

## Who is in and who is out? Escapes, expulsions, and the creation of new boundaries during D’Annunzio’s rule in Fiume (1919-1920)\*

*This article aims to tackle one of the controversies related to Rijeka’s post-imperial history – namely the issue of refugees from both Fiume and Sušak in the aftermath of Gabriele D’Annunzio takeover. Drawing on both Italian and Croatian sources, this article will clarify the circumstances that served as a background for departures, flights, and expulsions from Fiume in the years that followed 1919. In particular, it will look at the different waves of politically-motivated expulsion orders which targeted entire political and national categories. As this article argues, collective expulsion orders served as a litmus test for the internal evolution of D’Annunzio’s rule over Fiume, which gradually defined the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the political community. Rather than regarding refugees solely as victims of persecution, the article will try to reconstruct the decision-making process that led expellees to decide whether or not to leave the city.*

**Key words:** Fiume, Upper Adriatic, D’Annunzio, refugees, nationalism

The one-hundredth anniversary of Gabriele D’Annunzio takeover of Fiume<sup>1</sup> was accompanied by radically different interpretations of the original event. Italian-language scholarship has predominantly reframed D’Annunzio’s reign as a site of political experimentation and myth-making, bridging prewar irredentism and the qualitatively different attitude characteristic of post-1918 political commitments. Although Italian historians have also tackled some exclusionary aspects that the pro-Italian nationalist project entailed, investigation into how coercion played out on the ground has featured as a topic primarily in Croatian-language historiography, which has traditionally interpreted “D’Annunzio’s occupation” as a prelude to later fascism, stressing the con-

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1 I use the term Fiume here to refer to the contested territorial body internationally known under that name in 1919–1921, and stretching from the Western bank of the river Rječina to the areas of Kantrida and Zamet. Fiume and Sušak, located on the Eastern bank of the Rječina and belonging to the Yugoslav state in the interwar period, were united in 1947-1948 in the present-day city of Rijeka.

tinuities between the two, as well as the open persecution enacted against Croatians.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, more recent interpretations have avoided clear-cut answers to questions of national strife, and they have demonstrated the existence of a wide range of processes of negotiations and adaptations, which often challenged national boundaries.<sup>3</sup> However, the implementation of exclusionary measures against “internal enemies,” or individuals regarded as noncompliant, has been demonstrated to be one of the main features that marked D’Annunzio’s fifteen-month rule and it therefore still deserves further investigation.

The issue of Fiumian refugees best epitomizes the radically different views on the city’s history that continue to characterize the scholarship. The US historian Michael A. Ledeen, author of one of the first accounts of D’Annunzio’s rule in Fiume, acknowledged the xenophobic campaign pursued by the main newspaper *La Vedetta d’Italia* in the first months of 1919. This campaign was designed to blame foreigner speculators for the malfunctioning of the Fiumian economy, and it drew on the antisemitic trope of Jewish profiteers.<sup>4</sup> However, as we will see, the question went beyond antisemitism and the “foreigner” label unified newcomers and residents in the city who were deprived of *pertinenza*. Ledeen, like other scholars, mentioned a single episode of expulsions but failed to acknowledge how widespread this practice was.<sup>5</sup>

The Italian-language historiography tends to ignore the presence of an outflow of individuals who escaped the city after and during D’Annunzio’s takeover, despite their significant number. In his insightful book on the social history of Fiume, Giuseppe Parlato acknowledged the dynamics of the expulsions, but he falls into the trap of replicating the language used by D’Annunzio himself.<sup>6</sup> In fact, as we will see, one of the strategies used to oust several categories of individuals from the national body involved labeling them as “foreigners” and highlighting their lack of *pertinenza*, despite their having been longtime residents of the city. Other more recent studies have drawn on the figures presented by Ledeen.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, the Yugoslav and later Croatian historiography has consistently devoted attention to the topic of refugees and migrants from the areas annexed

2 Nikola Crnković, “Procjena šteta nastalih uslijed D’Annunzijeve okupacije Rijeke”, *Argumenti*, 1-2, 1983, 89-103; Daniel Patafta, “Privremene vlade u Rijeci (listopad 1918 – sječanj 1924.)”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 38, 1, 2006, 197-222.

3 Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis. Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2020; Ivan Jeličić, “Repubblica con chi? Il movimento socialista fiumano e il giallo Sisa nel contesto post-asburgico fiumano”, *Qualestoria*, XLVIII, 2, 2020, 73-95; Vanni D’Alessio, “L’Altra Fiume. La ‘dannunziade’ vista e vissuta da Croati e Jugoslavi”, *Memoria e Ricerca*, 3, 2020, 491-508.

4 Michael A. Ledeen, *D’Annunzio a Fiume*, Roma – Bari 1975, 111.

5 Ledeen mentioned the political expulsion of 36 workers in February 1920, and the figure of 500 expellees in late April 1920, blaming this measure on the Italian National Council. Ledeen, *D’Annunzio a Fiume*, 154, 175.

6 Giuseppe Parlato, *Mezzo secolo di Fiume. Economia e società a Fiume nella prima metà del Novecento*, Siena 2009, 136-141.

7 Pupo, *Fiume città di passione*, 93-94, 125.

to Italy after 1918, making the case for national persecution suffered by Croats.<sup>8</sup> These uprooted individuals were emblematic of the violence and brutality of fascism. Yet, until recently little attention has been devoted to refugees who left Fiume and Sušak in 1919 and 1920. The first pioneering work engaging with refugees is fragmentary, and it fails to keep track of the turbulent events that occurred in the city after D'Annunzio seized power in September 1919. Refugees are described as a homogeneous mass with a common ethnic background, a description that paved the way for an interpretation of D'Annunzio as having indiscriminately expelled Croats from Fiume,<sup>9</sup> which led to "ethnic cleansing."<sup>10</sup> Other authors have simply acknowledged the expulsions from Fiume and the presence of refugees from across the border in Sušak.<sup>11</sup> A very recent monograph published by the State Archives in Rijeka provides a detailed account of the first waves of refugees from Fiume and Sušak. It draws on two nominal lists of refugees who applied for subsidies in the nearby Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.<sup>12</sup> Since the lists cover a period from September 1919 to January 1920, the book focuses on the first phase of D'Annunzio's rule, which witnessed chaotic and spontaneous flights rather than expulsion orders. The coexistence of different grounds for expulsion in post-1918 Fiume, ranging from political activism fighting against the annexation to Italy to morality and petty crime has been acknowledged by Dominique K. Reill, who also stressed the need to retain the scarce resources for the pro-annexationist locals.<sup>13</sup>

By drawing on both Italian and Croatian sources, this article will clarify the circumstances that served as a background for departures, flights, and expulsions from Fiume in the years that followed 1919. Rather than regarding refugees solely as victims of persecution, it will try to reconstruct the decision-making process that led expellees to decide whether or not to leave the city.

8 For an updated overview see the following texts (their bibliographies are also relevant): Nevio Šetić, *Istra za talijanske uprave: o istarskoj emigraciji i njenom tisku u Zagrebu 1918.-1941.*, Zagreb 2008; Mirko Jurkić, "Borba Istrana u Zagrebu za očuvanje hrvatskoga identiteta u Istri 20-ih i 30-ih godina 20. stoljeća", *Kroatologija*, 2, 1, 2011, 59-78.

