



Borderline Syndrome in Fiume: The Clash of Local and Imperial Interests

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As the only seaport city of the Hungarian Kingdom, Fiume (present day Rijeka, Croatia) was a key area for policies implemented by the central government in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It was a multi-ethnic hub, an economic, social, political and cultural center, and a highly intensive contact zone where people from various parts of world with different interests and aims met. Fiume was a border, a filter, and a frontier. Moreover, it was an important area in the Hungarian state-defense system. Three important factors deserve particular attention. First, that Fiume was physically enclosed within the Croatian Kingdom, and very much as if it had been an enclave, it did not have common borders with Hungary. Second, due to the way the Hungarian government exercised power and devised its strategies to create a support base (and also because of a fear of efforts towards expansion by Slavs), the government created an Italian-speaking political elite that ruled over Fiume. Third, Fiume enjoyed extraordinarily wide municipal autonomy which included the right to maintain public order and security in the city. The local elites wanted to preserve these rights from the encroaching state.

My study has two purposes. First, I discuss the main reasons for the establishment of the border police. Why was it such a vital question for the Hungarian state at the national and the local level, and why did Fiume became the most problematic element in this issue? I highlight how and why the problem of the border police emerged as one of the most crucial conflicts in relations between the state and its port city.

Keywords: border police, Fiume, Hungarian government

Introduction

Less than one year after the scandalous events in Fiume in connection with the parliamentary election of 1901, a clearly agitated Ferdinando Kuscher,¹ a

1 Ferdinando Kuscher was the former royal prosecutor, a retired judge, and politician who belonged to the Autonomy Party. He was also a city representative. Several scandals and protest actions against the central government can be attributed to him. For example, in 1899 he participated in the vandalization of the newly opened tramway in Fiume. In 1898, he smuggled into Fiume issues of *La Difesa*, a “forbidden” paper of the Autonomy Party published in Sušak. He secretly distributed issues of the paper, and in 1901, he took part in the upheaval that accompanied the parliamentary elections.

member of the Autonomy Party,² rose to deliver a speech to the council of local representatives, the *Rappresentanza*.³ The city father addressed Francesco Vio,⁴ the *podestá*⁵ of the city, and warned him of the dangers with regards to the border police to be organized in Fiume.⁶ In his somber response, Vio said that the Legal Committee was already looking into the matter.⁷

In their proposal submitted a few days later, the committee supported Kuscher's opinion and also deemed the setting up of the police force problematic. The committee noted the importance of protecting Fiume's autonomy and declared that the Budapest government should give up its plans or find another solution to achieve its goals. For example, border policing tasks and prerogatives could be assigned to the city police, which was under the supervision and control of the *Rappresentanza*.⁸ The proposal caused a great uproar among the political elite of the governing party, as it was considered unacceptable for any city in the Kingdom of Hungary to question the sovereignty of the Hungarian state and defy its will.

There were four main factors that made the relationship between the central government and the Fiume municipal administration particularly critical. First, as Fiume is located on the eastern coast of the Adriatic and was the only seaport of the Kingdom of Hungary, it played a crucial role in the economic, foreign, and domestic policy of the Hungarian governments. Second, Fiume was not directly

2 The Autonomy Party began as a group of Fiume citizens who opposed the centralizing efforts of the central government. This group became a party in 1896 under the leadership of Michele Maylender. Their main goals were to protect the Italian language and culture in Fiume and to safeguard the city's autonomy.

3 The *Rappresentanza* was a council of 56 representatives of Fiume and the Fiume district led by the mayor or *podestá*.

4 Francesco Vio was a lawyer and one of founders of the Italian literary society, the *Circolo letterario*. He was also city representative who belonged to the Autonomy Party. He served as first deputy mayor and then mayor (*podestá*) from 1902 to 1913, intermittently.

5 *Podestá* was the title of an office essentially the same as mayor of Fiume and the Fiume district between August 1872 and November 1918. From October 31, 1918 on, the mayor was called *sindaco*. This title ceased to exist after the fall of d'Annunzio and the creation of the Free State of Fiume. Then, in order to emphasize the separation of Fiume and Italy, the Italian government reintroduced the term *podestá* in the new entity. In the Kingdom of Italy, the title of *podestá* was introduced by the administrative reform of 1926.

6 By Fiume I mean the city and districts (Cosala, Drenova and Plasse) of Fiume in the Dualist era.

7 "Az állami határrendőrség és a rappresentanza." *Magyar Tengerpart*, November 9, 1902.

8 Officially, the town police (in Italian, *Sezione di Pubblica Sicurezza*) was the Public Security Department of the Town Council, and thus it was under the authority and control of the *Rappresentanza*, which was led by the *podestá*.

connected to the Hungarian mainland. It existed, rather, as an enclave wedged between Austria and Croatia, and it was only as a *corpus separatum adnexum*⁹ that the city was part of the Hungarian administration.¹⁰ Third, Fiume as a multi-ethnic¹¹ and multilingual city, required increased control and extraordinary measures on the part of the Hungarian government, since, as a logical consequence of these circumstances, it was highly exposed to changes at the local, regional, imperial, and global levels. To borrow a metaphor from Georg Simmel,¹² Fiume was both a bridge and a door for Hungary to the Balkans and to the world, and it was, vice versa, a gateway for the rest of the world to Hungary.

The specific geographical location of Fiume, the heterogeneous linguistic and ethnic composition of its population, and its multiple border function were also symbolically expressed in the name of the town. The Italian word “fiume” and its Croatian version “rieka/rijeka” mean river, and the town and district borders meet the criteria of borders and barriers separating administrative areas and states, of contact zones connecting natural social, linguistic and economic features, of buffer zones, frontiers, and filter zones with permeable gates.¹³ That is why Fiume in the Dualist era offers a revealing case for the study of the dilemmas of the separation of roles and functions.

The unique geographical and legal situation of the city was also manifest in the fact that, in Fiume, the power of the state was represented by a governor¹⁴ appointed by the emperor in accordance with the proposal of the prime minister and the minister of commerce. The governor was also the chairman of the Maritime Authority. He played a very important role in his capacity as chairman, because the governor’s powers extended beyond Fiume to the entire Hungarian-

9 The concept of the Fiume *corpus separatum adnexum* (separate annexed body) dates back to Maria Theresa’s rescript of April 23, 1779, which made the city of Fiume, which had been given to Croatia in 1776, directly subject to the Hungarian Crown and affirmed the city’s privileges. Imperial interests, the economic development of the coast and the eastern parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, and thus perhaps the motivation of the Hungarian nobility to pay more customs duties were also reasons behind the empress’ decision.

10 The situation of Fiume from the perspective of public law was controversial throughout the entire period, as Croatia also laid claim to the port city and its surroundings. The disagreements between Hungary and Croatia were settled by the “Fiume Provisory” issued in 1870. Although the emperor intended the measure as a temporary means, the provisory remained in force until the autumn of 1918.

11 According to official census data, the ethnic distribution of the population of Fiume in 1900 was as follows: 45.6 percent Italian, 32.5 percent Croatian and Serbian, 9 percent Slovenian (Wend), 7.4 percent Hungarian, 5 percent German, 1.5 percent other. *Népszámlálás 1910*, 69.

12 Simmel, “Híd és ajtó.”

13 Péntzes, “The impact of the Trianon Peace Treaty.”

14 Officially: Royal Governor of Fiume and of the Hungarico-Croatian littoral.

Croatian coastal region, at least in maritime and commercial matters.¹⁵ However, the governor (and thus the Hungarian state) had no absolute power even in Fiume, because, in accordance with the 1872 city statute, Fiume enjoyed exceptionally broad administrative autonomy. The power resulting from this autonomy was mostly exercised by the podestá and, under his leadership, the Rappresentanza, or the body of representatives that not only controlled cultural and economic issues but also had administrative and policing rights.

This privileged status inevitably became a hotbed of conflicting interests between the centralizing ambitions of the state and the municipality of Fiume, which “fervently protected” its autonomy. Although the conflict eventually led to a gradual erosion of the city’s autonomy, the city fathers were able to counter the state’s ever-increasing need for control and they successfully blocked some of the state initiatives to transform local society. Furthermore, Fiume not only preserved its autonomy (if undoubtedly in a limited form), but also managed to retain it in the aftermath of the world war, when the status of the city changed radically.

What naturally follows is that the problem posed by setting up the Fiume border police, therefore, was much more than an isolated, local conflict, and it was linked to and part of the modernizing and yet Janus-faced centralizing efforts of the state. In the present paper, I therefore consider how the introduction of the institution of the border police in Fiume (specifically) was significant as an example of these centralizing efforts and the resistance with which they sometimes met. I also identify fields where the interests of the state and the city clashed and examine how these conflicts were impacted by the characteristics and the functioning of borders. In addition to presenting the main periods of the history of the border police, I also discuss why the Fiume city fathers found the idea of the state border police offensive and what means and strategies they relied on in their struggle to stifle or at least impede the centralizing efforts of the state.

