Royalty and Republic in Europe

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Political Establishments in the Early 1920s

Edited by

Sorin Arhire, Tudor Roșu
and Călin Anghel

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INTRODUCTION

TUDOR ROȘU

The current volume of studies was put together at the end of the conference *Royalty and Republic: Europe's Political Establishments in the Early 1920s*, organised by the National Union Museum and the "1 Decembrie 1918" University, both in the city of Alba Iulia, Romania, from 14 to 18 September 2022. The conference created the opportunity for scientific dialogue with 30 participants from 11 countries (Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Turkey and, of course, Romania). Most of the conference presentations are processed in the present volume as scientific articles.

The conference was the last in a series of three historical conventions organised between 2018 and 2022 dedicated to centenarian realities of Europe (and further afield, but to a lesser degree). The first conference led to the volume entitled *The Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920) and Its Aftermath: Settlements, Problems and Perceptions*, eds Sorin Arhire and Tudor Roșu (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), while the second conference was followed by the volume *The Paris Peace Conference and Its Consequences in Early-1920s Europe*, eds Sorin Arhire, Tudor Roșu and Călin Anghel (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023). These two books focused on topics related to the Paris Peace Conference and the geopolitics it was intended to serve and solve following the desolations caused by the First World War. They also examined the conference's importance for the institutions and power structures that developed subsequently in Europe and the world, how this famous event was received at the time, and how perceptions of it evolved over the following decades. Specialists – mainly historians – published studies in these books covering a large range of subjects: from principles and theories regarding the new power structures, mass-media and its influence, controversies and interpretations, and important actors to local realities such as the Albanian issue, Banat's reconfiguration, the Slovaks' position, and the repatriation of citizens from France and Soviet Russia, among many other themes.

The considerable interest aroused by the two editions of the conference and these associated volumes influenced the organisation and the configuration

of a third edition. For the September 2022 conference, the topic was related to the period that immediately followed the Paris Peace Conference: the early 1920s. Besides the narrow timeframe, the chosen theme was "Royalty and Republic: Europe's Political Establishments in the Early 1920s," inviting participating researchers to engage in a historiographic exercise to examine the balance between these two major political paradigms.

This approach was also necessary because the conference was organised in Romania under the aegis of the centenary celebrations of the Coronation. On 15 October 1922, King Ferdinand I of Romania was crowned in Alba Iulia (the city where the conference was held) as King of Greater Romania, with a ceremony which symbolically confirmed the advantageous transformations and gains the country underwent between 1918 and 1920. In this short interval of time, the Kingdom of Romania more than doubled its population and territory, primarily through multiple unions of new territories in 1918, but international acknowledgement of this gain was only received following the Paris Peace Conference, which took place in 1919 and 1920. Within Romania, the conference's final completion – its corollary – had to be something highly symbolic for the country, a great national festivity, and there was no event more appropriate than the coronation of King Ferdinand as sovereign of the new Romania. The chosen location was Alba Iulia, "the old citadel of Romanian spirit," connected with the union of Michael the Brave at the turn of the seventeenth century and with the most meaningful of the 1918 unions: the union of Transylvania. The great coronation festivities lasted for three days, as if in a fairy tale, and the crucial moment, the crowning of the king, which began in Alba Iulia continued in the capital, Bucharest, with a further solemn ceremony. The three days of the coronation were declared public holidays, with schools, shops and factories closed. The coronation benefited from widespread attention at that time. The press covered the event extensively, and a great number of foreign journalists were present. Alongside these journalists, photographers and film crews were envoys, representatives, ambassadors, and special guests from around 30 countries in Europe and beyond.

For these reasons, a significant number of studies in the current volume are dedicated to issues related to the Romanian coronation. One chapter, "The Duke Albert of York at the Coronation Festivities of King Ferdinand of Romania," notes that the future king of Great Britain was among the most important special guests present at the event. Another chapter depicts the event from the perspective of the Swedish delegate to the ceremonies. Another chapter related to the coronation analyses how the later communist propaganda dealt with the subject.

But, as already pointed out, the range of topics in the present volume is much greater. The interested reader will be taken through many historical locations, encountering the Duke of York again in Belgrade at a similar event: the royal wedding between Yugoslavian King Aleksandar Karadjordjević I and Princess Maria of Romania, daughter of King Ferdinand I and Queen Maria. Then to Czechoslovakian lands, and on to another new country on Europe's map – Poland, then to a Turkey renewed by Kemalist policies, and on to the complicated Caucasus and other unsettled areas such as the Northeast Adriatic, at the border between Italy and the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

