



BLOODY CHRISTMAS

When Giovanni Giolitti returned to power in 1920, and the **Treaty of Rapallo** was signed, the legionnaires' subsequent declaration of war against Italy was answered by a bombardment and troops led by General Enrico Caviglia attacking the city on **24 December**. The operation terminated on 31 December with the **surrender** of the occupants, and the timing of the battle led D'Annunzio to christen the episode "**Bloody Christmas**".

The conflict caused numerous victims, including 22 legionnaires, 17 Italian soldiers and five civilians. Italian troops entered the city of Fiume in January 1921.¹

Summing up the undertaking after the fact in his autobiographic novel *Trilliri*, Mario Carli wrote: "[...] we realized (but without remorse) that **our dream was too great** for the scores of mediocre people around us: a **feat of energy and imagination** that so many followers professing their loyalty had not understood a word of".²

The legionnaires were furious with the Italian government, and in their rage they **ripped the Italian insignia** from their uniforms, putting Fiume stamps in place of their stars. In Italy no-one acted on our behalf, and the parties which had helped us up till then did nothing for us. The whole of Italy was willing to stand by and see us **massacred**. The troops which attacked on Christmas Eve had been **stirred up with alcohol** and the promise of rewards. The government in Rome took advantage of the Christmas holiday, when no newspapers would be published, to carry out the operation undisturbed. On our radio the Commander **broadcast news** of the sacrifice to the entire world, while it was happening.³



Antonio Gramsci.

"The Honourable Giolitti, in documents issued directly by the state, described the events in Fiume in extremely violent terms on several occasions. The legionnaires were presented as a **horde of bandits**, good for nothings only interested in gratifying the basest, most bestial of **human urges**: power, money and possessing many women. D'Annunzio, the head of the legionnaires, was depicted as a madman, a histrionic enemy of the homeland and an **instigator of civil war**, opposed to all human and civil laws. To further its own ends, the government roused the most intimate and profound sentiments in the **collective consciousness**: the sanctity of the family violated, fraternal blood coldly spilled, the integrity and liberty of the people left at the mercy of a mob of drunken, lust-crazed soldiers, **girlhood contaminated** by the most wanton sexual urges. By planting these ideas the government managed to achieve a near perfect consensus: **public opinion was manipulated** with unprecedented ease".

1. Source: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natale_di_Sangue

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. Giovanni Comisso, *Le mie stagioni*, Edizioni di Treviso – Libreria Canova, 1951, p. 111.

4. Antonio Gramsci, "Natale di sangue", *L'Ordine Nuovo*, Turin, 6 January 1921. Source: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impresa_di_Fiume

FIUME SACRIFICED, SAYS D'ANNUNZIO

He Asserts That Acceptance of Rapallo Treaty Would Be Suicide to City.

The New York Times
New York, 24 November 1920.

WAR ON ITALY OPENLY DECLARED BY D'ANNUNZIO

Fiume Commander Sets Tomorrow as the Date for Beginning Hostilities.

CAVIGLIA ORDERS BLOCKADE

And Warns Insurgents to Refrain From "Useless Resistance" to Government.

SKIRMISHING CONTINUES

Insurgents Have Captured Some Regulars in Incursions Made Into Their Opponents' Lines.

The New York Times
New York, 2 December 1920.

ITALIAN WARSHIPS SAIL UP TO FIUME TO AWE D'ANNUNZIO

Powerful Vessels Steam Close Past Harbor, but Do Not Reply to Rifle Fire.

POET BLOCKS THE HARBOR

Cruiser Is Sunk, While Active War Preparations Go On Inside the City.

The New York Times
New York, 3 December 1920.

BLOCKADE WARSHIP JOINS D'ANNUNZIO

Destroyer's Crew Makes Officers Prisoners and Enrolls Under the Banner of Fiume.

POET DEFIES GOVERNMENT

"Whoever Enters Fiume Will Do So Over My Blood-Stained Corpse."

The New York Times
New York, 8 December 1920.

ANOTHER VESSEL DESERTS

Crews of Two Ships Bound Their Officers and Headed for Fiume Under Full Steam.

The New York Times
New York, 9 December 1920.

D'ANNUNZIO STILL DEFIANT

Third War Vessel Deserts and Joins Him — Pessimism Displaces Hopefulness in Rome.

The New York Times
New York, 10 December 1920.

D'ANNUNZIO PAYS DESERTING SAILORS

Hands Out 10,000 Francs to Crew of Destroyer—Its Officer Bound to Gun.

The New York Times
New York, 11 December 1920.

Four Italian Armored Car Crews Desert And Join d'Annunzio's Forces in Fiume

The New York Times
New York, 13 December 1920.

ITALIAN REGULARS CLOSE IN ON FIUME FROM THREE SIDES

The New York Times
New York, 27 December 1920.

BOMBARDING FIUME BY LAND AND SEA; REBEL SHIP SUNK

**Casualties of Besiegers Are
Heavy, as Machine Gunners
Dispute Their Advance.**

REGULARS ENTER THE CITY

The New York Times
New York, 28 December 1920.

FIUME SURRENDERS; AIRPLANE TO TAKE D'ANNUNZIO AWAY

**Not Worth While to Die for Italy,
Poet Declares in His
Farewell.**

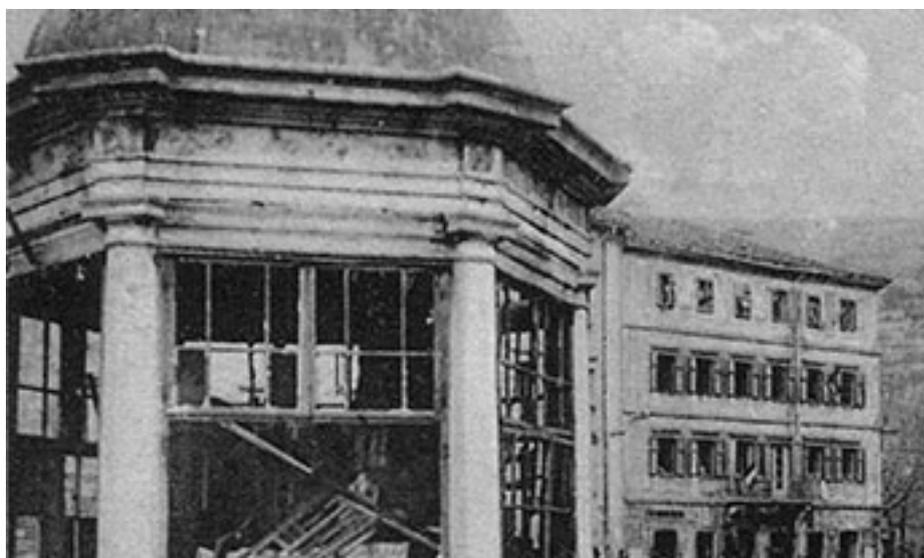
The New York Times
New York, 30 December 1920.



Bloody Christmas, Fiume, 24-28 December 1920.



Bloody Christmas, Fiume, 24-28 December 1920.



Bloody Christmas, Fiume, 24-28 December 1920.