State Aspirations

In December 1905, Royal Prosecutor Lajos Orosdy¹⁶ of Nagykanizsa was turning the pages of *Budapesti Közlöny* (Budapest Gazette) with considerable excitement every morning, hoping to spot the announcement that would mark an important

15 For more details, see: Ordasi, “Modellváltások.”

16 Lajos Orosdy was the royal prosecutor of Nagykanizsa. He was then appointed to serve as captain of the Fiume border police, and in 1905, he was made ministerial councilor of the Fiume Governorate. On

milestone in his life. Finally, on Christmas Day it was communicated in the official journal of the government that he was listed in payment class VII by the minister of the interior and had been appointed captain of the newly organized border police.¹⁷

Although it remains unclear whether Orosdy considered his appointment a professional challenge or a punishment or whether he thought about the fate of his son, who had been born out of wedlock and was later legitimized, the new position required him to take a 300-kilometer journey, which was anything but comfortable. Furthermore, he had to move all his belongings and adapt to a radically different environment. The new place of service for the 45-year-old official, born in Hontbesenyőd (today Pečenice, Slovakia),¹⁸ was the border police headquarters in Fiume.¹⁹ However, the border police act (Article VIII of 1903) that served as the foundation of the appointment was yet to come into effect: Fiume had to wait more than seven years.

It was not unusual for a law to come into effect years after it had been passed, but regarding the national political significance of the border police, it is rather interesting that the executive order of the Ministry of the Interior was given no earlier than in the last days of December 1905. Some of the reasons for the procrastination may have been the weakness of the administrative system, the poor financial state of the legal authorities, and several crises faced by the government.

Yet in this transitory period, the issue remained on the agenda. The problems that necessitated setting up the border police were becoming an onerous burden for the whole Hungarian political elite, and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which was already struggling with a structural crisis, was facing new dilemmas posed by the governmental, personal, and dynastic changes in the Balkans.

The most crucial problems for the Kingdom of Hungary were that emigration and immigration rates were not decreasing, illegal labor and prostitution were on the rise, smuggling and the circulation of illicit documents and principles were

October 29, 1918, together with Governor Zoltán Jekelfalussy, he moved to Budapest for good, and they managed the affairs of the Governorate from the Hungarian capital. After World War I, he was promoted and decorated several times. He eventually retired as deputy state secretary.

17 *Budapesti Közlöny*, December 24, 1905.

18 Settlement in Upper Hungary (today Slovakia) near Léva (today Levice, Slovakia).

19 The sources do not reveal precisely why he was selected for the position in Fiume, but according to articles in the papers *Pécsi Napló*, Orosdy's knowledge of criminalistics and his knowledge of Italian and (presumably) a Slavic language must have been weighed in the balance. "Királyi ügyészből határszéli rendőrkapitány," *Pécsi Napló*, December 29, 1905.

out of control, individuals were appearing who posed a threat to public order and safety, and no effective methods had been put in place to protect against pandemics. This cause conflicts, uncertainty, and upheavals not only in the settlements and regions along the border but in the entire state, and this turmoil had serious social and political consequences. These consequences included, in particular, the waning of the ruling elite's political support, a rapid decrease in the number of the working-age people and men who could be conscripted into the military, and the appearance of new groups (mainly the so-called Galician Jews) which acted as rivals of the local population. Emigration and immigration were closely related to the problems of nationality, citizenship, and place of residence, and the tensions surrounding emigration and immigration, in turn, created a new wave of conflicts. In Hungary, no citizenship other than Hungarian was recognized.²⁰ Consequently, anyone who did not have Hungarian citizenship was considered a “foreigner” and could be expelled from the country. This mentality had much in common with the procedure applied by villages to banish individuals they deemed noxious from the community.²¹

Border defense and maintaining law and order were the tasks of counties and town municipalities. The model had been transformed on a number of occasions and had been gradually centralized, but it remained somewhat inefficient. As part of an effort to address this, a bill on setting up the border police was passed in 1903.²² The legislation process sparked heated debates inside and outside the parliament. Most of these debates concerned how to establish the new institution and its functions, prerogatives, and tasks. In the end, the members of parliament agreed to place the organization directly under the Ministry of the Interior and to set it up as a civilian authority. In other words, the body could not have taken on a military character, neither in its functions nor in its appearance. Behind this decision lay the principle of the primacy of parliament and government over county and city municipalities and also over the military administration. The government was also intent on establishing and operating a “Hungarian” body along the borders that was independent of Austria or, at least, separate from it.²³ MEPs also agreed that, in order to make it more effective, the organization,

20 *Az 1901. évi október hó 24-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója, X. kötet*, January 13, 1903, 272.

21 Szikinger, “Rendvédelmi jog.”

22 Parádi, “Határrendőrség a történelmi Magyarországon.”

23 *Az 1901. évi október hó 24-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója, X. kötet*, January 13, 1903, 281.

which was seen almost as a panacea, should be deployed in as many areas as possible and should be given exceptionally broad powers.²⁴

The border police not only checked the passports of travelers along the borders, but also participated in investigations, intelligence gathering, surveillance, and the detection, screening, and removal of enemy intelligence agents and persons deemed to be dangerous. It also provided operational support for the armed forces during the war.²⁵ The border police (in its area of operation) had the right to judge in the first instance in cases of offences under its jurisdiction,²⁶ and its members also had discretionary powers. In other words, they could resort to bribery, hire and pay off civilians deemed trustworthy, or even threaten them in the name of the greater public good and the interests of the state.²⁷

The involvement of the local population in the official procedures, in addition to obtaining “insider” information and exploring social networks, was also necessary because the border police had a relatively small number of personnel,²⁸ which cast doubts on its effectiveness due to the proliferation of its tasks and its disproportionately defined operational areas. This was true even though the function of the new organization was the surveillance and keeping of the borders rather than participation in direct operations and border defense.²⁹

The purpose of setting up the border police was the protection of the entire country, but the measures it entailed mainly concerned the border areas. The localization of problems, however, also entailed an increase in the influence of the state government, which sharpened the conflicts of interest between the central power and local elites in the municipalities concerned. This explains why it was József Kristóffy,³⁰ minister of the interior of Fejérváry’s Darabont government,³¹ who defied the power of the counties and towns, who took

24 When the border police was established, it operated in 25 counties, and when the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy collapsed, a border police force was active in 30 counties.

25 Parádi, “A dualizmuskori Magyar Királyi Pénzügyőrség.”

26 Ernyes, “Magyarországi rendőrségek a dualizmusban,” 24.

27 Parádi, “A dualizmuskori Magyar Királyi Pénzügyőrség.”

28 In 1906, there were 160 people on duty. By 1914, this number had risen to 451.

29 Szabó, “Határvasdász zászlóalj,” 165; Parádi, “A dualizmuskori Magyar Királyi Pénzügyőrség.”

30 József Kristóffy was a Liberal Party politician. He served as minister of the interior in the Fejérváry government between 1905 and 1906.

31 Géza Fejérváry served as minister of war between 1884 and 1903. He was prime minister in 1905–1906. The government under Fejérváry was mockingly referred to as the *darabontkormány* or guardsman government, in part because Fejérváry had distinguished himself with his career in the military rather than as a politician. In spite of the victory of the opposing coalition in the 1905 elections, the emperor first asked István Tisza, who had resigned as prime minister, to take charge of government affairs. He

it upon himself to set up the border police and thus limit the powers of the counties' and cities' jurisdictions in December 1905.³²

Local Concerns

Although Lajos Orosdy had been feverishly preparing for the trip, his expectations with regards to the new position were yet to be fulfilled. The reason for this was that Kristóffy, who had already been in the midst of a serious internal political crisis, postponed the establishment of the twelfth, Fiume precinct due to the persistent protests of the Autonomy Party. Furthermore, Kristóffy declared in his Circular no. 91 000 that he would be regulating the operation of the institution at a later, more appropriate time. Thus, Orosdy could not assume his office and was only able to move into the rented flat as a private citizen.

Kristóffy's resignation had other, more serious consequences. For example, the unanimous outcry of the Hungarian public, which was already critical of the government, which it considered unconstitutional. It also sparked protests by the public in Fiume. The former, while complaining about the loss of their own powers, protested against the minister of the interior's retreat and the privileged position of the port city, citing the need for maximum public safety and equal treatment. The majority of the political elite felt that the corpus separatum of Fiume did not imply that it had rights that superseded state interests or that the local council could refuse to enact national laws for any reason. This opinion was shared by the authors of *Magyar Tengerpart* (Hungarian Seashore),³³ a newspaper

then appointed Géza Fejérváry to head the country. This appointment by the emperor of Fejérváry to such a position of influence led to serious internal political conflicts. Public opinion considered him an unconstitutional ruler, and in many Hungarian cities (including Fiume) and counties, a "national resistance" campaign was launched against him. This campaign took the form refusals to pay taxes and levies, in addition to mass demonstrations and sharp criticism in the press. Fejérváry was dismissed, but only after a secret pact had been reached between the ruler and the opposition coalition in April 1906, according to which the opposition renounced many of its demands in exchange for the formation of a government under Sándor Wekerle. After Fejérváry's resignation in April 1906, he resumed his post as captain of the Hungarian Royal Guard.

