

04. Mutilated Victory

Fernanda Ruiz and Rado Ištok



Names of
in the

PALERMO - TEMPIO DEL MUTILATO

IL SACRARIO

CITIES
Atrium,

1939

Source:Giuseppe Spatrisano Archive at Fondazione per
l'Arte e la Cultura Lauro Chiazzese



Names of Cities in the Atrium, 2017

Zara, Fiume and Pola, three inscriptions placed above architraves of the Sacrarium, are Italian names (exonyms) of three cities which are today part of Croatia: Zadar, Rijeka and Pula. Comparing these inscriptions with the archival photographs, we can see that the order of the cities (as well as the size of the inscriptions, material and the font) has changed since the inauguration of the building in 1939, as Trieste and Fiume were placed above the architraves of the Sacrarium and other cities were inscribed on the side walls of the atrium: Zara and Tenda on the right and Pola and Briga on the left side, commemorating not only cities on the Adriatic coast but also the Alpine communes of Briga and Tenda, today La Brigue and Tende in France. As Italy was only forced to cede Briga and Tendato to France in 1947 in the aftermath of Italy's defeat in the WWII, this puts the dating of the archival images as from the interwar period in question.

The common denominator of these cities is the history of Italian expansionism and irredentism. Italian irredentism was a national movement during the late 19th and early 20th centuries which promoted the incorporation of territories inhabited by Italian speaking communities. The territorial claims of Italy in its neighbouring countries, and particularly Austro-Hungary, based on irredentism were also one of the main reasons why Italy in 1915 joined the WWI on the side of France, the United Kingdom and the Russian Empire, in hopes to gain the territories of Trentino, South Tyrol, Istria and Northern Dalmatia, the harbours of Trieste and Vlora (Albania), as well as a protectorate over Albania. During the Treaty of London (1915), a secret pact between the Triple Entente and the Kingdom of Italy, Italy was also promised a share over the Mediterranean Ottoman region of Antalya and a share of the German colonies in Africa and Asia. After the WWI, however, the USA, France and the UK saw the Italian territorial demands as exaggerated, reestablishing them in the Treaty of Saint-Germain (1919). Although most of the territories stipulated in the previous treaty became Italian after WWI, the agreement of annexation of a large part of Dalmatia was revoked, which outraged Italian nationalists who considered Dalmatia to have strong Italian cultural roots since it was part of the Roman Empire and later of the Republic of Venice. [1] As the Italian demands were not fulfilled according to their agreements and expectations, Italian nationalists believed their victory in the war as a mutilated one.

This feeling of injustice led to the term Mutilated Victory (*vittoria mutilata*), coined by the nationalist writer Gabriele D'Annunzio, a keen supporter of the seizure of Dalmatia, which referred to Italians' unconformity with the repartition of the territory set by the Paris Peace Conference after the WWI. This concept was then extensively used in Mussolini's discourses which continued to strengthen Italian nationalism and irredentist rhetoric, becoming a key point in Italian Fascist propaganda. Hence, the word *Mutilato*, as opposed to *invalido*, to name this monument for the heroes of war, does not lack a significant connotation, and during the 1920s and 1930s almost 80 Casa del Mutilato were built across the whole of Italy.

D'Annunzio has also been named by some historians as the First Duce for his rule over Fiume (today's Rijeka). The failure of the Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando to acquire the Adriatic region during the Paris Peace Conference made D'Annunzio take the matter into his own hands. In September 1919 he led 2600 Italian irredentist troops and occupy the city of Fiume/Rijeka, establishing the Italian Regency of Carnaro, an unrecognized protofascist state.

D'Annunzio is also considered by many as the creator of Italian Fascism, with Mussolini developing his ideology based on the writer. As John Whittam notes in his essay 'Mussolini and The Cult of the Leader,' referring to D' Annunzio (1998):

This famous poet, novelist and war hero was a self-proclaimed Superman. He was the outstanding interventionist in May 1915 and his dramatic exploits during the war won him national and international acclaim. In September 1919 he gathered together his 'legions' and captured the disputed seaport of Fiume. He held it for over a year and it was he who popularised the black shirts, the balcony speeches, the promulgation of ambitious charters and the entire choreography of street parades and ceremonies. He even planned a march on Rome. One historian had rightly described him as the 'First Duce' and Mussolini must have heaved a sigh of relief when he was driven from Fiume in December 1920 and his followers were dispersed. But he remained a threat to Mussolini and in 1921 Fascists like Balbo seriously considered turning to him for leadership."