9 Mihael Sobolevski, "Egzodus Hrvata iz Rijeke u vrijeme D'Annunzijeve vladavine (rujan 1919. – siječanj 1921.)", in: *Talijanska uprava na hrvatskom prostoru i egzodus Hrvata (1918.-1943.): zbornik radova s Međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa, Zagreb 22.-23. listopada 1997.*, edited by Marino Manin, Zagreb 2001, 287-299.

10 Goran Crnković, "Uvodna Riječ", *Vjesnik Državnog Arhiva u Rijeci*, LXI/LXII, 2020, 11.

11 Tea Perinčić, *Rijeka ili smrt!: D'Annunzijeva okupacija Rijeke, 1919.-1921 = Rijeka or death!: D'Annunzio's occupation of Rijeka, 1919-1921*, Rijeka 2019, 175. Toševa Karpowicz mentions the figure of 3,000 refugees from Fiume in Sušak in June 1921, which she found in a letter to the Italian state authorities by Riccardo Zanella. The figure sounds disproportional compared with the size of the city. Ljubinka Toševa Karpowicz, *Rijeka / Fiume 1868. – 1924. Od autonomije do države*, Rijeka 2021, 252.

12 Goran Crnković – Mladen Urem, eds., *Izbjeglice i štete za D'Annunzijeve režima 1919.-1921.: Zbornik radova*, Rijeka-Zagreb 2021.

13 Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*, 152-154.

### When nonpertinents became outsiders

Due to its geographical position, Fiume has historically been a magnet for immigrants. However, their presence was increasingly regarded as a burden on the city as soon as most economic activities came to a halt after the First World War. Using expulsions to get rid of the surplus population seemed one of the easiest solutions to the city's rulers.

As pointed out by Dominique K. Reill in her book, according to the Habsburg laws that the Fiumian legislation inherited – which were shaped by the Italian National Council when it assumed power in late 1918 – many different categories of residents fell into a vulnerable position. The lack of *pertinenza* endangered the thousands who had reached the city after the war, as well as individuals born in Fiume whose parents held *pertinenza* in other cities. Due to the huge trends in migration, nonpertinents amounted to over seventy percent of all the legal residents in the city before the war. Those awarded *pertinenza* gained the right to vote – albeit if we take into account other limitations concerning suffrage – and to access certain forms of welfare protection. Not being awarded *pertinenza* could result in Fiumian residents' expulsion, especially if they happened to be a burden on the city. In the Habsburg period, expulsions were issued against people on the margins of society and subversives, a practice perpetuated by the Inter-Allied forces.<sup>14</sup>

After 1918, as happened in the nearby areas, the Italian army stationed in Fiume, who were part of the Inter-Allied forces that occupied the city, implemented expulsions against subversives and supporters of Fiume's annexation to Yugoslavia.<sup>15</sup> An order of expulsion issued in April 1919 by the Italian carabinieri, as part of the occupation forces, targeted the merchant Viliem Safranko, born in the Yugoslav city of Sinj; the clerk Alessandro Zaccaria, born in Vienna but holding *pertinenza* in Koper (Capodistria); and the former war prisoner in Russia Árpád Simon, holding *pertinenza* in the city of Piešťany, in today's Slovakia. While the first was a pro-Yugoslav activist, all the others were socialists.<sup>16</sup>

However, it was D'Annunzio's takeover of the city that inaugurated a new phase of repression against increasing sectors of society. Responding to a call from the pro-Italian National Council, which seized power in Fiume in November 1918, D'Annunzio took control of the city along with his entourage of legionnaires on September 12, 1919, while the Italian army continued to control the nearby city of Sušak, located across the border. While international negotiations reached a sticking point at the Paris Peace Conference, local pro-Italian and pro-Yugoslav factions confronted

14 Idem, 139-144. See also Dominique K. Reill – Ivan Jeličić – Francesca Rolandi, "Redefining Citizenship After Empire: The Rights to Work, Welfare, and Remain in a Post-Habsburg World", *The Journal of Modern History*, June 2022.

15 Gorazd Bajc, "Internments after the First World War: The Case of Women in the Northern Adriatic, 1918-1920", *Acta Histriae*, 26, 4, 2018, 1034.

16 Državni arhiv u Rijeci (DARI), Riječka Kvestura (53), A8, k. 390, Alessandro Zaccaria; Jeličić, *Repubblica con chi?*, 78.

each other on the ground. They were soon joined by the autonomist political group, who advocated the establishment of a free state under the protection of the League of the Nations.

Since D'Annunzio's legionnaires compelled the local Croatian-language newspaper *Primorske novine* to stop working, the task of reporting on the violence fell upon other Yugoslav newspapers, and they announced the first waves of refugees right after D'Annunzio had entered the city.<sup>17</sup> These papers searched for the reason underpinning this collective escape in the panic that resulted from mass arrests and the violent behavior of storm troopers (*arditi*). The papers described the nearby towns of Bakar, Krasica, and Lokve as already crowded with refugees on September 15.<sup>18</sup> Based on the subsidies distributed by the Council for Refugees from Fiume and Sušak, a body that mediated between the refugees and the state and local authorities, Boris Zakošek counted more than 2,000 refugees, predominantly from the middle class, who left the city in the months leading up to January 1920,<sup>19</sup> but it can be argued that not all the escapees applied for subsidies. The pro-Italian *La Vedetta d'Italia*, which was prone to downplaying the phenomenon, spoke of "a few hundreds of Croats" who left Fiume and Sušak after D'Annunzio's takeover, leaving behind their houses and jobs.<sup>20</sup>

It is not easy to detect what happened in Fiume in the turbulent days that followed September 12, 1919, as the existing sources are poor and fragmentary. While the Italian press did not mention any act of discrimination or violence against the Slavic population, the Croatian newspaper did report acts of violence that sound disproportionate. Archival sources do not reveal a climate of mass violence in Fiume after D'Annunzio's takeover of the city. Despite the situation having been potentially explosive, with the city crowded with paramilitary troops, it did not escalate into a bloodbath, as happened in many "shatter zones of empires," as pointed out by Reill in her book *The Fiume Crisis*.<sup>21</sup> It is certainly true, as noted by Natka Badurina, that D'Annunzio was preceded in Fiume by his reputation of being the most ardent advocate of violent nationalism and imperialism.<sup>22</sup> The media reports, as well as the spread of false information, likely contributed to creating an atmosphere that led to an outflow of refugees.

While a sentiment of fear and humiliation was widespread among the Croatian population, the thesis cannot be excluded that the Yugoslav authorities facilitated

17 Vjeran Pavlaković, "D'Annunzio in Rijeka 1919: Representations in the Yugoslav Press", in: *Fiume 1919-2019. Un centenario europeo tra identità, memorie e prospettive di ricerca*, edited by Giordano Bruno Guerri, Milano 2020, 99-117. The author would like to thank Vjeran Pavlaković for sharing archival and press materials.

18 "Riječki skandal", *Hrvat*, 15.9.1919, 1; "Strahovlada na Rijeci", *Obzor*, 16.9.1919, 1; "Krivnja služb. Italije za događaje u Rijeci", *Jutarnji List*, 17.9.1919, 3.

19 Boris Zakošek, "Prvi riječki egzodus. Popis izbjeglica iz Rijeke i Sušaka 1919.-1920.", in: *Izbjeglice i štete za D'Annunzijevo režima*, 21, 33.

