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Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War

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prorogue the Duma and take personal command of the war at the front. According to Pipes, "the decisions which Nicholas took in August 1915 made a revolution unavoidable. Russia could have averted a revolutionary upheaval only on one condition: if the unpopular bureaucracy, with its administrative and police apparatus, made common cause with the popular but inexperienced liberal and liberal-conservative intelligentsia."

The spontaneous revolution in February brought not only the end of tsarist rule in Russia but also a weak but accountable Provisional Government that was beholden to an unaccountable and hostile Provisional Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. Trotsky subsequently utilized the soviets as a cover for initiating the Bolshevik coup. Lenin completed the coup by emasculating the soviets and proroguing the Constituent Assembly. As these highlights indicate, Pipes believes that political events were more responsible for bringing revolution than were social problems (e.g., the dislocation of peasants or alienation of workers). This perspective allows the author to establish the continuity between Russian patrimonialism and Soviet totalitarianism—in the person of Lenin.

Richard Pipes's treatment of Lenin is a bit much. Not only is too much made about his "cowardice," given the admitted paucity of evidence, but what is one to make of the following? "To reconstruct his thinking, it is necessary, therefore, to proceed retroactively, from known deeds to concealed intentions." Are we to discount totally the possibility of tactical adjustments in response to events? Nevertheless, it is from this questionable methodology that Pipes (less than two pages later) has Lenin personifying the critical, deterministic link between Russian patrimonialism and Soviet totalitarianism. Pipes says, "This [militarized] outlook on politics Lenin drew from the inner depths of his personality, in which the lust for domination combined with the patrimonial political culture shaped in the Russia of Alexander III in which he had grown up. But the theoretical justification for these psychological impulses and this cultural legacy he found in Marx's comments on the Paris Commune. Marx's writings...served to justify his destructive instincts and provided a rationale for his desire to erect a new order: an order all-encompassing in its 'totalitarian' aspiration."

Such is the narrow and inadequate interpretation of Russian history which emerges from an otherwise rich and engaging work.

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Williamson, Samuel R., Jr. *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War.* New York: St. Martin's, 1991. 272pp. (No price given)

This publisher's series, *The Making of the Twentieth Century*, has included to date works on the origins of the First World War for Britain (Z. Steiner),

France (J. Keiger), Germany (V. Berghahn), Italy (J. Bosworth), and Russia (D. Leiven). Williamson, president of the University of the South, completes the survey with this volume. He is most qualified to do so, having spent the past two decades completing a two-volume history of the Habsburg monarchy from 1910 to 1914. He is perhaps best known for *The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914* (1969).

The book is divided into two major sections: the first six chapters examine the nature of the Dual Monarchy and how it functioned, while the last four analyze decision making during the Balkan Wars and the July Crisis of 1914. The research was conducted in the major Austrian military and political archives and includes the personal papers of Archduke Francis Ferdinand. The work is beautifully crafted and is written in an impeccable style.

Williamson's major purpose is to correct the Germanocentric view of the First World War partially created by Fritz Fischer's pioneering studies. Hence, the author reminds us that the initiative for war was Vienna's, not Berlin's: "The steps that pushed Europe toward war were taken in Vienna." Williamson details how a seasoned set of policymakers, enjoying "unusually complete and united backing" in the monarchy, opted for war in 1914. The military, in the words of the chief of the general staff, wanted "war, war, war." The Foreign Office sought nothing less than a *"final and fundamental reckoning"* with Serbia. The emperor, while recognizing the "tragedy of that contemporary moment," in the end concurred that war was the only solution to the dynasty's ethnic problems.

Despite this "now or never" mentality, Austria-Hungary was ill-prepared for war in 1914. The bulk of the army was on harvest-leave until 25 July, thus precluding a lightning strike against Serbia. Secondly, General Conrad von Hötzendorf committed a major strategic error. On 30 July, ignoring news of pending Russian military measures, he ordered his offensive force to move southward; when Russia ordered mobilization on 31 July, von Hötzendorf agreed with his railway staff that the troops should continue south and then reembark and head northward. They arrived in time to influence neither theater.

Williamson's damning conclusion is that von Hötzendorf dispatched the force against Serbia in order to "subvert a diplomatic solution." Put differently, the general had "reacted in an almost classical fashion by ignoring the information that contradicted what he wanted most—war against Serbia." In the end, Habsburg prospects rested upon hopes and illusions (short war, power of the offensive) rather than realistic chances of success. Finally, Williamson rejects the apologia that Vienna pursued no war aims. Russian Poland and the Ukraine emerged in short order on such a wish-list. And in every post-war scenario concocted at Vienna, Austria-Hungary emerged as the dominant power in the Balkans,

"supplanting Russia and excluding Germany."

In conclusion, Williamson has provided a superb corrective to the Germanocentric view of the origins of the First World War. In crisp, well-chiseled sentences the author has laid out the motivations that prompted Vienna to choose war in 1914 as well as both their short-term and long-term results. A more balanced interpretation of the July Crisis of 1914 should emerge as a result of his labors.

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Sumida, Jon Tetsuro. *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology and British Naval Policy 1889-1914*. Scranton, Pa.: Harper Collins, 1989. 377pp. $70

Sumida has offered a study that will profoundly influence our understanding of the Royal Navy before World War I and, in the widest sense, how we view the relationships between technology, finance, and government policy.

The author traces the growth of British naval spending while Britain faced emerging threats from continental Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He connects the pressing requirement to achieve economies in the defence votes with the appointment of the reformist John Fisher as First Sea Lord in 1904. The key to Fisher's confidence that he could improve Britain's imperial security while effecting reductions in naval spending was his belief in the potential of radical technical innovation, particularly the all-big-gun ship, the first of which was the *Dreadnought* of 1906.

Sumida explains Fisher's attempts to embody his ideal fighting ship in a vessel with the endurance and speed necessary to find its opponents and force them into action at a range of its own choosing—at which its superior gunnery ensured that there could be no effective reply. Critical to Fisher's plans for such a "super ship" was his assumption (he did not fully comprehend the complex issues involved) that Britain was on the verge of producing a fire control system that could operate effectively in the worst conditions of sea and visibility when both target and firing platform were manoeuvring, achieving hits at ranges at which Britain's opponents could not. The ideal fighting ship, in Fisher's words, was "never meant to get in [the] enemy's range!" and thus did not require heavy armour.

The failure of the fire control project defeated the concept. Without such predictive systems, it was too easy (as the Germans were to demonstrate) to produce a ship of equal gunpower and speed with superior protection. Because the story of gunnery fire control has never before been comprehensively explained, a popular belief has developed that the *Dreadnought* represented the real "revolution" in capital ship design, and that the faster but ill-protected battle cruisers represented an evolutionary cul-de-sac because of their vulnerability to vessels with better