



THE EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH OF AUSTRIA.
Born, 1830; succeeded to the throne, 1848; died, 1916.

THE WAR GUILT

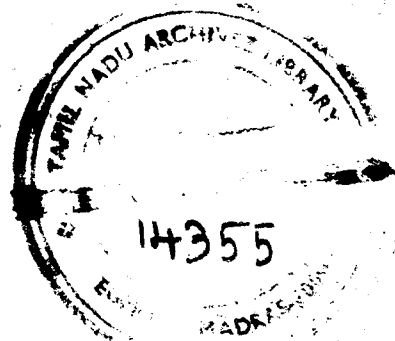
BY
H. W. WILSON
AUTHOR OF "BATTLESHIPS IN ACTION," ETC.

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION TO
M. RAYMOND POINCARÉ
PRIME MINISTER AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF FRANCE,
WHO ALSO CONTRIBUTES A FOREWORD

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO., LTD.

V1:19 (BIM) N14

N29



TO THE GREAT FRENCH PRESIDENT
AND STATESMAN

M. RAYMOND POINCARÉ

WHO HAS RENDERED SUCH TRANSCENDENT SERVICE

TO OUR COUNTRIES

AND TO EUROPE

I VENTURE TO DEDICATE THIS BOOK

FOREWORD

By M. RAYMOND POINCARÉ

*President of the French Republic, 1913-19; Prime Minister
and Minister of Finance in the French Government.*

I THANK you for submitting to me the proofs of your most interesting work on the responsibilities for the war. I have read with the closest attention these pages, which are at once so conscientious and so impartial—devoted entirely to the vindication of the truth. I am profoundly touched that you should have desired to dedicate your work to me, and I accept this evidence of sympathy the more willingly because your book will contribute most effectively to demonstrate to all the anxiety for peace shown by our two countries.



*January 28, 1928
Présidence du Conseil,
Paris.*

PREFACE

THE purpose of this volume is to give in a compact form a summary and analysis of the fresh evidence as to the causes and origin of the war which has become available since the armistice; and, in the light of that evidence, to estimate the responsibility attaching to the various governments. The question has become one of great political importance because of the systematic propaganda which is being carried out in Germany to prove German innocence with the object of securing a revision of the Treaty of Versailles. It is necessary to examine how far the evidence supports this propaganda, and how far the propagandists, who are many of them sincere and honourable men, are basing their case on misrepresentation of allied policy. They would stand on much firmer ground if they and their country had, after the war, openly condemned the violation of Belgian neutrality, the outrages in Belgium and France, and the U-boat crimes, and had promised to do their utmost to make good the wrong thus done. For, as Cardinal Mercier pointed out, there can be no forgiveness without repentance.

The theory that the war was inevitable will not stand. Had Germany in 1901 responded to King Edward's overtures, an Anglo-German alliance would have been concluded, and would certainly have been followed by friendlier relations between Germany and France, which it was always his object to secure. He saw clearly enough that a war between the great powers of Europe must end in their exhaustion, and transfer most of their wealth and much of their trade to the United States. It was an immense disaster for Europe that his advances were repelled through the folly of Holstein and the weakness and duplicity of William II.

PREFACE

The period covered by this volume is the period covered by the collection of German foreign office documents published since the war under the title of *Die Grosse Politik*—from the close of the Franco-German war of 1870-1 to the opening of the Great War.

It is the period marked by the German acquisition of a colonial empire and by the development of the German navy. This last was an event the importance of which has been often almost ignored in the United States, though the anxiety which it caused to thinking Englishmen cannot be exaggerated. The growth of the German fleet was accompanied by a remarkable outburst of German chauvinism. German writers, even the German Emperor on one occasion at least—in an unpublished interview with Arnold White—did not hesitate to declare their belief that the British race was rapidly degenerating. Leading German soldiers and seamen had come to think that a vigorous push from some strong and determined state would bring the British empire down in ruin, and provide Germany with abundant spoil.

In the years before the war I had many opportunities of ascertaining the opinion of the British foreign office, and of the French government and French embassy in London, with which it was necessary for my work to be in close touch, and I can sincerely say that I never detected the faintest indication of the plots which they are now accused of devising against Germany and Austria. They were, above all, anxious for peace, and convinced of the enormous strength of Germany—as any close study of pre-war evidence will show. In July and August, 1914, I saw enough of the French newspaper correspondents in London to be certain that not one of them was eager for war, and that, without British aid, they were sure the issue would be disastrous.

It is, of course, impossible for man to divest himself entirely of national and personal prepossessions, especially where one has lived through such an agonising epoch as the Great War, and the years of travail that preceded and succeeded it. But I have striven, to the best of my power, to look at events from the German as well as the English standpoint, and to read and examine the arguments of all the important German advocates.

PREFACE

As it is vital in a controversial work to know the authority for statements, footnotes are appended where the facts are not easily verifiable; and a short bibliography is given at the end of the book which will enable the reader to carry his studies further. For brevity I have used the names Austria for Austria-Hungary, and England for Great Britain or the United Kingdom, and have generally omitted titles in the text where the persons mentioned are famous. I hope that this will not be regarded as showing any want of respect. For the peoples or governments of countries I have used the name of the country concerned—thus Austria for the governments of Austria-Hungary, for though pedants complain of such personification, it is a practical necessity unless space is to be wasted.

Finally, I must express my obligation to my publishers who have patriotically taken the risk of issuing a book of this kind, in the present state of the British market. It is not fair to our own country that German and other foreign propagandist works should be issued broadcast and left without an answer. To the members of the famous old firm of Messrs. Sampson Low, Marston & Co., I am greatly indebted for the interest which they have shown, and the responsibility which they have incurred in connection with this book.

CHRONOLOGY 1914

PAGE			
173	<i>June</i>	28	Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife assassinated at Serajevo.
180	<i>June</i>	30	Berchtold proposes to Tisza a sudden attack on Serbia; Tschirschky advises caution.
182	<i>July</i>	1	Francis Joseph advises Berchtold to obtain William II's support for an attack on Serbia.
180	<i>July</i>	4	William II blames Tschirschky for advising moderation; Tschirschky tells Austria the sooner she attacks the better.
184	<i>July</i>	5	Francis Joseph's letter asking for German support, placed before William II who advises swift action against Serbia, and gives Austria a "blank cheque."
186	<i>July 5 and 6</i>		William II informs German naval and military staffs of the decision to support Austria against Serbia, and possibility of general war. He leaves for Norway on the 6th.
191	<i>July</i>	7	Austrian council; Tisza against war, as the moment is unfavourable; but the council decides for a violent ultimatum to Serbia.
192	<i>July</i>	8	Tisza, in a letter to Francis Joseph, protests. Tschirschky urges Berchtold not to lose the opportunity of dealing a blow.
196	<i>July</i>	10	Selling of securities by German and Austrian holders.
197	<i>July</i>	11	Tschirschky gives Berlin an account of the ultimatum in a private letter.
197	<i>July</i>	12	Austrian forces on the frontiers strengthened.
179	<i>July</i>	13	Wiesner reports from Serajevo that there is no evidence to prove the guilt of the Serbian government.

CHRONOLOGY 1914

PAGE		
197	July	14 German diplomatists instructed to prepare for announcement of the drastic punishment of Serbia.
200	July	18 Moderate article in <i>Norddeutsche Zeitung</i> , to avoid "prematurely giving the alarm."
199	July	19 Austrian ultimatum ready. William II orders the High Sea Fleet to remain concentrated.
201	July	20 German steamer lines warned of the risk of war.
203	July	21 Ultimatum given to the German ambassador in Vienna.
206	July	22 Orders issued to German stations to jam wireless signals to Poincaré.
208	July	23 6 p.m. Ultimatum presented in Belgrade. 11 p.m. Poincaré leaves St. Petersburg. Grey warns Austria of the "possible awful consequences" of the ultimatum.
214	July	24 Grey proposes mediation by four powers, and extension of time limit given to Serbia. German notes to England, France and Russia as to the "incalculable consequences" which intervention on their part would produce.
210	July	25 3 p.m. Serbia orders general mobilisation. 6 p.m. Austria breaks off relations with Serbia after, at 5.58 p.m. receiving the Serbian reply. 9.23 p.m. Austria orders mobilisation of eight corps. Russia orders "period of preparation for war." <i>Von Papen Papers</i> reveal preparations for war in Germany. Grey proposes that England, France, Germany and Italy should keep together and attempt to arrange matters.
227	July	26 William II with High Sea fleet returns to Germany. German ultimatum to Belgium completed. Encounter in Dublin with loss of life. French precautionary measures. German war measures at Metz. Orders to British First fleet to remain concentrated.

CHRONOLOGY 1914

PAGE		
		Grey proposes a conference of ambassadors to find a pacific solution.
234	July	28 Austria declares war on Serbia; Serbian vessels shelled. Grey suggests Russia and Austria should reach a settlement by direct discussion. Special precautionary measures taken in Germany.
240	July	29 Austrians bombard Belgrade. British First fleet leaves for Scotland. German threat to Russia to mobilise if Russia continues military preparations. Midnight of 29-30th, Russia orders mobilisation of thirteen corps. German ultimatum to Belgium sent to German minister at Brussels. Bethmann Hollweg refuses to promise to respect Belgian neutrality. British naval and military forces warned of danger of war. Grey proposes that Germany should suggest a method of maintaining peace, and later proposes the "halt in Belgrade."
251	July	30 Moltke urges Austria to carry out a complete mobilisation forthwith. Berlin <i>Lokalanzeiger</i> incorrectly reports a German general mobilisation. 4 p.m. Russia orders a general mobilisation. French covering troops ordered six miles back from frontier.
257	July	31 Moltke again calls for Austrian mobilisation; it is ordered at 12.23 p.m. Germany orders <i>Kriegsgefahrzustand</i> and at 11.25 p.m. delivers an ultimatum to Russia, "demobilise in twelve hours or have war." Poincaré appeals to England for support, and is put off with a cool reply. Financial panic in London. Belgium orders mobilisation.
266	August	1 7.10 p.m. Germany declares war on Russia. German troops violate neutrality of Luxembourg. 3.40 p.m. France orders general mobilisation.

CHRONOLOGY 1914

PAGE

		5 p.m. Germany orders general mobilisation.
		Grey suggests that Germany and France, having mobilised, shall confront one another without fighting, while mediation is proceeding.
		British navy mobilised.
276	August 2	Germans seize the whole duchy of Luxemburg.
		Germans at many points violate French territory.
		British cabinet decides to treat an invasion of Belgium as an act of war.
		German ultimatum delivered to Belgium.
291	August 3	German alliance with Turkey signed.
		Belgium rejects German demands, and asks England for diplomatic support.
		6.30 p.m. Germany declares war on France.
		British army mobilised.
		British flotillas in Channel.
300	August 4	British ultimatum to Germany.
		6 a.m. Germany declares war on Belgium.
		German troops pour into Belgium.
		Meeting of Reichstag.
		11 p.m. England declares war on Germany.

Tschirschky, German ambassador at Vienna.
Bethmann Hollweg, German Chancellor.
Berchtold, Austrian foreign minister.
Tisza, Hungarian premier.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.—THE REIGN OF BISMARCK	1-37
EFFECT OF THE WAR OF 1870	1-3
GRAVE POSITION OF FRANCE	4-5
THREATS TO BELGIUM	7
CRISIS OF 1874 AND 1875	8-11
BISMARCK'S BALKAN POLICY	12-13
OVERTURES FOR BRITISH ALLIANCE	14
THE GERMAN ALLIANCE SYSTEM	15
THREE EMPERORS' ALLIANCE OF 1881	16
TRIPLE ALLIANCE, 1882	16-18
GERMAN COLONIAL EXPANSION	19
BELGIAN FEELERS OF 1887	21
SCHNAEBELÉ AFFAIR, 1887	23
REINSURANCE TREATY WITH RUSSIA, 1887	25
ENGLAND AND THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE	26
ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II, 1888	27
EDUCATION AND CHARACTER	28
DISLIKE FOR EDWARD VII	30
ALEXANDER III AND WILLIAM II	32
BISMARCK'S FALL, 1890	33
HOLSTEIN'S ACTIVITIES	35
DEFECTS OF GERMAN CONSTITUTION	36
CHAPTER II.—WILLIAM II'S FIRST YEARS	38-65
LETTERS TO THE CZAR	38
FRANCE IN QUARANTINE	40
RUSSIA APPROACHES FRANCE	42
DUAL ALLIANCE, 1892	43-45
WILLIAM II'S ATTITUDE TO ENGLAND	45
GERMAN INTERVENTION IN FAR EAST, 1895	47
SALISBURY'S SCHEME FOR PARTITIONING TURKEY	49
KRUGER TELEGRAM, 1896	51-53
WILLIAM II'S LETTER TO QUEEN VICTORIA	54
FIRST LARGE GERMAN NAVAL PROGRAMME, 1897	57
BISMARCK'S APPROVAL OBTAINED	58

B

xvii

CONTENTS

	PAGE
KIAOCHAU SEIZED, 1897	60
ANGLO-GERMAN ALLIANCE NEGOTIATIONS	61
THE PORTUGUESE COLONIES	63
DEATH OF BISMARCK, 1898	64
CHAPTER III.—THE ANGLO-FRENCH UNDER- STANDING	
	66-95
UNITED STATES WAR WITH SPAIN, 1898	66
FASHODA AFFAIR	68
WILLIAM II'S SAMOAN DEMANDS	70
SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899	71
FRESH GERMAN NAVAL PROGRAMME, 1899	73
INTERVENTION SCHEMES ON THE CONTINENT	74
EFFECT OF THE GERMAN NAVAL POLICY	76
WILLIAM II'S "HUN" SPEECH	77
MANCHURIAN TREATY, 1900	78
LANSDOWNE AT THE BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE	79
ANGLO-GERMAN ALLIANCE PROJECTS	80
CHAMBERLAIN AND BÜLOW	82
ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE, 1902	83
"ADMIRAL OF THE ATLANTIC"	84
SCHLIEFFEN'S DISASTROUS WAR PLAN	86
KING EDWARD IN PARIS, 1903	86
RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR, 1904-5	89
ANGLO-FRENCH AGREEMENT, 1904	90
NORTH SEA INCIDENT	92
LEE'S SPEECH, 1905	94
CHAPTER IV.—GROWING TENSION ON THE CONTINENT	
	96-127
WILLIAM II AT TANGIERS, 1905	96
GERMAN WAR THREATS	98
DELCASSÉ RESIGNS	100
BJÖRKÖ TREATY	100
ALGECIRAS CONFERENCE, 1906	103
ANGLO-FRENCH MILITARY DISCUSSIONS	104
BELGIAN CONVERSATIONS	105
FRESH GERMAN NAVY ACT, 1906	105
AHRENTHAL AND THE SOUTH SLAVS	108
ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION, 1907	109
ANOTHER GERMAN NAVY ACT, 1908	111
WILLIAM II'S TWEEDMOUTH LETTER	113
EDWARD VII AT REVAL	114
HIS ISCHL VISIT	115
ANNEXATION OF BOSNIA	117
WILLIAM II'S <i>Daily Telegraph</i> INTERVIEW	119
GERMAN ULTIMATUM TO RUSSIA, 1909	121
NAVAL CRISIS IN ENGLAND	123

CONTENTS

	PAGE
RACCONIGI MEETING	124
POTSDAM MEETING, 1910	125
CHAPTER V.—ON THE EVE OF THE GREAT WAR	
	128-172
DANGER TO THE ENTENTE	128
WILLIAM II'S LAST VISIT TO ENGLAND, 1911	130
AGADIR AFFAIR	132
LLOYD GEORGE'S WARNING TO GERMANY	133
GERMAN EXASPERATION	135
FRESH NAVY ACT, 1912	136
MENACE TO ENGLAND	137
ITALY OCCUPIES TRIPOLI, 1911	138
HALDANE IN BERLIN, 1912	140
WILLIAM II'S RASH PROJECTS	143
SECRET BALKAN ALLIANCES, 1912	146
POINCARÉ'S ATTITUDE	147
FIRST BALKAN WAR, 1912	149
WILLIAM II, FRANCIS FERDINAND AND CONRAD	150
MOLTKE'S OPINION	152
CONFERENCE OF LONDON, 1913	153
SECOND BALKAN WAR	155
WARNINGS TO BELGIUM	157
WILLIAM II URGES CONRAD TO ACT	158
LIMAN VON SANDERS AFFAIR, 1914	160
GERMANY'S "HOUR OF DESTINY"	163
KING GEORGE IN PARIS, 1914	165
RUSSIAN SECRET DOCUMENTS	167
KONOPISCHT MEETING	169
AUSTRIAN BALKAN PLANS	171
CHAPTER VI.—SERAJEVO AND AFTER	
	173-207
FRANCIS FERDINAND ASSASSINATED	173
NEGLECT OF PRECAUTIONS	175
THE CONSPIRATORS	177
SERBIA AND THE CRIME	178
WILLIAM II'S COMMENTS ON TSCHIRSCHKY	180
FRANCIS JOSEPH'S LETTER TO WILLIAM II	182
WILLIAM'S "BLANK CHEQUE"	184
WARNINGS TO THE GERMAN STAFF	186
ITALY TO BE DUPED	188
GERMANS EXPECT A SHORT WAR	190
TISZA AGAINST WAR	191
GERMANY INTERVENES FOR WAR	193
WILLIAM II'S ADVICE	194
FINANCIAL PREPARATION FOR WAR BEGINS	196
POINCARÉ'S RUSSIAN VISIT	198
GREY'S PLANS FOR PEACE	200
ITALY'S ATTITUDE	201
BERLIN AND THE AUSTRIAN ULTIMATUM	203

CONTENTS

SERBIA TO BE CRUSHED	PAGE 205
JAMMING THE WIRELESS SIGNALS TO POINCARÉ	206

CHAPTER VII.—THE ULTIMATUM AND MEDIA- TION

.	208-243
THE ULTIMATUM TO SERBIA	208
SERBIAN REPLY	210
SERBIAN MOBILISATION, JULY 25, 3 P.M.	210
SIR EYRE CROWE'S MINUTE	211
UNCERTAIN ENGLISH ATTITUDE	213
WILLIAM II'S COMMENTS ON GREY'S WARNING	216
SAZONOV APPEALS TO ENGLAND	218
GERMAN THREATS TO FRANCE	219
RUSSIA ORDERS MILITARY PRECAUTIONS	221
GREY'S REPEATED EFFORTS FOR PEACE	222
PRINCE HENRY AND KING GEORGE	224
MOLTKE GETS READY THE BELGIAN ULTIMATUM	225
BERCHTOLD'S DIPLOMATIC DIFFICULTY	228
BETHMANN'S WANT OF FRANKNESS	230
AUSTRIA DECLARES WAR, JULY 28.	232
DANGER OF GENERAL WAR	234
ST. PETERSBURG PACIFIC	236
RUSSIAN STAFF DEMANDS MOBILISATION	237
WILLIAM II AND THE CZAR'S TELEGRAMS	238
PARTIAL RUSSIAN MOBILISATION	241
BOMBARDMENT OF BELGRADE	243

CHAPTER VIII.—THE MOBILISATIONS

.	244-278
GREY'S "HALT IN BELGRADE" PROPOSAL	244
MOLTKE DEMANDS MOBILISATION.	246
BETHMANN'S "INFAMOUS" PROPOSALS	248
AUSTRIA'S INTRANSIGENCE	249
WILLIAM II'S TELEGRAM TO VIENNA	250
TELEGRAMS FROM THE CZAR	253
GENERAL RUSSIAN MOBILISATION ORDERED	254
WILLIAM II'S WILD COMMENTS	256
GENERAL AUSTRIAN MOBILISATION	258
FRENCH TROOPS WITHDRAWN FROM THE FRONTIER	260
FRANCIS JOSEPH'S BELLICOSE TELEGRAM	262
GERMAN ULTIMATUMS TO FRANCE AND RUSSIA	263
WILLIAM II'S LAST TELEGRAM TO THE CZAR	265
GERMAN DECLARATION OF WAR ON RUSSIA	266
BRITISH HESITATIONS	268
GERMAN CHARGES AGAINST BELGIUM	269
GENERAL GERMAN MOBILISATION	270
WILLIAM II'S CONFLICT WITH MOLTKE	272
GERMANY VIOLATES LUXEMBURG'S NEUTRALITY	274
GENERAL FRENCH MOBILISATION.	274

xx

CONTENTS

ENGLAND STILL UNCERTAIN	PAGE 276
OCCUPATION OF LUXEMBURG	277

CHAPTER IX.—ENGLAND AND BELGIUM

.	279-311
BRITISH ATTITUDE REGARDING LUXEMBURG	279
GERMAN VIOLATIONS OF FRENCH TERRITORY	280
AFFAIR OF JOHANNISBURG	282
GERMAN CHARGES AGAINST FRANCE	284
GENERAL BRITISH NAVAL MOBILISATION	286
GERMAN ULTIMATUM TO BELGIUM DELIVERED	287
BELGIUM STANDS FIRM	288
THE LOYALTY OF THE BELGIANS	290
GERMANY SECURES TURKISH ALLIANCE	292
ATTITUDE OF SWEDEN	293
GERMANY DECLARES WAR ON FRANCE	294
MUTILATED MESSAGES	295
BRITISH SUPPORT FOR BELGIUM ASSURED	297
GOSCHEN'S INTERVIEWS WITH JAGOW AND BETHMANN	299
THE SCRAP OF PAPER	300
BEYENS AND JAGOW	303
BETHMANN'S REICHSTAG SPEECH	305
BRITISH ULTIMATUM EXPIRES	306
GERMAN EXCUSES FOR THE ATTACK ON BELGIUM	307
HAGUE CONVENTIONS VIOLATED	309

CHAPTER X.—WHERE THE GUILT LAY

.	312-345
ENGLAND'S UNSATISFACTORY POSITION	312
IF AUSTRIA HAD BEEN GIVEN A FREE HAND	313
CHARGES AGAINST SERBIA	315
ATTITUDE OF PASITCH	318
THE CZAR FOR PEACE	320
RUSSIA NOT READY	321
LICHNOWSKY'S WARNING	322
FRANCE FOR PEACE	323
EFFECT OF THE MOBILISATIONS	325
CHARGES AGAINST GREY	326
GREY'S REPEATED EFFORTS FOR PEACE	327
ENGLAND HAD MOST TO LOSE FROM WAR	329
AUSTRIA'S RESPONSIBILITY	330
HER DIFFICULTIES	332
GERMANY'S PART IN THE WAR	333
THE <i>Einmarschpolitik</i>	334
CONFIDENCE OF THE GERMAN STAFF	335
WILLIAM II'S CONDUCT	337
DEFECTIVE GERMAN DIPLOMACY	338
GERMAN TENDENCY TO VIOLENCE	339
THE COMPETITION OF ARMAMENTS	341

xxi

CONTENTS

	PAGE
STRENGTH OF THE POWERS	342
THE BALANCE OF POWER	344
 APPENDIX I.—BIBLIOGRAPHY	347-353
 APPENDIX II.—THE GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE DOCUMENTS	353-354

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH OF AUSTRIA

Frontispiece

	FACING PAGE
PLATE I. HERR F. VON HOLSTEIN	36
PLATE II. THE EMPEROR WILLIAM II OF GERMANY	58
PLATE III. GRAND ADMIRAL A. VON TIRPITZ	106
PLATE IV. THE ARCHDUKE FRANCIS FERDINAND OF AUSTRIA	150
PLATE V. HERR T. VON BETHMANN HOLLWEG	186
PLATE VI. COUNT CONRAD VON HÖTZENDORF	228
PLATE VII. GENERAL HELMUTH VON MOLTKE	266
PLATE VIII. SIR WILLIAM EDWARD GOSCHEN	300

THE WAR GUILT

THE WAR GUILT

CHAPTER I

THE REIGN OF BISMARCK.

WHEN the assassin's three pistol shots rang out at Serajevo on that tragic Sunday morning of June 28, 1914, and the Archduke Francis Ferdinand sank back dying in his car, though the crime was a terrible one and startled the world, the general feeling outside the German and Austrian capitals was that it need not endanger European peace. Nor could any isolated event, not even one of this dreadful character, have brought about such a catastrophe as the World War. Other influences had been at work during the forty years which preceded the conflict, and for their investigation it is necessary to go back to the days of the Franco-German war of 1870-71. They were closely connected with the rise of the German state in the form which Bismarck gave it, and with the régime of force for which that state stood.

The Franco-German war of 1870 was epoch-making in many respects. It left Germany in a position of overwhelming strength such as no nation in Europe had held since Napoleon I. It totally destroyed the balance of power. In the six years from 1864 to 1870 the Prussian military machine, with the aid of Bismarck's dexterous diplomacy, had struck down in succession Denmark, Austria, and France; and there seemed no limit to its possible achievements. This supremacy of a single power was in itself dangerous, and its menace was increased by the mutilation of France, reduced in 1871, as it seemed, to the position of a second-class power. The two provinces of Alsace and Lorraine which she was made to cede to Germany were indeed inhabited by a population of German descent. But they had been an integral part of her territory

THE WAR GUILT

[1871

for nearly two centuries; they were strongly French in sympathy; and they bitterly resented their incorporation by force in a strange state. There was no pretence of consulting them. No plebiscite was taken as when Savoy and Nice were annexed to France in 1860.

So fearful were the losses of France in 1870-71 that German statesmen, almost without exception, were convinced that she could never be reconciled to the terms of peace which they had imposed on her. Therefore German policy after 1871 was directed to armed and diplomatic preparation for a war of revenge, which the French were assumed to be always meditating.¹ Germans argued that this policy of revenge had been adopted by Prussia after Jena, and that what Prussia had done in the past France would certainly attempt to do in the future. In the end it was Germany, not France, that attacked, after Germany for more than a generation had kept Europe in a condition of constant tension and unrest.

To this policy of preparing for the French war of revenge the world owes the intense competition of armaments which followed 1870. Napoleon III, in his later years, had been a peace-loving and timid ruler, though his character was totally misunderstood in England, as the real weakness of his army was never detected till his defeat in 1870.² In 1868 and again in early 1870 his government had proposed schemes of disarmament, and its proposals had been shattered on the resistance of Bismarck.³ To give a lead which Napoleon hoped other powers would follow, in 1870, on the very eve of the war, the contingent of recruits annually called up for the French army was reduced from 100,000 to 90,000, in face of emphatic warnings from the French military attaché at Berlin, Stoffel, thereby accentuating the numerical superiority of the German forces. The competition of armaments was not, then, a process for which France was responsible. The real author and begetter of it was Bismarck, or the Germany which he created.⁴

¹ See Odo Russell's opinion in Newton's *Lord Lyons* ii, 41.

² See Miss Ramsay's masterly *Idealism and Foreign Policy*; *passim*.

³ Napoleon III's own statement of his position in 1861 is in Maxwell's *Earl of Clarendon*, ii, 241-2, cf. Ollivier, *Empire Libéral*, xiii, 67; Stoffel, *Rapports Militaires*, 384 ff; and Newton, *Lord Lyons*, i, 247 ff.

⁴ cf. his words to Prince Napoleon in 1868: "A nation only exists in virtue of the number of soldiers it can place in line. . . . The weak were made to be devoured by the strong." Ollivier, *Empire Libéral*, x, 448.

1871]

BLOOD AND IRON

In the policy of preparing for the French war of revenge the initial ascendancy which Germany owed to her superlative military organisation was increased during the twenty years which followed 1870, by the political skill of Bismarck. He combined a complete want of scruple with rare strength of character and commanding intellect; and he either really believed or affected to believe that the application of force was a remedy for most human evils. His temperament was the temperament of the bully; but his hectoring method of diplomacy excited so much admiration among his countrymen that it was subsequently copied by most of his successors. Between 1864 and 1870 he had kept Europe on tenterhooks, and threatened, one after another, all the states bordering on Prussia, with the sole exception of Russia. But though he was a firm believer that might is right, he had a sense of what he called the moral *imponderabilia*, which told him that an unlimited use of violence was often inexpedient. He was, too, not a little afraid of coalitions if he went too far. The real "blood-and-iron" Bismarck was very different from the amiable old gentleman shown in such documents as the German foreign office has preserved for the period following the Franco-German war, and his policy was not always of the disinterested and humanitarian character that they might suggest. One of his worst failings in his later years was that he was often dominated by personal feelings, and the physical complaints of old age. He specially disliked the English Liberals for their sermonising and political flabbiness; and the Russian chancellor, Gortchakov, was another favourite target for his sneers.

He hoped, at the outset, by the treaty of Frankfort, which he imposed on France with every aggravation of brutality on his part, permanently to paralyse her, and perhaps even to reduce her to the condition of a vassal state whose policy could be controlled by himself. He never attempted to conceal his irritation at her rapid recovery, her early payment of the enormous indemnity of £200,000,000 which much more than met all the German expenditure on the war, her liberation of her remaining territory from German occupation before the date which he had contemplated, and the reconstitution of her army. Whenever he could weaken her, he did so. Thus there is good reason to believe that he used his influence to deter the Comte de Chambord, the

last Bourbon in the direct line, from accepting the tricolour, and thus securing the union of the legitimist and Orleanist parties in France. He preferred a republic which he believed would be always distracted and weakened by internal dissensions, and would be inefficiently governed.¹

His claim that he treated the French with marked magnanimity after their defeat is not one which can be taken at all seriously. It is true that he did not force the surrender of Belfort which the Prussian staff demanded; but even the German generals, who were none too tender-hearted, regarded his attitude to the French population and the French diplomatists as harsh, overbearing, and unnecessarily cruel.² His policy after the war was directed towards isolating France, and securing the alliance of other powers against her. In this, no doubt, he was acting within his rights as a German statesman. But at every turn she was reminded by him of her defeat and kept in a state of extreme apprehension.

The outlook for France was bleak indeed after the war. Her population, which had been superior to that of Germany (38,500,000 French to 38,000,000 Germans) dropped well below it (36,100,000 French to 39,100,000 Germans). The loss of the Rhine and of the great fortresses of Metz and Strassburg left her with a frontier which was believed to be quite indefensible. The cost of the war and the charges for the payment of the indemnity crippled her finances. The actual damage done by the invaders and by the Communists was very serious, though it did not compare with the methodical devastation of a large area by the Germans in 1917-18. Moreover, French faith in the French army and its leaders was shattered, and much time would be required to create a new staff on the German model, and infuse into all the ranks of the army a new doctrine of war. The handicap of a numerically weak population, as compared with Germany, grew more and more menacing to France as the years went on. The German population increased rapidly; the French very slowly; till on the outbreak of the Great War the French population stood at less than 40,000,000, whereas the German population was close on 70,000,000. Where Germany had placed four men in the field in 1870

¹ *Grosse Politik*, i, 161; *Hohenlohe. Memoirs*, ii, 106.

² Waldersee, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, i, 162-3; *War Diary of the Emperor Frederick*, 240-1, 292, 315, 325.

she was, in 1914, capable of placing seven in the field, while the French capacity remained almost precisely the same.

In view of the enormous strength of Germany, other powers might have been expected to combine against her or at least to refuse to give her their material and moral support. But it was proof of the great diplomatic skill of Bismarck that, notwithstanding this German prepotency and the manner in which it was used, he kept, on the whole, the friendship of England, and secured powerful allies on the continent. In May, 1872, as the result of his dexterity a military convention was concluded between Russia and Germany by which either power promised to support the other with 200,000 men in the event of an attack by a third power.¹ In the autumn of that year the three Emperors, German, Russian and Austrian, met on German soil, and, in 1873, they concluded an agreement not to make new alliances without consultation² which was, in actual fact, equivalent to an alliance. Thus France was faced by a great combination, controlled from Berlin, and was left friendless on the Continent, though the Czar, Alexander II, sent her assurances that he would take no part in any attack on her. With Italy she was not on intimate terms, nor was Italy at that date strong enough to give an ally much support. As for England, British policy was a compound of apathy and ignorance in European affairs.

Bismarck's policy as regards England and Russia was to play them off one against the other without definitely committing himself to the support of either. It was the policy of "the two irons in the fire," as he described it himself. Had he found it necessary to choose finally between them, there is very little doubt that his choice would have fallen on Russia. It was indeed one of the basic defects of his policy that he—like most of the statesmen of that epoch—overestimated the strength of Russia and totally under-estimated that of England, because of the half-heartedness of her party politicians. Moreover, he implanted his habit of thought in German diplomacy and diplomatists. His attitude towards England varied from time to time with his personal likes and dislikes. He said in his middle age that he had a weakness for her people.³

Grosse Politik, i, 203-4.

² *Ludwig, Bismarck*, 585.

³ *id.*, i, 206-7.

THE WAR GUILT

[1874

But he was always ready to deal blows at the Liberals. For the "old Jew," Disraeli, he had a very real appreciation, and he regarded the late Lord Salisbury as a capable statesman, despite sneers at him as "a lath painted to look like iron." German relations with England, therefore, improved when the Conservatives were in office.

Bismarck's personal proclivities help to explain his contradictory utterances regarding England's position and strength. About 1874 he declared that he had lost five years of his political life through the foolish belief that England was still a great Power.¹ On the other hand, so judicious a student of German policy as Hammann believes that his chief aim was to secure a German alliance with England. He told a council of Prussian ministers in 1889, shortly before his dismissal, that the object of German policy for the previous ten years had been to secure England's adhesion to his system of alliances.² His attitude to individual Englishmen was most friendly, and he often referred to his travels in England as a young man, but for the English politicians he had the profoundest distrust.

As the German staff watched the increasing efficiency of the French army in the years after the war, and the development of the great system of fortifications which General de Rivières so skilfully carried out for the defence of the new French frontier, it began to regret that it had not secured a limitation of French armaments in the peace terms, which would have left the French frontier open, and the German superiority more overwhelming than it was. Such a limitation was unquestionably considered by Bismarck, and only rejected because he thought it would bring neutral powers into the field, and create the coalition, of which he stood in constant dread. He afterwards told Blowitz³ that he had to hurry on the negotiations, and cut Thiers and Favre short because he feared neutral action. Not that there was anything in French armaments to cause alarm to the German soldiers. To such impartial observers as Morier⁴ and Lyons, the dangerous fact in the situation seemed to be "the absolute powerlessness of France."

¹ Morie, ii, 330.

² Hammann, *Missverständnisse Bismarck*, 21.

³ Blowitz, *Memoirs*, 162-3.

⁴ Morier, ii, 349; Lyons, ii, 54.

1874]

BELGIUM MENACED

Relations between the German staff and Bismarck were more frequently strained than not. Bismarck accused Moltke of monomania, and seeing only the narrowest military side of problems. If their differences did not go very deep, Bismarck was not the man to give the staff its head. But in 1874 he was clearly inclined to yield to the incessant military pressure put on him¹ to make an end of France before she could offer a vigorous resistance. At that particular moment he was greatly annoyed with the Belgian government which had refused to support him in his campaign against the Roman Church, by punishing certain Belgian bishops who had criticised his methods. He was also incensed against the Bishop of Nancy in France,² because this ecclesiastic had not only condemned the anti-Roman campaign but had directed prayers to be offered for the reunion of Metz and Strassburg to France. He told a Russian diplomatist that if France did not cease her armaments he would seize Nancy. He was believed to have inspired articles in the German press denouncing the Comte de Chambord, the Bourbon claimant to the French throne, for "hatching a Roman Catholic plot" against Germany.

Warnings from the minor German courts and from other quarters reached London and Paris, to the effect that "the German empire wishes to conquer Belgium and northern France in order to open a road to the sea." Forty years before the Great War the aspirations which the German industrialists embodied in their peace terms were thus entertained by some of the leading minds in Germany. Whether Bismarck himself contemplated the treacherous acquisition of Belgium is uncertain. There is nothing in the published documents or memoirs to show it, but much concerning this famous man has yet to be revealed. If he knew that in 1870 even the Gladstone government had declared, through the super-cautious Lord Granville, that England was bound to oppose any violation of Belgian territory by France or Germany, he probably also knew that Gladstone, in private, had added that not until the danger actually arose would he make any preparations for

¹ Hanotaux, *Contemporary France*, ii, 433 ff.

² *Grosse Politik*, i, 211 ff; Hohenlohe, *Memoirs*, ii, 97; Newton, *Lord Lyons*, ii, 69.

it, which was much as if a City Council were to wait for the outbreak of a violent conflagration before organising a fire brigade.

A preventive war would be dangerous if he had Russia against him, and would be still more dangerous if Russia were supported by England. Gortchakov and Alexander II were both becoming uneasy at the enormous strength of Germany, and the overweening manner in which that strength was used, and Queen Victoria was peculiarly susceptible to any threats against Belgium. On February 10, 1874,¹ she wrote to the old Emperor William deprecating any resort to "renewed war with France" even under "incessant provocations of a fanatical press and priesthood." If Disraeli's government, which had just entered office in England, took no strong line, the Czar sent an emphatic warning to the old German Emperor which probably had some influence on him. William I replied to Queen Victoria that peace would be maintained, though he declared that "we cannot allow France again to grow stronger than we are"—words which suggest that a preventive war was being considered. Nor was the tension relaxed at once. In October, 1874, there were rumours of imminent German action against France, and William I told Hohenlohe that he feared that Prince Bismarck was trying to drag him little by little into a fresh war.²

Bismarck's ill humour with France was not removed by these episodes in 1874. There was further trouble in 1875.³ The election of MacMahon as French president had irritated and alarmed him. In February he once more threatened the Belgian government because it did not chastise its Roman Catholic ecclesiastics. On March 12 the French National Assembly passed a law creating fourth battalions in 144 French infantry regiments, which Bismarck and Moltke said that they considered dangerous to Germany. According to French authorities Russia was sounded as to her attitude in the event of war with France, and was offered German support in the Balkans; of this there is no trace in the German foreign office documents, but the French reports cannot lightly be dismissed. The German press

¹ Buckle, *Letters of Queen Victoria*, ii, 313; Fitzmaurice, *Lord Granville*, ii, 114-6; *Rapport*, i, 153.

² Hohenlohe, *Memoirs* ii, 125-6.

³ *Grosse Politik*, i, 245 ff.; *Rapport*, i, 157 ff.; Ramsay, *Idealism*, 360 ff.

opened a campaign against Belgium and France, much as forty years later that same press campaigned against the French law increasing the term of military service from two to three years. Morier,¹ the British minister at Munich, believed that Bismarck "has resolved to extricate himself from the present complications at home by foreign action; there is to be a great *coup*, and Belgium is the object . . . The *Cologne Gazette* declares already that the same century which saw Belgium rise might see it disappear."

In March, 1875, both the old Emperor William and the Grand Duke of Baden believed war with France "possible" though both hoped that it would be avoided.² The French government had determined to refrain from defending France if a fresh attack were made upon her,³ and it maintained, apparently with truth, that the actual increase proposed in the strength of the French army was only 30,000 men. On April 5 the *Cologne Gazette*, which was regarded as one of the German foreign office mouthpieces, published a threatening article on the French armaments; on April 9 this was followed by a yet more menacing article in the *Berlin Post*, which disturbed the stock exchanges and threw Europe into alarm.⁴ "Is war in sight?" asked that newspaper, and then answered its own question by asserting that, "war is approaching though the clouds gathering on the horizon may yet be dispersed." It denounced the negotiations which it said were in progress between France, Italy and Austria.

The next day the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* declared that the French armaments were "of an alarming character," but that the *Post* had exaggerated the danger, as the relations of France with Italy and Austria were not such as to prohibit action by Germany. Everyone at the time believed that Bismarck had inspired this campaign, but he then and afterwards denied any knowledge of the *Post* article, though he stated that the *Norddeutsche* article expressed the official view. The old Emperor, however, regarded the articles as showing so much similarity with German foreign office despatches that he thought there must have been what

¹ Morier, ii, 333.

² Hohenlohe, *Memoirs*, ii, 139.

³ *Grosse Politik*, i, 265.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, i, 253 ff.; see also Ramsay, *Idealism and Foreign Policy*, 363 ff.

he called "an indiscretion"; and he considered the *Nord-deutsche* article as "anything but reassuring."¹ Definite warnings, one of them from Queen Sophia of Holland, reached the French president, MacMahon, that Germany was contemplating an attack on France in either the spring or autumn of 1875.

Whether there was real foundations for all this alarm is still a controverted point.² But both France and Belgium believed that the German military party was bent on action. The Belgian minister in Berlin, Nothomb, declared that Moltke used most threatening language to him about France, and that Bismarck had sent him a message to the following effect on April 30: "Tell your King to get his army ready for defence because Belgium may be invaded by France sooner than we expect."³ Nothomb communicated this message to Odo Russell, the British ambassador at Berlin. He was, according to Lord Derby, the British foreign minister, "something of an alarmist," but there was in Bismarck's words an exact anticipation of what actually happened in 1914. Bismarck and Moltke were certainly endeavouring to frighten the French into altering their new military law and abandoning the organisation of fourth battalions, though, as Lord Derby said,⁴ the German theory was untenable, that "for France to repair her losses and recover her strength is unjustifiable and dangerous, because it would be more convenient to German interests that she should remain enfeebled." On May 5 the German ambassador in Paris, Hohenlohe, addressed a threatening message to the French government⁵; and on the following day *The Times* published a famous letter from its Paris correspondent, Blowitz, warning Europe of the risk of war. Blowitz wrote from information supplied by the French government which he verified in conversation with Hohenlohe.⁶ He stated that the intention of the German staff was to attack France, rapidly invest Paris, and dictate a new treaty of peace which would limit French armaments,

¹ *Grosse Politik*, i, 255; cf. Busch, *Bismarck*, iii, 325-6; Ludwig clearly thinks Bismarck had a hand in the *Post* article (*Bismarck*, 553-5).

² Bismarck (*Reflections*, ii, 189), would have us believe there was nothing in the business—it was all a wicked tale of the English and Russians.

³ Newton, *Lord Lyons*, ii, 74.

⁴ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, ii, 389-90.

⁵ *Grosse Politik*, i, 269; *Rapport*, i, 160.

⁶ Hohenlohe, *Memoirs*, ii, 144; Busch, *Bismarck*, ii, 394.

compel the surrender of Belfort and impose an indemnity of £400,000,000. Blowitz in his old age when his memory was failing, said that he did not regard Bismarck as having had any hand in this project, but from beginning to end it was in the Bismarck manner.

Some days earlier Alexander II of Russia had given a warning against war to the German court—the old Emperor, William I, was his uncle, and on terms of intimacy with him. He was strongly against any attack on France, and he was in touch with Queen Victoria, who was equally anxious to maintain the peace of Europe. Disraeli, then British prime minister, proposed to the Queen an alliance with Russia, to which she suggested that Austria and Italy might be invited to accede, for the special and limited purpose of protecting France.¹ He was seconded by Schouvalov, the Russian ambassador in London, who gave assurances that Russia would not cause any trouble in Central Asia if England so acted. The Queen, on May 10, wrote to Alexander II asking him to use his influence for peace, and that same day he arrived in Berlin. Before his arrival the Grand Duchess of Baden, daughter of the Emperor William, and the Empress Augusta, had both been active in the cause of peace. Morier believed that the Crown Prince Frederick had been brought round "to Bismarck's premises, that France was getting dangerous and Belgium insupportable."² But at the last moment William I drew back from so dangerous an adventure as war with France, with Russia hostile. He went back to Berlin to meet Alexander II, and conferred with Bismarck, who characteristically ascribed the entire trouble to Moltke's want of political insight, and tendered his own resignation (which was refused) on May 11. Bismarck never forgave the Russian chancellor, Gortchakov, for the Czar's intervention, and he was most indignant when, at the end of May, Lord Derby announced in the House of Lords that the British and Russian governments had made joint representations at Berlin, and that the danger had passed. An important incident of this crisis as showing the British attitude with regard to Belgium was a hint given by Disraeli

¹ Buckle, *Disraeli*, v, 422.

² Morier, ii, 350. cf. the Prince's letter in Buckle, *Letters of Queen Victoria*, ii, 400.

to the German government that England would not look on tamely in the event of an attack on Belgium.¹ This was followed by an article in *The Times* of April 13, which repeated the British warning, and was probably inspired.

William I, after this episode, decided, it would seem finally, against any form of preventive war.² Bismarck for the time being was furious with England and with "the petticoats," as he called the Empress Augusta, Queen Victoria, and the Grand Duchess of Baden. The British ambassador at Berlin wrote, that he "behind our backs . . . raves like a maniac, and swears he will take his revenge."³ But in foreign policy he was too prudent to be governed by his passions. His chief animosity was vented on Russia; he pronounced that Disraeli had behaved like a man and a gentleman. Perhaps for that reason he sounded Disraeli as to the possibility of an alliance with England.⁴ His overtures, coming at a moment when both Disraeli and the Queen were disposed to regard him as a new Bonaparte, were declined. But Disraeli was not at all hostile to a treaty with Germany to preserve the *status quo*. Both he and the Queen, however, felt that Bismarck incessantly tried to sow distrust between England and Russia,⁵ which did not make them hopeful of any benefit from a formal alliance with Germany.

From 1875 onwards trouble in the Balkans was continuous, involving the interests of Austria and Russia. Bismarck's chief desire, according to the German foreign office documents, was to avert a war between these two empires, as such an event might have forced him to choose between them and incur the abiding enmity of one or other. He held that "the existence of Austria as a strong and independent great power was for Germany a necessity of the very highest order," and he did not believe in the possibility of crushing Russia, if she were beaten. But he wanted to keep England, Austria and Russia apart lest they should arrange their affairs without his intervention; and, short of war, he undoubtedly wanted to make things as hot as

¹ Buckle, *Disraeli*, v, 420-1.

² See his marginal comment in *Grosse Politik*, i, 282.

³ *Morier*, ii, 355.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, ii, 29-33; iv, 3, denies that Bismarck intended an alliance with England.

⁵ cf. *Letters of Queen Victoria*, ii, 383.

possible for Gortchakov. So early as 1876 he was quite ready for Austria to take Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for Russia to take Bessarabia.¹ He did not, however, encourage the Russian court with promises of support or even neutrality² if it went to war with Austria or with England, though he was sounded on both heads from St. Petersburg. It is possible that Poincaré³ is correct in stating that the German military attaché in St. Petersburg, together with the German ambassador in that capital in 1877, incited the Czar to war with Turkey, by insisting that Russia could not carry her forbearance further. There is no evidence of this in published German documents, but it is in accord with contemporary information that reached the British government. If the charge is true, the German attitude in 1877 was the same as in 1904, when William II urged Nicholas II to take Korea, which the German Emperor must have known very well would cause immediate war with Japan.

Bismarck necessarily foresaw that a Russian advance towards Constantinople would alarm England, and throw her into antagonism towards Russia, thus breaking up the entente of 1875. So early as 1875 he had suggested to the British government that it should assume a protectorate over Egypt, which would certainly estrange England and France. He advised France to secure Morocco and Tunis, which would keep France and Italy apart. The resulting friction between the great powers of Europe would strengthen the position of Germany and add to his own prestige as the "honest broker." In 1876, however, Queen Victoria wrote that she was "sure that Germany would be the safest ally in every way," and she believed that an alliance with Germany would prevent Bismarck from again attacking France.⁴ The grounds for this belief are not very evident, seeing that English ministers continued to be uneasy as to Bismarck's plans and suspected him of the intention to swallow up Holland and Belgium.

The destruction of the imperfect entente between England and Russia was one of the results of the Balkan crisis of 1876-8. If Disraeli, by the treaty of Berlin, succeeded

¹ *Grosse Politik*, ii, 29. England was to take Egypt.

² *id.*, vii, 357.

³ *Origins of the War*, 41-2.

⁴ *Letters*, ii, 489-90.

in ousting Russian influence from Constantinople, it was only to place the Sultan under German tutelage. In March, 1878, Bismarck asked the future King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales and on a visit to Berlin, whether Germany could depend on British support if her relations with Russia became impossible. According to Bismarck, the Prince replied in the affirmative, whereupon St. Petersburg was informed of his answer by the German chancellor.¹ This habitual duplicity in German diplomacy was well known in London, and it made English statesmen rightly suspicious of overtures for an Anglo-German alliance, of which there were fresh suggestions in September, 1879. According to Disraeli the initiative came from the Germans; according to Bismarck it came from the English.² Disraeli was against any move which might cause friction with France, though he expressed himself as generally favourable to an alliance or good understanding with Germany; and possibly because of his comparatively cool attitude—for both he and Queen Victoria doubted the real aims of Bismarck—the German chancellor drew back.

The offer—if it was one—coincided with the conclusion of the alliance between Germany and Austria which Bismarck regarded as one of the greatest events of his political career. The news of this alliance was greeted by Lord Salisbury³ in England as “good tidings of great joy.” It was nominally defensive, and provided that the allies, in the event of an attack on either by Russia, should support one another with their whole military strength, and make peace in common; in the event of an attack by another power on either, the ally not attacked was to maintain a benevolent neutrality.⁴ Thus Austria was not pledged to aid Germany against France. Alexander II was to be confidentially informed, if Russian armaments continued, that an attack on either Germany or Austria would be met by both powers combined.

Russian irritation at the results of the Berlin congress and treaty was the immediate cause of this alliance. The alliance was strongly opposed by the old Emperor William

¹ Lee, i, 433.

² *Grosse Politik*, iv, 3, 141; Buckle, *Disraeli*, vi, 486-94.

³ Speech of October 17, 1879, cf. Busch, *Bismarck*, ii, 405.

⁴ Pribram, i, 6-9; *Grosse Politik*, iii, 26 ff, gives Bismarck's reasons for the alliance

who feared that it would prove fatal to the traditional friendship between Prussia and Russia, which had enabled him in succession to defeat Denmark, Austria and France. He talked indeed of “treachery” to Russia, and even threatened to abdicate sooner than accept it.¹ He foresaw the possibility that it would bring France and Russia together. Bismarck, however, was haunted by the fear of a coalition between France, Russia, and Austria. He was determined to have his way, and finally got it by threatening resignation. Moltke was for the alliance, but he held that there was nothing for Germany to win in the east² and that it was most desirable to maintain good relations with Russia.

This Austrian alliance was the first of that extensive system of alliances which marked Bismarck's policy after the war with France of 1870, and which has been regarded as one of the chief causes of the Great War. The earlier agreements of 1872-3 had not, in his eyes, the binding force of this treaty of 1879, which actually sowed the seed of the Great War, because it bound Germany to support a state that was slowly disintegrating from the conflict of the various nationalities within its borders. Bismarck had seen Hungary wrest its independence from Francis Joseph, and he was aware of the Czech problem in Bohemia, but while, in 1879, the South Slav danger to Austria existed, it had not become deadly. The Austrian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had been accepted by Russia in a secret treaty as far back as 1877, and which had been recommended to Austria by himself, was a cause of future danger, when it took place after the Berlin congress, because it added so largely to the South Slav population within the Austrian dominions. It was resented by Russia, and also by Serbia, but not as yet strongly, as that principality was only just beginning its independent existence, and was then under Austrian influence.

Bismarck's ascendancy on the Continent was greatly increased after the German alliance with Austria. The British government quarrelled with France over the occupation of Tunis by the French (though this had been promised France at Berlin as compensation for the British

¹ *Grosse Politik*, iii, 59, 111; cf. Alexander II's views, id., 132.

² *Grosse Politik*, iii, 122.

THE WAR GUILT

[1881-2]

occupation of Cyprus) and the French resented the circumstances in which the British occupied Egypt in 1882. The events which followed these two occupations showed British diplomacy in an unfavourable light as being at once weak and shifty. Moreover they led to a quarrel between England and France which was not ended till some twenty years had passed, and which, with greater foresight and decision on the part of the British governments concerned, might easily have been averted. The occupation of Tunis at the same time estranged Italy from France, and more than ever played into Bismarck's hands. England was on bad terms with Russia and France, and was thoroughly isolated. France had as yet no ally, and her army, though strong numerically, was still in no position to confront a war with Germany.

