

Leo Weiczen Valiani and his Multilayered Identities: An Introduction

D'Alessio, Vanni

Source / Izvornik: Časopis za povijest Zapadne Hrvatske, 2016, 10, 11 - 20

Journal article, Published version

Rad u časopisu, Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:186:641471>

Rights / Prava: [Attribution 4.0 International](#)/[Imenovanje 4.0 međunarodna](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-01-04**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[Repository of the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences - FHSSRI Repository](#)



ČASOPIS ZA POVIJEST
ZAPADNE HRVATSKE
WEST CROATIAN HISTORY JOURNAL



Monografski broj / Special issue

LEO WEICZEN VALIANI
Fiuman, European, Revolutionary, Historian

Uredio / Edited by VANNI D'ALESSIO

RIJEKA,
X./10. 2015.

**Leo Weiczen Valiani and his Multilayered Identities:
An Introduction**

Vanni D'ALESSIO

University of Rijeka, Croatia
University of Naples, Italy

**UDK: 929Valiani, L.
32-05Valiani, L.**

This volume "Leo Weiczen Valiani: Fiuman, European, Revolutionary, Historian", appears as a special thematic issue of the West Croatian History Journal. In September 2015 the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Rijeka hosted the international conference "From Leo Weiczen to Leo Valiani", to present the life and activities of this prominent European intellectual originally from Rijeka for the first time to a Croatian audience and in a Croatian institution. Born in Habsburg Hungarian "Fiume", Valiani spent the World War I years as a schoolchild in Budapest, was raised in a German-speaking family and in the Italian-speaking environment of Rijeka's turbulent postwar. In Rijeka he became an antifascist subversive, and in World War II a leader in the Italian resistance movement, and subsequently member of Italian Constitutional Assembly. As a prolific historian and newspapers commentator, he was also appointed Senator for life. Our aim is to discuss this multifaceted prominent intellectual as Fiuman, European, Revolutionary, and Historian.

Keywords: Leo Weiczen/Valiani, Multilayered identities, Rijeka/Fiume, Anti-fascism, Revolution.

Fiuman, European, Revolutionary, and Historian are the qualities of Leo Weiczen Valiani we presented and examined at the conference *From Leo Weiczen to Leo Valiani* and that was the basis for further discussion in the pages of this volume. This edited volume, published as a special edition of the West Croatian History Journal, offers various kinds of contributions: in the first section you will find scholarly (double-blind peer reviewed) articles, of which three were developed from the selected presentations offered at the conference and one that is a completely original paper; in the second section you will find an outline of Rijeka's interwar milieu, a commented paper on Valiani as historian of Austria-Hungary, a text with the correspondence between Valiani and the writer Arthur Koestler, and a reproduction of unreleased archival

documents on Leo Weiczen and his family in Rijeka. These documents, from the Rijeka State Archive were displayed at the special exhibition on Weiczen/Valiani opened during the conference, and are here presented as a catalogue with a new commentary by the curators. This commentary includes some basic biographical information in Italian and in Croatian on Valiani, someone still unfamiliar to the present day inhabitants of his birthplace, Rijeka.

It is not always true that *Nemo propheta in patria*. Very often the people who accomplished great things far from home are sooner or later celebrated in the place from which they came. In Valiani's case this has not quite happened yet, among other reasons because he became a prominent European political and intellectual figure outside Rijeka, although he had been already actively engaged in his hometown, and had been recognized as a prominent and dangerous political leader by the Italian Fascist authorities. Leo Weiczen was a socialist and then a communist antifascist in the late 1920s and early 1930s Rijeka, at that time part of the Italian state ruled by Mussolini's fascist dictatorship. As a socialist he was arrested in Rijeka and confined to the island of Ponza, where he joined the Italian communist party, and resumed his political agitation in Rijeka where the police recognized in him the new leader of the local communists and again arrested him, sentencing him to more than twelve years of prison, a sentence later reduced to five years. An engaged journalist in the Spanish Civil War, he followed the destiny of other former fighters of the *International Brigades* in the French prison of Le Vernet. Later he had a leading role in the World War II Italian partisan fight: as a member of the leading insurrectional board of the Liberation Committee for Northern Italy (*Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia*), along with Sandro Pertini, Emilio Sereni and Luigi Longo, he formally launched the final uprising against the Nazi forces, and sentenced Mussolini to death. In this board, with socialist Pertini and communists Sereni and Longo, Valiani acted on behalf of the democratic and liberal-socialist *Partito d'Azione*, a party based on "strong ideas" rather than "on interests", as often claimed by its adherents.

