

# Franz Joseph and Elisabeth: The Last Great Monarchs of Austria-Hungary

Karen Owens

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## Franz Joseph and Elisabeth: The Last Great Monarchs of **Austria-Hungary**

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In 1848, an 18-year-old boy assumed the throne of Austria, one of the most powerful countries in Europe. He would be its last significant emperor, the only monarch to serve two countries, and the last cogent head of the prestigious Habsburg dynasty. Emperor Franz Joseph's reign was marked by revolutions, often fueled by rising liberalism and nationalism, and wars orchestrated by conquering architects such as Napoleon, Metternich, and Bismarck. This book gives attention to these political and cultural events, but it is essentially a biography of Emperor Franz Joseph and his enigmatic wife, Empress Elisabeth. Franz Joseph, with an overwhelming sense of dynastic responsibility, played all the roles assigned to him as Emperor. Elisabeth played none, as a wife, mother or Empress. Many factors played a part in her "abdication" and in the decisions Franz Joseph made during his reign--none more enigmatic than the self-proclaimed Peace Emperor's final act of mobilizing of Austria-Hungary's armies, detonating World War I at the cost of 16 million lives.



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