32 153. Circular no. 91 000 of 1905 issued by the minister of the interior of the Kingdom of Hungary to all jurisdictions except the town of Fiume on the implementation and enforcement of Article VIII of Act 1903 on the Border Police. *Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára* 1905, 1460. *Parádi*, "Határrendőrség a történelmi Magyarországon."

33 *Magyar Tengerpart* was a Hungarian-language press organ in Fiume active between 1893 and 1906. It supported the Hungarian government and state initiatives.

published in Fiume. With its usual cynicism, the paper gave the following advice to the city fathers at the end of 1902:

Do not fear for the powers of the autonomous police, nor should Kuscher fear for the celebrated police force. The border police shall not curb their rights. Our brave city policemen will continue to escort drunk people in, they will continue to silence the shouts of the nighttime revelers, and they will remain in the position they are in now. We demand serious work from our city councilors to look after the true interests of the city and to cherish the citizens. [...] Let them work and not deal with politics!³⁴

A mere five years later, Viktor B. Thoroczkay³⁵ gave a speech in parliament in the same spirit:

Fiume is an ungrateful child of the Hungarian body, and in spite of the fact that we spend millions on it, when it comes to the interests of the Hungarian state, Fiume, this ungrateful child, joins forces with the enemies of the Hungarian nation and protests against the Hungarian nation. Let me mention one example only: the question of the border police... This Rappresentanza has so far prevented the establishment of the border police in Fiume.³⁶

The supporters of the state power were therefore overjoyed when, in November 1906, news got out that the Fiume border police would still start its operation in January 1907 under the leadership of Orosdy.³⁷

The enthusiasm of the press that wrote in support of the government was due to state administrative reasons. More precisely, the establishment of the Fiume border police was not intended as an ultimate goal. Rather, it was to be the first step toward the long-planned nationalization of the city police. István Tisza essentially confirmed this in an address³⁸ before the parliament, when he argued that the border police staff needed to be increased and the resulting cost increases had to be accepted, because “as soon as the general organization of

34 “Politika a városházán.” *Magyar Tengerpart*, November 12, 1902.

35 Vilmos Thoroczkay was lord lieutenant of Aranyos County and secretary of the Governorate.

36 *Az 1906. évi május hó 19-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának irományai, XVIII. kötet*, May 14, 1908, 227.

37 “Határrendőrség Fiumében.” *Budapesti Hírlap*. November 23, 1906.

38 István Tisza was the son of Kálmán Tisza and leader of the Hungarian Liberal Party. He was elected to serve as prime minister in 1875. He was leader of the Liberal Party from 1903 to 1905 and of the National Party from 1913 to 1917.

the police is done, the border police should naturally be integrated into it.”³⁹ Yet the plan to reorganize and then expropriate the Fiume police was nothing new. In the second half of the 1870s, the central government had already identified reorganization as a long-term goal in order to remedy the problems that required greater state involvement. These problems included the Russian-Turkish war, the deluge of Bosnian refugees, the difficulties around the regulation of the customs territory, and the establishment of the financial directorates. It was at least as significant that, with the increased spatial presence of the state, instances of fraud, omissions, and the overall shortcomings of the Fiume authorities were becoming more apparent.

The state only achieved partial success in the direct reorganization of the city police. There were several reasons for this. First, according to the city statute of 1872, the organization was supervised by the Fiume council of local representatives. Second, this document contained a special legal guarantee which stipulated that the basic statutes of the city and the regulations of the power exercised by the *Rappresentanza* could be modified or amended only with the consent of the council of the representatives. In other words, the state could not directly eliminate the autonomous institutions and the powers of the municipality of Fiume. Therefore, the state wished to apply the same method it was using in the fields of administration and education in the city. First, the government created the state “copies” of the institutions that belonged to the autonomous jurisdiction of the *Rappresentanza*. Then, by taking over the functions of these institutions, it made them redundant and eliminated them.⁴⁰

What made the issue of the possession and appropriation of the police force(s) even more relevant was that it affected the power competencies abilities of the *Rappresentanza* and its ability to defend itself. In other words, as long as they maintained control over the police, the city fathers were able to conceal certain self-serving activities in which they engaged. This consideration could not have been negligible, as the city fathers were often involved in dubious deals through their family connections or personal interests. Nicoló Gelletich,⁴¹ for instance, who was the royal notary and a member of the governing party,

39 *Az 1910. évi június hó 21-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának irományai, XXIV. kötet*, April 24, 1914, 68–69.

40 DAR JU 5. 75. Pres./1903 (file no. 75.) box no 349; DAR JU 5. 75. Pres./1903 (file no. 75.) box. no 349. In this regard, Governor László Szapáry's opinion is interesting.

41 Nicoló Gelletich was royal notary in Fiume and one of the leading figures of the local Liberal Party, which supported the central government. He was also a member of the *Rappresentanza* for many years.

regularly imported wine from the taverns of the tavern keepers Sirola Udovicich and Malogna without paying excise duty. Of course, it was not he who was prosecuted for the misdemeanor, but his agent, Giuseppe Pluhars, who was tried at the Hungarian Royal Court of First Instance in Fiume.⁴² Furthermore, anomalies related to the questionable financial management of the Fiume police also caused something of a stir, as did fears of irredentism.⁴³

However, Governor Sándor Nákó,⁴⁴ who had been carefully balancing municipal and state interests since 1906, firmly rejected the accusation made by the joint minister of war, according to which Fiume was a hotbed of irredentism. Defending the town's population, Nákó said that only a few people followed the extremist pro-Italian line, as the majority of the locals were not even engaged in politics. Even in February 1909, the governor considered it premature to follow the proposals made by the minister of war for the establishment of a state police force,⁴⁵ and he was expressly concerned about "the introduction of a uniformed special border police." Nákó was expecting that the new emigration law would solve the problems. He hoped that the new law would replace the city police with border police officers with the status of civil commissioners. According to him, this special border police detail, consisting of eight to ten plainclothes officers, could perform other police and political tasks in addition to their duties in the emigration house, and the Rappresentanza would have no objections to them.⁴⁶ But even the governor did not deny that there were serious problems with the city police. For example, like all city or municipal police, the Fiume police was dependent on the ruling party (in this case the Autonomy Party).

Nákó also noted that it is difficult to find a sufficient number of reliable individuals to serve in Fiume anyway. On the one hand, because the official language of the municipality was Italian, only Italian-speaking Hungarian citizens could be recruited to the force or serve as non-commissioned officers. On the other hand, because of the extremely high prices in the port town and the modest

42 DARJU 5. Ad 40. Pres./1883. Box no. 8.

43 DARJU 5. 102. Pres./1909. Box no. 35.

44 Sándor Nákó was a parliamentary representative from Nagyszentmiklós who was elected to serve in 1906. He then served as governor of Rijeka and president of the Maritime Authority between 1906 and 1909.

45 He continued to support the proposals of the Joint Ministry of Defense. See: MNL OL K 26. Lot 1042. 1915. Act XXVII. 814./1914. (file no. 3028.) Act XXVII; MNL OL K 26. Lot 1042. 1915. Act XXVII. 3028./1913. (file no. 3028.) Act XXVII.

46 MNL OL K 149. 516. responsibility./1909. box no. 64; *Az 1910. évi június hó 25-ére birdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának irományai, I. kötet*, July 18, 1910, 247–48.

salaries of the police officers, very few people applied for the jobs advertised. The governor also enclosed a list of the employees of the Fiume police, drawing the attention of the minister of war to a very important compromise. Namely, that in the previous few years, there had been so few applicants that Hungarian citizenship, which in theory was essential for the service, was not even required of them any longer.⁴⁷ According to the governorate report, most of the force had to be recruited from Austria (including Dalmatia and Istria), and not from the Kingdom of Italy (!), but they had to be able to speak Italian.⁴⁸

Nákó changed his mind two months after he had written a letter to the minister of war because of the so-called Steindl scandal,⁴⁹ which prompted him to request the minister of the interior to set up the border police without undue delay.⁵⁰

The Reactions of the City Fathers

The city fathers of Fiume responded in a particularly sensitive way to any initiative that foreshadowed increased control of their municipality by the state. No wonder, then, that they instinctively loathed any rumor about the reorganization of the police force or the introduction of the border police. It is revealing that on every such occasion, the podestá called an extraordinary meeting at which the more temperamental members of the Rappresentanza were taking turns “ringing the alarm bells.” As *Magyar Tengerpart* put it rather cynically,

Border police—they moaned and suffered. So much pain in these two words! And the city fathers were overcome with bitterness in the meeting room of the town hall, which has witnessed much more bitter moments in the past. As if they had come to attend a funeral.

47 MNL OL K 149. 516. res./1909. box no. 64.

48 DAR JU 5. 102. pres./1909. box no. 35; MNL OL K 149. 516. res./1909. box no. 64; Gegus and Székely, *A közbiztonság almanachja 1910. évre*, 104.