In the Italian partisan fight he was no longer a communist, and therefore, in the immediate postwar, he did not fit into the Yugoslav communist narrative on the history of antifascism in Rijeka. Among those in the Italian speaking community who after the war were locally either celebrated as martyrs, as Mario Gennari, Corrado Illiasich or the Duiz brothers, or were recognized for their efforts against fascism, had been fighters or agitators during the war, along side the Yugoslav partisans. Those who had survived accepted and joined the Yugoslav socialist revolution. Valiani had chosen to commit himself to the Italian liberation and reconstruction, and to join the free democratic electoral competition and as a prominent member of the *Partito d'Azione*, he was elected to the Italian Constitutional Assembly.

In the eyes of the new rulers in Rijeka there was hardly any reason to recognize or establish contacts with a former communist of the long disbanded, and therefore unsuccessful, Italian party in town. Moreover Valiani, as a

member of the Italian constitutional Assembly, did not support the 1947 Peace Treaty and the annexation of Rijeka to Yugoslavia. In 1954, though, Valiani approved the Memorandum that settled the Italo-Yugoslav dispute and followed closely the events in Yugoslavia, establishing important contacts with the political and intellectual elite of that country. Valiani organized and edited the special issue on Yugoslavia for the Italian political magazine *Il Ponte* in 1955, with Yugoslav politicians and intellectuals, among them? Edvard Kardelj, Rodoljub Čolaković, Miloš Žanko, Đuro Lončarević, Jaša Davičo and Ivo Andrić, but this did not bring him closer to the Yugoslav Rijeka milieu.¹ After leaving Rijeka for Italian prisons in 1931 he never returned to his birthplace, and was never celebrated afterwards. In the late 1970s the Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti got recognized with a central square in town dedicated to him, and in the immediate postwar the local administration had named another square in honor of the Italian socialist martyr Giacomo Matteotti, though the former square had its name changed again in the post-socialist transition, and the latter square simply vanished with the erection of a new building, leaving no trace of Matteotti. Local Italian anti-fascists still appear in the names of some streets in Rijeka, but Valiani has not even received a plaque on his Rijeka address, in Pomerio 9.

Ignored in Rijeka, Valiani became a relevant personality in Italian culture and politics, in which he became engaged, albeit as a commentator and analyst and not as a consequence of a political career, after the disbandment of the *Partito d'Azione*. From the 1950s to the 1960s he wrote much on the history of socialist movements and ideology, on the Resistance, and on Austria-Hungary.² He was further an authoritative, consistent, and critical presence in the Italian printed press, and distinguished himself in the dark years of the 1970s terrorism, "defending the democracy"³ from the violent and self-deluded *wannabe sons* of WW2 partisans. Sandro Pertini appointed him Senator for life in 1980, and for two decades he dynamically participated in the politics of the Italian Senate.

Although Valiani did not fit in the commemorative spaces of Yugoslav or post-Yugoslav Rijeka, he appeared in a 1970s collection of war memoirs by the Center of Historical Research (*Centro di ricerche storiche*), established in Istria by and for the Italian minority in Yugoslavia,⁴ and more recently in a couple of texts in Croatian language, as Ivan Jeličić noted in the introduction

¹ „La Jugoslava d'oggi”, *Il Ponte - Rivista mensile di politica e letteratura*, XI/8-9 (1955).

² Among his many books of that period I mention just a few: *Questioni di storia del socialismo*, Torino: Einaudi, 1958; *Dall'antifascismo alla Resistenza*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1959; *Il partito socialista italiano nel periodo della neutralità 1914-1915*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1963; *La dissoluzione dell'Austria-Ungheria*, Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1966.

³ Leo VALIANI, *Sessant'anni di avventure e battaglie. Riflessioni e ricordi raccolti da Massimo Pini*, Milano: Rizzoli Editore, 1983, 103.

