

THE GENTLEMEN NEGOTIATORS: A DIPLOMATIC HISTORY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR. By Z. A. B. Zeman. New York: Macmillan, 1971. xi, 402 pp. \$9.95.

A sustaining interest in World War I has produced a plethora of studies of that holocaust. Most of them establish irrefutable evidence of the absolute idiocy of that conflict. Zeman, an English scholar already noted for his studies of German policy toward the Bolsheviks, Nazi propaganda, the decline of the Habsburg Monarchy, and other studies of twentieth-century history, has turned his acerbic pen to a series of personal portraits. Those historians schooled in England possess a facility—rare among Americans of the same profession—to transform the trite into sparkling prose. Barbara Tuchman is one of those rare Americans who can perform the same miracle, and her remarkable *Guns of August* compares favorably with Zeman's study. Whereas most studies of the war have treated causes and consequences, this delightful work gives us glimpses of the statesmen who lacked statesmanship, politicians who treated the war as a vehicle for re-election (how well Zeman substantiates Arno Mayer's *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking!*), the horse-trading characteristics of efforts to woo the neutrals into belligerency, and the fruitless attempts to arrange separate peace treaties.

A memorable example of Zeman's skill in proving the ineptitude of those entrusted with considerable authority is apparently taken from his excellent study of Alexander Helphand ("Parvus"), *Merchant of Revolution*, who negotiated with the German Foreign Ministry and whose efforts contributed to Lenin's fateful return to Russia in 1917. Helphand was an intimate of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, the German diplomat whose greater fame rests with the Treaty of Versailles. Zeman tells us more about the count than anything else available. Although he was attracted to Helphand's world of radicalism, he was far from being a part of it. A member of an old Holstein family related to the Danish royal house, Rantzau had served in the Foreign Ministry in St. Petersburg and elsewhere, becoming envoy to Denmark in 1917 when he was forty-two years old: "He was an intelligent, open-minded homosexual; he could be, and frequently was, icily reserved and elaborately polite. He had a liking for Helphand: not because of what he was—flamboyant, *nouveau riche*, in the company of big blondes—but because of what he stood for." This vignette, and a hundred similar ones which punctuate this popularized study, mark Zeman's work as a milestone in what skillful prose can do to arouse and sustain interest in history. Surely Zeman fails to include many essential items in what purports to be a diplomatic history of the war. But he does succeed in making the war behind the war as exciting and useless as most of the battles which have had our attention until recently.

SHERMAN D. SPECTOR
Russell Sage College

REVOLUTION IN CENTRAL EUROPE, 1918–1919. By F. L. Carsten. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972. 360 pp. \$11.95.

The author of standard monographs on Prussia, the German army, and fascism has now turned to the revolutions in Imperial Germany and the Habsburg Monarchy with the same conscientiousness and elegant detachment which mark his earlier writings. The result is a fine handbook which can be used with confidence, even

though the proper title (admittedly cumbersome) would be "Councils, People's Militias, Extremist Parties, and Free Corps Units in Germany and German-Austria, with Some Consideration of Similar Phenomena in Prague and Budapest."

For the German-speaking lands the research is based on all the major archival collections; for Hungary and Czechoslovakia it is based mainly on secondary sources in Western languages. Conclusions are drawn sharply and frequently, and even if there are no great surprises, it is still shattering to read from the pen of a foremost historian that in 1918–19 democratization was a real possibility but it failed mainly because of the miscalculations and inferiority complex of German Social Democracy. The fall of 1918 saw genuine mass movements in Central Europe, not for socialist experiments or for a permanent revolution, Professor Carsten says, but for peace, the creation of soldiers' and workers' councils, parliamentary government, and democratization. Although these mass movements had similar origins and motivation, the results differed fundamentally in Austria, where there was temporary success, and in Germany, where democracy failed almost immediately. In Austria the old army disbanded at the end of the war, demobilization went smoothly, a people's militia was set up rapidly, and the civil service was reorganized under democratic leadership. The councils in Austria soon fell under the sway of the Social Democrats, while the far Left never became truly dangerous. In Germany the opposite was true. The army did not disband, the High Command was allowed to continue in the mistaken assumption that it alone could demobilize the soldiers, and the people's army was small, not quite reliable, and soon suppressed by the generals. The old bureaucrats were kept in office; the councils were aggressive and dictatorial, but they soon split and lost all power; and the far Left was a real danger but was exterminated by the Free Corps, which made no distinction between putschists and loyal Social Democrats. The end result was the same in both countries: the rise of right-wing forces. But Social Democratic determination in Germany could have saved the whole of Central Europe. The fault lay also with German and Austrian history and with the conservatism of the peasants. All this, and more, is presented by Professor Carsten through a skillful balancing of topical and narrative treatments.

ISTVAN DEAK
Columbia University

LOCARNO DIPLOMACY: GERMANY AND THE WEST: 1925–1929. By
Jon Jacobson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972. xii, 420 pp. \$13.00.

This is an important book. Concerned with the little-explored period 1925–29, it offers a judicious and profound analysis based on British, German, and American archives, and an impressive array of printed sources and historical literature. It is really the first time that post-Locarno diplomacy has been so exhaustively presented, although, as the subtitle indicates, the author confines himself to German-French-British relations rather than attempting to cover all of Europe. Jacobson does draw the reader's attention to the most important Russian, Italian, and East European aspects of international politics, but treats them marginally. German-Russian secret military cooperation is barely mentioned, and the name of Seeckt seldom appears. True, Jacobson makes one important contribution by showing that the Locarno Triplice was hardly ever used against the Soviet Union, a point which is at complete variance with the standard "Marxist" interpretations. Franco-Italian and British-