



F.T. Marinetti (right) and F. Vecchi in Fiume, October 1919.

After Marinetti's and Vecchi's departure, Mario Carli and Mino Somenzi took over the leadership of the Futurist flock in Fiume. Keller, whom Marinetti had praised in his diary as a true Futurista, became a close friend and collaborator. This *Fascio Futurista Fiumanese* founded the newspaper, *La testa di ferro*, edited by Mario Carli, whose first number appeared on 1 February 1920.

Keller called into existence a group called Yoga, which ran a regular column in *La testa di ferro* and for a short period also published their own journal: *Yoga: Unione di spiriti liberi tendenti alla perfezione* (November to December 1920). Both groups opened their doors to a wide spectrum of political forces on the Left: anarchists, syndicalists, communists, Bolsheviki, republicans etc. Many Arditi joined their ranks, but these were not to be confounded with the Ardito-Fascists who followed Mussolini's move to the Right. They supported Carli's revolutionary line, which was presented in his newspaper under the headings "Our Bolshevism" (15 February 1920) and "The Little Bolshevik Father" (7 March 1920).

Here he described Moscow and Fiume as the centres of a world revolution and Lenin as the genial leader of the Russian working class.

He distinguished his notion of Bolshevism from the politics of the Italian "official" Socialist Party and proposed to **form Soviets all over Italy**, where artists and the proletariat could join hands and establish a new political system along the communist model.

The leadership of the Arditi, who had stayed behind in Italy with Mussolini, took offence at Carli's Bolshevik propaganda. Pietro Bolzon, who ran the by now Right-wing *L'ardito*, started a series of attacks on the *Arditi Fiumanesi*, who in response rallied around Carli and D'Annunzio and defended their independent outlook on the **Italian Revolution**.¹



F.T. Marinetti.

F.T. Marinetti (1876 – 1944)

On 16 September 1919, Marinetti made his way to Fiume, dressed in the uniform of a Volunteer. He was warmly greeted by D'Annunzio and fêted in the streets by legionnaires. Together with Vecchi and Carli they organized some Futurist events; but Marinetti was equally active in political rallies and gained access to the top brass in the military command of the city. His judgment on the officers who surrounded D'Annunzio was not exactly complimentary:

"They are nearly all monarchists and passéists, who do not want to understand or admit that their gesture has been a revolutionary one. They declare that they are not involved in politics! Some probably have regrets and want everything to find a quick and good ending, so that it will not inconvenience their career and they will get His Majesty's approval!!!"
Marinetti established close contacts with Guido Keller, who explained to him his 'task of overseeing what happens around D'Annunzio'.²

1. Günter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909-1944*, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1995, pp. 137-138.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

LA TESTA DI FERRO

La testa di ferro was considered the **unofficial organ of the Command** of Fiume. The opinions expressed by Carli in this newspaper were so **radical and unorthodox** that in the end the Command asked him to move the publication to Milan, despite praise from D'Annunzio himself.



“Fiumanism = the Italian city of Fiume – **city of new life** – liberation of all the oppressed (peoples, classes, individuals) – **discipline of the spirit** against formal discipline – **destruction of all hegemonies**, dogmas, conservatisms and parasitisms – crucible for **new energies** – few words, much substance”.³



Mario Carli.

Mario Carli (1888 – 1935)

Mario Carli was an Italian poet, novelist, essayist, diplomat, and journalist. During the Fiume episode he founded the newspaper *La testa di ferro*, in which he dialogued with the leading anarchists of the day, and more than anyone else fought for the Fiume undertaking to become an outpost for world revolution. His extremism meant that he was eventually forced to leave Fiume, in June 1920: at D'Annunzio's “suggestion” he moved the office of *La testa di ferro* to Milan.



Gerardo Dottori, *Un ritratto di Mussolini. Ritratto aereo di Mario Carli*, 1931. Collezione Wolfson.