⁴ *Parlano i protagonisti, Memorie e documenti raccolti per una storia di Fiume nella Lotta popolare di liberazione fino al 1943, Il „Battaglione Fiumano” e il „Battaglione garibaldi”*, (ed.) Lucifero MARTINI, Rovigno: Centro di ricerche storiche, 1976, 165-169.

to the catalogue of the exhibition he prepared with Lea Čeč.⁵ Nevertheless, Valiani is still basically unknown in his hometown, which was not merely his birthplace, as was the case for Ödön von Horváth or János Kádár. In Rijeka he finished his schooling, started his profession in a bank (which he revived after abandoning his political career), became politically aware and engaged in antifascist activities, and in this town he became an insurrectional leader. He did not forget Rijeka, or rather Fiume, and accepted with enthusiasm the honorary presidency of the *Società di studi fiumani* in Rome.⁶

To make up for the lack of recognition of this eminent figure in his hometown, the former Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, Predrag Šustar, suggested we organize a conference in honor of Leo Valiani. From the start we already knew that some of his qualities and features were going to be emphasized and discussed, including his biographical connections to Rijeka, although we were cautious about the real possibilities of producing an original and fruitful discussion on this issue. This was accomplished thanks to the presence of Andrea Ricciardi - author of an important monography on Valiani's early life and engagement until the beginning of World War II,⁷ but also thanks to the original research of Ivan Jeličić, who placed Leo and the Weiczens in Rijeka's Central European framework and networks. Jeličić collected and organized the archival material of Leo Weiczen and his family that was framed and exhibited by Lea Čeč, and appear here in the catalogue. To me, as an historian of the Adriatic and, at large, of the Central and Southern Eastern European areas, the conference was also a fantastic occasion to discuss an internationally acclaimed historian of the Austro-Hungary Empire.⁸ I have to thank primarily Laurence Cole, but also Rok Stergar, Tamara Scheer and Guido Franzinetti for analyzing at the conference the work of Valiani as an historian. Cole's presentation on Valiani's book appears in this volume as well.

Other features of Weiczen - Valiani acquired a central place in the presentations and discussions at the conference, and I consider them highly relevant in depicting him, his European dimension and his revolutionary attitude. In preparing the conference, during the event, and eventually in gathering and discussing the material for this publication, Valiani revealed himself more and more as an intellectual of wide European culture and connections. Jeličić had already placed Valiani's Rijeka in a larger Central European framework. Marco Bresciani, Guido Franzinetti, and Ilona Fried

⁵ See Ivan JELIČIĆ - Lea ČEČ, "Katalog izložbe *Od Lea Weiczena do Lea Valianija*, Catalogo della mostra *da Leo weiczen a Leo valiani*" (in this volume) for a detailed account on these publications and for an introduction to Valiani in Croatian and Italian languages.

⁶ For an interesting interview with Valiani and on his stances and views on Rijeka, especially in the post-war transitions after World War I and World War II, see Guglielmo SALOTTI, "L'esodo dall'Istria e dalla Dalmazia quarant'anni dopo, A colloquio con Leo Valiani", *Tempo Presente*, 82-83 (1987), 53-62.

⁷ Andrea RICCIARDI, *Leo Valiani. Gli anni della formazione. Tra socialismo, comunismo e rivoluzione democratica*, Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2007.

⁸ The aforementioned book was translated into English as Leo VALIANI, *The end of Austria-Hungary*, New York: Knopf, 1973 [c1972].

pushed the discussion into a wider European context, raising ideological issues and problems, reviving the interwar situations and places, but also the actors around Valiani. Among the latter there is primarily Arthur Koestler, whose correspondence with his "Mario" from the novel *Scum of the Earth* is presented here in this volume by Fried, who had met and interviewed Valiani on several occasions.⁹