In fact, if one had to summarise all the new European political architectures in the early 1920s in one word, that word would be "complicated." The period under discussion saw the decline of the nobility and monarchy, yet these institutions proved to be only a superficial layer of the Old World. The multi-nation empires of Central and Eastern Europe disappeared after the Great War, but many of their problems remained in place. The tragic experience of the First World War profoundly influenced the structures generated by the Paris Peace Conference, but a stable standardisation among participating political establishments was extremely hard to accomplish, due to all the regional particularities. There were also divergent interests, sometimes more so than before the war, between the Great Powers in certain areas. For instance, Anglo-French disagreements over the Balkans and the Middle East were growing. The problem of minorities, ethnic or religious, paradoxically became, at least in some regions, bigger than before. For instance, Hungary felt that the Trianon Treaty was unfair, since more than three million Hungarians remained outside the borders of the renewed state. These territorial problems were far from solved after the Paris Peace Conference; for the most part they were just dissipated into smaller disagreements over a wider area. A young irredentist or insurrectionist generation challenged the new establishments. Violence was present, sometimes on a massive scale. Fascism beginning to form; Bolshevism was already a model. The West continued to consider itself superior to the East. France continued to be a model country for republicanism, while Great Britain still served as the most prestigious model for the monarchy. But the interpretation of these models covered large range regarding the functionality of democracy. For instance, from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the sultanate, after another war (the Turkish War of Independence), the Republic of Turkey emerged in 1923. It was led by a president with quasi-dictatorial powers, which were considered necessary for the implementation of deep-reaching reforms. But, as some studies from the current volume will show, the opposition argued that as the Turkish

Republic was the product of war, genocide and mass expulsion of non-Muslims, and the state established a more powerful control over its population than had ever been the case in the past.

As a single preliminary conclusion, at least from some perspectives, it can be said that following the Paris Peace Conference, Europe was more divided and vulnerable than ever.

CHAPTER ONE

REPUBLICAN IDEAL, REVOLUTION AND NATIONALISM IN THE NORTHEASTERN ADRIATIC DURING THE FIRST POSTWAR PERIOD

STEFANO SANTORO

In the lands of the northeastern Adriatic, the postwar situation, tense throughout Italy due to strong social conflict, was further radicalised by the rift between the Italians and the Slavs. This rift was exacerbated by the question, which remained open after the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, of the border between Italy and the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia). The forces that supported Italian irredentism in its fight against Austria had fragmented at the end of the war, due to ideological and generational conflicts. Since the beginning of the century, the Italian Partito Liberal-Nazionale (Liberal-National Party) had revealed internal differentiations, as well as the irredentist movement itself. Two souls had always existed, the liberal and the democratic, but a young irredentist generation challenged both currents dominated by the previous generation, such that in Venezia Giulia a youthful, Mazzinian and republican component gained increasing strength in the prewar years. At the end of the war, in Venezia Giulia – just annexed to Italy and looking at the Italian political panorama – there was not much clarity from an ideological point of view, because in the Italian scenario itself there was a great deal of ideological confusion at the time. In the spring of 1919, Mazzinian war interventionists founded in Trieste a local branch of the Republican Party, which had many adherents in Istria as well as Trieste. The Republican Party of Trieste was made up of a few hundred young activists, many of whom were former volunteer combatants. They united radical nationalism and revolutionary aspirations in their political struggle, quickly assuming anti-socialist and frequently anti-Slavic positions.

Moreover, the Trieste republicans had close links with the radical nationalism of northern Italy, with the Arditi (elite troops of the Royal Italian Army) and with the futurists, thus finding themselves in harmony with the nascent fascist movement.[1]

The Nitti government, which had been in office since June 1919, had to deal with the international political aspects of the Adriatic problem, that is, with the question of establishing Italy's eastern borders with Yugoslavia. This issue was very complex. American President Woodrow Wilson continued to adopt a closed position with respect to Italian requests, based on the provisions of the London Pact of 1915. However, Francesco Saverio Nitti and his Foreign Minister, Tommaso Tittoni, succeeded in getting closer to France and England, counting on their support. The position held by the Italian armed forces and their leaders in Fiume (Rijeka) and Zara (Zadar) aroused apprehension in the Italian government, which was fearful of *coups de main* which could put Italy in a difficult position *vis-à-vis* the Allies. On the one hand, the Italian generals in Fiume and Dalmatia had a reticent attitude towards the requests of Nitti government to avoid conflict with the Yugoslavs; on the other hand, the Yugoslav nationalists in turn tended to provoke the Italian occupation troops. An anti-Yugoslav nationalist attitude persisted even among the leading Italian groups in Dalmatia which pushed in favour of annexation to Italy, and therefore did not tow Nitti's prudent line. Thus, a bond was created between more extremist (in the nationalist sense) positions of the Italian groups in Fiume and Dalmatia and elements of the Italian occupation troops. Indeed, it was precisely the Italian military commands in Fiume and Dalmatia that carried out nationalist propaganda – not only anti-Yugoslav but also against the Allies. The situation was therefore extremely fluid, and some people accused the Liberal state of being no longer able to guarantee the interests of the Italians. Thus, the idea of a *coup d'état* circulated or, at least, the idea of a role for the armed forces in plans to destabilise Liberal institutions and make way for a nationalist and anti-parliamentary turn.[2] In this insurrectionary climate, where some looked both to the right, at fascism in formation, and to the left, at Russian Bolshevism, entirely new solutions were possible. Personalities close to the republican and revolutionary world often assumed a leading role in such circumstances. After all, at that time republican inclinations were spread rather transversally, both on the right and on the

[1] Almerigo Apollonio, *Dagli Asburgo a Mussolini. Venezia Giulia 1918–1922* (Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 2001), 63–66.
[2] Paolo Alatri, *Nitti, D'Annunzio e la questione adriatica (1919–1920)* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1959), 137–146.

left; even the first iteration of fascism looked with substantial openness towards a republican solution.