49 Fiume police’s management of money was often criticized, and on numerous occasions the force was even suspected of embezzlement. One of the most resonant incidents occurred in 1909, when Otto Steindl, a city police officer, was elected city secretary. László Szabó, a councilor to the minister of the interior, and János Kramer, the councilor for accounts, found numerous irregularities and exceptional disorder in Steindl’s former office. Steindl (and the city council that employed him) found himself in a particularly awkward situation when the local press criticized him and evidence was found of misappropriation of the fines and funds confiscated from emigrants that had been entrusted to him. Matters were made even worse when Steindl, who was trying to flee, was arrested at the Austrian border at the home of Superina Menotti, a prominent activist who espoused the Greater Italy ideology and a man with a criminal record. Steindl was taken to the state prison. MNL OL K 149. 516. res./1909. box no. 64.

50 MNL OL K 149. 516. res./1909. box no. 64.

They were sad and they were many. So many as would be impossible to convene in two weeks were the circumstances different. Now they have come because the “sacred autonomy” is in danger. The state has organized an armed body against it—the border police...⁵¹

Indeed the members of the Rappresentanza were dismayed. This body was not a fully uniform, permanent organ of government with respect to its constitution or political agenda, but it could wield great energies to make the central government change its mind. The rhetoric of the city fathers mostly built on two arguments: that the border police were unnecessary and inefficient and that the establishment of this border police would be a violation of the city’s autonomy. The discourse that prevailed in Fiume was therefore characterized by both down-to-earth, rational arguments and the population’s outrage and resentment towards the state.⁵² First and foremost, the city fathers claimed that the establishment of the border police in Fiume was an unnecessary burden, because the main tasks of this border police were already being performed by the city police,⁵³ and the existence of two institutions with overlapping prerogatives would inevitably lead to political conflicts and disagreements over their jurisdictions. Municipal representative Stanislao Dall’Asta, for instance, insisted that, although the border police were set up in order to control immigration and emigration, these services had been done perfectly well by the city police. In other words, Dall’Asta said, any complaints were nothing but “defamation, spread deliberately.”⁵⁴

After Dall’Asta’s address, the Socialist Pietro Stupicich⁵⁵ also rose to speak. He too warned the city fathers of the dangers of the border police: “This is a Trojan horse that they cunningly want to drag into this castle of autonomy so that they can catch us off guard and deprive us of our rights. [...] The border police are nothing but the state police—in disguise.”⁵⁶ He also added that when the draft bill was debated, one of the most prominent arguments concerned so-called

51 “Fiume a határrendőrség ellen. A városi képviselőtestület ülése.” *Magyar Tengerpart*, December 3, 1905.

52 DAR JU 5. 477. pres./1905. box no. 29; DAR JU 2. The relevant issues of *Protocollo della Rappresentanza*.

53 DAR JU 5. 75. pres./1903. (file no. 75.) box no. 349; DAR JU 5. 499. gen./1904. (file no. 1904. I-2. 6425.) box no. 349.

54 “Fiume a határrendőrség ellen. A városi képviselőtestület ülése.” *Magyar Tengerpart*, December 3, 1905.

55 Pietro Stupicich was a representative of the Social Democrats in Fiume and also a member of the city council.

56 “Fiume a határrendőrség ellen. A városi képviselőtestület ülése.” *Magyar Tengerpart*, December 3, 1905.

protections against the Israelites arriving from Galicia. However, he said, this deluge of Polish Jews had never posed a risk for Fiume.⁵⁷ Giovanni Ossoinack⁵⁸ was similarly practical. He said before the plenum that the government should find different instruments with which to control emigration, first, because the “fixed and immobile” border police could act against agencies which operated freely in the interior of the country and enticed people to emigrate and, second, because the organization was easy to fool anyway: emigrants just had to get off the train in Buccari and cross the Austrian border via a side road.⁵⁹ The fact that Ossoinack’s concerns were not unfounded is also evident from the parliament’s diaries, which contained numerous complaints about the activities of the agents and the officials and private individuals who collaborated with these agents. In one of his speeches, Ferenc Buzáth⁶⁰ reported that agents (“human traffickers”) often dressed emigrating Slovaks in civilian clothes, put them on trains, and led them on foot past the major stations so that they could be handed over to the agents of the various shipping companies at the border.⁶¹

The common feature of the speeches made in defense of the autonomy of Fiume was that they did not lack exaggeration or bombastic rhetoric. More important, however, were the references made to the legal contradictions and the unalterable nature of the statute. Dall’Asta referred to this in his next address:

The Rappresentanza shall be liable to organize the police and the healthcare services. [...] If the organization of the police is pried from our hands, so to say, then all our rights to autonomy will be gone. What is left, then, of the statute? Nothing... And the statute cannot be altered without us and against our will. Because Article 127 stipulates that “The present statute may only be altered or amended with the consent of the Rappresentanza of the free city of Fiume and the district thereof.”⁶² [...] We stand on the side of the law and do not shy away from protecting our rights.⁶³

57 Ibid.

58 Giovanni Ossoinack was a former ship captain. He served as a city councilor who supported the more extreme tendencies of the Autonomous Party.

59 “A rappresentanza és a határrendőrség.” *Magyar Tengerpart*, November 27, 1902.

60 Ferenc Buzáth was a pharmacist and a member of the Catholic People’s Party. He served parliamentary representative from the city of Beregszász (today Berehove, Ukraine).

61 *Az 1910. évi június hó 25-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőbáczának irományai, I. kötet*, May 8, 1903, 273.

62 *Statuto della Libera città di Fiume e del suo distretto. Fiume, Emidio Mohovich, 1872*, 95.

63 “Fiume a határrendőrség ellen. A városi képviselőtestület ülése.” *Magyar Tengerpart*, December 3, 1905.

The above argument was popular among the city fathers. Andrea Bellen followed a train of thought very similar to that of Dall'Asta's

by establishing a border police, they want to deprive Fiume of one of its most important rights. In accordance with the city statute, there is no place for any police in Fiume other than the autonomous city police. [...] If the government wants to introduce border police in Fiume in any form, it shall be our obligation to protest against this with every means possible.⁶⁴

La Voce del Popolo's⁶⁵ poem entitled "Let us stand in line" hits a very similar note, encouraging the city's readership to recognize that the issue was sensitive from the perspective of the future of the city's autonomy:

For it is poetry when we fight for our homeland and for the city we were born in, and the struggle of he who rises to protect the constitution is poetry worthy of praise and glorification: And the fight to protect the statute is poetry no less sublime and beautiful. And our statute shall remain intact. Thus spoke the Rappresentanza, but if their words do not suffice, the people will say it likewise We must clearly distinguish between the nation and the government. The nation is not hurting us; what is more, the nation loves us and respects us, its most prominent sons are with us, from Kossuth⁶⁶ to Apponyi.⁶⁷ But this government.... Was it an accountable government compelled to give an account before the parliament of its deeds and certify the abomination caused by bringing the state police to Fiume? But this government is nothing but a mob of bribed nobodies and Austrian soldiers, a government that assassinates without punishment the millennial Hungarian constitution.⁶⁸

With regards to the reservations of the leaders of Fiume, the issue of language also needs to be mentioned. The draft bill made Hungarian the official language of the border police, which, according to the Rappresentanza's

64 Ibid.

65 *La Voce del Popolo* was a press organ of the the Autonomous Party of Fiume. It often adopted a strong critical stance towards the government.

66 In this case, this Kossuth was Ferenc Kossuth, the son of the famous Lajos Kossuth, one of the leading figures of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849. In 1906, Ferenc Kossuth was made minister of trade in the government of Sándor Wekerle. After the fall of the cabinet, he became leader of the Independence 48 and Kossuth Party.

67 Albert Apponyi was a parliamentary representative who was one of the leading figures of the Independence 48 and Kossuth Party after the government of Sándor Wekerle was dismissed. He later served as head of the Hungarian delegation to the Paris peace talks.

68 DAR JU 5. 117. gen./1906. (file no. 1906. I-2. 6425.) box no 533.

interpretation, contradicted the provisions of the statute that specified Italian as the language of the Fiume jurisdictional institutions. Therefore, although by 1906 the Rappresentanza had finally agreed to accept the establishment of the organization and, citing the existing practice and its redundancy (as a kind of maximum concession), had even accepted that the Fiume border police could limit the city's right to use Italian to correspondence with local authorities, it consistently insisted that at least the phrase “and communicate verbally with Hungarian-speaking parties in Hungarian” be deleted from the draft.⁶⁹ It must be noted that even the government supported the Rappresentanza in these efforts.⁷⁰

As we have seen above, the city fathers were keen to put the Italian language and Italian culture, local patriotism, and the city's autonomy at the center of their arguments, but at the same time, for moral and rational reasons, they also made room in their discourses for patriotic rhetoric and emphasized their loyalty to the state. It is another matter that for the people of Fiume, the unconstitutional exercise of power by Géza Fejérváry's government was in fact primarily a pretext to sabotage the implementation of the law. When the issue of the border police was raised again and again under the governments of Prime Minister Sándor Wekerle and István Tisza, the members of the Rappresentanza protested with the same fervor as they had against Kristóffy and Fejérváry.

