

masculinity would have been warranted, however. The author's thorough review of the literature led her, of course, to critically important work by such historians as Paul Lerner, yet how the underlying gender norms of fighting and service impacted the soldiers caught in the medical system was only mentioned in passing or relegated near the end of the book, and the masculinities of the psychiatrists as they reached different conclusions about diagnosing dissent were not considered.

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Österreich-Ungarn, Deutschland und der Friede. Oktober 1916 bis November 1918

By Georg Stacher. Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau, 2020. Pp. 971. Cloth €120.00. ISBN 978-3205204107.

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In late summer 1916, Emperor Wilhelm II entrusted the German High Command to Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff, based on their successful record on the Eastern Front over the previous two years. They soon received authority over war production and, in the consensus opinion of historians (at least since Martin Kitchen's *The Silent Dictatorship* [1976]), functioned as *de facto* rulers of Germany for the rest of the war, pursuing a victorious peace which led to disaster for their own country and doom for its hapless ally, Austria-Hungary. Against this backdrop, the best-known peace efforts on the part of the Central Powers are the Reichstag's Peace Resolution of July 1917, passed by a coalition of Social Democrats, the Catholic Center, and Progressives dissenting from the High Command's vision of the endgame, and the Sixtus Affair overture by the last Habsburg emperor, Karl, via his brother-in-law, Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma, for a separate peace between Austria-Hungary and the Allies. Recent books by Horst Afflerbach (*Auf Messers Schneide. Wie das Deutsche Reich der Ersten Weltkrieg velor* [2018]) and Philip Zelikow (*The Road Less Traveled: The Secret Battle to End the Great War, 1916–1917* [2021]) have helped amend the record to account for the extensive, serious efforts by leading figures from the Central Powers to negotiate an end to the war. Georg Stacher's work has the same purpose, focusing primarily on Austria-Hungary in the context of its relationship with Germany, and likewise makes a significant contribution to the literature.

Stacher's point of departure is a peace proposal presented by Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Baron (later Count) Stephan Burián on October 18, 1916 to German chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, as the bloody, indecisive battles of 1916 on the Western, Italian, and Eastern Fronts were winding down. The initiative predated the death of Emperor Franz Joseph on November 21 but gained momentum with the encouragement of his successor, Emperor Karl. The result was a deliberately vague note from Bethmann Hollweg, on behalf of the Central Powers, delivered on December 12 to the Vatican, the United States, and other neutral countries, proposing a peace conference with the Allies. U.S. president Woodrow Wilson responded to the note by asking the belligerents to present their terms, to ascertain "how near the haven of peace may be," in the words of his secretary of state, Robert Lansing (38). Bethmann Hollweg then refused to show the hand of the Central Powers unless the Allies first replied to his note. Their response to Wilson on

January 10, 1917, listed more or less the same terms eventually incorporated into the Versailles Treaty. Germany and Austria-Hungary then resumed unrestricted submarine warfare, prompting the United States to break diplomatic relations with Germany and, on April 6, declare war.

In the traditional metanarrative of the First World War, serious efforts for a negotiated peace ended at that point. But as Stacher documents, in considerable detail, the diplomatic chess match that started late in 1916 continued, as each side experienced setbacks that gave new life to peace efforts. During 1917 alone, the Allies endured the February and October Revolutions in Russia, the Bolshevik government's decision to leave the war, the widespread mutinies in France after the failure of the Nivelle offensive, and Italy's disastrous defeat at Caporetto. Meanwhile, in the Central Powers, Wilhelm II and Karl sought to bolster the home front with promises of postwar political reform that only made more people more impatient for the war to end. Most governments felt compelled to respond, on some level, to the peace rhetoric of Lenin and Wilson and, to a much lesser extent, the peace appeals of Pope Benedict XV. Remarkably, Wilson's Fourteen Points of January 1918 caused Austro-Hungarian leaders to continue to view him as a potential mediator, even though the United States had declared war on the Dual Monarchy a month earlier.

Stacher's approach is "to explain the material as far as possible through the words of the sources themselves" (16). Thus, his work of nearly a thousand pages includes the equivalent of hundreds of pages of documents quoted extensively throughout the text, often a page or half-page at a time, through which his large cast of characters tell the story of their proposals and counterproposals, calculations and miscalculations, and ultimately their despair, as the last hopes for an acceptable peace slipped away. While the vast majority of his documentation is from Austrian archives, Stacher also uses some Bavarian archival collections as well as a great number of published documents, diaries, and memoirs. Owing to his focus on the Austro-Hungarian perspective, the central figures are Emperor Karl and his foreign ministers Burián (until December 1916), Count Ottokar Czernin (December 1916 to April 1918), then Burián again till the end of the war, primarily in their interactions with their German counterparts, Bethmann Hollweg and his successors, but also Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and Reichstag figures such as Matthias Erzberger of the Center Party, primary author of the Peace Resolution of 1917. Stacher achieves his goal of revising the traditional view of Emperor Karl, largely shaped by his widow, Empress Zita, over the decades between his death in 1922 and hers in 1989. The emperor comes away with his halo tarnished a bit (no small matter, as he was beatified by the Catholic Church in 2004 and is one step away from sainthood). Zita's role in shaping her husband's views, and even his correspondence, appears even greater than previously imagined; indeed, Stacher presents proof that Karl's damage-control telegram to Wilhelm II in the wake of the Sixtus Affair was actually written by Zita (681).

That, in the opinion of this reviewer, is the closest thing to a bombshell revealed in this formidable tome, but even scholars who teach and write about the Central Powers in the First World War will come away humbled by the experience of reading it. By exploring every nuance and taking the reader through every twist and turn, Stacher presents a lot of history that very few of us know, but most of it is in accounting for the trial balloons, the dead ends, and the gradual evolution of plans and proposals that most scholars present and discuss only in their ultimate forms. In the end, there are no great revelations or fundamental alterations to the existing narrative, just a much more complete picture of *wie es eigentlich gewesen war*, in the true Rankean sense.