With the disappearance of Gortchakov's authority in Russia, Bismarck was able to secure the new Czar, Alexander III's accession to a secret treaty with Germany and Austria, the three Emperors' alliance of 1881.¹ It provided that if one of the three allies should find itself in conflict with a fourth power, the two others should maintain a benevolent neutrality. Thus Russia was prevented from aiding France against Germany, and Austria from intervening in a war between Russia and Turkey. In this latter case it was stipulated that there must be a previous arrangement between the three allies as to the results of such a war. The three agreed to enforce on Turkey the closing of the Dardanelles, in a clause which was visibly directed against England (at that date under a Gladstone ministry). Russia had then no fleet in the Black Sea, and Bulgaria was in all but name her vassal. Provision was made for a common policy in the Balkans, giving Austria the right to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina—"at the moment which Austria thinks opportune"—and arranging for a subsequent union of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia. This treaty was completed by a convention between Austria and Serbia in 1881, which brought the latter state definitely into the Austrian sphere of influence.²

In 1882 Bismarck concluded the triple alliance.³ Its

¹ Pribram, i, 11; *Grosse Politik*, iii, 139 ff.

² Pribram, i, 18.

³ *Grosse Politik*, iii, 183 ff; Pribram, i, 24 ff.

1882-3]

TRIPLE ALLIANCE

object was to free Austria from the risk of attack by Italy in the rear, in the event of war between Austria and Russia. The terms of this treaty were different from those of the alliance of 1879 with Austria. Italy was guaranteed the aid of Germany and Austria in any war with France, and in return she pledged her aid to Germany, but only "in case of an aggression by France which has not been directly provoked." If two powers attacked any one of the members of the alliance, the other two had to intervene. Italy desired the inclusion of England in the alliance, but to that Bismarck was not willing to consent, though he knew that the future Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, was for a close understanding with Germany.¹ He probably felt certain that the Liberals would reject his overtures, though in the summer of 1882 they were in cordial relations with him;² he may also have wished to punish England for her previous aloofness. But an Italian declaration to the effect that the alliance was in no way aimed at England was appended to the treaty.³ In 1883 Austria concluded an alliance with Rumania,⁴ to which Germany and Italy afterwards acceded, for joint defence in case of an attack on either Austria or Rumania. So far as Austria was concerned this was limited to an attack in the Austrian territory bordering on Rumania, and thus the alliance was clearly pointed against Russia.

With this great and complicated system of alliances embracing six states (Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, Serbia, Rumania), four of them of the first class, Bismarck had completely isolated England and France. With England he was now in constant diplomatic conflict. He was only too pleased to incite Russia and France to an aggressive policy against her.⁵ "France need not trouble herself about England; that power has no allies, and will remain isolated as untrustworthy and revolutionary," was the message which, in 1881, he addressed to the French government. But in 1884 he told his son to tell the French ministry that "a French-English war would be for us, even if we took no part in it, a calamity similar to an Austro-Russian war."⁶ He wanted, while trying to get France

¹ *Grosse Politik*, iv, 31.

² Fitzmaurice, *Granville*, ii, 273-7.

³ *Grosse Politik*, iii, 245.

⁴ Pribram, i, 30 ff.

⁵ *Grosse Politik*, iii, 401.

⁶ *Grosse Politik*, iii, 431.

into German tow, rather to worry Gladstone than to ruin England.

In 1884 the secret treaty between Germany, Austria and Russia was renewed for three years (until June, 1887) and he began to urge the Gladstone government to cede Heligoland, assuring that government that he would convert the island into a "good harbour of refuge."¹ The German press was just then engaged in one of its frequent anti-British campaigns, and Gladstone was much embarrassed and even disturbed. The cession of Heligoland was refused.

The immense development of German industry which followed Bismarck's acceptance of protection in 1879 gave Bismarck abundance of money, which he used to subvention the German merchant service, and to develop the fast growing German colonial empire. He was probably contemplating some considerable increase in the German navy, as his effort to obtain Heligoland suggested. It is, therefore, true that the seeds of German antagonism to England were sowed by his hand, as under him Germany took her first steps to assert her world power. Treitschke, the German historian, was, about this date, lecturing in Berlin, and declaring that after the "settlement" with Denmark, Austria, and France, must come a "settlement" with England which "will be the hardest and the last." Anglophobia was growing the dominant feeling in Berlin. Treitschke's bitter invectives and this spirit of arrogance and anglophobia may have helped to encourage the Russian advance in central Asia, where the Penjdeh incident of 1885 almost brought war between Russia and England. Busch reveals the fact that Bismarck encouraged the Turks to take an anti-British line and refuse the British fleet access to the Black Sea.² But to William I Bismarck denied that he had done anything to increase the friction, though he confessed that too intimate relations between England and Russia were not to the interest of German policy.³

None the less he worked with France against England in the Congo question. He certainly encouraged France to make difficulties in Egypt, and saw, without any real concern, a crisis precipitated in French relations with England by

¹ *Grosse Politik*, iv, 51; Fitzmaurice, *Granville*, ii, 351, 361.

² Busch, iii, 133.

³ *Grosse Politik*, iv, 125.

the affair of the *Bosphore Egyptien*. The tragic death of Gordon at Khartum was taken by him as proof of the Gladstone government's incapacity and weakness. What might have happened if Gladstone had continued in power is subject for speculation; but in June, 1885, Salisbury, with a Conservative ministry, came into office, and Anglo-German relations at once improved. Salisbury made an earnest effort to secure a close understanding with France, but was rebuffed. He fell back on an entente with Germany and Austria. His personal relations with Bismarck were good, and one of his ablest ministers, Lord Randolph Churchill, was an active advocate of a German alliance,¹ though in 1887 Lord Randolph became convinced that such an alliance was inexpedient, and supported a close understanding with Russia.²

Bismarck, in his earlier years, had been hostile to the acquisition of a colonial empire, believing that it would lead to dangerous friction with England. But the pressure of German opinion and commercial interests was too strong, and perhaps the idea of inflicting pin-pricks on the Gladstone ministry was not unwelcome to him.³ He began in 1883 a series of annexations in Africa and Oceania, hoisting the German flag in territories and islands which were not then definitely occupied by any European power. As the result of these annexations, he had constant difficulties with the English government, and accused it of playing the part of the dog in the manger. Lord Derby, the British colonial secretary of the day, was particularly objectionable to him because of that peer's choppings and changings; but in all these disagreeable altercations, "he was disposed to respect a display of vigour and . . . he had no intention of pushing matters beyond a certain point."⁴ The extension of the German colonial empire was completed during Lord Salisbury's ministry by friendly negotiations, and gave Germany a territory of over 1,000,000 sq. miles outside Europe, most of it, however, unfit for white settlement. But it marked the appearance on the scene of Germany as a world-power.

¹ *id.*, iv, 139.

² Lee, i, 683.

³ *cf.* Busch, *Bismarck*, ii, 456. "Professor Gladstone . . . there is nothing to be done with him," and *id.*, iii, 131.

⁴ Fitzmaurice, *Granville*, ii, 370.

THE WAR GUILT

[1885-7]

In September, 1885, a Balkan crisis arose from the action of Alexander of Battenberg, Prince of Bulgaria, in making himself master of Eastern Rumelia without the Czar's consent. King Milan of Serbia, who was an Austrian protégé, attacked Bulgaria to obtain compensation, and was almost immediately severely defeated. The Russian government, thoroughly hostile to the "Battenberger," (though he was a relative of the Czar) was meditating the invasion of Bulgaria with a powerful army, and Austria was eager to send a force into Serbia, not to attack the Serbians so much as to secure for them compensation. The danger of war between Austria and Russia was serious, and it is peculiarly interesting in view of events in 1914 to note how Bismarck dealt with it. He informed the Austrian government that he would not support it, if it moved troops into Serbia, and directed it, "without delay to reach an understanding with Russia about the admissibility, form and extent of such intervention."¹ The effect of this warning was marked and immediate, though it should be remembered that in 1885 both Austria and Germany with Russia were members of the three Emperors' alliance. There is every reason to suppose that had Bismarck's policy been followed in 1914, peace could have been preserved.

During these years, 1881-1886, Bismarck's pressure upon France was relaxed in view of the fact that her policy was one of general antagonism to England, and that much of her energy was being concentrated on colonial undertakings. But in 1886 the attitude of Boulanger, the French war minister, attracted his attention just at a moment when the French army through its adoption of smokeless powder was in advance of the German army in equipment. The German army, however, since 1870 had constantly grown, and was regarded by good judges as still the most formidable in Europe. But there was talk in Berlin of the possibility of war, and once more there were suggestions, as in 1874 and 1875, that Belgian neutrality might be violated. In January, 1887, great alarm was caused by the calling out of 72,000 German reservists for a special short course, and generals as eminent as Waldersee² pressed for an attack

1887] BELGIUM AGAIN THREATENED

on France, or for a demand that Boulanger should be deprived of office.

In 1875 the German military attaché at Brussels had strongly urged the Belgian government to put Namur and Liège in a good state of defence; but in 1876, one year later, Moltke had suggested that Belgium ought not to fortify the line of the Meuse, as such action on her part was unnecessary and might "lead to inconvenience." This suggestion makes it probable that he was still thinking of moving through Belgium in a new war with France. In 1882, when Brialmont's plans for the construction of powerful works on the Meuse were being considered in Belgium, the official *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* announced that "Germany has no political motive for violating the neutrality of Belgium, but the advantages that from the military point of view might result from it may force her to do so."¹

In February, 1887, when there was incessant friction between England and France and anxiety regarding the relations between France and Germany, a letter which some thought inspired by Bismarck appeared in the London newspaper, *Standard*. It expressed the opinion that the British government would not treat the entry of German troops into Belgium as an act of war, but would be content to allow them to march through Belgium against France, if Germany pledged herself not to annex any Belgian territory. This may have been meant as a "feeler," to ascertain whether Salisbury would permit such an act at a time when he was known to be sympathetically disposed towards Germany, and indeed almost a German ally.² A leading article in the *Standard* supported the letter and was at that date ascribed to Alfred Austin, the chief political leader writer on that newspaper and a friend of Salisbury's. The article assumed that war between France and Germany was inevitable, and that, as England did not wish to be involved in so colossal a struggle, her best course was to obtain from both sides a promise that they would not annex Belgian territory, and then to wash her hands of the business. It is, however, certain that this article had no official inspiration, and that Salisbury had nothing to do with it. According

¹ Essen, *Invasion and War in Belgium*, 21.

² cf. Newton, *Lord Lyons*, ii, 386.

¹ *Grosse Politik*, v, 25; cf. Ludwig, *Bismarck*, 580.

² *Denkwürdigkeiten*, i, 311.

to an official British note, issued in March, 1917, Lord Vivian, the British minister at Brussels, in 1887 informed the Belgian government that the article neither was inspired by, nor represented the views of, the British government.¹

Shortly after this episode Bismarck announced in the German press that the German staff did not settle German policy, and that Germany would not begin any European war by violating a treaty.² It is significant that Waldersee, who in 1886 and 1887 was, under Moltke, in charge of the German staff plans for war, was then proposing to attack France in a war against France and Russia, but that about this date, or in 1888, he decided for a defensive against France and an offensive against Russia.³ Whether the British attitude influenced this alteration of plans is not clear. There is no hint that it did in German works, where it is ascribed to the belief that the war would be opened by Russia. The coincidence of dates is, however, suggestive.

The triple alliance was renewed in February, 1887, and was extended by an agreement between England and Italy in March, which recognised Italy's claim to Tripoli, and promised British action in concert with Italy to maintain the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and northern Africa.⁴ The Anglo-Italian understanding was approved by Austria with Bismarck's express sanction, and became a virtual triple alliance in Mediterranean affairs. In the triple alliance proper, a new convention was incorporated between Italy and Austria, providing that if either Italy or Austria should occupy territory in the Ægean or Balkans, such occupation should not take place without a previous agreement between these two powers, based on the principle of reciprocal compensation.⁵

Bismarck had always feared an alliance between France and Russia, and his uneasiness was increased by French proclivities which Alexander III was showing. In 1886 the Czar had received the French ambassador, Laboulaye, with a cordiality which alarmed Berlin⁶; a little later he intimated that he would not maintain the three Emperors' agreement of 1884, which was due to be renewed on June

¹ Langenhove, *Dossier Diplomatique de la Question Belge*, 8-10.

² *Berlin Post*, February 24, 1887.

³ Kuhl, *Deutsche Generalstab*, 154-5; cf. Official German *Welthrieg*, i, 50.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, iv, 329-30.

⁵ Pribram, i, 44. This was still in force in 1914.

⁶ cf. *Grosse Politik*, vi, 92 ff.

18, 1887¹; and in Paris the Russian war minister held conferences with Boulanger which pointed to a military understanding between France and Russia. German relations with Russia were becoming strained when the mysterious Schnaebelé affair occurred which all but brought a European war.²

Schnaebelé was a French police official of Pagny-sur-Moselle. From his duties on the frontier he had to be in constant communication with the similar German official, Gautsch, of Ars-sur-Moselle. He was specially disliked by the German government because he was supposed to direct French espionage in Alsace-Lorraine, and Bismarck, on March 12, 1887, had sanctioned his arrest if he could be caught on German soil. On April 20 he was invited by his German colleague to a conference on the frontier, and in due course presented himself there. While the two were talking he happened to cross the frontier by a few feet, whereupon two German detectives in plain clothes fell upon him and attempted to seize him. He threw them off by an effort, and had just recrossed the frontier into French territory when they followed him, seized him once more, arrested him, and carried him off to Metz, where he was immediately imprisoned on the charge of espionage.

The affair caused the greater sensation because it came at a time when Austria was making extensive military preparations as the result of Russian threats against Bulgaria. The French government, imagining war was imminent, took emergency measures to strengthen its covering troops on the frontier,³ and similar German movements were observed. The French foreign minister, in a note pointed out that Schnaebelé had been illegally seized on French soil, at a conference to which he had been invited by Gautsch, and, producing Gautsch's letter, called for Schnaebelé's immediate release. After eight days' delay the release was granted, Bismarck having recorded his private opinion that the arrest could not be justified. The Czar, during the crisis, warned William I that he considered himself free from his obligation under the three Emperors' alliance

¹ *id.*, v, 211 ff.

² *id.*, vi, 182 ff.

³ *Grosse Politik*, vi, 186: according to Münster Boulanger wanted to mobilize; (*id.*, 204), but the French civil government refused to have anything to do with such a project.

(to maintain neutrality in the event of a conflict between Germany and France), which was a new cause of alarm to Bismarck.

The Czar Alexander III was hostile at that date as he believed that Bismarck was stealthily supporting Alexander of Battenberg, who was now a special object of dislike to Russia. Bismarck had, in reality, not the slightest affection for "the Battenberger," and was quite ready to sacrifice him in order to improve German relations with Russia.¹ "In the future, as in the past, we mean to act with Russia in Bulgaria, and against Battenberg," he wrote.² Perhaps with the hope of disarming Pan-Slav hostility to Germany, Bismarck about this date published the fact that Austria, in her occupation of Bosnia, had been carrying out a treaty which she had concluded with Russia before the Russo-Turkish war. The disclosure caused a storm in Hungary, where the feeling was anti-Russian and pro-Turkish, and it considerably annoyed the Austrian government.

Fresh trouble with Russia arose over the Bulgarian choice of Ferdinand of Coburg as the new prince, Alexander of Battenberg having abdicated. Ferdinand was a German with much property in Austria, and serving in the Austrian army, but he was selected because he was supposed to be personally acceptable to the Czar,³ which seems an odd delusion on the part of that Balkan people. Bismarck treated the new prince coolly, but then, in 1866 he had affected to discourage the Hohenzollern candidate in Rumania. His principle, as he proclaimed it, was still in all Balkan questions to act with Russia. Meanwhile in May, 1887, Spain, by a secret convention, extended the triple alliance to the western Mediterranean,⁴ and agreed to enter into no treaty with France regarding the north coast of Africa which should be directed against Italy, Germany or Austria. This completed the encirclement of France.

The Czar, according to German reports, was the victim alternately of intense irritability and complete apathy from want of exercise.⁵ Irritation against Bismarck had led him, in 1887, to the very verge of an alliance with France,

¹ Busch, iii, 181.

² *Grosse Politik*, v, 163; vi, 277 ff.

³ *id.*, v, 159; cf. Buchanan, i, 24.

⁴ Pribram, i, 48.

⁵ *Grosse Politik*, v, 71-2.

when the old German chancellor, by what his admirers considered his diplomatic master stroke, recovered his ascendancy over the Russian sovereign. Alexander may have been influenced by the negotiations which were then in progress between England, Italy and Austria, and he may have felt that Russia was too weak to venture on a policy which might lead Bismarck to organise a vast coalition against him. On June 18, 1887, the famous reinsurance treaty was concluded between Germany and Russia, by which either power pledged itself to neutrality in case the other was attacked by a third power. But, if Germany attacked France or Russia attacked Austria, this pledge of neutrality was not to apply.

Russia's "historic rights" in the Balkans were recognised, as also was her "preponderant and decisive influence in Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia," but there was to be no modification in Balkan territorial conditions without a preliminary agreement between the two allies, and the two undertook to oppose any infringement of the *status quo*. By secret additional clauses Germany agreed to ban the "Battenberger," and to support Russia in any measures thought necessary for the defence of the "entrance to the Black Sea" which would cover the Russian occupation of Constantinople.¹ The treaty was for the term of three years. It was concealed from the Austrian government and even from the German staff.²

Even Bismarck's enthusiastic defenders confess that he was guilty of extreme duplicity in concluding this treaty. He argued that its object was peace and nothing else, and that for the preservation of peace he had to keep Russian policy under his control, and prevent an alliance between Russia and France. He did not believe that Russia from her internal weakness would be able to attempt aggression in the Near East; and he thought Austria had everything to lose by going to war with her over Balkan issues. By this sort of mental legerdemain he succeeded in persuading himself that he had acted honourably³; and Alexander III attached great importance to the treaty, though it is quite clear that Bismarck's secret purpose, if war did come, was to sacrifice Russia in the last resort. The treaty was

¹ *id.*, v, 254.

² *Grosse Politik*, vi, 63.

³ cf. Brandenburg, 13.

THE WAR GUILT

[1887]

treacherous to Austria and England, as it promised Constantinople to Russia at a time when Bismarck himself was promoting an agreement between England, Italy and Austria to prevent the Czar from occupying that city. It was certainly treacherous to Rumania.¹ Its disclosure some years later brought no little discredit on Bismarck's reputation, and led foreign nations more than ever to distrust German diplomacy. Just at this time the German and Austrian staffs were studying plans for a great campaign in Poland, and for setting up an Austrian archduke there at an early date, if Russia caused trouble. Waldersee² was in favour of winter for such operations, believing that then Russia was most vulnerable.

In December, 1887, with Bismarck's warm support, a convention was concluded between England, Italy and Austria, which provided for the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, thus cutting clean across the visionary concessions which he had made to Russia in the reinsurance treaty. The convention was preceded by an exchange of extremely cordial letters between Bismarck and Salisbury, in which the future William II concurred.³ Salisbury was doubtful of him because of his supposed pro-Russian proclivities which were in every mouth, and known in London from the family connection between the Prince of Wales and the Czar.

In December, 1887, somewhat unwillingly under pressure from Moltke, Bismarck brought forward a new military law increasing the German war effectives by 700,000. This action led Alexander III to believe that he had been tricked. But Bismarck was as strongly against a war with Russia as he had ever been; as he wrote in 1888, even if Russia were completely defeated, she could not be crushed, because of her climate, her deserts, and her poverty.⁴ He instanced the fashion in which France had recovered from the disastrous peace conditions of 1871 as proof that a great European state could not be finally put out of action by any use of military force; and said he feared that a defeated Russia would be a second France, ready to enter any combination against Germany. His publication, in 1888, of

¹ *Grosse Politik*, vi, 4 ff.

² *Denkwürdigkeiten*, i, 334.

³ Pribram, i, 51; *Grosse Politik*, iv, 376 ff.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, vi, 303-4.

1888]

WILLIAM II SUCCEEDS

the terms of the alliance with Austria was a hint to Russia that there were limits to his compliance with her wishes, and at the same time an assurance to Salisbury that he would not betray England. Salisbury felt some uneasiness lest Bismarck should be secretly meditating an attack on France.

In February, 1888, Bismarck, in a speech to the Reichstag which attracted great attention, denounced French policy, declaring that France hated all her neighbours; and at the same time he complained of Russian troop movements towards the German and Austrian frontiers. But his own definite decision, despite the pressure of the military party, had been made once more, not to allow a preventive war, but to wait till Germany was attacked.¹ Touch with Russia was recovered; cordial letters were exchanged between William I and Alexander III, in which each sovereign assured the other that his intentions were pacific. The strain was still serious when the old Emperor William I began rapidly to fail in health. His son, Frederick, was desperately ill with cancer of the throat, and could not live more than a few months. Before the old Emperor expired he besought his successor "always to remain on good terms with Russia, as with her there is no ground for dispute." With William I, however, the intimate understanding between the German and Russian courts vanished for a time, as Alexander III disliked and distrusted William II, who succeeded to the German throne on June 15, 1888.

The new Kaiser had been unfortunate in his upbringing. As a child he suffered from a withered left arm which had been badly treated. His home life had been unhappy; his mother thought him conceited and untrustworthy, and his father was by no means sympathetic to him; as he showed not unnatural timidity, in view of his useless left arm, he had great difficulty in learning to ride, which led some of those about him to regard him as a coward. He was the favourite grandchild of Queen Victoria, and it would appear that, notwithstanding Bismarck's statements as to his jealousy of her authority, he returned her feeling of tenderness. His father went so far as to criticise and disparage him to strangers; in 1885, at a dinner at one of the Guards'

¹ Waldersee, i, 349; *Grosse Politik*, vi, 24-25, 279.

messes, Frederick declared, in the presence of all the officers and their guests, that his son was an "immature person without any judgment," and caused a painful scene.¹ In 1886, when Bismarck wished to prepare him for his future duties, and to give him access to the minutes and business of the German foreign office, Frederick wrote a cruel letter, referring to his judgment as "rash and precipitate"; describing his knowledge as "defective"; and deprecating his contact with foreign affairs in view of his "immaturity and inexperience . . . and his tendency towards vanity and presumption."²

It was thus in part through the fault of his parents, or perhaps from the parsimony of the Prussian court, that the young prince lived mainly in the atmosphere of a Potsdam regiment, and was given little opportunity of seeing anything of men and life outside the barracks and drill ground. Bismarck watched this system of education with anxiety, and deplored it, but was unable to alter it. The influence of the *adjutantur*, or military household, had been prejudicial to deeper German interests even in the case of that much more cautious and modest ruler, William I. By his training and by the conditions of his early life William II seems to have been specially prepared for complete subordination to it. He talked of "stinking bureaucrats and ink-slingers," as contemptible in comparison with such glittering soldiers.³ There was a strain of great weakness in his character which he strove to conceal by bluster; and his bad manners and inclination to treachery made him the type of the imperial cad.

His mother, Queen Victoria's eldest daughter, from her English origin, her want of tact, and her dislike for Bismarck's violent methods, became extremely unpopular in Bismarckian Germany, and friction with her filled her son with prejudices against England. As the "half-Englishman" in a country where so many anglophobes were in high position, he was inclined to show his independence of parental influences by antagonism to England.⁴ It was a misfortune both for Germany and himself that from his youth up-

¹ Waldersee, i, 250.

² cf. the equally cruel account in *Grosse Politik*, v, 55-6.

³ *id.*, xviii, 57.

⁴ cf. his words in *Grosse Politik*, vi, 329. Francis Joseph saw that the Empress Frederick's attitude was likely to embarrass Anglo-German relations (p. 347)

wards he developed a passion for naval affairs. So far back as 1888 it began to cause concern among German soldiers of the older generation, who could foresee some of the consequences of a great expansion of the German navy.¹

He had a craving for popularity, was easily influenced, and was always eager to avoid responsibility. Impulsive and hasty, his judgment was bad, though in foreign affairs his opinions were frequently sounder than those of Holstein or Kiderlen-Wächter. Without hesitation he criticised his ablest and most experienced generals, and, as Waldersee said, "from an over-estimate of his own knowledge" was apt to "make an exhibition of himself."² In manœuvres he always wanted to win, and the umpire who gave a decision against him had speedy reason to regret it.³ He exercised no control over his tongue or pen. His talk and speeches were reckless, and Bismarck in vain warned him against violent and indiscreet annotations to official documents.⁴ According to Waldersee,⁵ he declared, in 1891, that the chief of the general staff ought to be only "a kind of amanuensis" to him; and there were but three of his senior generals for whom he showed any respect in his early days.⁶ His fondness for violence in words made his tendency to talkativeness extremely dangerous. Francis Joseph of Austria, who was no enemy, deplored his inability to hold his tongue.⁷ He was accused of neglecting work, and spending his time travelling and amusing himself.

His changefulness disagreeably impressed foreigners who came into contact with him. "Your Emperor," said Jules Cambon of him, "is an extraordinary man. To-day he hugs you, and to-morrow he kicks your backside." "In the morning he willed one thing: in the evening he did the very opposite," says Wolff.⁸ Because no one ever knew what he would do or say, he gradually became distrusted abroad. Yet he could be true to a personal friend. He clung to Eulenburg, and lamented his ignominious disappearance twenty years after it had happened. He

¹ Waldersee, ii, 4.

² *id.*, ii, 120.

³ *id.*, ii, 145.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, vi, 304-7, cf. Wolff, 231, 262.

⁵ Waldersee, ii, 179; cf. also 226.

⁶ *id.*, ii, 150.

⁷ Andrassy, *Bismarck*, 291.

⁸ *Vorspiel*, 106.

was commonly accused of listening only to flatterers and "yes-sayers"; and his dismissal of Bismarck was probably in large part due to the fact that the old chancellor openly blamed certain of his projects; in part to his determination to govern himself. But when the younger Moltke told him that his interference at manœuvres had been mischievous, he took it well, though Moltke's words must have wounded him deeply.¹ He kept Moltke as chief of staff, and showed him every regard. Schoen, a former foreign secretary, speaking of William II's later years, says, "he expected absolute candour . . . there is no justification for the legend current in Germany, that he followed his own inclinations."²

From his early years he showed a strong dislike of his uncle, Edward VII. The reasons for his attitude are not very clear, but his animosity was probably due in part to his uncle's sympathy with the Empress Frederick and well-known distaste for Bismarckian methods, of which William was in his earlier years an enthusiastic admirer. The Bismarck family did its best to aggravate the estrangement. The future Edward VII somewhat incautiously asked Count Herbert Bismarck, in 1888, whether the Emperor Frederick had really wished to restore Alsace-Lorraine to France, if it were possible. Count Herbert thereupon represented the Prince of Wales as having said that William II ought to commemorate his accession by restoring the two provinces to France, which was entirely to falsify his words.³

He perhaps really thought, as he told Schlieffen in 1900, that England was the natural ally of Germany,⁴ and he has recorded, in vivid sentences, the extraordinary attraction which Windsor exercised on him, and his feeling that in England he was at home.⁵ Yet at the same time he pursued naval projects which—had he reasoned matters out—were calculated to cause friction and even war between Germany and England. There was always a hardly suppressed note of menace in the naval bills which Tirpitz prepared at his orders and the Reichstag carried. In spite of this he was popular in London to the eve of the Great War, though

¹ H. von Moltke, *Erinnerungen*, 305-12.

² Schoen, *Memoirs*, 136.

³ Lee, ii, 647; *Grosse Politik*, vi, 331.

⁴ Waldersee, ii, 444.

⁵ *Grosse Politik*, xxviii, 326.

almost without exception English statesmen were afraid of him and distrusted him. In his personality there was undoubtedly something magnetic.¹ He dominated the weak Czar, Nicholas II, to such a degree that the Czarina did her best to prevent the two from meeting, for, like Edward VII, she regarded William II as false and insincere. Salisbury,² too, was believed to avoid interviews with him for the same reason, and, perhaps piqued by that fact, he spoke of Salisbury in the most outrageous fashion to Queen Victoria.

Critics of him abounded in Germany. Holstein, his own evil genius and the evil genius of Germany, declared that he would either destroy the German empire or die in a madhouse. Waldersee closed his memoirs³ with the words that he prayed God he might not live to witness what he saw coming. The sense of doom predominated in the last volume of Bismarck's memoirs.

William II introduced into German policy a note of instability and uncertainty; and his own letters prove that he was repeatedly guilty of treachery to his own relatives and friends. Yet he undeniably meant well, and was firmly convinced that he was under the special guidance of the Deity. It is strange that a man who had so many good qualities should have had such a fundamentally evil influence on his times, and should have been one of the causes of the Great War. He failed in a want of the deeper political judgment and moral courage, for few can question that in his heart he was against war, and apprehensive as to its result. Indeed, because of this apprehension, he was by some of the more reckless German militarists denounced as a poltroon. He might posture and bluster, but he did not want to shed human blood.

William II for a while submitted to Bismarck's guidance; and there was one point on which both seem to have agreed in these early days of the new reign—in their desire for closer relations with England. In January, 1889, Bismarck definitely proposed to Salisbury a treaty of alliance covering the risk of war with France.⁴ Salisbury was disinclined to bind himself in view of the party situation in England,

¹ *id.*, xxxix, 259-260.

² In 1891, William, however, spent a day at Hatfield, *id.*, viii, 65.

³ *id.*, 232.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, iv, 399 ff.

and perhaps of the risk that Bismarck might be planning a new war against France, but he assured Bismarck of his good will, and in all but treaty form a defensive Anglo-German alliance existed. In the Reichstag Bismarck spoke of England as an old and traditional German ally, "with whom we have no conflicting interests." He told Alexander III in 1889 that his policy excluded any conflict with England, and made her retention of her position as a great power a vital German interest.¹

In 1889, with the disappearance of Boulanger, one of the chief obstacles to an understanding between France and Russia vanished. Boulanger, whom the Czar regarded as a hare-brained adventurer, was led to believe that his arrest was imminent for plotting against the republic. He fled to Belgium, and after existing there for two years in obscurity, committed suicide. The new German Emperor William II was distasteful to the Czar, for personal reasons, among which was undoubtedly his "aggressive amiability," and was also generally distrusted in Russia.² The Czar's toast on May 30, 1889, to the Prince of Montenegro as "the only upright and true friend of Russia" had a ring unfriendly to Germany, while it seemed to threaten Austria. In the court circle in Berlin Bismarck was losing influence, and was described as pro-Russian, because he was doing his very utmost to hold Austria back in the Balkans, for which the German war party blamed him. William II was planning a journey to the East, which aroused Russian suspicions; and though, in October, 1889, Bismarck, in a personal interview, assured the Czar that Germany would never make war with Russia for the future of Baghdad, German firms were seeking railway concessions in Asia Minor with the support of the German Government.³ The Sultan, indeed, granted to a German agent of the Deutsche Bank, in 1888, a concession for a railway to Angora—the first link in the line to Baghdad. Alexander III knew from relatives in Germany that the Bismarck régime was all but over, and with his profound distrust of William II, he probably feared that Waldersee and the German war party

¹ *id.*, vi, 360.

² *cf. Grosse Politik*, vi, 332; and Bismarck, *Gedanken*, iii, 49, 142-4. Alexander III said of William, "he is mad: he is a young fellow who has bad manners, and is not straight." (Ludwig, *Kaiser Wilhelm*, 97).

³ Bismarck, however, cautioned the Bank against the risks it would run; Earle, *Baghdad Railway*, 41.

would carry out their pet project of a preventive war against Russia.

In May, 1889, Bismarck had a serious quarrel with Switzerland over the treatment of a German police official, Wohlgemuth, in Swiss territory. This man had engaged another person to stir up a Socialist agitation in Switzerland, and had directed him to act "without scruple." The Swiss authorities arrested and expelled him, whereupon Bismarck threatened to refuse to recognise Swiss neutrality and demanded the withdrawal of the right of asylum from foreign political refugees in Switzerland. The quarrel went so far that the Swiss government began hastily to arm and voted £640,000 for the purchase of rifles and ammunition. Waldersee,¹ who was engaged with Holstein in a cabal against Bismarck, even professed that the German chancellor thought of going to war and partitioning Switzerland. According to him, Bismarck expected Russian support, as the Russian terrorists' bomb factories were on Swiss soil. That Bismarck really intended war with Switzerland is wildly improbable, seeing that a friendly Switzerland was indispensable for the German staff's war plans. It was a sign of his failing judgment and self-control that he went to such lengths against a small state, and caused such alarm.

In any case William II was determined to get rid of him, and for that purpose meant to use the first convenient pretext. The chance came in March, 1890. Alarming reports from the German consul at Kiev, to the effect that Russia would assemble 150,000 troops in Volhynia for manœuvres in the summer, led the new Emperor impetuously to decide that Russia was actually about to deploy her army and attack Austria.² William complained that these Kiev reports had been kept back from him, and that he had not been told of "the fearful danger which threatens." Bismarck believed that the danger was not fearful, and that there was no real reason for alarm, while Waldersee was telling the Emperor that the only argument of any use with Slavs was stamping on them.³ The chancellor's reward for his coolness and caution was dismissal. He was succeeded by Caprivi, a good general but not of any genius as a

¹ *ii*, 51, 62.

² Waldersee, *ii*, 118.

³ *Grosse Politik*, vi, 363.

THE WAR GUILT

[1890]

statesman, who favoured an understanding with England and firm support of Austria. The reinsurance treaty should have been renewed in June, 1890, but, though the Czar offered to drop the clauses which were regarded as hostile to Austria, the Kaiser's government would not agree. A council was held in Berlin at which it was decided that the treaty was disloyal to Austria and to England and incompatible with the Rumanian treaty. The news that the treaty was to be dropped was received with "consternation" in Russia,¹ where the government seems to have been more than ever persuaded that an attack was imminent. Alexander III, with all his anxieties and suspicions increased, turned his eyes to France.

The crisis which brought the fall of Bismarck thus, in some respects, anticipated the crisis which a quarter of a century later brought the Great War. In 1890 William II was carried away by the influence of the German staff, and was prepared to act precipitately, without fully verifying his information. He was undoubtedly restrained by Bismarck's attitude. In 1914, when a similar emergency arose, no Prussian official had sufficient character or knowledge to hold him back or to bridle the general staff. Bismarck's hope in 1890 was that peace might be preserved indefinitely. He had secured the close alliance of Austria, and the nominal alliance of Italy. Austria, again was the ally of Rumania, and had control of Serbian policy, while she was also in close relations with Ferdinand of Bulgaria. He had succeeded in keeping France and Russia apart; and he was on excellent terms with England. The German military position was still one of immense strength. It had taken Moltke some time to work out plans for a war on two fronts, attacking Russia and standing on the defensive against France, in the event of an outbreak of hostilities. But in 1887 he had reported to William I that the German army was then able to face without aid such a war.²

One of the consequences of Bismarck's fall and of the new Kaiser's inexperience and impulsiveness was a marked increase in the influence of the German staff at times of difficulty. It began to interfere in purely political issues, and, as will be seen later, its influence had disastrous

¹ *Grosse Politik*, vii, 12.

² *Grosse Politik*, vi, 61-2. This plan did not involve the violation of Belgium.

1890]

HOLSTEIN'S INFLUENCE

effect. Bismarck knew that from its very nature staff work produces a tendency to believe that force is the remedy for all evils, and an inclination to use it, and resort to violence without considering the consequences. A staff, he wrote, obviously aiming his words at William II, "only becomes dangerous under a monarch whose policy lacks sense of proportion and power to resist one-sided and constitutionally unjustifiable influences."¹ He examined at some length the expediency of a preventive war against Russia, and condemned it.² He had kept Moltke and Waldersee under strict control, except perhaps in the affair of 1875. He remembered, he said, that the staff in 1867 and in 1870 repeatedly attributed to France aggressive projects without good reason, just as that organisation attributed to Russia aggressive projects in 1887.³

The fall of Bismarck was, in no small part, the work of F. von Holstein,⁴ an official in the German foreign office, who had acted as Bismarck's instrument in various unsavoury intrigues. He lived like a hermit, aloof from men, poor, without dress clothes, avoiding entertainments, and absorbed in paper work of which he was a master. He was regarded as a veritable Nestor of diplomacy, and as incarnating all the knowledge of the Bismarckian age. His one principle, however, was to suspect everyone and everything. He was obsessed with the idea that England's sole aim in foreign policy was to entangle Germany in frightful complications and then leave her in the lurch, or to use the German army to pick British chestnuts out of the fire.

There may have been some justification for this belief from the conduct of British diplomacy in the period 1850-1880; but time had brought great changes, and Holstein never reckoned with them. He was entirely out of touch with foreign statesmen and foreign habits of thought and he had none of Bismarck's broad common sense. He made German policy largely a matter of personal rivalry and intrigue. No more mischievous mentor could well have been discovered. To his suggestions and machinations were due some of the worst mistakes which William II

¹ Bismarck, *Recollections*, ii, 102.

² *id.*, 282.

³ *Grosse Politik*, vi, 25.

⁴ Born 1837, died 1909. The most friendly estimate of Holstein is Chifrol's (*Fifty Years*, 268 ff).

THE WAR GUILT

[1890

committed. He was apparently responsible for the habit of placing a loaded pistol on the table, which German diplomacy thenceforward more and more adopted in its arguments with foreign powers, though, no doubt, he derived the idea of it from the emphasis which Bismarck had laid upon force, as in the famous "blood and iron" speech. The cynicism which Bismarck had affected, and the contempt which he had displayed for liberalism and idealism, were exaggerated by his pupil, who imagined that the secret of his strength lay in this "real policy."

Bismarck left no school and no successors. It was with him as with Napoleon; he was so great that he did too much himself, and never trained men to carry on his work when he had departed. One of the many causes of the troubles that followed his dismissal was without question the defectiveness of the German constitution as an instrument of government. The departments were independent of one another, and there was no organisation, such as a cabinet council, for securing a common and definite policy or for thoroughly considering alterations of policy.¹ The Emperor was swayed by favourites, and suffered from want of definite principle in his political ideas, so it was of peculiar importance that when action was taken by his government it should be carefully studied. Yet the various secretaries of state had not the right of reporting direct to him without special arrangement; their reports went through the chancellor; and documents and information frequently failed to reach the sovereign, as was the case with the Kiev reports, and the news of the Balkan mobilisations in 1912. Holstein is said to have been in the habit of secreting important papers and showing them to no one. Because of this disconnectedness, there were not infrequently at critical times two or even more different policies being pursued by different ministers or departments and by the Emperor. The foreign secretary might have one policy and the Emperor quite another, while no one ever knew what Holstein would do. British governments subsequently complained that the seat of authority at Berlin was not to be discovered. Owing to the federal system, the constitution could not be modified without extreme difficulty,

¹ cf. Haldane, *Before the War*, 73.



HERR F. VON HOLSTEIN.

A leading official at the German Foreign Office; born, 1837; died, 1909.

and there is no indication that Germans recognised its defects before the Great War had been fought.

The outstanding facts in this period were the general competition in armaments following the wars of 1866 and 1870; the perilous position of France, isolated and bereft of Alsace-Lorraine; the organisation by Bismarck of an enormous system of alliances; and the advent to power of a person so incalculable in his impulses and reckless in his policy as William II.

CHAPTER II

WILLIAM II'S FIRST YEARS

FROM the documents published by the Bolsheviks, the world knows that William II had written letters to the Czar Alexander III and the Russian military representative at Berlin in 1884-5, sneering at the English, and doing his best to promote ill-will between Russia and England. He had warned Alexander III against England, and against the "false and intriguing nature" of the future Edward VII, his own uncle, and the husband of the Czarina's sister. He had denounced his father and mother to the Russian court as pro-British and anti-Russian, and had derided the British navy and its battleships. He had gone so far as to assure the Russian court of his intention to "keep a close watch" on the English, and had expressed a wish that Allah "would send them to hell." The Kaiser's later letters to sovereigns were generally censored, if not prepared by the German foreign office. It is, however, certain that Bismarck had no hand in these astounding missives of William's early life. The old chancellor held that William went much too far in his relations with Alexander III,¹ and that he, therefore, inspired suspicion rather than confidence. Moreover Bismarck knew that, from the family connection between Alexander III and the Prince of Wales, confidences might be easily exchanged between them, as indeed they actually were.

William II, however, at first pursued the policy of friendship with England. He visited that country in 1889 and praised the British navy and army. He obtained the cession of Heligoland in 1890 which Bismarck with all his veiled threats and astute diplomacy had been unable to procure. The first suggestion of it seems to have proceeded from

¹ Bismarck, *Gedanken*, iii, 135.

1889-90]

FRANCE ISOLATED

Joseph Chamberlain, who was anxious to obtain German South West Africa in exchange for it¹; actually the British government received Zanzibar and certain points in East Africa. The British admiralty was not consulted before the cession took place, but there seems little doubt in view of experience in the Great War that strategically Heligoland was useless to England, though it was of extreme value to Germany.

Even before the disappearance of Bismarck, William II had secured, in 1889, the first of those naval programmes which were subsequently so seriously to affect German relations with England. It was on a very modest scale, providing four battleships and nine small coast-defence vessels, besides fifteen other craft of less importance. The creation of a naval cabinet was being considered by the Emperor, who was reading Mahan's first and most famous volume on *The Influence of Sea Power on History*. From the earliest days of his reign he made no secret of his resolve to expand his fleet and build large sea-going ships. His naval projects as yet attracted little attention in England, where in 1889 the Naval Defence Act was passed, greatly increasing the British navy, to meet a possible combination of France and Russia. Only a few remembered that, in 1848, Cavour had declared that Germany would eventually challenge England at sea.² As she had created an army to destroy French authority on the continent so she would certainly, sooner or later, set to work to create a navy which would dictate to England at sea.³

The central fact in Europe was still the isolation of France—"placed in quarantine," as a French statesman said, faced by a coalition of apparently overwhelming military strength in whose purely defensive aims Frenchmen did not believe, and condemned to watch, with bitter indignation, the harsh treatment of the French population in Alsace-Lorraine. For the years passed, but the German empire was not able to assimilate this French element or to win its affection. No nation, least of all a great nation, could be deaf to the cry of sorrow which rose unceasingly, from the people of its lost territory; the blood still flowed from the wound, yet hope of recovering the provinces by war

¹ *Grosse Politik*, iv, 408.

² Countess E. M. Cesaresco, *Cavour*, 202.

³ Ramsay, *Idealism*, 445.

had faded, if it was ever seriously entertained. The rapid growth of the German population and the enormous increase in German wealth placed France at a marked initial disadvantage. "We thought of the lost provinces as we retain in our bereaved hearts the features of our dead," says Professor Denis.¹ "But visions of new slaughter did not dye our tears scarlet. Perhaps our courage quailed before the crushing sacrifices which a new war would cost us; and that new war, we knew only too well would be one to the death."

The German embassy at Paris in 1890 and 1891 reported that the temper of the French government was pacific.² The Radical party gained in strength at every election, and it was profoundly hostile to war; the peasants and the small bourgeoisie who dominated the French government were for peace by instinct. Though the French army had been greatly increased and reorganised, few cool critics considered it capable of attacking the Germans without allies. What France wanted was security, and the attitude of the German government kept her in continual anxiety.

The policy of alternate hugs and kicks was immediately applied by William II to France. Early in 1891 the Empress Frederick paid a visit to Paris, as was thought at the time to prepare for a subsequent visit by her son, the Emperor. She went *incognito*, and though she was treated with politeness she was coldly received. She prolonged her stay, unwisely as the German ambassador at Paris thought,³ and when the German press attributed political importance to her visit, articles in the French press replied sarcastically. A number of French painters, who had intended to send pictures to an exhibition at Berlin, decided not to do so; and the League of Patriots, an ultra-patriotic organisation, denounced the Kaiser. The results were alarming. William II ostentatiously conferred with Waldersee, the chief of staff and leader of the German war party; the Austrian ambassador in Berlin was informed by him that "peace hung by a hair"⁴; and the French ambassador was given a hint that the slightest want of respect to the Empress "might bring catastrophes." The published German docu-

¹ Denis, *La Guerre*, 131; cf. Florent-Matter, *passim*, and *F.O.D.*, ii, 286, where "the growing dislike for war" in France is emphasised, with some reservations.

² *Grosse Politik*, vii, 301, but also see 271 and 229.

³ *Grosse Politik*, vii, 275.

⁴ Langer, *Slavonic Review*, 1926.

ments fail to reflect the gravity of this incident or the anxiety which it caused in France at a time when French relations with Italy were strained, owing to a tariff war and to Crispi's policy; and when France was still isolated and without friend or ally. After the affair the German government increased the stringency of its passport regulations in Alsace-Lorraine, thereby making its rule more than ever burdensome to the people of those provinces.

In 1890, William II paid a fresh visit to St. Petersburg, and met with a somewhat cool¹ reception as the result of the dropping of the reinsurance treaty, and the fact that the Czar had good reason to distrust a person whose letters to himself struck so different a note from the speeches that same sovereign had delivered in England. The articles in the Russian press did not encourage any German illusions. In the winter of 1890 negotiations had begun for the renewal of the triple alliance. The fall of Crispi in Italy and a lessening of friction between that country and France enabled the Italian government to secure somewhat better terms from Germany. In May, 1891,² the new treaty was signed, with one important addition to its clauses, by which Germany promised to aid Italy in maintaining the *status quo* in Tunis and Tripoli, or, if that became impossible, in occupying these regions "after a formal and preliminary agreement" in accord with England. A protocol stipulated that England was to be invited to extend her support of the *status quo* in the Turkish Empire to Morocco and Northern Africa. A memorandum written by Caprivi emphasised the fact that the military value of Italy's alliance must depend on England's friendship.³ A further convention between Spain and Italy secured Spanish aid in maintaining the independence of Morocco. The triple alliance was to continue in force for six years, and to be automatically renewed, failing notice to withdraw from it given one year in advance by any of the states concerned in it.

The renewal of the treaty was announced with unusual ostentation, apparently at the wish of Italy, causing considerable annoyance to the Czar. He had already made up his mind to draw closer to France, though he heartily

¹ *Grosse Politik*, vii, 353.

² Pribram, i, 67.

³ *Grosse Politik*, vii, 81. This was ignored by the Germans in 1914.

detested her liberalism and her republican system, and he could be reasonably certain that if Germany and Austria fell upon him, the French rifles "would go off of their own accord." In no circumstances could France have stood still while the German and Austrian staffs were trying to crush Russia, as they had wanted to do in 1887-8. Alexander III was largely influenced by the belief that England was on the verge of joining the triple alliance, and that William II was bent on extending German influence in Asia Minor. Perhaps, too, he wanted to guarantee Russia against any risk of war in Europe while the Trans-Siberian railway was under construction. The plans for it were sanctioned in 1891 and work began that same year.

At the end of 1890 he suggested to the French government that a French squadron should pay an official visit to Cronstadt, and this invitation he repeated in 1891, when he bestowed the Russian order of St. Andrew on the French President, Carnot. The French government, after careful consideration, decided to send a squadron under Admiral Gervais to Cronstadt. As it was anxious to avoid any appearance of hostility to England, it accepted an invitation from Salisbury for this squadron to pay a visit to Spithead on its return from the Baltic. Salisbury's invitation was given as a hint to the French government that the presence of William II about the same date in England, on a visit to the Queen, did not indicate the conclusion of an Anglo-German alliance, of which the French were a little afraid. On July 22, 1891, Gervais's ships anchored at Cronstadt, and were received with extraordinary enthusiasm. Fêtes in honour of France were organised in St. Petersburg and Moscow; and Alexander III stood with bared head while the Marseillaise, that French revolutionary hymn, was played. In August, the French and Russian governments exchanged letters in which the two countries declared their resolve to work in common for the maintenance of peace in Europe and the balance of power.¹ A prodigious change had come over Europe. France was out of quarantine, isolated no longer. The continental powers were now grouped in two systems of alliance which confronted one another. From his retirement Bismarck directed against the Kaiser the bitterest criticism of the "new course" which had brought this catastrophe on Germany.

¹ *Alliance Franco-Russe*, 26 ff.

The German government, however, was right in insisting, as it did at the time, that the new understanding did not threaten the peace of Europe. Though German propagandists have since maintained that the purpose of Russia was aggression, and of France, revenge, the Radicals of the French government certainly had no desire for war. Alexander III, who well knew the weakness of Russia, and had no excessive belief in French stability, had not the slightest inclination to embark on wild adventures. His aim was only to protect Russia against William II's possible ebullitions. To prove that he had no hostile designs against Germany he paid William II a visit at Kiel in June, 1892, by which he gave a plain hint that he would support no "policy of revenge" in France.¹ But at the same time to show that his friendship for France had not been abandoned, he sent the Grand Duke Constantine to greet the French President at Nancy, and intimated that he was ready to conclude a defensive alliance with France.

This alliance took the form of a military convention signed by Generals Boisdeffre and Obruchev, for France and Russia. It was approved by the Czar in August, 1892, and from that date the dual alliance may be said to have come into existence, though it was not embodied in a political treaty till the end of 1893. The terms were as follows:²

- (1) If France is attacked by Germany or by Italy with German support, Russia will employ all her available force to attack Germany. If Russia is attacked by Germany or by Austria with German support France will employ all her available force for war against Germany.
- (2) If the forces of the triple alliance or of any single power of the triple alliance are mobilised, France and Russia at the first news of such procedure and without any preliminary agreement being required, will immediately and simultaneously mobilise their whole forces and assemble them as near as possible to their frontiers.
- (3) The forces available for employment against Germany will total 1,300,000 men in the case of France and 700,000 to 800,000 in the case of Russia. These forces will engage resolutely (*à fond*) and with all energy (*en toute diligence*) so that Germany will have simultaneously to fight both in the east and the west.

¹ *Grosse Politik*, vii, 409. In early 1892, William II indulged in threats against Russia, which probably reached Alexander III (see Waldersee, ii, 239).

² *Alliance Franco-Russe*, 164.

THE WAR GUILT

[1892

This convention is of great importance as its conditions affected the procedure of both France and Russia in the last hours of the crisis of 1914. The parties to it pledged themselves not to conclude peace separately. That Alexander III might understand the character of his promise, Boisdeffre verbally explained to him its inner meaning. He told the Czar:

To mobilise is to compel your neighbour to do the same. Mobilisation inevitably brings the concentration of armies. Were your neighbour not so to act, but to allow a million men to be mobilised on his frontier without simultaneously doing the same, he would lose all subsequent freedom of action, and place himself in the position of a man who, having a pistol in his pocket, allows his neighbour to hold a cocked pistol to his head without himself drawing his weapon.

Boisdeffre, therefore, stated that "mobilisation means declaration of war." In this he went beyond the facts; on at least two subsequent occasions partial mobilisations took place without declaration of war; and it is conceivable that as Grey suggested in July, 1914, a complete mobilisation might have been carried out without war following. For if two powers mobilised simultaneously, and both had their mobilisations equally well organised, neither would gain any advantage over the other.

The main points of the convention were that mobilisation by any power of the triple alliance was to be followed immediately by mobilisation of all French and Russian forces; and that this mobilisation was obligatory, not optional. The new alliance was the logical result of Bismarck's policy; as he had sought allies and organised a great system of German alliances, so now had French diplomacy acted. Henceforth a serious quarrel between a state in the dual alliance and a state in the triple alliance would bring the risk, or indeed the certainty of war, between not two powers but between two great systems of powers embracing five or six of the chief nations in Europe. The spectre of the world war rose grim and menacing. Yet the very greatness of the danger would itself serve as a restraint on ambition and aggressiveness; it was no longer easy, as it had been in the previous quarter of a century, for a single power, Germany, by rattling the sabre, to dominate Europe.