Under the growing Fascist nationalism, the Italian irredentism, which initially only requested territories with Italian majority of population, started to also claim areas where Italians were minority or had been present only in the past. Trieste, for example, annexed by Italy after WWI, had a large Italian population but it also had more Slovene inhabitants than Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital. After the annexation by Italy the Slovene population was subjected to forced Italianization and harassment, and several buildings in Fascist architectural style were raised in the city such as the well-known University of Trieste, demonstrating the power of the new empire.

At the same time, Zara, Fiume and Pola, together with Gorizia, were also names of four heavy cruiser ships of the so called Zara class, built in the late 1920s and early 1930s as the pride of the Italian Royal Navy. The four ships supported the Italian invasion of Albania in 1939 and during the WWII were active in extensive actions in the Mediterranean against the British navy. In March 1941 Zara, Pola, and Fiume were all sunk in the battles of Calabria and Cape Matapan, prefiguring the loss of the Italian control over the cities of Zadar, Pula and Rijeka.

How should the inscriptions in the atrium be restored?

Should the current inscriptions be replaced by the original ones?

Does this change in the name of the cities gives space to think of other cities or places that form part of the Fascist History that are not being recognized in the building?

Dictionary of Italian exonyms:

Trieste - Trst

Fiume – Rijeka

Pola - Pula

Briga - La Brigue

Zara - Zadar

Tenda – Tende



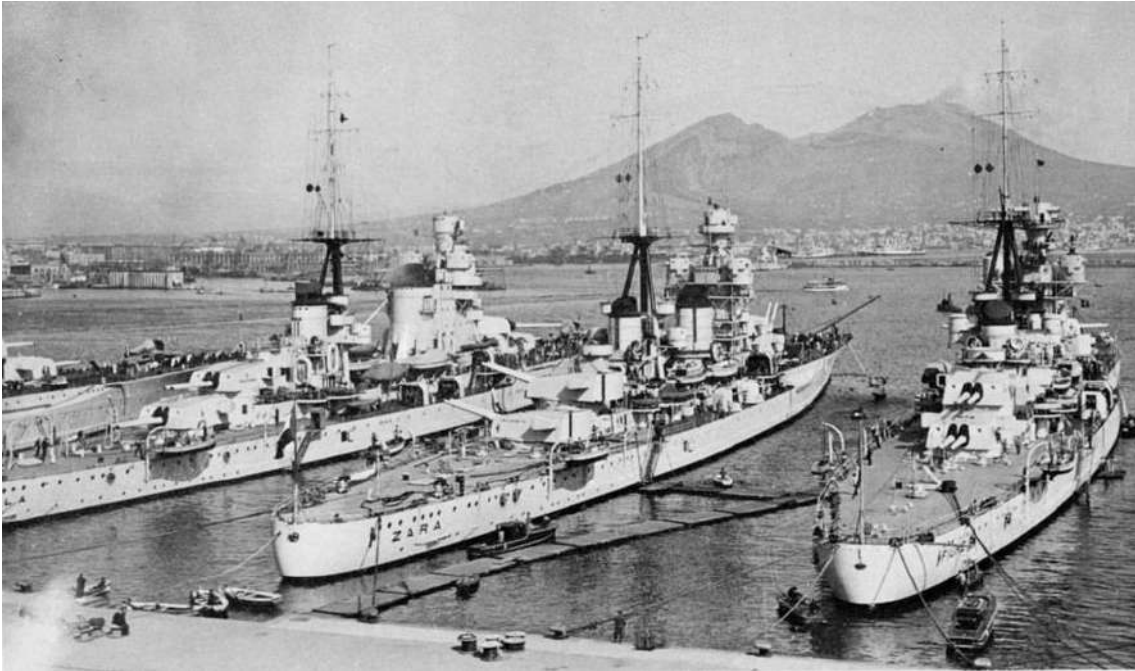
Map of the cities inscribed in the atrium of Casa del Mutilato



Fiume 25c stamp depicting Gabriele d'Annunzio
Source: Wikipedia



Pro-Italy messages that D'Annunzio threw from his airplane above Trieste in
Source: Cover of "Domenica del corriere", 1915



Pola, Zara, Fiume, three Zara-class heavy
cruisers of the Italian Regia Marina
(Royal Navy)Photo: Zvonimir Freivogel Source: Vojna Povijest



Ceremony at the Atrium Casa del Mutilato
Source: Archive Casa del Mutilato



Ceremony at the Atrium Casa del Mutilato
Source: Archive Casa del Mutilato



Ceremony at the Atrium Casa del Mutilato
Source: Archive Casa del Mutilato

Bibliography

[1] Wolff, Larry. (2002). "Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment". Stanford University Press.

[2] Whittam, John. (1998). "Mussolini and The Cult of the Leader". University of Bristol.