Thus, in the first postwar period and until the seizure of power by fascism, a revolutionary line-up was formed which saw a transversal convergence on the right/left axis of people from different backgrounds – revolutionary syndicalists, futurists, Mazzinian republicans, anti-clericals – many of them young and eager for a radical break. The recently annexed area of northeastern Italy was a place where this republican aggregation assumed a particularly important connotation. The republicans of Trieste were in close contact with subversive groups near to the Arditi and early fascists, and were ready to carry out insurrectionary and subversive, anti-monarchist and anti-government coups. From the spring of 1919, when both the Trieste republicans and the local combat Fascio were born, the collaboration between the two formations was very close. It was no coincidence that the Trieste republicans contributed greatly to Gabriele D'Annunzio's seizure of power in Fiume, together with the nationalists and the Arditi. Their contribution was also significant in terms of number of volunteers: the republicans constituted the most faithful nucleus of the Fiuman legionaries, numbering at least 500.[3]

In September 1919, the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio in seized power in Fiume via a military coup immediately after the signing of the Treaty of Saint-Germain, which did not provide for the annexation of the town to Italy. The coup has often been dismissed by historiography as a simple anticipation of the march on Rome. Indeed, the slogans and poses of D'Annunzio – from his speech to the people made from the government building in Fiume to the shouts "eja eja alalà" or "me ne frego" [I don't care] – were a source of inspiration for Mussolini. However, starting first from the pioneering studies of Renzo De Felice, to arrive at a series of important publications that saw the light in the following years and then on the centenary of the Fiume enterprise, it has been seen that to reduce these events to merely a general rehearsal of fascism is reductive and misleading. Indeed, the feat of Fiume and the establishment of the Regency of Carnaro constitute a particularly complex and multifaceted event. The premise, however, is that since the spring–summer of 1919 a project was maturing among the Italian armed forces, and in particular the navy, aimed at a *coup de main* against the Italian political class, which was considered to be cowardly. The aim was to ensure Italian control of Dalmatia and, above all, of Fiume and the Kvarner Gulf, which was considered to be of high strategic importance, even more than the Dalmatian coast itself, which was difficult to defend. Besides this military element, D'Annunzio was in contact with

[3] Apollonio, *Dagli Asburgo a Mussolini*, 175.

the Italian National Council of Fiume and nationalist leaders such as Giovanni Giuriati as early as the spring of 1919.[4]

The ideology that guided the legionaries was multiple: nationalism, but at the same time republican revolutionism, together with nonconformist and libertarian anti-bourgeois poses. Among D'Annunzio's legionaries there were basically two orientations. One was characterised by political calculation which aimed to obtain Fiume for Italy or, at least, to place in the hands of the Italian government a tool to weigh the Italian position at the negotiating table with the Allies and with Yugoslavia. The other was, in part, of a metapolitical nature, merging ideals of renewal, of revolt against the established order and a refusal to return to the ranks after the war into an anti-system stance. Hence, D'Annunzio's Fiume assumed a meaning that went beyond the nationalist claims, investing a "revolutionary" environment which seemed to be a response to the concerns of men who left the war, aspiring to the creation of a society different from that of their fathers.[5]

In an initial phase, D'Annunzio came under the influence of his Chief of Staff, the nationalist Giovanni Giuriati, a Venetian lawyer, irredentist and interventionist. A turning point in the situation came when, in December 1919, D'Annunzio refused to agree to a "modus vivendi" elaborated by General Pietro Badoglio for the Italian government. This agreement envisaged the abandonment of the town by the legionaries and the ceding of its control to the Italian army with the prospect of creating a Free State of Fiume or even its annexation to Italy. The majority of the Italian National Council in Fiume expressed itself in favour (48 in favour and six against), but D'Annunzio refused, pushed by his most intransigent fellows.[6]

Giuriati, who supported the agreement with the Italian government, was forced to resign and was replaced on 10 January 1920 by Alceste De Ambris, who assumed the position of chief of staff. The latter was, like Giuriati, a war interventionist; nevertheless, they were profoundly different in terms of their political ideology. Giuriati was a moderate and royalist nationalist, while De Ambris was a revolutionary republican syndicalist. He provided the government of Fiume with a revolutionary political breakthrough by seeking political agreements in Italy, as well as with exponents of anarchism and the most radical wing of the Italian socialists.