1893-4] ROSEBERY REBUFFED

The answer to the dual alliance from Berlin was a bill increasing the peace effectives of the German army by about 85,000 men and the war effectives by 800,000. This was criticised by Bismarck and Waldersee, and was rejected by the Reichstag, which was thereupon dissolved. The opponents of the measure were severely defeated in the elections, and the bill, with some modifications, was reintroduced and passed in the summer of 1893. The dual alliance was not directed against England, and made no reference to her, but British friction with France and Russia about this date was continual and caused extreme uneasiness in London.

British uneasiness was increased by the attitude of Germany, which puzzled the Liberal government that had, in 1892, replaced the Salisbury administration. "Suddenly," says Grey,¹ "there came a sort of ultimatum from Berlin, requiring us to cease competition for railway concessions in Turkey for which Germans were applying." The request was not in itself unreasonable, but the manner in which it was put forward was far from friendly. It was a disagreeable experience, and such incidents began to recur. In 1893 there was a serious difference between England and France over Siam. There was doubt at the time as to the exact attitude of William II; it was said that he had shown hostility to England and even attempted to form a coalition against her. The German documents appear to prove that this was not the case²; Italy, a partner to the triple alliance, was prepared to support England, and Germany again was prepared to support Italy. But the question was settled without war, though French claims in Africa were causing the British government great anxiety, and forcing it to lean upon Germany.

In early 1894 Rosebery, who was then British foreign minister, made proposals through Austria to Germany for an agreement on the part of the triple alliance to prevent France from intervening at sea, if England was involved in a war with Russia regarding the control of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus.³ He did not want the triple alliance to fight, but only to exercise pressure. Caprivi, who was

¹ *Twenty-Five Years*, i, 9-10; cf. *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 9, and *F.O.D.*, i, 322 ff.

² *Grosse Politik*, viii, 96 ff. It was quite common for William to say one thing and for his foreign office to say or do something quite different.

³ *Grosse Politik*, ix, 129.

THE WAR GUILT

[1892

This convention is of great importance as its conditions affected the procedure of both France and Russia in the last hours of the crisis of 1914. The parties to it pledged themselves not to conclude peace separately. That Alexander III might understand the character of his promise, Boisdeffre verbally explained to him its inner meaning. He told the Czar:

To mobilise is to compel your neighbour to do the same. Mobilisation inevitably brings the concentration of armies. Were your neighbour not so to act, but to allow a million men to be mobilised on his frontier without simultaneously doing the same, he would lose all subsequent freedom of action, and place himself in the position of a man who, having a pistol in his pocket, allows his neighbour to hold a cocked pistol to his head without himself drawing his weapon.

Boisdeffre, therefore, stated that "mobilisation means declaration of war." In this he went beyond the facts; on at least two subsequent occasions partial mobilisations took place without declaration of war; and it is conceivable that as Grey suggested in July, 1914, a complete mobilisation might have been carried out without war following. For if two powers mobilised simultaneously, and both had their mobilisations equally well organised, neither would gain any advantage over the other.

The main points of the convention were that mobilisation by any power of the triple alliance was to be followed immediately by mobilisation of all French and Russian forces; and that this mobilisation was obligatory, not optional. The new alliance was the logical result of Bismarck's policy; as he had sought allies and organised a great system of German alliances, so now had French diplomacy acted. Henceforth a serious quarrel between a state in the dual alliance and a state in the triple alliance would bring the risk, or indeed the certainty of war, between not two powers but between two great systems of powers embracing five or six of the chief nations in Europe. The spectre of the world war rose grim and menacing. Yet the very greatness of the danger would itself serve as a restraint on ambition and aggressiveness; it was no longer easy, as it had been in the previous quarter of a century, for a single power, Germany, by rattling the sabre, to dominate Europe.

1893-4] ROSEBERY REBUFFED

The answer to the dual alliance from Berlin was a bill increasing the peace effectives of the German army by about 85,000 men and the war effectives by 800,000. This was criticised by Bismarck and Waldersee, and was rejected by the Reichstag, which was thereupon dissolved. The opponents of the measure were severely defeated in the elections, and the bill, with some modifications, was reintroduced and passed in the summer of 1893. The dual alliance was not directed against England, and made no reference to her, but British friction with France and Russia about this date was continual and caused extreme uneasiness in London.

British uneasiness was increased by the attitude of Germany, which puzzled the Liberal government that had, in 1892, replaced the Salisbury administration. "Suddenly," says Grey,¹ "there came a sort of ultimatum from Berlin, requiring us to cease competition for railway concessions in Turkey for which Germans were applying." The request was not in itself unreasonable, but the manner in which it was put forward was far from friendly. It was a disagreeable experience, and such incidents began to recur. In 1893 there was a serious difference between England and France over Siam. There was doubt at the time as to the exact attitude of William II; it was said that he had shown hostility to England and even attempted to form a coalition against her. The German documents appear to prove that this was not the case²; Italy, a partner to the triple alliance, was prepared to support England, and Germany again was prepared to support Italy. But the question was settled without war, though French claims in Africa were causing the British government great anxiety, and forcing it to lean upon Germany.

In early 1894 Rosebery, who was then British foreign minister, made proposals through Austria to Germany for an agreement on the part of the triple alliance to prevent France from intervening at sea, if England was involved in a war with Russia regarding the control of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus.³ He did not want the triple alliance to fight, but only to exercise pressure. Caprivi, who was

¹ *Twenty-Five Years*, i, 9-10; cf. *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 9, and *F.O.D.*, i, 322 ff.

² *Grosse Politik*, viii, 96 ff. It was quite common for William to say one thing and for his foreign office to say or do something quite different.

³ *Grosse Politik*, ix, 129.

still chancellor, rejected this overture in a memorandum which smacked strongly of Holstein.¹ He demanded a definite British agreement with the triple alliance but did not believe in its practicability or value; and his attitude led the British government to the conclusion that German support could not be expected, and strengthened its desire to come to terms with France.

France and Germany both protested against a treaty which in 1894 the British government concluded with the Congo Free State, and by the terms of which the Free State was to take over the so-called Lado enclave, and to lease to England a strip of territory connecting northern Rhodesia with Uganda. According to Poincaré, William II, during this dispute, proposed to France joint action in Africa.² Rosebery found the Germans so exigent that the warmth of Anglo-German relations cooled perceptibly,³ but it does appear that in this business of the Congo, German diplomacy had right on its side. Berlin further wanted concessions in Samoa which Australian opinion strongly opposed, and it made trouble everywhere as the best means of obtaining its desire. The Congo agreement was modified in accord with German representations.

While the intimacy between London and Berlin waned, French relations with Russia grew less affectionate. An outburst of anarchism in France, and the assassination of President Carnot were disturbing signs, and were followed by the trial of the French artillery officer, Dreyfus, for treachery, which suggested to the Russian staff doubts of French military efficiency. But the death of the Czar Alexander III and the accession of Nicholas II in November, 1894, did not result, as some had expected, in Russia's abandonment of the dual alliance. On the contrary, the new Czar regarded it as his solemn duty to his father to continue in his father's policy. His passion for peace was well known; his character was a weak one, and enabled William II at the outset to exert a good deal of influence over him, which was by no means beneficial to Russia.

From this date onward for several years William II and Nicholas II kept up a correspondence which was written in a curious sort of pigeon-English. The third letter from

¹ *id.*, 137.

² *Grosse Politik*, viii, 432, *F.O.D.*, i, 324.

³ *Origins of the War*, 23.

William II in this correspondence shows indications of irritation at the reports that the new Czar thought of an understanding with England, for which country the Russian sovereign personally had the friendliest feelings.¹ It criticised in the most unflattering manner England and France as democratic states which were (so the Kaiser alleged) in anarchy and decay.²

Thus, at the end of 1894, German world expansion and the Kaiser's desire for a larger place in the sun were gradually forcing England away from the triple alliance; but, as against this, Germany was regaining influence at the Russian court. In the summer of 1894 war began in the Far East between Japan and China, and was attentively watched by William II who favoured projects of German expansion in that quarter of the world. He wanted to secure the island of Formosa³ or other territory at China's expense. There has been much controversy as to who was primarily responsible for intervention there to deprive the Japanese of the fruits of their victory. The belief in France⁴ is that Germany took the initiative, fearing that England, Russia and France would come to some agreement without German concurrence; and this is not disproved by the German documents, which show indeed that Lobanov, the Russian foreign minister, opposed the Japanese acquisition of Port Arthur, but do not exclude the possibility that he was spurred on by Berlin. The Russian statesman, Witte, afterwards claimed the chief credit for himself. That would be conclusive if he had not been always apt to exaggerate his own supposed achievements.

What is quite certain is that when, on April 17, 1895, the treaty of Shimonoseki was signed (providing for the cession to Japan of Formosa, Wei-hai-wei, and Port Arthur with the Liaotung peninsula), Russia, France and Germany protested, and backed up their protest by the despatch of squadrons to the Far East. France was manœuvred into this step by the necessity of supporting her ally, Russia; her government would have preferred to act with England,⁵ who held aloof, not seeing any reason for quarrelling with so

¹ *The Kaiser's Letters*, 7-8.

² *Grosse Politik*, xi, 353.

³ *Grosse Politik*, ix, 245-6.

⁴ *Rapport*, i, 258; cf. *Grosse Politik*, ix, 259, 269; and Brandenburg, 52.

⁵ *Grosse Politik*, ix, 408. England had suggested intervention in Oct., 1894, but dropped the proposal almost at once.

THE WAR GUILT

[1895]

vigorous and patriotic a people as the Japanese, or for despising them simply because they were Asiatics. Only a few weeks earlier at William II's express demand the French authorities had been obliged to declare that the foreign embassies were not concerned in Dreyfus's supposed espionage. As a matter of fact, Dreyfus was innocent, but another officer on the French staff had sold secrets.

The Japanese immediately gave way, but it was an act of grave political folly on Germany's part thus to quarrel with the rising power of the Far East. William II must share the blame; though he had acted on the advice of his experts, he aggravated their blunder by his cartoon of the "Yellow Peril," which he advertised in every way. He made the cynical proposal to the Czar, in a letter of April 26, 1895, that they should both help themselves to Chinese territory, and that thus "Germany may also be able to acquire a Port somewhere where it does not *gêne* you."¹ In fact, Japan having been expelled from Port Arthur, Russia was to take it; while Germany was already turning her eyes towards Kiaochau, after she had tried in vain to obtain from China a coaling station in the Chusan Islands.² The Czar's reluctant consent to her occupation of this point was obtained subsequently.

Prince Hohenlohe, a personal friend and distant connection of Queen Victoria, succeeded Caprivi in October, 1894, as German chancellor, but the German attitude became cooler than ever to England. He favoured a forward policy in colonial affairs at British expense,³ and Holstein was still full of distrust of British statesmanship. The Armenian massacres, in 1895, caused some tension between England and Russia, which was not lessened by German diplomacy. Germany, since the action taken against Japan, had a footing in both the dual and the triple alliances, and she used her position to make matters more difficult for the British government.

In June, 1895, Salisbury returned to office in England, and his attitude filled Holstein and the German government with new suspicions. Their belief was that he was waiting and working for a European war with the intention of deriving profit from it—a belief which Sanderson, the

¹ *The Kaiser's Letters*, 11.

² *F.O.D.*, i, 326.

³ *F.O.D.*, ii, 153.

1895] SALISBURY'S TURKISH SCHEMES

British under-secretary for foreign affairs from 1894 to 1906, justly pronounced in a private letter to be "grotesque."¹ The British prime minister gave some countenance to this suspicion when he was asked to assist Italy in her campaign against Abyssinia. Salisbury at that particular moment was deeply concerned at the Armenian massacres in Turkey, which had roused public opinion in England to such an extent that the Sultan was alarmed and asked France and Russia to give him support against Great Britain. According to the German documents, Salisbury suggested that Italy would be wise to abandon her "sterile undertaking" in Eritrea and to transfer her ambitions to Albania and Tripoli.²

If the Ottoman Empire proved itself incapable of reform and decent government, he further appears to have proposed a future partition of Turkey, Italy receiving Tripoli and Albania, Austria Salonica, France Syria, and Russia a share of Asia Minor north of Baghdad, while England received Egypt and Southern Mesopotamia. His aim was undoubtedly rather to secure immediate pressure on the Sultan for justice to the Armenians than a great upheaval in the Middle East. But German statesmen saw in his proposals only a machiavellian British plan for entangling Germany and her allies in a series of wars, though the partition, if it took place, was relegated to a distant future. Trained as they had been in Bismarck's "blood and iron" school, they perhaps could not be expected to show any enthusiasm for Salisbury's humanitarianism. Germany was assigned no share of territory in the partition, unless it was in Morocco. If Salisbury's intentions are accurately set forth in the German state papers—and on that point there is considerable doubt—German disquietude was at least intelligible. Any suggestion of action in Turkey seemed to Berlin rather like smoking in a powder magazine, and certain to bring grave trouble between Italy and Austria, and Austria and Russia.

Fresh shadows fell across Anglo-German relations in South Africa, where William II had long watched with growing irritation Rhodes's execution of vast schemes of British expansion. Rhodes had really modelled his methods on Bismarck; he was a passionate admirer of the Kaiser,

¹ *F.O.D.*, ii, 88.

² *Grosse Politik*, x, 10 ff.

and a thorough believer in an Anglo-German alliance; but between 1881 and 1895 he had outwitted German rivals and had pushed the British frontier north from the Orange River to Lake Tanganyika, and he was now in incessant conflict with the Boers of the Transvaal, who received stealthy support from Berlin. In January, 1895, Kruger, the Boer President, toasted the Kaiser on William II's birthday;¹ and in July, when the railway from Lourenço Marques to Johannesburg was completed, two German warships appeared at Delagoa Bay, and the Kaiser congratulated Kruger effusively. This German activity was the more resented in England because the foreign relations of the Transvaal were regarded in London as being subject to British control by the London Convention of 1884. There was a general and not unfounded belief that from German South West Africa, Germany hoped to expand eastwards, cutting across the British line of advance to the Zambezi, and meant to absorb the Transvaal.²

In October, the talk of the Pan-Germans and the German attitude in South Africa attracted so much attention that the English ambassador at Berlin, Malet, complained that Germany was encouraging the Boers in their tariff measures against Cape Colony; and, according to William II's not always accurate representations, even used the word "war." William presented something almost like an ultimatum in an interview with Colonel Swaine, the British military attaché at Berlin, on October 24.³ He dwelt on England's "selfishness and bullying." England must either unreservedly and publicly enter the triple alliance, giving signed and sealed guarantees, he said, or she must prepare to have the triple alliance against her. His hasty action embarrassed his ministers for they, it subsequently appeared, did not want an alliance with England with the responsibility of protecting India.⁴ Already William was making up his mind to strengthen the German navy as a reply to Malet;⁵ though from Italy, where the friction between England and Germany created great alarm, came reminders that good Anglo-German relations were indispensable for Italian adherence to the triple alliance.

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xi, 3; *F.O.D.*, i, 326.

² *F.O.D.*, i, 276-7.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xi, 9-11.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, x, 244.

⁵ *id.*, xi, 13.

At this juncture, in early December, 1895, the Venezuela crisis caused temporary difficulty between the United States and England, and led William II to imagine that the time for German action in South Africa had come; but the differences were ultimately settled by arbitration, after some weeks of tension. Close on the Venezuela trouble followed the disastrous Jameson raid, which worked endless mischief in South Africa. Jameson with 600 mounted police, made a dash from Bechuanaland on Johannesburg, imagining that the British and other foreigners on the Rand would rise against Kruger's government. The British government had nothing to do with the affair, and Rhodes himself was greatly disconcerted by it, though he was undoubtedly meditating a stroke against Kruger. The German government startled Salisbury by its truculent attitude. On December 31, 1895, the German ambassador in London, Hatzfeldt, was instructed to inquire whether the British government approved of Jameson's action and, if it did, he was told to demand his passports.¹ So serious was the position thus created that Salisbury had to ask Hatzfeldt to say nothing which amounted to a threat as otherwise he would be unable to reply. On January 3, 1896, when relations with England were thus strained, William II's famous telegram of congratulation to Kruger was despatched, after Jameson's defeat. The German officials concerned in its preparation afterwards alleged that the Kaiser wanted to issue a deliberate and insulting challenge to England by proclaiming a German protectorate of the Transvaal, and sending German troops there, and that he was only deterred when Hohenlohe warned him that such action would mean immediate war.²

The despatch of the telegram was not the result of the Emperor's own reckless impulse; it was a deliberate act in which the German government was concerned. The draft was discussed at a ministerial council, and the last sentence was altered so as to deny British suzerainty over the Transvaal, which would make it the more obnoxious to British opinion and the more menacing to the safety of the British empire. William II and Marschall, the German foreign secretary, each subsequently blamed the other for its

¹ *id.*, 19. The note, however, was recalled after it had been delivered, before Salisbury read it.

² Brandenburg, 75. cf. *F.O.D.*, i, 327; Chisolm, *Fifty Years*, 279.

its allies, Austria and Italy, remonstrated, and no other foreign power would give any support. Hatzfeldt regarded the whole incident as "unintelligible folly."¹ But it was the small cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, which gave warning of coming storms.

When he found Germany isolated, William II took fright at the consequences of his act. On January 8, 1896,² he wrote to Queen Victoria in pigeon-English addressing her as "Most Beloved Grandmamma," and telling her a string of falsehoods about the telegram and his part in it. The letter is important as its insincerity explains why William II and German diplomacy came to be so thoroughly distrusted by every country in the world:

The reasons for the telegram were threefold.

First, as in the name of "Peace," which I, always following your glorious example, try to maintain everywhere. This course of action has till now often earned your so kind and valuable approval.

Secondly, for the sake of our Germans in Transvaal, our bond-holders at home, and the invested capital which is near £300,000,000, which was in danger, as well as our local commerce on the coast, in value of ten to twelve millions.

Thirdly, as the government and your Ambassador had made it clear that they [the Jameson raiders] acted in open disobedience of your orders, I was of the opinion that they were a mixed mob of gold diggers, the scum of all nations gathered together, never a moment believing it possible that real Englishmen or officers were among them!

Now rebels against her most Gracious Majesty the Queen are for me the most execrable being[s] in the world, and I was so incensed at that idea, at your orders having been disobeyed and, thereby, peace and the security of my fellow countrymen endangered, that I thought it right to show that publicly. I was standing up for law, order and obedience to a Gracious Sovereign whom I revere and adore, who, I thought, was paramount for her subjects. It has, I am very sorry to say, been totally misunderstood by the British press. But these were my motives. I challenge anybody who is a gentleman to point out where there is anything against England.

Queen Victoria was not the simple old lady she may have

¹ Eckardstein, i, 272-278. The value of Eckardstein's statements is disputed in *Grosse Politik*, x, 25-6, but there can be little doubt that he gives the correct impression.

² *Europäische Gespräche*, 1924, 201. Probably his foreign office helped to concoct the epistle.

looked to her grandson. She was not easy to hoodwink, and she was not fooled by this elaborate effusion.

William II had favoured the summoning of an international conference to establish the independence of the Transvaal, and had also thought of seizing Lourenço Marques.¹ These schemes of his were not definitely known in England till long afterwards, but they show how untrustworthy he was as a friend and how rash as a ruler. Chamberlain, who perhaps suspected them, gave him a public warning that England would at all cost resist any foreign interference in South Africa. Through Hatzfeldt's skill and Salisbury's calmness tolerable relations between England and Germany were restored, though Marschall was still, secretly, but in vain, endeavouring to secure French support for joint action against England in the Transvaal.² The rifts in the triple alliance widened. Salisbury, influenced by the friendly attitude of the French government in the Kruger telegram affair, decided not to continue the British agreement with Italy and Austria for joint action in the Mediterranean, as it seemed to have an anti-French tendency.

Italy thereupon pressed for a clause in the triple alliance (which was about to be renewed) declaring that the alliance was not aimed against England.³ Berlin, however, would not agree, alleging that such a clause would mean that the triple alliance was directed specially against Russia. Perhaps this was a sign that William still cherished designs against his "beloved Grandmamma's" country. He was not above doing his utmost to cause ill-will between England on the one hand and France and Russia on the other, by giving the British ambassador at Berlin absurd accounts of the dual alliance,⁴ professing that he knew France had placed "her whole forces without condition" at Russia's disposal, and that Russia had two enemies who were to be annihilated, England and Austria. As Italy was in great difficulties in Abyssinia, Salisbury decided to give her indirect support by opening a campaign in the Sudan against the Mahdi, which two years later issued in the recovery of Khartum.

¹ Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 53-56, shows that people in Germany were then considering a possible naval war with England. cf. *F.O.D.*, i, 276.

² *Rapport*, 281.

³ The clause appeared in the original triple alliance of 1882, but not in the treaties of 1887 and 1891, as England had a special agreement with Austria and Italy, concluded in 1887, which had lapsed in 1896.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xi, 237.

THE WAR GUILT

[1896-7]

Early in 1896 the German government warned Austria that it would not regard a Russian occupation of Constantinople as giving her the right under the triple alliance to count upon German support.¹ It further refused to permit the German chief of staff, Schlieffen, to confer with the Austrian, Beck. As the result of this German attitude of aloofness, due to Holstein's personal dislike of Goluchowski (the Austrian foreign minister), the Austrian government was forced to come to an understanding with Russia about Balkan affairs, which was reached at St. Petersburg at the end of 1896 (when Francis Joseph paid a visit there), and was embodied in a written agreement in May, 1897.² The Czar's eyes were turned to the Far East rather than to Constantinople. Ferdinand of Bulgaria had submitted to Russian pressure, and now Austria and Russia both agreed to leave the Balkan peoples to themselves, subject to this condition, that they must not expel the Turk from Constantinople. For Russia wanted the Black Sea to remain closed for the time being, to foreign navies, and preferred "a porter in Turkish uniform" to any other keeper of the Dardanelles;³ Austria was anxious to maintain the *status quo*.

In September, 1896, the Czar met the Kaiser in Silesia who dwelt on his favourite project of a continental league, this time against the United States and the McKinley tariff.⁴ Nicholas II wound up his foreign tour by visits to England and France which roused German suspicion. To Queen Victoria the Czar said that he "regretted William's injudicious policy and Germany's inimicality" to England.⁵ She urged him, when he went to France, to ask the government of that country "not to be so hostile to England"; and there is reason to think that from that date he began to consider the expediency of an understanding with England, which was a little later definitely suggested to him by Salisbury; and rejected by his minister, Muraviev. In France he was received with extraordinary enthusiasm. It was just at this moment that Bismarck who still lived, angry and censorious, published in a newspaper the strictly guarded secret of the reinsurance treaty, which caused a prodigious hubbub.⁶

In the spring of 1897 there was fresh friction between

¹ *id.*, xi, 109.

² Pribram, i, 78 ff.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xii, 285-6.

⁴ *id.*, xi, 360.

⁵ Lee, i, 696.

⁶ *Grosse Politik*, xi, 375. cf. Steed, *Hapsburg Monarchy*, 217-8;

1897] GERMAN NAVAL PROGRAMME

William II and England, on this occasion regarding the autonomy of Crete, and the choice of Prince George of Greece—the relative of the Czar and the future Edward VII—as its Governor-General.

Greece had sent troops and ships to aid the insurgents in that island, which then was Turkish. William, in his hasty manner (which led Holstein to treat him as "either a fool or a child"), wished to take the most drastic measures against the Greeks at sea, whereas Salisbury refused; he tried to get Russia to act with him, but found the Czar no more favourable. About this date Francis Joseph mentioned William II's "deep-seated and extreme mistrust of England" as one of his chief characteristics.¹ In the war of 1897 between Turkey and Greece, German influence was exerted on the side of Turkey, which was more and more becoming a German vassal. The German railways in Asia Minor were advancing, and were now beyond Konia.

The year 1897 is of great importance in Anglo-German history for other reasons. Then it was that William II decided upon the first of his large naval programmes. In the spring he recalled from command of the German squadron in the Far East Admiral Tirpitz, to carry out his plans as naval minister.² Tirpitz was energetic, ambitious and astute; a master of propaganda, he was an organiser of quite exceptional capacity, but of statesmanship he showed not the smallest trace. The impulsive sovereign could have discovered no more dangerous adviser. Preparations were made by the German admiralty for the foundation of a German Navy League in imitation of the British Navy League, which had been created in 1894 for the maintenance of the British navy on the two-power basis. But whereas the British Navy League was not aggressive, and sought only to preserve the standard of strength, laid down by Pitt and Fox and reasserted in the days of Napoleon III, the German Navy League was to demand an aggressive policy and to work hand in hand with the Pan-Germans, who about this date were beginning to show their strength. The Pan-German League³ after some oscillations of fortune had been

¹ *Rapport*, 284.

² Tirpitz, 79 ff.

³ By one of his few mistakes Valentin compares this with the Imperial Federation League which was neither propagandist nor aggressive.

cruisers, with seventy-two large torpedo craft in addition¹; and it provided for a naval expenditure on new construction of £20,000,000 between 1898 and 1903. It was a business-like, well-thought-out measure, if Germany meant to aspire to the command of the sea; and far superior to the haphazard British system of annual programmes, the size of which no one knew in advance and which were always liable to be cut down for party reasons.

The secret intention of the authors of the bill was to give such a fleet to Germany as, in combination with another navy, would be able to dictate to England.² Tirpitz's desire was for an alliance with Russia and Japan against the British empire.³ But neither he nor William II appears to have realised that the larger the German navy grew, the more inevitably must England be driven to seek allies against it. For England without an army and with a fleet which might be defeated at sea would be at the mercy of Germany; whereas Germany with her great army, even if her fleet was weak, had nothing serious to fear from an England supreme at sea. The French in 1870-71 had enjoyed command of the sea, but their naval ascendancy had hardly influenced that struggle. Command of the sea was for England a question of life and death, and to raise it in this way meant that England would either have to adopt compulsory service and an enormous shipbuilding programme, or would, willing or unwilling, be forced into the arms of France and Russia, where there were no Holsteins to suspect fantastic treachery in every British approach.

While the bill was in gestation the German navy developed great activity abroad. In the autumn of 1897 a German squadron appeared off Hayti, to obtain satisfaction for the arrest of a German, and the affair caused some anxiety in the United States. In the Far East the murder of certain missionaries by Chinese gave William II the opportunity for which he had long been looking, to acquire a port in the Far East. During his visit to the Czar in August, 1897,⁴ the possible occupation of Kiaochau by Germany was

¹ Ships were given an age limit, after which they were automatically replaced—battleships in twenty-five years, large cruisers in twenty years, and small cruisers in twelve years.

² cf. Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 91.

³ *id.*, 142-3.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 62, 67 ff.

discussed;¹ in May, Salisbury, while he did not encourage such a German project and did in fact dislike it extremely, said that England would view it without jealousy.¹ In November, therefore, a German squadron anchored off Kiaochau, landed a detachment of men, and seized the place. This was followed by the despatch of a special German squadron under Prince Henry, the Kaiser's brother, and by much talk on the Kaiser's part of the use of "the mailed fist." The German foreign office about this time was more than ever convinced that the Emperor was mad.

Shortly after the German navy had seized Kiaochau, the Russian navy seized Port Arthur, from which Japan had been summarily ejected. The scramble for China had thus begun, bringing England and Russia into antagonism, as William II had probably calculated. The British government leased Wei-hai-wei, but it had its hands full in the Sudan, where Kitchener was about to open his victorious march on Khartum, and grave trouble was brewing in the Transvaal. Friction was constant with France in West Africa. British uneasiness was so great in view of the apparent hostility of the Kaiser, France and Russia, that in January, 1898, the British government made a determined effort to secure better relations with Russia, and proposed common action in China, and a general agreement covering Turkey and Persia as well.² But when weeks passed in vague discussions, Salisbury came to the conclusion that the Russian government was not sincere in its professions of anxiety for a good understanding.

At this juncture some of the leading members of his cabinet, including Joseph Chamberlain, urged the advisability of securing an alliance with Germany. Salisbury was always sceptical of the value of any German alliance,³ but he may have hoped that, if a close understanding could be reached with Berlin, William II might be induced to stop building a big fleet and picking quarrels with the British empire. In January, 1898, the Kaiser complained that his efforts to secure a British alliance had been rebuffed and he might have to combine against the British⁴ with other powers. It is still a matter of some uncertainty which government,

¹ *id.*, xiii, 27; *F.O.D.*, i, 4-5.
² *F.O.D.*, i, 2.

³ *cf.* *F.O.D.*, ii, 11.
⁴ *F.O.D.*, ii, 42-3.

British or German, took the initiative in the negotiations which followed. But so much is established, that in February, 1898,¹ Chamberlain and two other British ministers discussed with Baron Eckardstein of the German Embassy in London the project of an Anglo-German understanding. Further conferences followed with Hatzfeldt, the German ambassador in London, and it seems that as the result of them a definite treaty of alliance was offered to the German government. Twice previously Bismarck had endeavoured to obtain the British alliance, and on both occasions he had failed. Now that alliance was at Germany's disposal—despite all Salisbury's misgivings—and she had only to say "yes."

What followed was characteristic of the bad faith which so often marked the Kaiser's diplomacy. Difficulties were raised by Holstein and Bülow² because a treaty of alliance with England to have binding effect might, they argued, have to be approved by parliament. Chamberlain told them that the consent of parliament was certain, and in this he was probably right. But he did not remove their suspicions. They maintained that a German alliance with England would be regarded in Russia as an act of open hostility and would imperil German safety, especially if the treaty were not approved by parliament. They advised the rejection of the alliance. They protracted the negotiations, however, to tie England's hands, and requested the British government to keep them secret, but, as the Kaiser's letters to the Czar prove, the British proposals were at once disclosed to Russia, and exaggerated and misrepresented so as to arouse the Czar's ill-will. William declared that he had thrice deliberately evaded a definite answer. He asserted that in the British alliance (which was aimed, he said, against Russia) Japan and the United States were to be included, and, as Hammann has stated, went beyond the real facts.³ He wanted to know what the Czar would do if Germany refused the British alliance. This was to make a direct bid for a Russian alliance. Nicholas replied that England had addressed "tempting proposals" to Russia three months before, which seemed suspicious and were promptly rejected.⁴ Russia, he said, had an

¹ Eckardstein, i, 292-3; *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 193 ff.

² German foreign secretary, 1897-1900; chancellor, 1900-1909.

³ *Missverständnisse Bismarck*, 69, and note in *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 250.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 250.

understanding with Japan, and was on the best terms with the United States. William II was therefore counselled to decide for himself what his answer to the British was to be, but he was assured that Germany could count on Russia's friendship.

From other sources the British government discovered that its confidence had been abused. It was not disloyally intriguing with Russia against Germany and with Germany against Russia; but, as we have seen, before turning to Germany it had made a sincere attempt to reach an understanding with Russia, and had been repulsed. The Czar in his letter did not give a correct account of the Anglo-British negotiations, and so coloured his statements as to deepen the distrust which Holstein had felt from the first, and to make William II more than ever suspicious of England. Berlin determined to continue discussions with London, but to evade a definite acceptance of the British offer which was renewed in August, 1898. The Kaiser, in a memorandum, ascribed the British overtures to British dread of the results of the new German navy act, adding that "early in the coming century we shall have an armoured fleet which, in combination with other growing navies, will be able seriously to endanger England."¹

Salisbury gave the German government more than a hint of the possibilities; he remarked that it asked too big a price for its friendship,² and he told the Austrian ambassador that the British alliance with France in Crimean days was proof that there was nothing in a policy of alliances irreconcilable with British traditions. Chamberlain was perfectly frank about the British attitude to his German friends: the government, he said, would have to approach the dual alliance if Germany rejected the British offer. But Holstein and William II had convinced themselves that England must to all time live in enmity with France and Russia, even though Chamberlain explained quite clearly, when discussing an Anglo-German alliance, that he did not want war with France and Russia, and believed it avoidable.³ What he did want was to preserve the open door in China, and to prevent the indefinite extension of the Russian empire southward in that country.

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 230.

² *id.*, 224-5.

³ *id.*, 230.

This episode cannot possibly be reconciled with the subsequent German assertion that British diplomacy aimed at the encircling of Germany. British diplomacy sought the maintenance of peace, and in these years was sincerely anxious for the friendship and alliance of Germany. Even after the repulse of its overtures the British government made yet another effort to satisfy the Kaiser. There were reports that Portugal was anxious to sell her African colonies, as she was supposed to be in desperate straits for money in the summer of 1898. In Germany there was general suspicion that Rhodes was seeking to acquire some considerable part of them, and Delagoa Bay in particular. The German government saw clearly enough that war was probable at an early date in South Africa between the Boer republics and the British.

As Salisbury's hands were full, what with French antagonism to Kitchener's advance in the Nile valley and Russian hostility to British interests in China, the moment seemed opportune for the Kaiser to demand from England compensation for German goodwill, with threats of war if it were not given. The compensation demanded was a share in the Portuguese colonies. The Germans intimated in Hatzfeldt's own words to the British government,¹

That their demands are the minimum for their abandonment of the Boers and the Transvaal; that without the compensation asked they could not justify themselves to the German public; and that, failing such compensation, they would be obliged to seek other means of settling the question, which would give greater extension to the matters at issue.

They would, they said, "seek assistance elsewhere" or "turn to Russia" if they did not get what they wanted.² To increase the tension they tried to play off England and France against one another, warning England to beware of French intrigues for the control of Portuguese finances,³ and France of the advisability of French co-operation with Germany in the business.⁴

Salisbury was by no means anxious for this agreement, disliking such treatment of England's oldest ally. But he

¹ *F.O.D.*, i, 67.

² *F.O.D.*, i, 59, 69.

³ *F.O.D.*, i, 55.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 267; Lee, i, 712.

THE WAR GUILT

[1898]

was not strong enough, in view of the risk of a great anti-British combination, to refuse to touch it. He did not accept it till William II had threatened to withdraw his ambassador from London in a strange interview with the British ambassador at Berlin.¹ That the Kaiser was angling for a Russian alliance against the British empire was suggested by the fact that he communicated the particulars of his threats to the Czar, apparently without evoking the response he desired. Under such pressure on August 30, 1898, the convention between England and Germany was signed for the ultimate division of the Portuguese colonies in Africa, should Portugal be willing to dispose of them. She was not willing; in 1899 the Portuguese parliament declared indignantly against any such idea.

It was alleged at the time in the German press that the British government had encouraged Portugal to act thus, and Salisbury has been accused of treachery because he renewed in 1899 in the so-called "treaty of Windsor"² the British guarantee of the integrity of the Portuguese empire, which went back to the days of Charles II. The treaty of Windsor, however, was only signed when it became quite clear that Portugal was no longer willing to consider a deal, such as was provided for in the agreement; and the Anglo-German convention in its preamble declared the intention of England and Germany "to preserve her integrity and independence."³ Moreover the German government had been repeatedly and plainly informed by Salisbury beforehand that England was pledged by ancient treaties to guarantee Portuguese integrity and still wished to maintain it. William II's denunciations of him as "false and untrustworthy" were therefore quite undeserved.⁴

The greatest figure in nineteenth century Germany vanished with the death of Bismarck on July 30, 1898. His last years were clouded with fears for the future of Germany; he foresaw coalitions against her, provoked by William II's impetuous violence. The longer the danger was delayed, he said, the graver it would be. Almost the last coherent words which his family heard from him were these:⁵

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 334.

² This was really a "secret declaration," *F.O.D.*, i, 93-4.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 347, cf. *F.O.D.*, i, 49, 62.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 261-3.

⁵ Hammann, *Missverständnisse Bismarck*, 62.

1898]

BISMARCK'S LAST HOURS

"Help! help! Serbia, England, Turkey, Russia! Oh, Germany, Germany, Germany!" Some vision of the future rose before that failing spirit, but no one troubled about Bismarck's Cassandra-like cries in 1898.

Thus this period was marked by four capital events—the conclusion of the Russo-French alliance, the Kruger telegram, the first large German navy act, and the unsuccessful British attempts to obtain an alliance with Germany, departing from the old British principle of the balance of power.

CHAPTER III

THE ANGLO-FRENCH UNDERSTANDING

THE closing years of the nineteenth century marked the opening of a new age in world policy. In 1897 the United States annexed Hawaii, and in 1898 began the acquisition of a colonial empire outside America as the result of the war with Spain. William II had for some time looked with disquiet on the great republic's rapid advance in wealth and trade, and the McKinley tariff of 1890, with its prohibitive duties, particularly rankled in his mind. From time to time he meditated the formation of a European league to exert economic pressure on the Washington government. When friction between the United States and Spain began in 1897 as a result of the protracted Cuban rebellion, he suggested a league of European monarchies to protect Spain, provided France would co-operate.¹ The German foreign office, however, hurriedly smothered this project.

In April, 1898, while the United States Congress was considering the question of war with Spain, a peculiar incident happened at Washington. The representatives of the six great European powers at that capital discussed the despatch of a collective note to the American government deprecating hostilities. The Germans attributed the initiative in this affair to the British ambassador, Pauncefoot, who afterwards stoutly denied the rôle imputed to him. If he behaved as was alleged, he was acting at variance with British policy and with the intentions of the British government. But the fact that he remained at Washington and enjoyed the confidence of the British government and the goodwill of the American government is proof that the imputation against him was unfounded, and based on a misunderstanding, if the affair were not due to one of those

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xv, 3.

1898]

DEWEY AT MANILA

intrigues in which German diplomacy during this period abounded. The Kaiser noted his opposition to any collective action in a series of marginal notes,¹ and nothing further came of it. The Pan-Germans, however, were anxious that Germany should secure Liberia and part of the Spanish possessions in Africa and Oceania. A site for a naval base in the Canaries or Cape Verdes, Fernando Po, the Sulu islands, Mindanao in the Philippines, and the Caroline islands in the Pacific, all of which, except the Cape Verdes were Spanish, appear in a secret list of territories which the German government wished to acquire, drawn up in June, 1898.²

The German press denounced the United States attitude to Spain, much as it was in the habit of denouncing England's attitude to the Boer republics. The British government, for all its inclination at that date to a German alliance, had accepted two principles as fundamental in British foreign policy—that war with the United States must be avoided, and that in any serious difference with a European power support must be given to the United States. This German press campaign, therefore, strengthened the feeling of solidarity between the various branches of the English-speaking peoples. Differences speedily arose between Germany and the United States. In May and June German warships arrived at Manila, which the American commander, Dewey, was then blockading. They came in the hope of securing a German coaling station in the Philippines.³

The German admiral, Diedrichs, was forced to play a tactless part, mainly through William II's eagerness to obtain a naval base; and Dewey, who was alarmed by the German attitude, informed Diedrichs's flag lieutenant that, "if Germany wants war, all right, we are ready." The senior British officer present was asked by the German admiral what his attitude would be "in certain eventualities," and replied that it would be to support Dewey. As in the matter of the Kruger telegram, William II hastily drew back; but, as one result of this affair, the United States began closely to watch German naval policy.⁴ On September 23, at

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xv, 24.

² *id.*, xiv, 260.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xv, 44, 53, 62; *Marine Rundschau*, Mar., 1914; Valentin, 29; *F.O.D.*, I, 105.

⁴ cf. Eckardstein, I, 312. There seems to have been no idea of actual fighting in the "certain eventualities."

THE WAR GUILT

[1898

Stettin the Kaiser delivered a much-quoted speech in which he declared that "our future lies upon the water." It followed only a few weeks after his veiled ultimatum to England in the matter of the Portuguese agreement, and it seemed vaguely to threaten the United States. In the end Germany obtained the Carolines by purchase from Spain.

Barely had this Philippine incident passed when a dangerous dispute arose between England and France. Kitchener reached Khartum in September, 1898, only to learn that a French force under Marchand had arrived on the Nile and planted the French flag at Fashoda, 400 miles south of Khartum, thus cutting across the British line of advance up the Nile valley, and committing what Grey had declared in March, 1895, would be "an unfriendly act." Mainly through the cool handling of the affair by Salisbury and the French foreign minister, Delcassé, an armed conflict was averted. Joseph Chamberlain, in the British Government, was for refusing any sort of concession to France.¹

William II did his utmost to bring on war. In a telegram to the Czar he accused the British of sneering at Russia, and expressed his astonishment that Muraviev, whose anglophobia was notorious, had been inert.² He suggested to England that she ought to settle finally the questions at issue with France with the sword³; though Salisbury's government constantly protested its anxiety not to force war on France, and in that anxiety it was perfectly sincere. In the end, Salisbury's hatred of violence prevailed, and as Delcassé was unwilling to throw away French lives for an issue which was really of minor importance to France, by a convention signed in March, 1899, the Nile was secured by England and the British and French frontiers in the Sudan were defined on a basis of compromise. This was the first germ of the entente. The convention left soreness in France, but it removed a most dangerous cause of quarrel between the two nations, and the good temper and reasonableness of Delcassé made a deep impression on the British government. By German admission during the dispute no attempt was made by France to secure German support.⁴

William II's advice to the Czar to intervene was given from Palestine where he was making a tour, after visiting

¹ cf. *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 388.
² *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 394-5.

³ *F.O.D.*, i, 103.
⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xv, 121.

1898-9]

FASHODA AFFAIR

Constantinople. He assured Nicholas that Turkey hated England, despised France, and was "very much alive and not a dying man"; and if French authorities can be trusted,¹ he pressed the Sultan to undertake to concentrate 200,000 men in Armenia, in the event of war between Germany and Russia. The Kaiser's tour in the Near East aroused Russian suspicions. It was then that William II conceived the idea of making Asia Minor a German colony, a scheme which conflicted with Russian ambitions. The Czar's susceptibilities were wounded afresh by the German attitude at the first Hague conference of 1899, summoned on the Czar's initiative to effect disarmament.

This conference followed immediately after the Russian government had decided to add largely to its navy—a decision which led the British admiralty to reply with a counter-programme. The Czar's motives in proposing a measure of disarmament were undoubtedly generous, but in the background there were less disinterested purposes. Witte, then the most influential Russian minister, thought that as Austria was then increasing her artillery and Russia had not the funds to reply at that moment, it would be wise to call a halt in continental armaments.² He was anxious for a close understanding with Germany and favoured the diversion to naval armaments against England of a part of the resources which the continental powers were expending on land forces. All the powers were openly or secretly opposed to the Russian proposals because of their impracticability, but the German representatives made themselves specially prominent in criticism. One of the positive results of the conference was the condemnation of the dum-dum bullet—a projectile that had been devised for the British army's use in uncivilised war, not for employment against nations which observed the Geneva rules of war. In this matter Germany acted in concert with France and Russia, possibly as a sop to the Czar, for her resistance to disarmament.

In the summer of 1899 Delcassé secured a modification in the terms of the French alliance with Russia, by which the purpose of that alliance was declared to be "the maintenance

¹ *Rapport*, i, 293.
² Montgelas, *Leitsaden*, 11. Witte's statements, however, require to be treated with caution.

of the balance of power," as well as the preservation of peace. He wished to guard against the risk of a break-up of Austria—which every one foresaw. At Berlin, about this date, Austria was not given a longer life than ten or twenty years. Despite the arguments of Montgelas,¹ there was nothing aggressive in this modification, which was designed to prevent the absorption of Hungary and German Austria by Germany.

In the spring of 1899 William II came to the conclusion that he was being tricked by Salisbury in the matter of Samoa—to a share in which island group Germany had certain claims. He agreed, on Bülow's advice, to withdraw the German ambassador from London, if England did not accept the German proposal to send a joint commission of German, British and United States representatives to settle the disputes between subjects of the three powers.² The threat was unofficially conveyed to Salisbury, who seems to have been quite ready to agree to the German proposal without it (though this was not the German view); but the Kaiser's hostility to Salisbury became more than ever bitter.

He was also annoyed that he was not invited to England for Queen Victoria's eightieth birthday in May, 1899; and wrote a letter of angry complaint to her, denouncing Salisbury's attitude to himself, after he had shown—as he said—such friendship to England in the Fashoda affair, and in other matters. He spoke of "the high-handed, disdainful treatment" which Germany had received at Salisbury's hands,³ "all on account of a stupid island (Samoa) which is a hair-pin to England compared to the thousands of square miles she is annexing right and left every year unopposed." Queen Victoria answered with some asperity⁴; "I doubt," she replied, "whether any Sovereign ever wrote in such terms to another Sovereign, and that Sovereign his own grandmother, about her Prime Minister. I never should do such a thing, and I never personally attacked or complained of Prince Bismarck, though I knew well what a bitter enemy to England he was."

The Samoa affair was not settled till November, 1899, after the outbreak of the Boer war, when Britain resigned

¹ *Leitfaden*, 3.

² *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 591-2; *F.O.D.*, i, 113.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xiv, 615-9.

⁴ *id.*, 620-1.

her rights in those islands to Germany under pressure from the Kaiser. According to Eckardstein, when the South African war began, a party in Berlin wanted at once to intervene and attack England, though eagerness for such a course was damped by a remark of Admiral Bendemann to the effect that, "we have no ships." So far as the documents show, William II was sympathetic. He visited England when the press of the whole continent was denouncing her. French and Russian authorities maintain that Bülow threw out suggestions of a coalition against the British.¹ But William II in a conversation with the French ambassador in Berlin declared with emphasis that he "was not in a position to depart from the strictest neutrality," though he added, "I must first provide myself with a fleet; in another twenty years when it is ready I shall be able to talk in a different style."²

Whether attempts were or were not made by Germany beneath the surface to form a coalition for the purpose of checking England, the Czar, when he met William II at Potsdam on November 8, 1899, declared that Russia would not be drawn from a policy of non-intervention in South Africa.³ William II arrived in England a few days later, and there was fresh discussion of an Anglo-German alliance, followed by an episode which for the moment ended all negotiations. Joseph Chamberlain, after a conference with the Kaiser and Bülow,⁴ was encouraged by Bülow boldly to place before the world his favourite scheme of a pacific alliance between England, Germany and the United States. He did so in a speech at Leicester on November 29, and his overtures were treated in Germany as though he had dealt the German people a blow in the face. The reception was so hostile that the project of an Anglo-German alliance was dropped for the third time. As Bülow admitted, German opinion was more unfriendly to England than English opinion was to Germany. British statesmen came to the conclusion that the German government was untrustworthy; Chamberlain⁵ had been a sincere believer in the German alliance and still worked for it, but from this date

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xv, 501; Poincaré, *Origins of the War*, 25; *Rapport*, 289-93.

² *Grosse Politik*, xv, 408.

³ *id.*, xiii, 228.

⁴ Eckardstein, ii, 106.

⁵ See Metternich's opinion, *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 6; Bülow's account is in Wolff, 93.

THE WAR GUILT

[1900

German government made a definite attempt to organise a coalition hostile to England. The German documents attribute the initiative to Russia, and represent Germany as discouraging any action hostile to England. French opinion at the time was that Germany was laying a trap for France and Russia, in order to force England into a German alliance. Until the Russian documents have been published in full and tested, there must be some doubt as to the exact attitude of the powers concerned, though it is practically established that France declined to play any part in the proposed coalition.

It must be remembered that there were then no close understandings between England on the one side and France and Russia on the other; but that, on the contrary, there had been incessant friction and even danger of war between England and the Franco-Russian group. England had no reason to expect French or Russian goodwill, but rather the contrary. It must also be remembered that the invariable German policy was to play off France and Russia against England, and at every opportunity to demand compensation from the British for real or alleged German services. That Germany took any initiative against England in the direction of intervention is strongly denied by good German authorities,¹ but it is probable that such overtures, if made, would be made with extreme secrecy and would not find their way into foreign office documents. According to the Russians, on January 1, 1900, William II suddenly descended on Osten-Sacken, the Russian ambassador in Berlin, with a suggestion that Russia should attack England in Asia, offering to "mount guard" over the Russian frontier in Europe if the Czar followed his advice. Bülow held the same sort of language. On January 9, according to the Russian documents, the Kaiser went further and informed Osten-Sacken that England was denuding Egypt of British troops, and was inviting Italy to send a force to the Nile. This latter suggestion came from him, and was addressed to Salisbury through the British ambassador in Berlin as an act of friendship.²

At this stage the German documents take up the story and represent Osten-Sacken as proposing on January 11, 1900, that German, Russian and French warships should

¹ Hammann, *Missverständne Bismarck*, 73.

² *F.O.D.*, i, 250.

1900] KAISER'S THREATENING ATTITUDE

proceed to Delagoa Bay, and the German government as rejecting the proposal by asking what guarantee France was prepared to give.¹ Three days later, on January 14, 1900, the German ambassador in London was informed that William II was considering the despatch of a German emissary from Berlin to London with a 48-hour ultimatum, threatening German hostility if England did not within that period release the German ships which she was detaining. Such was the excitability of his Majesty at this juncture that his foreign office, so far as it possibly could, refrained from placing before him documents, so that the world has not his lurid marginal annotations to reveal, in his own hand, what his real purposes were. He contradicted reports which reached the Russian court, that he was telling people the time had come to make an end of British arrogance, but he was quite ready to promise benevolent neutrality to Nicholas if Russia attacked the Indian empire. The Czar afterwards told Edward VII that he was receiving "addresses, letters, telegrams, etc., in masses, begging me to interfere" in South Africa,² and because of this constant pressure, Muraviev, at the beginning of March, proposed that "friendly influence" should be applied by Russia, France and Germany to stop the war. Bülow, however, once more informed Russia that Germany must be certain of France's attitude, and asked whether the three governments concerned—German, French and Russian—were prepared mutually to guarantee the integrity of their European dominions.³ This would have involved a French consecration of the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, which France would never have granted. In any case Salisbury had come to the sound conclusion that the German ships must be released on grounds of international law, because they had no contraband on board, and that damages must be paid for their detention. But the attitude of the continental powers was another reminder to the British government of the perils of isolation.

Lord Roberts's victories in South Africa acted as a cold douche for the war-mongers, and a visit of the Prince of Wales to Berlin helped to improve relations with the Emperor. Yet the new German navy bill became law in June, 1900. That it met the wishes of the German people is not to be

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xv, 507.

² *Grosse Politik*, xv, 517.

³ Lee, i, 765.

THE WAR GUILT

[1900]

doubted. Prince Hohenlohe, a cool and sagacious judge, had written some years earlier: "It is unjust to reproach the Emperor with wishing to call a fleet into existence as a whim or for his pleasure. He is doing nothing but only carrying out what the German people has desired for 150 years."¹ A modern authority, writing after the war, holds that the construction of a strong German navy "corresponded with old political ideals; so far back as 1848 the idea of a German empire was directly bound up with the idea of a fleet."² In any case Germany was now definitely committed to the policy of creating and maintaining a fleet which should be capable of challenging the British navy, and defeating that navy, if Germany could obtain allies.

Bülów, at the secret session of the Budget committee of the Reichstag, when the navy bill was being discussed stated that war with England was not merely possible, but probable and near at hand.³ In German propagandist publications calculations began to appear endeavouring to prove that England's financial strength would not be sufficient for a prolonged competition with Germany; we know from subsequent events and disclosures that this was the view of Tirpitz, and probably of William II. They thought that England would, by degrees, have to lower her standard of superiority at sea—without which she was doomed—and that then Germany would become the arbiter of the world.

They did not see or understand that more and more inevitably as the naval menace grew—as it became certain that the German programme was not a paper one—must England be impelled to seek powerful allies; that the German navy act was in reality an act to add England to the dual alliance. With what British statesmen had learnt of the impulsiveness and deep-rooted unfriendliness of the Kaiser and his advisers, they would have been criminal in the highest degree if they had not met the danger. Yet the British action was still uncertain. All the inclinations of London were for the German alliance, possibly because British ministers, unfamiliar with German history, could not believe that Germany was seriously contemplating the organisation of a first-class navy. They deluded themselves till the Great War began.

¹ *Memoirs*, ii, 473.

² *The Times*, March 9, 1916 Florent-Matter, 83.

³ Valentin, 20.