In this volume Bresciani and Franzinetti focus on the *European* Valiani, émigré and journalist between Spain and France, and on his personal and ideological journey from communism to democratic revolution and liberal socialism. Both Bresciani and Franzinetti discuss his abandonment of the communist camp. The refusal of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was indeed a crucial element in this. Franzinetti stresses the importance that played in Valiani's ideological and political evolution the relationship he established with Arthur Koestler in the French prison of *Le Vernet*. Valiani was expelled from the Italian communist party while, still in the French prison, he condemned not only the USSR's international, but also the domestic policies and the repression. Afterwards he gained again some respect by the four thousand imprisoned communists by not seeking liberation, which he could have, had he made public his condemnation or the expulsion from the party.¹⁰ Valiani's political engagement was consistent. After prison he fought fascism until the end of the war and he further pursued his research for a new democratic and liberal way for socialism. In 1956 he eventually wrote to Gaetano Salvemini: "my 'ideology' remains that of liberal socialism. I acquired gradually, painstakingly", as quoted in this volume by Ricciardi,¹¹ whose article in this volume focuses on a period that appears to be the final stage of his intellectual evolution and journey as a revolutionary.

After his return to Italy he was still connected to a large European and global framework, but his interests and motivations became predominantly directed towards the Italian case and cause. The question of the International revolution in the European dimension was still an important question to debate, but the Italian problems often surfaced in these discussions, as is shown in the letters that Valiani exchanged with Franco Venturi and that Ricciardi presents and analyzes here. Ricciardi focuses on the years from 1953 to 1956, i.e. from the death of Stalin to the Hungarian crisis and its consequences, discussing what revolution meant to Valiani in that precise moment in European history and in his individual intellectual stance and trajectory. This was the period in which the USSR's revolutionary drive appeared eventually at its end, also in the eyes of large sectors of the European left which had once supported international communism.

⁹ Ilona FRIED, *Colloqui milanesi con il senatore Leo Valiani (1993-1997)*, Udine: Designgraf-Artestampa, 1999. Fried published also a monograph on Rijeka (*Emlékek városa: Fiume*, Budapest: Ponte Alapítvány, 2001), translated into Italian as *Fiume città della memoria, 1868-1945*, Udine: Del Bianco, 2005.

¹⁰ VALIANI, *Sessant'anni di avventure e battaglie*, 62-63.

¹¹ "La mia 'ideologia' rimane quella del socialismo liberale. L'ho acquisita gradualmente, faticosamente". Andrea RICCIARDI, *Leo Valiani 1953-1956. Dalla speranza alla delusione* (in this volume).

From the end of 1943 Valiani had made his home in Italy, was granted Italian citizenship and maybe also for practical reasons Italianized his surname from Weiczen to Valiani as his sister had already done many years before. Valiani's engagement in Italy and his political stances in the Italian debates are beyond the scope of this volume, as they are also far from the usual angle of purview of our journal. The result is that the book enhances his broad views on the European scale and focuses on his interest in and concerns for, but also personal commitment to, a revolutionary transformation of society. The discussion on his European identity, network and perspective, of his revolutionary attitudes, and of his contribution as historian, all explain the title of this volume. Last but not least, there is the issue of Rijeka, for us a particularly relevant one that was also discussed during and after the conferences and that deserves to be elaborated on, as the role of Rijeka for Waiczen/Valiani was more than simply a biographical data point. Valiani, who lived very close to the Governor's palace, from where D'Annunzio made famous speeches, said that as a child he was incredibly moved and impressed by the orator. Maybe he was also positively impressed by his radicalism. Later he started to develop his antifascism witnessing the fascists' violent behavior in town and the putsch against the elected government of Zanella, and this was indeed a crucial formative experience for Weiczen's political stance?, but also for his readiness to act according to what he believed in. In which other ways was Rijeka important for him? And in what sense was Weiczen and/or Valiani a "Fiuman"?

Fiumano and *Riječanin* are not mere words that simply express in two different languages people's belonging to the city of Rijeka. The reason for this, for a start, is that already Fiume and Rijeka did not always refer to exactly the same place. Rijeka and Fiume could be concretely identified with one another after the 1948 unification of the city. As Tito solemnly announced right after the Peace Treaty that handed Rijeka to Yugoslavia, the "artificial border" had finally disappeared. His words are in evidence on the stone plaque on *Titov Trg*, Tito's square, which physically and symbolically unites the two banks of the river in place of the former Italo-Yugoslav border. Tito's words were pronounced at the time when the Croatian Communist Party was effectively recognizing and promoting Italian language and culture in town, along with the Croatian language.¹² Though, the plaque was written only in Croatian language. The reunification was not between Croatian Sušak and Italian, mixed or predominantly Italian "Fiume", but between two sides of a Croatian city. From this perspective, generally shared by Yugoslavs and Croats before

