



INTRODUCTION

On **11 September 1919**, the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio left Ronchi at the head of a handful of firebrands with the intention of **occupying Fiume** and annexing it to the Kingdom of Italy. D'Annunzio's surprise operation was of **great media effect**, and for 16 months in the occupied city a spectacular **"revolution party"** was staged.¹



Gabriele D'Annunzio enters Fiume,
12 September 1919.

ITALIAN 6TH CORPS DISOBEYS ORDERS

Commanded by Nitti to Disarm
D'Annunzio's Force in Fiume,
the Troops Refuse.

NITTI TO FORCE DISCIPLINE

The New York Times
New York, 15 September 1919

ROME GOVERNMENT STOPS ALL NEWS OF FIUME MUTINY

Realized That the Italian Govern-
ment Has a Difficult Task to
Oust d'Annunzio.

The New York Times
New York, 17 September 1919

ALLIES QUIT FIUME, D'ANNUNZIO RULES WITH MUTINEERS

French and British Haul Down
Flags When Requested to
Do So by Raiders.

Italian Delegates at Paris Think
Serious Political Results May
Follow Denunciation of Coup.

The New York Times
New York, 16 September 1919

D'ANNUNZIO IDOL OF ARMY AT FIUME

Correspondent Who Reached
There Hidden in Coal Finds
Great Enthusiasm.

CITY ABLAZE WITH FLAGS

The New York Times
New York, 1 October 1919

1. Carla Pagliero, "Ma D'Annunzio era no-global?", *A – rivista anarchica*, year 33 no. 288, March 2003.
Source: <http://www.anarca-bolo.ch/a-rivista/288/38.htm>

Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863 – 1938)



Gabriele D'Annunzio.

Gabriele D'Annunzio was an Italian poet, journalist, novelist, dramatist, military hero, and political leader, the leading writer of Italy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. D'Annunzio's literary works are marked by their egocentric perspective, their fluent and melodious style, and an overriding emphasis on the gratification of the senses, whether through the love of women or of nature.

After the start of World War I, D'Annunzio made public speeches in favour of Italy's entry on the side of the Allies. After Italy declared war he plunged into the fighting himself. D'Annunzio was fond of bold,

individual military actions. Two of his best known came in 1918: his flight over Vienna (*volo su Vienna*), where he dropped thousands of propaganda leaflets over the city, and his prank at Buccari Bay (*beffa di Buccari*), a daring surprise attack on the Austrian fleet with power boats.



D'Annunzio on the day of the flight over Vienna, 9 August 1918.

On 12 September 1919, he led the seizure of Fiume, forcing the withdrawal of the inter-Allied occupying forces. The plotters sought to have Italy annex Fiume, but were denied. Instead, Italy initiated a blockade of Fiume while demanding that the plotters surrender.

D'Annunzio then declared Fiume an independent state, the Italian Regency of Carnaro with himself as "*il Comandante*" and coauthored a constitution with syndicalist Alceste De Ambris, the *Charter of Carnaro*.

D'Annunzio ignored the Treaty of Rapallo and declared war on Italy itself, only finally surrendering the city in December 1920 after a bombardment by the Italian navy (Bloody Christmas).²



D'Annunzio in Fiume, September 1919.

D'Annunzio, Heir of David, Poet-Warrior

Of the Race of Firebringers, the Raider of Fiume Is Compared to Prometheus, Who Raided High Heaven and Defied Great Jove for Mankind's Sake

The New York Times
New York, 28 September 1919

2. Sources: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriele_D%27Annunzio | <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/151126/Gabriele-DAnnunzio>



THE SEAPORT OF LOVE

“The city of Fiume was unsettled and altered between 12 September 1919 and the so-called ‘**Bloody Christmas**’ of 1920. It was **governed by a poet**, for the first time in the world, and his army comprised insubordinates of all ranks and forces from the Italian army. The people of the city lived for over a year on meagre provisions, but with **celebrations and shows**, and beautiful words spoken and printed almost daily by Gabriele D’Annunzio, who for that short period was known to all simply as ‘*il Comandante*’”. **Holocaust, City of Life, Port of Love**. The city had a constitution that challenged the concept of property, and army regulations which basically revolved around achieving a greater degree of aesthetic beauty than the Theban Legion.

It attracted all the independentists and anti-capitalists in the world, from Egypt to Bolshevik Russia. It was a **den of pirates** who made a living by rustling horses, capturing ships and undertaking impossible flights. It was a place for experimenting with alternative lifestyles: **nudism, naturism, vegetarianism, futurism, homosexuality, free love, drug use**.

“After the *modus vivendi* initially proposed by the Italian government failed, D’Annunzio’s politics leaned increasingly towards a revolutionary perspective. In this new context a particular psychological climate arose, which made Fiume, to quote D’Annunzio, the ‘**City of Life**’: a sort of tiny experimental ‘counter-society’ with ideas and values not strictly in line with contemporary morals, open to breaching social norms, and with a mass engagement in rebellion”.¹

Fiume was [...] an experience that foreshadowed a **new socio-political order**, a “bubbling magma of moods, conceptions of life, aspirations towards renewal, between idealism, utopia, anarchy and **festive vitalism**, a response to the apprehensions and malaise of a generation that had experienced war and considered themselves to be different from their fathers’ generation in terms of how they conceived of life, human and social relations, and the **organization of power**”.