1900]

THE "HUN" SPEECH

In the summer of 1900 came the Boxer rising in China, the siege of the legations at Peking, and the despatch of forces by the powers to China, which was made the occasion for the famous "Hun" utterance by William II. To his troops on the eve of embarkation he said:

When you meet the enemy you will defeat him. You will take no prisoners and give no quarter. Let all who fall into your hands perish. As the Huns a thousand years ago under Attila gained a reputation, in virtue of which they still live in tradition and history, so let the name of German be known in such a manner in China that no Chinaman will ever again dare even to look askance at a German.

The speech seemed truculent and savage, even to Germans who were not squeamish; and it was accompanied by a sermon in the imperial yacht, preached by his Majesty, in which China was compared with Amalek—a people "to be hewed in pieces before the Lord." If observers in the Far East are to be trusted the German expeditionary force acted up to the orders given it by its war lord. The German staff and officers further insulted in every way the British Indian troops and the Japanese.¹

A fresh effort to conciliate the Kaiser was made by Salisbury who, on October 15, 1900, concluded an agreement with Germany regarding China, shortly before he handed over the office of foreign secretary to Lansdowne in November, 1900. Salisbury, with his experience of German diplomacy, was not very hopeful of any good result, and regarded the treaty as "unnecessary but innocuous."² But the British difficulties in almost every direction were so great at that moment that his hands were tied. He, no doubt, had heard of the reports current in the summer of 1900, that the German government was meditating some fresh seizure of territory such as it had already carried out at Kiaochau, in the Yangtse valley. On his side the Kaiser suspected the British of an intention to acquire special rights in the Yangtse valley, such as the Germans had acquired in Shantung, and saw in the landing of a British military force at Shanghai for the protection of the concessions there, the first move in such an enterprise.

British anxiety as to the real German intentions was certainly not diminished by the Kaiser's act in despatching

¹ cf. *F.O.D.*, ii, 153.

² *F.O.D.*, ii, 2.

THE WAR GUILT

[1900

a division of four German battleships to the Far East, and ordering the landing of a German battalion at Shanghai, where the Germans had no concession. This action obviously made Schlieffen, then German chief of staff, uneasy, as he advised against it if it were unfavourably viewed in England.¹ The British government was itself deeply concerned at the cold or actually unfriendly public utterances of Bülow,² for which the warmth of his private assurances did not atone. But when the German ambassador in London proposed that the protection of foreigners in the Yangtse zone should be undertaken by all the powers conjointly, and suggested an agreement by which, among other stipulations, England and Germany should uphold freedom of trade in the Yangtse region and renounce any intention to acquire territory there, Salisbury was willing to make this proposal a basis for negotiation.

In the German form, the projected treaty did not go far enough, and, in Salisbury's opinion, seemed to be really directed against England. Its effect would obviously be to tie her hands in central China while leaving Russia and Germany free to do what they liked in the north, where Russia was busy asserting a privileged position in Manchuria and Germany was in possession of special rights in Shantung. He wanted no special privileges anywhere, but to uphold the integrity of China and the "open door" for trade there. He could count to a certain extent upon support from the United States and Japan if he withstood German demands, but it was doubtful how far they were prepared to go, and some of the most influential members of his cabinet were in favour of a close alliance with Germany and still believed it attainable.

To make the agreement less one-sided³ he proposed that the two powers should extend the zone of the treaty to include "the ports of the rivers and littoral of China." The Germans agreed to such a change provided that Port Arthur and the Amur ports, which were then in actual Russian occupation, were excluded. Salisbury on this suggested two modifications; the first limited the zone of the treaty by excluding all territory north of thirty-eight degrees north latitude, (or Peking and Manchuria); the second provided that England

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xvi, 209-11.

² The treaty is in *F.O.D.*, ii, 15-16

³ *F.O.D.*, ii, 6

1900]

THE MANCHURIAN TREATY

and Germany should not only renounce for themselves territorial acquisitions within the new zone but should also agree to oppose any other power seeking such acquisitions. The second modification Bülow declined because he thought it calculated to annoy Russia. Thereupon Salisbury withdrew his first modification, to which strong objection was taken by his cabinet, because it seemed to invite Russia to seize the whole of China north of thirty-eight degrees.

The treaty, as finally completed by Bülow, was to apply to all Chinese territory, so far as the contracting powers could exercise any influence.¹ The German aim in the Far East was to maintain absolute neutrality between England and Russia, taking neither one side nor the other, while obtaining the utmost possible in Shantung from the Chinese. It was not unreasonable, but it was not a practicable policy to walk the diplomatic tight rope long.

The British public imagined—as it had a perfect right to do—that the treaty referred to Manchuria (as indeed it did in the form which Salisbury first proposed and finally accepted). But Berlin promptly declared when Russian troops appeared south of the Peiho and close to Tientsin, in January, 1901, that the treaty had reference only to the Yangtse region and Bülow repeated this declaration publicly on March 15,² in a fashion that wounded Salisbury and prompted fresh doubts of the honesty of German diplomacy. The German view is that Salisbury was to blame, and that his memory was failing, and certainly whatever the skill he displayed in the handling of the agreement concerning the Portuguese colonies and this Yangtse agreement, they are both episodes which leave a disagreeable impression.

With Salisbury's retirement younger men came on the scene, and British policy was much more firmly handled, though in fairness to Salisbury it must be remembered that after 1900 the embarrassments which hampered the British government had greatly diminished. Lansdowne, the new foreign minister, seems on the whole, to have favoured a formal alliance with Germany, though the point is not yet settled whether he or Eckardstein, one of the prominent personages at the German embassy in London, took the

¹ Signed October 16, 1900; *Grosse Politik*, xvi, 249; *F.O.D.*, ii, 15.

² *F.O.D.*, ii, 26.

THE WAR GUILT

[1901]

initiative in the negotiations of 1901.¹ These opened about the time when Queen Victoria lay dying at Osborne, carrying with her into the dim beyond the age of British isolation and security.

On January 16, 1901, Joseph Chamberlain told Eckardstein that "the period of England's splendid isolation is over. . . . In the cabinet there are already voices in favour of England's adherence to the dual alliance. We should prefer adherence to Germany and the triple alliance. But if this proves impossible then we, too, contemplate a rapprochement with France and Russia." Six days later died the Queen. Edward VII, the new sovereign, had had reasons to complain of his nephew's attitude to him in the past, but he received William II with all possible cordiality, and the Kaiser's touchiness and jealousy of his uncle were temporarily disarmed.² Discussion of an Anglo-German alliance proceeded, and had a sane diplomatist such as Metternich been trusted, the alliance might have been effected. William II was favourable to it, but as "the half-Englander" hesitated, Bülow was against it; and Holstein, as usual suspecting some infernal British plot, carried the day by declaring that "a general treaty with England is scarcely conceivable which does not bring for us the almost certain danger of war."³ Yet Metternich pointed out that England did not really harbour these machiavelian plans, and certainly did not want to cause a war, but only to secure peace.

In April, 1901, Edward VII discussed the alliance with Germany at some length—the fifth time of asking—in an interview with Eckardstein. The King sat with two letters before him, one from William II and the other from the British ambassador in Berlin, Lascelles. He complained of the manner in which the Kaiser described British ministers as "unmitigated noodles,"⁴ and went on to say: "I myself felt for years the warmest sympathy for Germany, and actually to-day I am still of opinion that England and Germany are the most natural allies. . . . Germany needs colonies

¹ Lansdowne (*F.O.D.*, ii, 76) speaks of being "sounded by Baron Eckardstein . . . during the spring." Eckardstein (*Lebenserinnerungen*, ii, 279-80) mentions a conversation in March, 1901, in which he says Lansdowne asked for his ideas as to the practicability of a defensive agreement between England and Germany.

² *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 19. Yet even then he took offence readily; Lee, ii, 11-12.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 22.

⁴ *F.O.D.*, ii, 74.

1901] KING EDWARD AND GERMANY

and commerce. She can have both to her heart's content; there is room enough in the world for England and Germany. But we can have no share in the constant 'somersaults' of the Kaiser." Meanwhile British ministers were told by Russian diplomatists in London that information about the negotiations (which were regarded by the British as secret) had been divulged to Russia.¹ This was mentioned by Eckardstein to Holstein, and Holstein seems to have tacitly admitted its truth. He knew the duplicity of his Emperor.

Behind all the friendly talk of the Kaiser and German diplomacy was the steady prosecution of the Kaiser's vast naval plans. In August, 1901, at the very time when he was entertaining King Edward at Wilhelmshöhe and trying to persuade him to measures which would have brought war with Russia, he was writing to Bülow: "The construction of our fleet must be pressed forward as rapidly as possible. This will serve as a pleasant surprise for the English; and perhaps it is really aimed at them as much as against anybody."²

The decisive moment in Anglo-German relations was reached in the autumn of 1901. In Lansdowne's words to Eckardstein, Germany was at the cross roads. If she did not agree to the English alliance England must turn to France and Russia. Holstein's influence was still dominant at Berlin, and he was still filled with suspicion of British policy, though really anxious, as would appear, for the British alliance. From false premises he drew logically unanswerable conclusions. Probably at his suggestion the German government imposed two conditions with which the English government was not likely to comply—the first, inclusion of the triple alliance in the new alliance, and the second, immediate acceptance of the alliance by parliament.³

Salisbury was unwilling to include Austria because he held that any alliance with her would involve direct or indirect support of the Sultan Abdul Hamid and his cruel régime. For the immediate acceptance of the proposed treaty of alliance by parliament a special session would be necessary, and he was anxious to avoid that. The Germans suspected him of bad faith, and the British government suspected that it was being amused by people who wanted

Eckardstein, ii, 277-8.

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xviii, 15.

² Brandenburg, 153-9.

to use the negotiations to obtain concessions from other powers by a process of diplomatic blackmail. There is no sign that the German naval plans had anything to do with the failure of the alliance, except in a brief reference in a foreign office memorandum,¹ as at that date most people in London believed that they were mere paper projects. Had the alliance been completed, it could not long have been maintained in face of an enormous development of the German navy. It would not have been hostile to France or Russia; Edward VII's well known sympathy for France was a guarantee that no attack on her was intended or would have been countenanced.

In June, 1901, the Sultan of Morocco, alarmed for the future of his country and dreading annexation by France, sent a mission to London and Berlin, seeking support. The suggestion was made by the British government during the negotiations with Germany for an alliance, that an Anglo-German agreement for the protection of Morocco should be concluded. The German government did not accept the proposal. Apparently Holstein, with his usual suspiciousness, saw in it a British plot to involve the German empire in a serious quarrel with France. Berlin declared that it "was not primarily interested,"² and very shortly afterwards British policy in regard to Morocco changed, and the inevitability of French control of that country was very wisely recognised. To satisfy William II and Holstein was an almost impossible task. To satisfy France was not impossible.

In October, Joseph Chamberlain made a speech replying to the charges of barbarity brought in England and Germany against the British army in South Africa, and declared that British methods had been those of all armies, including the German in 1870. On this there was a new outburst of anglophobia in the German press, and Bülow early in 1902 delivered a speech which in tone was deliberately insulting to England and to Chamberlain.³ At the close of 1901 William II wrote a friendly letter to his uncle, Edward VII, but it ended with a veiled threat, probably suggested by Bülow and Holstein: "May your govern-

¹ *F.O.D.*, ii, 75. This memorandum by Bertie was strongly against a German alliance.

² *F.O.D.*, ii, 75; *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 294, 333; Eckardstein, ii, 359.

³ See Chirol, on this episode and on Bülow's duplicity (*Fifty Years*, 296-7).

ment . . . never place me in the jeopardy to have to choose a course which could be a misfortune to both them and us!"¹

While the German government thus brought to naught the British overtures, an alliance was negotiated between England and Japan. Berlin, so early as the spring of 1901, knew that it was being considered in London.² The original suggestion came from Chamberlain who, in 1898, wanted to form a combination of England, Germany and Japan, in the closest touch with the United States. In March, 1901, Eckardstein and Hayashi, the Japanese minister in London, began discussions. Nothing came of them so far as Germany was concerned. Ito, the great Japanese statesman, visited Berlin and St. Petersburg, late in 1901, but he was rebuffed there, though he seems to have favoured on the whole an alliance with Russia rather than with England. Arriving in London he concluded the first Anglo-Japanese alliance on January 30, 1902.³ Its terms were defensive, providing that if either party were attacked by a combination of powers, the other should come to its aid, and guaranteeing the independence of Korea and China. The treaty was viewed with satisfaction in Austria, but Germany still held aloof, though Bülow and Holstein were secretly delighted, believing that England must now be driven into antagonism to Russia. It was William II's favourite doctrine that Germany would one day have to fight for existence with Japan.⁴ He gave the Czar friendly assurances,⁵ and promised to march side by side in the Far East, but he declined to join in counter-measures such as a German-Russian-French alliance against the Anglo-Japanese alliance in Asia; and he promised Japan neutrality, if she engaged in a war with Russia.

In May, largely as the result of King Edward's efforts, peace was concluded in South Africa, and the hands of the British government were free. In June the triple alliance was renewed much in its old form, though Italy in vain asked for the inclusion in the treaty of a clause stating that she undertook no responsibilities which would be dangerous to France. It contained the old protocol of 1892 to the

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 110.

² *F.O.D.*, ii, 89.

³ *F.O.D.*, ii, 115-20.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xix, 212.

⁵ *id.*, xvii, 156; xviii, 41.

THE WAR GUILT

[1902]

effect that England was to be asked to extend her support of the maintenance of the *status quo* in the East of Europe, to Morocco and Northern Africa. But conditions had greatly changed in the ten years.

Late in 1902 an understanding was reached by France with Italy by which France granted Italy a free hand in Tripoli, and Italy pledged herself to neutrality if France were attacked by Germany. This was probably due to Germany's failure to close with the British offer of alliance, as Italy had repeatedly intimated her inability to act with Germany, if English support were not assured. Schlieffen, the German chief of staff, reported that the Italian military authorities were no longer so enthusiastic for the triple alliance as they had been; and that difficulties were being made about an Italian plan for sending two army corps of Italian troops into South Germany through Switzerland, violating Swiss neutrality.¹ The triple alliance, in fact, was in a shaky condition. But the Kaiser's relations with the Czar were still excellent. At Reval in August, 1902,² he discussed a combination of the five great continental powers, to be directed mainly against England and Japan, and urged Nicholas II to assume the title of "admiral of the Pacific," adding "I shall call myself admiral of the Atlantic," greatly to the alarm and horror of Bülow. The two phrases were constantly in his thoughts; he wrote to Nicholas in October signing himself "admiral of the Atlantic."³ The news reached London, and seemed to throw a new light on the German naval armaments. The admiralty which had long pooh-poohed the German navy act, began to consider the construction of a British naval base in the North Sea, and the reorganisation of the British fleet. Constant discussion in Germany of possibilities of success in a naval war with England helped to cause uneasiness,⁴ and the German navy was growing fast. Moreover its officers claimed—apparently with a large measure of truth—that its shooting was the best in the world.

France drew nearer towards England as Germany drew away from that country. Various Anglo-French differences

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xviii, 692, 703.

² On this episode see Wolff, 274.

³ *The Kaiser's Letters*, 91.

⁴ *Navy League Journal*, 1903, 62-3.

1902] ENGLAND APPROACHES FRANCE

in Africa were submitted to arbitration in 1901. During 1902 the German government learnt that Chamberlain had acted as he said he would act, and had approached France with a view to an alliance. The Czar, in an autograph letter to the French president, advised him to accept the British overtures,¹ and the terms of an agreement were examined. In August, 1902, Delcassé suggested a frank discussion between England and France as to the future of Morocco.² The desire for closer relations with France was favoured by increasing uneasiness in England at the apparently unfriendly attitude of the German people. Chamberlain, in an interview with Eckardstein in September, 1902, said that, while he did not really believe that Germany wished to bring about the fall of the British empire, in order to profit by it, so much provocation had been given to England as to cause risk of an explosion if diplomatic difficulties arose.³ A few weeks later William II, on a visit to England, learnt that Bülow was regarded with special distrust. A suspicion was growing that under cover of negotiations for an alliance he sought to push forward rapidly the great naval plans which Tirpitz entertained. King Edward to Eckardstein referred to Bülow's "unfriendly and sarcastic remarks in the Reichstag" as having alienated British goodwill; and Metternich some years later treated them and the German naval preparations as the chief causes of British distrust of Germany.

During 1902 Prince Henry of Prussia was despatched to the United States to undo, if it was possible, the harm which had been caused to relations between that country and Germany by the incidents at Manila in 1898. His journey had little result. In the Venezuelan affair of 1902-03 Germany co-operated with England, but popular opinion in the British empire was unfavourable to that co-operation, which was regarded as ill-judged. The Germans bombarded Maracaibo without consulting the British admiral, and thus irritated the United States.⁴

In 1902 the German government and staff took a decision of disastrous import to Germany. Schlieffen completed

¹ *Rapport*, 314.

² *F.O.D.*, ii, 265.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 221-5.

⁴ *F.O.D.*, ii, 165-6.

THE WAR GUILT

[1902-3]

his plan for attacking France through Holland and Belgium, which he first brought forward in 1898,¹ and meant to put into force so early as 1900. It was a plan which Bismarck had rejected, but it was substantially that followed by the German army in the Great War, though the younger Moltke well understood the necessity of a neutral and independent Belgium for British safety.² Schlieffen was warned of the certain result by Eckardstein. He was told that it would "bring England on our backs." The plan of moving through Belgium and Holland was from time to time discussed in the German technical press; and, what was most disquieting, was the building of new railways in the districts bordering on the Belgian frontier. King Edward certainly knew of this scheme, and it must have increased his anxiety both for England and Belgium. For the conquest and annexation of Belgium to Germany would be the almost inevitable preliminary of the fall of England. Accompanying the preparations under the German navy act, it was calculated to inspire a deep distrust of German intentions, such as the Austrian ambassador in London³ said that he noticed everywhere in the autumn of 1902. Its disregard for all moral considerations in proposing to attack, without cause or provocation, weak and friendly states whose neutrality Germany was solemnly pledged to respect, covered the men responsible for its adoption with shame. German authorities, even since the war, have proclaimed their admiration for this scheme, but it was in reality one of the principal causes of the German defeat, because it shocked the conscience of the world.

The visit of King Edward VII to Paris in May, 1903, marks a turning point in European history. It would not have been made had the King not been anxious to secure an understanding with France. German authorities have declared that he was received with great cordiality in Paris because of his "well-known antipathy to Germany."⁴ They are wrong in all their facts. At the outset the reception given to the sovereign was not particularly enthusiastic, and a member of his Majesty's suite remarked to him,

¹ *Weltkrieg*, i, 10; Eckardstein, ii, 399.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxi, 525 ff.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 224.

⁴ Valentin, 53.

1903-4] EDWARD VII IN PARIS

"The French don't like us." The King's characteristic and wise reply was, "Why should they?"¹ For the best part of half a century or longer British policy had been by no means cordial to France, but Edward VII believed that with goodwill on the British side, the French people would speedily come to recognise the value of an alliance. Against Germany he had no antipathy whatever.² As his biographer points out, "in the two years that followed the signing of the Anglo-French agreement as in the two years preceding it, he did all that he could to ensure friendly relations with Germany."³ British overtures had been repeatedly rejected by Berlin before Paris was approached.

A few weeks later President Loubet visited London, and a French fleet was received with special ceremony at Spithead. The negotiations between the British and French governments progressed steadily. Delcassé and Lansdowne both had minds and knew what they wanted; the discussions were placed on a satisfactory basis by a memorandum of Lord Cromer,⁴ advising the sacrifice of British claims in Morocco in return for the sacrifice of French claims in Egypt. Delcassé, who had now secured the friendship of England, after obtaining that of Italy, set to work with all his energy to prevent war between Russia and Japan. In this he was seconded by British diplomacy, so far as it could successfully intervene. The German suggestions that England desired war are pure moonshine, and are contradicted by contemporary German diplomatic reports from London. These dwell on England's "anxiety and unrest," on her distaste for any war at that moment, on her lost confidence in her military leaders after the South African war, and on the advice given by her statesmen to Japan to show moderation and calm.

Such a conflict between England's ally, Japan, and France's ally, Russia, must obviously cause tension with France and play into the hands of Bülow and William II. Nor was Japan anxious for war if she could secure so much of Korea as was necessary for her safety without fighting. But when on January 19, Russia asked for British mediation, it was too

¹ Lee, ii, 237.

² *Grosse Politik*, xvii, 591-2.

³ Lee, ii, 257.

⁴ *F.O.D.*, ii, 307-9.

late, and Japan was no longer willing to treat.¹ German policy was admittedly directed towards thoroughly entangling Russia in the Far East, in order to lessen her pressure upon Austria. It was not a policy of which England had any special right to complain, though it certainly did not make for world-peace. William II at Danzig and Reval assured the Czar that in the event of war, Germany would cover Russia's rear. But lest news of this assurance should be conveyed to the Japanese and deter them from standing their ground, they were simultaneously informed that Germany had entered into no alliance with Russia.²

Neither England nor France was under any illusion as to the enormous strength of Germany, and the relative weakness of Russia. If the balance of power was to be maintained in Europe it was important that Russia's resources should not be dissipated in dangerous eastern adventures. The British and French view was that of so clear-sighted and patriotic a Russian soldier as Kuropatkin. Truthful estimates of Japanese strength were supplied to the Czar by his English relatives, in the hope that they would lead him to accept a fair compromise, for which Japan was anxious. But he seems to have regarded them as "bluff." The Russian troops were to have evacuated Manchuria in April, 1903. They did not retire. On the contrary they began an advance towards Korea, though the control of that country was to Japan a matter of life and death.

The Münzsteg meeting in October, 1903, between the Czar and Francis Joseph of Austria, led to an understanding about Balkan policy between Austria and Russia, which was necessary if Russia was to risk war with Japan in the Far East. The Balkan situation was a dangerous one. In the summer of 1903 King Alexander and Queen Draga of Serbia were assassinated. The plot was known beforehand to the Austrian and Russian governments, and not discouraged by either.³ The new king, Peter, was believed to be sympathetic to Austria, and thoroughly pliable.⁴ In Macedonia there was constant unrest which was stirred up by Ferdinand of Bulgaria, now in close relations with the Czar, and anxious

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xix, 45. Large Russian naval reinforcements were then en route for the Far East and Japan's naval position would have been endangered by their arrival. cf. *F.O.D.*, ii, 229.

² *Grosse Politik*, xix, 15.

³ Cf. Bogitshevitch, 15. Assassination was not intended in the first instance.

⁴ Kanner, 30.

to make an end of Turkey. Austria was eager to maintain the Sultan's dominions, but was ready to put up with their partition between Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania and Greece. Any aggrandisement of Serbia, however, she was determined to resist, dreading its reaction on the Serbs in her own territory. At Münzsteg arrangements were made for reforms in Macedonia under Russian and Austrian supervision.

Two other events in 1903 to some extent influenced Anglo-German relations—the opening of Chamberlain's tariff campaign, and the definite launching of the Baghdad railway project—"my railway" as the Kaiser called it—by an agreement between a German syndicate and a Turkish government in March, 1903. The prospect of having Germany as a neighbour in the Persian Gulf was not particularly welcome to England; there were British rights to Koweit, the harbour on the gulf where the railway was to have terminated, and the German government was reminded of them so early as 1900.¹ As for the tariff campaign it was treated in the German press as a hostile step, and threats were even made that, if protection were adopted by England, Germany would have to "take action."²

Early in 1904 came the breach between Russia and Japan. William II wrote to the Czar on January 3 that Korea must be Russian, and under his influence the Czar refused an arrangement by which Japan would have received a free hand in Korea and Russia in Manchuria. Indeed so energetically did William push his cousin into war that Bülow was uneasy, fearing the result of such advice would be the very opposite to that intended.³ The Kaiser expected a collision between England and Russia, and an attempt by the British fleet to enter the Baltic; he believed that then would come the opportunity of the German fleet. In the spring of 1903 he had sounded the Danish royal family as to a Russo-German-Danish-Swedish alliance to close the Baltic, and in December of that year he broached the subject to the King of Denmark, who was apparently not unwilling to enter such an alliance. The Czar agreed to a Russo-German occupation of Denmark, in the event of a war in which England and Japan were combatants. William II was now confidently reckoning on a coalition of five great powers (Germany,

¹ *F.O.D.*, ii, 94.

² cf. Sir A. Fitzroy, *Memoirs*, i, 172.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xix, 62.

Austria, Italy, Russia and France) with at least two minor powers (Rumania and Denmark) against England and Japan. He may have believed the reports which reached both the German and the Austrian staffs, that Russia would crush Japan, even if she exhausted herself in the process.¹ But from February 8, 1904, when operations began, Russia sustained a series of unbroken reverses. Meanwhile William II pressed the Czar for a commercial treaty which would give Germany what she wanted, even though it retarded the advance of Russian industry. The Czar on this point had to yield.

Though England and Germany were steadily drifting wider apart, William at moments was anxious to renew the old relations of comparative friendship which his régime had destroyed. But always (with Tirpitz in the background watching him and prompting him) he insisted on the rapid increase of the German fleet to inspire "the necessary respect" in England. In 1904 land was acquired by the British government at Rosyth for a new naval base on the North Sea, a plain intimation that the growth of the German navy was causing anxiety.

On April 8, 1904, was signed the Anglo-French agreement, by which England received a free hand in Egypt and France in Morocco, subject always to freedom of trade. Either power promised the other diplomatic support in the execution of the agreement. Treaties arranging for future territorial conditions in Morocco were signed in April between England and France, and in September between France and Spain. Certain articles in them were kept secret from regard for the susceptibilities of the Sultan of Morocco, and on this account Lansdowne and Delcassé have been accused of duplicity. The secret articles of the Anglo-French agreement were published to the world in 1911, and provided for the cession of a part of Morocco to Spain.²

France had now secured the consent of England, Spain and Italy to her Moroccan plans—England by concessions in Egypt and elsewhere; Spain by a partition of the Moroccan coast; and Italy by recognition of the Italian claim to Tripoli. Germany had received nothing. Through Prince Radolin,

¹ His comments on the Russian plans were not, however, hopeful. (*Grosse Politik*, xix, 24) though Wolff (276) holds that he was very badly informed.

² The documents are in *F.O.D.*, ii, 374 ff.

its ambassador in Paris, the German government had been confidentially informed of the main conditions on March 23 and had not objected to them. On April 12 Bülow informed the Reichstag that Germany had no reason for complaint, and that her interests would be served by order and calm in Morocco. But there was a fresh outburst of ill-will in Germany, stimulated by Tirpitz and the Pan-Germans.

The German government was secretly annoyed because it had secured no compensation and had not been consulted in advance by Delcassé. It would have liked to claim a part of the Morocco coast, but it was estopped from so doing because the Kaiser in 1903 had told the King of Spain that he sought no territorial acquisitions, great or small, there, but only to protect German trade against unfair treatment.¹ This was a statesmanlike attitude, which shows that William II, with all his faults, could be wiser at times than Bülow and Holstein. His declaration tied their hands for the moment. To make amends for it he delivered threatening speeches at Karlsruhe (where he urged the need of unity "in case we are compelled by our world policy to intervene"), Mainz and Saarbrücken. A visit paid by Edward VII to Kiel in June, 1904, passed off cordially; and in August, when various Russian warships were driven by the Japanese into the German naval base of Tsingtau, they were promptly disarmed, after a hint from Lansdowne that under the Anglo-Japanese alliance England was concerned in their treatment. The Kaiser's real attitude was not friendly. To the Czar he wrote fairly frequently, doing his best to stir up trouble between Russia and England and Russia and France. In the autumn he urged Nicholas II to despatch the Russian Black Sea fleet through the Dardanelles,² for action in the Far East, though it was well known in Germany that this would have been regarded by England as a *casus belli*.³ The Czar was not inclined to take such a risk; but William II's advice illustrates his penchant for mischief-making.

Such was the posture of affairs when the Russian Baltic fleet under Rojestvensky sailed for the Far East. William

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xx, 268.

² *Kaiser's Letters*, 128.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xix, 240. cf. *F.O.D.*, ii, 242. King Edward was apparently in favour of allowing the exit of the Black Sea Fleet, (Lee, ii, 289-90) but afterwards changed his view.

THE WAR GUILT

[1904

II had expressed to the Czar his confidence that this fleet would defeat the Japanese, if the Russian ships in Port Arthur first disposed of the Japanese battleships—a rather considerable assumption. The Russians received false information—as they afterwards alleged from German sources, though of this there is no documentary evidence—that the Japanese, with British collusion, were preparing a torpedo attack in the North Sea. In the night of October 20-21 they steamed into the midst of the British North Sea trawlers on the Dogger Bank. Professing that they had seen a torpedo craft among the trawlers they opened fire. One trawler was sunk and two men were killed; several trawlers were damaged. When the Russians knew that a mistake had been made, they gave no assistance to the fishermen nor did they report their mistake to the British government.

Naturally this affair caused extreme tension between England and Russia. The British government did not know whether Germany was acting in secret alliance with Russia (as there was some reason to suspect), and whether Russia was deliberately seeking to cause a war. Owing to the efforts of Delcassé, Edward VII, and the Czar, an armed conflict was averted; and the affair was referred to an international commission. William II utilised the crisis by urging the Czar to sign a treaty with Germany of which he submitted two slightly different drafts, providing for common action by Russia and Germany against England.¹ He asserted that from "private source" he knew there had been "foreign steam craft" among the trawlers, and "foul play," which was an entire fantasy. He probably believed the tale though there was not the slightest foundation for it²; and his attitude was another example of his impulsiveness and mischievousness. The Czar did not agree to William's proposal.

In the closing months of 1904 friction between England and Germany was increased by the attitude of Sir John Fisher, who took over the office of first sea lord on October 21, 1904. He was always apt to let his tongue run away with him, and he talked incessantly of a preventive war with Germany. His suggestion was that a summons should be addressed to her to cease increasing her fleet, and, if

¹ *Kaiser's Letters*, 131-9.

² *Grosse Politik*, xix, 282

FISHER'S FANTASIES

1904]

she did not obey it, that her fleet should be "Copenhagened." Articles in this sense, some of them written by an intimate friend¹ of Fisher's, appeared in various periodicals,² but not in any important newspaper. They were known by the German embassy in London to represent Fisher's ideas, and though at first they were discredited, their persistence gradually began to cause uneasiness. Fisher's plan was an utterly indefensible one; it was scouted by King Edward; and there never was the slightest possibility that it would be accepted by any British government. But Germans perhaps could not reasonably be expected to know this. How the German fleet was to be "Copenhagened" Fisher never clearly explained. England had not the requisite military force to capture Kiel and Wilhelmshaven, as she had captured Copenhagen in 1807; and English military authorities regarded the project as simply ridiculous.³

The truth was that as Count Eulenburg, one of the officials at the German embassy in London, stated, the British were afraid of a sudden German naval attack. Already from across the North Sea the shadow of the ever-growing German navy fell dark upon England. German suspicion that Fisher was really meditating something more serious than bombast was undoubtedly strengthened by the redistribution of the British navy which Fisher carried out, concentrating its main strength in home waters. For this there was abundant justification. It was a defensive measure and indispensable for British security as Germany's naval strength grew—for practically the entire German fleet, it must be remembered, was kept concentrated in North Sea or Baltic waters. It was also, as we have seen, the habit of William II to assume the title of "admiral of the Atlantic" in his exchange of telegrams and letters with the Czar, and that fact had led to much comment and uneasiness in England. William II, in his impulsive fashion, took Fisher's Copenhagen projects as though they had been definite naval plans.

He was (or said he was) greatly exercised as to the methods by which he should bring home certain German cruisers that were on distant service, and even talked of treating

¹ The late Mr. Arnold White.

² The most important was one in *Vanity Fair*, November 17, 1904. See *Grosse Politik*, xix, 332 and 353 ff.

³ cf. King Edward's assurances to Germany in April, 1905. *id.*, xx, 616.

as a *casus belli* with England any recall of the British Mediterranean fleet to British waters. His irritation against England was strengthened by a speech which Lord Lee of Farnham (then Mr. A. Lee, civil lord of the admiralty) delivered on February 2, 1905. The speech was completely distorted in the German press, perhaps as the result of incorrect versions of it which appeared in England. Lee merely said that "the British fleet is now prepared strategically for every conceivable emergency, for we must assume that all foreign naval powers are possible enemies. Owing to the growth of new naval powers we have, unfortunately, more possible enemies than formerly, and we have to keep an anxious eye, not only on the Mediterranean and Atlantic, but on the North Sea as well." Such a statement was wholly unexceptionable, and contained nothing but the veriest commonplaces of naval strategy. Yet Bülow spoke of the "threatening speech of Lee, the first lord of the admiralty," thus misrepresenting both Lee's real position and his sentiments.

It was about this date that, according to Baron Heeckeren van Kell, William II wrote a letter to Queen Wilhelmina of Holland, pressing the Dutch government to fortify the Scheldt and threatening German action if it were not fortified.¹ The existence of such a letter was denied officially in 1910, but it is known that Schlieffen by his famous plan proposed to violate the neutrality of both Holland and Belgium in a war with France, on which he was then pressing the Kaiser to embark. The German government may therefore have been anxious to have a serviceable *casus belli* with Holland up its sleeve, just as in 1914 it produced the strange tale of the eighty French officers in motor cars who had attacked Germany from Dutch territory.

Thus this period was marked by events of the utmost diplomatic importance; the first, the rejection by Germany of the last British overtures for an alliance; the second, the conclusion of an alliance with Japan by England; the third, the conclusion of the Anglo-French entente; and the fourth, the German navy act of 1900, proclaiming Germany's intention to build a fleet that could endanger the naval position of even England. The final decision had now been made by the British government. In the understanding with

¹ *Annual Register*, 1910, 358. No trace of this episode is to be found in the German documents as yet published.

France, which was to be followed by a similar understanding with Russia when the war in the Far East ended, Edward VII and his advisers had shown no unfriendliness to Germany. Every single attempt to secure an alliance with the German government had been rebuffed because of Bülow's and Holstein's suspicious natures. The British ministers were night and day confronted by the solid fact that the German navy was being persistently increased. This ever-growing and most formidable force would be in the hands of a monarch whose impulses were incalculable, and who had already shown himself prone to yield to the demands of the Pan-Germans and naval extremists. If German statesmen had been realists and had come to a naval understanding with England, or had simply refrained from building a fleet which must menace her, they could have averted the Great War, provided always they had been willing to treat France and Russia reasonably. But in the critical years they allowed themselves to be dominated by Tirpitz and Holstein, both of them men of thoroughly unsound judgment though both men of marked ability.

CHAPTER IV

GROWING TENSION ON THE CONTINENT.

THE North Sea incident was settled happily because neither England nor Russia was anxious for trouble. The difficult position of France, however, encouraged the German government to put pressure upon her in the hope of breaking up the Anglo-French entente. The way was open for such action as the Russian forces in the Far East were uniformly unsuccessful, and in France the pacifist, M. Rouvier, became premier in January, 1905. He was known to be covertly hostile to Delcassé, the negotiator of the entente and the bugbear of German diplomacy. Early in March, 1905, the Russians were severely defeated at Mukden, and the revolutionary movement in St. Petersburg and Moscow became distinctly dangerous. Russia was paralysed, beaten in the East, and impotent in Europe. France was weakened by the sudden introduction of the two-year system of military service in her army on March 21, 1905. During the winter months of 1904 William II had endeavoured to obtain from the Czar a definite alliance against England and Japan, so as to guarantee Germany against the risks she would run if she aided in the coaling of the Russian Baltic fleet.¹ That fleet was very lethargically moving east; its departure had left Russia's Baltic seaboard entirely open and at the mercy of the German navy.

Such were the conditions when on March 31, 1905, William II, very much against his will, landed at Tangiers, and, as he put it in a subsequent statement to the Russian diplomatist, Isvolsky,² "threw down the glove to France." This landing in the most spectacular conditions was planned as a deliberate challenge to the Entente. It was apparently the belief

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xix, 247 ff., 259, 303.
² Isvolsky, *Memoirs*, 78.

1905]

TANGIERS AFFAIR

of Bülow and Holstein that France would turn to England for support, when the treacherous English would leave France in the lurch and the entente would be irretrievably shattered.¹ William II disbelieved in the efficacy of these plans²; indeed the unfortunate monarch, shortly before embarking for Tangiers, delivered at Bremen a speech in which he declared for a policy that would secure from all sides the completest confidence for the German empire as a "calm, honourable and peace-loving neighbour," and for the Hohenzollern monarchy the reputation of being upheld "not by the sword but by mutual trust." He was anxious to include France in a great continental combination against England. But he was hustled off, and, to compel him to do what Bülow wanted, the news that he was to land was published well in advance in the German press.³

How far Bülow and Holstein intended to go is still, more than twenty years after, uncertain. But, according to Eckardstein, Holstein was quite ready for war. Curiously enough some sense of impending danger seems to have been felt in France as reserve officers received special instructions in February, 1905.⁴ Up to the last moment of going ashore William II hesitated, nor did he land till the German diplomatist, Kühlmann, arrived on board with despatches from Berlin and a report of the preparations made to welcome him at Tangiers. He ran some risk of assassination at the hand of Moorish fanatics, and he had to ride a strange horse, which was dangerous for him with his crippled left arm.

Spectators noticed that he was extremely white and anxious as he delivered his speech of challenge to France before a wondering audience. It had been prepared for him by his ministers. In it he announced his determination to treat the sultan of Morocco as "an absolutely independent sovereign" and to do everything in his power "to safeguard effectively German interests in Morocco." In this latter matter he could not be accused of aggressive conduct, as Germany clearly had the right to obtain security for her commercial interests,⁵ and as in previous French annexations, such as Tunis and Madagascar, the commercial

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xix, 460; xx, 265 ff.

² *id.*, xxi, 567.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xix, 497; xx, 285.

⁴ *id.*, xx, 692.

⁵ Under the Anglo-French agreement the commercial rights of all countries were safeguarded for thirty years.

interests of foreign powers had not always been treated with regard. But William II, after declaring that Germany sought nothing for herself, beyond the maintenance of these commercial rights, went on to warn the Sultan to be cautious in proceeding with reforms, which he knew the French were urging. His whole attitude was one of hostility to France, and the episode sent a thrill of alarm through Europe.

In London it was regarded by everyone as a deliberate challenge to the new entente¹; in Berlin it was treated as inflicting on France a graver humiliation than the Fashoda evacuation. In Paris no one knew what Germany wanted; but Rouvier was uneasy, and feared an early outbreak of war. What Germany desired is not disclosed by her foreign office documents. It seems to have been the annexation of part of the Atlantic coast of Morocco in exchange for the surrender of economic German rights elsewhere.² The Kaiser's speeches had made it impossible to put forward this demand at once, and therefore Bülow now called for a conference to settle the future of Morocco and gain time.

Delcassé was for rejecting this demand. He regarded it as sheer "bluff," and his view was shared by one of the ablest French statesmen of the date, Clemenceau. If German authorities are to be believed and there was nothing behind the Tangiers episode, then Delcassé and Clemenceau were right. The impression Holstein's attitude produced was that Germany sought war with France, and Schlieffen at this juncture was pressing William II to attack. Rouvier, however, was alarmed at the risk of a war in which France would not have Russian support, and believed that a good understanding and friendly co-operation with Germany were still practicable. He had no faith in British support, doubting whether it would be given, and whether, if given, it would guarantee France against disaster. And thus in the end he decided to give way and agreed to the conference, sacrificing Delcassé. He even went so far, according to Caillaux, as to offer Germany Mogador, or territorial compensation in the Congo region—a clear sign that France was not, as German propagandists have so often alleged, thirsting for a war of revenge.

¹ William II described it to the Czar as a challenge to France; *Grosse Politik*, xix, 460.

² Brandenburg, 198; cf. Valentin, 57.

That British support was definitely promised is certain,¹ though there is no evidence of this in the British foreign office documents. Any such promise was denied at the time by Lord Lansdowne to Metternich, the German ambassador, and has since been even more positively denied by Lord Oxford and Asquith. But Lansdowne did tell the German ambassador that if Germany attacked France, British opinion would require the British government to support France. Plans for naval and military co-operation were studied by the staffs of the two countries. There is very little doubt that a pledge was given personally by Edward VII to Delcassé (as William II believed²) and that it would have been implemented by the government, though the government was not directly bound by it. The decisive defeat of France by Germany, just as much as the seizure of Belgium, would have been the certain prelude to the fall of Great Britain.

The habit of playing with fire and threatening war had gone so far that German agents in Paris menaced the French with terrible things if they did not give way. Henckel von Donnersmarck, acting unofficially for the German government, was reported to have declared that unless Delcassé was dismissed France would be invaded and an enormous indemnity exacted from her.³ The French military position was deplorably weak, and Schlieffen was entirely certain of swift victory. Two well-meaning but not very competent politicians, André and Pelletan, had thrown the French army and navy into confusion. A dangerous anti-militarist movement was in full swing, directed and financed from Germany (or so the French staff believed). The shortage of munitions⁴ and equipment was such that the French armies must have been severely handicapped. The military weakness of France was aggravated by the law substituting two years' service for three years, which was passed in March, 1905. The extent of French deficiencies was subsequently revealed by the special expenditure of £9,000,000 to make good the failings which

¹ Hammann, *Missverständnisse Bismarck*, 117-9; Asquith, *Genesis of the War* 90-1; Appuhn et Renouvin, xviii.

² *Grosse Politik*, xx, 664. This the writer heard in 1905 from well-informed Frenchmen, in Delcassé's confidence.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xx, 390, disputes this, but the French evidence for it is strong and is confirmed by Valentin, 59.

⁴ The Moselle forts had only thirty rounds apiece for their heavy guns.

this crisis brought to light. Expecting a sudden attack, the French staff hurried eight army corps to the frontier, to support the three which were in position there in covering the French mobilisation.

The resignation of Delcassé and the acceptance by Rouvier of an international conference, which met at Algéciras, constituted a triumph for German diplomacy.¹ But it was a barren triumph—a victory without a morrow. Before the conference could meet Russia realised the hopelessness of her position in the Far East. William II had constantly urged the Czar to continue the war, and in private had deplored his weakness as being likely to induce him to make peace; but after the destruction of the Baltic fleet at Tsushima there were no more of these appeals, which could only lead Russia to waste her resources without any chance of success. The Czar decided on peace, and Japan in this matter honourably accepted British and American advice.

On July 24, 1905, some weeks before peace was signed, William II extracted from the Czar at Björkö a definite treaty of alliance between Russia and Germany, by which if any European state attacked either power, the other would aid with all its force. It was to come into effect after peace with Japan had been signed. Metternich, the German ambassador in London, had warned the German government that a treaty of this kind must obviously be directed against England, even though it was professedly defensive, and had further said that neither England nor Japan thought of war with Germany, and that it would be a distinct mistake for the German Michael to make himself into a "lightning conductor."²

The Kaiser was on board the Czar's yacht, *Standart*, when, exploiting the expansive simplicity of Nicholas II, he suddenly produced from his pocket what he called "my little agreement," the draft of the treaty, which he had all ready. "Should you like to sign it? It would be a very nice souvenir of our *entrevue*," the Kaiser asked (for the two monarchs habitually used a somewhat shaky English in their converse.³) "Yes, I will,"

¹It is possible that but for the fall of Delcassé, a definite alliance would have been concluded between England and France; Poincaré, i, 221.

²*Grosse Politik*, xix, 334 ff.

³*id.*, xix, 463.

replied the Czar, according to William's vivid account, which proceeds:

Tears of joy filled my eyes—a thrill ran down my spine; and I thought that Frederick William III, Queen Louise, Grandpapa, and Nicholas I must be close at hand at that moment.

The "old Prussian God," whom the Emperor was later so often to invoke, was also in his judgment decidedly present.

When he returned bursting with joy from this visit, carrying with him the "little agreement," he found German ministers not so highly pleased with the performance or so confident that the Deity had presided over the negotiations. They saw the impolicy of the proceeding. For at that moment England was bound by a defensive alliance to Japan, and if Germany suddenly "butted in" on the side of Russia, it must mean increasing tension with Japan and risk of a war in which Russia, hamstrung in the Far East, could have given little aid.

From the standpoint of German interests, for William II to meditate war with England at such a moment was a proof of his erratic judgment and his impulsiveness. Yet that his mind was running on war is shown by his talk in view of the visit of a British squadron to the Baltic, a week later, of:

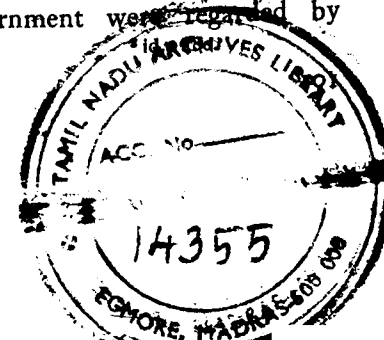
Sending two notes to Brussels and Paris with a summons to them to declare within six hours whether they are for or against us. We must march into Belgium immediately they have declared themselves.¹

Incidentally this passage proves that the Kaiser thoroughly approved of Schlieffen's treacherous scheme for the violation of neutral territory, in the event of a war with England. The suggestion filled Bülow with real or affected admiration. He replied to the Kaiser:

What your Majesty says about Belgium hits the nail on the head. Everything in that business depends on the Belgians having no suspicion beforehand that in such an event we mean to confront them with these alternatives. Otherwise they would spend large sums on fortifications against us, and give the French a hint so that they could have plans ready.²

Passages such as these justify the immense distrust with which William and his government were regarded by

¹*id.*, 479.



THE WAR GUILT

[1905]

peaceful European powers.¹ But not content with these Belgian plans, the Kaiser was also arranging for a simultaneous occupation of Denmark; and, according to his own account, he had persuaded the Danish government to accept it in advance.² In fact, he was organising a colossal coalition against England and Japan.

Yet what was the danger against which he was preparing? In England, all the indications pointed to the early advent to power of a pacifist Liberal government. If Germany kept the peace, with such a government in office, there was every reason to believe that she would gradually be able to carry out a policy of commercial penetration in England and France, and by dexterously using her gigantic strength and exploiting their dread of war, to force them both by degrees into vassaldom to herself. In this way she would obtain without the cost of a great conflict all the fruits of a victory won by arms. To the east she feared no danger from Russia for several years. The dread of a war on two fronts, which had been a salutary check on German ambitions, had passed for the time being. This was an enormous gain for her, even though it was purchased by the possible future sacrifice of Kiaochau to Japan. As Reventlow³ wrote about this date: "The Cossack peril was no longer the principal factor for Germany and Austria. Russia had for a definite period no interest in provoking a war in Europe which would bring the triple alliance into play, and for which she lacked the strength. . . . From this it followed that France had no inclination for war, and was inferior to us." This is a statement of extreme importance. The dual alliance was practically out of action from 1904 to 1910.

The Björkö treaty brought William II a veritable peck of troubles, and even induced Bülow, the German chancellor, to hand in his resignation, because he had not been consulted. This, in turn, led the Kaiser in a ridiculous letter to threaten suicide—

The morning after your resignation reaches him, the Kaiser will no longer be in this world! Think of my poor wife and children.

¹ For the general character of German diplomacy see Steed, *Through Thirty Years*, i, or Grey, vol. i; or Chirol.

² According to Isvolsky (*Memoirs*, 76 ff.), the Russian government gave no countenance to this occupation of Denmark.

³ *Weltfrieden oder Weltkrieg*, (1907), 35-6.

1905] COALITION AGAINST ENGLAND

Bülow¹ succumbed to these pathetic entreaties, and withdrew the resignation.

The signing of peace between Russia and Japan was followed by the publication of the new treaty of alliance between England and Japan, which differed from its predecessor in two important respects—it covered British India, and it came into force in the event of a single power attacking either of the signatories. The Björkö treaty between Russia and Germany was quietly dropped by the Czar at the instance of his ministers, after strong representations from France. But anxiety was general in Europe as to German policy. Edward VII told a Danish diplomat about this period,² "with a man of so impulsive a temperament as the German Emperor at the head of the greatest military power in Europe, anything may happen." In France there were precautionary measures, and though Edward VII, in January, 1906, wrote a most cordial letter to William II, the German Emperor continued to be suspicious and distrustful.³

The Algeciras conference met in January, 1906, to deal with the Morocco question and sat for ten weeks. In it, to the considerable surprise of Germany, Italy took up an attitude distinctly friendly to France. The conference drew up a treaty dealing with the future of Morocco, known as the Act of Algeciras, and was noteworthy because in it for the first time the United States was represented in a congress which dealt with matters of European policy. The presence of an American was due to William II's own action. Evidently believing that his flattery had won over Roosevelt, the President (who wrote of him, "the Kaiser has become a monomaniac about getting into communication with me"), he personally requested the United States to intervene. The result was that the American representative received the strongest instructions against giving Germany a foothold in northern Africa.⁴ During the conference reports were spread to the effect that England had decided to abandon support of the French view in the matter of Casablanca, and these reports (which were quite untrue) were traced to German sources.⁵

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xix, 498.

² Lee, ii, 358.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxi, 109; cf. 427.

⁴ Cf. *Grosse Politik*, xxi, 259-60.

⁵ Grey, i, 105-111.

THE WAR GUILT

[1905]

The Kaiser's expectation that the accession to office of a Liberal government in England would be followed by a weakening of the entente was disappointed. Campbell-Bannerman, the new prime minister, was determined to maintain continuity in foreign policy. The new foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, as he told Metternich, was anxious for friendly relations with Germany, though he made it quite clear that friendship with France would not be sacrificed. Haldane, Grey's intimate friend, was equally well disposed to Germany, and was equally determined to uphold the entente. Metternich reported current British opinion to be that "Germany has been acting as a bully."¹ In January, 1906, Grey refused to give a definite promise of alliance to France, but stated that, if Germany attacked her, public opinion in England would be strongly moved in favour of France.² He was warned that if a sudden crisis arose and public opinion approved of British intervention, armed British support could not be given effectively unless a preliminary understanding had been reached between the military authorities in both countries.

The French wished for the completion of arrangement which would render it possible to despatch 100,000 British troops quickly to guard the northern frontier of France while the French armies faced east and met what was anticipated would be the main German attack.³ A series of discussions took place as the result of which Haldane introduced his army scheme of 1907—he was then secretary for war. All the plans for co-operation with France were provisional, and depended on popular consent, and the approval of the House of Commons, if a crisis arose. But Campbell-Bannerman had authorised the arrangements and his influence with his party was so great that he could be sure of a majority.

In April, 1906, rumours that a German violation of Belgian territory would mark the opening of the next war led Colonel Barnardiston, then British military attaché at Brussels, to discuss with General Ducarne, the chief of the Belgian staff, the possibilities of such an event. Barnardiston, according to Ducarne's notes, said that England

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xx, 689.

² *id.*, xxi, 81.

³ Haldane, *Before the War*, 28-31; Hansard, *House of Commons*, August 1914; Appuhn et Renouvin, xix-xx.

1906] NEW GERMAN PROGRAMME

would despatch a force of 100,000 men who would disembark between Calais and Dunkirk.¹ He asked whether Belgium could hold her ground for the period of ten days required to land this force. Ducarne replied that the two great Belgian fortresses of Liège and Namur were safe against sudden attack, and that the Belgian army would be ready for the field with 100,000 men in four days. It was distinctly understood and endorsed on the documents, that the British would only enter Belgium after her neutrality had been violated by Germany. No report of these conversations was made to the British government or to Haldane, but they were very proper and natural discussions in view of the fairly well known intention of Germany to attack Belgium, and the fact that England was one of the guarantors of Belgian neutrality. The German government was informed by the Belgian authorities of them.