12 On these aspects see the research by Andrea ROKNIĆ BEŽANIĆ, "Rijeka od oslobođenja 1945. do Pariškog mirovnog ugovora 1947. godine", doktorska disertacija, Sveučilište u Zagrebu, 2012.; and the article by Marco ABRAM "Integrating Rijeka into Socialist Yugoslavia: the Politics of National Identity and the New City's Image, 1947-1955", *Nationality Papers* (in press). See also: Antonella ERCOLANI, *Da Fiume a Rijeka. Profilo storico-politico dal 1918 al 1947*, Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2009, 289-358; Vinko ANTIĆ, Zdenko BEKER et al., *Povijest Rijeke*, Rijeka: Skupština općina Rijeka – Izdavački centar Rijeka, 1988, 395-403, 431, 433, 446-448; Luciano GIURICIN e Giacomo SCOTTI, "Una storia tormentata (1946-1991)", in *Italiani a Fiume. Nel Sessantesimo del Circolo Italiano di Cultura / Comunità degli Italiani, 1946-2006*, Fiume: EDIT, 2006, 15-102.

and after Tito, Rijeka was always an urban area in which both sides of the river constituted a single Croatian town. For the local population that identified "Fiume" as an Italian town, and Leo Weiczen/Valiani was one of them, Sušak was not Rijeka. Moreover, precisely because Rijeka was a highly contested city, with Croatian and Italian historians still challenging the Other's national perception and mental map of the city, the idea of Valiani as *Riječanin* or, to give an example, Drago Gervais as *Fiumano*, sounds odd and misplaced, as much as national historiographies have inclined to categorize Budweisers into Czech or Germans.¹³

Leo Valiani did not speak much of Leo Weiczen and of Rijeka. We know that he maintained his Hungarian citizenship while in Rijeka and when he was arrested. After his Spanish, French and Mexican emigration he returned to Italy as an Italian, and already in 1944 started to use his new surname Valiani, following the example of his sister, who already had Italianized her surname.¹⁴ His Italianness was also a matter of cultural, social and political immersion in the new framework, and he cultivated it in the following years, but not as a crucial aspect of his personality, beliefs, and identity, which were connected to his ideological positions. He felt like an Italian from Rijeka, but specific research should be dedicated to discussing his *fiumanità*, in many terms, as this term in itself connotes different things in different periods and social circumstances. Moreover, the number of meanings attached to the categories of *Fiumano* and *Riječanin* are so invasive, as much as the term Istrian seems to be now imbedded with hybridity, although it is not so easy to find multinational Istrian historical figures, as Dominique Reill managed to find them in Dalmatia, at least in the mid 19th century.¹⁵ Classifications are peculiar aspects of historical narrations, as much as generalizations are. Not only phenomena to be linked in social, economic, political and cultural processes are forced into categories by historians, but also human beings. In multilingual areas the classification of human beings into national categories meant that in historical narrations ethnicities often prevailed, oversimplifying the multifold human identities. This is a reason for the huge success of Tahra Zara's and Pieter Judson's literature on national indifference.¹⁶ Valiani

13 On Germans and Czechs in Bohemia, see Jeremy KING, *Budweisers into Czechs: A Local History of Bohemian Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. On contested cities in Europe see Anthony C. HEPBURN, *Contested Cities in the Modern West*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan 2004; James ANDERSON, "From Empires to Ethno-National Conflicts: A Framework for Studying Divided Cities in Contested States", *Divided Cities, Contested States Working Paper*, 1 (2008); Vanni D'ALESSIO, "Divided and Contested Cities in Modern European History. The Example of Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina", in *Beyond the Balkans: Towards an Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe*, (ed.) Sabine RUTAR, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013.

14 On this see the article in this volume by Ivan JELIČIĆ, *The Waizen Family and Young Leo Valiani in Fiume*.

15 Dominique REILL, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

16 On national indifference see: Tara ZAHRA, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis." *Slavic Review* 69, 1 (April 1, 2010), 93-119. Pieter M. JUDSON, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006; Tara ZAHRA, *Kidnapped Souls. National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008. See also James E. BJORK, *Neither German nor Pole Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.

reaffirmation of his *italianità* is clear, but it seems that for many years this element was not as relevant as other aspects he cultivated.