20 "Vittime che ritornano", *La Vedetta d'Italia (VI)*, 15.10.19, 2.

21 Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*, 14.

22 Natka Badurina, "D'Annunzio a Fiume. La violenza politica, l'etica, la storia", in: *Fiume 1919-2019*, 203-204.

such an outflow from the city to use it as evidence of the violent and illegal nature of D'Annunzio's endeavor at the negotiating table. Nonetheless, there were certainly cases of individual persecutions, such as Viktor Stiplošek, who was the head of the printing house Miriam, attached to the Capuchin monastery. In a postcard addressed to the Council for Fiumian Refugees, he stated that he had to flee because "soldiers were coming to arrest me."<sup>23</sup> This was also the case with some Croatian priests who had to leave the city due to physical and verbal threats.<sup>24</sup>

Several refugees who left Fiume in September 1919 nevertheless returned in the fall. In some cases, they even went back a couple of days after having left,<sup>25</sup> a move that was mocked in the pro-Italian press, which published statements from D'Annunzio's command. Similarly, some refugees from Sušak also returned, unless the Italian army prevented them from doing so.<sup>26</sup> In the fall of 1919, several pro-Yugoslav women and men went back to Sušak and struggled to find a space for political activities under Italian occupation. Even if they were officially regarded as refugees, they moved much closer to their previous homes, which enabled them to have an impact on local policy. This was the case with the teacher Ljubica Mikić, who went back to Sušak after a first period spent in Bakar; she held positions in several pro-Yugoslav institutions.<sup>27</sup>

D'Annunzio's command and the Italian National Council ruled over Fiume, pursuing annexation to Italy. On the one hand, they strove to maintain political control over the population and silence any form of opposition. On the other hand, as the city had been sieged by the Italian army in an attempt to push D'Annunzio out, the local authorities tried to preserve the limited resources for the inhabitants who granted them political support.

The fall of 1919 saw a press campaign against "foreigners." While it primarily targeted war profiteers who had reached the city after the war,<sup>28</sup> it increasingly essentialized the boundaries between pertinent and nonpertinent, addressing the latter as "foreigners" even when they had solid relations with and in the city. The economic situation was deteriorating due to the economic blockade imposed by the Italian government,<sup>29</sup> and so frustrations were channeled to solidify new hierarchies.

23 Hrvatski državni arhiv (HDA), Zemaljska vlada. Odjel za unutarnje poslove (79), k. 5461, Postcard from Stiplošek, 6.12.1919; Zakošek, *Prvi riječki egzodus*, 25.

24 Marko Medved, *Riječka država u razdoblju fašizma. Nastanak biskupije i prvi talijanski upravitelji*, Zagreb 2015, 165.

25 Fondazione Vittoriale degli Italiani (FVI), Governi di Fiume (GF), cart. 249, Comando dell'esercito italiano in Fiume d'Italia Ufficio informazioni, 21.10.1919; *Vittime che ritornano*.

26 HDA, Zemaljska vlada. Predsjedništvo (78), k. 1045, Srednjoškolski nastavnici – povratak na Sušak, 18.2.1920.

27 DARI, Privremene vlade u Rijeci (3), kk. 16-17, Comando dell'esercito italiano in Fiume d'Italia Ufficio informazioni. Elenco nominativo delle persone la cui attività sospetta venne segnalata dal suddetto Ufficio; Boris Zakošek, "Prijepis Popisa izbjeglica", in: *Izbjeglice i štete za D'Annunzijeve režima 1919.-1921.*, 63, 88, 137.

28 "Ospiti non desiderati", *VI*, 21.9.1919, 2.

29 Parlato, *Mezzo secolo di Fiume*, 45-68.

The nonpertinents held *pertinenza* in other locations, not only all around the former Habsburg Empire, but also in the Italian peninsula.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, once a wish for exclusionary measures had been articulated in the press, those more at odds with the political authorities were clearly the first to be targeted. A “purge” (*epurazione*) could not be systematically accomplished, unless the few industries still functioning were brought to a halt due to the lack of skilled workers. Aware of the fact that workers could not be replaced overnight, industrialists opposed the measures against nonpertinents from the beginning, and they were repeatedly accused by D’Annunzio’s headquarters of protecting politically disloyal workers and discriminating against Italians.<sup>31</sup>

In December 1919 the leadership of the Italian National Council supported the proposal issued by the Italian government of a compromise solution on the Fiume settlement, which informally made the city a satellite of the Italian state. The majority of Fiumians voted on the proposal in a plebiscite, which was invalidated by D’Annunzio, because he had decided to go for strong-arm tactics with the Italian government. The outcome was paradoxical. The Italian government placed an economic blockade on the city, in order to push for acceptance of the Paris conference deliberations. Nonetheless, to avoid an open humanitarian catastrophe, it supported the city’s crumbling economy through aid delivered by the Italian Red Cross.<sup>32</sup> Some of the more traditionally oriented nationalist elements consequently withdrew from Fiume. D’Annunzio’s headquarters began to build a bridge with those sectors of the trade unions that had adhered to the nationalist project, as represented by the integration into Fiume’s leadership of the union official Alceste De Ambris.<sup>33</sup> While the local elite had started to distance themselves from D’Annunzio, he and his command tried to secure support from the pro-Italian lower strata of the population at the price of playing them up against their fellow residents deprived of *pertinenza*. In this context of shifting alliances and a search for a consensus, the first collective expulsion measures against entire categories of individuals came to pass.

### **Being on the wrong list. Expulsion measures during D’Annunzio’s rule**

On February 9, 1920, D’Annunzio’s headquarters issued a decree requesting that all industrial plants and economic enterprises submit lists of their employees, specifying each employee’s nationality and *pertinenza*. According to D’Annunzio’s information services, these first measures were favored by “Fiumian” – i.e., pertinent – workers who hoped that this purge would have resulted in more available jobs. However, the

30 Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*, 69.

31 DARI, 3, kk. 18-19, Comando dell’esercito italiano in Fiume d’Italia Ufficio informazioni, 3.2.20; Parlato, *Mezzo secolo di Fiume*, 57.

32 Idem, 69-112.

33 Ledeen, *D’Annunzio a Fiume*, 137-138.

measures were met with dismay from Croatian and socialist workers.<sup>34</sup> The workers, who had enjoyed a high degree of unity before the war, became increasingly split between those remaining faithful either to the socialist trade unions (Sedi Riunite) or to the pro-Italian Fascio Democratico Sociale and Camera Del Lavoro.<sup>35</sup>

Within three weeks, a decree issued by D'Annunzio himself ordered the expulsion of all the nonpertinents who became resident in the city after October 30, 1918. The deadline set by the decree, although apparently aimed at evicting newcomers, did not imply that all those targeted were strangers in the city, since the war had disrupted many life paths. Nonetheless, the decree, motivated by widespread unemployment and food shortages, foresaw some exceptions such as for those who had resided in the city for at least five years and who had departed for war-related reasons, older people or those categorized as invalids, and those who were ready to join a local paramilitary corps.<sup>36</sup> The aim of providing work to Fiumian pertinents in exchange for support was additionally stressed by De Ambris, who presented the ousting of “foreigners” as an opportunity to secure more work for Fiumians.<sup>37</sup>

Indisputably, any decrease in the number of inhabitants would have somewhat relieved the shaky economic situation.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, loyalty became a crucial credential, as granted by adherence to the ultra-nationalist Fiumian Legion. The inconsistency in the economic motivations behind the expulsions is demonstrated by the fact that employed workers and individuals of means were also expelled and fired.<sup>39</sup> D'Annunzio's command took the opportunity to get rid of differently minded individuals, including some who were known to be against the city's annexation to Italy, but who had never been politically active.