In *La testa di ferro*, the legionnaire Alessandro Forti gave a clear description of the new task facing intellectuals: “[...] if the **intellectual proletariat** manages to understand the times and support the **manual proletariat** in its struggle for emancipation [...] it will no longer find itself in the dangerous and humiliating position of buffer between **capitalism and labour**”.⁴

3. This is a phrase that often appeared in the publication *La testa di ferro*.

4. 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>

YOGA: UNIONE DI SPIRITI LIBERI TENDENTI ALLA PERFEZIONE



The *Unione Yoga* entertained relations with Futurists all over Italy, the **Futurist-Communist** circle in Turin, with the **Dadaists** in Germany, the **Bolsheviks** in Russia and Hungary.

They included artists from many European countries and even the United States, who had come to Fiume to participate in the “**great experiment**” that was taking place there. Through their leader, Guido Keller, they had direct influence on the command of the city, and direct links with other officers meant that they managed to give many **political statements** of the city government a much more **radical drive** than they would otherwise have had. [...] They organized a “**People’s Academy**” with regular public debates on topics as wide-ranging as **free love, abolition of money, destruction of prisons, beautification of the city**, and so on.

The Foundation Manifesto of *Yoga* and the articles in their paper *Yoga* bear many resemblances to Futurist proclamations. [...] But what distinguishes them from Marinetti’s anarchical Futurism is their **Dionysian individualism**. Issue number 4 of *Yoga* contained a long critique of Marinetti’s a-human technology cult that takes out of art



F.T. Marinetti (center) with G. Keller (left) and F. Vecchi (right) in Fiume, October 1919.

what is most precious about it: to give expression to the originality and individuality of the artist. It would be therefore wrong to describe Yoga as a Futurist circle. [...] [Yoga] members were communists and anarchists, Bolsheviks and William Morris-like socialists, bohemians and nihilists, Nietzscheans and Rosenkretzers, Rousseauist dreamers and **Utopian Proudhonists**. Yoga was not a Party with a fixed doctrine, but rather, as Carpi put it, “an **open meeting ground for all rebellious spirits** [...]]. They tried to attract people not on the basis of a homogeneous political programme, but rather by their **principle of diversity** and vitalistic spontaneity”.

What brought these **rebellious characters** and “free spirits”, as they called themselves, together was their rebellious attitude against the established political and cultural system. They fest a broad consensus of “us against them”, and their adversaries were not only the political cliques in parliament and the social orders who sustained them in power, but also the value system they promoted and upon which their ethics were based (bourgeois morality, rationality of thinking, discipline, work ethics, materialism, greed, etc.). However, there was also a political side to Yoga. It involved **subversive tactics** through which they sought to **overturn the political system** that had evolved during the industrial age. Their aim was to **replace the “democracy of numbers”** with a communist reign of liberty based on syndical organization of producers.



Guido Keller.

Guido Keller (1892 – 1929)

Guido Keller, aviator, aesthete and man of action, instigator of lightning strikes, piratical feats and sensational japes, and follower of the health/naturist movement, as well as disdainer of uniforms and bourgeois clothes, was the only one of the young legionnaires present in Fiume allowed to use the familiar “*tu*” form of address with D’Annunzio.

[In Fiume] he established the Yoga, a group of the most daring, intelligent and modernist men in the “Holocaust city”. This association planned and carried out bold feats, and pledged support for the Irish revolution and the nationalist movements in India, Turkey, Egypt, and Montenegro.⁵

On 14 November 1920 on board a single-seater SVA, he flew over Rome to drop three “messages” to the Vatican, the Quirinal and Montecitorio respectively, with the aim of furthering the Fiume cause.

“Having reached my destination I offered red roses to Frate Francesco at the Vatican, over the Quirinal I dropped more red roses for the Queen and the People, as a love token. On Montecitorio I threw an enamelled iron utensil attached to a strip of red cloth, with some turnips tied to the handle and a message: Guido Keller – Action in Splendour Wing – gives to Parliament and the Government that has been ruling on lies and fear for some time, a tangible allegory of their worth. Rome, 14th of the third month of the Regency”.

