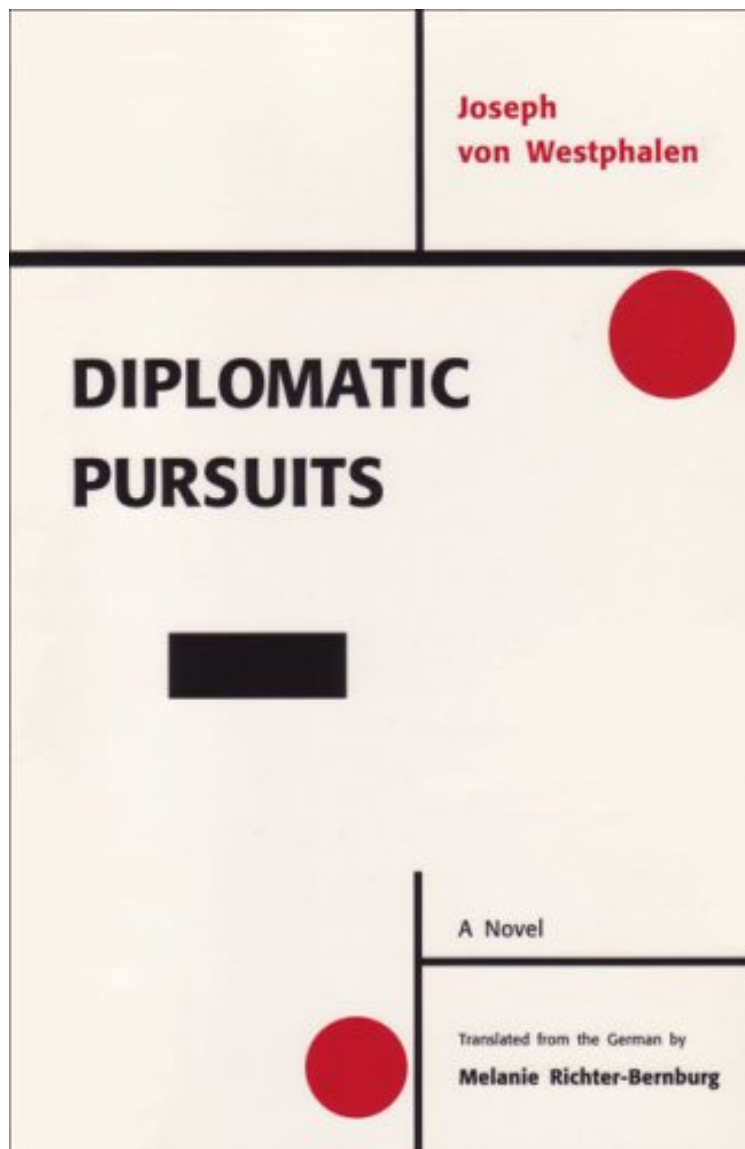


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## Diplomatic Pursuits

*Joseph von Westphalen*  
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**Joseph von Westphalen : Diplomatic Pursuits** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Diplomatic Pursuits:

Harry von Duckwitz pursues ideas and women with the same conflicted, contrary, self-critical volatility he brings to his diplomatic career.

From Publishers Weekly "Only a lunatic would have been convinced by the instructors' comments about the meaning and importance of the diplomat's job." Dr. Harry Baron von Duckwitz, however, is not a lunatic. In 1975, Duckwitz is a lawyer sliding into success by helping "undeserving clients obtain their undeserved rights." His girlfriend, Helen, has left him. His colleagues don't like him. On a lark, Duckwitz tries out for the German diplomatic corps, gets in and is assigned to Yaunde, Cameroon, and, in due course, to Quito, Ecuador. In the "sentimental journey" of the next 15 years, Duckwitz continues to be carried by the current of life: he marries, is rejoined by Helen in a cozy menage, has affairs and tries (with little success) to provoke local colleagues and the central office alike. He hates his boorish, greedy, self-important countrymen, whom it is his job to help--he'd make use of his legal expertise to bring about exactly the opposite of what he was here to do, which was to look after the interests of German business--going so far as to strike an alliance with an Ecuadoran crook in order to scotch a German construction deal. Von Westphalen is known in Germany as a satirist and as the author of such books as *Why I Became a Monarchist and Other Essays*, but this is his first novel and his first work to appear in English. Those with overly delicate sensibilities may find the tone too sarcastic, but most will be taken with von Westphalen's gently cynical voice (beautifully translated by Richter-Bernburg), his sense of everyday absurdity and Duckwitz's mordant musings on phones, fidelity, politics and the deficiencies of existence. Copyright 1995 Cahners Business Information, Inc.