The winter of 1905-06 Germany used to introduce a new naval act known as the *Novelle*, raising the number of battle cruisers from fourteen to twenty and the number of destroyers from ninety-six to one hundred and forty-four. It provided for the annual commencement of three large armoured ships, two small cruisers, twelve destroyers, and an unspecified number of submarines. But while the increase in the number of ships was not large, the revolutionary characteristic of this new act was that it enormously augmented the size and power of individual ships by adopting for the German navy the Dreadnought type. This was a type which had just been introduced by Fisher in England, and he fondly believed that it could not be constructed by any foreign navy.² It involved a very large increase in expenditure. The German measure produced a more disagreeable impression because it followed immediately on a British admiralty statement (December 4, 1905), reducing the proposed British armoured programme to four ships a year, as against the three which Germany was now to adopt. As a British critic wrote at the time: "The slightest rearrangement of the balance of power, the slightest change in foreign relations would bring upon England the risk of losing

¹ See *Times Documentary History*, ii, 314 ff. The Congo atrocities agitation and King Edward's dislike for King Leopold made the Belgian government and its diplomats in this period inclined to German sympathies.

² The ground for his belief is not clear; other navies in 1905 were preparing plans for similar ships, among them Japan and the United States.

the command of the sea." The act was sanctioned in June, 1906, and served further to increase the tension between England and Germany. From 1906 onwards the naval question played an ever-growing part in the relations of the two countries.

A little earlier Holstein's reign in Berlin had ended; his disappearance was in part due to personal intrigues, in part to his hostility to the vast naval projects of William II and Tirpitz. He made no secret of his view that they would raise up new enemies for Germany. Raging at his retirement, he wrote:

There is only one way of averting the certain dangers of the future. It is absolutely to oppose profitless provocation, whether it takes the form of deeds or words, and to criticise it unhesitatingly as political folly. . . . All these acts of provocation either come directly from the Emperor or are intended to please him. . . . He has the instinct of an actor, not of a statesman.

Angry men sometimes tell the truth, but Holstein had egged the Kaiser on repeatedly, and was the chief offender in the Tangiers and Algeciras business. He continued to exercise some degree of influence till Bülow's retirement in 1909.¹ As for the limitation of the German fleet, which he favoured, Holstein knew well that William II had repeatedly declared the expansion of his fleet to be the corner stone of his foreign policy.

Fear of a sudden German attack during the Morocco negotiations still haunted France, and in April, 1906, the Russian chief of staff, Palitzin, signed in Paris an agreement by which both French and Russian armies were to mobilise all their forces, immediately they received the first news of a German mobilisation.² The French staff urged the Russian government to strengthen the Russian forces on the German and Austrian frontier, which had been greatly weakened during the war in the Far East, as otherwise there was risk that France might not be able to carry out her military undertakings. As a matter of fact the Russian weakness was such that little aid from the Czar's forces could be expected, and the position of France remained critical.

And now to the three existing causes of trouble in Europe—the situation of Alsace-Lorraine, the Morocco question, and

¹ "When you go," he said to Bülow, "war will become inevitable"; (Wolff 199).

² *Grosse Politik*, xxi, 320. This was simply to renew the treaty in which the dual alliance was based.



GRAND ADMIRAL A. VON TIRPITZ.
German Minister of Marine from 1897 to 1916.

the naval issue raised by the growth of the German fleet—a fourth was to be added in the South Slav question, which was inextricably bound up with the integrity of Austria. The Austrian foreign minister, Goluchowski, from 1895 to 1906, strove rather to maintain the *status quo* than to extend Austrian power in the Balkans; but even he was forced by Hungarian detestation of Serbia into a tariff war against her. One of the causes of this war is said to have been the fact that the Serbian army ordered new artillery, not from the Austrian Skoda works, but from France.¹ In Austria there was a large South Slav population, racially close akin to the Serbians. It was scattered in four distinct political organisations—Austria proper, Hungary, Croatia-Slavonia (which was dependent on Hungary with a certain very limited autonomy), and Bosnia. The South Slav population in Serbia was gradually estranged by the hostile treatment of its kindred across the frontier. The Hungarians cherished an undying hatred of the South Slavs, whom they had never forgiven for the services which troops of that nationality under the Ban Jellachich, rendered to the Austrian autocracy in 1848-9, in putting down the Hungarian insurrection.

Goluchowski resigned in October, 1906, possibly because he had shown himself too obsequious to Germany in the Algecirras conference, when his action was praised by William II as that of a "brilliant second" to Germany. He was succeeded by Baron Aehrenthal,² who had been Austrian ambassador in St. Petersburg, and had a poor opinion of Russian capacity, though he was anxious to renew the three Emperors' alliance of 1881. His chief desire was to shine as an Austrian Bismarck just at the moment when Russia, compelled by the success of Japan and the new Anglo-Japanese alliance to abandon ambitions in the Far East, once more turned her eyes to the Balkans. Between Russia and the Hapsburg Empire there need have been no lasting quarrel; the Czar certainly did not desire the destruction of Austria. But it appeared to Austrian statesmen that if Austria was not to perish, there was only one solution of the South Slav question—to crush Serbia and incorporate her in the Austrian dominions or sphere of influence. This,

¹ Kanner, 30.

² Steed, *Hapsburg Monarchy*, 227 ff.; *Through Thirty Years*, I, 241 ff.; Kanner, 32 ff.; Szilassy, 126.

however, Russia, as a Slav state, connected by close political and racial ties with the Serbian Slavs, could never permit, though down to 1903 the Serbian kingdom had almost been an Austrian dependency. The loss of her South Slav provinces must mean to Austria dismemberment; vital portions of them had been an integral part of her dominions for six centuries or more.¹

Aehrenthal showed a marked anti-British bias, which was something new in Austrian policy, and began the construction of a powerful fleet with the object, which he was not afraid privately to avow, of securing for Germany, Austria and Italy combined a superiority over the British fleet. This was a change of extraordinary gravity, though its full importance was not as yet grasped in London. It is difficult to see what Austrian aim could be promoted by such a naval expansion. The Austrian staff dreamed of naval operations in the Black Sea against Russia; but the creation of a large Austrian fleet was certain to alarm Italy, and one of Aehrenthal's chief aims was to secure a closer understanding with her. He undoubtedly rendered a real service to the peace of Europe by preventing Conrad von Hötzendorff, the Austrian chief of staff and leader of the war party, from attacking her in order to punish her for her friendship with France.² The Austrian heir, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, was in general sympathy with Aehrenthal, who was his man, but, like Aehrenthal and Conrad, he was hostile to the Serbians, whom he regarded as dangerous and irreconcilable foes of Austria. Italy at once replied to the Austrian naval programme with a yet larger programme. Externally imposing, the triple alliance had ceased to be more than a façade. It was, however, renewed in 1907,³ none of its members having given notice to terminate it.

A few months before Aehrenthal's appointment in Austria, Isvolsky who was a personal friend of Aehrenthal and Bülow, in May, 1906, became Russian foreign minister, and set to work to end the old quarrel with England. Isvolsky was not at that date at all hostile to Germany, and William II suggested that he would be welcomed in Berlin as Russian ambassador.⁴ He appears to have been sincerely anxious

¹ The Slav part of Styria since 1192; of Carinthia and Carniola since 1335.

² Auffenberg, 155.

³ Aehrenthal's reasons for the renewal are in *Grosse Politik*, xxi, 393.

⁴ *Kaiser's Letters to the Czar*, 158.

to maintain the Russian understanding with Austria. At the end of 1906, however, Serbian projects for a railway to the Adriatic led Aehrenthal to suspect that he was intriguing against Austria in Serbia, whereupon relations between Austria and Russia became less friendly.

In the summer of 1906, at the instance of William II, Haldane¹ paid a visit to Berlin. He was further invited to study the organisation of the German war office; and during his stay in Berlin he received from the Kaiser assurances that the German government was not hostile to the entente but "on the contrary believed that it might even facilitate good relations between France and Germany." Haldane discussed the naval position with him, and told him that the British fleet was to the British nation what the German army was to Germany; he warned William II that the Liberals would have to hold firmly to the two-power standard. It would have been better if the Liberals had talked less and acted more; on the eve of the second peace conference, which met at The Hague in June, 1907, the British government reduced its naval programme from three large armoured ships to two, against the three which the German naval programme provided. For the first time since the naval rivalry between the two countries had begun, the British programme was smaller than the German, though provision was made for the commencement of a third ship if the peace conference failed to secure serious results.

A marginal annotation by the Kaiser about this date shows that he was not convinced that the victory of the British navy at sea against the Germans was mathematically certain.² The idea of any general disarmament had to be abandoned, and the chief result of the conference was a scheme for an international naval court, the effect of which in war would be to subject British naval operations to a tribunal of foreign judges. In the early weeks of 1907 a new Reichstag was elected, and a large number of its members were definitely pledged to a forward naval policy, while a petition, signed by several hundred thousand Germans, was laid before it calling for an immediate large increase in the navy.

In August, 1907, a convention between England and Russia was signed which completed the work begun by the Anglo-French agreement of 1904. It settled all questions

¹ *Before the War*, 37.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxi, 495-7.

THE WAR GUILT

[1907]

at issue between England and Russia, and ended all prospect of a Russian movement against India. A good understanding between Russia and Japan was effected a few weeks earlier and embodied in a treaty. Thus the triple entente came into existence and England entered into close relations with two continental powers, once regarded as the chief enemies of the British empire. The menace of the German navy undoubtedly played a great part in bringing about this new quasi-alliance.¹ The insignificant British naval programme of 1907 had encouraged Tirpitz and the German Navy League to a fresh campaign of hostility against England. One of the leading Pan-Germans² of the day even went so far as to demand the "absorption of Holland and Belgium" in Germany, and the annexation of Poland, the Baltic provinces, and the Ukraine. The main reason which brought England and Russia together was the fear of German domination on the continent and the British knowledge of such episodes as the Kaiser's repeated attempts to form a vast continental combination against England, and the Björkö treaty.³

Though Bülow had, in 1906, told King Edward that he had nothing against an Anglo-Russian reconciliation, and though the British and Russian governments entertained no purpose hostile to Germany, Berlin became uneasy.⁴ The anglophobes maintained that a ring was closing round Germany, and that whereas in 1890 France had been in quarantine, now, thanks to British machinations, Germany was in that position, isolated with a dubious ally, Austria, in grave danger. This was not a sound view of the position. Germany was a power of such strength that everyone was afraid of her, and she stood in no peril of attack. But the habit of suspecting every foreign country and statesman of machiavelian plots against Germany had been so thoroughly ingrained by people like Holstein in their pupils that German statesmen smelt out conspiracies where there were none.

William II's visit to England in November, 1907, did not remove the feeling of suspicion. The British policy of trying to get rid of friction with other great powers was coming to be treated in Berlin as a deliberate encirclement

¹ cf. Cassel's account of Edward VII's motives in *Grosse Politik*, xxiv, 53.
² Martin, *Kaiser Wilhelm II und König Edward VII*, 88.
³ Brandenburg, 227.
⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xxi, 453.

1907] ANOTHER GERMAN PROGRAMME

of Germany, and a hostile manœuvre, though it had been carried out by a King who hated the very word "war," and by the most pacific ministry that ever held office in England. An agreement between William II and the British cabinet on the subject of the Baghdad railway was reached at Windsor, but was ultimately blocked by the Berlin foreign office. It represented a sincere endeavour to conciliate Germany, but it was in vain.

Whenever an effort was made to clear up the difficulties between England and Germany, Tirpitz and the Kaiser were pretty certain to intervene with one of their naval bills. And in the winter of 1907-08 a fresh and yet more gigantic German navy bill was brought forward. It reduced the period within which every large ship must be automatically replaced from twenty-five to twenty years, which meant that the total number of ships to be laid down was increased by one-fifth; between 1908 and 1911 inclusive, four large armoured ships were to be begun annually instead of three; and the expenditure was fixed till 1917. The total amount to be spent on the German navy was to be £207,700,000, nearly half of which was to go in providing new ships and guns; the annual outlay on the German navy, which had been £10,102,000 in 1904, the year of the Anglo-French entente, was to rise to £20,845,000 in 1910. Further, provision was made for widening and deepening the canal from the Baltic to the North Sea, so as to adapt it for the passage of Dreadnoughts; and the construction of an extraordinary number of large docks was another feature of Tirpitz's plans. The canal was to be ready at the end of July, 1914. Already prophets foretold that war would follow immediately on its completion; and the prophets were subsequently proved to be right.

The basis of these plans was the secret belief in Germany that the Liberal government in England would "let the navy down," and spend on doles the money which was required for new ships. This conviction was actually avowed in the Reichstag by an influential member. The best means of removing such an impression would have been for the British government then and there to adopt the policy of building "two keels to one," which was urged upon it by some of its own most sincere friends. In that case, when four large German armoured ships were laid down

eight large British ships would have been begun. But the policy was never tried. In the judgment of such an observer as Sir Ernest Cassel,¹ a well-wisher of both England and Germany, the weakness and hesitations of the British government in the matter of strengthening the British navy were among the deeper causes which led up to war, by tempting the naval party in Germany to yet more gigantic armaments.

After this challenge, and after the failure of the peace conference, Fisher, the first sea lord in the British admiralty, incurred severe and well-deserved criticism for the line he took. He disparaged the German proposals as mere "paper schemes"; he asserted that Germany was incapable of building Dreadnoughts, and he rested content with a programme which laid down that year no more than two large British ships against the four Germany was beginning. The expenditure on new construction in England in 1908-9 was only £8,521,000 against a German expenditure of £7,795,000. Yet as to what would happen if the command of the sea was in danger Fisher declared he had no doubt. He constantly predicted that Germany would attack the moment she was strong enough and ready enough. His own wild talk of "Copenhagening" her fleet had created enough ill-will and harmed the British national cause, yet the years passed and he hesitated to take precautions against that ill-will. He had stopped the construction of a naval base at Rosyth, but now, very tardily, he began a large dock there.

A further source of trouble was that his meagre ship-building policy compelled the advocates of a strong navy continually to refer to the German naval plans, and to the signs of German unfriendliness. Such comparisons and controversies could have been avoided had the government and admiralty fully maintained the two-power standard; it is even conceivable that the human agony and sorrow of the war might have been averted. As it was, Fisher's policy of construction must be regarded as one of the causes of the war, producing ever widening anxiety as the superiority of the British fleet grew more and more precarious. What menace the German navy held to a weak fleet Jutland was afterwards to reveal.

In 1908 disquieting incidents multiplied. In January, Aehrenthal suddenly announced that the Sultan would

¹ Huldermann, *Ballin*, 220.

be asked to agree to the construction of an Austrian railway carrying the Austrian lines in Bosnia through the Sanjak of Novi-Bazar and linking them to the terminus of the Turkish line from Salonica at Mitrovitz.¹ This, he declared, "would lay the foundations for the further development of Austria-Hungary in the East." It was his reply (after prolonged consultation with the German foreign office) to the projected line from Serbia to the Adriatic. The Austrians had for thirty years had the right to place garrisons in the Sanjak, but because their troops there were so situated as to prevent communication between Serbia and Montenegro, any stabilisation of their position caused uneasiness in Serbia. The Russian government was alarmed, Italy was rendered suspicious, and the first result of Aehrenthal's proceedings was a great increase in tension in the Near East.

In England fresh turmoil was produced by the Kaiser's letter to Lord Tweedmouth, who at that date was first lord of the admiralty, and raised a storm of criticism by reducing the British programme of big ships to two—half the German programme for the year. The Kaiser, very foolishly and insincerely, in view of what we know from Tirpitz and other authorities, assured him that the German navy act was not aimed against England, and protested against the perpetual discussions of German naval strength, which, as has been seen, the half-hearted measures of the English government necessitated. "It is very galling," he wrote,² "for the Germans to see their country continually held up as the sole danger and menace to Britain by the whole press of the different parties: considering that other countries are building too."

The effect of the letter was distinctly harmful. Many Englishmen, noting that Tweedmouth was reducing the British navy in face of constant increases in the German programme, leaped to the conclusion that he was being duped by William II, and more than ever resented the German influence which they suspected to be at work everywhere in the background. Edward VII, who had been told by the Kaiser of his letter to Tweedmouth, replied³

¹ Grey, I, 213-4; *Grosse Politik*, xxv, 283 ff. A Sanjak is an administrative district: but "the Sanjak" was used in this period always with a special reference to the Novi-Bazar area.

² The letter is given in *Grosse Politik*, xxiv, 32-5.

³ *id.*, 36.

saying it was a "new departure," and that the admiralty could not "prevent our press from calling attention to the great increase in the building of German ships of war, which necessitates our increasing our navy also." Metternich remarked, in a despatch dealing with the letter and its result, that while the loss of a battle on the continent would not come anywhere near ending Germany, the loss of a battle in the North Sea meant the end of the British empire.¹

All that Metternich obtained by such representations was the Kaiser's decision that every opportunity must be seized to point out to the English that they were wrong in their ideas of the danger from the German fleet. William II himself incidentally stated that in the Dreadnought age it would not be easy for England to maintain the two-power standard. From Cassel the German foreign office learnt that Edward VII was really anxious about the naval position—as well he might be. The King, Cassel said,² knows that his nephew at heart hates war for its horrors, but even if in the years of his own life, which are now limited, no Anglo-German conflict breaks out, he must take care to leave to his son the British supremacy at sea, which he has inherited, so firmly established that the Kaiser's successor will not be able to challenge it.

In the summer Edward VII paid the Czar a visit at Reval.³ Hardinge, the English permanent under-secretary for foreign affairs, discussed with Isvolsky the ever-growing German naval armaments and their meaning; and the advice was given to Russia to strengthen her land army before reconstructing her fleet. Tirpitz had declared in 1904 that the "danger zone," (which would, as he admitted, be caused by the German naval projects), would be crossed in two years, and England would be brought to heel. But now four years had passed, and the "danger-zone" had not been crossed—on the contrary uneasiness in England, as Metternich's reports showed, was steadily increasing. Grey and Lloyd George told Metternich that as the German programme was executed, the British expenditure on the navy must rise and the sense of the menace from Germany must grow in intensity so that the relations of the two countries could not improve. William II paid no heed to their

¹ *id.*, 45.

² *id.*, xxiv, 53.

³ Grey, i, 210 ff.; Siebert, ii, 777 ff.; *Grosse Politik*, xxv, 459.

warnings, which he received with an outburst of passion, asserting that they contained a concealed threat. His final pronouncement was that "good relations with England are not desired at the price of the sacrifice of the fleet."¹ According to Conrad,² Bülow was prepared to resort to arms if England pressed her proposals for disarmament.

Edward VII, more and more alarmed at his nephew's vast naval projects and the unutterable misfortune with which they threatened both peoples, British and German, made one last effort. In August, 1908, he visited the Kaiser at Kronberg and discussed with him a naval agreement without any result being reached. Hardinge was sharply rebuffed by William II on pointing out to him the danger of an intense naval competition between England and Germany. Yet William II was not altogether comfortable. Tirpitz told him in September that he did not think it right to refuse bluntly any discussion of the naval programme.³ Tirpitz, however, was against any real disarmament.

Even after this rebuff Edward VII still persisted. He went from Germany to Ischl, where he had a long interview with Francis Joseph of Austria, who, among European sovereigns, was his oldest friend; and urged that Emperor to use his influence with William II in order to secure such a limitation of naval armaments as would diminish the friction between England and Germany. Francis Joseph refused, possibly because of the advice of Aehrenthal, who was irritated by the British attitude in the question of the rival Balkan railways. This interview was distorted by German suspicion into an attempt to detach Austria from the triple alliance—an attempt on the part of the man in whom, as Grey has said, "warm human kindness was of his very substance."⁴ Surely the truth was that one of his dominating motives was his desire to save his nephew from catastrophe, if it could be done. The English royal house had no reason whatever to wish mischief to the closely related house of Hohenzollern, to which it was bound by ties of friendship and marriage going back two centuries.

Hammann regards the failure of these efforts to stop the

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxiv, 104; Tirpitz, *Aufbau*, 85.

² Conrad, i, 95.

³ Tirpitz, *Aufbau*, 86. cf. Wolff who gives Bülow's view on the Ischl visit, which is not that Edward VII tried to break up the triple alliance (*Vorspiel*, 227).

⁴ Grey, i, 206.

race of naval armaments between England and Germany as one of the most fateful moments in the years before the war.¹ There can be no doubt that the German navy acts of 1898, 1900, 1906 and 1908, coming in quick succession—four acts in ten years—had alarmed all thinking men in England; and the alarm caused by the 1908 act was the greater because at The Hague England had offered to reduce her naval programme for 1907 to two ships, and had actually cut down her programme for 1908 to that figure, after the failure of the peace conference.

In July, 1908, the Balkans were suddenly disturbed by the Young Turk movement, which brought the speedy deposition of Abdul Hamid. The revolution was followed by a series of startling measures in the Balkans, carried out by Aehrenthal and Ferdinand of Bulgaria, the object of which was to meet any attempt of the Young Turks to recover power in Turkey's lost provinces. In late August Aehrenthal and Isvolsky met at Buchlau and there reached an understanding, according to which the *status quo* in Turkey was to be upheld by Russia and Austria; and neither would intervene without a previous agreement.² The definite annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria was mentioned, in return for Austrian support of the opening of the Bosphorus and for the withdrawal of the Austrian garrison from the Sanjak. But it seems fairly clear both from the oral and written evidence that the annexation of Bosnia was not to take place until Russian opinion had been prepared for it, and the consent of the great powers had been obtained in a conference.

Aehrenthal did not tell Isvolsky his secret purpose—that he meant to “clear out completely the revolutionary nest in Serbia.” But immediately after this meeting he suggested to Bulgaria that she should partition Serbia with him. Bulgaria, unwilling to break with Russia, refused. On October 5, 1908, Ferdinand proclaimed Bulgaria's independence of Turkey, and assumed the title of Czar. On October 6, Austria proclaimed the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.³ Isvolsky considered that he had been duped by

¹ *Missverständnisse Bismarck*, 157.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxvi, 26, 190 ff.; Lee, ii, 630-1, gives an account of the interview by Isvolsky, which presumably was sent to King Edward, and denies that Russia agreed to the Austrian action. Hardinge thought Isvolsky “a very unscrupulous and unreliable man.”

³ Steed, *Through Thirty Years*, i, 290-1.

Aehrenthal, and since the latter boasted to Dr. Kanner of having deceived him, Isvolsky's charge was probably true.¹ As the annexation was effected, it was a violation of the treaty of Berlin, though by various secret agreements of long standing certain of the powers and even Russia could be said to have consented to it. The German government appears to have encouraged Aehrenthal; he told the German foreign secretary, Schoen, well in advance what he proposed, including his plan for wiping out Serbia.² Schoen believed with him that the Russian bear “would growl but would not bite.”

The annexation annoyed the Italian government because it was an infraction of the seventh article in the triple alliance by which Austria promised to take no such action in the Balkans without consulting and compensating Italy. It menaced Serbia coming as it did after a violent campaign in Austria against the Southern Slavs and after the arrest of a number of Austrian Slavs for treason, which was followed some months later by their trial at Agram. It irritated the Russian government which felt that it had been tricked, and it alienated for a time the Young Turks. William II condemned it as “fearful stupidity.”³ The comment of Conrad, the Austrian chief of staff, was that the annexation had been carried out by Aehrenthal to obtain the title of count, so purposeless and foolish did this new departure in Austrian policy seem to that combative soldier. He was equally against the Sanjak railway, believing it impracticable.

Aehrenthal's secret purpose, however, was that of Conrad and Francis Ferdinand—completely to destroy Serbia or to incorporate her in Austria-Hungary, where the dualistic state would have become trialistic.⁴ It is true that Conrad declared Francis Ferdinand's policy was one of the closest co-operation with Germany⁵; and that William II assured the Czar a few weeks later that Austria would not attack Serbia and that Aehrenthal really harboured no such plans.⁶ But Aehrenthal was entirely untrustworthy; Edward VII said of him, “he is a poor man and not clever.”⁷ What

¹ Kanner, 82-3, gives an interesting account of Aehrenthal's manners and methods. cf. Goschen's remark (Lee, ii, 634) that Aehrenthal did not love the truth.

² Schoen, 78; *Grosse Politik*, xxvi, 28.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxvi, 112.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xxvi, 28.

⁵ *id.*, xxi, 395. Trialism was regarded as anti-German.

⁶ *id.*, xxvi, 391.

⁷ *id.*, xxiv, 122.

THE WAR GUILT

[1908]

he actually intended was to take drastic action against Serbia and he asked Berlin to see to it that no third power intervened.¹

Isvolsky, as Russian opinion was deeply offended by the way in which Bosnia had been annexed, called for a European conference to regularise the business. Neither Austria nor Germany would agree to this, since the military weakness of Russia, who had not then recovered from her Far Eastern defeats, was notorious. The aims of the Austrian war party were openly avowed in November, 1908, in an article published by the leading Austrian military periodical. It proposed a movement by 400,000 men through Serbia into Macedonia and the formation of a Jugo-Slav state in the Austrian empire, including Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, and Serbia. It further declared that "Serbia and Montenegro must disappear; it is impossible for us to avoid a conflict with these two countries and therefore we ought to invite and provoke it." Austria was urged to begin her march to Salonica and assert her hegemony in the Balkans.

In Morocco new difficulties had arisen in September, 1908, between France and Germany as the result of an incident at the Moorish port of Casablanca.² Certain deserters from the French foreign legion, three of whom were German by nationality, were seized by the French authorities as they were about to embark in a German ship with safe-conducts which had been illegally given them by the German consul. The German government demanded their release. For years a bitter German campaign had been directed against the foreign legion probably because so many Alsatians took service in it. French policy at this moment was in the firm hands of Clemenceau who met the German demands with complete calm. The dispute was ultimately submitted to arbitration, and the decision was that Germany on the main issue was in the wrong. A convention between Germany and France regarding Morocco was signed in 1909, by which France undertook to respect the commercial interests of Germany in that country and Germany in return undertook to respect French political interests there.

While this dispute was at its height the Kaiser published

¹ *id.*, xxvi, 607.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxiv, 330 ff.

1908]

THE KAISER'S INTERVIEW

his famous interview in the *Daily Telegraph* of October 28.¹ It began by stating that the English were "mad as March hares" because they did not believe in his friendship for them. It contained the grave and true confession that "the prevailing sentiment among large sections of the middle and lower classes of my people is not friendly to England. I am therefore, so to speak, in a minority in my own land." His Majesty went so far as to assert that in building her great fleet Germany was preparing for "eventualities in the Far East," and hinted that this fleet would be used against Japan. He charged Russia and France with trying to form a coalition against England in the Boer war. The interview, because of its tactlessness and clumsiness, aroused a storm of indignation in Germany, and led Bülow publicly to state in the Reichstag that the Emperor had been guilty of an indiscretion. The real responsibility rested with Bülow himself, to whom the interview had been referred before it was published for examination. He had passed it negligently, and now tried to place the blame on his master.

So severe was the censure of the public that the Kaiser wept, and thought for a time of abdicating; the foreign affairs committee of the Federal Council went so far as to consider whether it should recommend him to do so.² Bülow handed in his own resignation, but was induced to remain when the Kaiser promised thereafter to take no political step without consulting his chancellor. The Kaiser, however, was not unreasonably estranged from Bülow by the latter's mean treatment of him. He dismissed Bülow in 1909, replacing him by a diligent and pacifically-minded but dull bureaucrat, Bethmann-Hollweg.

Towards the close of 1908 Bülow made another effort to persuade Tirpitz to reduce his rate of building battle-ships, pointing out that if England did not take special measures, Germany would have thirteen Dreadnoughts and England only twelve in 1911.³ He suggested increased expenditure on submarines and mines and changes in the rate of building—laying down three Dreadnoughts instead of four a year, but not altering the ultimate number to be attained. Tirpitz would have none of these modifications.

¹ *id.*, 170-4.

² Schoen, 108.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxviii, 40. cf. Wolff, 235-6.

THE WAR GUILT

[1908]

He proclaimed that the "danger-zone" would be passed in 1915. He was convinced—or said he was—that the financial resources of England would not permit her to maintain a British fleet on the old two-power standard of strength. His secret hope was quite obviously to wear England down, and then to wrest from a weak British navy the command of the sea. Like a warning bell came another of Metternich's reports from London, which told the Kaiser "the alternatives are: limit your armaments or have war."¹ But Metternich added that no national German aims were to be served by war.

This was the moment when information from several sources reached the British government that Germany was accelerating the construction of her battle fleet, and, in advance of her programme, had ordered material for four Dreadnoughts (which by that programme were not to be laid down till April, 1909); or had even begun their construction. A friend of McKenna (who had succeeded Tweedmouth as first lord of the admiralty) stated that he had actually seen the keel of one of these ships laid at the Schichau works, in 1908.² The vessel was apparently the *Oldenburg*. Additional information came from Argentine officers who had no bias. The British government was also warned from other quarters, and received definite and detailed information that Germany was now able to build as fast as England, and was superior in equipment for the construction of heavy gun mountings. How marked the German superiority was in the matter of gun output the war was soon to show.

The German programmes which Fisher had described as merely "paper" ones were now seen to be stern realities. King Edward was under no illusions. He understood that a life-and-death contest for England had opened, and used all his influence (which was great) for an adequate and immediate strengthening of the navy. He was warned by Clemenceau of the risk that the German war party would decide to fall upon France, and the consequent need for strengthening the British army as well. But in this matter he could not dispel his ministers' blindness. They were deceived because they wanted to be deceived, and hoped the deluge would not come in their time.

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxviii, 75.

² *id.*, 425.

1909]

SERBIA'S PERIL

All through these stormy weeks, risk of an explosion in the Balkans continued, while the Austrian and Russian armies watched one another across the Galician frontier—the Russian army very short of munitions.¹ An Austrian attack on Serbia was daily expected.² The Serbian government, however, was warned by the triple entente not to commit suicide by allowing itself to be provoked into a struggle for which it was plainly told that Russia was ill prepared; it was also informed that Germany might seize the opportunity to fall upon Russia. What Aehrenthal was meditating was revealed in a letter to Bülow.³ He meant, after assuring the triple entente that the independence and integrity of Montenegro and Serbia were not to be affected, to summon Serbia to demobilise, and take military action so swiftly that the other powers and the triple entente would not have time to intervene. Both England and France were against war, but both were anxious to support Serbia in her claim for compensation, provided she was reasonable. The tension was extreme. Fifty-eight Austrian Slavs were in prison at Agram under the charge of treason—as it afterwards proved indicted on forged evidence and were to be shot if war had come. The Austrian war party called in February, 1909, in its periodical for an operation on "the purulent abscess" which, according to it, "that artificial creation, the kingdom of Serbia represents." On March 25, 1909, Metternich in London threatened Grey with war, but found Grey was not to be intimidated into abandoning Serbia.⁴

On March 29, 1909, the Russian government, in view of appeals from France and England, finally decided that war was out of the question with an army shaken by the defeats in the Far East and weakened by revolutionary propaganda. On March 22, it had received what the German foreign minister of that date described as a "very energetic communication,"⁵ and what other people called an ultimatum, from Germany, stating that she would support Austria with all her forces if Russia did not yield. Preparations were

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxvi, 407.

² *cf.* Siebert, i, 72.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxvi, 283.

⁴ Lee, ii, 647; *Grosse Politik*, xxvi, 707-8.

⁵ *Grosse Politik*, xxvi, 693-5; Schoen, 108; Siebert, i, 104-5; Szilassy (251-2) maintains that the German action was desired and invited by the Czar.

being made for a German summons to France.¹ Thus there was in fact a dress rehearsal of the final terrible act of 1914.²

Serbia was to be called upon to demobilise and to make a humiliating declaration that she not only regarded her agitation against the annexation of Bosnia as wrong, but that also in the future she would suppress all such irredentist movements. This declaration was to be conveyed to her in "a note with a time limit," and if she did not make it word for word, as it had been drawn up for her by Aehrenthal, war was immediately to follow. The time limit was to expire on March 24, 1909, and that evening warlike articles were prepared for the Austrian press, one of which actually appeared in the *Neue Freie Presse* for March 25, though Serbia, on the advice of Russia, submitted humbly to the Austrian threat. The Serbian reserves were dismissed; the Sanjak was returned to Turkey; and the crisis appeared to be over.

Germany's action was afterwards described by William II as the appearance of the German Michael in shining armour. Good Austrian opinion regarded Aehrenthal's policy as fatuous. Andrassy³ points out that he had torn up a treaty in order to lose the Sanjak, alienate Russia, and intensify Serbian enmity. Down to this fatal period Austria had generally been regarded as a conservative state, working sincerely for peace. From 1908-09 Austrian policy in the hands of Aehrenthal and Conrad became turbulent and aggressive—so aggressive that hints were given to Vienna from Berlin to be more cautious. Austria, from being a "saturated state," began to aim at predominance in the Balkans,⁴ and to aspire to an ultimate inheritance in Asia Minor, side by side with Germany. Her attitude was closely connected with the advance of William II's Baghdad railway. If she was to carry out the schemes of expansion which she appeared to have in view, she must crush Serbia. But, as Bismarck had told William II twenty years earlier, it is not easy to crush a national European state.

In February, 1909, Edward VII whose health was already beginning to fail, paid a visit to Berlin, but the naval question

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxvi, 623-4.

² Kanner, 62 ff.

³ *Diplomatie und Weltkrieg*, 45. William II's comments at the time were not more flattering.

⁴ cf. Brandenburg, 272.

was only cursorily mentioned. William II put words in his uncle's mouth, however, which do not agree with what is known from other sources of Edward VII's attitude.¹ British ministers who accompanied the King stated quite clearly that, as "the existence and future of the British empire depended on its strength at sea, England must take the necessary measures for her security"; and shortly after Edward's return to London a battle royal over the strengthening of the British navy began. The admiralty, in view of the rapid increase in the German fleet, had taken no very energetic steps. It asked only for a programme of six² Dreadnoughts, so that the total number of large ships laid down by England and Germany in the two years 1908, 1909, would have stood at eight apiece—a bare equality which must have made Tirpitz smile because it made no provision whatever for a British margin of superiority.

Even this restricted programme was violently opposed by a section of the cabinet, including Lloyd George and Churchill, which, though entirely ignorant of naval affairs, insisted that four big ships would be enough. In the end, a curious compromise was reached. Four big ships only formed the definite programme, but it was announced that four additional ships might have to be sanctioned in view of "certain circumstances," which, it soon turned out, were the reported secret acceleration of the German programme and the continued rapid progress of the German navy act.

This compromise had unfortunate results. In their grave and legitimate anxiety for the superiority of the British navy—which was admittedly a matter of life and death—the supporters of the two-power standard had once more to warn the British public in a prolonged press campaign, of the enormous German naval preparations, and the barely disguised hostility of large sections of the German people. The four extra ships were afterwards laid down, and upon them the British margin of superiority in the North Sea depended at the outbreak of war. But the naval campaign of 1909 was a fresh cause of antagonism between England and Germany, while the fluctuating British programmes encouraged the war party in Germany to renewed efforts.

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxviii, 86. The King may have used them from his wish at such a moment to avoid disagreeable disputes. But no reliance can be placed on the Kaiser's accuracy or memory.

² To be followed by programmes of six in 1910 and 1911.

THE WAR GUILT

[1909]

For a second year in succession the British vote for new construction was only slightly above the German (£11,076,000 against £10,177,000). The provision by Australia and New Zealand of two Dreadnoughts in 1909 to some extent remedied the mischief caused by the small programmes of 1906-8. Just at a moment when the country's whole attention should have been concentrated on the menace from without, the budget of 1909 was introduced, and provoked an internal crisis which may be said to have continued till the war began.

Evidence of the humiliation which Austria had inflicted on the Czar was given when in the autumn of 1909 he visited the King of Italy at Racconigi. He made a wide circuit to avoid passing through Austrian territory. The intimacy between Russia and Italy which followed this visit was not agreeable to the German powers; and Conrad was pressing Aehrenthal for measures against the Italians. An agreement between the two powers, Russia and Italy, was concluded by which the *status quo* in the Balkans was to be maintained as long as possible; if Turkey were partitioned it must be among the existing Balkan states according to the principle of nationality, and no foreign domination was to be admitted.¹ Italy's claim to Tripoli was recognised, as were Russia's interests in the opening of the Dardanelles. Both powers agreed to oppose the acquisition of territory in the Balkans by a third power, having Austria in view. In December, 1909, an agreement was concluded between Austria and Italy by which Austria renounced her right to occupy the Sanjak, and promised if she had to occupy it temporarily or permanently, only to do so after a preliminary understanding with Italy.² This treaty was in force on the outbreak of war, and affected Italy's policy and Austria's plans. In the same month Russia concluded a secret treaty of alliance—defensive and offensive—with Bulgaria,³ which stated in article 5 that Slav ambitions could only be completely realised as the result of a successful war with Germany and Austria.

In 1909 a new code of law for naval war was drawn up for the use of the international prize court which it was intended to establish at The Hague. The code was prepared

¹ Stieve, ii, 363-4. ² Pribram, i, 99-100.
³ Bogitshevich, 115 ff.

1909] DECLARATION OF LONDON

by the representatives of the ten chief maritime powers, and was known as the Declaration of London. In the main it represented German ideas and wishes, and was for that reason regarded in England with not unnatural doubt. One hundred and thirty-eight British admirals protested against it as perilous to the nation. Its great defect was that it limited, or indeed practically destroyed, the British power of blockading an enemy's coast line. It secured Germany's food supply while at the same time it imperilled British food. But here again Germany was not really the culprit; the offender was the pacifist British government which, in its desire to disarm German animosity, was ready to remove the points from the British trident. An independent neutral authority, the Danish Professor Hovgaard, declared that the new rules were "as favourable to Germany as they were unfavourable to England."

Regarding this unlucky code a violent controversy began, and into this inevitably the strength of the German navy was dragged. The British government had acted from the most amiable of motives, but many felt that it would have been wiser had it shown a little less cosmopolitan emotion and a little more concern for vital British interests. Some people even suspected hidden German influences at work, remembering the Kaiser's letter to Tweedmouth. The anxiety caused by the Declaration in England continued for years, until the campaign against it secured its rejection by the House of Lords in 1911. Had it been ratified it is doubtful whether the war could have been won.

The turmoil generated by the bitterly partisan budget of 1909 absorbed the public mind in England, and though in the general election of 1910 the naval issue played some considerable part, the Liberals were returned to office, if in diminished numbers. Early in 1910 Edward VII died at the moment when perhaps his country had sorest need of his influence and his wisdom. There was about this time some improvement in the relations between the entente and the German powers. The Kaiser was present in London for his uncle's funeral, and had a friendly reception. This was important, as with him personal considerations weighed no little.

The Czar visited William II at Potsdam in November, 1910, with his new foreign minister, Sazonov, who had

replaced Isvolsky in the previous September and was regarded as a supporter of more intimate relations with Germany.¹ Captain Hintze, however, the German military representative at St. Petersburg, constantly reported that Russia meant war with Germany, and was preparing for war, and the Kaiser noted in 1910, with some bitterness, that six new Russian army corps were being formed. In Berlin Sazonov explicitly announced his desire for a better understanding, and told Bethmann Hollweg that, if England adopted an anti-German policy, he would not support her.² The Kaiser informed Francis Joseph that he was convinced the Czar was sincerely working for the maintenance of peace. Earlier in the year the Czar had agreed to the dismantling of the most important Polish fortresses, and a general movement of Russian troops eastwards had taken place—probably because the ultimatum of 1909 had shown that Russian forces in Poland, unless they were of very great strength, were liable to be cut off and destroyed by a joint Austro-German attack, such as Conrad meditated in 1914. In France these movements were ascribed to German influence and caused great anxiety, as the French staff feared that, because of them, Russian support would not be forthcoming with speed in the event of a German attack on France.³ They appear to have been really due to Russian military considerations, but they supplied further evidence of the weak Russian position. The Czar accepted an agreement by which the Russian railway system, projected in Persia, was to be linked to the Baghdad line.

From the end of 1908 onwards, through the treachery of an official in the Russian embassy in London, the German government secured copies of many of the secret Russian diplomatic documents, and therefore knew the inner purposes of Russian diplomacy. These documents were translated by Professor Schiemann, and were disclosed only to the chancellor, the foreign secretary, and the foreign under-secretary in Berlin.⁴ Not even the Kaiser was trusted with them. The German government therefore knew the cards in the hands of Russia, and to a great extent

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxvii, 829.

² *id.*, 836.

³ Stieve, i, 139.

⁴ Valentin, 145. The British foreign office suspected leakages in London: v. Siebert, i, 373-4.

of France and England as well, while the entente powers had no such advantage.¹ The net effect of this knowledge was to encourage the suspicious habits which Holstein had ingrained, and to lead German statesmen more than ever to distrust the entente powers—often without reason.

In England, Fisher retired in 1910 as the result of the unsatisfactory war plans of the navy. He was replaced by Sir A. K. Wilson, who abstained from foolish threats against Germany, but did not show any great energy in his naval policy. Bethmann Hollweg was busy trying to negotiate an Anglo-German agreement, but, as Bülow before him had done, always found Tirpitz in his way, and Tirpitz was now ably seconded in mischief-making by Commander Widenmann, the German naval attaché in London. Metternich bitterly complained of Widenmann maintaining that he exaggerated, and seized on untrustworthy information to stir up the Kaiser and Tirpitz.

¹ A few German telegrams in 1910-1911 were read by the French, who at that date had the secret of the German cipher. After 1911 the cipher was altered.

CHAPTER V

ON THE EVE OF THE GREAT WAR

At the close of 1910, the last year of peace which Europe was to know for more than a decade,¹ the Kaiser stood in a position of peculiar strength. Edward VII, whom he had long regarded as the formidable enemy of Germany, was dead. King George V was reported by German diplomatists in England to have little of his father's sympathy for France.² Through its secret sources of information, however, the German foreign office knew he had told Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador in London, that he should strive to maintain friendly and intimate relations between England and Russia.³ The relations of the entente powers were not altogether satisfactory at that moment. The Potsdam agreement and the Russian attitude in Persia seemed to many in France and England to indicate a weakening in the understanding between Russia on the one side and France and England on the other. If the alliance between France and Russia could be broken up by German diplomacy, France would be left isolated on the continent, and the risk of an attack on her would become extremely serious. Or, again, if England and France could be forced apart while Russia was still relatively weak, there would be nothing to prevent William II dominating the continent as Napoleon had done. And always in the background was the spectre of the German navy—growing, growing incessantly, and growing—for what?

In England, as the political crisis which followed the budget of 1909 developed, gigantic obligations had been incurred for schemes of social reform, rendering it more

¹ 1911-12, war between Italy and Turkey; 1912-13, Balkan wars; 1914-18 the Great War; 1918-20, Russian civil war; 1920-2, Græco-Turkish war.
² Cf. *Grosse Politik*, xxix, 244 ff., though this is after Agadir.
³ Siebert, ii, 781.

1910-11] AUSTRIAN DREADNOUGHTS

than ever difficult for the British government to reply to the German naval armaments. The Russian fleet was being reconstructed, but very slowly. German trade and industry were rising by leaps and bounds, and the German revenue was increasing so fast that the cost of the growing German armaments was easily borne.¹ In accordance with the understanding between the Austrian and German navies, Austria had in 1910 adopted a programme involving the construction of four Dreadnoughts, bringing up to sixteen the number laid down by the two allies between 1908 and 1910, against only seventeen² in England. German pressure had been applied to Holland with such success that the Dutch government was fortifying the entrance to the Scheldt, which would effectually prevent the despatch of British troops to Antwerp, if Belgian neutrality were violated. Meanwhile the Dutch system of works which gave security against a German invasion was allowed to fall into disrepair. In Sweden, German influence was gaining ground, and it was thought in St. Petersburg that a Swedish attack on Finland would accompany the outbreak of any war.³

So impartial a judge as the United States admiral, Mahan, with a clear eye on the weakness and rottenness of Russia, declared that the balance of power in Europe had disappeared and that Germany and Austria were already dominant. In March, 1911, a new law raised the effectives of the German army well above the French strength.⁴ Early in 1911 the British government once more proposed to Germany a treaty of arbitration, and an agreement to limit naval armaments; but the German condition was that the basis of any limitation should be the construction by Germany of three ships to each British four (which would have rendered the defeat of the British navy in any war highly probable), or that, if a ratio of three British to two German were adopted, Dominion ships should be included in the British figures. Proposals for the interchange of naval information came to nothing. The German naval extremists were encouraged to fresh efforts by an incautious reference of Grey, to

¹ cf. Kühlmann's able memorandum in *Grosse Politik*, xxxi, 87, which seems to me the literal truth.

² 19, if the Australian and New Zealand ships are added.

³ Stieve, ii, 183; iii, 274.

⁴ Poincaré, iii, 144.

the risk of England and Germany "bleeding to death in peace" from their expenditure on armaments. This led Widenmann to calculate that England would have to spend £189,000,000 on capital ships to answer Germany,¹ which would be beyond her power. In 1911 the British admiralty began the construction of two additional docks at Rosyth—another indication that a German naval war was dreaded.

In France, early in 1911, a ministry took office with Caillaux as its prime minister. He was well known as an advocate of friendly relations with Germany; and if Delcassé (the German bugbear) figured in this government it was as minister of the navy—a department where he would have nothing to do with foreign policy. The German foreign office since 1910 had been in the hands of Kiderlen-Wächter, a jovial South German with a great reputation as a diplomatist. Not unamiable in character, though thoroughly distrusted by the Kaiser, the recklessness of his temper made him an extraordinarily dangerous influence, but, except in the Morocco affair, he seems to have sincerely laboured for peace. He disliked Tirpitz, upon whose navy schemes he looked with suspicion. It is probable that from the date of his advent to office he had been meditating some blow against France in the Bismarckian or Holstein style; it was a saying of his that in the event of a conflict between England and Germany, France would have to pay the bill.

In May William II visited England for the last time, for the unveiling of the monument to Queen Victoria. The London crowd, despite the menace of the German navy acts, received him enthusiastically, which may have led him to misunderstand the British attitude.² He did not shrink from using threatening language to British friends, telling those he met that Germany's sword was sharp, and he brought with him in his train to Windsor the German secret agent and master spy Steinhauer, of whose activities the British secret service detected signs in many directions—in both countries cases of espionage were occurring. William II's words and Steinhauer's disturbing presence were thought by people who knew German methods to point to the imminence of some fresh German move. That

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxviii, 397.

² cf. Steed, *Through Thirty Years*, i, 342.

the Kaiser was aware of the exact manœuvre which his ministers purposed is, however, improbable.

In April, 1911, because of a serious insurrection in Morocco and an appeal from the Sultan of that country, the French government despatched a force to Fez, to occupy the city temporarily and restore order. Rumours were current in Berlin,¹ even before the Kaiser left, that some grave event was impending; and it subsequently appeared that Kiderlen-Wächter with Zimmermann, the foreign under-secretary, had conceived the idea of attempting at this juncture to secure from France southern Morocco, and for that purpose wanted to send German warships to its ports. They argued that Morocco was in peril of becoming a French province, which was contrary to the Act of Algeciras and the agreement signed with France in 1909, and that Germany had the right to demand compensation. The Kaiser, evidently ignorant of this scheme, on April 22 warned Bethmann-Hollweg to resist any demands for the despatch of warships to the Morocco coast², but Bethmann was afterwards won over by Kiderlen.

To George V, the Kaiser, during his English visit, mentioned the situation in Morocco, and, after stating that he would never go to war with France for that country, went on to speak of a possible demand for compensation from her, but said that this would take the form of territorial concessions³ on the frontier of Germany's African colonies. As Germany had no colonies near Morocco his words ruled out any compensation in North Africa. The fact was that the Kaiser and his foreign minister were engaged in different policies, an example of the dualism which caused such harm to German interests. On May 9, a report on the Berlin bourse that three German cruisers were about to be sent to Morocco waters was officially contradicted, and treated by Kiderlen as "criminal."⁴

On May 21 a considerable French force arrived at Fez, and on June 10 the Spanish government sent Spanish troops and a warship to Larasch, a port within the Spanish zone of Morocco. This news seems to have stirred up the forward

¹ I heard them from a neutral diplomatist in London. Isvolsky expected trouble; cf. Stieve, i, 75-6.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxix, 89.

³ *id.*, 120.

⁴ Tardieu, *Agadir*, 389.

party in Berlin. On June 12 Zimmermann prepared a long memorandum proposing, if France did not make an acceptable offer, to secure the southern portion of Morocco as compensation for Germany.¹ He expected England to support France, but thought that France would give way. He advocated sending four German cruisers to Mogador and Agadir, two to each port, and only informing the French and Spanish governments of this move twenty-four hours before the vessels were due to arrive.

The same day the German Crown Prince remarked to Cambon, the French ambassador in Berlin, "Morocco is a nice acquisition of yours, but there will be no objection to your taking it; you will give us our share and everything will be settled." On June 21 Kiderlen-Wächter had a talk with Cambon at Kissingen in which he pointedly asked for compensation with the words: "Bring us something from Paris," and hinted at a cession of territory in the Congo region but said it must be something big.² The French government, however, made no move. Kiderlen thereupon induced the Kaiser to agree to the despatch of German warships to the Morocco coast, but only one happened to be available, the gunboat *Panther*, and she was ordered to Agadir.

The German claim to compensation was not regarded by Grey as unreasonable, provided excessive demands were not made.³ The British government gave France a free hand so far as it was concerned, and was prepared for French concessions in Morocco, so long as the German navy did not secure a base there, which would have been dangerous to British national interests. In the event of excessive demands being made by Germany, England was ready to support France. Kiderlen's gunman methods, however, aroused no little alarm when on July 1 the *Panther* anchored at Agadir. The general belief in Europe was that he meant to force France to choose between war or a humiliating surrender, which would have broken up the entente. And it is now known that he was quite ready to precipitate a European conflict if France did not give way and hand over to him either a stretch of territory in west Morocco or her

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxix, 146. According to Caillaux Rouvier offered Germany Mogador in November, 1905.

² The Rouvier government in 1905 had suggested compensation in the Congo zone. *id.*, xxi, 21.

³ Grey, i, 220.

whole Congo colony. He told Bethmann that the French must believe he meant war if they did not yield, as otherwise he could not get what he wanted.¹

On July 4 Grey, who was uneasy at the look of things, informed the German ambassador that England would fulfil her treaty obligations to France, and tried to discover what exactly Kiderlen desired to obtain by this Agadir business.² His action led Kiderlen to abandon the idea of requiring compensation in Morocco, but brought no information from Berlin. When seventeen days of silence had elapsed without any answer from Kiderlen, Lloyd George, who was well known as the chief pacifist in the British cabinet and the antagonist of the two-power naval standard, rendered anxious by the German attitude, proposed to Grey to give Germany a public warning in a speech that he was delivering at the Mansion House on July 21.

The warning had been prepared by himself; it was approved by Grey and duly given.³ It informed Germany that peace at the price of national humiliation would not be endured by England. It was precisely such a warning as the British government did not give in 1914. Its effect was to convince the German people that, if German statesmen picked a quarrel with France, British armed support would be granted to France. It cleared the air, even though its directness roused a storm of indignation in Germany, and it possibly preserved peace.

The German government hesitated, yet after the speech it sent to Grey a communication, "so stiff that the First fleet might be attacked at any moment."⁴ The British government in alarm took measures to secure the British navy against any sudden onslaught. The German authorities do not appear to have meditated such a step, but the directive for the German navy in 1911 was to attack at once with the whole High Sea fleet in the North Sea.⁵ There was, then, full justification for British precautions which were all the more necessary in view of the deplorable British weakness on land, and the careless fashion in which the home strength of the British fleet had been scattered. Had

¹ Brandenburg, 335; Jäckh, ii, 83, 129.

² Grey, i, 222.

³ Grey, i, 225.

⁴ Churchill, *World Crisis*, i, 48; *Grosse Politik*, xxix, 212-4.

⁵ Tirpitz, *Deutsche Ohnmachtspolitik*, 37.

THE WAR GUILT

[1911]

Germany attacked, there was risk that the British navy might have been defeated in detail, and its ships were also short of coal. The German naval attaché in London, Widenmann, reported that the British fleet had mobilised,¹ but Metternich pointed out that he was quite wrong. Defensive measures only were taken, and there was nothing even remotely resembling a mobilisation.