The tangible allegory naturally referred to the “enamelled iron utensil” an object for intimate use which is no longer in fashion today.⁶



Guido Keller (second from left) on his airplane.

5. Source: http://www.avia-it.com/act/cera_una_volta/memorie_e_ricordi/CUV_memorie_maggio_2008/11_L_asso_di_cuori.pdf

6. Igino Mencarelli, *Guido Keller*, Ufficio storico dell’Aeronautica, 1970. Source: http://www.oblique.it/manifesto_keller.html

A social revolution was to go hand-in-hand with the political revolution and to produce a **new concept of identity** and individuality.

One section of Yoga, the “Brown Lotuses”, promoted the idea of an agrarian democracy of small producers. Amongst them, a race-earth-nature ideology was widely diffused, and they had strong **anti-capitalist, anti-industrial and anti-city feelings**. Strong doses of **mysticism**, spiritualism and **Eastern mythology** gave them an extremely Utopian character, not dissimilar to that to be found in other artists’ communities such as L’Abbaye de Créteil, Monte Verità or Worpwede. However, other members, who formed the “Red Lotuses”, had their feet much more firmly on the ground. They utilized the many international connections of the group to promote their ideas of **“Moving. Living. Destroying. Creating”**.

Keller prepared for and animated the Fiume undertaking with his genial enthusiasm for hatching plans. With his acute, penetrating, witty, pensive spirit, he possessed the Futurist talent for demolition and mockery. He knew the frenzy of action and the superior calm of the purely cerebral. As an imaginative, bantering character, he loved life, and took pleasure from playing with things and people, and inventing paradoxical entertainments. [...] He was known for carrying out reconnaissance missions in his fighter plane, dressed in his pyjamas. Bruno recalls sees him on a few occasions, after a risky flight, lying under a tree completely naked, engrossed in a newspaper or book. On board his plane there were always a little tea set, and flowers, cigarettes and tins of biscuits: it was a genuine flying drawing room.⁷



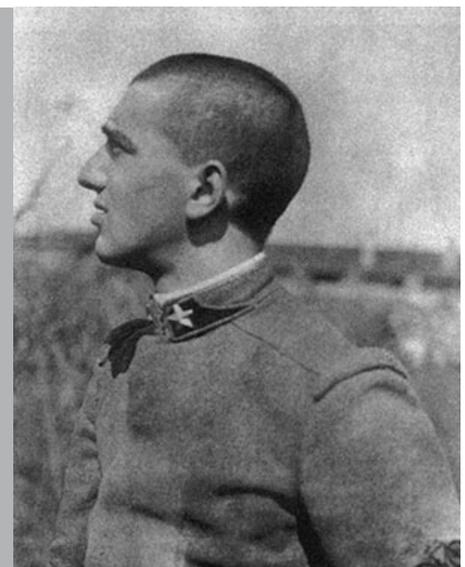
The “performer” Guido Keller.

Giovanni Comisso (1895 – 1969)

Giovanni Comisso, Italian journalist and novelist. He published his first poems – influenced strongly by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Nietzsche – in pamphlet form in 1916.

In September 1919 he decided to participate in the occupation of Fiume, where together with Guido Keller he edited the magazine *Yoga*, advocating activism and libertarian ferment, anti-capitalism and anti-parliamentarianism, and expressing contempt for the bourgeoisie, and the need for freedom from material impulses. Comisso’s experience in Fiume provided the inspiration for his first novel, *Il porto dell’amore*, written in 1921 and published privately in 1924.⁸

Giovanni Comisso in Fiume 1920.



7. Mario Carli, *Trilliri*, Piacenza, Edizioni Futuriste di Poesia della Società Tipografica Editoriale Porta, 1922, pp. 153-154.

Source: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utente:Justinianus_da_Perugia/Storia_dell%27Italia_antica

8. *Who’s who in Contemporary Gay and Lesbian History: From World War II to the Present Day*, Eds. Robert Aldrich, Garry Wotherspoon, Routledge, 2001, p. 89.