The revolutionary turning point catalysed by De Ambris was immediately evident, with the establishment, on 12 January 1920, of the External Relations

[4] Renzo De Felice, *D'Annunzio politico (1918–1938)* (Roma and Bari: Laterza, 1978), 7.
[5] Ibid., 23–35.
[6] Ibid., 49–52; Raoul Pupo, *Fiume città di passione* (Bari and Roma: Laterza, 2018), 124–129.

Office, which was subsequently led by a series of whimsical and nonconformist personalities such as Léon Kochnitzky and Ludovico Toeplitz, with the collaboration of Henry Furst, Giovanni Comisso, Giovanni Bonmartini and others. D'Annunzio's foreign policy in this phase – to seek political recognition – was open to collaboration with the revolutionary forces then active in Central and Eastern Europe, from former members of the Hungarian government of Béla Kun to emissaries of the Russian Bolshevik government.

During a conversation with the anarchist Randolfo Vella, it seems that D'Annunzio said:

> I am for communism without dictatorship [...]. No wonder, since my whole culture is anarchist, and since the conviction is rooted in me that, after this last war, history will unleash a new flight towards a most audacious progress. […]. It is my intention to make this city a spiritual island from which an action, eminently communist, can radiate towards all oppressed nations.[7]

In effect, Fiume's foreign policy, at least until the summer of 1920, was marked by an anti-imperialist rhetoric, condemning the League of Nations as guided by the "selfish" interests of Western "demo-plutocracies" and world capitalism. The League of Fiume was founded in order to oppose it, ready to enter into agreements with all movements of a revolutionary nature, with poor and oppressed nations against rich nations. De Ambris worked to give Fiuman politics a clear republican, as well as revolutionary, character which was to radically change the first brief phase, initiated by Giovanni Giuriati, of a nationalist and conservative nature. It was in this second phase that the group of Trieste and Venezia Giulia republicans was most closely at D'Annunzio's side.[8] According to them, Fiume had to make a clear choice of field between the old aristocratic and bourgeois world of the monarchies and the progress and future of the social republics. Among other things, the libertarian spirit of Fiume had an incredible ability to attract artists and poets, some of whom came to the Adriatic town from abroad to give life to a completely new experience, where futurism and dadaism operated in the sign of a revolution not only of politics but also of customs, as a rejection of bourgeois morality. Drug use and sexual freedom were an important ingredient of this cultural climate. In this atmosphere, interesting personalities such as Guido Keller operated: a freemason, republican, highly skilled pilot and "ace of hearts" aviator in Francesco Baracca's squadron, he practiced nudism, was vegetarian and despised bourgeois clothes and

[7] De Felice, *D'Annunzio politico*, 61–62.
[8] Apollonio, *Dagli Asburgo a Mussolini*, 178.

uniforms. Together with Giovanni Comisso, Keller founded the "Union of free spirits tending towards perfection" (nicknamed "Yoga") with the aim of renewing society from a moral and political point of view.[9] His propensity for desecration and mockery led him to throw an enamelled iron chamber pot from his plane on the Italian Parliament after the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo with Yugoslavia. The aforementioned Léon Kochnitzky, director of the External Relations Office of Fiume, was born in Brussels to a Russian father and a Polish mother. He was a lover of Italy, a Jew who converted to Catholicism, a polyglot poet and a revolutionary spirit. He attempted to give the Fiuman government a distinctly anti-nationalist, anti-monarchist, republican and internationalist character.[10]

The Fiuman experience therefore acted as a catalyst for all those who felt dissatisfied with the new world order symbolised by the League of Nations and, ultimately, for the "rage of the vanquished," as referred to by Robert Gerwarth in his volume on postwar tensions.[11] Italy, although finding itself on the winning side, had suffered, in D'Annunzio's rhetoric, a "mutilated victory." Fiume, he said, had been denied to Italy despite the principle of nationality enunciated by the American President Wilson, who, in the eyes of the legionnaires, betrayed his own values, becoming the supporter of a selfish imperialism. In turn, Yugoslavia was considered by D'Annunzio to be nothing more than an artificial creature by which Serbia was preparing to colonise and subjugate other peoples, from Croatia to Montenegro.[12]

But it was Alceste De Ambris who gave the Fiuman experience a markedly revolutionary and Mazzinian republican aspect. Undoubtedly, the most significant result of this attempt to merge trade unionism, anti-imperialism and republicanism was the Carnaro Charter, the constitution conceived by De Ambris and reworked by D'Annunzio in lyrical form. The constitution merged libertarian and egalitarian elements and was characterised by a productivist imprint of a corporative type, proposing on the one hand the elevation of the working classes, but on the other the

[9] Simonetta Bartolini, *"Yoga". Sovversivi e rivoluzionari con d'Annunzio a Fiume* (Milano: Luni, 2019).
[10] Claudia Salaris, *Alla festa della rivoluzione. Artisti e libertari con D'Annunzio a Fiume* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2002), 37–73.
[11] Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917–1923* (London: Penguin Books, 2016).
[12] Marco Cuzzi, "'La nostra bandiera è la più alta': la politica esteriore di d'Annunzio e la Lega di Fiume," in *Fiume 1919–2019. Un centenario europeo tra identità, memorie e prospettive di ricerca. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi sull'Impresa fiumana*, ed. Giordano Bruno Guerri (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2020), 319.