In some instances, expulsion was the last act in a series of attacks. Those targeted with expulsion included Salomon Molnar Bela, a former member of the border police who was accused of having persecuted individuals with pro-Italian sentiments during the Habsburg period. Physical aggression had preceded his expulsion – he had been beaten up by young nationalists because he refused to stand up during the Italian hymn – and a call for his expulsion was published by a local newspaper.<sup>40</sup>

34 DARI, 3, kk 16-17, Comando dell'esercito italiano in Fiume d'Italia Ufficio informazioni, 13.2.20.

35 DARI, 3, kk. 18-19. Comando dell'esercito italiano in Fiume d'Italia Ufficio informazioni, 3.2.20. On the socialist movement in Fiume see Ivan Jeličić, “Uz stogodišnjicu riječkog Radničkog vijeća. Klasna alternativa nacionalnim državama na sutonu Monarhije”, *Časopis za povijest Zapadne Hrvatske*, 12, 2017, 63-85; Ivan Jeličić, *Nell'ombra dell'autonomismo. Il movimento socialista a Fiume 1901-1921*, Phd dissertation, Università degli studi di Trieste, 2017; Hinko Raspor, *Radnički pokret Rijeke i Sušaka 1900-1941. Revolucionarne tradicije lučkih radnika*, Rijeka 1977; Ljubinka Toševa-Karpowicz – Mihael Sobolevski, *Sindikalni pokret u općini Rijeka do 1941. godine*, Rijeka 1990.

36 DARI, 3, kk. 3, 4, 5, 6, Decreto n. 50, 27.2.1920.

37 Ledeen, *D'Annunzio a Fiume*, 154-155.

38 Parlato, *Mezzo secolo a Fiume*, 99n.

39 On the contrary, Parlato interprets the February 1920 expulsions as an attempt at protecting the local elements and the social order against an influx of foreigners; Idem, 67-68.

40 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Comando dell'esercito italiano Ufficio informazioni, 26.2.1920.



Among the 593 appeals submitted to the Surveillance Commission (Commissione di vigilanza),<sup>41</sup> 468 were approved; according to a note, the latter were related to cases of ethnic Italians from the Italian kingdom or the former Habsburg areas. Apparently, the local police (Questura), still mainly represented by personnel employed before the war, did not act as they should have. Individuals whose appeal had been rejected continued to reside in the city, while some who had successfully appealed had nonetheless been kicked out. While the Surveillance Commission, which had included two legionnaires and two members of the Italian National Council, was primarily driven by nationalist sentiments, the Questura was more likely preoccupied with public order issues and wanted to limit the influx of outsiders to the city.<sup>42</sup> As connections with the outside world had been interrupted, many of those who should have been expelled (according to the rules) remained in the city.<sup>43</sup>

April 1920 witnessed a new open conflict between the working class and D'Annunzio's command. In early April, Fiumian workers – both pro and anti-annexionist – submitted a set of requests to D'Annunzio, which ranged from economic claims to the withdrawal of politically motivated expulsions, the re-employment of dismissed workers and the right to opt for Fiumian *pertinenza* for those who were already residents before the war.<sup>44</sup> In fact, workers who had immigrated to the Adriatic city in search of employment and started a new life there were among those most affected by the lack of *pertinenza*.<sup>45</sup> D'Annunzio was initially open to negotiation, siding with the workers against the National Council and proposing to limit expulsions to individuals regarded as “anti-Italian,” rather than those promoting “socialist propaganda.”<sup>46</sup> However, no compromise could be achieved and the workers proclaimed a general strike based on claims regarded as political on April 20. The repression was harsh; hundreds of nonpertinent workers were to be expelled, including the leaders of the Socialist Party.<sup>47</sup> It is difficult to estimate how many of the expulsion orders issued in April 1920 were implemented, and – of those that were – how many of those dispatched across the border soon returned to Fiume.<sup>48</sup>

41 The Surveillance Commission, established on February 27, included two members of the Italian National Council and two members of D'Annunzio's command. See Danilo L. Massagrande, ed., *I verbali del Consiglio nazionale italiano di Fiume e del Comitato direttivo: 1918-1920*, Roma 2014, 455.

42 DARI, 3, kk. 18-19.

43 Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*, 154; DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Elenco degli espulsi marzo-aprile 1920.

44 Archivio dello Stato di Trieste (AST), R. Governatorato poi Commissariato Generale Civile per la Venezia Giulia. Atti di Gabinetto (1919-1922) (RGCGCVG-Gabinetto), b. 91, Desiderata della classe lavoratrice di Fiume, 3.4.1920.

45 Reill – Jeličić – Rolandi, *Redefining Citizenship After Empire*.

46 AST, RGCGCVG-Gabinetto, b. 91, Comando della città di Fiume, Segreteria particolare del comandante, 9.4.1920.

47 “Lo sciopero di Fiume soffocato con la violenza armata,” *Il lavoratore*, 24.4.1920; Jeličić, *Repubblica con chi?*, 82-83.

48 FVI, GF, cart. 249, Comando dell'esercito italiano in Fiume d'Italia Ufficio informazioni Notiziario politico riservatissimo, 9.5.1920.

Expulsions continued over the following months. While the *Questura*, in line with their actions in the Habsburg period, continued to target both subversive and social marginals,<sup>49</sup> D'Annunzio's command started a qualitatively new phase with expulsions ordered against entire categories of Fiume's residents, including against affluent citizens who had never been targeted in the past. The director of the Grand Hotel Europa, Will Daneu, had his appeal rejected, but the *Questura* awarded him an extension of his residence permit.<sup>50</sup> Similar conflicts over rights emerged in at least eighteen other documented cases, with the *Questura* authorizing expellees whose appeals had already been rejected to remain in Fiume.<sup>51</sup> However, the converse situation also occurred, with various agents pursuing diverse aims. The communist agitator Nicolò Sisa had been repeatedly expelled by the Italian army and later by the *Questura*, while D'Annunzio's command likely opposed his expulsion to Hungary and ultimately enabled him to later reach Italy. Such a move can be probably explained as D'Annunzio's attempt to explore possible alliances on the political Left.<sup>52</sup>

Not only deeds, but also words and jokes were mentioned as valid motivations for expulsion, as were musical notes. This was the case with the second order that targeted Daneu, and a certain De Majo, a cosmopolitan conductor described as an "Austrophile and pro-Yugoslav," born in Budapest and holding *pertinenza* in "Constantinople." While Daneu allegedly did not allow Italian music to be played, De Majo insisted on playing German music with an anti-Italian character, and allegedly planned to engage new musicians from Budapest and Vienna.<sup>53</sup> According to the local newspaper, a row arose because a conductor had allegedly refused to play Fiumian songs, and this had escalated into a brawl with a musician smashing an instrument on the conductor's head.<sup>54</sup> The victim, i.e., the conductor, was the one held responsible and was thus targeted for expulsion. In June 1920 several other expulsion orders were issued against well-off opponents of the pro-annexationist cause.<sup>55</sup> Some of the expellees had a cosmopolitan background stretching across the post-Habsburg space, and were thus living evidence of the previous imperial networks that the new nationalist powers were trying to unmake.