The city fathers tried to solve the problems they faced by using five main tactics. First, during the Rappresentanza meetings, they symbolically protested against the law “imposed” on them and the manner in which it was implemented. All the more so, because István Tisza's second cabinet introduced the institution into the city without consulting the Rappresentanza.⁷¹ Second, submissions were made to the governor and his deputy offering compromises and asking for intervention.⁷² The central idea of these initiatives was that the Minister of the Interior should legislatively entrust the tasks of the border police to the municipal police. In return, the municipality of Fiume offered to significantly expand and modernize the organization.⁷³ What they forget to emphasize, however, was that the city, which was already a heavy borrower of state loans, would have covered

69 DARJU 5. ad 1583. gen./1907. box no 533. The statute did not stipulate the official language of the city.

70 DARJU 5. 78. pres./1907. box no. 533.

71 *Az 1910. évi június hó 21-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának irományai, XX. kötet*, November 12, 1913, 47–49.

72 DARJU 5. 365. gen./1906. (file no. 1906. II-1.25.) box no. 533.

73 DARJU 5. 499. gen./1904. (file no. 1904. I-2. 6425.) box no. 349.

the additional costs of the developments by taking out new loans. Third, the city fathers also presented the matter to the House of Representatives and the ministers. Their aim was to draw attention to the perceived injustice and, with the help of their influential supporters, to take a stronger stand against the government's "despotism." Fourth, the city fathers used the local Hungarian and Italian press to air their concerns. Thus, dilemmas and criticisms concerning the police and border police were published in the local newspapers *La Voce del Popolo* and *La Bilancia*,⁷⁴ as well as in the weekly *La Giovine Fiume*⁷⁵ and in some of the capital's newspapers. Indeed, as the correspondence between the governor and the minister of war testifies, the news from Fiume spread beyond the borders and became increasingly resonant in Istria and the Apennines and also in the neighboring Croatian territories. Fifth, as a result of the ever-increasing tensions, marches and demonstrations were held.⁷⁶

The persistent resistance of the Fiume town fathers finally bore fruit. The central government repeatedly postponed the implementation of the decree enacting the border police law, citing the prevailing local political conditions and the inopportuneness of the time. This affected the life of Lajos Orosdy, who remained idle in Fiume. In 1907, he was reassigned to Brassó (today Braşov, Romania), but he was made redundant and was temporarily retired. Orosdy went back to Fiume in the summer of 1911, when Károly Khuen-Héderváry⁷⁷ appointed him to serve as administrative advisor to Governor István Wickenburg⁷⁸ in the rank of councilor of the ministerial department.⁷⁹ Orosdy's second term in Fiume proved a much greater success than the previous one. In 1912, he got

74 *La Bilancia* was originally an Italian-language daily newspaper which was supportive of the central government and the state. In the 1910s, it changed direction and became increasingly critical of the government.

75 *La Giovine Fiume* was the newspaper of the organization which went by the same name and which was founded in 1905 by a group of young denizens of Fiume who were sympathetic to Italian irredentism and called for accession to the Kingdom of Italy. It was founded in 1905 and remained in print until 1912.

76 MNL OL K 26. lot 1042. 1915. Act XXVII. 6605./1913. (file no. 3028.) Act XXVII. ad 367. pres./1911; MNL OL K 26. lot 1042. 1915. Act XXVII. 431./1912. Act XXVII. (file no. 291); MNL OL K 26. lot 1042. 1915. Act XXVII. 544./1912. Act XXVII. (file no. 291); MNL OL K 26. lot 1042. 1915. Act XXVII. 582./1912. Act XXVII. (file no. 291).

77 Khuen-Héderváry Károly was lord lieutenant of Győr County. Between 1883 and 1903, he was viceroy (*bán*) of the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia. He served as prime minister of Hungary from June to November 1903 and again from 1910 to 1912.

78 István Wickenburg joined the governorate of Fiume in 1885 as a ministerial clerk. He then became deputy governor in 1910. Between 1911 and 1917, he served as governor of Fiume and president of the Maritime Authority.

79 Hivatalos rész. *Budapesti Közlöny*, August 3, 1911.

married and started a family, and having climbed the career ladder, he finished his life as a deputy state secretary in 1943.⁸⁰ His son Róbert was also successful. In 1916, he disappeared from the lines of the Hungarian Army that was fighting on the Eastern Front. He crossed several borders in his flight, and reappeared as a certain Roberto Tartini/Bartini, but in the end he made a career in the Soviet Union as an airplane engineer by the name Robert Oros di Bartini.⁸¹

In the end, the city fathers could not fight the powerful advances or the legal expansion of the state. This was already indicated by the fact that the governor dissolved the Fiume representative body in the most critical situations and, as the municipal elections of 1911, 1914, and 1915 show, he also strongly transformed its composition by asserting his influence both formally and informally.⁸² The perfect moment for the central government to realize its long-delayed plan for the border police was the “state of emergency” declared in 1912 because of the Balkan wars, or in other words a situation in which a much more direct, centralized form of government was introduced to guarantee law and order and public safety. It is to be noted that this solution was based on the British model,⁸³ which, as opposed to the Prussian military model and the Austrian one that followed the Prussian,⁸⁴ made the government the holder of such exceptional wartime power. In Hungary, the army could not control the civil administration, and the High Command could not even control the border police.⁸⁵

However, war preparedness also required the Hungarian government to introduce restrictive defense measures. These measures included restrictions on fundamental civil rights, the appointment of government commissioners, tighter restrictions on issuing passports, censorship of telecommunications and the press, tighter restrictions on the exercise of the rights of association and assembly, the establishment of martial law, and the extension of the scope of

80 “Dr. Orosdy Lajos ny. h. államtitkár.” *Tolnamegyei Ujság*, May 12, 1943.

81 Ciampaglia, Giuseppe. *La vita e gli aerei di Roberto Bartini*. This topic has recently been researched by Svetozar Nilović Tozo.

82 Ordasi, “Modellváltások.”

83 Deák and Gumz, “How to Break a State.”

84 In Austria, as of 1906, the army could take over control of the administration in so-called extraordinary situations. As István Szikinger points out, the Austrians tried to persuade the Hungarian government to adopt similar measures, but their efforts were unsuccessful. One explanation for this may be the political elite’s ideals and values of constitutionalism, libertarianism, and the priority of human freedoms, while this position of the elite may also have been due more to interdepartmental conflicts. Above all, this stance was based on the rational consideration that the Hungarian government did not want the political and police administration of the country to fall into the hands of the joint army. Szikinger, “Rendvédelmi jog.”

85 Parádi, “A dualizmuskori Magyar Királyi Pénzügyőrség,” 52–53.

military jurisdiction. In a similar fashion, the minister of the interior in a circular ordered authorities to arrest and remove all aliens and/or persons who posed a threat to public order.⁸⁶ Internments started, and deportations were becoming more and more frequent. Under these circumstances, the obstacles that had prevented the establishment of the border police had been overcome by the summer of 1913, though it had been evident by that time even to the MPs that the organization was too expensive and was not suitable to serve its purpose elsewhere.⁸⁷

The Border Police in Fiume

When Dezső Késmárky⁸⁸ learned that the minister of the interior had listed him in grade three of payment class VII and appointed him councilor of the border police,⁸⁹ little could he have suspected that he would soon live the most trying years of his life. As this distinction was followed by Késmárky's relocation to Fiume,⁹⁰ it can be assumed that the new title and the higher salary were, as a kind of incentive, both a reward and a token of trust given in advance, but also a “wedge” to be presented to the locals and a “weapon” of commanding presence. The higher rank and salary entailed more rights and responsibilities and also higher social prestige, which generally was a vital condition of the successful work of state officials. Késmárky in particular seemed a promising choice for the position, as he had been born in Szekszárd, had relatives in the so-called Southern Territories,⁹¹ had received an education in law, and could speak Italian

86 Szikinger, “Rendvédelmi jog”; DAR JU 5. 3931./1913. (file no. 1913. I-2. 14.) box no 596. nr. 38100. V. Minister of the Interior to the Governor. This was provided for by Act V of 1903 on the Residence of Foreigners in the Countries of the Hungarian Crown, the so-called Immigration Act, which made registration of foreigners residing in the country compulsory. The act also regulated this process and entitled the authorities to investigate any so-called foreigner's identity, citizenship, and, if deemed necessary, residence and previous life, as well as their living conditions. The authorities were empowered, furthermore, to take measures deemed necessary against such individuals in the alleged interests of public security.

87 *Az 1910. évi június hó 21-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának irományai, XX. kötet*, March 31, 1911, 364–66.

88 Dezső Késmárky served as police captain in Gyöng and then as high sheriff. In 1906, he was made unpaid border police captain in Mezőlaborc (today Mezőlaborc, Slovakia). In 1907, he was transferred to Brassó and in 1908 to Pancsova (today Pančevo, Serbia). From 1913 to 1917, as border police councilor, he served as captain of the border police in the border area of Fiume.