Still, the danger of war had not entirely passed. The British military authorities in this crisis consulted with the French staff as to the possible despatch of British troops to France, and the Committee of Imperial Defence was instructed by the cabinet to study the problem of continental operations in the event of war. But nothing was done to strengthen the British army, though its weakness aggravated the naval menace from Germany; and, had it been organised for a continental war, peace might perhaps have been maintained² indefinitely. The need for a British military reorganisation was all the greater because of suspicions that Germany would violate Belgian neutrality in order to attack France, and this strategy would necessitate immediate British aid to Belgium and France in strong force. One result of the discoveries as to naval unreadiness made by the British government at this juncture, was that Churchill was appointed to the admiralty, so soon as the crisis was over, with the mission to establish a naval war staff and secure more effective preparations.

The crisis was still acute when a great dockers' strike broke out in London. Whenever there was action by Germany which threatened or seemed to threaten war, the revolutionists in England got to work. As the peril grew, as German movements towards the French frontier were reported (rightly or wrongly), and as the French covering troops began to take up their position, a great railway strike began in England. On August 16, Asquith, realising all that was at stake, took effective action to stop the strike. He convened the Labour leaders and informed them of the peril from Germany; he also warned the railway managers, and because of the national emergency secured an agreement. Neither party to this industrial dispute was

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxxi, 19 ff. The fact was that the British measures were by no means adequate or satisfactory.

² cf. the King of Rumania's advice in August, 1911, Steed, i, 349.

1911] FRESH GERMAN PROGRAMME

ready to wreck the country and perhaps precipitate a war. The news of the settlement was probably one of the factors which deterred the German war party from going to extremes.

The Kaiser complained, not unjustly, that Kiderlen's clumsiness had brought back the days of the Kruger telegram. It had strengthened the bonds which linked the entente powers¹, deeply wounded France, and even aroused Austrian criticism. Aehrenthal permitted the Vienna newspapers to express sympathy with France and one of his ministers to announce that Austria was not bound by the triple alliance in Morocco.² In the end, a settlement was reached after further alarms and excursions in a treaty, by which France surrendered to Germany as compensation over 100,000 square miles in the Congo region. The irritation in Germany at so meagre a result was extreme, and was mainly directed against England. The Kaiser and Tirpitz decided to use the occasion for yet another navy bill, the fifth which the German government had brought forward in fourteen years. On August 27, 1911, William II made a speech in which there was the customary note of menace, and proclaimed his intention of creating such a fleet that "no one will be able to challenge the place in the sun which should rightfully be ours."³

The gigantic character of the German naval armaments can be understood from this, that the previous navy acts provided for a force of fifty-eight battleships and battle cruisers, each automatically replaced after a life of twenty years. Tirpitz and the Kaiser, though they had repeatedly declared that the number of ships fixed by the original draft of the navy act of 1900⁴ (fifty-eight large armoured ships) would not be increased, now proposed to add no fewer than six large armoured ships (three battleships and three battle cruisers) besides small craft. Three of these ships were afterwards struck off through Bethmann Hollweg's and Kiderlen's opposition,⁵ leaving a total of sixty-one as the

¹ Isvolsky's attitude in the crisis, however, was enigmatic, perhaps in retaliation for the French attitude in 1909. (cf. Poincaré, i, 295 ff.)

² Kanner, 74-5. But Poincaré (i, 240) states that Aehrenthal's policy was not friendly to France.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxxi, 3.

⁴ The act, as passed, provided only fifty-two large armoured ships: six were added subsequently.

⁵ Tirpitz, *Aufbau*, 268, 276.

strength of large ships fixed for the German navy in the future. But the most important change was that, as the new bill was carried out, more than half this enormous force was to be massed permanently in commission in the North Sea with full crews, ready to strike—namely thirty-seven battleships and battle cruisers. On the eve of war the British navy only possessed thirty-five¹ such ships in commission with full crews throughout the world; at Jutland the British total of Dreadnoughts was thirty-seven², or exactly the figure that the German fleet in the North Sea was to attain in peace.

Special provision was made for the mobilisation of the reserve ships with extraordinary speed. What the bill meant, in fact, was that the new German navy, as its units were completed, was to be permanently mobilised, and held on a war footing, in the North Sea, able instantly to attack. When Fisher indulged in his talk of "Copenhagening the German fleet" there was no enormous British naval force massed close at hand to Kiel to carry out such a scheme. But henceforth close to British shores, only one day's easy steam from the mouth of the Thames, a fleet would be stationed which, if every conceivable precaution were not taken by the British government, and if a much superior number of ships were not constructed by that government, could be certain of dealing a deadly blow to the British empire. Behind that fleet, too, was the strongest army in the world. The German navy could attack at its selected moment, as Churchill pointed out, while the British fleet would have to face such attack at its average³ or perhaps even its weakest moment. And just before the bill was brought forward a German Fisher, in the form of Admiral Stiege, declared in the German Navy League periodical, *Ueberall*, that, if there were any more Lloyd George speeches, the German fleet would attack without warning. Metternich was rendered more than ever uneasy by such transparently aggressive schemes of naval expansion, and reported yet again, almost for the last time from London, that "a violent explosion" would be inevitable if the race of naval armaments were not checked.

¹ Of which three were in the Mediterranean, leaving thirty-two in home waters.

² The German total Dreadnought strength at the date of Jutland was twenty-two.

³ At Jutland of the total completed Dreadnought force, the British had four ships absent and the Germans only one refitting or detached.

The basis of all the plans was the secret belief of both the Kaiser and Tirpitz, advised by Widenmann,¹ that the British government could not and would not reply. Widenmann treated as "bluff" Churchill's declarations that if foreign navies were further increased, the ratio of British superiority would be raised. If at this critical moment the British government had acted, instead of arguing, the naval race might possibly have been stopped, for then it would at once have been proved that Churchill was not "bluffing." Widenmann dwelt with great satisfaction on the anxiety caused in England by the increase in the fleets of Austria and Italy, both of which powers were in the triple alliance, and pointed out that British Dreadnoughts would probably have to be sent to the Mediterranean² from the North Sea.

Thus, whatever official assurances proceeded from Berlin, it was a fact that the German navy was becoming a most serious menace to the safety of the British empire; but it was also a fact that much of the danger was due to the hesitations of the British government, which, instead of building an adequate fleet, spent its time trying to persuade the Kaiser and Tirpitz to cut down the programme established in their navy acts. The more it talked, the more they doubted its resolution. They accepted the reports of Widenmann as gospel truth, and refused to listen to Metternich's warning against the spirit of "hatred and suspicion" which Widenmann breathed.³ Bethmann had neither the energy nor the foresight required to resist the naval extremists and the growing strength of the chauvinists throughout Germany.

Henceforth over England was to be suspended the sword of Damocles, in the form of this huge fleet in the North Sea, controlled by the most reckless statesmen and the most impulsive sovereign that Europe had known for generations, and backed by an overwhelming army. As France had ceaselessly to keep her eyes fixed on the artificial line that marked her eastern frontier, across which at any moment the German legions might pour, so had England henceforward to watch untiringly that tract of shallow and difficult coast from Emden to the Elbe, from which at any hour the German fleet might deploy. More definitely, more indissolubly than

¹ cf. *Grosse Politik*, xxxi, 170-2.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxxi, 199.

³ id., 60-1.

THE WAR GUILT

[1911

ever England and France were forced together by a common danger, threatening them both. If they allowed themselves to be parted, it might be national death to one or both. They must stand side by side; they must support one another; they must pray for peace, but their only hope of maintaining it was incessantly to abide prepared for war, on guard, ready at the shortest notice. It is this fact which explains English policy in the short years that remained before the misery of general war was let loose on the world; it is also this fact which explains the military measures taken in France. And because the safety of France depended largely on the ability of Russia to hold a considerable part of the German forces in the east, France and England were compelled in any real emergency to support Russia.

The German naval proposals caused uneasiness in Russia, whose Baltic seaboard was greatly exposed to naval attack, and a naval programme, involving the expenditure of £80,000,000 on ship construction between 1913 and 1917, was at once considered and a little later adopted. On land the German staff called for five additional army corps, a large increase in effectives and reserves, and a special expenditure of £44,000,000 spread over a term of six years. Three of the five army corps were struck off because of financial difficulties, but the rest of these special measures were accepted in 1912.

Immediately the Agadir question was settled, Italy, alarmed by vague reports that various powers had designs on Tripoli,¹ landed troops in that Turkish province, which by various treaties and understandings she had asserted her claim to occupy. She struck almost without warning, but she had long-standing grievances which the Sultan was powerless to redress. The move was highly distasteful to Germany and Austria; to Germany because Turkey was one of her dependencies since Enver Pasha, the Young Turk leader, had been brought safely into the German fold; to Austria, because of her deep-seated distrust of Italy, and because of Italy's new friendship with Russia. Under the seventh article of the triple alliance,² stipulating that neither Italy nor Austria should take action in the Adriatic, Ægean, or Balkans, without consulting the other and providing compensation, Austria prevented Italy from bombarding

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxx, 34.

² Pribram, i, 94.

1911-12] ITALY SEIZES TRIPOLI

various Turkish ports, and protested when the Italian fleet appeared off the Dardanelles in April, 1912.¹

After Italy's occupation of the Dodekanese (a group of Turkish islands in the Ægean) there were fresh signs of Austrian irritation, though the Italian government gave assurances that the occupation would be only temporary. At that date Aehrenthal's health was failing, and both he and Francis Joseph had decided against a preventive war. In November, 1911, Conrad, the Austrian chief of staff, who had for so many years been pressing for an immediate attack on Serbia or Italy or both combined, was removed from his post.² He was recalled in December, 1912.

So far as Russia and Germany were concerned, the tension between them was reduced by a German promise in December, 1911, not to oppose the opening of the Dardanelles to Russian warships.³ This had long been a question of special importance to Russia, and it was rendered acute by Turkey's action during the war with Italy when the passage of merchant shipping was from time to time stopped. Italy at Racconigi had promised support of Russian interests in this matter; England had accepted the Russian scheme in principle, but discouraged action, while Turkey was at war and without Turkey's assent. Germany's promise of support was dependent on Turkey's agreement to the Russian proposal, but the Sultan's consent could not be secured, probably because Austrian influence was exerted against any such change, to which Austria had nominally agreed, subject to certain conditions.⁴ No doubt, also, German statesmen learnt with satisfaction of Isvolsky's manœuvres in Paris, and the difficulties which were arising in Persia between England and Russia. The winter of 1911-12 was an anxious period, rendered doubly anxious for England by the outburst of anglophobia in Germany which had followed the German government's retreat in Morocco. The German Crown Prince made himself specially conspicuous by applauding the threatening speech of a leading Pan-German who declared in the Reichstag, with reference to England, that "all now know where the

¹ *Documents diplomatiques échangées entre l'Italie et l'Autriche-Hongrie* (1915), 6-7.

² Auffenberg, 172; cf. Wolff, 285.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxx, 203, 251; *Livre Noir*, ii, 458ff.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xxx, 208.

THE WAR GUILT

[1911-12]

real enemy is to be found."¹ It was said that the word "poltroon" had been used of his father by the Prince. The suggestion was heard once more that the Kaiser ought to abdicate. Tales were circulated, without the smallest foundation of fact, that the British fleet had prepared to attack Germany without declaration of war.² So violent was the storm and so severe the pressure of German sympathisers in the British Liberal party that the British government determined on yet another effort to restore friendly relations with Germany. The German shipowner, Ballin, suggested that an English minister should go to Berlin and discuss a naval understanding. Lord Haldane accordingly visited the German capital on February 8, 1912.³

In Berlin, Haldane received a proposal from the German government that England should bind herself to observe neutrality in any war in which Germany might engage, and should also pledge herself not to enter into any fresh agreements which would render it impossible for her to observe neutrality. Germany on her part promised neutrality in any war in which England was engaged, but nullified this promise by a clause to the effect that obligations under existing agreements remained unaltered. So that if war broke out in Europe, Germany would be free to aid Austria against Russia or Serbia, while England would have her hands tied. As for a naval agreement, the new German navy bill was given to Haldane some weeks in advance of the official publication, and Tirpitz announced to Haldane that he would accept the ratio of three British to two German ships as the basis of future programmes.⁴ Haldane declined this and with reason. German strategists believed that a German victory at sea would be possible against such odds, with the help of Germany's allies or a sudden attack when the British navy was not ready.

What was quite clear from Haldane's visit was that William II dare not, and Tirpitz would not, effect any serious naval reductions. He had his newspapers busily at work, protesting against English interference with the German navy and its programmes. There was some sense in these protests. The British entreaties to Germany not

¹ *id.*, xxix, 259.

² *id.*, 261, 276, 280.

³ *id.*, xxxi, 97 ff.; Haldane, *Before the War*, 57 ff.

⁴ Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 190.

1912]

HALDANE'S MISSION

to build ships were undignified, certain to prove futile, and calculated to increase rather than to allay German passion. The right course was for the British to build two ships to one and not to whine.

The mission, though full of danger to the stability of the entente, was generously meant on the British side, but it was yet another of the deeper causes of the war. Tirpitz exploited it to aggravate German exasperation. The British government discovered that not only the Kaiser but also the greater part of the German nation was determined to press forward the vast naval programme.¹ A speech by Churchill, who was now at the admiralty, sent there as he afterwards stated, "to put the fleet in a state of instant and constant readiness for war, in case we were attacked by Germany"—added fuel to the flames of German indignation. An outburst of fury in the German press followed his statement of the undoubted truth, that a strong navy was a necessity to England, but a luxury to Germany.

On Haldane's return to London, efforts were made to find a formula which would satisfy the German government, and the following was submitted to Berlin:

England will make no unprovoked attack upon Germany, and pursue no aggressive policy towards her. Aggression upon Germany is not the subject, and forms no part of any treaty, understanding, or combination to which England is now a party, nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object.

This the Germans thought inadequate, and once more put forward a formula which would have bound England to neutrality "if a war is forced upon Germany"—a clause which would have compelled England to remain neutral if Germany had gone to war with Russia and France under the terms of the German alliance with Austria.² What the German government wanted, as it seemed to Asquith, the British prime minister at that date, was "a free hand, so far as we were concerned, when they selected the opportunity to overbear, to dominate the European world"; and this free hand England could not give, without betraying her friends and herself committing political suicide. Haldane

¹ See the opinion of Steed, one of the ablest observers of Germany, because he saw deepest into the German mind: *Through Thirty Years*, i, 357-8.

² Grey, i, 253-5.

afterwards declared that Germany was a veritable powder magazine,¹ though he did not at the time take either the public or the cabinet into his confidence, and even made reassuring speeches.

In March, 1912, Churchill announced a new standard of strength for the British navy—60 per cent. superiority in Dreadnoughts over the German fleet. There was, as he pointed out, no parity of risk as between England and Germany. England was in a highly artificial position, fed from the sea, with only a microscopic army, compelled to think not of her trade but of her life. The speech provoked yet another storm of reproaches in the German press which complained of British "threats," "bluff," and "irritation," and asked why "England cannot decide what is necessary for her requirements without referring to us." Churchill's suggestion that Germany should reduce her programme when England would do the same, was treated as insulting. Yet if Germany had accepted it, she could have employed the money saved to increase her army and thus have exerted pressure on France. It cannot be said that the British handling of the naval question was happy in these reiterated cries of distress to Berlin.

The new German navy bill was duly enacted, and in the summer a small supplementary estimate was voted for the British navy. In calling for it Churchill emphasised "the awful suddenness with which naval warfare can reach its decisive phase . . . the extreme slowness with which naval preparations can be made."² So grave was the danger, and so great the difficulty of meeting it, that Churchill obtained from the Malay States in 1912 the gift of a battleship, and from Canada the offer of three battleships, which last did not in the end become effective. These ships were to be outside the normal British programme; the proposal to build them was construed in Germany as a fresh offence, and a trick of the British admiralty.

Post-war apologists for Germany have steadily turned a blind eye to the menace which the fast growing German navy meant for the British empire. Yet the figures as stated by Churchill were terrifying. The German High Sea fleet in constant commission with full crews was gradually

¹ *Daily Chronicle*, July 6, 1915.

² Hansard, *House of Commons Debates*, July 22 1912.,

to rise to twenty-five Dreadnought battleships, eight battle cruisers, eighteen light cruisers, ninety-nine destroyers and seventy-two submarines, perpetually exercised, trained to the highest level of efficiency—and how high that level was events at Jutland subsequently showed—able to intervene without any slow process of mobilisation which would give the British warning. Besides these, four reserve battleships could be brought up by a simple wireless order. Behind this fleet was a perfect system of coast defences and (it must once more be repeated) an enormous and efficient army. At the date when this law was passed the whole British force in full commission in home waters numbered only sixteen battleships,¹ four battle cruisers, eighteen light cruisers, sixty-five destroyers and forty submarines. Behind it were coasts almost destitute of defences and an army with a total effective strength of 120,000 men.

The ex-Kaiser characteristically states in one paragraph of his memoirs² that the British fleet was "four or five times stronger than ours, and assured England's superiority," though in the next paragraph he goes on to insist that the British fleet would have been annihilated at Jutland if up to 1900 the Reichstag had not refused credits for the German navy. Widenmann exulted at the idea that it would be beyond England's financial power to build two ships to the German one (the only safe ratio) which would have involved a British force of one hundred and twenty Dreadnoughts and 200,000 men.³ To such proportions was the German navy swelling. And indeed the German naval chief of staff, Heeringen, told Bethmann in 1911 that to be of any real value the German fleet must have a military prospect of victory.⁴

The British government could not for a moment lose sight of this shadow falling over the North Sea, at a time when England had no naval agreements with her friends, and no definite alliances with France and Russia. The naval party in Germany grew more and more truculent; in March, 1912, the Kaiser proposed to treat the movement of the British Mediterranean fleet to the North Sea as justifying a German mobilisation and giving him a *casus*

¹ Of these four were pre-Dreadnoughts. ² *Grosse Politik*, xxxi, 172.

³ pp. 156-7. ⁴ Tirpitz, *Aufbau*, 220-1.

THE WAR GUILT

[1912

belli.¹ Thereupon Bethmann handed in his resignation on the ground that he could not be responsible for war on an issue which did not concern Germany's honour or vital interests, even if complete victory was assured. The Kaiser drew back; he was even ready to postpone indefinitely laying down the additional Dreadnoughts, when Tirpitz got to work, threatened to resign if the ships were not begun at definite dates, and forced the Emperor to yield to him.²

Thus was William swayed to and fro by his ministers, though his first inclinations in every crisis, in 1912 as in 1905, in the *Bundesrath* affair of 1900 as in the Kruger telegram, were usually for violence, for reckless measures, for acts calculated to bring war into sight. And this was the monarch whose order the enormous fleet in the North Sea obeyed. Among German papers captured by the French during the war a letter of this date was found from an official at Kiel: "Between ourselves, naval men calculate that we shall have war as soon as the Kiel canal is widened and the big ships now on the stocks are completed—in 1914—though some army officers put it earlier, perhaps in a few months."³ The official was right.

In 1912 a German cavalry regiment was posted at Malmedy, close to Liège, and there were disquieting rumours, supported by the steady progress of the German strategic railways near the Belgian frontier, that Belgian territory would be violated by Germany in the event of war. The plans for such a violation had been prepared by the German staff, and German officers summer by summer, in the guise of harmless tourists⁴, examined the Belgian terrain. All this was well known when, on April 23, 1912, Colonel Bridges, the British military attaché at Brussels, had an interview with the Belgian chief of staff, General Jungbluth, on the subject of British action in war. Jungbluth represented him as having said that England would have landed troops in Belgian territory had war broken out in 1911, even if Belgium had not appealed for aid. Bridges denied making such a statement, and he cannot have been correctly reported by Jungbluth whose memorandum is the only authority for the interview, and what was said in it. There are inaccuracies as

¹ Jäckh, ii, 158; *Grosse Politik*, xxxi, 148, 155-6.

² *Aufbau*, 323.

³ Poincaré, i, 89.

⁴ Information personally obtained in Belgium in 1921.

1912]

BELGIUM'S DANGER

to the British force in the memorandum which show that its facts are not precise.¹ A year later Grey expressly assured the Belgian government that, so long as Belgian neutrality was not violated by any other power, "we should certainly not send troops ourselves into their territory."

As rumours of coming sudden German and Austrian movements² caused uneasiness in eastern Europe, on March 12, 1912, an order was issued to the Russian troops in Poland that a telegraphic direction to mobilise, in the event of complications on the western frontier, should be interpreted as an instruction to begin operations against Germany and Austria. This instruction was repeated in the autumn of 1912, but it was recalled before the outbreak of the Great War. It is of historical importance because it was connected with the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance of March 13, 1912, and because it has been cited as a proof that Russia entertained aggressive purposes at that moment. It was based on the theory, which Boisdeffre had twenty years before expounded to Alexander III, that "mobilisation means war." But the power which mobilises first is not necessarily the aggressor.

In May, 1912, Metternich was recalled from London and replaced as German ambassador there by Baron Marschall, best known from his association with the Kruger telegram. Metternich had given constant and faithful warning of the disastrous effect of the Kaiser's naval projects on German relations with England, and was therefore distrusted by the Kaiser and Tirpitz. Marschall had made a reputation as German ambassador at Constantinople, and he was regarded as the ablest and most imperious of German diplomatists. He died only a few months after his appointment, so that he had no real influence on affairs; he was succeeded by Prince Lichnowsky, who was a much more sympathetic personality and might, with a little more support from Berlin, have averted the catastrophe of the war. Marschall reported that so far from finding the British arrogant and conceited, he detected in their foreign policy uncertainty, want of spirit, and weakness³; and he cited the alteration of the Anglo-

¹ Haldane, 180-2; *Second Belgian Grey Book*, x. The Belgian government was still suspicious of England.

² cf. *Rapport*, i, 363-5.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxxi, 249.

Japanese alliance, which had been effected in 1911 to placate the United States,¹ as an example of British timidity.

None the less during 1912 tension between England and Germany somewhat diminished, just as events in the Balkans were so moving as to produce a fresh crisis of the gravest nature. Aehrenthal's successor in Austria was Count Berchtold, a magnate of agreeable manners and kindly character but without the statesmanship and strength of will required for so difficult a post in times of danger.² At the outset he inclined to a policy of friendship with England and Russia; indeed a memorandum drawn up for him in the Austrian foreign office declared that the perpetuation of the Czarist régime was desirable for Austria, as a liberal Russia would attract the Austrian Slavs more potently than an expanded Serbia.³

On March 13, 1912, after prolonged and stealthy negotiations, Bulgaria signed a secret treaty of alliance with Serbia, since both these states wanted to seize the opportunity given them by the war between Italy and Turkey and the general decline of Turkish power. Who instigated the alliance is still uncertain; some German authorities⁴ have regarded it as being aimed as much against Russia as against Austria. Sazonov at one time thought that Turkey might be included in it.⁵ Russian agents were undoubtedly concerned in its gestation,⁶ but it is possible that they were duped by that extremely astute sovereign, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and that he was in collusion with Austria. He had large estates in Hungary which made it most unlikely that he should act as the enemy of Austria or risk forfeiting them, though it is true that at this particular moment he was borrowing money from the Czar. M. Poincaré, the able and firm French premier, when he learnt of the treaty, regarded it with no little alarm as containing the germ of a war with Austria.⁷

His attitude is of great importance as, since 1918, there has been a tendency in Germany and in France, among

¹ By the modification in the treaty England was not to be required to aid in the event of war between Japan and the United States.

² Kanner, 87 ff., gives a scathing account of him; cf. Szilassy, 209.

³ Conrad, iii, 82-3, 115-7.

⁴ Valentin, 112; cf. Guéchoff, *Alliance Balkanique*, 59; *Grosse Politik*, xxxiii, 24; Steed, i, 360 ff.

⁵ Poincaré, ii, 36.

⁶ Nekludoff, 52.

⁷ Poincaré, ii, 38; cf. Nekludoff, 63.

his political opponents, to treat him as being largely responsible for the Great War, together with Grey and Isvolsky, who was Russian ambassador at Paris from 1910 onwards. The truth is, however, that, as his own memoirs show,¹ and as the French foreign office papers prove, he studiously avoided giving Austria and Germany any provocation, though he was not prepared to surrender to their threats. He sought for joint action with them to restrain the Balkan states; he refused Bulgaria a loan lest she should precipitate war; he even did his best to bridle Isvolsky, whom he personally disliked as a "turbulent and prolix" diplomatist, and who was in reality equally distasteful to the Russian foreign minister, Sazonov. Isvolsky's rôle in this period has been exaggerated, but his chief crime lay in his serving the interests of his country with zeal and devotion and discerning the real aims of the Austrian and German military parties. He was often indiscreet in his talk, and was apt to go beyond the truth in his reports.

The Serbo-Bulgarian treaty was followed by a treaty between Bulgaria and Greece on May 29, and on August 28 by an understanding between Montenegro and Bulgaria. No one trusted the King of Montenegro very far; he was supposed to be in Austrian pay, and he had received a sharp order from the Czar in the spring to keep quiet. The Serbo-Bulgarian treaty was submitted to the Czar, who was constituted an arbiter between the two states concerned, and was given by the terms the right to veto action. But as Poincaré has said, the treaty was a veritable "delay-action bomb," even though Sazonov constantly impressed on Bulgaria the necessity for a pacific policy.²

If the Austrian government was not in the secret from the first, it purchased full information early in the proceedings;³ in April, Kiderlen,⁴ the German foreign minister, knew of the alliance and was not greatly perturbed by it. The German and Austrian belief was that if these small Christian states attacked Turkey they would be completely defeated.⁵ In that case Serbia would be weakened, and

¹ cf. Poincaré, iii, 90 ff. Szilassy (*Untergang*, 108) points out that Poincaré was not a pacifist, but that he certainly did not kindle the war.

² Poincaré, ii, 57.

³ Bogitshevich, 42; Kanner, 94.

⁴ Jäckh, ii, 186; *Grosse Politik*, xxxiii, 25; cf. Siebert, ii, 616, which says he learnt of it from King Charles of Rumania.

⁵ Auffenberg, 203.

Bulgaria would probably be forced into dependence on Austrian support. This was a prospect not at all unpleasant to Austria. In Russia it was not thought that the Balkan states would be able to hold their own against Turkey without Russian aid;¹ and as Russia was not anxious for war this belief would naturally lead the Russian government to advise the small states to keep the peace, the more so as Poincaré had quite clearly stated that only a German attack on Russia would bring the French alliance into play. If Russia, by an adventurous policy, provoked a Balkan war, that would not involve her ally. In September Sazonov visited England, and there was told by Grey what the British position was.² England would only fight if Germany tried to crush France, but in such an event the British fleet would "do all it could against Germany." On the strength of a misleading version of this interview, which appeared in the Russian secret documents, Grey's words were afterwards distorted by Bethmann Hollweg³ into a British promise that "England would make every effort to deal German power the most decided blow . . . England held out the prospect of her taking part in the war against Germany without any regard as to who might be responsible for the war."

While France warned Russia against Balkan adventures, Kiderlen and Bethmann warned Austria that Berlin must be consulted before she acted; and the Austrian government was plainly told that Germany was not going to become a mere Austrian satellite in questions of Balkan policy. From the European standpoint the best solution of the eternal Balkan difficulties would have been for the Balkan states to combine into one strong federation and deal with Turkey, settling matters among themselves without external intervention. But there were serious obstacles in the way of such a course. The first was the attitude of Austria. At the outset she declared that she must exclude the Serbians from the Sanjak, which parted them from Montenegro. On this point she yielded under German pressure. She further insisted on establishing an autonomous government in Albania, where her activity was a source of constant friction

¹ Siebert, ii, 542; William II's comments (in *Grosse Politik*, xxxiii, 148,) show that he expected the Balkan states to win.

² Grey, i, 297 ff; Stieve, ii, 290.

³ *Official German Documents relating to the World-War*, i, 18.

with Italy. Another difficulty lay in the fact that Rumania, Austria's ally, was one of the Balkan states, but was not in the Balkan alliance, and, though friendly to Serbia, was suspicious of Bulgaria. Finally Russia was not at all anxious to see Constantinople in the hands of Bulgaria.

All the diplomatic schemes for holding back the Balkan states failed. Peace between Italy and Turkey was signed on October 15; a week earlier the King of Montenegro opened the Balkan war by attacking the Turks, timing his action to suit his speculations on the Vienna bourse. On October 17 each side simultaneously declared war on the other. To the stupefaction of the German and Austrian staffs and the alarm of everybody, the Turks from the outset were badly beaten by the Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbians. The Serbians astonished Europe by their energy and military capacity, and their victory roused the Austrian war party to fury.

If Austrian policy had been prudent, an effort would have been made to conciliate the Southern Slavs in Austria and to keep on good terms with Serbia. The stronger the Balkan states became, the less likely they were to act as Russian puppets.¹ William II had moments of vision; in early November he pointed out that a strong Balkan league might be opposed to Russia.² Berlin urged moderation on Austria, startled by the victories of the Serbians at Kumanovo and of the Bulgarians at Kirk Kilisse. Austria, however, took up a threatening attitude; she was partially mobilising her forces in Galicia on the Russian frontier and also on the Serbian frontier, as though she meant to act. The Russian government which was engaged in carrying out a test mobilisation on its south-west frontier, replied with counter-measures to the Austrian preparations.³ The Austrian government was determined to prevent any expansion of Serbia to the Adriatic, and there had Italy with it. Yet William II declared that he "could see absolutely no danger to Austria's existence or prestige in a Serbian port on the Adriatic,"⁴ and was for refusing aid to her, under the alliance, if she provoked Russia into war by a hostile attitude

¹ Szilassy saw this, and urged this policy. *Untergang*, 218.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxxiii, 276; cf. Siebert, ii, 623.

³ It kept with the colours the class of reservists that should have been dismissed in November, 1912.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xxxiii, 295, 302.

to Serbia. Bethmann and Kiderlen induced him to yield in this matter, as they were afraid of the collapse of the triple alliance if Austria were left unsupported. But it is possible that William showed himself here far more foreseeing than his ministers.

Meanwhile, in view of the violence of the Pan-Germans the possibility of a German attack on France caused anxiety in England and France. M. Poincaré endeavoured to obtain a definite pledge of British action in such an event. But he could secure nothing more than an interchange of letters in November, 1912, between Grey and Cambon, the French ambassador in London, by which the French and British governments agreed that if either "had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third power," it should immediately discuss with the other whether the two should act together, and what measures they should take. As Poincaré has pointed out,¹ in these nebulous documents there was neither an alliance nor a promise of help; but none the less France had sufficient faith in British honour to act on them. The British naval staff conferred with the French, and worked out plans for war at sea, as plans for war on land had been jointly studied six years before. The basis of the plans was that the French fleet would take charge of the Mediterranean and concentrate there, leaving to the British the defence of the French coast in the Channel and Atlantic. The British land force, which was to act only in case of an unprovoked attack on France, and provided parliament sanctioned action, was fixed at 125,000 men.

As the year drew to its close the danger of war increased. The Serbians moved towards the Adriatic, and to obtain a favourable *casus belli* against them the Austrian government falsely accused them of savagely maltreating the Austrian consuls at Prisrend and Mitrovitz, and required reparation from them. The war party was dominant at Vienna, though it was warned against precipitation both by Moltke, the German chief of staff, and William II. On November 21, however, William II was prepared to back Austria, thinking the moment favourable because the European press—deceived by the Vienna falsehoods—believed that she had received gross provocation.² But a day or two

¹ i, 222 ff.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxxiii, 373.



THE ARCHDUKE FRANCIS FERDINAND OF AUSTRIA.
Born, 1863; assassinated at Serajevo, 1914. He is shown in Austrian naval uniform, and he took an intense interest in the Austrian fleet.

later he strongly impressed on Francis Ferdinand, who had paid a brief visit to Berlin, the need for moderation, if he did not positively refuse to support Austria in war; and, when seeing his guest off at the station, he said, "Above all, let's have no nonsense."¹ The Archduke seemingly came to the interview determined on war; he left in such a passion that after the train started he drew his sword and hacked the upholstery.²

While the Archduke visited Berlin, Conrad was sent to Rumania to conclude a military convention with that state against Serbia; on his return, on December 7, he became once more chief of the Austrian staff—a sign that the war party were gaining the upper hand at Vienna. Rumania was by no means an enthusiastic ally. King Charles made it clear that he feared Bulgaria, and looked on Serbia as a friend. There was a general thrill of alarm none the less; in far-away Belgium the Austrian military attaché reported to Conrad the appearance of numerous German intelligence officers.³ Overtures from Serbia, in the form of a proposal from her minister, Pasitch, to come to Vienna and discuss an arrangement, were rudely repulsed by Austria. But a general war was averted for the time being. The German warnings took effect at Vienna; the French warnings influenced St. Petersburg. In December as the result of Grey's efforts, a conference of ambassadors met in London to arrange a peaceable settlement. Meanwhile the triple alliance was renewed for the last time;⁴ it was to remain in force till 1920. Fear of a Serbian naval base in the Adriatic for the moment brought Italy closer to Austria than at any date since the alliance had existed.

If the risk of war had diminished, there was still great friction, and on the Galician frontier large Austrian and Russian forces confronted one another. The Russian staff, however, late in 1912, withdrew its order of the previous year, that a mobilisation was automatically to be followed by military action. This was the result of French pressure. In January the crisis again became acute. The Russian government massed troops in Armenia, and threatened

¹ *id.*, xxxiii, 374.

² Seton Watson, 90. cf. Conrad, iv, 39, which contradicts the view set out in *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 325-6.

³ Conrad, ii, 392.

⁴ Pribram, i, 101.

Turkey with war if she resumed operations against the Balkan states, whereupon Germany warned Russia that an such attack by Russian forces on Turkey would bring the German army into the field. The Russian government was still sore at the humiliation which it had suffered in 1904 but it made concession after concession to Austria, under pressure from Poincaré and Grey, through the ambassadors' conference in London. It agreed to the exclusion of Serbia from an Adriatic port, which meant sooner or later a quarrel between Serbia and Bulgaria, because it forced Serbia to look for expansion to Macedonia, which Bulgaria claimed. It agreed to the creation of an autonomous Albania—a scheme which William II treated with well-deserved ridicule, but which Austria fanatically espoused. It agreed to the exclusion of Montenegro from Scutari. But there were limits beyond which the Russian government could not go without risk of a revolutionary movement at home.

Austria's provocative attitude puzzled even such German soldiers as Moltke.¹ "I cannot imagine," he wrote, "why she has mobilised half her army for months and half ruined herself when all that she needs is a *modus vivendi* with Serbia. She could have friendly relations at once with Russia if she would demobilise her Galician corps." He tried to hold the Austrians back, though, as he wrote to Conrad, "now I previously I am of opinion that a European war must come soon or later, in which in the last resort we shall have to face a struggle between Germanism and Slavdom. . . . But the attack must come from the Slavs."² Conrad was burning for war, and dreaming of a sudden attack on Serbia with the intention of afterwards partitioning her territory between Bulgaria, Rumania, and Albania or Austria.

It was a scheme to which he incessantly recurred, and it kept Europe in a state of alarm for weeks, as Montenegro defying Austria and the ambassadors' conference, laid siege to Scutari and gave him a good excuse for intervening by insolently refusing to recall her troops and give up the place to Albania. In February, 1913, Prince Gottfried Hohenlohe was sent to the Czar with friendly explanation by the Austrian Emperor, as the result of which Russia agreed gradually to reduce her forces in the frontier zone. But immediately after this an Austrian proposal to despatch

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxxiv, 319.

² *id.*, 353.

a squadron to attack the Montenegrins in March, 1913, once more came very near causing general war. Preliminary preparations were made for mobilisation in Germany.¹ In April, as Montenegro was still defiant, Italy was sounded as to her willingness to allow Austria to occupy Montenegrin territory, but replied that if such occupation took place she would establish herself in Valona and Durazzo.² Finally, with immense difficulty, after Germany had declared at St. Petersburg her determination to back Austria, Montenegro was induced to give way, and the ambassadors' conference in London decided on a settlement which excluded Serbia from the Adriatic, created an artificial state in Albania, and, by depriving Serbia of an outlet to the sea, drove her southwards to Macedonia and the Ægean, rendering almost certain another war and the collapse of the Balkan league.

Nevertheless Europe breathed more freely. War had been averted for the moment, but the South Slav question was there and the growing power of Serbia made it more formidable. The hopelessness of carrying out any real reform in Austria, in view of the dual system, was evident. Under that system satisfaction could be given neither to the Slavs nor to the Rumanians within the Magyar boundaries. Russia had been pushed from concession to concession, and the Czar's government was being savagely criticised by the Russian press. The temper of the German people grew more aggressive; William II's zeal for peace was waning; the widening of the Kiel canal and the construction of the new German fleet were going rapidly forward. In December, 1912, Moltke completed a new army bill which was published on March 28, 1913. It provided for an increase in the peace strength of the German army to 761,000 men³; for the rapid expansion of the air force; for large numbers of machine guns and heavy guns; and for a larger reserve of munitions. A new type of uniform was introduced. The bill was described by a German Socialist deputy as "a mobilisation in time of peace." Its cost was to be defrayed by a levy of £50,000,000 on capital, paid in

¹ Valentin, 119.

² Tittoni's speech of June 24, 1915: Conrad, iii, 234; *Grosse Politik*, xxxiv, 773.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 164; Poincaré (iii, 145) states the German force as 865,000 men.

instalments of which the last fell due in June, 1914. It became law on June 30, 1913.

In that same month of June a naval agreement between Germany, Italy, and Austria for action in the Mediterranean was completed,¹ though it was not finally signed till November, 1913. It provided for the immediate junction of the naval forces of these three powers in order to secure the command of the Mediterranean by forcing battle and defeating the hostile fleets in that sea. Thus Tirpitz's idea of a naval combination was bearing fruit. The French transports with troops *en route* from Algeria to France were to be assailed. Full information about this agreement was in the hands of the French government through its secret service, which had the key to the Italian cipher and read most of the Italian diplomatic messages.

The introduction of the new German army bill led both the French and Russian governments to take counter-measures. In France the government very reluctantly decided to alter its military system and to increase the term of service with the colours from two to three years, thus augmenting the peace strength by nearly 50 per cent., and raising it to over 800,000.² There were two different ways in which this change could have been effected. The better way would have been to keep in service in 1914, for a third year with the colours, the men whose two years' term of service had then expired, thus giving a peace force in which the raw recruits would only have been about one third. The inferior plan was to lower the age at which men were taken and to call up simultaneously two contingents, the men of twenty and the men of twenty-one. This would give in 1914 an active force of which two-thirds would be raw recruits. The second plan was that demanded by the French Radicals and Socialists and was that eventually adopted. It was unquestionably one of the causes of the war, because it so greatly weakened the cohesion of the French army and gave an opportunity which German chauvinists were quick to point out.

This three years' measure was regarded in Germany as a challenge, and a great outburst of passion against France

¹ Pribram, i, 308; cf. *Livre Noir*, ii, 220-1; Stieve, iv, 7-8.

² 794,000 men, without the Foreign Legion and African troops, according to *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 164. It is entirely false that the three-years' law was demanded by Russia, cf. Poincaré, iii, 146.

followed in the press. Every attempt was made to misrepresent its character, and treat it as having preceded the German bill, which had been its real cause.¹ Germans, in fact, while angrily denouncing the British proposals for naval disarmament as insulting, had come to imagine that they had the right to fix the strength of the French army and interfere in a matter that concerned the very existence of France. German ill-will to that country was shown in a series of disagreeable incidents which occurred in April, 1913. When the new Zeppelin Z IV on her trials was carried by an east wind into French territory and compelled to land there, the German press broke out into violent abuse of the French because she was detained for a short period by the French military authorities to inquire into the circumstances which had led to this visit.² A fracas between a number of Germans and a handful of French students in a beer hall at Nancy led the German government to make a formal and bitter complaint. Shortly after this, on April 22, a German military aeroplane landed in the French fortified zone, but the French government allowed it to depart, to avoid a fresh quarrel.

In the Balkans a new war broke out, mainly because Austria instigated Ferdinand of Bulgaria, with definite promises of Austrian support to fall upon Serbia, and in June, Ferdinand ordered his troops to attack the Serbians and Greeks without declaration of war. Conrad once more hoped for "the complete clearing up of the South Slav question" by the destruction of Serbia.³ But the Austrian plans miscarried again. When, on June 29-30, the Bulgarians assailed their allies, the Greeks and Serbs were found to be on the alert, and severely defeated their treacherous friends. Immediately afterwards Bulgaria was attacked by the Turks, and by the Rumanians. Austria did not move or fulfil her promises, though she sent Prince Charles Fürstenburg to threaten the Rumanian government with war if it invaded Bulgaria, a threat which Rumania disregarded. The reason for Austria's inaction was that on July 9 she sounded Italy for the second time that year on the question of attacking Serbia and received a definite

¹ cf. Barthou's statement quoted in *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 154.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 281ff.; Poincaré, iii, 189-92.

³ *id.*, xxxiv, 764.

THE WAR GUILT

[1913]

refusal of support.¹ It was also at the critical moment discovered that Colonel Redl, a leading Austrian staff officer, had been in the pay of Russia, and had sold her the secret Austrian war plans.²

From Berlin the Austrian government was advised to hold back once more. William II was distinctly friendly to the Serbians; he distrusted and disliked Ferdinand of Bulgaria, while the King of Rumania was a Hohenzollern, and the King of Greece, Serbia's ally, was his own brother-in-law. Thus family reasons were added to political arguments against armed intervention³ and led him to approve the peace of Bucarest—which, on August 10, 1913, ended the war—in a telegram of congratulation to the King of Rumania. What advice the German staff gave is not known, but military expansion was proceeding fast in both Austria and Germany and the position would obviously be more favourable for the German powers when the Turkish army had been reorganised. The 16½-in. Krupp howitzers which Moltke needed for the rapid capture of neutral Belgium's fortresses, were under trial or approaching completion; and the Austrians had just produced a mobile 12-in. howitzer⁴ and were extending the Skoda munition factories on a gigantic scale. A *casus belli* could be secured at any favourable moment. As Dr. Schiemann, a well-known friend of the Kaiser, and the translator of the betrayed Russian documents declared in the Berlin *Kreuzzeitung*, to precipitate a European war "Austria had only to be turned loose on Serbia."

This year of evil omen did not pass without fresh friction between England and Germany on the naval question. Churchill, when introducing the navy estimates in March, reiterated a proposal which he had made in 1912 for a "naval holiday," which meant that England and Germany were each to cease laying down new ships for a year; and the response was a new storm of protests from Tirpitz's propagandists. In July, when the Canadian Senate rejected a bill providing three Dreadnoughts at the dominion's expense, Churchill obtained a supplementary estimate for £2,500,000,

¹ Pribram, i, 301: the date is doubtful. Giolitti gives it as August 9; *Grosse Politik*, xxxv, 123, 192.

² Auffenberg, 241.

³ cf. Conrad, iii, 152-3.

⁴ Conrad, ii, 377.

1912-13]

BELGIUM'S WARNING

but a fresh naval agitation had to be carried out in the press to prevent a reduction in the all-too-small margin of safety.

In 1912 the King of the Belgians was warned by his relative, King Charles of Rumania, that the German staff meditated war at no distant date, and had decided to move through Belgium. "I give Belgium the friendly advice to make serious preparations for her own defence, as the miracle of 1870, when she rested intact between the two hostile armies, will not be repeated," said King Charles. In December, 1912, Moltke and Ludendorff drew up a memorandum regarding operations in the coming war.¹ "To take the offensive against France," they wrote, "it will be necessary to infringe Belgian neutrality. Only by an advance through Belgian territory can we hope to be able to defeat the French army in the open." Belgium was uneasy, as the Germans hardly attempted to disguise their intentions. The Belgian parliament passed in June, 1913, a law enforcing universal service. Proposals were made for improvements in the Belgian fortresses.² New heavy guns were ordered for Antwerp, but, though ready in 1914, were stored for the time being in Germany because the Belgian government was not ready to pay for them. Beyond question the prospect of a great increase in the Belgian army and a marked improvement in the Belgian fortresses was one of the causes which led the German staff to decide on war in the summer of 1914, before either measure had taken effect.

In Germany a new motive for war, in addition to the determination to crush the Slavs in south-east Europe and deal the final blow to France, was arising at the close of 1913. The agitation against the Prussian franchise, which gave the great majority of the population only one third of the votes, was growing so strong that resistance to it was difficult. The military party and the industrialists dreaded the grant of universal suffrage. They began to look more and more eagerly to a great war which would divert popular attention from electoral reform; and they exercised on William II ever-increasing pressure. Always in the background was the bitter naval competition with England and

¹ Ludendorff, *Urkunden*, 54-5.

² Deguise, *Défense d'Anvers*, 30-45.

THE WAR GUILT

[1913]

refusal of support.¹ It was also at the critical moment discovered that Colonel Redl, a leading Austrian staff officer, had been in the pay of Russia, and had sold her the secret Austrian war plans.²

From Berlin the Austrian government was advised to hold back once more. William II was distinctly friendly to the Serbians; he distrusted and disliked Ferdinand of Bulgaria, while the King of Rumania was a Hohenzollern, and the King of Greece, Serbia's ally, was his own brother-in-law. Thus family reasons were added to political arguments against armed intervention³ and led him to approve the peace of Bucarest—which, on August 10, 1913, ended the war—in a telegram of congratulation to the King of Rumania. What advice the German staff gave is not known, but military expansion was proceeding fast in both Austria and Germany and the position would obviously be more favourable for the German powers when the Turkish army had been reorganised. The 16½-in. Krupp howitzers which Moltke needed for the rapid capture of neutral Belgium's fortresses, were under trial or approaching completion; and the Austrians had just produced a mobile 12-in. howitzer⁴ and were extending the Skoda munition factories on a gigantic scale. A *casus belli* could be secured at any favourable moment. As Dr. Schiemann, a well-known friend of the Kaiser, and the translator of the betrayed Russian documents declared in the Berlin *Kreuzzeitung*, to precipitate a European war "Austria had only to be turned loose on Serbia."

This year of evil omen did not pass without fresh friction between England and Germany on the naval question. Churchill, when introducing the navy estimates in March, reiterated a proposal which he had made in 1912 for a "naval holiday," which meant that England and Germany were each to cease laying down new ships for a year; and the response was a new storm of protests from Tirpitz's propagandists. In July, when the Canadian Senate rejected a bill providing three Dreadnoughts at the dominion's expense, Churchill obtained a supplementary estimate for £2,500,000,

¹ Pribram, i, 301: the date is doubtful. Giolitti gives it as August 9; *Grosso* *Politik*, xxxv, 123, 192.

² Auffenberg, 241.

³ cf. Conrad, iii, 152-3.

⁴ Conrad, ii, 377.

1912-13] BELGIUM'S WARNING

but a fresh naval agitation had to be carried out in the press to prevent a reduction in the all-too-small margin of safety.

In 1912 the King of the Belgians was warned by his relative, King Charles of Rumania, that the German staff meditated war at no distant date, and had decided to move through Belgium. "I give Belgium the friendly advice to make serious preparations for her own defence, as the miracle of 1870, when she rested intact between the two hostile armies, will not be repeated," said King Charles. In December, 1912, Moltke and Ludendorff drew up a memorandum regarding operations in the coming war.¹ "To take the offensive against France," they wrote, "it will be necessary to infringe Belgian neutrality. Only by an advance through Belgian territory can we hope to be able to defeat the French army in the open." Belgium was uneasy, as the Germans hardly attempted to disguise their intentions. The Belgian parliament passed in June, 1913, a law enforcing universal service. Proposals were made for improvements in the Belgian fortresses.² New heavy guns were ordered for Antwerp, but, though ready in 1914, were stored for the time being in Germany because the Belgian government was not ready to pay for them. Beyond question the prospect of a great increase in the Belgian army and a marked improvement in the Belgian fortresses was one of the causes which led the German staff to decide on war in the summer of 1914, before either measure had taken effect.

In Germany a new motive for war, in addition to the determination to crush the Slavs in south-east Europe and deal the final blow to France, was arising at the close of 1913. The agitation against the Prussian franchise, which gave the great majority of the population only one third of the votes, was growing so strong that resistance to it was difficult. The military party and the industrialists dreaded the grant of universal suffrage. They began to look more and more eagerly to a great war which would divert popular attention from electoral reform; and they exercised on William II ever-increasing pressure. Always in the background was the bitter naval competition with England and

¹ Ludendorff, *Urkunden*, 54-5.

² Deguise, *Défense d'Anvers*, 30-45.

the Pan-German desire for the acquisition at her expense of a great colonial empire in which Germans could settle and multiply. In Austria, according to one of the most far-sighted observers,¹ the atmosphere was that of a charnel house. Tschirschky, the German ambassador at Vienna, declared in April, 1913, that it was high time for her to prove she was not a corpse.² Francis Joseph and Francis Ferdinand had both been brought to agree to "energetic measures," which meant war.³ The storm of hatred was rising against the Serbians; in Bosnia, Croatia and Dalmatia, as the result of the harsh Austrian methods an anti-Austrian terrorist and revolutionary movement was developing, and spreading like a forest fire. In October Berchtold again rebuffed friendly overtures from Serbia.⁴

In October, 1913, the anniversary of Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig was celebrated in Germany with great festivities. On that occasion William II had a most important interview with Conrad in which he declared himself in favour of energetic action against Serbia, and promised his fullest support to Austria. "I will stand by you," he said.⁵ "The other powers are not ready. They will do nothing against you. You ought to be in Belgrade in a few days. It is quite true that I was a supporter of peace, but there are limits to that. I have read a great deal about war and know what it means; at last a situation has arisen in which a great power can no longer look on, but must draw the sword." In November, 1913, William II declared that Austria's value as an ally would decline if she did not nerve herself to some bold act.⁶ The key to German action in July, 1914, is here. These words were spoken to a soldier whom the Kaiser well knew to have been urging war in the most reckless manner for four years upon the Austrian government. Similar incitements were conveyed to Berchtold.

The evidence of this grave interview with Conrad is decisive as to a change in the Kaiser's temper. Kiderlen,⁷ before his death, lamented the attitude of the Kaiser's family, men as well as women, who, since 1911, were urging him

¹ H. W. Steed.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxxiv, 732.

³ *id.*, 765.

⁴ *Sarajevo*, 55.

⁵ Conrad, iii, 469-70; cf. *Grosse Politik*, xxxvi, 396; and his "now or never," 399.

⁶ Conrad, iii, 486.

⁷ Jäckh, ii, 236.

to war, and they certainly helped to produce the change. It is true that in March, 1914, Tschirschky told Conrad that it was due to William II and Francis Ferdinand that war with Russia had not already come.¹ But in November, 1913, the King of the Belgians, on a visit to Potsdam, received alarming confidences from William II. The Kaiser regarded war with France as inevitable. He spoke of it as imminent, and expressed the hope that King Albert would "remember he was a Coburg"—his great grandfather was the Duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha. The King replied very properly, "I shall remember first and foremost that I am a Belgian." As a prelude to the ultimatum of 1914, the passage of German troops through Belgium was mentioned, and the King warned the Kaiser that it would be strenuously resisted.

William II appeared old, worn, and intensely irritable, but he boasted of the crushing superiority of the German army and its certainty of swift success.² In a subsequent interview between the King and Moltke, the German chief of staff was equally truculent, and though Moltke afterwards disputed the accuracy of King Albert's account, there is no reasonable doubt that in all fundamentals it is correct. Moltke maintained that not only was success certain but that the whole German people would rush into war with "irresistible enthusiasm."³ When the necessary moment came, Germany would strike swiftly at her chief adversary, France, and crush all resistance. Commonplaces about right and wrong would not be heeded.