49 Reill – Jeličić – Rolandi, *Redefining Citizenship After Empire*.

50 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Comando della città di Fiume. Ufficio del capo di gabinetto, 5.6.1920.

51 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Il Capo di Gabinetto al Delegato agli Interni, 11.6.1920.

52 Jeličić, *Repubblica con chi?*, 91-92.

53 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Comando militare di polizia al Capo di Gabinetto del Comando, per conoscenza alla Regia *Questura*, 8.6.1920. De Majo was also accused in a signed letter of having spied on a pro-Italian family during the war.

54 "Una scenata disgustosa al Caffè Centrale", *VI*, 5.6.1920, 1.

55 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Comando militare di polizia al Capo di Gabinetto del Comando, per conoscenza alla Regia *Questura*, 8.6.1920.

## **The summer of violence in 1920. Expulsions against pro-Yugoslav nonpertinents**

The summer of 1920 saw an outbreak of violence all around the Adriatic area, which also affected Fiume. On July 11, the murder of an Italian ship captain in Split served as a pretext to spark attacks on properties and individuals perceived as connected with the pro-Yugoslav sections of society. The most iconic action happened in Trieste on July 13, when fascist squads set the Narodni dom on fire, a gorgeous building designed by the architect Max Fabiani, which hosted the main economic and cultural institutions of the Slovenian community. The attack was followed by a call on the government to clear the city of all those deemed foreigners. However, as Marco Bresciani stressed, rather than being the outcome of existing conflicts between Slavs and Italians, the fire was a deliberate act designed to radicalize tensions and solidify political and national boundaries within the local milieu.<sup>56</sup>

Similar attacks took place all around the Adriatic area over the following days, and Fiume was no exception. On July 11, a list of over one hundred shop owners, who were members of a pro-Yugoslav League of the Fiumian Industrials, was circulated by D'Annunzio's command.<sup>57</sup> As had already happened in February, expulsions were preceded by an investigation that aimed to detect their target. The next day several shops owned by pro-Yugoslav merchants were plundered and the boats anchored in the Dead Channel that flowed between Fiume and Sušak were set on fire. These attacks were followed by expulsion orders against pro-Yugoslav nonpertinents.

On July 16, at least two different orders of expulsions targeted over 150 individuals – charged with “political acts against Italy” – and their families. They included several shop owners and businessmen, who were well integrated despite being nonpertinents, and in some cases had even been born in Fiume.<sup>58</sup> The lists' arbitrariness, likely due to being driven by tip-offs, is visible in some of the handwritten notes that featured on the lists, possibly made by the authority tasked with implementing the expulsions. While in many cases the expellees were impossible to identify, in others they had allegedly taken refuge in Yugoslavia or had already been expelled.<sup>59</sup>

The second half of July witnessed a proliferation of new lists, with certain names often recurring, and with notes referring to both professional positions and pro-Yugoslav sentiments. Those targeted included, for instance, Mirko Fuček, the head of the First Croatian Saving Bank; Pečanj, the president of the Serbian-Orthodox community; Spiro Marčeta, the owner of the well-known café Continental; two

56 Marco Bresciani, “The Battle for Post-Habsburg Trieste/Trst: State Transition, Social Unrest, and Political Radicalism (1918–23)”, *Austrian History Yearbook*, 52, 2021, 182–200.

57 FVI, GF, cart. 249, Comando dell'esercito italiano in Fiume d'Italia Ufficio informazioni Notiziario politico interno, 11.7.1920; Comando dell'esercito italiano in Fiume d'Italia Ufficio informazioni Cenni e segnalazioni sulla situazione politica a Sussak, 11.7.1920

58 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Gabriele D'Annunzio Comandante della città di Fiume Ordinanza, 16.7.20.

59 DARI, 3, kk. 18-19, Elenco nominativo delle persone da espellersi, 16.7.1920.

pharmacists, Dinko Babić and Veljko Smokvina; and Božo Kolacio, a businessman and meat dealer.<sup>60</sup> All members of the business elite who did not share a pro-Italian orientation came under fire. These included Erminio Klein, the head of the Adria Society, and Smidchen, the head of the torpedo factory, whose expulsions were confirmed. The causal link between socioeconomic status and repression was best explained by a note on one of the lists, which suggested checking whether Antonio Smerdel was the owner of a shop in Sušak, and if so, to confirm his expulsion.<sup>61</sup> In August 1920, the Surveillance Commission revoked the expulsion orders for two-thirds of a list of 182 nonpertinents, giving the explanation that they were mostly workers and individuals of modest origins who represented “a minor danger compared with those belonging to the more affluent and educated classes.”<sup>62</sup> Rather than being measures of public order, the July 1920 expulsions revealed a first attempt to engineer the city’s social fabric to remove untrustworthy elements and create a more compliant business elite; as one document issued by D’Annunzio’s entourage made clear, those expelled had to be replaced with shop owners holding *pertinenza*, being favorable to “our cause,” or both.<sup>63</sup>

Class was central to the July 1920 expulsion, and it turned hierarchies upside down. For the expelled, it reversed roles present in Habsburg times, targeting groups who would not have been vulnerable before. While expulsions had rarely affected affluent individuals in earlier times, D’Annunzio’s attempt to reconfigure Fiume’s social fabric explicitly targeted the pro-Yugoslav business elite. Such a project encountered a sense of uneasiness also among Fiumian pro-Italian nationalists. If previous expulsions had triggered conflicts between D’Annunzio and the *Questura*, in July 1920 it was members of the local pro-Italian nationalist circles who, while favoring Fiume’s reworking into an Italian city,<sup>64</sup> and being willing to silence the opposition, opposed such a direct attack against members of the economic elite. Many members of the Italian National Council, including its president Antonio Grossich, were of the opinion that the anti-Yugoslav protests represented a good opportunity to get rid of pro-Yugoslav agitators and intimidate possible political opponents. However, the expulsion of members of the city’s business elite challenged the established social order.<sup>65</sup> While rumors accused certain Fiumian pro-Italian nationalists of protecting previous business partners, it is possible that some of the members of the Italian National Council started to fear they would be the next target of D’Annunzio’s persecution. In other cases, it was the arbitrariness of the allegations that shocked the

60 DARI, 3, kk. 18-19, Elenco delle persone da espellere da Fiume, 18.7.1920; FVI, GF, cart. 50, 706/1920.

61 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Seduta del 31.7.20.

62 FVI, GF, cart. 249, Comando dell’esercito italiano in Fiume d’Italia Ufficio informazioni Notiziario politico riservato, 1.8.1920, 2.

63 FVI, GF, cart. 42, 4019, 1.8.1920.

64 Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*, 178-224.

