

The book is organized in three parts, each subdivided into chapters. The first four chapters in Part One are dedicated to Weyprecht's early years in the navy before he became a highly respected naval officer. Mazzoli is able to put Weyprecht's development into the context of the uneasy multicultural coexistence within the Austrian Empire and other major issues of the time. Chapters five and six discuss how Weyprecht developed his interests in science and gained knowledge of the polar regions.

Part Two is divided into nine chapters that cover the beginning of Austrian polar research, including the ambition in this field of Hans von Wilczek, a wealthy man who was very interested in science and polar exploration. Wilczek provided financial support not only for humanitarian and social initiatives, but also for polar expeditions. He funded an Arctic expedition led by Weyprecht and undertook his own expedition at the same time, leaving depots at places Weyprecht might pass. The remaining chapters of Part Two describe the Austro-Hungarian Arctic Expedition of 1872–74 in great detail. Here Mazzoli also explores the complex, confrontational relationship between the calm and attentive Weyprecht, leader of the entire expedition, and Julius Payer, the adventurous and ambitious army officer who led the land expeditions.

Part Three has nine chapters with the overarching theme “a new age of international scientific research” (p. 277). Weyprecht was convinced that the type of scientific studies usually conducted in the course of exploration did not sufficiently explain the complex meteorological, magnetic, and earth science problems encountered. Chapters two to five cover the long and complex path that led to the first IPY (1882–83). The conflicts between the geographical institutions and individual personalities are well described, as are international political conflicts, such as the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78). The diplomatic difficulties caused by these conflicts delayed the possibility of international science collaboration. Weyprecht was passionate about the benefits of collaboration, and despite many obstacles, he advocated for this at several congresses and conferences. Finally, in 1879 at the International Meteorological Congress in Rome and then at the following International Polar Conferences in Hamburg (1879) and Bern (1880), progress was made, and plans for an international program were formed.

The strength of the book is its focus on Weyprecht's development as leader of the Austro-Hungarian Arctic Expedition and promotor of the First International Polar Year. Weyprecht was one of the few visionaries of his time; he realized that earth and climate science could help us to understand our earth systems and that the necessary information could be obtained only by coordinated survey and observation, not in random expeditions. At a time when discoveries were highly political and economically motivated, Weyprecht and his supporters pushed science. Unfortunately, Weyprecht died in 1881, at age 42, before his idea became reality with the First International Polar Year in 1882–83.

CARL WEYPRECHT AND THE INTERNATIONAL POLAR YEARS. By ENRICO MAZZOLI. Trieste, Italy: Luglioprint, 2016. ISBN 978-88-6803-147-3. 460 p., maps, b&w illus., colour insert, appendix, bib., index. Softbound. €38.00.

The author's objectives are to introduce Carl Weyprecht as an experienced scientist and strong leader and, at the same time, provide a fresh outlook on Weyprecht's scientific achievements. To demonstrate Weyprecht's legacy, Mazzoli focuses on the development of the First International Polar Year (IPY) in 1882–83, particularly its outcome. He gives a broader picture in his regrettably brief description of the second IPY (1932–33) and goes into more detail on the International Geophysical Year (1957–59). He finishes the book with a description of the last International Polar Year (2007–09) and other recent international collaborations in polar science.

The book also has some weaknesses. The vague referencing is frustrating at times, making the book not very helpful for fellow researchers. In particular, the lack of a primary source reference list is disappointing. Mazzoli in his introduction points out that new material has been discovered, but the reference list contains only literature that is already known. However, the book is still an interesting read for a wider audience that is not so familiar with the First International Polar Year. The text also has some spelling mistakes and wrong expressions (e.g., p. 5) and some inconsistency in the format (e.g., p. 63). This, however, seems to be an editorial issue. The content is well chosen to present Weyprecht's life, but the narrative at times does not flow well. Readers may sometimes find this awkward writing distracting.

The appendix provides some interesting extras. Very useful is the list of commemorations of Weyprecht's achievements (p. 417–418). These include places that have honoured him, the “Weyprecht Payer Marsch” that Eduard Strauss composed in honour of the two explorers, awards made in Weyprecht's name (e.g., the Weyprecht Medal for outstanding achievement in polar science), and museums with related displays. The convenient index of towns mentioned in the book gives their former and current names and the countries where they are located now. A graphological analysis of Weyprecht's handwriting is an interesting detail to show his very special nature and character. The book has a rich collection of pictures and maps, but the fact that they are reproduced only in black and white diminishes their impact when one has seen the originals.

I recommend the book for a wider audience interested in polar history. For academics, it is a comprehensive read despite the lack of primary sources. The German and Austro-Hungarian polar expeditions are not well known to an English reading audience and therefore this book is a great contribution to international polar literature.

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