No chance was missed of wounding France, and reminding the people of Alsace that they were the conquered enemies of Germany. William II, in a violent outburst, declared to the Alsatian mayor Schwander,⁴ "you have so far known only our good side, but you will oblige us to show you our stern side. If things do not change I shall destroy your constitution and incorporate you in Prussia." In November, at the little Alsatian town of Saverne, the populace hooted a lieutenant who had sneered at Alsatian civilians, and for

¹ Conrad, iii, 597.

² *C.D.*, 142; *Deutschland Schuldig?*, 75-6; *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 230-1; Poincaré, iii, 330.

³ As to Moltke's attitude, cf. Conrad, iii, 596: he rather leant to war.

⁴ Denis, 221.

this conduct it was treated with great severity by the German military authorities.¹ The lieutenant in question a few weeks later slashed with his sword a half-paralysed cobbler whom he accused of laughing at him. The officer was tried, and sentenced to a short term of imprisonment for this act which, it appeared, was entirely without justification. The sentence was quashed by a higher court. All through this trouble the uneasiness in France was great, and was increased by the furious manner in which the French foreign legion was denounced by Germans. Provocative German speeches were multiplied, and the Kaiser, as usual, took the lead. "We, too," he thundered before the statue of Frederick William III², "shall march to battle with joy and confidence in our hearts, if one day we have to defend what we have conquered."

The air smelt of powder. In October an Austrian ultimatum compelled Serbia to withdraw her troops from certain points on the Albanian frontier. In November, 1913, the Hungarian premier, Tisza, admitted that Austria had no hope of liquidating the heavy floating debt which she had incurred by her measures against Serbia³; and the French ambassador in Vienna warned his government that the time was near when Austria would be able to find no more money for armaments, and would seek relief from the strain in a general war. Austria, in fact, was meditating *suttee*, and Conrad was telling friends that at the worst she would perish gloriously—amid the ruins of Europe.⁴ He could wait no longer because disaffection was spreading so rapidly among the Austrian Slavs; what was wanted was a favourable opportunity.

A new crisis developed in Turkey where the German government, in response to a request made by the Young Turks, sent a German officer of distinction, Liman von Sanders, to reorganise the Turkish army, while a British officer, Rear-Admiral Limpus, was charged with the reorganisation of the Turkish navy. The Czar had agreed to Sanders's appointment during his visit to Berlin in May, 1913, but when that soldier took command of the Turkish army corps at Constantinople and was accompanied by some

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 229ff.

² Poincaré, iii, 149.

³ *Rapport*, i, 73; *Livre Noir*, ii, 374.

⁴ cf. *F.O.D.*, 172, as to the effects of South Slav unrest.

forty picked German officers, Russian opinion treated this action as unfriendly and as a practical assertion of German hegemony at the Turkish capital. The Russian military authorities dreaded a Turkish attack in Caucasia.¹ The British government did not share the Russian view; yet as Sazonov argued, Germany would not have liked to see a Belgian or Dutch army corps commanded by a French general, and Austria would certainly have deeply resented the appointment of a Russian officer to the Constantinople command.²

The incident was closed by the promotion of Liman to be inspector of the Turkish army and director of military schools, which meant that nominally he no longer commanded the Constantinople corps, and Russia reluctantly accepted this change, though Sazonov complained that England was not supporting him adequately. German influence in actual fact continued supreme at Constantinople. If Germany showed no unreasonableness, from the Russian standpoint it was unquestionably a serious matter that, flanking Germany and Austria, were now Sweden and Turkey, both regarded as hostile, while no trust could be placed in Bulgaria, who burned only for revenge upon Serbia and Rumania.

In February, 1914, Pasitch, the Serbian premier, visited St. Petersburg and discussed Balkan conditions with the Czar. He outlined Serbia's policy as one of peace, but feared danger from Bulgaria, Austria and Turkey. He suggested a marriage between the Crown Prince of Serbia and one of the Czar's daughters, on which Nicholas II did not look unfavourably. Other subjects discussed were the anarchy in Albania (where a German princelet covered with rings, chains and jewellery, William of Wied, had been set up as ruler), and the Hungarian prosecution of one hundred and eighty-one Jugo-Slavs of Austrian nationality for treason at Maramaros-Sziget. But the conversation showed that both hoped for peace though both believed that the break-up of Austria could not be long delayed. That belief was becoming general on the continent and in Austria herself. Both Russia and France urged Serbia to do her utmost to recover the friendship of Bulgaria: according to German

¹ Stieve, vi, 238ff.

² Buchanan, i, 148; *Grosse Politik*, xxxviii, 302.

authorities they advised her to make concessions in Macedonia, in return for Bulgaria's support if Serbia acquired territory from Austria.¹

In France there was certainly no desire for war.² A general election was imminent, and an agitation was in progress for the repeal or modification of the three years' service law, which was bitterly assailed by the Socialists. In England the determination of Ulster to resist subjection to Sinn Fein Ireland occupied public attention. The last navy estimates before the war were introduced by Churchill on March 17, 1914, when he announced that a general mobilisation of the reserve fleet would take place in July instead of the usual manœuvres. It was to this decision (which was reached to effect a small saving of money) that the British navy owed some part of its readiness for war when the final crisis came. Churchill did not provide for the construction of additional battleships in place of the ships which Canada had not constructed, and the naval situation in the Mediterranean became more than ever menacing.

So far as Germany was concerned, Moltke's papers show that in February he regarded the political position as critical, and "the European atmosphere in an extraordinary state of electrical tension."³ He expressly mentioned the possibility of Austrian action against Russia, and in May discussed it with Conrad at Karlsbad.⁴ In March the German staff concluded a military agreement with Italy by which, in the event of an attack by France on Germany, Italy was to send three army corps and two cavalry divisions to Germany for service against France. They were to be commanded by General Zuccari, who visited Moltke and worked out all the arrangements with him. The Italian chief of staff at that date was Pollio, who was strongly sympathetic to the Germans, and there was some tension with France regarding Italy's continued occupation of the Dodekanese.

It was about this time, in March, that a German officer, Colonel Frobenius, published a book⁵ which was said to have been inspired by the Crown Prince, and went through

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxxviii, 322.

² cf. Nordau's opinion in Saintyves, 233; *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 250.

³ *Erinnerungen*, 376; Conrad, iii, 598.

⁴ Conrad, iii, 670.

⁵ *The German Empire's Hour of Destiny*.

twenty-four editions in a few months. Its thesis was that the English would instigate France and Russia to a life-and-death struggle with Germany, and that they would hold aloof—at the outset if not throughout—and permit their associates to bleed to death. The whole aim of the book was to call on Germans to seize the "hour of destiny" in 1914, by engaging in a preventive war before the network of Russian strategic railways, then under construction, had been completed, and before the strengthening of the Russian army, then in progress, had taken place. Frobenius pointed out that owing to the manner in which the three years' service law in France had been applied, calling up and training two annual contingents of recruits in 1914, it would be "almost impossible" for the French army to engage in war "at the present moment." But this condition, he said, would pass, and the French in 1915 or 1916 would be in an extraordinarily strong position.

In April, 1914, Bulgaria began negotiations for a loan to cover her expenditure in her unsuccessful war with Serbia.¹ Her government then in office was distrusted by the entente powers as being anti-Serbian, and completely under Austrian influence. French financiers were reluctant to lend her any more money unless there was a change of administration. The matter was still under discussion when the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was assassinated at Serajevo. That event, and the obvious risk that Bulgaria might fall upon Serbia, deterred the French banks from making the loan, but in mid-July the German Disconto-Gesellschaft agreed to advance £20,000,000, and this transaction was the first definite sign that Bulgaria was preparing to ally herself with the German powers.

In Austria the signs that spring were ominous. The government had decided upon war with Serbia at the earliest favourable opportunity, if only to prevent her union with Montenegro.² It had previously come to similar rash decisions and abandoned them; on this occasion it unquestionably met with encouragement from the war party in Germany at the head of which was the Crown Prince, and with which Ludendorff was identified. The reasons

¹ Siebert, ii, 631; Radoslavov, *Bulgarien*, 132.

² Conrad, (iii, 702) declares that on June 4, Francis Joseph was for peace, but Pallavicini's evidence is against this view.

THE WAR GUILT

[1914]

which rendered war dangerous for the entente made the moment opportune for the German powers.

The enlargement of the North Sea canal would be complete in July; the last instalment of the special German army levy would then have been paid; the German and Austrian military reorganisations would be well advanced, while the French army would be relatively disorganised; the Russian army would be without the heavy artillery, railways, and new fortresses which were under construction; the Serbian army and nation would still be suffering from exhaustion caused by the wars of 1912-13; the Turkish army would be able to render substantial aid; the Belgian fortresses and army would be unready; England would be paralysed by the Ulster conflict. From Berlin the Russian embassy reported that the Junker class no longer concealed their warlike attitude, and that German opinion was violently excited against Russia because of her armaments.¹ Now was the time when a war with Russia ought to be provoked. But the German government was stated not to share these views. Moltke, in February, spoke of Russia's rapid military progress in a tone which was one of alarm.

In March the *Kölnische Zeitung* attacked Russia for her preparations and charged her with a wish to break the peace of Europe when she was ready, though it declared that there was no immediate danger of war from her. It denounced the French government and produced a panic on the stock exchange. The author was a German reserve officer in St. Petersburg; and it was supposed at the time that the publication of the article had been encouraged by the military party in Berlin and the Crown Prince. Pourtalès, the German ambassador in St. Petersburg, reported that Russia was not planning any such war, but William II in a marginal note declared the ambassador was wrong.² A few days later the St. Petersburg *Bourse Gazette* replied with an article which the Russian war minister, Sukhomlinov, had prepared and the Czar had approved.³ It stated:

The time of threats is over. Russia need no longer fear German menaces. . . . Hitherto the Russian plan of operations has been of a defensive character. To-day the Russian army is known to

¹ Siebert, ii, 714-5.

² *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 552.
³ *id.*, 555-6.

1914]

KING GEORGE IN PARIS

be in a position to play an active part. . . . Our artillery will no longer have to deplore want of munitions. . . . The country is ready for any eventuality.

The Russian staff asserted it was able to face Germany in a duel, and had so reported to Sazonov in a conference in January, regarding the Liman von Sanders affair.¹ This was a complete and dangerous delusion, as the war was speedily to prove, and it was not shared by Sazonov, who told Pasitch and others early in 1914 that Russia was not ready for a great war.² Russia lacked industrial equipment necessary for such a conflict.

In April King George V visited Paris, and was cordially received there. At the suggestion of the French government, made to Grey on that occasion,³ the cabinet authorised the British admiralty to communicate with the Russian naval authorities, as it had already done with the French. The matter was of no naval and of minor diplomatic importance, as in war the Russian fleet could not get out of the Baltic nor the British get in. It was desirable, however, that the possibilities of a world war should be considered, as the attitude of Germany and Austria made such a conflict always possible. Since the war German apologists have been inclined to argue that any power which prepared for a world war desired a world war; whereas the statesmen responsible for the safety of England, France and Russia, would have been criminal had they ignored the plain signs of danger.

About the date of the King's visit to Paris the first of two momentous meetings between William II and Francis Ferdinand took place at Miramar.⁴ The Archduke complained of the Slav population in Austria, and thought its excessive claims were extremely dangerous. He agreed with William II when the latter suggested that Austrian policy should be so orientated as to support the Germans and give the Czechs a lesson, but added that he felt no sympathy for the German politicians in Austria. He severely condemned Berchtold's and Tisza's attitude to the Rumanians in Hungary. William, on the contrary,

¹ *id.*, 538.

² *Sarajevo*, 220-1.

³ Grey, i, 284.

⁴ *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 342; Conrad, iii, 700.

praised Tisza. Whether anything was definitely said about war is uncertain. Francis Ferdinand was now ready for a conflict with Serbia as also was the Emperor Francis Joseph, who told the Marquis Pallavicini, the Austrian ambassador at Constantinople, in June that "a European war is inevitable."¹ The Rumanian government learnt that Austria was working for some opportunity to recover her position in the Balkans and was ready to go to war,² which indeed Conrad's pages fully prove, while her attitude in Albania exasperated Italy.³

In Germany scarcely a month passed without some bellicose speech or demonstration, and the Crown Prince did not hesitate to proclaim his longing for a "frisch, fröhlich Krieg"—"a brisk, lively war." In May the German war office made large purchases of corn, forage, beds and hospital stores. It warned German reservists in the Far East and in South Africa, of which fact the allies subsequently obtained documentary evidence. How far these were normal precautions and how far exceptional measures is not clear; but the concurrence of all these preparations about the same period is curious if it is entirely accidental. In the early summer the United States politician, Colonel House,⁴ visited Berlin and left that capital convinced, as his letters show, that the German military party was determined on war, meant to make it quickly, and would dethrone the Kaiser if he allowed his love for peace to stand in its way.

In June, the Russian government, alarmed by reports from Paris that a Radical-Socialist French government might abandon the three years' law, published in the *Bourse Gazette* of St. Petersburg an article under the heading "Russia is ready: France must be equally ready," which was inspired by the Russian war minister. It concluded that "Russia and France desire no war, but Russia is ready and France must be equally so." In marginal notes on this article William II declared his conviction that Russia and France "are working at high pressure for a sudden war against ourselves," and called for counter-measures.

¹ Conrad, iv, 107.

² *D.D.*, i, 149; Take Jonescu, 35-6.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxviii, 350.

⁴ Hendrick, *Life of W. H. Page*, i, 289-99. His evidence is important as showing that England had no desire to see Germany crushed. Cf. *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 111.

1914] RUSSIAN NAVAL CONVERSATIONS

Reports based on information in the betrayed Russian documents, that a secret naval compact had been concluded or was about to be concluded between England and Russia, added to German bitterness. It has been suggested since the war that these documents were revealed of deliberate purpose by the Russian government in order to poison relations between England and Germany. This suggestion seems to me absurd and fantastic. But the trustworthiness of the documents as *bona fide* reports of what Grey said to various Russian or French diplomatists is not established, and Grey in his memoirs has pointed out that some of their statements go beyond the facts.¹

On the Russian side the discussions with the admiralty were in charge of Captain Volkov, the Russian naval attaché in London. German sympathisers in the House of Commons, in view of inspired articles in the Berlin press, asked whether an Anglo-Russian naval agreement had been signed or whether negotiations for one were proceeding. Grey gave an evasive answer on June 11, when he said that no negotiations were in progress, and, so far as he could judge, none were likely to be initiated. In returning such an answer to a question deliberately framed so as to cause trouble, he was clearly within his rights, though the distinction between "negotiations" and "discussions" was a fine one. He saw Lichnowsky, the German ambassador, on June 24, and on that occasion warned the ambassador that "though we were not bound by engagement as allies [to France and Russia] we did from time to time talk as intimately as allies."² After all, that England should reach a clear naval agreement with her friends was no more unreasonable than that Germany should conclude a compact with Austria and Italy, as she had done a few months before, for joint action at sea.³

At this interview of June 24 a most important statement was made by the German ambassador to Grey. He said he had been instructed by Bethmann Hollweg to tell Grey that "he [Bethmann] hoped if new developments or emergencies arose in the Balkans, that they would be discussed as frankly between Germany and ourselves [England] as the difficulties

¹ *Twenty-Five Years*, i, 287.

² Grey, i, 304. He repeated this warning on July 9 (*F.O.D.*, 33).

³ Lichnowsky on July 9 declared to Grey that the powers of the triple alliance had no such naval compact. (*F.O.D.*, 34.) This was probably due to his ignorance, not to bad faith.

that arose during the last Balkan crisis, and that we should be able to keep in as close touch."¹ Grey welcomed the assurance warmly. If Bethmann had acted in this manner a fortnight later when the final crisis arose, war would probably have been averted in Grey's belief.² That he did not so act certainly suggests neglect of duty or complicity with the war party.

To the Russian ambassador in London, Grey dwelt on the harm that was done by these reports of an Anglo-Russian naval agreement, which, he said, reached Germany from "friends in Paris and St. Petersburg."³ England and Russia had been accused in Berlin of making a bargain for the opening of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus in their naval discussions; Grey, therefore, told the ambassador that he proposed to say in Parliament that this question had not been discussed by the two powers for five years. From the Russian secret documents it appears that Volkov, the Russian naval attaché in London, intended to raise the question of the straits, and to advocate joint naval and military action by the British and Russian navy and army in the event of a war in which the Turks were hostile. Because of Volkov's intention Grey has since the war been accused in Germany of perfidy. But the statement in Parliament was to refer to action in peace. As for action in war, if Turkey sided against Russia and England, neither Grey nor any other minister could predict what would be done; and Grey had not discussed it.

This affair of the naval agreement did, however, help to cause the war. The secret information made the German government more than ever suspicious⁴ while the non-committal attitude of Grey produced irritation in St. Petersburg which endangered the stability of the triple entente and rendered it difficult for him to ask the Russian government for further concessions to Austria. There was always a danger that Russia might be detached to the German side; indeed, though German critics of foreign policy since the war have treated such a change in Russia's attitude as impossible, it was far from hopeless in June, 1914.⁵ The powerful German

¹ F.O.D., 4.

² Grey, I, 306-7.

³ F.O.D., 6; cf. id., 30.

⁴ cf. F.O.D., 33.

⁵ cf. Francis Ferdinand's scheme discussed at Konopischt; *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 367.

party at the Russian court was gaining strength, and Witte was doing his best to advance its aims, when German and Austrian impatience forced on the war. In fact, according to Lichnowsky and Bethmann, Sazonov had given Germany this signal: "cut loose from Austria and we will cut loose from France."¹

On June 12-14 William II visited Francis Ferdinand at Konopischt. Tirpitz was present, and Treutler represented the German foreign office. A summary of the subjects discussed was given briefly in a despatch from Tschirschky, the German ambassador at Vienna, who said that the two personages "considered in detail all conceivable questions and ascertained that their views were in thorough and complete agreement."² Action against Serbia must have been examined because it was the one urgent problem, but Treutler, in his very incomplete report on the meeting,³ is entirely silent on that subject. We know, however, from Francis Joseph's statement to Conrad that Francis Ferdinand's main business was to ascertain "whether we [Austrians] in the future can unconditionally reckon on Germany."⁴ Francis Joseph said that William II had evaded an answer to this question on which the issue of immediate war might depend.

Francis Ferdinand in reality had concealed the all-important fact from Francis Joseph—the two were on thoroughly bad terms—for the Archduke told the chief of the Austrian operations' division on the last evening of his life that William II had encouraged and indeed advised him to attack Serbia, with the words, "if we fail to attack the situation will get worse."⁵ This statement was known to Conrad, and is mentioned by him as being at variance with Francis Joseph's. Grave doubt must be felt as to the trustworthiness of Treutler's report in view of the contemporary assertion of the Austrian military press, which was in the closest touch with Francis Ferdinand, that "important military measures were adopted in amplification of those sketched out during the recent meeting of the chiefs of the general staffs at Karlsbad."⁶ Conrad reveals that Francis Ferdinand was convinced that Russia had ceased to

¹ Valentin, 161.

² *Deutschen Dokumente*, I, No. 4.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 365.

⁴ Conrad, iv, 36.

⁵ Conrad, iv, 39.

⁶ F.O.D., I.

be dangerous, and that her internal difficulties were too serious to prevent a policy of action on her part. William II agreed with the Archduke in deploring the Hungarian government's attitude to the Rumanians in Hungary, and insisted on the strengthening of the Austrian fleet to meet the Russian Dreadnoughts in the Black Sea, which explained the presence of Tirpitz. The accelerated construction of four more Austrian Dreadnoughts (in addition to the four then complete or completing) was apparently decided.¹

Two days after William II and the Austrian heir had exchanged views, King Charles of Rumania met the Czar at Constanta and discussed Balkan politics.² The King was anxious for better relations between Russia and Germany, and believed them possible. The marriage of one of the Czar's daughters to Prince Charles of Rumania was considered, and a general understanding between the two states in political questions was reached. The King for his services at Plevna, thirty-seven years before, was appointed a Russian field marshal. If he still regarded himself as bound by the secret treaty of alliance with Austria, the attitude of the Rumanian government left little doubt in the mind of clear-headed observers or in the belief of William II that Rumania would not fight against Russia and Serbia if war came. On June 21 Russia and Rumania presented to the Sultan notes almost identical in character, protesting against the closing of the straits to commercial navigation. Even then mines were being laid by the Turks in view of the possibility of a Greek attack on the Dardanelles.

For the autumn of 1914 Russia was to carry out another test mobilisation. No secret had been made of this intention; Nicholas II informed Prince Hohenlohe of it early in 1913, and it had no influence on subsequent events. Signs of danger in the Balkans multiplied. The tottering princelet of Albania spent most of his time besieged by his too lively subjects, and was only maintained by Austria with extreme difficulty. If he vanished, all that Austria had played for was lost. Rumours that Montenegro and Serbia intended

¹ cf. Take Jonescu, 25; where Berchtold outlined plans for a German-Austrian naval war against England.

² *Livre Noir*, ii, 377-84.

to amalgamate into one state led Vienna to threaten both Kings with war.

William II's departure from Konopischt was followed significantly enough by extensive Austrian military measures on the Serbian frontier, while the Austrian foreign office completed a memorandum on Austrian policy in the Balkans.¹ The gist of it was that Serbia's expansion and her co-operation with Rumania favoured Russia's plans and endangered the safety of Austria. The necessity of an Austrian alliance with Bulgaria was stressed, in order to bring Rumania to heel, and a further alliance between Bulgaria and Turkey was declared to be advisable. The preliminary to this must be the destruction of Serbia as a political factor in the Balkans. The memorandum stated that Russia was engaged in organising a new Balkan league, this time against Austria, and that she had proposed to Bulgaria an agreement with Serbia, on the basis that Bulgaria should receive Macedonia while Serbia took Bosnia. The first draft of the document was ready on June 24. A fortnight earlier, on June 9, German industrial employers had been directed to open the sealed envelopes in their possession containing instructions for mobilisation; and on June 15 contracts were signed with United States firms for the coaling of German cruisers at certain points at sea in the event of war.

Towards the close of June a British battle squadron visited Kiel, while the British battle cruiser squadron visited St. Petersburg. The Kiel visit, in the guidebook phrase, was "variously judged" at the time in Germany. The German naval attaché came over from London to tell German officers to beware, as England was on the verge of attacking.² The rejoicings were a little damped by the arrest of old Lord Brassey as a spy, for his injudicious conduct in rowing about the harbour. The completion of the work of widening the Kiel canal was celebrated, however, by the Kaiser passing the Holtenau lock amid salutes, cheers, and every indication of enthusiasm.

On Sunday, June 28, a telegram reached William II on board his yacht, *Meteor V*, that Francis Ferdinand and his wife had that day been assassinated at Serajevo. His

¹ *D.D.*, i, 21-30; Gooss, 6-24.

² Hase, *Die Zwei Weissen Völker* i 9.

THE WAR GUILT

[1914

face turned ashen grey; with the sphinx-like words, "all my work will now have to be done again," he bade farewell and proceeded to Berlin. On June 30 the British squadron sailed with this message from Admiral Warrender as its parting signal: "Friends in past, and friends for ever." The signal sounded oddly as high British and German officers had been discussing with each other during the visit the danger of general war, and the terrible probability that the Serajevo affair would bring their two countries into collision. There are times when effusiveness is best held in check; and it is possible that Warrender's signal encouraged William II in his delusion that England would stand aloof, and thus helped to cause the war.

CHAPTER VI

SERAJEVO AND AFTER

THE assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, at Serajevo, on June 28, 1914, is still enveloped in some mystery.¹ He selected for his tour in Bosnia a period embracing the anniversary of the battle of Kossovo (June 28) in which the Serbians had been routed by the Turks, and he went to inspect the military forces that were told off for the sudden attack on Serbia which Austrian soldiers meditated. Throughout Bosnia feeling against Austria was rising to fever heat, and his appearance in the Bosnian capital at such a time seemed like a challenge to the revolutionaries. There were rumours beforehand of plots. The Serbian minister at Vienna himself told the Austrian finance minister, Bilinski, that the Archduke's visit at that particular moment would be regarded by all Serbians as provocative and would be dangerous.² Tisza, the Hungarian premier, conscious of the intense unrest in Bosnia, advised the Archduke not to go there. But Francis Ferdinand never lacked courage, and he paid no attention to this advice.

He was believed by many people in the court circle to be suffering from incipient softening of the brain, and it was thought that he had not long to live. It was even said that among his attendants were male nurses, ready to deal with any outbreak of madness.³ Conrad⁴ mentions two occasions on which he did not behave as a person in his normal senses would do; but the Duke of Portland, who in 1912-13 paid

¹ Seton-Watson, *Sarajevo*, 101 ff. See the anti-Serbian account in Durham's *Sarajevo Crime*, 75 ff., and the criticism of Miss Durham in the *Slavonic Review*, December, 1925.

² *Sarajevo*, 154.

³ Stead, i, 367-8; Dumaine, 67-8.

⁴ iii, 436, 470.

him visits and entertained him, noticed nothing wrong, and General Auffenberg¹ states that he observed in him no pathological sign of insanity. He was heartily disliked by Francis Joseph because of his interference in political affairs, and because the Emperor feared that his morganatic marriage with the Duchess of Hohenberg might lead to grave difficulties and possibly even to the separation of Hungary from Austria. Vague reports of the Archduke's supposed schemes were in every Austrian mouth, and the anxiety which they caused has led some people to suspect that his death was due to a palace plot, or to the deliberate omission of the Austrian authorities to give him proper protection.

There is no documentary warrant whatever for any such idea, and no evidence of Austrian or Hungarian complicity. Notwithstanding the extraordinary negligence of Potiorek and the Austrian authorities, the probabilities are all the other way, though it seems true that the Archduke was regarded by the imperial family as a danger to the state, and was personally most unpopular everywhere owing to his violent fits of rage² and his intense antagonism to the Magyars. The most reasonable conclusion is that the crime was the result of a terrorist plot hatched by fanatical South Slavs, who obtained a certain measure of sympathy and support from the more violent and revolutionary elements in Serbia. It would then be parallel to the affairs which Mazzini planned against the Austrians in Italy in the days before the Austrian yoke had been shaken off, or the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson by Sinn Fein conspirators.

The doomed man left Vienna on June 23. He was observed to be unusually gloomy and silent, though his was never an expansive personality. He asked Francis Joseph before his departure whether it would not be well to abandon the journey, which suggests that he had presentiments of danger.³ At Trieste, on the 24th, he embarked in the new Austrian Dreadnought, *Viribus Unitis*, which bore the Emperor's motto as her name, for the Dalmatian coast. Thence he took the train for Bosnia where he was joined by his wife. He was not unfavourably received by the people. On June 26 and 27 the pair watched manœuvres

¹ Auffenberg, 233.

² Czernin, 35-9.
³ Conrad, iv, 37. cf. Auffenberg, 255.

of troops belonging to the 15th and 16th Austrian corps. On June 28 they went to Serajevo. Potiorek, the governor of Bosnia and military commander, having concentrated 100,000 men near the Serbian frontier,¹ neglected all precautions for the protection of the Archduke. Francis Ferdinand had been offered a strong force of detectives by the Hungarian government,² but declined them, though when Francis Joseph visited Serajevo in 1910 3,000 police were employed to guard him.³ The security of the Archduke was placed in the hands of the numerically weak military police, who had orders to watch suspicious characters.

The Archduke and his wife were received by Potiorek at the station and drove in a motor car, preceded and followed by other cars, to the town hall, where various ceremonies were to take place. During the drive a young Austrian Jugo-Slav, Cabrinovitch,⁴ who had a pass from the Vienna police, and was known to be the son of an Austrian police spy, threw a bomb at the Archduke's car. The Archduke knocked it aside with his hand, and it fell behind him, close to the car that was following, when it burst feebly, wounding two officers in his suite, one of them severely. The ceremonies at the town hall were attended by no fresh incident, and after them the Archduke, who was in one of his fits of rage at the reception given to him, drove to the military hospital, to inquire as to the condition of the wounded. No steps were even then taken to protect him. Potiorek, whose attitude was casual to a degree, remarked that he knew the Bosnians well, and nothing was more unlikely than two attempts at assassination on the same day.

Only one precaution was ordered. It was decided that the Archduke should not go through the town but by the Appel quay which runs along the northern bank of the Miljacka river. Potiorek neglected to give the chauffeur of the Archduke's car precise instructions, with the result that he turned off the quay at the Latin Bridge to go into the town. He was stopped by Potiorek and told to back,

¹ *Rapport*, i, 66.

² Windischgraetz, *Vom roten zum schwarzen Prinzen*, 50; Gooss, 47.

³ Steed, i, 401.

⁴ On his arrival in Belgrade a few weeks earlier, the Serbian government had inquired of the Austrian authorities about his antecedents and had been told that he was a satisfactory person: *F.O.D.*, 64.

and as he reversed and moved slowly backwards a young man stepped forward from the crowd and fired three shots from an automatic pistol into the Archduke's car. At the first shot the Archduke was hit; the second and third hit the Duchess of Hohenberg who had risen to protect her husband with her body. She fell unconscious on his shoulder. Francis Ferdinand for some minutes retained consciousness though blood poured from his mouth. The assassin was knocked down by one of the Austrian military police with a sword. The car with the two bleeding victims in it drove to the governor's palace which was reached in two minutes. Both were beyond human aid. The Archduke died ten minutes after he had been carried in, and it was noticed that the hour was 11 a.m. when he breathed his last.¹

The assassin was a young Austrian Jugo-Slav named Princip. An unexploded bomb was picked up farther along the route which the Archduke was to have followed, and if he had escaped the pistol shots other attempts were to have been made on him. In all seven persons were stationed on his route with bombs and automatic pistols. Unlike Potiorek, the terrorists left nothing to chance.

After the crime Potiorek manifested a cynical indifference, remarking to the suite, "this is a terrible misfortune; nevertheless one must eat; let us go to luncheon."² Conrad was struck by the fact that Francis Joseph showed Potiorek no ill will. Lichnowsky, the German ambassador in England, spoke with legitimate astonishment of "the avenue of bombs" through which the Austrian governor had conducted his visitors. Tschirschky, the German ambassador at Vienna, remarked, "if at some insignificant station an Archduke is bitten by a fly, the station-master has got to pay for it by losing his job; yet for this battue in the streets of Serajevo not a hair on anyone's head has been touched."³ In short there was a general feeling that Austria was well rid of an unstable and incalculable influence; and the riddance was "almost providential"⁴ because in death the Archduke had presented the Austrian war party with a most satisfactory *casus belli*.

¹ The hour of the Armistice. (cf. Conrad, iv, 22.)

² Stead, i, 400.

³ Auffenberg, 255.

⁴ cf. F.O.D., 28.

Reports that a Slav plot existed against the German Emperor prevented him from coming to Vienna for his friend's funeral. In that ceremony the dead Archduke and his wife were treated with so little respect by Francis Joseph's order as to provoke much comment, and the old Emperor told a friend that his nephew's death had removed a danger to Austria. At Budapest there was little or no sign of mourning; at Vienna there was "complete indifference."¹ The Archduke had ordered in his will that his burial should take place with his wife at Artstetten. The bodies were driven to the Western station in Vienna in the gloom of a close and thundery summer evening. There was talk in the station with bated breath on policy, and Conrad told General Auffenberg that "now the richly merited punishment would be exacted from Serbia."² At Artstetten the final rites were carried out after a long delay caused by the thunder and the downpour. Thus passed the second of Francis Joseph's heirs by a violent death in the old sovereign's lifetime. A fortune-teller had predicted to Francis Ferdinand that "he would one day let loose a world war,"³ and terribly the prediction was fulfilled. The news of his death echoed like the crash of an alarm gun through Europe. Twelve noble sons of the Trojans were slain to honour Patroclus's burial. Over the corpse, which had been so ignominiously huddled away in the vault of that great castle which overlooks the Danube, ten million human beings were to be immolated.

The principals in the assassination were three, the two actual assassins (Princip and Cabrinovitch), and an Austrian Slav named Grabez, who was arrested immediately. Two other young Bosnians, Ilitch and Gachinovitch, were the organisers and directors of the conspiracy. In all twenty-five persons were ultimately tried in October, 1914, after the war had begun. In every case they were Austrian subjects, of Slav race, and advocates of a Greater Serbia. Most of them were avowed terrorists or anarchists, and perfectly ready to risk their lives. Cabrinovitch, Princip and Grabez were mere boys, under 20, and had been in Belgrade, the Serbian capital, shortly before the crime, but there was no evidence that they had been encouraged by the Serbian

¹ Dumaine, 135.

² Czernin, 44.

³ Auffenberg, 256.

government. The case against the criminals, so far as it was disclosed by the Austrian authorities, contained no serious implications against any Serbian officer or official other than a Major Tankositch, who was the chief of a guerrilla band in the Balkan wars, and an obscure railway clerk, Ciganovitch, who had himself, at one time, been an Austrian employee and subsequently a guerrilla in Tankositch's band. It also appeared that various minor Serbian officials had been concerned in smuggling the assassins over the frontier, a month before the crime, at Ciganovitch's and Tankositch's instance.

The principals themselves insisted that Serbia had had nothing to do with the assassinations. The charges which were brought at a much later date against a Serbian officer, Colonel Dimitrievitch, and the Serbian government, are examined in the final chapter of this work. The verdict of perhaps the greatest living authority on South Slav affairs and history¹ is that Serbia was innocent. "The unanimous view of 'Young Bosnia,'" says this authority, "may be summed up in the phrase . . . 'The youth [of Bosnia] worked without the government [of Serbia], secretly from the government, and against the government.'" A comparison of dates confutes the absurd tale that the conspirators at Belgrade were informed from Russia that Francis Ferdinand and William II had decided on war with Serbia at Konopischt.²

Cabrinovitch, Princip and Grabez were condemned to twenty years' imprisonment, as the law did not allow the execution of persons under twenty. Three of their confederates were executed; ten others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, and nine were acquitted. The three principals were cruelly treated, and died miserably in prison.

The Austrian government afterwards professed that behind the conspirators was the Narodna Odbrana, a Serbian patriotic society, which had propagandist aims, but worked quite openly like the German or British Navy League. The association in question was said by the Austrian government to have maintained in Austria a secret terrorist branch, the "Black Hand,"³ and to have carried out its propaganda in collusion with the Serbian government against the Austrian Empire. No proof of these contentions was ever produced.

¹ Dr. Seton-Watson in *Sarajevo*, 152.

² *Sarajevo*, 138 ff.; for German opinion see *Grosse Politik*, xxxviii, 359 ff.

³ *id.*, 142.

The Serbian government at that date was itself attempting to put down the "Black Hand," which was the adversary and not the confederate of the Narodna Odbrana. War at such a juncture, and precipitated by such a crime, was not at all to Serbia's interest. The military position of the country was desperate. Austrian authorities at the outset saw this clearly enough, and did not accuse Serbia. The Austrian ambassador at Constantinople told the Serbian chargé d'affaires there, on June 30, that Berchtold "was satisfied with the attitude of the Serbian government, and that he, on his part, sincerely desired friendly relations with Serbia."¹ Tisza, the arch-enemy of the Slavs in Hungary, on July 1 reported to Francis Joseph that "we have not sufficient proof to be able to place the responsibility for the crime on Serbia."²

From Serajevo a high Austrian official, Wiesner, charged with the task of investigating the facts of the crime, reported on July 13,³ "there is nothing to prove or even support the view that the Serbian government was concerned in inciting the crime, preparing for it, or furnishing the weapons used. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that this is quite out of the question. . . . There can be no doubt that the bombs used came from the [Serbian] army stores at Kragujevatz, but there is no proof that they were obtained for this crime, as they might have been in the hands of the guerrillas since the war [of 1912-13.]" Potiorek, it is true, strongly contradicted this verdict, but his knowledge of Bosnia and his judgment were usually both at fault.

Though the death of the Archduke evoked singularly little regret in Austria, and though the evidence produced against Serbia was unconvincing to a cool judge, Austrian diplomacy, after some moments of hesitation, used the crime as justification for an immediate attack on Serbia. At the outset indeed Berchtold was not eager to go to extremes; he told Conrad on June 29 that he thought of sending a note to Serbia which would call on her to dissolve various leagues and societies that were regarded as anti-Austrian and to dismiss the police minister.⁴ He feared an insurrection in Bohemia, and thought that Russia would intervene in the event of war with Serbia, and that Germany might leave Austria in the lurch. The Austrian press was encouraged to inveigh

¹ *C.D.*, 372.

² *Austrian Red Book*, i, No. 2.

³ *id.*, No. 17.

⁴ Conrad, iv, 34.

against Serbia, and English newspapers which were amenable to Austrian influence were induced to couple with their condolences denunciations of the Serbians as enemies of peace.

On June 30 Berchtold, who changed his plans and his opinions from hour to hour, proposed to Tisza a sudden attack on Serbia without any warning or ultimatum, to take vengeance on that state and partition it.¹ Tisza strongly opposed such a course on the ground that the moment was unfavourable, inasmuch as Rumania was doubtful and Russia would certainly intervene, while no reliance could be placed on Germany. A good *casus belli*, he said, could be obtained whenever Austria wanted it. Tschirschky on that same day reported to Berlin a conversation which he had with Berchtold.² In this, contrary to the evidence then available, Berchtold told him that "all the threads of the conspiracy to which the Archduke has fallen victim met in Belgrade." Tschirschky added, "I hear here, even among the most serious people, the wish constantly expressed for a complete settlement, once and for all, with the Serbians." On this William II commented in one of his famous marginal notes, "now or never." The German ambassador at Vienna continued: "I use every such opportunity to warn people calmly, but very impressively and earnestly, against excessively hasty steps." William II commented once more in words which had a tragic influence in causing the war: "Who authorised him to do this? It is idiotic. It is none of his business; what she may decide to do is entirely Austria's affair. If things go wrong, we shall be told later that 'Germany was not willing!!' Tschirschky must be good enough to stop this lunacy. We must clear the Serbians out of the way, and that too forthwith."

The effect of such a comment on Tschirschky³ (who was previously notorious enough for his violence against the Serbians, and had tried to stir up Berlin against them) can easily be understood. He had, perhaps, imagined that William II was favourable to the Serbians, but now he was told by his master that he had been an idiot and a fool for

¹ *A.R.B.*, i, No. 2; Kanner, 206.

² *D.D.*, i, No. 7.

³ *F.O.D.*, 32, 114; Dumaine, 131; Take Jonescu, 14. But in May Tschirschky questioned whether Germany was wise to link her fate so closely with the Austrian monarchy, which, he said, was falling to pieces, *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 364. cf. also Gooss, 6, where we are told that before the crime Berchtold was "doing his utmost to open Tschirschky's eyes."

urging caution, and was instructed to throw all his influence into the scale of immediate war with Serbia. The sad words of Edward VII recur to the memory: "With a man of so impulsive a temperament as the German Emperor at the head of the greatest military power in Europe, anything may happen." Thus on or about July 2—for Tschirschky's document reached the German foreign office on July 2 and was returned by William II on July 4—the German Emperor was inciting Austria to attack Serbia and was accepting without examination the careless, precipitate assertions of the Austrian government, whose untrustworthiness had been proved by its use of forged documents in the Agram prosecutions of six years before. If Tschirschky was thenceforward conspicuous in urging Vienna to take the most dangerous and violent course the responsibility attaches directly to William II. He had forgotten Bismarck's warning that there is no "clearing out of the way" possible in the case of a virile and expanding European nationality.

This was a moment when Bethmann Hollweg might well have averted disaster by discussing with Grey (as he had declared little more than a week earlier that he intended to do) the "new developments or emergencies" that had arisen in the Balkans. That the German position was difficult, any fair-minded person will allow. The Austrian alliance was now the only one left. Italy was uncertain; Rumania was believed, or indeed known, to be actually hostile.¹ Yet, after all, the military, financial and industrial strength of Germany was terrific, and if she was isolated, it was mainly as the result of the policy which her statesmen and sovereign had pursued when they threatened France and Russia in turn, and by their navy acts forced England into a close understanding with France and Russia. Frank explanations on Bethmann's part would have shown him the appalling danger of encouraging Austria to attack Serbia. As for destroying Austria, England, France and Russia had not the slightest wish to face the risks which such a programme would create.

A reproof was conveyed to Tschirschky by the German foreign office, of which fact the Austrian ambassador at

¹ cf. *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 520, where the German minister at Bucarest reports on June 17, 1914, that the Rumanian government can "under no pretext allow an Austrian attack on Serbia."

Berlin, Szögyeny, informed his government on July 8.¹ On July 2 Tschirschky had an audience of Francis Joseph, who came forward "with elastic step," and said that in his view the future was very black.² He discussed German relations with England and was evidently under the impression that her support of France and Russia was dubious. He spoke of Serbia, and declared her a danger to Austria and therefore to the triple alliance. Tschirschky—who may already have been warned by telephone of the view at Berlin—told him that "my Emperor intends to back up any firm decision which Austria reaches," that Germany would resolutely support Austria in the defence of her vital interests, and that Austria herself had the right to determine whether those vital interests were affected in the existing crisis. The old Emperor lamented the death of Pollio, the Italian chief of staff, an eager supporter of the triple alliance, and remarked, "all about me die; it is too sad."

Francis Joseph, however, knowing nothing of the promise of support against Russia which William II had given at Konopischt, was not satisfied with any verbal declaration of the German ambassador. He wanted a written, definite pledge, but he was determined on war if he could get that pledge. He, therefore, advised Berchtold, apparently on July 1, to lay the plan of a sudden attack on Serbia before William II, with whose consent the difficulties in the way would be greatly diminished. On July 2 the draft of a letter from Francis Joseph to William II was submitted by Berchtold and transcribed in the old Emperor's own hand. It was so conceived as to bind William II to back Austria in the most violent measures against Serbia. It declared once more that the threads of the "bloody deed at Serajevo" reached to Belgrade; that Austrian efforts must therefore be directed towards isolating Serbia and reducing her territory; that, as a step towards this end, a Balkan league should be formed under the domination of the triple alliance, between Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, with Rumania, if she could be induced to forsake Serbia, and that any reconciliation with Serbia was out of the question. With the letter, which was slightly modified by Tisza to avoid "frightening Berlin," was forwarded the prolix memoir on Austrian policy in the Balkans that had been drawn up before the Serajevo crime, and

¹ Gooss, 40.² *D.D.*, 1, Nos. 9 and 11.

a brief supplementary statement which declared it necessary for the Austrian monarchy "to seize the threads of the net which its enemies are weaving over its head with a strong hand, and tear them apart."¹ It was a programme of complete upheaval in the Balkans and general war.²

On July 4 Tschirschky told an Austrian official that Germany "would support the monarchy through thick and thin. . . . The earlier Austria attacks the better. It would have been better to attack yesterday than to-day; and better to attack to-day than to-morrow."³ Meantime the attitude of the Serbian government was humble enough, though the freedom of the press which existed in Serbia prevented a strict control of the newspapers, and led to violent and foolish utterances in the less important journals. But one piece of excellent advice which was given to Serbia by the German acting foreign secretary, Zimmermann, was not carried out.⁴ This was to offer Serbian aid to the Bosnian officials in their investigations into the origin and ramifications of the Serajevo plot. By the *London Times*, which was a disinterested friend of Serbia, the Serbian authorities were urged at once to open an inquiry; and their failure to do so was an unfortunate omission which justified suspicion. The Serbian government, however, intimated its profound sorrow, and asked for German mediation at Vienna. It pointed out that the Serbian press campaign against Austria had been provoked by an Austrian press campaign against Serbia, which was undoubtedly true. It made repeated inquiries as to the attitude of the Austrian government. On July 3 Macchio, one of the highest officials in the Austrian foreign office, told the Serbian minister: "No one accuses the Serbian kingdom or government or people. We only accuse those who support the Pan-Serb projects and work for their realisation." On July 4 Szögyeny reported Zimmermann, the German foreign under-secretary, as saying that while he thought energetic action by Austria would be perfectly justified, he "would advise great discretion and would not like to see humiliating conditions imposed on Serbia."⁵

¹ *D.D.*, 1, 30.² cf. *A.R.B.* (1, 29) which makes it clear that after Serbia, Rumania was to have been throttled; and the phrase "grossen Krieg provozieren"; *A.R.B.*, 1, No. 2.³ Gooss, 40.⁴ *F.O.D.*, 17.⁵ *A.R.B.*, 1, No. 5.

THE WAR GUILT

[July

It was known in Germany that the powers of the triple entente were urging on Serbia the utmost restraint and had declared their conviction that she would satisfy any legitimate demands made by Austria. The war party in Vienna and Berlin, however, wanted no peaceful settlement but the destruction of Serbia, to give Austria and Germany control of the Balkans; they believed that if the opportunity were not used, Austria would tumble to pieces. On July 5 Francis Joseph's letter and the Balkan memorandum were handed to William II by Szögyeny,¹ to whom they had been carried by Count Hoyos, Berchtold's special envoy, with instructions to give explanations and ascertain feeling at Berlin. William invited Szögyeny to lunch with him and before lunch read the documents, and said they "made him regard European complications as possible"—which is proof that he understood the scope of Austria's proposed action—and that he must consult with Bethmann Hollweg. After that fateful meal and without any thorough discussion of the facts, he promised Austria Germany's full support, subject always to Bethmann's agreement, of which, however, he declared himself certain.

Down to this point he had been regarded in Vienna as being on the whole friendly to Serbia, but now he entered enthusiastically into the Austrian war schemes. He advised that action against Serbia should not be delayed.² He said that Russia would doubtless be hostile, but that he was ready for this. If war between Austria and Russia became inevitable Germany would stand side by side with Austria. "Russia at the present time was in no way prepared for war and would think twice before she appealed to arms. But she would certainly incite other powers against the triple alliance, and add fuel to the flames in the Balkans. . . . He would regret it if we [the Austrians] did not make use of the present opportunity which is all in our favour." With characteristic heedlessness he omitted any reference to Italy, and promised to make Rumania "observe a correct attitude."³ While expressing suspicion of Bulgaria he declared that he had no objection to a treaty of alliance

¹ A.R.B., i, No. 6, 7.

² A.R.B., i, No. 6. In his letter of July 14 to Francis Joseph he spoke of "this Russian and Pan-Slav agitation," (A.R.B., i, No. 18) showing that he regarded Austria's action as aimed against Russia.

³ Forgetting his own marginal note (*Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 521) "Oho, so the Rumanians are going to aid the Russians."

1914] WILLIAM II FOR ACTION

between her and Austria. In all this interview not a word was spoken to warn the Austrians of the risks they were running or of the wickedness of forcing on a general war until every resource of diplomacy had been exhausted and the truth about the plot at Serajevo ascertained.

On the following day Szögyeny and Hoyos saw Bethmann, who told them that he also considered "immediate action on our [the Austrians'] part the best solution of our difficulties in the Balkans; from an international standpoint he regards the present moment as more favourable than some later date can be; he agrees with us that we need inform neither Italy nor Rumania beforehand of our intended action against Serbia. . . . Whatever our decision may be, we can depend on Germany to stand behind the [Austrian] monarchy as an ally and a friend."¹ The grave fact which this second interview at Berlin brought out was that Bethmann, by confirming the Kaiser's blank cheque, and calling for swift action, had ranged himself with the party of violence, and was not supporting the German foreign office, which had shown some signs of a wish for peace. Yet Bethmann was generally regarded as a pillar of peace. His failure in the higher statesmanship at such a moment stamps him as utterly unfit for his position. It was the graver because both Szögyeny and Hoyos agree that he recognised definitely that a general war might result from Austria's action.²

July 5 was the date of the alleged crown council at Potsdam, which, according to reports current in the war, decided on war. But though the decisions reached that day rendered war inexorably certain, unless they were recalled as hastily as they had been made, there was no crown council. From the German standpoint it is surely one of the gravest counts against William II's government that he gave Austria a blank cheque without first fully examining with his ministers and experts the probable consequences. The absence of anything like a British cabinet council in the management of German policy had grievous consequences both for the world and for Germany herself. On July 6, according to previous arrangements, he was to leave for his usual summer visit to the Norwegian coast. He did not postpone his departure as he did not wish to alarm Europe or give the entente powers any reason for concerting measures.

¹ A.R.B., i, No. 7.

² Hoyos, *Deutsch-Englische Gegensatz*, 80.

THE WAR GUILT

[July 1-6]

In fact, he was not only quite ready to risk a general war but was also determined to do his best to dupe the peaceful powers of Europe; and this may have been the reason why his chancellor, Bethmann, failed to enter into any discussions with Grey on the German plan of action.

On July 5 or July 6 William II saw various German officers and officials. Captain Zenker, of the naval staff, was told of his decision to support Austria in case of tension with Russia. "He did not believe," Zenker reported, "that Russia would intervene on the Serbians' behalf when they were disgraced by the stain of murder. France would hardly risk a war when her field army lacked heavy artillery. But while a war with Russia and France was not probable, its possibility must always be kept in view."¹ England he never mentioned. He had a hurried and casual talk with Admiral Capelle, of the German admiralty, and orders were issued immediately afterwards to German squadrons and ships on distant stations. Admiral Souchon, commanding the battle cruiser *Goeben* in the Mediterranean, was told that the situation was not free from anxiety;² and Spee, commanding the cruiser squadron in the Pacific, was directed to withdraw to a remote island in touch with the cable. Tirpitz, who was absent from Berlin but had excellent information,³ reported the Kaiser as stating that war was improbable because "Russia was for military and financial reasons unready." William II saw Zimmermann, Bertrab, a staff officer, and the Prussian war minister, Falkenhayn,⁴ and decided with them that "measures which were likely to attract public attention or incur special expenditure were to be avoided," though he told Falkenhayn that "extremely grave consequences" might follow Austria's action. Moltke, like Tirpitz, was away. Bussche states that it was determined to make preliminary preparations for war and that the necessary orders were issued.⁵

The German staff afterwards declared that it gave no special orders in consequence of these interviews, so far as concerned the army. Its arrangements were so perfect, and had been so thoroughly worked out, that there may

¹ D.D., i, xvi.

² Groos, *Krieg in der Nordsee*, i, 3.

³ D.D., iv, 171.

⁴ *Erinnerungen*, 209.

⁵ *Weltkrieg*, i, 25-6.



HERR T. VON BETHMANN HOLLWEG.

Born, 1856; died, 1921. German Chancellor from 1909 to 1917.

well have been no reason for last-minute changes, but here there is a conflict of German evidence. It is not likely that its registers and papers and those of the ministry of war will be produced and investigated; but, until they have been, its exact part in these last days of peace remains undetermined. It was a factor more important than the Kaiser or the foreign office, working furiously in the twilight of the dingy building in the Thiergarten in Berlin, where it had its head-quarters. "I am here, ready to pounce, waiting; we are ready in the general staff," wrote Waldersee, its acting head, some days later.¹ Bethmann, in a telegram of instruction to Tschirschky on July 6 told him that William II did not propose to interfere in the Serbian affair, but "in accordance with his duties as an ally and his old friendship, would stand faithfully by Austria's side." The words "under all circumstances" were added in the draft and struck out by Bethmann.²

Thus the decision to accept the risks of war was confirmed by German statesmen, soldiers and seamen, but without any full and formal deliberation. All agreed that Serbia must be chastised and humiliated, and that Austria must be supported even at the cost of war with Russia, which they all knew would bring France into the field. They encouraged her to a policy of violence. All accepted a catch-phrase as to "localising the conflict" by way of salving their consciences. It meant, in the words of a British diplomat, that "all the powers were to hold the ring while Austria strangled Serbia."³ All must have been aware that such an attack on Serbia would alarm Russia and wound her to the quick because of her Slav sympathies, and because the annihilation of Serbia would revolutionise the Balkan situation and endanger the Russian position in the Black Sea. All knew that every great European power was directly concerned in the Balkans, which had for three generations been the powder magazine of Europe.