65 Massagrande, ed., *I verbali del Consiglio nazionale italiano di Fiume e del Comitato direttivo*, 513-514.

citizenry as the events of July 1920 clearly appeared to be retaliation for the events that had occurred in Split, with expulsions ordered by legionnaires who did not even know the city.<sup>66</sup>

The expelled businessmen began to leave for the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes at the beginning of August, after having tried to secure their business by drawing on figureheads.<sup>67</sup> For many, this was not chaotic flight, but rather a carefully planned departure. The Hajdin family lived a lower-middle-class life in Fiume, with the father Ernesto and the three children employed as clerks in different firms. They sought refuge in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the summer of 1920. When “ordered to leave the territory of Fiume,” the father remained for several more days in order to successfully preserve their belongings in Fiume, while the rest of the family left for the mountain town of Fužine.<sup>68</sup> In other cases, expulsion orders had to be implemented within twenty-four hours. The Kirinčić family was allowed to bring only the clothing they needed most.<sup>69</sup> Ultimately, even after the expulsion, going back and forth was still possible, despite the discriminatory measures in place. The Yugoslav citizen Julio Kuhn was a newcomer to Fiume when he was expelled. In October 1920, after having heard rumors that his apartment had been confiscated and his furniture abandoned on the street, he went back to Fiume to collect what could be saved and transport it to Zagreb.<sup>70</sup>

However, formal expulsion orders were not the only measures that pushed Croats to leave. D’Annunzio’s command reported that legionnaires or civilians disguised as soldiers threatened Croats, telling them to leave if they wanted their life to be spared.<sup>71</sup> Legionnaires later settled in the houses of evicted families.<sup>72</sup> The image of luxury apartments destroyed by Italian soldiers further fueled frustration and led some expellees to resort to corruption to avoid having their apartment confiscated.<sup>73</sup>

In September 1920, the Regency of Carnaro was established by D’Annunzio’s command. While many of its proclamations were never enforced, one tangible consequence of its founding was that the Italian National Council was further ousted from power. In October 1920, the regency advertised the number of expulsions carried out during

66 AST, RCGCGVG-Gabinetto, b. 91, Commissariato civile del distretto politico di Volosca, 21.7.1920.

67 AV, GF, cart. 249, Comando dell’esercito italiano in Fiume d’Italia Ufficio informazioni Notiziario politico riservato, 1.8.1920, 2.

68 HDA, 79, k. 5466, Zapisnik od dana 14. rujna 1920. sastavljen u uredu opć. Poglavarstva u Fužinama.

69 HDA, 79, k. 5466, Kirinčić Josipa obiteljske i imovinske prilike, 15.10.1920.

70 HDA, 79, k. 5466, 1443, 20.11.1920.

71 FVI, GF, cart. 249, Comando dell’esercito italiano in Fiume d’Italia Ufficio informazioni Notiziario politico riservatissimo, 21.7.1920, 3.

72 DARI, 3, kk. 18-19, Ordine di divisione n. 320, 28.7.1920.

73 FVI, GF, cart. 249, Comando dell’esercito italiano in Fiume d’Italia Ufficio informazioni Notiziario politico riservatissimo, 5.8.1920.

the summer,<sup>74</sup> which some estimates suggested had targeted 160 individuals and families, mainly Croats.<sup>75</sup> In the meantime, new expulsion orders had been issued, although the feasibility of enforcing them was in doubt. This was the case with the watchmaker Maurizio Kraus who was required to present himself to the authorities in Budapest within six days, followed by his family.<sup>76</sup>

Clearly, many individuals remained in Fiume despite having been expelled, while other expellees returned to Fiume.<sup>77</sup> Rather than really determining those who had to be physically removed from the city,<sup>78</sup> expulsions set new boundaries, demarcating the new categories that had to be excluded from the national body. Another influx arrived too, that of nonpertinents from Italy, Trentino, or Venezia Giulia, who were mostly Italian nationals. Many of them were unemployed and were enjoying a subsidy.<sup>79</sup> While their social rights were disputed by many members of the National Council, they were strongly supported by the head of the Rectorate of Labor, Clemente Marassi, who represented D'Annunzio's command.<sup>80</sup> While the members of the Italian National Council were mainly concerned with preserving the resources for the local pro-Italian pertinents, other sectors advocating a more pronounced convergence between social claims and Italian nationalism, represented by De Ambris, opposed them. This went hand in hand with repressive policies against the socialists who were gathering around the Sedi Riunite, whose expulsions were repeatedly advocated by members of the military police in October 1920.<sup>81</sup>

Within the ruling elite, debates continued over opportunities to secure jobs and the scarce resources available to Fiumian pertinents. However, the feasibility of such measures was continually disputed by many, including by fierce local nationalists who were aware of the fact that the few functioning sectors of the local economy depended on nonpertinent skilled workers.<sup>82</sup> On December 23, 1920, another decree ordered the eviction of all nonpertinents, a measure that would have likely targeted more than half of those living in the city, which was clearly unfeasible.<sup>83</sup> A few days later, after five days of fighting, the Regency of Carnaro surrendered to the regular Italian army, which besieged the city.

As D'Annunzio's political project unfolded, expulsions maintained their double function of removing the undesirables, but on a much larger scale that targeted entire

74 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Elenco delle persone che hanno abbandonato Fiume in relazione alle ordinanze sugli sfratti: I, II, III, IV, V del Comando di città, 26.10.1920.

75 DARI, Gradski narodni odbor Rijeka (323), k. 117, Perseguitati politici durante la Reggenza del Carnaro.

76 DARI, 323, k. 117, Foglio di via obbligatorio, Maurizio Kraus, 14.10.1920.

77 DARI, 3, kk. 22-23, Reggenza italiana del Carnaro al Comando della polizia militare, 23.9.1920.

78 Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*, 154.

79 Parlato, *Mezzo secolo di Fiume*, 137-138.

80 Idem, 130.

81 FVI, GF, cart. 243, Prot. 52/1920.

82 DARI, 3, kk. 12-13, Verbale, 16.10.1920.

83 DARI, 3, kk. 18-19, Reggenza italiana del Carnaro Ufficio informazioni, 23.12.20.

categories of individuals.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, as this article argues, they served as a litmus test for the internal evolution of D'Annunzio's rule over Fiume, which gradually defined the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the political community.

### Fiume's refugees in search of a homeland

Not all those who fled or were expelled from Fiume had pro-Yugoslav sentiments; however, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was the only territory that hosted a consistent number of refugees or expellees from the city. Bearing in mind the situation, wherein opponents to Italian annexation were being targeted with expulsions, and given the city's geographical position, this outcome was somewhat logical. However, it also hints at the fact that expellees rarely embarked on long trips to reach the faraway cities in which they held *pertinenza*: they were more likely to resist expulsions. Furthermore, socialist and communist activists often ended up wandering from country to country, drawing on transnational political networks, and they hardly regarded their place of origin as a significant marker of identification. Finally, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was ready to accept refugees of pro-Yugoslav sentiments, as it had learned to use them as tools for putting pressure on the neighboring state.

In February 1920 around 200 Fiumians in Zagreb continued to receive subsidies, and the city also hosted the leadership of the refugee population, represented by two distinct political groups.<sup>85</sup>

The Fiumian Autonomist Democratic Party was led by Ruggero Gotthardi, a merchant who had participated in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. He advocated the internationalization of Fiume as a buffer state and cultivated the idea of a liberal city state that aimed to attract capital from abroad.<sup>86</sup> While nationality was not deemed as important, he regarded Yugoslavia, in which he arrived as a refugee in September 1919, as a "hospitable land that is nonetheless foreign."<sup>87</sup> In late 1920, while taking the floor, speaking in the local dialect at a public meeting in Zagreb, he conceptualized the identity of his supporters, as neither Italian nor Croatian, but as Fiumians.<sup>88</sup> Another group of refugees was gathered around the high school teacher Benjamin Grohovac and other pro-Yugoslav personalities from Fiume and Sušak. This group was named the Council for Refugees from Rijeka and its Surroundings, and it evolved into the Yugoslav Rijeka Party in 1921.<sup>89</sup>

84 Reill – Jeličić – Rolandi, *Redefining Citizenship After Empire*,

85 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Notiziario interno, 26.2.1920.

