

embodied by Hitler. Lockenour suggests that, despite some of Ludendorff's attacks on Christianity, which Nazi leadership often saw as detrimental to solidifying popular support, Ludendorff's goals were essentially the same as Hitler's, and the old general largely succeeded in promoting his symbolic Siegfried image, which drew widespread support from those who also sought revenge for a lost war.

Lockenour's study should prove to be a definitive work, especially on Ludendorff's post-1918 career. Though some of the chapters would benefit from more concrete arguments to highlight the author's main points, the engaging writing and compelling narrative make it a fascinating read. Lockenour's in-depth analysis of the Tannenberg League's publications and the role played by Ludendorff's wife, Mathilde, in influencing his ideology and cementing his legacy will be especially interesting to social and cultural historians. Lockenour's impressive research demonstrates that Ludendorff's postwar efforts at myth-building were at least as significant as his role as a military leader.

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## **The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire**

**By Dominique Kirchner Reill. Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020. Pp. 312. Cloth \$35.00. ISBN 978-0674244245.**

Marta Verginella

University of Ljubljana

Following the end of World War I, Fiume saw one of its most tumultuous and watershed periods in the twentieth century. Between 1918 and 1924, governments of opposing geopolitical aspirations succeeded each other. The city's future was highly uncertain. Pro-Italian Fiumians strove for the city's integration into Italy, its pro-Yugoslav citizens demanded that the city become part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, while autonomists and socialists sought its independence. However, regardless of the strained postwar political atmosphere that was spurred by nationalist fervour, no blood was spilt in conflicts in Fiume, unlike a few other European border and multiethnic areas, and not only because international military troops were in charge of the public order in the city, along with the armies of the neighbouring states, i.e., Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

In the greater narrative of the interwar era, Fiume was, first and foremost, the scene of Gabriele D'Annunzio's proto-fascist, legionary adventure. The port city, which up to the disintegration of the Habsburg empire had been a multiethnic and multireligious *corpus separatum* within the Hungarian kingdom, became a symbol of *vittoria mutilata* or Italy's mutilated victory. Italian nationalists and the local irredentists reproached Italian diplomacy for being no match for international negotiators in Paris, too passive and failing to stand up to Woodrow Wilson's policy of the right of self-determination. Italian diplomats insisted that Fiume was Italian because half of the city's population identified as Italians but were not willing to leave the domain of the Entente's politics.

Dominique Kirchner Reill provides a convincing demonstration of how effective D'Annunzio's political campaign and that of his supporters was, how it contributed to the expansion of the nationalist myth that concealed the multiethnic past of the city and its

inhabitants. The city that was never part of the Kingdom of Italy began to embody Italy's mutilated victory, despite the fact that the majority of the city's army conscripts fought on the Austro-Hungarian side and only a few, i.e., the most zealous Italian patriots, went over to the Italian side as volunteers. It is thanks to Italian historiography and publishing, which recounted and preserved the legend of D'Annunzio and his reign in Fiume to this day, that this Italian poet-soldier and his legionaries became a synonym for the martyr city and that his military undertaking is regarded as a preliminary stage of Mussolini's rise. Even though the author offers D'Annunzio's arrival in Fiume and, first and foremost, the Christmas of Blood as an overture to her discussion of Fiume's postwar history (September 1919-January 1921), in the further course of the book she diverges significantly from the most established and ideologically tinted readings of the city's postwar history, concurrently pointing to their historiographical fragility. D'Annunzio is discussed as one of several important political players with a role in the Fiume crisis but far from a decisive one. Reill sheds historiographical light mostly on economic and social factors and their impact on everyday life, where state belonging and the rights of the local population were defined anew, but also on political players and practices. By way of a varied document base, she demonstrates how Fiume's elites, who were used to prewar institutionalised polycentrism as defined by Budapest, Vienna, and Fiume's autonomy, dealt with the layered sovereignty system. If the disintegration of the empire meant a destruction of the prewar institutional, economic, and commercial frameworks, within which Fiume experienced economic development and prosperity, the experience, knowledge, and awareness acquired by Fiume's entrepreneurial and political elites before the outbreak of World War I became a highly important resource in the new political context: "Fiumians adapted the vestiges of that empire to their newly isolated position and used them to push for a geopolitical reordering that satisfied their interests" (16).

