

The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire. By *Dominique Kirchner Reill*.
Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020. Pp. xvi+290.
\$35.00.

For her second monograph, Adriatic specialist Dominique Reill turns to the port city of Fiume (today Rijeka, in Croatia) during the three years subsequent to the implosion of the Habsburg Empire in 1918. The smallest “successor state” to Austria-Hungary, Fiume most often draws the attention of European historians due to the international crisis generated in 1919, when Italian paramilitaries led by the poet, war hero, and proto-fascist Gabriele D’Annunzio occupied the city in an attempt to claim it for the Italian Kingdom. Reill begins her history with what D’Annunzio—in typically hyperbolic fashion—later termed the “Christmas of Blood,” when Italian troops finally ended the occupation at the end of 1920, thus paving the way for the confirmation of Fiume’s position as a “free state” the following year.

Where many historians have subsequently focused on this episode as a key moment in Italy’s—and Europe’s—path to fascism, Reill seeks to open up alternative narratives, above all by concentrating on the long-neglected story of the city itself. Hence, the book aims, firstly, to “dispute commonly held assumptions about the rise of charismatic fascism,” and secondly, to foreground “the experiences of the kaleidoscope of communities and individuals who called Fiume home” (18). Lastly, Reill further strives “to re-situate Fiume in its postwar cultural and geographical context” (20), namely, postimperial Central and Eastern Europe. In doing so, the author—in line with other scholars—contests the import of imperial collapse: “not only did imperial mindsets continue, they may actually have been strengthened, for it was now the former imperial subjects promoting the system, not a metropole forcing them to do so” (19).

The first chapter offers a lively discussion of the “different Fiume stories” associated, respectively, with the diplomatic debacle resulting from US President Woodrow Wilson’s convoluted efforts at establishing Fiume as a free state under League of Nations protection; the concerted campaign for national self-determination led by the city’s Italian national elite and supportive newspapers in and outside Italy; and the legend of Fiume as the birth of a new Italy, fostered initially by D’Annunzio and later by the Italian Fascists. Subsequent chapters explore “how people lived within, around and against the state structures they encountered daily in a time of political uncertainty, economic scarcity, and widespread regional upheaval” (18). Thus, chapter 2 explores the economic tribulations of Fiume’s citizens after the end of Habsburg rule. Formerly enjoying broad autonomy as a *corpus separatum* under the authority of Hungary, Fiume had been a veritable boomtown prior to 1914. Faced with a variety of differently stamped currencies, Fiumians sought to maintain established networks of trade and communication. In this multinational city of Italians, Croats, Slovenes, Hungarians, Germans, and others, most followed a “primacy of economics” in accepting potential annexation to Italy if it were to mean a more valuable currency (106–7).

If economic motivations thus cut across national feelings, questions of law and citizenship were equally complex. In chapter 3, Reill explores how the city government sought to adapt the “layered sovereignty” prevalent before 1914 in the shape of Fiumian autonomy, the Hungarian legal system, and membership of Austria-Hungary. Hence, city elders in practice retained much of the former legislation they deemed convenient, while also adopting some Italian legal codes in anticipation of the annexation that the port’s Italian social and political elite desired. Chapter 4 pursues these issues further with regard to citizenship, which was connected to questions of residency and domicile. In order to leave the possibility

of Italian citizenship open, the city government concentrated on restricting domicile rights to those long resident in the city, also in order not to overwhelm pressed municipal resources. Newcomers were not granted such rights and, where possible, they were sent back to their place of domicile. Finally, chapter 5 explores senses of self and questions of nationalism and propaganda. While the city government continued to pursue a national agenda focused on annexation by Italy, Reill shows that this masked greater malleability in practice, as desires for the implementation of Italian monolingualism proved difficult in everyday life (181). Moreover, suggests Reill, many Fiumians embraced the city's multinational heritage. After a March 1919 law encouraged citizens "to reintegrate or rectify names of Italian origin as well as to change or modify foreign family names" (199), only 161 heads of household—in a city of over 50,000 inhabitants consisting of families with mostly non-Italian surnames—availed themselves of this opportunity by April 1921 (204). In sum, the author concludes, "extreme nationalism and Fascism did not overwhelm Fiume when armistices were signed or when D'Annunzio came driving in" (227). Fiume was not immediately torn apart by violence, unlike other shatter-zones of empire in the period 1918–21. Instead, Reill suggests, "most Fiumians (though not all)" aimed "to continue what they had been doing, but this time 'Italianly' instead of 'Habsburgly.'" Rather than a story of leaving imperialism through nationalization, their history was one of transitioning to a new form of locally centered imperialism, with Italy standing in for the Habsburgs" (224).

Reill's interesting case study makes an important contribution to the burgeoning literature on post-1918 Europe and the debate on continuities between empires and nation-states. She unearths a lot of intriguing material, and there is much ingenuity and craft to her work. Above all, she provides a welcome focus on urban history and seeks to recover the agency of local historical actors. Nevertheless, one could certainly debate the framing of the main argument. The Fiumian elite—and considerable sections of the population—sought to preserve local economic interests, but what precisely did the "imperial" dimension of this program consist of, beyond the desire to retain local autonomy? Leaving aside the more minor point of whether Fiume possessed an "imperial" or more of a "royal" (Hungarian) legacy, there is no great evidence of people lamenting the end of the Habsburg dynasty and no mention of the last Emperor-King Charles (his restoration efforts in Hungary seemingly had no echo in Fiume). From a different direction, Reill's emphasis on the city's multinational legacy may well offer a useful corrective to traditional narratives, but it potentially underplays key developments in the region. Above all, in stopping short of the Fascist coup of March 1922, which removed the old city elite from power, one comes away feeling that there is more to be told than the already complex tales woven here.

Ultimately, therefore, this accomplished study invites further discussion and research on a key moment in European history. Reill confirms her reputation as a fine scholar, well attuned to the nuances and waves of the Adriatic region's history.

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The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle? Sovietization and Americanization in a Communist Country. By *Zsuzsanna Varga*. Translated by *Frank T. Zsigó*. The Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series. Edited by *Mark Kramer*.

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Varga's recent work interprets the history of postwar Hungarian agriculture within the framework of model transfers. In her interpretation, the reorganization of agriculture first