repression of the "parasitic" classes and individuals. The constitution was republican – later De Ambris would define Fiume a "Federative Social Republic"[13] – but, probably out of prudence and in order not to create dangerous rifts with the monarchist and conservative elements, the word republic was not mentioned except in reference to the institutions of the ancient Roman republic and of medieval Italian communes.[14]

The republican-democratic structure of Fiume institutions – tempered, however, by a corporative framework – envisaged that

> the Italian Regency of Carnaro [should be] a straightforward government of the people [...] which is based on the power of productive work and by the introduction of the broadest and most varied forms of autonomy as understood and exercised in the four glorious centuries of our communal period.[15]

The Carnaro Charter, therefore, was the result of a merger of revolutionary thought typical of De Ambris, with D'Annunzio's intuitions of a pre-political nature: the needs of mass politics (which could be found, for example, in Gustave Le Bon's writings) combined with aestheticism and elitism. In an apparently paradoxical way, instances of socialist derivation were thus combined, albeit in the syndicalist-revolutionary version, with anti-democratic ones, whereby only chosen elites would have the right to lead and shape the shapeless mass of the people. Ultimately, De Ambris and D'Annunzio were typical exponents of the political-intellectual elaboration of their time, combining an early twentieth-century sensibility with new experiences born from the war and in search of new solutions – alternatives to liberalism and Bolshevism – that were suitable for the age of the masses.[16]

The state envisaged by the Carnaro Charter was in practice, even if not officially, a republic, of a decentralised and corporative type, which set out to represent an alternative to the political, constitutional and institutional models elaborated up to that moment. Article 18 said that "only the assiduous producers of the common wealth and the assiduous creators of

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[13] Renzo De Felice, *Sindacalismo rivoluzionario e fiumanesimo nel carteggio De Ambris – D'Annunzio (1919–1922)* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1966), 326.

[14] Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Disobbedisco. Cinquecento giorni di rivoluzione. Fiume 1919–1920* (Milano: Mondadori, 2019), 310.

[15] Renzo De Felice, ed., *La Carta del Carnaro nei testi di Alceste De Ambris e di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1973), 37.

[16] Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1895); George L. Mosse, *L'uomo e le masse nelle ideologie nazionaliste* (Roma and Bari: Laterza, 2002); Emilio Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo dall'antigiolittismo al fascismo* (Roma and Bari: Laterza, 1982).

the common power are complete citizens in the regency and constitute with it a single active substance, a single ascending fullness." Executive power was entrusted to seven "rectors" – essentially the ministers of foreign affairs, finance, education, interior, justice, defence and labour. Each rector was elected by one of the three parliamentary branches and remained in office for one year, with the possibility of being re-elected for a second year and, after a one-year break, for a third time. One of the three elective parliamentary branches, called the "Provvisori" Council, was dedicated mainly to the discussion of economic matters. Another, called the "Ottimi," which met once a year, had more general tasks and, meeting at the beginning of December of each year with the Provvisori Council, it formed the third legislative body, called the "Carnaro Arengo." The Carnaro Arengo was given the power to elect a supreme commander but only in moments of emergency: the inspiration from republican Rome was clear, with the figure of the dictator. In the case of Fiume, such a figure would not remain in charge for six months, as in antiquity, but for a provisional period which could be periodically extended as deemed necessary. A universal suffrage voting system was established making all citizens of both genders aged 20 or over eligible to vote and to be elected.

The Provvisori Council, in particular, was configured as a corporate chamber and was elected on a proportional basis, gathering ten representatives of the workers and peasants; ten "people of the sea" (i.e., fishermen or merchants); ten employers, five technicians of industry and agriculture, five administrative employees of private companies; five teachers, students and artists; five freelancers; five civil servants; and five people from production, work and consumption cooperatives. The 60 members of the Provvisori Council remained in office for two years and dealt with everything concerning economic and commercial legislation, from the regulation of private and salaried work in industry, to agriculture, the maritime field, transport, public works, tariffs and customs, banks and technical and commercial education. As for the Ottimi, there was to be one for every thousand citizens and they remained in office for three years. Candidates were required to have experience in the civil and penal code, the police, defence, education, the fine arts, or relations between the central government and the municipalities. The third branch of the legislative power, the Arengo, dealt with the direction of foreign policy, legislation on finance and higher education, and the approval of any changes to be made to the constitution. As testimony to the fundamentally anti-parliamentary attitude of De Ambris and D'Annunzio is the fact that the organs of legislative power met rarely, only once (the Ottimi Council) or twice (the Provvisori Council) a year. This is because in the minds of De Ambris and