Source: http://www.premioalfiomenegazzo.it/Articoli/2005/art_14_02.htm

They were also extremely active in the running of the city of Fiume and the organization of the many **festivals and artistic events** there. Despite their patriotism they were **anti-Fascist** and opposed to any narrow nationalism. Their aim of “developing and exalting the meaning of race” was not to be confounded with Fascist racialism, because it went hand-in-hand with their “international conception that promotes the **Dionysian race** and the race of the spirit by the **practical means of Love**”.⁹

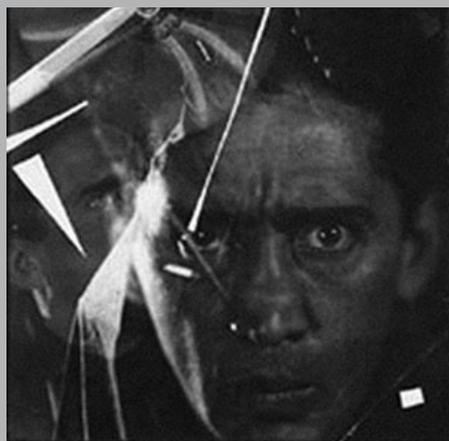


IL BALLO DI SAN VITO. PRIMO QUADERNO DELLA YOGA. COLLEZIONE DIRETTA DA MINO SOMENZI. CITTÁ DI VITA, GIUGNO 1920

On the occasion of the “Festival of St Vito” Mino Somenzi published one of the most memorable Futurist documents to be distributed in the streets of Fiume. It was called *Il ballo di San Vito. Primo quaderno della Yoga. Collezione diretta da Mino Somenzi. Città di Vita, Giugno 1920* and contained an “Appeal to the Population of Fiume”, where the citizens were exhorted to join the youthful and vitalistic Ardito-Futurists in their endeavour to **demolish the bourgeois establishment**, to “smash to pieces all altars and pedestals” and to **destroy the power of “banks, beards, and prejudices”**. The futurist mottoes of “destroy and create” and “disseminate, overthrow, set to fire” would inspire the world to make an end to the accepted order and to replace it with a system “where **everything is possible** in an atmosphere of geniality and incandescent madness”. The **“festival as an institution”**

was seen as an expression of this ludic principle, and to “remove the hundred deliberating sages from their seats of power” was therefore going to be an “intoxicating and tumultuous ball”. Preceding the Appeal is another proclamation, directed to the female section of the population. They are exhorted to become **“the mother of the modern woman”**, to make use of “the hour of your awakening and not to fear hypocrisy masquerading as morals”, “not to

fear the **modern ideas** that are exploding in the volcanic brains of the ‘forgers’, who have made **Fiume the centre of innovation**”. Until now, “women have only been the fountain of carnal pleasures; in the future they will also be a spiritual and heroic stimulant of modern mankind.” As a step in that direction they are called upon to **discard with the romantic notion of woman** as a passive creature on whom everything can be imposed. Instead they are asked “to have the courage to stand to their **femininity** and their own **desires**”. They have their mission just like man; but to achieve this aim they have to liberate themselves from old prejudices and **“putrid morality”**.¹⁰



Tato, *Aeroritratto fantastico del poeta Mino Somenzi*, 1934.

Mino Somenzi (1899 – 1948)

Mino Somenzi was a Jew, Futurist and former member of the radical Left in the *Fasci di Combattimento*. Together with Mario Carli, took over the leadership of the Futurist flock in Fiume after Marinetti’s and Vecchi’s departure (October 1919). On the occasion of the “Festival of St Vito” he published one of the most memorable Futurist documents to be distributed in the streets of Fiume: *Il ballo di San Vito. Primo*

quaderno della Yoga. Collezione diretta da Mino Somenzi. Città di Vita, Giugno 1920. Somenzi was appointed by the Commander to erect an anchor monument in a square in Fiume.

9. Günter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909-1944*, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1995, pp. 141-143.

10. Ibid, pp. 140-141.