89 The title councilor made him the border police captain's superior.

90 DAR JU 5. 285. pres./1913. 42. d.

91 Dr. István Késmárky, Legal Academy director in Pécs, was a nephew of the editor of the magazine *Dunántúl*.

and maybe a Slavic language, and had many years of bureaucratic experience in Budapest. The government expected no less of him than to start the operations of the new border police smoothly and make the local population accept the institution. However, these expectations were rather hard to meet.

Késmárky arrived in Fiume in June 1913, a few days before the enactment of the law.⁹² He was accompanied by 70 border policemen, five officers, and several detectives.⁹³ Considering that in 1913 the entire *national* staff of the border police consisted of 451 individuals, this was a sizeable contingent.⁹⁴ This high number (which the governor still believed to be insufficient)⁹⁵ was partly justified by the conflicts in the Balkans. Also, the government drew conclusions based on the events of the previous years and wanted to prepare for the resistance with which its efforts might meet from the citizens of Fiume.⁹⁶

All the more so, because Icilio Baccich,⁹⁷ the second vice-president of the city and someone who was very popular with the local citizens and was making a visit to Fiume, was escorted by a city policeman to the police station for no apparent reason. Only at the police station was Baccich informed by police director Saverio Derencin, who had been the target of many accusations (partly because of his alleged Croatian origins) made by the Autonomists, that he had been expelled for agitation and for propagating irredentist ideas and had to leave the city within eight hours.⁹⁸ What made the expulsion of Baccich possible was his Italian citizenship, as he was considered an “alien.” He came from an aristocratic family of Croatian origin from Ragusa (or Dubrovnik by its Croatian name) and therefore was born an Austrian citizen. When he lived in Fiume, he acquired Hungarian citizenship, but he then moved to Ancona in 1912 and became an Italian citizen.⁹⁹ His appearance in Fiume offered a useful pretext to Governor István Wickenburg to instrumentalize the city police and get rid of a man who was considered a threat. What Wickenburg failed to take

92 MNL OL K 26. lot 1042. 1915. Act XXVII. 6605./1913. (file no. 3028.) Act XXVII. MT./13.

93 Appointment of councilor for the border police. *Dunántúl*, June 26, 1913.

94 József Parádi has shown in his research that, together with other military and civilian armed bodies, a total of 3,324 people were involved in border guard duties in 1913. Parádi, “A dualizmuskori Magyar Királyi Pénzügyőrség.”

95 DARJU 5. 378. pres./1913. box no. 42.

96 DARJU 5. 309. pres./1913. box no. 42.

97 Icilio Baccich was a Fiume lawyer from a Ragusa family. He served as town councilor and tended to support the more extreme wing of the Autonomous Party. In 1912, he became deputy mayor of Fiume. He was one of the most important local critics of the Hungarian government.

98 “Lo sfratto al dott. Icilio Baccich!” *La voce del Popolo*, June 10, 1913.

99 “Fiume II.” *Pesti Hírlap*, June 28, 1913.

into consideration was that the expulsion of Baccich would meet with the disapproval of his own political camp, the Lega Autonoma,¹⁰⁰ a group that was hard to assemble, and that a municipal crisis would unfold.

The Rappresentanza protested unanimously against the steps taken by the police, which was all the more strong a cautionary sign, since after 1911 the majority of the Rappresentanza belonged to the more moderate Lega Autonoma party rather than to the Autonomists.¹⁰¹ The expulsion of Baccich, however, blurred the lines between the two groups. The Legists were also outraged, and they joined the solemn protest organized by the Autonomy Party. Their common stance on the issue revealed the depths of the crisis, and the city fathers forced Mayor Francesco Vito to resign.¹⁰² When Wickenburg dissolved the protesting body, the members of the substituting General Committee also gave back their mandates.¹⁰³ The consequence of the new municipal scandal was that, for lack of a better solution, the minister of the interior gave the powers of the Rappresentanza to the governor, who thus became a kind of government commissioner.¹⁰⁴ This, according to the citizens of Fiume, meant the suspension of their autonomy, even though István Tisza never for a moment ceased to deny that this had been his intention.¹⁰⁵

Therefore, the locals were definitely hostile as they waited for the border police to take office, and the arriving force was welcomed by a crowd of protesters at the police station. If the national press reports are to be believed, the border police had to make their way with their “bayonets forward” to their quarters in the Emigration House under the protection of the municipal police and the military.¹⁰⁶ In the meantime, the Italian press also did not cease to criticize the border police. The *La Voce del Popolo* sardonically called the border police members “sycophants,”¹⁰⁷ and he sometimes also referred to them

100 Lega Autonoma was a local party created and brought to power between 1911 and 1913 with the help of Governor István Wickenburg. It consisted for the most part of more moderate elements of the Autonomous Party who were willing to cooperate with the Hungarian state.

101 DAR JU 5. 177. pres./1914. box no. 43.

102 “Una seduta storica della Rappresentanza municipale.” *La Voce del Popolo*, June, 1913; DAR JU 2. Protocollo della Rappresentanza. June 13, 1913.

103 MNL OL K 26. lot 1042. 1915. Act XXVII. 3287./1915. (file no. 3287.) Act XXVII. MT./11.

104 MNL OL K 26. lot 1042. 1915. Act XXVII. 6658./1913. (file no. 3028.) Act XXVII. MT./14.

105 *Az 1910. évi június hó 21-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának irományai, XX. kötet*, November 12, 1913, 47–49.

106 “A határrendőrség felállítása Fiumében.” *Pécsi Napló*, June 25, 1913; “Tüntetés a fiumei határrendőrség ellen.” *Magyarország*, June 26, 1913.

107 “A magyar állameszme védelme.” *Népszava*, August 26, 1913.

as alien conquerors put at the throats of the Fiume citizens by the two *Pistas* (Pista is a nickname for István).¹⁰⁸ This is also understandable, since only two of the officers listed in the Hungarian Directory of Officers came from Fiume and had experience there. One was the son of one of the technical directors of the Rice Husking and Starch Factory, Erik Beusterien, an assistant clerk.¹⁰⁹ The other was Mario Minach, a detective inspector from a distinguished Fiume family. Everyone else came to Fiume from the highlands well beyond the city borders, apart from Rafael Ninkovich, who came from Novi Sad.

Although the exact number, composition, and origin of the force cannot be determined due to a lack of sources, it can be reasonably assumed that some of them were local residents and/or the members of the municipal police. This raises the question as to how many of the border guards on duty spoke German, Italian, and some Slavic languages (and how well), which were essential if they were to perform their duties. After all, the most important tasks of the border guards included reconnaissance, gathering information, and effective cooperation with the border population, and each of these responsibilities required a good command of the above languages. As Governor István Wickenburg once put it, “A detective must speak at least one Slavic language and German, because without these [languages], he is of no use whatsoever when on duty.”¹¹⁰

Finally, with regards to the staffing of the border police, the very delicate balance of powers and financial resources among the different government bodies cannot be overlooked. The dilemma was already evident in the fact that while Wickenburg and Késmárky were striving to expand the staff, minister of the interior János Sándor¹¹¹ regarded the increasingly independent and expensive organization with concern. Therefore, János Sándor, fearing for his own influence and the budget of his ministry, warned the governor to refrain from increasing public spending by recruiting new members and also from supporting the expansion of the border police’s jurisdiction.¹¹²

108 “Oggi: 21 giugno 1913.” *La Voce del Popolo*, June 22, 1913, István Tisza and István Wickenburg.

109 DAR JU 5. 6543. gen./1913. (1913. I-2. 14.) box no. 533.

110 DAR JU 5. 406. pres./1917. box no. 58.

111 János Sándor served as chief deputy from 1891 to 1902. He was state secretary to the minister of the interior between 1903 and 1905 and then served as minister of the interior in the second Tisza government from 1913 to 1917.

112 DAR JU 5. 496. pres./1913. box no. 42.

Everyday Problems and Extraordinary Challenges

What is certain is that on June 25, 1913, the border police started to operate in Fiume in accordance with Article 1903:VIII and at the same time, the city police lost a great deal of its powers. The city police were only able to continue temporarily with those tasks and cases that were either already in progress or for which the appropriate systems had not yet been put in place.¹¹³

The strict instructions and the obligatory *modus vivendi* ordered from above (out of necessity) seemed to have had their effect. Only two months later, Wickenburg was already boasting to the Minister of the Interior that the city fathers had formally recognized the new organization as a public utilities committee made up of members of the *Lega Autonoma*, and the Autonomy Party had agreed to allow border police to travel free on the city tram.¹¹⁴ However, the acceptance and the integration of the border police were far from smooth and seamless. This was true for at least three reasons. First, the various authorities were in rivalries with one another, gloating over the others' failures and condemning one another at every turn. Second, as was the case in other parts of the country, the border police were deployed to break up mass protests, strikes, and demonstrations organized around election periods. Third, the border police often "harassed" common people or people belonging to the middle class.¹¹⁵

The border police often had to deal with offences such as the case of Vreja Kauzlari of Sušak. Charges had been brought against the "Croatian woman of Greater Serbian sentiments" because she allegedly had claimed that Franz Joseph I's manifesto entitled "To my peoples!" "could not have been written by His Majesty, as the King was already old and soft in the head."¹¹⁶ Aladár Molnár, a state-employed educator in Fiume who had been born in Hungary (and whose native tongue was Hungarian) and who was propagating Bolshevik ideology, must have had a similar view (he was the father of the Marxist historian Erik Molnár). He was prosecuted by the Austrian Minister of the Interior himself for high treason and the defamation of a member of the Royal House.¹¹⁷

113 DAR JU 5. 7204./1915. (file no. 1915. I-2. 14.) box no. 596. nr. 38000. V.-a. Minister of the Interior to the Governor.