86 Ljubinka Karpowicz, "Biografia politica di un autonomista. Ruggero Gotthardi", *Quaderni del Centro di ricerche storiche di Rovigno*, VII, 1, 1984, 40-64.

87 "Proglas Autonomaske Riječke Stranke", *Jutarnji List*, 17.09.1919, 3.

88 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Notiziario politico-estero detratto dalla stampa jugoslava, 5.12.1920.

89 Maja Polić, "Prilog poznavanju života i djelovanja Benjamina Grohovca", *Vjesnik Državnog arhiva u Rijeci*, LXI/LXII, 2020, 209-202.

The two parties tried to establish different relationships with the political powers, which often turned into asymmetric alliances with either Zagreb or Belgrade. In March 1920, Croatian outlets, such as *Hrvat* and *Obzor* published an interpellation signed by 150 refugees, both Croats from Fiume and Sušak and autonomists, and addressed to the Belgrade government.<sup>90</sup> The head of the Fiumian Autonomist Democratic Party, Gotthardi, openly blamed the county leadership (Matko Laginja and Rikard Lenac, both refugees themselves from areas occupied by Italy) for the poor living conditions that refugees experienced, either sleeping rough or in railway carriages.<sup>91</sup> However, both the parties tried to cultivate strong relationships with the Belgrade government. The political games in which they got involved often kept them away from the needs of the mass of refugees.

The two parties representing Fiumian emigration took on a revitalized role on the eve of the 1921 April elections. After D'Annunzio's eviction, which the Italian army carried out, this resulted in two counterposed blocs: the National Bloc advocating the annexation to Italy, and a diverse coalition of supporters of the establishment of the Free State of Fiume, represented by the Autonomist Party and its allies. The Fiumian Autonomist Democratic Party and the Yugoslav Fiumian Party advocated a diplomatic intervention by the Yugoslav government that would allow fugitives back to the city in time to vote for the upcoming April elections.<sup>92</sup> Both the parties, together with the International Socialist Party,<sup>93</sup> joined the Indeficienter League, which sided with the Autonomist Bloc, and addressed appeals to both international authorities and the League of Nations.<sup>94</sup> They drew on financial support from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which in the course of 1920 turned from supporting Fiume's annexation to Yugoslavia to advocating the establishment of the city as a free state.<sup>95</sup>

After the Autonomist Bloc's victory in the April 1921 elections, the émigré organizations advocated the fast return of refugees to Fiume. In 1921 some refugees tried to return to Fiume,<sup>96</sup> and they also drew on support from Yugoslav state institutions. However, political violence caused further pro-Yugoslav and autonomists to leave the city,<sup>97</sup> which culminated after the March 1922 coup d'état, when over 1,000 Fiumians took refuge in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.<sup>98</sup> At the same time, the local

90 DARI, 3, kk. 16-17, Notiziario politico riservatissimo, 6.4.1920.

91 HDA, 78, k. 1032, 348/1920.

92 Massagrande, *Italia e Fiume*, 15.

93 The party would later withdraw from the coalition, in a sign of protest, due to – among other reasons – the issue of workers deprived of *pertinenza*. See Ivan Jeličić, “Izbori za riječku Konstituantu 1921. godine, demokracija u raljama nacionalizma”, manuscript under review.

94 Massagrande, *Italia e Fiume*, 26.

95 Toševa Karpowicz, *Rijeka / Fiume 1868. – 1924.*, 280.

96 See for example “Braćo Riječani / Fratelli fiumani”, *Riječki glasnik* (RG), 25.6.1921, 1; “Slobodan put izbjeglicama kod povratka”, *RG*, 1.9.1921, 2. The author would like to thank Ivan Jeličić for sharing these articles.

97 Patafta, *Privremene vlade u Rijeci*, 697.

98 Massagrande, *Italia e Fiume*, 90.



police continued to protect the city from a further influx of population without means. The police strove to discourage the return of Fiumians who had taken refuge in Italy, unless they had means and jobs already secured.<sup>99</sup>

After a short return to Fiume, Zanella and his supporters were definitively kicked out of Fiume by a coup d'état enacted by the nationalist faction in March 1922. They would return to Crikvenica where they established a constituent assembly in exile. While other representatives later negotiated conditions for their return to Fiume, Zanella would never see his hometown again. He would spend ten years as a refugee in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, deeply involved in political affairs in which he tried to mediate between several political actors based in Italy, Yugoslavia, and further abroad.<sup>100</sup>

During a long phase of instability that ran from D'Annunzio's eviction to the annexation to Italy in 1924, expulsions never ceased to play a role in the political struggle. While the Free State of Fiume was officially established by the Rapallo Treaty in 1920, it was in power only for a couple of months. Before and after this, the city's reins of power lay in the hands of temporary bodies that increasingly pursued Fiume's annexation to Italy. Those bodies continued to use expulsions to get rid of political and social undesirables, as did many of their predecessors. Similarly, implementing the expulsions was more wishful thinking than reality.<sup>101</sup>

However, no attempt to reshape the community on the scale foreseen by D'Annunzio took place. Without losing sight of their final aim – the annexation of the city – the temporary governments installed by Italy strove to keep the level of violence in the city low by ousting the riotous elements coming from outside. Indeed, despite their modest results, they tried repeatedly to also expel legionnaires and unemployed nonpertinents from Italy,<sup>102</sup> while the high commissioner Foschini extended opportunities to expel nonpertinents with criminal records.<sup>103</sup> These measures were fiercely opposed by the local Fascio,<sup>104</sup> which responded with calls for the expulsion of other opponents.<sup>105</sup>

99 FVI, GF, cart. 56, 699, 1051

100 Ljubinka Toševa Karpowicz, "Riccardo Zanella u Beogradu između srpske, francuske i italijanske masonerije", *Vojno-historijski glasnik*, 42, 1-2, 1998, 41-53.

101 DARI, 3, kk. 3, 4,5,6, Governo provvisorio. Raccolta delle leggi 1921, Bollettino ufficiale del Governo provvisorio di Fiume, 21.1.1921.

102 Massagrande, *Italia e Fiume*, 32, 48, 63.

103 DARI, 3, kk. 3, 4,5,6, Bollettino Ufficiale del Governo provvisorio di Fiume del 20.8.21

104 FVI, GF, cart. 244, 5.59. Deliberazione: Fascio fiumano di combattimento a Salvatore Bellasich, Fiume, 3.5.1921.

105 Massagrande, *Italia e Fiume*, 53.

## Conclusions

While the entire story of refugees from Fiume in 1919–1920 has to date been remembered as a case of ethnic-based expulsion and welcoming in the neighboring kin-state, a more detailed analysis presents a wider picture, in which measures against “national others” should be contextualized within the entangled exclusionary measures. This article has focused on the outflow of refugees, and it has considered the political and social factors underpinning their departure, as well as the external circumstances that Fiumians faced when confronted with the decision to leave their city behind. This has been complemented with an analysis of the collective expulsion decrees, regardless of their implementation.

