

readable package, is an extremely valuable contribution to the history of the war. It is the only book of its kind out there, and herein, title aside, lies its true value. For this reason, I can heartily recommend this book for specialists and nonspecialists alike, even if its broader claims were both unconvincing and unnecessary. It is a terrific work of history.

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Since 1918

Reill, Dominique Kirchner. *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire*

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020. Pp. 312.

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“Austriaco? Tedesco? Croato? Inglese?” asks the waiter of the Coffeehouse in Dezső Kosztolanyi’s great Hungarian novel when the protagonist arrives in Fiume from the Hungarian plains to see for the first time the sea (*Ein Held seiner Zeit. Die Bekenntnisse des Kornél Esti* [1933; Reinbeck, 2005], 77). “Where I am from?” Esti replies to himself. “From where everybody comes. From the red den of his mother’s lap. ... I am human, just like you, my dear old Italian, as good and as bad. Most of all, I am sensitive and curious. Everything and everybody interests me. I like everything and everybody, all peoples, all lands. I am everybody and nobody.”

The scene provides us with an excellent insight into the world described in Dominique Kirchner Reill’s fascinating new book on Fiume, where people were not necessarily indifferent to a sense of national belonging but followed a pragmatic approach when it came to the situations of daily life. As the book’s subtitle makes clear, her account of the Fiume Crisis is based not on what comes next but on what had been there before. It deals with “life in the wake of the Habsburg Empire.” This approach means that Reill distinguishes herself from teleological accounts of the crisis that have attempted to explain the events of 1919–20 as preludes to Italian Fascism. As Reill shows, local support for Gabriele D’Annunzio’s attempted annexation of the city to the Kingdom of Italy was not rooted in long nurtured nationalist ideals but in pragmatic decisions people took in response to their city’s artificial separation from its hinterland, when due to international decisions Fiume lost the autonomous status it had enjoyed under Habsburg and Hungarian rule.

Fiumians accepted the prospect of belonging to an Italian nation-state in the same way they had previously lived as imperial citizens within the Kingdom of Hungary. Living as Fiumians in Hungary had meant a certain degree of assimilation, as would belonging to a centralized Italian nation-state. Their attitudes toward these decisions suggest that the ideas of the Wilsonian nation builders, which had resulted in the undoing of imperial melting pots like Fiume, were far from the realities of the people who lived in these places. A history from below, Reill’s study shows striking parallels to the problems of other postimperial regions after World War I—places such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Galicia, or the Bukovina. She describes a city in which about 50 percent of the population spoke Italian, but 50 percent spoke languages other than Italian; where a large proportion of the population had hybrid identities and mastered several languages; and where a local sense of belonging often counted for more than nationality. People from Fiume could simultaneously identify as Italians, Hungarian patriots, or loyal Habsburg citizens.

Reill's book starts with an account of what Fiume's "duce," Gabriele D'Annunzio, termed the "Christmas of Blood," when in 1920 the Kingdom of Italy attacked and invaded Fiume to make it accept its internationally determined status as a Free State. The reason for the attack was that Italy feared retaliation on behalf of the international powers should it tolerate D'Annunzio's repeated requests for annexation. Despite the far greater brutality of the events in L'viv/Lwow, the bloodshed directed against the Ruthenian minority in interwar Poland, or the violence related to the population exchanges in the Balkans, the military action in interwar Fiume has always attracted the curiosity of historians, especially in Italy. The "Christmas of Blood" has also received more attention than the violence directed at the city's non-Italian population when Mussolini finally annexed the city in 1924 or the extermination of its Jewish population by Nazi Germany in 1943. The reason for historians' keen interest in the "Christmas of Blood" is that it counts as a key event in the rebellion against Italy's liberal state and in Mussolini's rise to power. Reill shows that this perspective on future developments distorts the view on the origins of the events, which can be found in the disintegration of the empire at the end of the Great War. Her viewpoint invites a reading of the Fiume crisis in the context of other moments of violence connected to the empire's collapse, making her book particularly relevant to historians of Habsburg Europe, while challenging standard accounts of modern Italian history. The history of interwar Fiume is much more than an Italian story, more than the prehistory of Italian Fascism.

Extremely erudite, well-written, and illustrated with many astonishing photographs from local archives, Reill's beautiful book presents the Fiume Crisis through several closely related case studies, taking her readers from stories about money, law, and citizenship to accounts of the educational system and the uses of propaganda by the different political agents involved in the crisis. The chapters present us with various instruments to construct and deconstruct identities, which served local authorities to defy Wilson's concept of the Free State and to prepare the city's population to accept Italian annexation as the best possible alternative to an empire that was no more. As Reill shows, the quest for annexation had more to do with imperial habits than with nationalist convictions.

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Bonoldi, Andrea, Andrea Leonardi, and Cinzia Lorandini, eds. Wartime and Peacetime Inflation in Austria-Hungary and Italy (1914–1925)

Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2019. Pp. 162.

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As Andrea Bonoldi notes in his introduction to this collection of scholarly articles on wartime and peacetime inflation in Austria-Hungary and Italy, the economies of the two belligerents showed certain commonalities at the war's outset. Both countries had similar GDP per capita ratios, lacked a sophisticated tax system, and resorted heavily to borrowing and printing money to finance war. They had economies that were less developed than those of Germany, France, or Great Britain, implemented restrictions on currency exchange, and experienced higher rates of annual inflation. While a rigorous comparative study would have had to grapple with the innumerable and important ways in which these two belligerents also differed from each other, the papers collected for this book do not embrace the comparative method, instead presenting the reader with national case studies.