114 DAR JU 5. 380. pres./1913. box no. 42.

115 "A magyar állameszme védelme." *Népszava*, August 26, 1913.

116 MNL OL K 149. 2802. res./1914. box no. 60.

117 MNL OL K 149. 4039. res./1914. box no. 60.

In addition to insults brought against the monarch and his family, ethnic agitation and slanderous statements blaming the “other party” were also common. The case of the wife and daughter of Giovanni Kvaszt offers a revealing example. According to Késmárky, they were reported to the police by their neighbor, the wife of Jenő Ragasics, who was probably of Slavic origin. Ragasics’ wife claimed that her neighbors were “constantly vilifying Hungarians”. As Késmárky put it, “they call them disgusting Hungarians, wish for them to be hanged, they say the war was our fault and that we should go back to Hungary to die and rot there, for we are¹¹⁸ mere Hungarian swine.”¹¹⁹ Antonia Kucias, a 21-year-old resident of Fiume who spoke Italian as her mother tongue but was a Hungarian citizen, was sentenced to ten months in jail, because, as a prostitute, “in the brothel she used to praise Italians incessantly and sang songs reviling the Hungarian-Austrians.”¹²⁰

A more thought-provoking and complex case was that of Teodoro Biasi, who, in the local pub owned by József Kirincich “attempted to extract military information from Mihály Horváth, István Kulcsár, Zsigmond Véghelyi, and Pál Bodai of the 19th k.u.k. Infantry Regiment, who were drinking at that location.” In order to achieve his goals, Biasi offered drinks and cigarettes to the soldiers, who not only turned down his offer but chased him off in their outrage. Biasi was apprehended when, while praising Italy and running away from the soldiers, he attempted to commit suicide. The real piquancy of the case was not its near-tragic ending, but Késmárky’s closing line: “I have to note that the abovementioned is the brother of Miklós Biasi, Deputy Head of the City Police.”¹²¹ Teodoro Biasi’s ties to someone in power probably contributed to the fact that he was acquitted by the court of Fiume.¹²²

The border police also spent a significant amount of their time during the day confiscating politically dangerous documents, postcards, correspondence, and press products. These items included not only documents smuggled in from abroad, but also, as the press lawsuits against *Novi List* and *La Voce del Popolo* and their journalists show, papers published in the port city.¹²³ The misdemeanors and offences related to printed materials often entailed house searches, confiscations, relatively high fines, and often even physical atrocities. Thus, these cases provided

118 The plural refers to the Hungarians in the port city, and Késmárky uses it in the first person, plural.

119 MNL OL K 149. 492. res./1916. 1. file. box no. 88. 3931. no. /1915.

120 MNL OL K 149. 965. res./1916. 1. file. box no. 88. d. 5542.no./1915.

121 MNL OL K 149. 498. res./1916. 1. file. 418. res./1916.

122 MNL OL K 149. 498. res./1916. 1. file. 418. res./1916.

123 DAR JU 5. 517. pres./1913. box no. 42.

a fertile source of stories for the outraged autonomist press. What further eroded trust in the border police was the fact that several prominent public figures, such as G. T. Stipanovich, Director of the Coastal Bank and Savings Fund,¹²⁴ were under surveillance, and as the example of Edmondo Manasteriotti illustrates, they were often banned from crossing the border.¹²⁵

Many of the members of the border police staff had only a limited knowledge of the local conditions, and this also caused several misunderstandings. A plainclothes border policeman named János Jakab, for instance, allegedly “insulted” County Lord Lieutenant (főispán) Vinko Zmaić.¹²⁶ On one occasion, patrolmen mistook one of the non-commissioned officers of the Japanese military committee staying in town for an assassin and arrested him.¹²⁷

The most high-profile conflicts in which the Fiume border police were involved were linked to two bomb attacks. The first was committed in October 1913 by the members of Giovine Fiume under the leadership of Luigi Cussar¹²⁸ and Francesco Drenig¹²⁹ as a protest against the introduction of the border police and against the politics of Wickenburg.¹³⁰ The second, in the spring of 1914, according to Riccardo Gigante’s¹³¹ pamphlet “Bomb”¹³² (and other documents), was allegedly staged by Italian citizens hired with the knowledge and support of the governor and the border police officer Erik Beusterien, who

124 DAR JU 5. 637. pres./1914. box no. 45.

125 DAR JU 5. 4501. BM. res. box no. 45.; DAR JU 5. 907. pres./1914. box no. 46.

126 DAR JU 5. 670. pres./1914. box no. 45.

127 “A japán altiszt és a fiumei határrendőrség.” *Népszava*, October 8, 1913.

128 Luigi Cussar was the first president and then one of the most active members of La Giovine Fiume, founded in 1905. He was the son of and heir to the owner of the Cussar metal foundry in Fiume and owner of the foundry from 1902 to 1917.

129 Francesco Drenig was a poet, literary translator, and art critic from Fiume. He was also a member of La Giovine, the irredentist society. After World War I, he was editor of the cultural magazines *La Fiumanella* and *Delta*. His works were often published under the pseudonym Bruno Neri.

130 MNL OL K 26. lot 995. 1914. Act XXVII. 6647./1913. Act XXVII. (file no. 6647); Dubrović, *Francesco Drenig*.

131 Riccardo Gigante was a Fiume politician, a member of the more extreme wing of the Autonomous Party, and one of the leaders of La Giovine. In the autumn of 1918, he joined the Italian National Council of Fiume and demanded the annexation of the city to Italy. In September 1919, he became one of Gabriele d’Annunzio’s main supporters, and in November, he was appointed Sindaco (the Italian administrative term for mayor) of Fiume. After the fall of D’Annunzio, he resigned as Sindaco, but in 1921, at the head of a group of fascist troops and the Legionnaires of Fiume, he carried out a coup against Riccardo Zanella and the Free State of Fiume, which Zanella sought to create.

132 MFS FEGD. 64. bis. 4/7. *La Bomba*.

had wished to discredit the members of Giovine Fiume.¹³³ Though the role of neither the governor nor of the border police can be clarified,¹³⁴ the sources do indicate at least that the second bombing was committed by a bricklayer from Ancona, an Italian citizen named Arduino Bellelli, who had been commissioned by a certain Giuseppe Scipioni, a lawyer from Ancona. While Bellelli was completely unknown to the governor and the authorities, the same cannot be said about Scipioni. Scipioni had played a key role in a case involving the forgery of Albanian money or, rather, the unveiling this affair.¹³⁵ Both bombings were carried out in an extremely tense foreign and domestic political situation, and they both generated considerable consternation and controversy beyond the borders of the country.¹³⁶

The primary cause of the negative international reputation of the Fiume border police was not the assassinations, but the increasing number of conscriptions, expulsions, and internments, mostly to Kiskunhalas and Tápíósüly.¹³⁷ Above all, the authorities took action against men of conscription age who were not citizens of the Hungary or of the port city, among whom were Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, and, of course, Italians. However, the border police also focused their attention on residents of Fiume and Hungarian citizens. Beyond public safety and health reasons in most cases,¹³⁸ these steps were justified by reference to power/political considerations.

This exceptional situation created a unique opportunity for the government to filter out the social groups and individuals it considered dangerous, to break the dominance of the Autonomy Party, and, as a result, to influence the composition of the Rappresentanza in a way that was favorable to it (the government), and to minimize the body's capacity to act in its own interests. The border police often waited for a proper pretext and opportunity to take action against the city fathers and have them removed from Fiume in one way or another. This

133 MNL OL K 26. lot 995. 1914. Act XXVII. 2953./1914. Act XXVII. (file no. 2953); MNL OL K 26. lot 995. 1914. Act XXVII. 4258./1914. Act XXVII. (file no. 2953.)

134 Considering the discretionary “rights” of the border police, the procedure followed by Beusterien does not seem atypical of the system or even exceptional.

135 The report of the administrative committee to the minister of the interior on his draft bill no 1316 on the “H. royal state police in Fiume.” *Az 1910. évi június hó 21-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőbázanak irományai, LIV. kötet*, 303–9; “Az államrendőrség hatáskörének kiterjesztése.” *Pesti Hírlap*, August 13, 1916.

136 Ordasi, “Bombamerényletek.”

137 DAR JU 5. 1128. pres./1915. box no. 50. See Somogyi, *A tápiósülyi civil internálótábor*; Végső, “Olasz áldozatok”; Stelli, *Storia di Fiume*, 207–10; Gecsényiet al., *Sülysáp: Az első világháború viharában*.