D'Annunzio, the centre of the institutions of Fiume should not be parliament but rather the municipalities, in evident reference to the medieval and Renaissance experience. In this system, particular protections were provided for minority populations. Indeed, De Ambris wanted to guarantee total equality between the rights of Italians and minority populations. The text of his draft constitution provided that "the teaching of the different languages spoken in the territory of the republic will be compulsory in middle schools" and that

> primary education will be taught in the language spoken by the majority of the inhabitants of each municipality ascertained, where necessary, by means of a referendum; but the language spoken by the minority must in any case be included among the subjects taught.[17]

In order to protect minority languages, De Ambris established that "when a sufficient number of pupils request it, on the advice of the Primary Education Committee, the Municipality will be obliged to set up parallel courses in the language spoken by the minority" and "in case of refusal by the Municipality, the Government of the Republic has the right to institute the parallel courses itself by charging the cost to the Municipality" (art. 38). D'Annunzio, on the other hand, had a vision of an assimilationist nature, according to which Latinity would progressively absorb Slavic culture due to its alleged historical-spiritual superiority. In any case, the Carnaro Charter was generally based on principles of equal rights, for which "the sovereignty of all citizens without distinction of sex, race, language, class, religion" was recognised. But it did specify, in tribute to the syndicalist-corporate vision which permeated the document, that "above all other rights, the rights of producers" would be supported. At the same time, a libertarian nature was evident according to which the Regency "abolishes or reduces the overwhelming centrality of the established powers [...] so that common life is always made vigorous and richer by the harmonious play of diversity" (art. 4). All citizens were guaranteed "the fundamental freedoms of thought, of the press, of assembly and of association" and any religious sect was admitted (art. 7).[18]

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[17] De Felice, *La Carta*, 64.

[18] It is possible to compare the two versions of Carnaro Charter by De Ambris and D'Annunzio in De Felice, *La Carta*, 33–75. See Patrick Karlsen, "La carta rivoluzionaria di D'Annunzio e De Ambris: origini, contesto, contenuto," in *Fiume, D'Annunzio e la crisi dello Stato liberale in Italia*, eds Raoul Pupo and Fabio Todero, *Quaderni di Qualestoria*, n. 25 (Trieste: Irsml FVG, 2010), 87–107.

Probably De Ambris prepared his constitutional text as early as in March 1920, while D'Annunzio subsequently reworked it, expanding it not so much in terms of content but from a literary and aesthetic point of view. It is important to briefly recall the context in which De Ambris drafted the Carnaro Charter. After the Italian government's failure to convince D'Annunzio to agree to a modus vivendi with the evacuation of the town in December 1919, the poet openly attacked the Fiume National Council, which had accepted the agreement since its main fear – annexation to Yugoslavia – seemed to have been thwarted. From that moment, D'Annunzio pursued a more radical line which led to a deterioration in relations with the more moderate legionaries; the resignation of his Chief of Staff, Giuriati; and to Giuriati's replacement by De Ambris. In 1920, therefore, a new phase began characterised by greater political radicalism. This phase saw the approach to the legionary command of the most restless and revolutionary fringes, which proposed a profound contestation of the political order that had emerged from the war. In this climate we have to place the aforementioned League of Fiume, the revolutionary alternative to the League of Nations, which represented, according to De Ambris, the "global trust of rich states."[19] Also in this context, on the initiative of Captain Giuseppe Piffer, a close collaborator of D'Annunzio, a reform of the army was proposed based on a close trust between the commander and his men and, at the same time, on a form of self-government through a military council whose members voted by majority in full equality, regardless of rank. The nationalist radicalism that led to the refusal of an agreement with the Italian government, combined with a syndicalist and, in some respects, libertarian radicalism, aroused the suspicions of some legionaries, the Italian National Council and a large proportion of the population of Fiume, including the majority Italian component. The democratic, libertarian and republican aura that seemed to hover around the first version of the Charter drawn up by De Ambris frightened moderates and conservatives: the "Republic of Carnaro" (art. 1) was defined as "a direct democracy based on productive work and the widest functional and local autonomies as an organic criterion" (art. 2). These republican bases were opposed by the moderates, who feared a slip into the revolutionary direction, very far from monarchical conservative nationalism. In the spring of 1920, therefore, D'Annunzio and De Ambris decided to postpone the publication of the constitution, fearing a reaction from those who dreaded the establishment of an "extreme democratic" regime. However, contacts with radicalism –

[19] Letter of De Ambris to D'Annunzio, 18 March 1920, in Gabriele D'Annunzio, *La Carta del Carnaro e altri scritti su Fiume*, eds Marco Fressura and Patrick Karlsen (Roma: Castelvecchi, 2019), 126.