In the discussion about the Italian character of the city, Valiani was eloquent. When he did not vote in favor of the 1947 Peace Treaty at the Italian Constitutional Assembly, he knew that Rijeka was bound to stay in Yugoslavia and that vote would not change much.¹⁷ In his 1983 memoirs Valiani stressed that “the population of Rijeka (“Fiume”) was in great majority of Italian mother tongue: there was a Croatian minority, but also German was spoken because we were in the Mitteleuropean area”.¹⁸ Valiani was evidently speaking about the historical Fiume, annexed by Italy in 1924, and of the historical Hungarian *Corpus Separatum*. In fact, after World War Two Rijeka became a single unit not only with Sušak, but also with the parts of Zamet which had been previously in the Yugoslav state: a much larger city with a much larger Croatian component, let aside the fact that Italians had already started to flee the old city and Croats had already started to populate it. The perceptions of the city as Croatian or Italian would still be at the center of disputed narratives. The idea to dub Valiani as Fiuman depends in part on the fact that Rijeka, or the Valiani’s old town of Fiume, appears here in the works by Jeličić and by Ervin Dubrović, but also serves as a provocative category, counter balanced by the epithet “European”. Valiani, born Weiczen son of German speaking Hungarian Jew coming from Bosnia, did not share any apparent elements of Croatian identity and culture, as many other Fiumani did, and today necessarily do. He was definitely not simply an “Italian” from Fiume, or being *Fiumano* should be understood in many more complex and multifaceted ways. His multilayered identifications are also due to his political and cultural orientations in which religion played a negative role and some languages were eventually abandoned or less cultivated. Nevertheless, there is no definitive or even “real” identity that we historians are bound to uncover. There are continuities in people’s lives, belongings and personal approaches, but circumstances change. Valiani had German as his mother tongue and this was the language used in his family, but he also spoke Italian to his sisters, and remained proficient in Hungarian, at least for the first part of his life. He went to Hungarian elementary schools and after he was expelled from Rijeka’s local high school for openly defending the legitimate Head of the Free State of Rijeka (*Stato libero di Fiume*) Riccardo Zanella, victim of a pro-Italian Fascist putsch in 1922, he got his diploma from the local Hungarian High School

17 See on this his speech at the Constitutional Assembly (Leo VALIANI, *Discorsi parlamentari*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005, 40, 61), but also the above mentioned 1987 interview: SALOTTI, “L’esodo dall’Istria e dalla Dalmazia quarant’anni dopo, A colloquio con Leo Valiani”, 57. See also the 1990 interview of Amleto Ballarini with Valiani for the journal *Fiume. Rivista di studi fiumani*, 20 (1990), more recently published as “Il Trattato di pace del 1947 e la questione adriatica nella testimonianza di Leo Valiani. Intervista a Leo Valiani”, in Giovanni STELLI, *La memoria che vive. Fiume, interviste e testimonianze*, Roma: Società di Studi Fiumani, 2008, 35-54.

18 “La popolazione di Fiume era in grande maggioranza di madrelingua italiana: c’era una minoranza croata, ma si parlava anche il tedesco perché eravamo nell’area mitteleuropea”. VALIANI, *Sessant’anni di avventure e battaglie*, 15.

when he was eighteen years old. Young Leo Weiczen was a socialist from a very young age and never professed any religion, but his family was Jewish, and his mother, as Ivan Jeličić illustrates in this volume, kept her connections to the the rich Jewish network of interwar Rijeka alive. Antonello Venturi stressed in an interview to Ricciardi, that Valiani was an atheist and his “Jewish condition” was not a “central component of his culture”, but he believes that it influenced his life and that his internationalism was also connected to his Austro-Hungarian origins.¹⁹

Austria-Hungary is brought back into the picture, and not only for historical interest. Valiani was a European coming from that mixed Middle Europe spanning from Germany to Russia and also his polyglotism, although remarkable, was not so special in that area. Already in Rijeka Leo Weiczen spoke German, Italian, Hungarian and French, to which he added Spanish and English in emigration, and could read Russian “Serbo-Croatian”.²⁰ On his obituary the “Economist” wrote: “Leo Valiani was an old European, using the term in a respectful and slightly awed sense”.²¹ Leo Valiani died in 1999 and was of another century, specifically in the combination of a consistent and radical political engagement and his wide-open Central European cultural background, enriched by multilingual skills and attitude.