138 DAR JU 5. 178. pres./1915. box no. 47.

was how Edmondo Manasteriotti, Alcide Rack, Francesco Drenig, and other members of the Giovine Fiume ended up being interned in Kiskunhalas, and it was also how Luigi Cussar was taken to Tápiósüly as a final destination.¹³⁹ It was rather characteristic that Ferdinando Kuscher, who had warned of the dangers of the border police as early as 1902, only escaped internment because of his age (he was 66 years old).¹⁴⁰

Epilogue

The establishment and operation of the border police cannot be viewed separately from the centralization politics and modernization efforts of the state. This trend was also fueled by the protracted world war and the gradually worsening daily crises which arose as a consequence of it. The problems (food and fuel shortages, influxes of Austrian refugees, epidemics, strikes, unemployment, general social tensions) needed to be addressed as quickly and efficiently as possible. However, only a well-organized and centrally controlled organization could do this. Acting on these considerations, in July 1916, minister of the interior János Sándor took a decisive step and proposed a bill concerning the nationalization of the Fiume police force, although the bill was enacted only half a year later. The new body started operations on May 1, 1917, and it essentially took over the majority of public security tasks from the city police.¹⁴¹ Although the border police were intended primarily to be the “antechamber” of the state police and the personnel of the two bodies constituted “a single national force” under the law, the border police did not cease to exist with the creation of the state police. Furthermore, though Fiume had to contribute 280,000 koronas to the maintenance of the state police, according to the administrative committee, only part of the city police staff could enter into the employment of the state.¹⁴²

139 Stelli, *Volontari e internati fiumani*, 174–88.

140 Stelli, *Storia di Fiume*, 208.

141 *Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára* 1917, 654–61. Circular no 37,000. of 1917 of the Hungarian Royal Minister of the Interior on the enactment of the Article 1916: XXXVII on the Hungarian Royal state police and the description of its powers.

142 Article 1916: XXXVII on the Hungarian royal state police in Fiume. The administrative committee found this amount not only fair but also beneficial to Fiume, as it was less than what the city had spent earlier on its own city police. *Az 1910. évi június hó 21-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőbázának irományai, LIV. kötet*, 1910–1318. The report of the administrative committee to the minister of the interior on his draft bill no 1316 on the “H. royal state police in Fiume,” 303–9, The expansion of the powers of the state police.

According to János Sándor's design, only people with the necessary professional qualifications, language skills, experience, and politically and socially irreproachable behavior could be appointed to the new organization. However, it was in the governor's discretion to decide who could be trusted. This re-selection of the staff resulted in significant changes, as shown by the list published in the Hungarian Directory of Officers. The name list includes 25 individuals for the year 1918 instead of the eight to ten people for the previous years, but many of the border police staff members who had been serving in Fiume for years were not among their numbers. One of the reasons for the staff changes was obviously the world war and the resulting compulsory military service, but a push for increased efficiency and the more rational and practical national distribution of tasks was also an important factor, as was the need to ensure the authority and integrity of the corps.

To achieve these goals, certain individuals were replaced on purpose. The much-criticized Késmárky was transferred to Szombathely as district Chief of Police, where he served until he died in 1922.¹⁴³ Késmárky was probably replaced because his "past in Fiume" would have reflected badly on the new organization. In his place, the Minister of the Interior appointed and tasked with chief-of-police responsibilities István Török¹⁴⁴ of Törökfalva, who was department councilor of the Ministry of the Interior and the son of Kálmán Török, the highly respected first director of the Csillag Prison in Szeged.¹⁴⁵

István Török arrived in the port town on August 25, 1917, where he spent approximately as much time as Lajos Orosdy. The fate of Török and of the organization under his leadership was sealed on October 23, 1918, when the crowd from Sušak, celebrating Croatian independence, joined by soldiers from the Jelačić regiment, broke into Fiume and, wreaking havoc, raided the court. There were many accounts of acts committed by the Croatian "mob" in which the topos of the state and border police force's unsuitability to handle the situation was a recurring element.¹⁴⁶

Though the defense of the borders was not the task of the state police and the border police, the citizens of Fiume could never forget or forgive that the

143 Dezső Késmárky was the district chief-of-police. *Dunántúl*, August 15, 1922.

144 István Török served as advisor to the minister of the interior and clerk of the Construction Committee of the National Archives until his appointment as head of the Hungarian State Police in 1917. MNL OL K 148. 781. cs. 29252/1917. pres. XIV. t. 1112. a. sz.

145 Nagy, "A magyar börtönügy arcképcsarnoka"; DAR JU 2. Protocollo della Rappresentanza. 1907. Originally, the amount was 290,000 forints.

146 See Hesz, "Fiume az összeomlás után."

Hungarian law enforcement bodies failed to defend the town and that an even greater tragedy was prevented only because of the sobriety of the officers of the joint army. All the less so, because a few days later Governor Zoltán Jekelfalussy, as per the alleged instructions of Prime Minister Sándor Wekerle, handed over Fiume to the South Slavic Commission and traveled to Budapest with a few of his officials. According to the diary of Deputy Governor Lajos Egan, that night, the majority of the police force followed Jekelfalussy's example. This had two consequences: The maintenance of law and order was taken over first by the Croatian military and then by the allied troops, and the border police and the state police force de facto ceased to exist as a relevant factor. Thus, any members of their staff left as soon as possible.¹⁴⁷

The collective retreat of the police can be explained by the fact that, as members of the armed forces of a hostile and defeated state, they had no rights or authority necessary to perform their duty. Furthermore, they became the main target of the new regimes. Although István Török stayed in Fiume until as late as January 26, 1919,¹⁴⁸ it cannot be ruled out that his relatively lengthy stay was due to his wife's illness and that he ultimately left only when he did because of her death on January 14, 1919.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

The issue of the establishment of the Fiume border police fits into the context of the modernization and centralization efforts of the Hungarian state. This was also reflected in the ambitions behind the programs set out, such as the intention to maximize state oversight and control and the need to transform local society and employ the labor force more rationally and efficiently. The underlying motivation was that the Kingdom of Hungary wanted to keep and increase its economic potential and vitality, strengthen its position within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and guarantee its own security. However, emigration and immigration (which increased dramatically around the turn of the century), strikes (which were becoming more and more frequent), and the phenomena that accompanied the power shifts in the Balkans made it clear to the Hungarian political elite that such goals could not be achieved without granting the fundamental conditions of existence for the population.

147 Ordasi, *Egan Lajos naplója*, 56.

148 Ibid., 123–26.

149 "Halálkozás. Dr. Törökfalvi Török Istvánné." *Pesti Hírlap*, January 25, 1919.

The government's desire to act was shown by the fact that the parliament was ready to approve an increasingly higher budget for the Ministry of the Interior, which was tasked with solving the problems. As a result, ambitious measures were taken to keep the prevailing social order and maintain public security and public health. Furthermore, a decision was reached according to which, in the towns and bigger villages along the border where the border traffic was higher, the border control tasks should be assigned to a civil law enforcement body rather than to the local police. According to the centralist plans, this body would have been established by the nationalizing of the municipal and court polices, but due to the resistance of the county representatives, the first step was the establishment of the border police. Thus, local interests could only be gradually subordinated to the objectives of the state.

Pursuant to the order enacting article 1903: VIII, the border police, that is, the top organization of the institution, would have been introduced in twelve settlements along the border.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, the members of the Fiume council interpreted the initiative as another attack on the city's exceptionally broad autonomy. The gradual removal of the powers of the municipal police, which was an armed body maintained by and at the disposal of the municipality, undeniably meant a loss of power for the Rappresentanza and the podestà who led it.

The dissonance was not only due to public law reasons, but also had serious economic, social, interpersonal, and foreign political antecedents. The economic consequences included, for example, curbing smuggling and limiting the trade in counterfeit wine and other dubious quality goods. Closely related to this were the social problems (difficulties making a living and the resulting tensions), which were challenges for social groups and individuals alike. The border police even impacted interpersonal and intergroup relationships. The majority of the local population frowned on those who joined the border police, and those who "transferred" from the city police to the border police were even more despised. Also, the organization proved a very effective means of breaking the dominance of the Autonomy Party and thus of limiting the ability of the Rappresentanza to assert its interests.

The issue of the border police became the most important source of conflicts between the state and Fiume. Although the city fathers did their best to prevent

150 DAR JU 5. 4698. gen./1905. (1905. I-2. file no. 6425.) Ministry of the Interior. 111906./1905. III-a. box no. 349.

the enactment of the law, the Fiume border police finally began operations in 1913. This was mainly due to the enormous financial sacrifices the government had made to set up the border police and the “state of emergency” measures introduced in 1912, which also created an opportunity for an unprecedented extension of state power in Fiume.

However, the organization, as numerous omens had made predictable from the outset, failed to fulfil the ambitions attached to it for domestic and foreign political reasons. The antipathy of the population and the unwillingness of the denizens of the city to cooperate significantly decreased the local integration and legitimacy of the border police. Furthermore, the perception of the border police was further undermined by ambivalent legal interpretations and jurisdictional frictions, the outdated and/or incomplete technological tools at their disposal, and the conflicts that arose from the unfortunate procedures initiated by policemen who had only a superficial knowledge of local conditions.

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