National interests of individual political players, Italian and Croatian nationalists, autonomists, and socialists were reflected in postwar Fiume; however, their local belonging, rooted in the awareness of Fiume's autonomism and multiethnicity, played a very important part in their political decision-making. It is telling that the city's political authority strove to keep the prewar legislature and renewed many values that were rooted in the prewar period even when clearly demanding to be part of Italy. This was not only conservative behaviour of the local authorities – it was the ability to adjust to the new situation and an attempt to enforce local benefits and needs. In this highly uncertain period, when Fiume's society was faced with an unstable currency and shortages of the most basic goods, representatives of the local authorities stuck to well-established habits, practices, and values and, first and foremost, demonstrated a remarkable ability to negotiate with and manipulate external centres of authority. By analysing diverse archival materials of mostly Fiume provenance, the author successfully documents the persistent institutional continuity both in terms of administration and legislature. Fiume's political elite was not willing to give up the national agenda to the detriment of the multiethnic and multilingual world. It is true that its citizens were imbued with nationalist sentiments, that Fiume was flooded with Italian flags, that the names of streets and people were Italianized; however, this did not imply that the Italo-centric view prevailed or that the deviation from the past was radical. Despite the nationalist agitation, Fiume's bureaucratic body remained multilingual and its multiethnic civic culture tenacious. In schools, the process of Italianisation was not as radical and expeditious as it was in Istria and other parts of the Julian March which were integrated into Italy.

By taking a microhistorical approach that comes close to prosopography and attempts to provide a detailed list of the Fiume urban tissue, the author demonstrates what constituted Fiume's Italianness, what defined its postwar everyday life, the levers of political and economic operation of Fiume's inhabitants and elites. Shifting the historiographical focus from the macro to the micro level, from the global to the local and vice versa, allows Reill to draw attention to the specificity of the Fiume crisis and highlight its embeddedness in the broader international postwar context. By assessing continuities and discontinuities,

the weight of specific economic, social, and cultural factors, the author puts Fiume on the broader European postwar map, dealing with it as a pragmatic example of post-World War I and post-Habsburg studies. She provides an excellent demonstration of how individuals of both genders responded to watershed institutional and economic changes, how and with which means and ideas they sought to overcome the political and economic crisis that occurred after the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire. *The Fiume Crisis* holds a mirror to historiography which makes do with highlighting the surface when dealing with the political history of the Northern Adriatic and fails to plumb depths, as well as to historiography dealing with the history of post-World War I Europe that was not willing to re-analyse concepts by means of which Wilson's diplomatic policy in Paris was assessed prior to this book.

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## **Der Weimarer Reichstag. Die schleichende Ausschaltung, Entmachtung und Zerstörung eines Parlaments**

**By Philipp Austermann. Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau, 2020. Pp. 338. Paper \$35.00. ISBN 978-3412520144.**

Verena Wirtz

Universität der Bundeswehr

With his reconstruction of the “gradual elimination, disempowerment, and destruction” (reviewer's translation) of the Weimar parliament, Philipp Austermann, an expert on state and European law both in theory and practice, tries to reach two goals at once: to present a “reference for anyone interested in learning more about the work of the Reichstag” during the last three years of the Weimar Republic and a passionate “plea for liberal parliamentarism” addressed to the people and politicians of today (13).

As to be expected, these two goals contradict each other. Epistemologically it seems counterproductive to assess the Reichstag at a time when its legislative power was already limited by the various states of emergency issued by the executive powers. As Austermann rightly points out, from 1930 to 1933 the republic underwent a change from a parliamentary democracy to a presidential system. But according to Austermann, the fate of Weimar's democracy lay in the hands of a few “wrong m[e]n” (164): the Chancellors Heinrich Brüning, Kurt von Schleicher and Franz von Papen, as well as Reichspräsident Paul von Hindenburg, serving as Hitler's “Steigbügelhalter” (224).

Reproducing the classical plot of Weimar as a tragedy, Austermann opens his “drama” (91) with a parallelization of Germany in the 1920s and the 2020s, based on the popular, but premodern assumption that history could repeat itself. In chapter two he repeats the list of “fatal” continuities between the Weimar Republic and the German Empire (47). Consequently, in chapter three, the Reichstag's productive work in the “Golden Twenties” is presented only to highlight Weimar's “permanent mode of crisis” (15). Finally, the focus shifts to the last and “lethal phase of the crisis” (15): the parliament's “semi”, then “anti”, and finally “sham existence” (98, 167, 261), before the author closes with an outlook on the violent aftermath of the burning of the Reichstag and Hitler's Enabling Act.

The approach to depict the Reichstag as a reflection of the republic's fate is less innovative than the book's back cover suggests. In sharp contrast to the nuanced picture painted by Thomas Mergel in *Parliamentarische Kultur in der Weimarer Republik* (2002), Austermann's