Laurence Cole, in his precious overview and discussion on Valiani’s “lucid, objective evaluation” of the collapse of Austria-Hungary, a “classic of the scholarly literature on the Habsburg Monarchy”, stresses also its “international” form, attitude and perspective, transcending the national historical narratives and borders.²²

In conclusion, I have to express my gratitude to many people for their contributions and help in the conference and/or in this volume. I thank the participants of the conference, hence the anonymous reviewers and the authors of this volume. Among the members of the International Board I have thank in particular Guido Franzinetti for supporting this project from the very beginning with his intellectual curiosity and engagement. My gratitude goes also to the other members who have followed us. I thank Ivan Jeličić for the enthusiasm he devoted to his research, exhibition and work with the students

19 Antonello Venturi, historian and son of Valiani’s longtime friend, political partner, and historian Franco Venturi, said to Ricciardi that “la condizione di ebreo per Valiani non era una variabile centrale della sua cultura, era ateo. Tuttavia, pensando per esempio a sua madre, credo che una qualche influenza sulla sua formazione l’abbia avuta. Quanto al rapporto tra internazionalismo socialista ed ebraismo, in risposta al nazionalismo aggressivo, antisemita e razzista, bisogna stare attenti. Gli ebrei italiani, fino al 1938, erano soprattutto assimilazionisti, non certo sionisti. Di fronte al fascismo, molti sono morti o sono emigrati senza diventare socialisti o internazionalisti. Penso che l’internazionalismo di Valiani fosse figlio soprattutto dell’Impero austro-ungarico da cui egli proveniva”, RICCIARDI, *Leo Valiani. Gli anni della formazione*, 18n.

20 *L’utopia necessaria. Leo Valiani a cento anni dalla nascita*, a cura di Corrado SCIBILIA, Annali della Fondazione Ugo La Malfa, Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2012, 128; VALIANI, *Sessant’anni di avventure e battaglie*, 41-42.

21 “Leo Valiani, a maker of modern Italy, died on September 18th, aged 90”, *The Economist* (Oct 2nd, 1999), <http://www.economist.com/node/245285> (30.11.2016).

22 Laurence COLE, *Leo Valiani’s La Dissoluzione dell’Austria-Ungheria in Historiographical Context* (in this volume).

of the city high school in Italian language, known as *Liceo*, and Lea Čeč for her artwork for both the exhibition and this publication. Ivan and Lea were both pupils of the Italian high school, whose Director Michele Scalembra, and the professors Marko Zotić and Dario Ban I also thank for their collaboration. Apart from Marko Zotić, who is from Poreč, all the others are “Fiumani”, and I can assure you that the multilayered complexity of their identification patterns is not banally due to romance or Slavic first names or second names, but it goes well beyond it. Another former pupil of that school is Carla Konta, to whom goes my gratitude for the great help in the organization of the conference. I also thank Gianna Mazzeri Sanković, Luka Skansi, Francesca Rolandi and Lorella Radin for their contribution to the conference, Predrag Šustar for coming up with the idea and Ines Srdoč Konestra for supporting it as the new Dean.

I thank Mila Orlić and Kosana Jovanović for their precious work for the journal and for welcoming the idea of a special issue on Leo Weiczen Valiani. Curiously, this may be the last number of the journal with this title. We are in West Croatia but our interest and scope reflect the wider Adriatic connection of Mitteleuropa, the Balkans and the Mediterranean. The journal will not be discontinued, but it is a good sign that a volume dedicated to Leo Weiczen Valiani, a native German speaker, a liberal socialist secularized Jew and son of Central Europe, of Hungarian origin and citizenship, eventually of Italian nationality, *umgangssprache* and belonging, appears in the West Croatian History Journal, established and still alive as Časopis za povijest *Zapadne Hrvatske*.