



THE CHARTER OF CARNARO

The *Charter of Carnaro* was the constitution of the Italian Regency of Carnaro. It was co-authored by syndicalist Alceste De Ambris and poet Gabriele D'Annunzio.

The ideal of **greater social equality** was inspired by De Ambris. D'Annunzio contributed to it clauses guaranteeing a **beautiful life**, and the free **development of spiritual man** as a gift to a world of brothers. His was also the idea of a **tenth corporation** among those of other professions and walks of life present in the constitution: one that was to be reserved for “the **mysterious force** represented by the people at work and directed to **higher things**.”

The charter is notorious for designating “**music**” to be the **fundamental principle of the state**.

The *Charter of Carnaro* recognizes “the **sovereignty of all citizens** regardless of gender, race, language, class or religion” and contains many undoubtedly modern elements – with regards to the **concept of property** (“no property can be the reserve of one person as if a part of that person; [...] The only unique claim on any means of production or exchange is work”); work (**elevation of the masses** from physical labour towards a **dimension of freedom and spirituality**, that transcends “toil”); the status of women (the right to equal pay and freedom from “husbandly” authority); **public education** (free and with a **multi-ethnic approach**: all the languages spoken in the Regency were to be taught in schools, and all religious denominations were welcome); basic freedoms (those of the press, meeting and association); political rights (**universal suffrage** for men and women); civil rights (**recognition of divorce**); social rights (the right to assistance and welfare); the organization of the armed forces (**abolition of the army** in peace time and obligatory military service for both sexes in war time), and administrative decentralization.



Alceste De Ambris.

Alceste De Ambris (1874 – 1934)

Alceste De Ambris was an Italian syndicalist. He was head of the cabinet of the Regency of Carnaro from January 1920. It was De Ambris who gave the government of Fiume a strong revolutionary slant, both in terms of internal policy and planning, and with regard to political action aimed at forging links with exponents of Italian revolutionary forces, from the syndicalist Giuseppe Giulietti and the anarchist Errico Malatesta, to the members of the maximalist wing of the Socialist party.

With Gabriele D'Annunzio, he co-authored the *Charter of Carnaro* (1920), a constitution for Fiume. De Ambris provided the legal and political framework for the document while D'Annunzio used his skills as a poet to make the document more impressive; he was also the leader of a group of Italian seamen who had mutinied and then given their vessel to the service of D'Annunzio.¹

The *Charter of Carnaro* presents undoubtedly modern characteristics, and democratic and libertarian aspects. As for its **utopian vein**, it may look like a “**book of dreams**”, but “for sure the atmosphere you experience among the preachers of New Worlds in the squares of the **free city of Fiume** is immeasurably more thrilling and intense than the dusty old Albertine Statute”.²

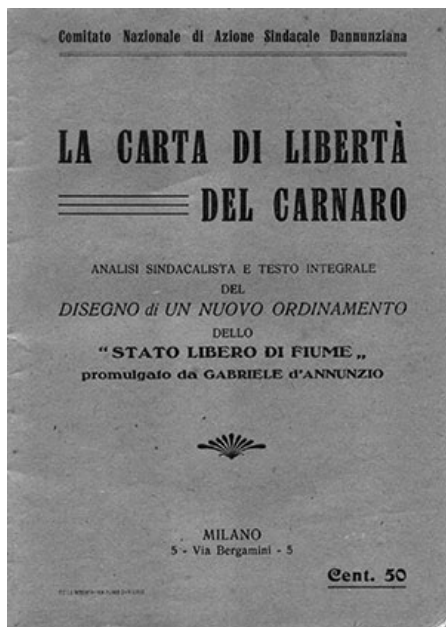
1. Giovanni Savegnago, critical review of the book by Claudia Salaris *Alla festa della rivoluzione. Artisti e libertari con D'Annunzio a Fiume*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2002.

Source: <http://www.pavonerisorse.to.it/storia900/libri/fiume.rtf>

Wikipedia. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alceste_de_Ambris

2. Mario Isnenghi, *L'Italia in piazza. I luoghi della vita pubblica dal 1848 ai giorni nostri*, Milano, Mondadori, 1994, p. 235.

[The *Charter of Carnaro*] must be viewed and studied as a kind of **apotheosis** (albeit created in the unreal, ardent atmosphere of the **microcosm of Fiume**, where all states of minds, philosophies, protests, revolutionary ideas and aspirations of the day circulated) of the **revolutionary trade unionism** which developed in the first two decades of this century in European culture and in a whole series of **radical subversive fringes** in Italy and abroad.³



But for me, believing fervently in the supreme, victorious **role of art in human life**, there is no better, more just and more practical part of this Constitution than the section regarding music. Marinetti too, in his manifesto *Al di là del Comunismo*, attempted to offer a **poetic resolution** to the tangle of political and social problems by **extending art**, and above all music, to all human souls. **“Music will reign over the world”**, wrote Marinetti. [...] And today the legislator of Fiume has solemnly declared: **“In the Italian Regency of Carnaro Music is a religious and social institution”**.⁵

“To date no constitution has ever codified **human and social rights** with broader liberty, with deeper trust in its people, and with a bolder outlook to the future, than the Constitution that Gabriele D’Annunzio drew up for the city of Fiume”.⁴



The tenth [corporation] has no special trade or register or title. It is reserved for the **mysterious forces of progress and adventure**. It is a sort of votive offering to the genius of the unknown, to the man of the future, to the hoped-for **idealization of daily work**, to the liberation of the spirit of man beyond the panting effort and bloody sweat of to-day.

It is represented in the civic sanctuary by a kindled lamp bearing an ancient Tuscan inscription of the epoch of the communes, that calls up an ideal vision of human labour: **“Fatica senza fatica”**.⁶

In the Italian Regency of Carnaro, **music is a social and religious institution**. [...] music, the language of ritual, has power, above all else, to exalt the achievement and the life of man. [...] In every commune of the province there will be a **choral society** and an **orchestra** subsidized by the State. In the city of Fiume, the **College of Aediles** will be commissioned to erect a **great concert hall**, accommodating an audience of at least ten thousand with tiers of seats and ample space for choir and orchestra. The great orchestral and choral celebrations will be **entirely free** – in the language of the Church – a gift of God.⁷

There are three articles of belief which take precedence of all others in the Regency and the federated communes: **Life is a good thing**, it is fit and right that man, reborn to freedom, should lead a life that is noble and serious; a true man is he who, day by day, renews the dedication of his manhood to his fellowmen; labour, however humble and obscure, if well done adds to the **beauty of the world**.⁸

3. De Felice, *D’Annunzio politico 1918-1938*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1978, pp. 230, 241.

4. COMITATO NAZIONALE DI AZIONE SINDACALE DANNUNZIANA, *La carta di libertà del Carnaro. Analisi sindacalista e testo integrale del “Disegno di un nuovo ordinamento dello Stato libero di Fiume” promulgato da Gabriele D’Annunzio*, Milano, 1920, Prima edizione, p. 3.

5. Mario Carli, *Con D’Annunzio a Fiume*, Milano, Facchi, 1920, pp. 83-84.

6. Gabriele D’Annunzio, Alceste De Ambris, “the Corporations”, *La Carta del Carnaro*, Article no. 19, Fiume, 1920.

7. Ibid, “the Music”, Article no. 64.

8. Ibid, “the Basis”, Article no. 14.