even on the left wing, by the more revolutionary fringes of the legionaries – were not lacking. For example, an attempt was made to win the support of the Fiuman and Trieste socialists, to whom it was explained that D'Annunzio wanted to proclaim a "social republic." For its part, the Italian National Council, on the morning of 8 September 1920, declared that it could not pronounce on the proclamation of the Italian Regency of Carnaro and on the adoption of a constitution, resigning and summoning within six weeks a constituent assembly which was supposed to decide on D'Annunzio's proposals. This was, ultimately, a disavowal of D'Annunzio's ideas. In response, the poet decided to proclaim the Carnaro Regency regardless, at the same time rebalancing his political actions towards the right. In this framework, he put aside ambitions of a revolutionary foreign policy and gave an anti-Yugoslav turn to his strategy, with the intention of fomenting internal conflicts in the neighbouring kingdom in agreement with nationalist elements. Consequently, these actions aroused protests from De Ambris and the legionary left.[20]

It is appropriate to dwell a little longer on the revolutionary spirit which – despite D'Annunzio's vacillations in his attempt to maintain relations with the traditionalist, conservative and monarchist subset of legionaries – guided the lines of Fiume's policy during 1920. To understand it, we need to start again from the controversial character of Alceste De Ambris, the revolutionary syndicalist who became the main ideologue of that policy in those months. Ever since his first speech to Fiume's citizens as D'Annunzio's chief of staff, on 11 January 1920, De Ambris had emphasised the universal and revolutionary nature of this new phase of Fiuman politics, making it clear that their aims were no longer just the nationalist will of ensuring the annexation of Fiume to Italy. "Our horizons have broadened," he said, as "Fiume today means an idea and a torch in the world; the point of convergence of infinite hopes, the centre of radiation of a grandiose movement of liberation."[21] De Ambris, therefore, subordinated the interests of the Italian community in Fiume to the rhetoric of the proletarian and revolutionary nation, with a view to a republican and Mazzinian anti-imperialism. At the same time, it is true that the policy of De Ambris's cabinet was characterised by a gap between revolutionary ideals and concrete anti-Slavic and anti-socialist attitudes. The fundamental role of the "working class" in the politics and economy of the town – also recognised by D'Annunzio – was more precisely addressed to the Italian working class

[20] See Renzo De Felice, *introduzione* to De Felice, *La Carta*, 7–31; De Felice, *Sindacalismo rivoluzionario*, 91.

[21] Enrico Serventi Longhi, *Alceste De Ambris. L'utopia concreta di un rivoluzionario sindacalista* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2011), 138.

associated with the Chamber of Labour of D'Annunzio's observance, and tended to exclude the trade unions with socialist leadership and a Croatian majority against which repressive policies were implemented.[22]

In De Ambris's intention, giving in to Italian nationalist demands offered in exchange more room for manoeuvre to bring about the revolution he had in mind. We can place in this context the renewal projects carried out in parallel – on the political level by De Ambris and on the aesthetic–spiritual level by some personalities belonging to the artistic and literary world who wanted to give their own revolutionary imprint to the Fiume experience in those months of 1920. All these initiatives took place in a dimension where the revolutionary combined with the republican, in an anti-conservative and anti-monarchist sense, and where republicanism in turn was closely associated with a libertarian and often anti-hierarchical will.

This is the case of the futurist Mario Carli, director of *La Testa di Ferro*, a periodical inspired by a revolutionary ideology, based on the themes of productive work, anti-imperialism and the aesthetics of revolutionary violence. This periodical immediately set itself in opposition to the line previously held by Giuriati, against the Italian National Council and the pro-monarchist military. On its pages it is possible to find openness towards Leninism, seen as a break with the first Bolshevism and the "cowardly" Italian pacifism, while some officers of the revolutionary wing looked with interest to the Soviets, proposing this type of organisation within the legionnaires. Naturally this provoked further distrust on the part of the military hierarchy, even if this revolutionism was essentially anti-liberal and never implied a real desire to approach the forces of leftwing revolutionism of the Bolshevik type, rejected as classist and anti-national. This rift between the revolutionary and conservative souls overlapped with the rift between republicans and monarchists, which came close to breaking point in March 1920, when a republican insurrection seemed imminent. At that moment some clashes occurred between the revolutionary officers and those loyal to the military hierarchy and to the oath sworn to the king, and De Ambris decided to renounce the proclamation of the republic. Republican projects were perceived by conservative Italian political and economic groups as a sign of rebellion and indiscipline, and as a danger to the hierarchy, and were addressed as such.[23]

In any case, it is a fact that within D'Annunzio's circle a group of revolutionary and republican tendencies was created, with a universalist and

[22] Ibid., 138–140.