As we have seen, from 1919 those who left Fiume and Sušak were far from being a homogeneous category. Expulsion measures were first implemented by the Italian army as part of the Inter-Allied contingent, and they targeted individuals deemed suspicious for political or social reasons, in line with the previous Habsburg administration. In September 1919, D’Annunzio’s takeover of the city triggered the flight of many residents of Fiume and Sušak – mostly Croats – out of fear, disappointment, or scorn. However, there were not any clear eviction measures. They placed many expectations on the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, in which they were entitled to apply for subsidies.

The later waves of expulsions from Fiume, starting from February 1920, targeted entire categories of unwanted individuals, redefining the boundaries of belonging within the city. The first wave of expulsions, in February 1920, targeted a wide variety of individuals, ranging from pro-Yugoslav activists to individuals with a “cosmopolitan background” as a legacy of the former imperial framework, as well as social undesirables. The second wave was focused on workers who gathered around the trade union Sedi Riunite and participated in the April 1920 strike. Some of those expelled during the first half of 1920 were used to resisting such measures and to enduring the political pressure, while others saw no alternative homeland in the neighboring countries or in the cities in which they held *pertinenza*, often located in faraway areas of the dissolved Habsburg Empire that they felt no attachment to.

On the contrary, the victims of the July 1920 expulsion, which was preceded by an outbreak of violence that targeted the properties of pro-Yugoslav individuals – including a section of the Croatian urban business elite – were more likely to regard the situation as unbearable and to look for a haven across the border in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.<sup>106</sup>

As this article has shown, expulsions served as a litmus test indicative of the political dynamics developing within the besieged city, with an increased number of groups ultimately being subject to repressive measures. However, the pro-Yugoslav individuals or those identified as Croats were the only ones who formed a consistent refugee

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106 Reill – Jeličić – Rolandi, *Redefining Citizenship After Empire*.

community. This was due to the neighboring Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, in which they saw an alternative ethnic homeland. In contrast, subversives were regarded as undesirable by many states, a fact that often resulted in their expulsion, although they were also able to draw on transnational networks of activists. This frequently affected their personal trajectories. The pro-Yugoslav merchant Safranko moved to Zagreb, becoming one of the members of the Council for refugees from Fiume and Sušak.<sup>107</sup> However, the socialists Zaccaria and Simon traveled along nonlinear paths. Zaccaria initially tried to resist the expulsion order. D'Annunzio's command renewed the order, as did the temporary government in 1921.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the socialist Simon made his way to Hungary, which was then the Hungarian Soviet Republic, before returning to Fiume and being later expelled.<sup>109</sup>

The implementation of expulsions also sheds light on the coexistence of different actors involved in public orders (from D'Annunzio's command to the Italian National Council and the local police). These actors often pursued different aims. While the local police tended to act in line with the previous Habsburg administration, D'Annunzio's command staged an attempt to rework the city's social and national fabric to make it more compliant; this aim was nevertheless just partially implemented. Indeed, due to the poor border controls and the overlapping of different jurisdictions, the implementation of expulsion orders proved unfeasible.<sup>110</sup> Expulsions often only entailed a symbolic sense of exclusion from the national body, while decisions regarding departure fell on the individuals and the opportunities they saw in an alternative place of refuge.

Moreover, the trajectories of refugees and expellees were far from unidirectional, with individuals moving back and forth, being repeatedly kicked out, or actively resisting measures issued against them. The subtle balance between coercion and agency meant that the decision to leave was more often related to the unbearable conditions in Fiume and the available alternatives rather than to concrete evictions. Nonetheless, in 1920 – just as also happens today – the circumstances underpinning the existence of a “space of deportability” related not only to the mere act of being deported, but also to the need to cope with this possibility.<sup>111</sup> In turn, this made it easier to blackmail those targeted, and it essentialized their status as unwanted members of the community that was built in Fiume after 1919.

107 HDA, 79, k. 5465, Zapisnik skupštine bjegunaca iz Rijeke, Sušaka i okolice, 26.11.1920; Zakošek, *Prvi riječki egzodus*, 22.

108 DARI, 53, A8, k. 390, Alessandro Zaccaria; see also Jeličić, *Uz stogodišnjicu riječkog Radničkog vijeća*, 75.

109 Jeličić, *Repubblica con chi?*, 78.

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## SAŽETAK

**Tko je unutra, a tko vani? Bjegovi, protjerivanja i stvaranje novih granica tijekom D'Annunzijeve vladavine u Rijeci (1919-1920)**

U rujnu 1919. iredentistički pjesnik Gabriele D'Annunzio preuzeo je vlast u gradu Rijeci te se zadržao na vlasti sve do prosinca 1920. godine, u početku zajedno s lokalnim vlastima Talijanskog nacionalnog vijeća (*Consiglio Nazionale Italiano*). Tijekom tog razdoblja, kao posljedica represija, izravnih mjera izгона, ali i klime neizvjesnosti, nekoliko valova izbjeglica napustilo je grad. Iako je dosadašnja historiografija bila fokusirana na izgon hrvatskog i projugoslenskog stanovništva, na meti represije bile su i druge kategorije stanovnika Rijeke. Temeljen na talijanskim i hrvatskim izvorima, ovaj članak istražuje unutarnje okolnosti koje su dovele do bijega i odlazaka. Prve izbjeglice napustile su grad dan nakon što je D'Annunzio preuzeo vlast i računale su na podršku susjedne Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca. Potom su riječke vlasti provele niz mjera koje su u uzastopnim valovima pogodile političke suparnike koji su se protivili pripojenju Italiji: od onih koji su i dalje iskazivali lojalnost pokojnoj austrougarskoj vlasti i dolazili su i svih krajeva bivšeg carstva, preko socijalista, do onih koji su se identificirali kao zagovornici pripojenja Rijeke susjednoj jugoslavenskoj državi. Izgoni od srpnja 1920. posebno su nasilno udarili na projugoslavensku vladajuću klasu. Za razliku od prijašnjih valova izbjeglica, oni su pronašli utočište u susjednoj Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca koju su smatrali zamjenskom domovinom na koju se mogu osloniti, dok su se druge kategorije izgnanih raspršile ili pružile otpor. Dekreti o kolektivnom izgonu usmjereni na čitave kategorije stanovništva umjesto da propisuju stvarno udaljavanje iz grada, u stvari su određivali tko je isključen iz političke zajednice koja se tada formirala u Rijeci. Vodstvo riječkih izbjeglica u jugoslavenskoj državi pokušalo je izvršiti pritisak kako na političke krugove u Zagrebu, tako i u Beogradu, ne bi li osiguralo povratak izbjeglica u jadranski grad, no politička nestabilnost koja je karakterizirala grad čak i nakon što je redovna talijanska vojska izgnala D'Annunzia u prosincu 1920. godine, nije otežala samo povratak starih, nego je i uzrokovala nove valove izbjeglica. Uz preciznu analizu konteksta, ovaj će članak rekonstruirati djelovanje izbjeglica i proces donošenja odluka o ostanku ili napuštanju grada.

**Ključne riječi:** Rijeka, gornji Jadran, D'Annunzio, izbjeglice, nacionalizam