic, patriotic and innocent; they decide to enlist in the war in the spirit of the time. They move to Cairo and then to Gallipoli, Turkey, where they have to act in the Battle of the Nek. In the battle they have to simulate an attack like distraction strategy from the trenches with bayonets in order that the British troops could disembark. Due to poor communication coordination between superiors are depleted in a meaningless and futile attack on the falling dead right out of the trench. Only one of them survives, an athlete, Frank, who acts as broker, and tries to save carrying the general's order not to attack more. But despite striving and endangers his life running through the lines, he did not arrive on time.

3. Conclusions

We can tell from the above that the First World War begins to look a step in a stratified social status, with a strong command of the upper class to a more democratic social state. In the military field it is seen as a loss of values , for example, the honor when complying with whom you fight, or the lack of ethics in the use of weapons such as mustard gas shelling civilians.

However, in the battlefield are other democratic values, such as fighting shoulder to shoulder regardless of social class, where the prevailing pragmatic value of solidarity and scope of common societal aims. It begs the diversity of views when participating in the war and , if possible, the paradox of idealization of war through the Media with the aim of morale in a war so long, facing the critical view of those who were experiencing the rigors of war in their skin.

It is also discovered the negative effects of this war, as the testimony of physical and moral suffering human loss or damage characteristic of a situation where the medicine was still in progress regarding surgery. Disruptive behavior is also compared to military standards such as

desertion, mutiny, or experience of the absurd in the case of loss of life due to lack of communication or military negligence.

The collective experience after the war is losing a generation of young people who enlisted in the war and did not return, and the experience of other traumas as massacres and rapes, etc. . .

The portrait of the woman is on one hand, with the traditional role of family as a mother, but on the other, it appears to become a woman more educated, braver, with professional development, with greater independence to be moved and travel, with the possibility of marrying individuals of another nationality, and with significant action and involvement in war.

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