[23] Ibid., 143–146; Enrico Serventi Longhi, *Il faro del mondo nuovo. D'Annunzio e i legionari a Fiume fra guerra e rivoluzione* (Udine: Gaspari, 2019), 111.

spiritualist orientation, in contact with exponents of the Slavic and Hungarian left wing, and with the collaboration of men such as Giuseppe Giulietti, Secretary of the National Federation of Sea Workers, supporter of the programme of Carli and De Ambris, and exalter of the social character of D'Annunzio's enterprise.[24]

However, the split between the republican and the monarchic souls remained central in weakening the unity of Fiume's experience. Throughout the period preceding the promulgation of the Carnaro Charter, Fiume's Italian bourgeoisie (represented by the National Council) and the monarchist faction (some army departments, carabinieri and guards) feared a Soviet-style turn. On the contrary, republican syndicalists, futurists and a faction within the Arditi supported the need for a radical break with the past. As seen, from the beginning of 1920, with the arrival of De Ambris, this rift between the monarchist and loyalist wing and the revolutionary and republican wing had already begun to manifest itself. The former was determined to overcome the liberal parliamentary system, even through insurrectionary acts, while nevertheless remaining faithful to the monarchy, while the latter, being anti-liberal, nevertheless wanted to affirm a national-socialist republic. The tensions between the two parties seemed to explode in March 1920, when the proclamation of a republic in Fiume appeared to be imminent, with the elaboration of the first draft of the constitution by De Ambris. This draft took the form of a re-proposition of the theoretical and syndicalist republican debate that developed in the first two decades of the century in European culture, as a critique of bourgeois democracy, where corporative ideas were strong. It was a set of suggestions that brought together universalism and communalism, republic and trade unionism, corporatism, and voluntarism. All this aroused the distrust of the royalists, especially some of the younger officers, who printed and posted sheets praising the monarchy. These were opposed by the republicans, leading first to dialectical duels, then clashes.[25]

In a rally organised by D'Annunzio and De Ambris at La Fenice Theatre on 30 March 1920, the commander himself was challenged with boos by some in the audience, while another group applauded; many requested the Royal March, the anthem of the Kingdom of Italy and the Savoy dynasty, while the republicans wanted the Risorgimento *Canto degli Italiani* by Goffredo Mameli, the current anthem of the Italian Republic. The situation was so tense and the information so distorted that on 13 April the government commissioner for Venezia Giulia communicated to the Italian Prime Minister Nitti that D'Annunzio wanted to proclaim a Soviet

[24] Ibid., 93, 115.
[25] Ibid., 119–120.

communist republic in Fiume and to extend it to Venezia Giulia. On the other hand, when a delegation of republican and trade unionist legionaries met the Trieste socialists on 10 April to try to initiate a collaboration, the socialists ruled out the possibility of any agreement with "militarist nationalism."[26] Once again, this was a clear demonstration of the complexity of the Fiume experience and of its multiform composition from an ideal and ideological point of view.

The last phase of the Fiume experience began with the fall of the Nitti government and the rise of Giolitti's. Even the nationalist and moderate right in Fiume preferred Giolitti to Nitti, whom they considered a renouncer, although paradoxically it was during the Giolitti government that the Treaty of Rapallo between Italy and Yugoslavia was signed. It was at that time that D'Annunzio expressed support for the Italian government, which was engaged in facing the Albanian rebels in Valona. In this context, Mario Carli was sent away – officially to relaunch Fiume propaganda in Milan and find new financiers – and Léon Kochnitzky left, feeling betrayed in his universalistic beliefs. Meanwhile, the League of Fiume was reoriented in an anti-Yugoslav way, putting aside projects of support for oppressed peoples. The second version of the constitution was enacted in which radical references to "direct democracy" and "collective sovereignty" had disappeared. The Charter nevertheless managed to keep all the various souls of the Fiume enterprise united in a difficult equilibrium. The signing of the Treaty of Rapallo in November 1920, opposed by D'Annunzio, was instead supported by previous allies ranging from Mussolini's fascists, who were eager to get closer to the government to seek legitimacy, to the Liberals, who stressed the need for political and economic stability and wanted to close the anomaly represented by the regency.[27]

Ultimately, the Fiume experience – which certainly represented a forge of inspiration for what was to happen in the following years, from the march on Rome to the national-revolutionary mystique typical of the culture of the twentieth-century radical right[28] – was an extremely complex experience, difficult to summarise in the right-left conceptualisation. The republican, revolutionary and syndicalist wing had significant weight in the Fiuman experience and played a somewhat complementary role with respect to the nationalist and militarist wing. Indeed, in the myths and rituals brought into play by D'Annunzio's Fiume, there was no lack of confusion and interpenetration between the republican left and the nationalist right: in the

[26] Guerri, *Disobbedisco*, 261–269.
[27] Serventi Longhi, *Il faro del mondo nuovo*, 131–135.
[28] See Marco Mondini, *Fiume 1919. Una guerra civile italiana* (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2019).

mentality of the Arditi, after all, the army had to increasingly configure itself as a people's army and had to represent the "armed nation." From this perspective, its obedience to the established power was no longer guaranteed, if that power was deemed cowardly and treasonous to the national interests and will. In some ways, this vision calls to mind the idea of Garibaldi and the republicans of the people's army, naturally updated to the new age of the masses.[29]

[29] Serventi Longhi, *Il faro del mondo nuovo*, 31–58. On myths and symbols in the Fiume enterprise, see Federico Carlo Simonelli, *D'Annunzio e il mito di Fiume. Riti, simboli, narrazioni* (Pisa: Pacini, 2021).