

Karl Graf Stürgkh - a war-monger?

According to the letter seal, the official letter* dated May 6, 1913, comes from the Presidium of the KuK Ministry of Public Works in Vienna and is sent to the Prime Minister Karl Graf Stürgkh for opening by his own hand to Herrengasse 7 in Vienna as postage paid official matter and recommended. The building of Herrengasse 7 is also called Modeneser Palast or chic, Palais Modena - a house with tradition. From 1844, it housed the supreme police and censorship court, and from 1872, the presidency of the Council of Ministers, including the office and apartment of the prime minister, thus in 1913 the recipient of the letter in question. It is the control center in the Austrian Empire at that time.



Karl Stürgkh was born in Graz in 1859, attended grammar school in the city, studied law there, and entered the civil service as a secondary school teacher. As KuK Minister of Education, he appoints Albert Einstein as a professor at the German University in Prague. In 1909/1910, dry weather leads to crop failures, food prices double by 1911 and lead to demonstrations on 17.9.1911, peaceful at first, but soon escalating after mobs (Social Democrat Otto Bauer calls them lumpenproletariat in 1931) destroy buildings, lanterns, windows and set fire to buildings and streetcars, first in downtown Vienna, then in Ottakring. The military now shoots at the demonstrators, 4 dead, hundreds injured. Prime Minister Paul Gautsch resigns, Karl Graf Stürgkh takes over his post. In the Imperial Council, mainly by the Czechs, there is obstructionism and then adjournment, decisions can no longer be made; the country is governed by imperial decrees following the Basic Law of the State. In June 1914 - after the assassination in Sarajevo - the warmongering agitators from politics and the military - including Stürgkh - can assert themselves and work towards a warlike confrontation with Serbia. The Austrian parliament now does not influence the declaration of war on Serbia; the 84-year-old emperor, as the final decision-maker, is no longer equal to the political situation. Stürgkh continues to rule by decree; he

ignores calls from the opposition for parliamentary decisions; freedom of the press is restricted by massive press censorship.

On October 21, 1916, the Social Democratic politician Friedrich Adler, son of the Social Democrat Victor Adler, shoots Austrian Prime Minister Stürgkh in the Hotel Meissl & Schadn in Vienna. Adler is sentenced to death, initially pardoned to 18 years in prison by Emperor Charles I, and amnestied in 1918.

Wikipedia quotes Hugo Hantsch, Benedictine monk, university professor, chairman of the Commission for the Modern History of Austria: Stürgkh's proposals [Hinterhältige Scheinverträge] on Italian policy such as "...whether it would not be dangerous simply to wait until Italy decides to take aggressive action against us and whether an attempt should not be made to deceive it by some kind of secret treaty and so get over the danger zone of the next few weeks. Against brigands such as the Italians were now, he said, no diplomatic dodge was too bad. He would therefore have no moral qualms about betraying the Italians now," cast a telling picture of the person and politician Stürgkh. What Hantsch did not mention was that Italy had long since concluded a secret treaty with the British in 1915: for betraying the Austrian monarchy, Italy was to be richly rewarded: South Tyrol and, above all, Dalmatia. After World War I, however, the British did not keep their side of the bargain, which in Italy - out of bitterness at the British deception - opened the way for the Fascists under the Duce.

Further reading: Wikipedia; exhibit "The Puppeteer"; R.G.D. Laffan 1989: The Serbs - The Guardians of the Gate.

**For official letters, anything can be themed in Thematic Philately, thus also in this case e.g. the addressee of this letter.*