[...] In this experience pleasure underwent a kind of democratization, becoming the prerogative of all those who had come to the “**City of Life**”, to the “**revolution party**”; a confused, chaotic celebration which under many aspects clearly contradicted any realistic intentions of consolidation and **triumph of the revolution** itself.²

Fiume: Symbol, Hub, Pole, Rainbow! [...] A little of everything has come to you, divine Fiume: purity, ardour, courage, vanity, **cocaine**, faith, hypocrisy, **false currency**, voracity, sacrifice. [...] But the heart and soul of the legionnaires’ mission lay only in those few, neither too close to nor too far from D’Annunzio, who brought a new awareness, **new forms and patterns of life** to Fiume [...]. They intended Fiume to lead all the peoples of the earth towards the future; an island of wonders that was to travel the oceans, taking its shining light to the continents drowning in the darkness of brutal capitalist speculation. In the City of Carnaro this group of **enlightened men**, fanatics, mystic forerunners, managed to conjure up that atmosphere of passion for the future and **poetic rebellion** against the old faiths and ancient formulas, that has been given the name of “**Fiumanism**”.³

“I am for **Communism without dictatorship** [...] my whole culture is anarchist [...] it is my intention to make this city into a **spiritual island** which will send out a predominantly Communist action towards all oppressed nations”.

(Randolfo Vella, Fiume correspondent for the anarchist newspaper *Umanità Nova*. Interview with D’Annunzio.)
Source: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impresa_di_Fiume#cite_note-18

1. Claudia Salaris, *Alla festa della rivoluzione. Artisti e libertari con D’Annunzio a Fiume*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2002, p. 12.

2. Giovanni Savegnago, critical review of the book by Claudia Salaris *Alla festa della rivoluzione. Artisti e libertari con D’Annunzio a Fiume*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2002.
Source: <http://www.pavonerisorse.to.it/storia900/libri/fiume.rtf>

3. Mario Carli, *Trilliri*, Piacenza, Edizioni Futuriste di Poesia della Società Tipografica Editoriale Porta, 1922, pp. 165-167.
Source: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utente:Justinianus_da_Perugia/Storia_dell'Italia_antica

You should know that you have come to a city which is dangerous for your tender years. Here everyone does exactly what they want without reserve. The lowest and most elevated forms of life alternate, not unlike light and shade.⁴

[...] Fiume became a little world of its own, a microcosm where **radical dreams** and aspirations were given an unprecedented chance to be lived out and experimented with. The Bolsheviks tried to establish “soldiers’ soviets” as in Russia: syndicalists and anarchists organized producers’ networks following Proudhon’s example; **Utopian life-models** were practiced in an atmosphere of free-wheeling individualism and extravagant self-expression. The Futurist idea of **Life as Art and Art as Life** never found a more concrete realization: “**Today reigns Poetry**”, found Mario Carli, and “the old antithesis of Life and Dreams has finally been overcome”.

Umberto Carpi has described Fiume in 1920 as a “place where the highest concentration of a specifically bourgeois and intellectual subversiveness” could be found and “**transgression of norms and mass practice of rebellion**” was an organized everyday occurrence.

In Fiume D’Annunzio achieved what Marinetti merely hypothesized: **artists in power**.

Under the exceptional circumstances of the City State under siege, the common constraints of civil law were suspended. Groups of revolutionary intellectuals managed to assume control over the city and created a political culture, where **spontaneous expression** of beliefs replaced the tedious procedures of parliamentary democracy. Artistic fantasy and energy gave birth to a **new “aesthetics” of communal life**, where the fusion of political and artistic avant-garde became a reality. A festive lifestyle replaced conventional social behaviour. The transgression of moral and sexual conventions was widely accepted (including nudism, homosexuality and liberation of women from the shackles of marriage and family life). New and picturesque dress codes were invented. And then there was the **never-ending cycle of dances**, concerts, banquets, **theatre performances**, games, torchlight processions, cortèges, etc. There reigned, as one participant wrote in his memoirs, “**an atmosphere of a perpetual quatorze juillet**”.⁵

[Fiume] was in some ways **the last of the pirate utopias** (or the only modern example) – in other ways, perhaps, it was very nearly **the first modern TAZ** [Temporary Autonomous Zone].

I believe that if we compare Fiume with the **Paris uprising of 1968** (also the Italian urban insurrections of the early seventies), as well as with the **American countercultural communes** and their anarcho-New Left influences, we should notice certain similarities, such as: – the importance of **aesthetic theory** (cf. the Situationists) – also, what might be called “**pirate economics**”, living high off the surplus of social overproduction – even the popularity of colourful military uniforms – and the concept of **music as revolutionary social change** – and finally their shared air of impermanence, of being ready to move on, shape-shift, re-locate to other universities, mountaintops, ghettos, factories, safe houses, abandoned farms – or even other planes of reality. No one was trying to impose yet another Revolutionary Dictatorship, either at Fiume, Paris, or Millbrook. Either the world would change, or it wouldn’t. Meanwhile **keep on the move and live intensely**.⁶

4. Giovanni Comisso, *Il porto dell'amore*, Treviso, Vianello, 1924, p. 12.

Source: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utente:Justinianus_da_Perugia/Storia_dell'Italia_antica

5. Günter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909-1944*, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1995, p. 139.

6. Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, New York, Autonomedia, 2003, p. 125.



NATURISM – NUDISM – VEGETARIANISM

Many of the scholarly legionnaires engaged in getting **back to nature**, by leaving the city, sleeping in the open air, begging for a bite to eat from the monks in monasteries or living off berries in the woods or sea urchins, in the attempt to rediscover the **primitive dimension of life** which had been eliminated by social progress. Theirs was a quest – by means of a Pan-like fusion with nature – to renew a heavenly happiness which had been lost for ever. This dreamy sensitivity to nature also lay behind the **nudism, vegetarianism and aversion to artificial shelter**.⁷

7. Giovanni Savegnago, critical review of the book by Claudia Salaris *Alla festa della rivoluzione. Artisti e libertari con D'Annunzio a Fiume*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2002.
Source: <http://www.pavonerisorse.to.it/storia900/libri/fiume.rtf>