All knew that in the past no single great power had been allowed by the other powers to settle Balkan affairs at its will. France and England had intervened in 1854 and Austria and England in 1878 when Russia attempted to annihilate Turkey. Austria had intervened in 1912-13

¹ *Id.*, i, No. 74.

² *F.O.D.*, 157.

³ *D.D.*, i, No. 15.

when Serbia attempted to fight her way through what was then Turkish territory to the Adriatic. Italy had intervened in 1913 when Austria proposed to destroy Serbia. For many generations it had been a principle that no war in Europe could be considered purely local, the only exceptions being the three wars which Bismarck waged in 1864, 1866, and 1870-71. Palmerston would not have permitted Austria in 1849 to make an end of Piedmont, had she wanted to do so, and the French, despite their distrust of Cavour and Charles Albert, were prepared in that event to go to Piedmont's aid.

Those who maintain that the German government did not anticipate war at this juncture, claim that the absence of any warning to Italy and of any question as to her attitude shows that a peaceful issue so far as concerned the great powers was expected. But this omission is almost certainly to be explained by the fact that Moltke and the staff believed Italy's aid was certain—a belief which was shared at this moment by France,¹ as the result of the naval agreement between Italy, Austria and Germany. The Austrian government, however, after its experiences in 1913, expected a rebuff from her and dreaded efforts on her part in co-operation with the entente powers to prevent such a destruction of Serbia as was meditated. Berchtold was afraid the Italian government would demand Valona, which he was resolved not to concede.² Conrad always distrusted Italy and feared her, and throughout the period of tension one of the main anxieties of Austrian statesmen was to prevent the reference of the charges against Serbia to a conference of ambassadors which had in 1912-13 maintained peace, and which Italy might have proposed had she known what was brewing. Vienna was determined that peace should not "break out."

By the seventh article of the treaty of alliance, Austria was required to consult with Italy before taking any steps in the Balkans which would affect the *status quo* there, and to satisfy Italian interests and claims. This article had led Austria in 1908 to evacuate the Sanjak in return for the annexation of Bosnia; and now the failure to observe

¹ Moltke, *Erinnerungen*, 9; *Livre Noir*, ii, 220-1.

² A.R.B., i, No. 3. cf. *Grosse Politik*, xxxviii, 358, which shows that Italy warned Germany that an Austrian attack on Serbia would destroy the triple alliance and bring war with Italy, as early as July 10, 1914.

it certainly suggests that war was expected and that the desire was, as Berchtold said himself, to confront Italy with an accomplished fact,¹ and then extort her approval under pressure. The treaty which formed the basis of the triple alliance was defensive; it only came into force "if one or two of the high contracting parties, without direct provocation on their part are attacked,"² whereas the action which Austria intended was offensive, aimed equally against Serbia and Russia, and also vitally affected Italian interests which would be injured by an extension of Austrian authority to Macedonia and Salonica, such as was seemingly purposed in secret.

A second argument advanced to prove the complete innocence of Germany is that the German staff did not make elaborate economic preparations for war by importing food, nickel, copper, rubber, and all the exotic products which German industry and armaments would require. But it is certain that there was a full six months' supply of all requisites in Germany in August, 1914, and it is also certain that some time previously warning had been given to financial circles to be ready for a great war.³ So far as it is true that large reserves of raw materials had not been accumulated, this was probably due to two considerations. The first was that the German staff and everyone in Germany believed that the war would be short and brilliantly successful. Moltke, we know, had from time to time felt secret doubts; and he had no great confidence in himself, but he told Conrad that about the thirty-ninth or fortieth day after mobilisation began Germany would have decisively defeated France.⁴ William II, in 1914 told a visitor to Berlin—who long remembered his words—that in a fortnight from the date when the German army completed its deployment his troops would be at the gates of Paris—as indeed they were. Schlieffen, the predecessor of Moltke, had in 1909 declared that a long war, or a struggle of attrition, was impossible. It is strange that German soldiers so entirely disregarded the opinion of the elder Moltke who predicted in 1890⁵ that the next war would

¹ D.D., i, No. 87.

² Pribram, i, 102.

³ Helfferich, *Weltkrieg*, ii, 22-8; F.O.D., 205.

⁴ Nowak, *Weg zur Katastrophe*, 54.

⁵ Kuhl, *Generalstab*, 138.

be protracted, and could not be ended in one or two years of campaigning, owing to the universal adoption of the system of national service on the continent. It might, he said, last seven or even thirty years.

Helfferrich¹ who was in the closest touch with German military thinkers, admits that none of them in 1914 anticipated a long war. "The view that a modern war could only be of brief duration prevailed," he says, "in military as in commercial circles, because of the destructive power of modern weapons, the loss of labour through calling up the manhood of the country, and the enormous financial cost." Kuhl confesses that the staff were all wrong together in believing that the war would be short. It was, in fact, so far as the opinions of July, 1914, can be recovered from the existing evidence, to be "a brisk, lively" little affair, such as the Six Weeks' war against Austria in 1866, and it was not even expected to last six months, as had the French war of 1870. The Austrian staff believed, or professed to believe, that it could secure the complete defeat of Russia in eight months at the utmost.² France was to be overpowered or destroyed, and then it was assumed that Russia could be quickly brought to terms, and both France and Russia enrolled in a coalition against England, if she made any trouble about the annexation to Germany of Belgium, the Congo, and the French colonies. Such were the dreams of the Thiergarten, which never foresaw the furious four years' conflict and the endless terrible battles with German collapse at the end before the rising anger of the world.

A second consideration which must have prevented the German government from buying supplies in enormous quantities abroad, was its desire not to alarm the entente powers, but to take Europe by surprise, if Russia should move and if she should be supported by France. Immense purchases of material and supplies could not have been concealed, and would have put everyone on the alert, at a time when William II was careful to telegraph his usual birthday congratulations to King Peter of Serbia in order not to place Serbia on her guard.

On July 6 Grey had an interview with Lichnowsky³ in

¹ Helfferrich, *Weltkrieg*, ii, 43.

² F.O.D., 24.

³ Andrassy, *Weltkrieg*, 139.

which that German ambassador hinted plainly that Austrian military action against Serbia was imminent, and that Germany would support Austria because of alarm at the great Russian armaments and the alleged naval convention between England and Russia. "It would be better," he suggested, "not to restrain Austria and let the trouble come now, rather than later." He further hinted that a fresh increase in the German navy programme would follow if there were a British naval agreement with Russia. From the British ambassador in Vienna, the able and perspicacious Sir M. de Bunsen, Grey received warning as to Russian views.¹ Schebeko, the Russian ambassador there, had declared that "a Serbian war means a general war. . . . To make the country in which a plot was prepared responsible for its execution was a new doctrine." Bunsen, in common with his colleagues at Vienna, deplored the evasiveness of Berchtold, from whom no explicit statement of Austria's intentions could be obtained.

The German conversations at Potsdam were followed by an Austrian council at Vienna on July 7.² The new heir to the throne, the Archduke Charles, was not allowed to be present because his pacific tendencies were well known.³ Berchtold, who presided, once more proposed an immediate attack on Serbia without any declaration of war. This scheme had been discussed at Berlin by Hoyos with various German authorities. Berchtold stated that he agreed with Berlin that it would be better not to inform Italy and Rumania beforehand, but "to act first and wait for claims for compensation afterwards." Austrian diplomatists in Berlin had already intimated that the Austrian intention was to partition Serbia between Bulgaria and Albania and make an end of her after destroying the Serbian army by a sudden attack. Tisza, who thought always of Hungarian predominance in the Austrian state, refused his consent to such an attack from motives of policy, and was against the total destruction of Serbia because it would lead to an annexation of Serbian territory and an increase of the Slav elements in Austria, and because it would at once bring Russia into the field. He proposed severe demands on the Serbian government, but not "such as cannot be conceded";

¹ F.O.D., 31.

² Szilassy, 266.

³ A.R.B., i, No. 8.

and only if these demands were refused, was he willing to consent to war, for the purpose of defeating Serbia and reducing her in size. He warned Berchtold against the risks of an immediate war at a moment when Austria was not sure of Rumania, and expressed his preference for a policy which should secure a "marked diplomatic success" by humiliating Serbia. Berchtold replied by pointing out that "we are advised to act without delay" from Berlin.

Krobatin, the war minister, was anxious for an immediate secret mobilisation of the forces required to act against Serbia, and for the despatch of an ultimatum, when the mobilisation was complete. The quicker the better, because the Russian strength was weaker at that moment owing to the large number of recruits who had been given furlough for harvest work. The possibilities of war with Rumania and Russia were then discussed. Conrad¹ admitted that the chances were against Austria if she had to fight Serbia, Rumania and Russia at once; he told Tisza that in the near future they would alter "rather to her disadvantage." The proceedings of the council show plainly enough that in Vienna there was little or no real belief in the possibility of a localised war. No reference was made to Italian military co-operation or opposition beyond the bare mention of Italy by Berchtold. The programme outlined was this: Serbia was to be reduced in size and placed in a position of dependence on Austria. The ruling dynasty was to be dethroned and replaced by a "European ruler." An ultimatum was to be addressed to Serbia in such terms as would render its refusal practically certain, since a diplomatic success would be useless, and Potiorek reported that nothing could be done to subjugate the Bosnian Slavs unless a vigorous blow was dealt to her. Mobilisation was to follow immediately the Serbian rejection of the Austrian ultimatum was received. Military preparations were to be made unobtrusively, but of these no details are given in the documents.

Tisza was still uneasy. He wrote to Francis Joseph a letter on July 8² in which he once more insisted that the moment was not really favourable for a preventive war, and advocated a cautious, pacific policy for the time being, with the despatch of "a strictly measured but not a threatening

¹ *iv.*, 53-6.

² *A.R.B.*, i, No. 12.

note" to Serbia. A violent blow at that state was inexpedient, he maintained, because it must cause Russian intervention and let loose a world war. He added that Berlin, by withdrawing its resistance to the policy of an Austrian alliance with Bulgaria, had given Austria hope of improving her situation later on, if she postponed the war.

Just at this critical moment, however, when it seemed that he would save peace, came a fresh intervention from Germany in favour of war. On July 8 Berchtold reported¹ that Tschirschky had visited him, after receiving a telegram from Berlin, "in which his imperial master instructs him to declare with all possible emphasis that in Berlin action against Serbia is fully expected, and that Germany would not understand any neglect on our part to use this opportunity for dealing a blow." Germany was certain of Rumania. If Austria negotiated further with Serbia she would weaken her position in the triple alliance, and this "might influence Germany's future policy." The effect of this communication could only be to goad Austria into immediate war by threatening her with the loss of the German alliance if she hesitated and took the course which Tisza advised.

German apologists insist that only one telegram of any importance was sent from Berlin in this period to Tschirschky, namely that of July 6 from Bethmann.² They further maintain that the original of such a document as Berchtold mentioned does not exist,³ and that there is no record of it in the German foreign office papers or in the archives of the German embassy at Vienna. Tschirschky's family assert that among his private papers no trace of it remains.⁴ Nor is there any record of a telegram direct from William II to him. There is, however, a telegram of Szögyeny on July 8,⁵ informing Vienna that Tschirschky had been blamed by Berlin for feebleness in the attitude which he had taken up to Berchtold.

The German apologists' theory is that Berchtold either invented the story of the telegram, or greatly exaggerated the scope of Bethmann's message of July 6, in order to overcome Tisza's hostility to immediate war, or, again, that

¹ *id.*, No. 10.

² *D.D.*, i, No. 15, mentioned above, p. 187.

³ *cf.* Kanner, 209; Gooss, 69.

⁴ Montgelas, 172.

⁵ Gooss, 40.

Tschirschky exceeded his instructions and grossly misrepresented them. These explanations impute bad faith to one or other of these two men. Szögyeny's telegram is accounted for by supposing that he was stupid or that he had caught some reflection of Bethmann's instruction of July 6. All this special pleading is unsatisfactory; there clearly was some secret message, perhaps unofficial, urging violent action, but what was its precise tenor we are never likely to know. The evidence of those who were well acquainted with Tschirschky is that for all his truculent temper he was incapable of inventing imaginary instructions with a view to causing war. Berchtold has always since the war maintained the accuracy of his own report in the Austrian records.

On July 11 the German foreign minister, Jagow, telegraphed to Tschirschky to suggest that the ultimatum which Austria was going to send to Serbia should contain a collection of evidence regarding the danger of the Greater Serbian movement.¹ But he stated that the German government did not want to take any part in formulating the demands that were to be made of Serbia; that must be Austria's business. Thus he emphasised the fact that Berlin gave Vienna a blank cheque—in entire disregard of the German government's duty to the German people, which required it to watch and control Austrian vagaries.

On the following day Szögyeny reported from Berlin that "not only the Emperor William but all the authorities here . . . are encouraging us emphatically not to lose the present opportunity, but to treat Serbia with great energy, so as to clear out the conspirators' nest once and for all."²

He added the German reasons for thus urging Austria to "undertake action against Serbia that may eventually end in war"—a general war is clearly meant. They are of the first importance, for the understanding of the crisis and as an answer to assertions that Germany was playing a pacific rôle. Russia, he said, according to the German view, was not prepared for war at that moment, and was "not by any means so strong as she would be in a few years. Furthermore the German government believes it has proof that England would not take part in a war caused by an

¹ D.D., I, No. 31.

² A.R.B., I, No. 15.

upheaval in the Balkans even if Russia and France were involved in it." Thus the last check upon the reckless schemes of the Vienna war party was removed. After the catastrophe they protested that they would never have made war on Serbia had they known that England would support her allies. King Charles of Rumania said at the time—on July 10—that "people at Vienna had lost their heads." The more to encourage them William II supplied entirely misleading assurances that Rumanian action against Austria was "out of the question."³

While Austria was arranging her plans and the date of war, Conrad advised, about July 10, that everything "should be avoided that might alarm our antagonists, and lead them to take counter-precautions; peaceful intentions should be simulated."⁴ That same day, the 10th, died the Russian minister at Belgrade, Hartwig, while he was in the Austrian legation. It was evidence of the excited state of men's minds that he was said to have been poisoned with a cup of tea. Actually he died of heart failure.⁵

Incited to war by William II and Tschirschky and threatened with the loss of the German alliance if it did not go to war, the bellicose Austrian government decided on the course which was to bring such disaster on Austria and on Europe. Tisza's resistance was overcome, evidently as the result of the German threats, by July 14, on the condition that no Serbian territory should be annexed but with the proviso that Serbian territory might be "provisionally occupied," and permanently partitioned among other Balkan states. It was determined to send such an ultimatum to Serbia that she would not be able to accept it when immediate war was to follow. Already William II was complaining petulantly of Austrian delays. A report from Tschirschky, telegraphed on the 10th, reached him on the Norwegian coast on July 12. It contained the news that as yet no decision had been reached by the Austrian government. On this he commented:⁶ "As his Majesty's [Francis Joseph's] memorandum is about fourteen days old, this is waiting very long! This, too, merely to sketch out the basis of the decision!" Another marginal note called for "very definite and unequivocal demands" on Serbia.

³ A.R.B., I, 34.
⁴ id., No. 14.

⁵ F.O.D., 48.
⁶ D.D., I, No. 29.

One of the conditions which William II suggested was "the evacuation of the Sanjak! then there will be a row at once! Austria must incontestably recover it at once, to prevent the union of Serbia and Montenegro and to hinder the Serbians from reaching the sea!" A suggestion of Tisza's that the Austrian government ought to act "like gentlemen" was dismissed by the Kaiser with the scornful comment, "against murderers, after what has happened!" An announcement that the Austrian war minister and chief of staff had left Vienna, "expressly to avoid causing any disquietude" to Serbia, was condemned as "childish." The Kaiser added a postscript: "Nearly as in the time of the Silesian wars! 'I am against councils of war and conferences because the more timid party always has the upper hand!' Frederick the Great." William II's contribution to peace was a call for immediate violence.

At the time most clear-sighted onlookers believed that the absence of so many high officials and officers from Berlin and Vienna was deliberately planned in order to throw Serbia and the pacific powers off their guard. This is now proved, by the documents, to have actually been the case. The Austrian government instructed its press to observe a moderate tone, and the official organs affected optimism. But on July 10 stocks began to fall, showing that German and Austrian financiers had received hints of what was coming and were making their preparations. At Vienna and Berlin it was thought that Hartwig's death was specially favourable to the Austrian plans because at the critical moment it deprived the Serbians of the aid of their warmest Russian advocate and supporter. There was no outward sign of the storm impending except the persistent selling of securities on all the stock exchanges of Europe (which selling proceeded from German and Austrian agents), and vague rumours in Vienna and Berlin. And so it was that the British ambassadors at Berlin and Constantinople were absent for the usual summer holiday. The French President, Poincaré, was about to leave France on a visit to St. Petersburg which had been long before arranged, and he was to be accompanied by the French prime minister, Viviani. That journey would not have been made had not the entente powers been duped by the ostentatiously pacific attitude of Austria and Germany.

On July 12 information that the Austrian forces on the Serbian and Russian frontiers were being strengthened reached Serbia and Russia, and the fact became known in Berlin through the betrayal of Russian secret documents. On the 11th Tschirschky in a private letter which is not printed in the German collection of war documents gave Berlin a general account of the contents of the coming Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, including the facts that it would require an Austrian official to superintend the Serbian authorities in putting down the Greater Serbia movement, and that a time limit of only forty-eight hours would be granted.¹ The form of a private letter was used to secure the utmost secrecy and enable Bethmann and Jagow to profess—as they did afterwards—that they knew nothing of the terms of the Austrian ultimatum. While this may have been, in the abstract, a permissible diplomatic device to evade inconvenient inquiries, it is not easily to be reconciled with Bethmann's undertaking, before the crisis arose, to discuss events with Grey—an undertaking which presupposed candour and not duplicity on his part.

On July 13 Tschirschky telegraphed to his government that the terms of the ultimatum were to be settled next day, and submitted, on July 15, to Francis Joseph at Ischl,² so that the missive could be delivered to the Serbian government before Poincaré's departure for St. Petersburg. On the 14th the German foreign office instructed German diplomatic representatives in Rome and Bucarest to exert influence on the press in preparation for the drastic punishment of Serbia, but to avoid causing any suspicion that—as the documents show to have actually been the case—Germany was egging Austria on to war.³ At this moment there was a fresh sign of hesitation in Austria. Berchtold decided to wait till Poincaré had visited St. Petersburg and had left again, before delivering the ultimatum. This aroused the Kaiser's impatience.⁴ "What a pity!" he wrote in one of his marginal comments. But Tschirschky gave him the assurance that the note would "be so drawn up that its acceptance will be as good as out of the question" [*ausgeschlossen*] which word his Majesty twice underlined approvingly.

¹ Valentin, 181; Reichstag Committee, 119; cf. Bethmann's *Betrachtungen*, I, 138.

² D.D., I, No. 40.
³ id., No. 44.
⁴ id., No. 49.

In mid-July there was a debate in the French Senate in which special attention was called to the serious deficiencies in the French armaments, and particularly to the want of heavy artillery for the field army, the lack of powerful wireless installations in the fortresses and the inadequate supply of boots, by Senator Humbert. This debate undoubtedly encouraged the Austrian war party. Mean-time elaborate inquiries were made of the German government by the Austrian authorities as to the dates and hours of President Poincaré's visit to Russia and departure. The time-table was indeed obtained by the German government from St. Petersburg so as to avoid arousing Russian suspicions.¹ Unfortunately for the plotters, the President was not to leave Cronstadt till the evening of July 23, and the prospect of this further delay greatly alarmed and irritated the German authorities. "Berlin," in the words of Berchtold, "was getting nervous."² Some news of the Austrian intentions had already leaked out at Rome, and, as the relations of Russia and Italy were close and friendly, had been passed on to the Russian government. The Austrian explanations, that the ultimatum could not be sprung on the world at a moment when the "peace-loving reserved Czar" was in contact with so dangerous an influence as Poincaré,³ were received with snorts of impatience by the German officials. More than a fortnight had now passed since the Serajevo crime, and the German public was already beginning to forget it. And though Wangenheim, the German ambassador at Constantinople, told his Italian colleague there on July 15 that "we are in for a war,"⁴ war did not come. Reports, however, were now current that eight Austrian army corps were preparing to move.

A fresh fear which seized Berlin was that after the unending Austrian delays and hesitations the Austrian ultimatum might be such as Serbia could accept, and that war with her would not be secured at a time when, as the German foreign minister said, Russia was not ready to strike. Prince Stolberg, one of the leading officials in the German embassy at Vienna, was not a little alarmed to discover, on July 17, in an interview with Berchtold, that Berchtold considered

¹ D.D., i, Nos. 93, 96.
² A.R.B., i, No. 26.

³ id., No. 21.

⁴ *Corriere della Sera*, August 5, 1917.

it possible that the Serbians might agree to the demands of the ultimatum.¹ Stolberg thought it inexplicable that such conditions had not been fixed as would render a breach of the peace inevitable. "If the intended action turns out to be another storm in a teacup," he reported, "and goes no further than a so-called diplomatic success, the opinion already dominant here that the [Hapsburg] monarchy is no longer capable of showing vigour, will be notably strengthened." Berchtold strove to cheer him up with the promise that if Serbia did accept the demands, she should be subjected to far-reaching pressure in carrying them out. They were perhaps increased in severity after this interview, as Hoyos told Stolberg later in the day that the demands would be "of such a nature that it would be quite impossible for any state which retained its dignity and independence to accept them." This Austrian verdict on the ultimatum should be remembered, and also the fact that the character of the demands was quite well known to Berlin.

On July 18 the ultimatum was completed; on the 19th it was approved in council; on the 20th it was laid before Francis Joseph and received his signature at Ischl; in the afternoon of the 21st it was given to Tschirschky for transmission to Berlin, which had fathered it and watched over its preparation and its severity, though, so far, knowing only its general tenor and not its details. In the entente countries there was a feeling of uneasiness during the days before the ultimatum was delivered. Entente diplomatists did not know what was coming, but the rumours current were disquieting enough. On July 16 Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador in London, saw Grey, who said that he had received no alarming information from Berlin or Vienna, but appeared anxious at the absence of any force which could dam popular passion were it once aroused.² He told Benckendorff that Germany could no longer be regarded as in all circumstances bent on maintaining peace. Among the officials in the British foreign office there was less anxiety. The hope there was that Francis Joseph would be too wise to take the risk of war, while Francis Ferdinand, who was regarded as leading the party of action in Austria, had for ever disappeared from the scene. Unfortunately

¹ D.D., i, No. 87.

² Siebert, ii, 827.

the foreign office seems not to have known of the change in Francis Joseph's attitude which had been brought about by Conrad's and Tschirschky's manœuvres. Grey's intention was to propose a conference of ambassadors to deal with the quarrel between Austria and Serbia if the prospect darkened.¹

Evidence as to the attitude of Berlin is supplied by a report of the Bavarian chargé d'affaires in Berlin to the Bavarian government, dated July 18. The German foreign office expected war between Austria and Serbia, but feared that Austria might at the last moment draw back.² Zimmermann declared that Austria, owing to her rottenness and want of decision, was now "the sick man of Europe," as Turkey had been earlier; and that Russia, Italy, Rumania and Serbia were waiting to partition her. Vigorous and successful action on her part against Serbia would resurrect her power. Her Slav troops could be trusted to remain loyal because of the emotion caused by the Serajevo crime, whereas some years later, according to Conrad, this would not be the case.

It was the hour of fate for her, and for that reason she had been told that Germany would support her, even at the risk of war with Russia; and she had been given a "blank cheque." He himself thought the Austrian government had not expected such unconditional support from Germany and believed it was uneasy because Berlin had urged it forward instead of advising caution and restraint. When action came it was the German intention to profess surprise and to emphasise the fact that the Kaiser was away and Moltke on leave at Karlsbad.

The Austrian and German governments continued their policy of rebuffing all foreign inquiries as to their intended course of action. A violent article in the Austrian *Militärische Rundschau* on July 15 attracted attention by its statement that the hour was propitious for war: "Russia is not ready; the moral factors and right are on our side as well as force. Seeing that one day or other we shall have to accept a conflict, let us provoke it immediately." But on July 18 the *Norddeutsche Zeitung* published an extremely moderate article, which (the German foreign secretary in a secret message to Vienna stated) had been "deliberately

¹ Grey, i, 314.

² D.D., iv, 126-8; Dirr, 1-13.

toned down with an eye to European diplomacy,"¹ in order that an official organ should not "prematurely give the alarm." It was another move in the game of duping the pacific powers.

In these last moments before the explosion of their mine, the Vienna and Berlin war parties had fresh reasons for anxiety. The German staff had been informed that Austria intended to carry out only a partial mobilisation, and to employ six of her sixteen army corps against Serbia. But it had begun to realise somewhat late in the day that there were difficulties in a partial mobilisation; that, if Russia entered the war, Austria would not find it easy to break off operations in Serbia and to disengage the forces concentrated against the Serbians; further, that Serbia might delay any decision by a retreat. The attitude of Italy caused uneasiness at Berlin. The German foreign office had sounded her cautiously, but now had reason to anticipate "direct resistance" from her; and it was warned by the German ambassador at Rome that, if she did not receive "full compensation," she might "fall on Austria's rear." And there was yet another trouble. If war resulted, how were William II and the German fleet to be brought back from Norway without creating alarm? The Kaiser was displaying restlessness and showing his belief that a general war might be imminent. On July 19 he directed the High Sea fleet to remain concentrated.² On July 20, by his instructions, warning was given to the German steamer lines that on July 23 the Austrian ultimatum was to be delivered, and that they must be prepared for "developments" which might follow "very swiftly." In the normal course his own departure from the Sognefjord was timed for July 30. German diplomacy had involved itself in a pretty tangle as the result of its efforts to put Europe off her guard.

If Tirpitz is to be trusted, the German foreign office was now ready for the most violent measures. Jagow, he says, on July 20, proposed to a member of the German naval staff to threaten England with the immediate occupation of Holland, if she declared war on Germany.³ He was

¹ D.D., i, No. 70.

² D.D., i, No. 82.

³ *Erinnerungen*, 224. This episode makes hay of Jagow's excuses in his *England und der Kriegausbruch*.

thereupon told that such a policy, far from securing English neutrality, would be the surest means of bringing England into the war. It was the old plan introduced by Holstein, of placing a loaded pistol on the table before opening negotiations. Had it been tried it might have awakened the English cabinet from its delays and dreams. There was, perhaps, a faint suggestion of the idea in the proposals which Bethmann was to make to the English government nine days later. For the moment Jagow's scheme was not pursued; from Moltke's memoirs we know that the German staff considered that the occupation of Holland would be injurious to Germany in a war with England.

The last warnings of Lichnowsky and others against urging Austria into dangerous adventures passed unheeded. An article in the English *Westminster Gazette* had a disastrous effect in leading the Austrian government to imagine that it had Grey's countenance and the moral support of English liberalism in an attack on Serbia. Grey promptly disavowed responsibility, but he issued no such definite and public warning against forcing on a war as had been given in 1911 by Lloyd George. There was no sign of any German intention to draw back. If William II had felt any qualms—and with all his faults he was not a bloodthirsty man—he knew that the Crown Prince was pressing for war in a manner that was calculated to alarm the pacific powers. A despatch from Bethmann to William II on July 20 mentioned this attitude of the Crown Prince and a telegram of encouragement and approval which the Prince had sent to Colonel Frobenius.¹ It elicited a message from "Papa William" commanding his heir to refrain from increasing the tension.²

The war party and the Pan-Germans had not failed to mark the Crown Prince's attitude; if the Kaiser showed any inclination to run away, here was a Hohenzollern eager to gain popularity at his expense by advocacy of war, as that Prince had done in 1911 after the retreat from Agadir. Just as dangerous was the fact that the Empress, who disliked the French, was using all her influence against them. William II had persuaded himself that England would remain inert whatever action Austria and Germany might take.³ He

¹ *D.D.*, i, No. 84.

² cf. Montgelas, *Leitfaden*, 93.

³ *id.* No. 105.

wrote in a marginal note on a report from St. Petersburg (to the effect that Sazonov had said that Russia would not tolerate an Austrian attack on Serbia, and that "in England Austria's attitude would be very severely blamed") "he is wrong!"¹ The same delusion was general in Austria. The Austrian ambassador in London, Mensdorff, told Steed, the foreign editor of *The Times*, that he had "the assurance" of British neutrality. The name of the person who gave that assurance has not yet been published, but it is known.

On July 20² (not the 22nd as was stated in the falsified collection of Austrian documents issued on the outbreak of war) the Austrian ultimatum was sent to the Austrian ambassadors at Berlin, Rome, Paris, St. Petersburg, London, and Constantinople, with a covering letter declaring that the Austrian government in taking "fresh and urgent steps in Belgrade . . . was convinced that it was acting in accordance with the feelings of all civilised nations." The document was not to be handed to the various foreign offices till "the forenoon of July 24." In the covering letter to Berlin Szögyeny was told that "the perfect political understanding already reached with the German government saves you the trouble of a confidential verbal explanation of our step in Belgrade." This was as much as to say that Germany knew everything (which, as has been seen, was the truth). Berlin knew exactly what was purposed and, if it did not know the detailed demands of the ultimatum, that was because it had intimated that it did not want to know them. Francis Joseph when he approved the ultimatum had told Bilinski, the Austrian finance minister, that Russia would not submit to it. "There ought to be no mistake," he added "that means a general war."³

On July 21 the text of the ultimatum was handed to Tschirschky in Vienna and was despatched by train to Berlin that evening so that it would reach Berlin about noon on the 22nd.⁴ It was in the German foreign office, according to Bethmann's statement,⁵ "late in the evening," but twenty-four hours or so before it was due to be delivered, by the time-table, in Belgrade. The Austrian government, like Francis Joseph, had no real doubt that it meant war with

¹ *D.D.*, i, No. 120.

² *A.R.B.*, i, No. 29.

³ Kanner, 251.

⁴ *A.R.B.*, i, No. 47; *D.D.*, i, No. 103.

⁵ *Betrachtungen*, i, 139.

Russia. At the last moment, as the result of fresh conferences between Berlin and Vienna, it had been decided to postpone the delivery of the ultimatum to such an hour as would prevent its contents from becoming known in St. Petersburg¹ until it was too late for any interchange of opinion between President Poincaré and the heads of the Russian government. The departure of Poincaré was fixed for 11 p.m. on the 23rd and careful calculations had to be made, allowing for the difference of Russian time from Central European time. The final instructions—only issued by telegram from Vienna on July 23—were to present the ultimatum, which Berchtold now described as a "*démarche* with a time limit," at 6 p.m. This was regarded as sufficiently late to ensure Poincaré being at sea when the news reached St. Petersburg. Whether Tschirschky telephoned the contents of the note in full to Berlin on July 21 is not disclosed; that he telegraphed it to the Kaiser is stated by Bunsen, the British ambassador at Vienna, who was generally well informed.² The Austrian minister at Belgrade was given detailed and minute orders the object of which was to force a rupture of relations at once.³

In the morning of July 23 the Austrian government had yet another chance of drawing back. Conrad,⁴ when Berchtold said there were anxieties as to Italy's policy, remarked, "if we have Italy to fear as well as Serbia and Russia, then we must not mobilise." He meant, he says in his memoirs, that Austria could not survive a war on three fronts. But Berchtold gave no heed. If the German government had wished at the eleventh hour to put the brake on, there was still ample time. There was no such wish, and the brake was not applied. Between 7 and 8 p.m., more than twenty hours before the ultimatum was delivered, the Austrian ambassador officially conveyed it to the German foreign office which had, on the previous day, mildly suggested that it really ought "to be informed before the other cabinets as to the contents of the note and the details of the action intended at Belgrade."⁵ This information was now before it, and it did not lift a finger to restrain Austria.

Various accounts have been given by various German

¹ D.D., i, Nos. 108, 112.

² F.O.D., 196.

³ A.R.B., No. 39.

⁴ Gooss, 102.

⁵ Conrad, iv, 108.

ministers of their attitude to the ultimatum. Jagow,¹ the foreign secretary, states in his earlier book that the terms seemed to him extremely harsh, and to go beyond the proper limit, and says that this opinion was shared by Bethmann.² He told the British chargé d'affaires that "it left much to be desired as a diplomatic document." But to the French ambassador he said that "the note was forcible and he approved it";³ and Szögyeny reports him as saying that "the German government was of course in entire agreement with the contents of the note." There seems to be a gap in the Austrian documents as published, or else we have to suppose that Szögyeny did not inform Vienna of what had happened in Berlin in the evening of the 22nd, until the afternoon of the 24th.

Characteristic of the tortuous methods which the Austrian government employed throughout was its failure to inform its nominal ally, Italy, up to the very last, of its intended proceedings. Italy had already learnt from other sources, however, and the Italian government had sent instructions to its representatives in Bucarest and St. Petersburg to do their utmost to prevent the proposed attack on Serbia. Mérey, the Austrian ambassador at Rome, was ordered on July 20 to see the Italian foreign minister, San Giuliano, and tell him about the "very serious language" that Berchtold was about to use in Belgrade. Mérey was to state that Austria did not intend to annex Serbian territory,⁴ though, even if Serbia at once gave way, a "provisional occupation of the country would have to be maintained," until Serbia had paid an indemnity. But as Conrad had remarked to Krobotin a day earlier,⁵ "we must wait and see; before the Balkan war the powers decided on maintaining the *status quo*, but after the war no one bothered about that." The Italian diplomatists were no fools. At Mérey's dubious assurances they pricked up their ears and began to press Austria for a binding guarantee that she would not annex Serbian territory. When they received none but evasive replies, their distrust of Austria was doubled.

¹ *Ursachen*, 110.

² Bethmann (i, 139) confirms him, but goes on to argue that it was really quite reasonable.

³ *Collected Documents*, 23, 161; F.O.D., 92.

⁴ A.R.B., i, No. 32.

⁵ Conrad, iv, 92. cf. iii, 268, his scheme in 1913 for offering Italy concessions in Albania and "dislodging her from them later."

THE WAR GUILT

[July 20-4]

The German government, with the strange want of statesmanship which it displayed throughout the crisis, had not taken the precaution to obtain from Austria definite guarantees of compensation for Italy, if Austria invaded and occupied Serbia. It shared the Italian view of the treaty of alliance, which, in the seventh article gave the Italians the right to such compensation, but not till late in the negotiations did it press Austria to hand over southern Tirol, which is Italian by race, language and geography, to Italy; and this Austria was determined not to do. So that the immediate result of Germany's "Nibelung loyalty" to Austria was a proposal for Austria's surrender of territory which had been under her flag for a century or more. Nor was this all. As Rumania, contrary to William II's positive assurances, showed a determination not to accept the Austrian attack on Serbia as coming within the *casus foederis*, Germany began to urge the Austrian government to offer her some compensation in return for Rumanian armed support, which compensation could only be provided from Hungarian territory in Transylvania.

A curious comment on the contentions of the post-war German propagandists is supplied by the wireless instructions in cipher, which were intercepted by the French on July 22, but not deciphered till long after the war had begun. They directed the German wireless stations to jam all signals to the battleship *France*, in which vessel President Poincaré was returning to Dunkirk. The aim was to prevent the French government from consulting the French prime minister and President in the hours of an acute crisis. Such an act in such circumstances can scarcely be described as being anything else than one of deliberate hostility. Though the jamming was attempted and confused many of the French messages transmitted to the President, it was not entirely successful. Enough came through to tell him what was happening. After the departure of the *France* from Stockholm, on July 25, the jamming was resumed with more success. Apparently most of the German stations took part in it.

After the occupation of Metz, in 1918, by the French, the originals of the orders given by the German government were found there among the papers and registers of the Metz wireless station. One of the entries ran thus:¹

¹ Viviani, *Réponse au Kaiser*, 87.

1914] COMPENSATION FOR ITALY

July 27: Two o'clock. The governor orders the jamming of French wireless communications in such manner as not to violate peace. Three o'clock. The wireless engineer orders the jamming of wireless communications between France and Russia.

July 28: Four o'clock. The Eiffel tower has discovered our intention of interfering with its messages, and is obviously attempting to defeat us by transmitting with its highest power to Dunkirk news for the *France*, which is not answering. In view of the extreme importance to Russia of the matter in these despatches, this transmission of signals is also to be jammed.

Such was the lubricant applied by Berlin to the processes of diplomacy.

CHAPTER VII

THE ULTIMATUM AND MEDIATION

BERCHTOLD'S ultimatum, with its demands which, as Hoyos had said, could not possibly be accepted by any state that retained its dignity and independence, was delivered by Giesl, the Austrian minister at Belgrade, to the Serbian minister of finance at 6 p.m. on July 23, just at the moment when a squall burst over the battleship *France* at Cronstadt, 1,200 miles away, as the Czar and Czarina were going on board. The Serbian government was told that unless all the Austrian demands were accepted by 6 p.m. on the 25th, the entire Austrian legation would depart and diplomatic relations would be broken off. A general election was in progress in Serbia and the Serbian premier, Pasitch, was absent, as also were other Serbian ministers, making speeches in distant parts of the country; and one third of the short period of grace had passed before they could be recalled.

The ultimatum¹ was correctly described by Grey as the

¹ It required the Serbian government publicly to condemn the propaganda directed against Austria; to confess its guilt by announcing its regret that Serbian officers and officials had participated in this propaganda; to warn them against such conduct in future; to pledge itself to act "with the utmost rigour" against such offenders; and to publish its declaration to the Serbian army in a humiliating order of the day. Ten special demands were then enumerated. They were:

1. Special legislation to suppress all publications inciting to hatred against Austria.
2. Immediate dissolution of the Narodna Odbrana and confiscation of its means of propaganda.
3. Elimination from public instruction in Serbia and from the teaching staff of everything that served or might serve to foment the propaganda against Austria.
4. Removal from military service and from the administration of all officers and functionaries guilty of propaganda against Austria, whose names Austria should communicate.
5. Acceptance of the presence of Austrian agents in Serbia who should collaborate to suppress "the subversive movement directed against the territorial integrity" of Austria.

July 23]

AUSTRIAN DEMANDS

"most formidable document I had ever seen addressed by one state to another that was independent."² As Sir Eyre Crowe wrote on July 25, "the Austrian terms bear on their face the character of a design to provoke war."³ And Grey pointed out to the Austrian ambassador that Austria "had not only demanded a reply within forty-eight hours but dictated the terms of the reply."⁴ If Serbia agreed to these terms she became a vassal of Austria. The Austrian government would have the power to destroy the freedom of the Serbian press and to secure the dismissal of any officer, teacher or official whom it might name; it could interfere with Serbian justice, and, this was the more serious because, as the Agram affair in 1908 had shown, Austrian political agents did not stick at forgery. No minister could hold office in Serbia who was obnoxious to Austria, and representative government became impossible because any Serbian deputy might be placed on the Austrian black list.

Not only were the demands terrible in themselves, but the Austrians gave Serbia no time for negotiations or even deliberation. The Vienna war party, in their determination to confront Europe with the "accomplished fact," had taken care to arrange that. At Belgrade there was no one whom the Serbian government in its alarm could consult except the English minister. Hartwig was dead, and the French minister was ill. On July 24 the Crown Prince of Serbia sent a despairing telegram to the Czar, recounting the conditions which Austria sought to impose, and warning

6. Judicial action against accessories in Serbia to the plot against the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, in the investigations for which Austrian agents were to take part.

7. The immediate arrest of Major Tankositch and Ciganovitch.

8. Prevention of the illicit traffic in arms across the frontier, and dismissal and severe punishment of the Serbian officials who had aided the Serajevo criminals by facilitating their passage across the frontier.

9. Explanations of the utterances of "high Serbian officials" who, after the Serajevo crime had expressed themselves in terms of hostility to Austria.

10. Notification without delay that the measures under the preceding heads were being executed.

A brief memorandum was appended which professed to give the results ascertained in the inquiry at Serajevo, but this contained no evidence, though it stated that the plot was devised in Belgrade, and that the weapons used were obtained in Serbia.

The document is printed in full in *F.O.D.*, 364 ff.

² *F.O.D.*, 73.

³ *id.*, 79. Crowe was assistant under-secretary at the foreign office.

⁴ *id.*, 74.

him that at the expiration of the brief time limit, Serbia might be attacked by the Austrian army and would be quite unable to defend herself against such an assailant.

The Czar's answer was a pacific one, pledging his support but calling on Serbia to neglect no step which might lead to a settlement. Sazonov advised the Serbians that in the event of an Austrian invasion it would be better to retire and allow the Austrian army to occupy their territory, while they appealed to the powers. This is unimpeachable evidence that Russia was not urging Serbia to war as Germany was egging on Austria. Grey was in favour of Serbia giving such satisfaction as was legitimate, but not sacrificing her independence. Paris advised similarly, and suggested that Serbia should gain time; ask for information as to the results of the Austrian inquiry into the crime, and invoke the arbitration of the powers. But in actual fact none of this advice reached Belgrade in time. The Serbians had to act on their own initiative, and in this grave hour they showed remarkable statesmanship.

Two minutes before the expiration of the period of grace the Serbian reply¹ was handed to Giesl. It was moderate and apologetic in tone but, whatever its character had been, Austria was determined on war. Giesl, two minutes after he had received it, and without having had time to read it through, broke off relations as he was instructed to do, and at 6.30 p.m. of July 25 left Belgrade. At 3 p.m. the Serbian government had issued orders for a general mobilisation, expecting a sudden attack, and had taken steps to transfer the capital to Krajevat. This was a necessary defensive precaution as the Austrian monitors were cruising in the Danube and threatening Belgrade, and the Serbian

¹ The Serbian government contested the general charges against itself which the Austrian ultimatum had made; and while it agreed to publish a declaration regarding propaganda against Austria, substituted "any propaganda that may have been conducted" for "the propaganda that has been conducted." Of the specific demands, it *accepted*: the first subject to the enactment of a special law and an amendment of the constitution; the second without promising the confiscation of the Narodna Odbrana's funds; the third, fourth and ninth, subject to information from Austria giving names and evidence. As to the fifth demand, it asked for clearer information of what was required; and only the sixth demand, for the participation of Austrian agents in the Serbian inquiry into the Serajevo crime, was definitely *refused*. As for Tankositch, his arrest was ordered that day; Ciganovitch, who was an Austrian subject, had evaded arrest. As for the eighth demand, that was accepted without reservation. If Austria was not satisfied with this reply, Serbia was ready to accept a "peaceful settlement" by referring the question to The Hague or to the great powers which had supervised the declaration made by Serbia in March, 1909, after the Bosnian crisis. cf. analysis in *F.O.D.*, 121.

troops were already falling back towards Nish. The Austrian order for a Balkan mobilisation (which included eight army corps—3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 13th, 15th and 16th, with three cavalry divisions) was issued at 9.23 p.m. of July 25.¹ This Balkan mobilisation was arranged for the special purpose of a war against Serbia, though the 3rd corps was included as a precaution against Italian action. The other eight Austrian corps, which were destined for action against Russia, were not mobilised.

The disclosure of the terms of the ultimatum caused consternation among the pacific powers²—a consternation increased by all that had gone before and all that immediately followed. With a discernment that might have saved peace, Crowe, in a minute which he prepared on July 25, argued that the real issue of a general war rested with Germany:³

There is still the chance that she can be made to hesitate if she can be induced to apprehend that the war will find England by the side of France and Russia. I can suggest only one effective way of bringing this home to the German government without absolutely committing us definitely at this stage. If, the moment either Austria or Russia begins to mobilise, H.M.'s government give orders to put our whole fleet on an immediate war footing, this may conceivably make Germany realise the seriousness of the danger to which she would be exposed if England took part in the war.

The struggle that was impending, he pointed out, was "not for the possession of Serbia, but one between Germany aiming at a political dictatorship in Europe and the powers who desire to retain individual freedom." He urged that the decision to mobilise the fleet in this way should be announced "without delay" to France and Russia. Had his proposal been carried out, the mobilisation of the entire British navy would have been ordered on July 25 or early on July 26, and might have come in time to prevent Austria from committing suicide.

The entente powers could already plot out the line of German-Austrian policy, and see that unless it was drastically modified, it led directly up to general war. That German and Austrian diplomacy was busily engaged in

¹ Conrad, iv, 122.

² For Bülow's condemnation of the ultimatum see Wolff, 292.

³ *F.O.D.*, 81.

THE WAR GUILT

[July 25]

these hours of acute tension, in organising a new Balkan league directed against Serbia and Russia, was an ominous sign. Moreover, everything seemed to be playing into the hands of the Berlin and Vienna war parties. In St. Petersburg there were serious labour disturbances which culminated, on July 23, in street fighting, with many casualties. In Ireland the British government was face to face with the risk of civil war, which was mentioned by the King in his speech convening a conference of all parties on July 21—a conference which broke up three days later without result, and was followed by fighting in Dublin on July 26. In France attention was absorbed in the trial of Mme. Caillaux for the murder of Calmette. Some days earlier reports reached Paris that preliminary mobilisation notices were being sent out in Germany. All the stock exchanges of Europe recorded selling of securities on a scale which indicated a war panic. Bills on London far in excess of trade requirements were being drawn by Germans, falling due after August 1, so as to deplete the scanty British gold reserve. The Dresdner Bank, one of the most important in Germany, advised its clients from July 18 onwards to sell their securities, and sold them mainly on the London market.¹

To England all eyes turned. Diplomats on the Continent were convinced that, if her government made up its mind and definitely announced its decision in good time to support France and Russia, should Serbia be attacked and Russia be drawn into war, Austria and Germany would draw back and the peril to peace would pass. The German staff, through its champion Kuhl, maintains that it calculated from the first on the hostility of England.² This may have been true as it had decided to violate Belgian neutrality. But it is equally true that the German and Austrian sovereigns and civilian ministers had persuaded themselves that England would remain neutral. Francis Joseph and William II believed this; Bethmann, Jagow, Moltke and Berchtold³ believed it; Mensdorff believed it; Lichnowsky⁴ believed it; and Tirpitz⁵ afterwards complained that "Grey would have

¹ Lawson, *British War Finance*, 178.

² Kuhl, *Generalstab*, 97, 99.

³ cf. Czernin, *World War*, 7; *Livre Noir*, ii, 276.

⁴ F.O.D., 102, though his own memoirs assert the opposite.

⁵ *Erinnerungen*, 219; cf. Montgelas, *Leitfaden*, 93.

July 25]

ENGLAND'S ATTITUDE

been able to preserve peace if he had made Bethmann understand in time what England's attitude would be in the event of the conflict between Austria and Serbia spreading." Grey's silence," he adds, "strengthened the Berlin war party [*Einmarschpolitiker*] in their attitude." Even the general staff, he asserts, showed an inclination to believe that England would remain at peace. It was a lamentable mistake that the British cabinet could not reach a clear decision, for then Europe might have been saved from the fearful catastrophe which was impending, and which was destined to leave her peoples crippled, with resources permanently mortgaged to the United States. A very heavy share of the responsibility for the war rests with the "wait-and-see" policy of the Liberal government in England. William II knew more of British history and British tenacity than his ministers or generals, and if he had been plainly warned in good time he would probably have drawn back from a struggle in which, with England against her, Germany had much to lose and little to gain.

Various German emissaries in England in these critical days sent back optimistic reports to Berlin. Ballin on July 23 dined with Grey and Haldane, but he seems to have misunderstood Grey's attitude completely, and to have believed that England would not act. The tone of the English Liberal press, according to Take Jonsescu¹—who on this point is confirmed by the documents—strengthened German delusions; Tschirschky was telling everyone in Vienna that a German-Austrian war against France and Russia "would inevitably end in victory." On July 23, before he had examined the ultimatum, but after he had received a general account of its contents and of the brief time limit, Grey dwelt to Mensdorff, the Austrian ambassador,² upon the possible "awful consequences . . . if as many as four great powers of Europe—let us say Austria, France, Russia and Germany—were engaged in war . . . it must involve the expenditure of so vast a sum of money and such an interference with trade, that a war would be accompanied or followed by a complete collapse of European credit and trade. . . . This would mean a state of things worse than that of 1848, and irrespective of who were victors in the war, many things might be completely swept away."

¹ *Personal Impressions*, 97.

He intimated that if he was to counsel moderation at St. Petersburg, what influence he applied "would depend upon how reasonable were the Austrian demands."¹ But the mere suggestion that he might exert pressure on Russia was taken as a favourable sign by Berlin and Vienna, as also was the fact that he had not mentioned England among the powers engaged in the hypothetical war. He urged direct discussions between Austria and Russia, but these discussions Vienna could easily bring to nothing.

That same day Lichnowsky wrote to Jagow dwelling on the danger of encouraging Austria in Balkan adventures.² The defeat of the Serbians, he said very truly, would not solve the South Slav question, and he concluded with the words, "you will allow that the localisation of the war—if it comes to fighting in Serbia—belongs to the realm of pious wishes." But he did not favour abandoning Austria; what he did advise was urging moderation upon her. He had an interview with Grey on the following day, July 24, when Grey once more spoke of the possibility of a war involving four great powers (Russia, Austria, France, Germany) but, according to Lichnowsky, "specially emphasised the number 'four',"³ and this was again taken in Berlin as a sign of English neutrality and indifference. Indeed, Grey said that, if the ultimatum to Serbia did not lead to trouble between Austria and Russia, he "had no concern in it," so that his attitude differed distinctly from that of Paris and St. Petersburg. In view of the short time limit and the "extraordinary stiff character of the Austrian note," the only chance of mediation he could see was that "the four powers, Germany, Italy, France and ourselves [England] should work together simultaneously at Vienna and St. Petersburg in favour of moderation."⁴ He "felt helpless" as far as Russia was concerned if Germany did not induce Austria "not to precipitate military action," and thus gain time.

The views of the entente diplomatists might on the 24th be summed up thus⁵: (1) They were prepared to accept an Austrian diplomatic but not a military triumph over

¹ F.O.D., 70.

² D.D., i, No. 161.

³ D.D., i, No. 157.

⁴ F.O.D., 78.

⁵ This comparison is given by Kanner, 258. I have slightly modified his words.

Serbia; (2) They were agreed that a war between Austria and Serbia meant a general war; (3) They wished to secure mediation between Austria and Serbia (or in the case of England between Austria and Russia) so as to avert war between the two and first of all to gain time for discussion and negotiation. The Vienna and Berlin war parties had come to these totally different decisions: (1) They wished to force a military triumph over Serbia, and not to rest content with a diplomatic success against her; (2) To prevent any mediation of the other powers in the quarrel between Austria and Serbia by immediate Austrian action; (3) To insist on the entente powers mediating with Russia to "localise the war," and deter her from giving military support to Serbia; (4) To engage in war with Russia and with Russia's friends, if it were not otherwise possible for Austria to crush Serbia.¹

Thus Berlin and Vienna interpreted the meaning of mediation quite differently from Paris and St. Petersburg. Now there began to appear a further purpose in the diplomacy of the German powers—to detach England from the triple entente and France from the alliance with Russia. "If we succeed," Bethmann had written to the secretary of state for Alsace on July 16,² "in inducing France not only to remain quiet herself but also to advise St. Petersburg to keep the peace, this will have a reaction on the Franco-Russian alliance which will be very favourable to us." As usual, Crowe saw what was really involved in the course which Germany pressed on London. If the British government did intervene "in this sense [by threatening Serbia] or by addressing admonitions to St. Petersburg," he wrote, "the much-desired breach between England and Russia would be brought one step nearer realisation."³ If England had assisted Germany in the German plan of intimidating Russia while Austria strangled Serbia, the ruin of Serbia and the fall of the Russian dynasty would have resulted, and would have been followed by the complete isolation of England. Already the uncertain attitude of London was causing uneasiness both in Paris and St. Petersburg.

¹ v. *Collected Documents*, 406; the German white paper issued on August 3, 1914, states that the German government was aware that an Austrian war on Serbia "might bring Russia upon the field"; but that it "permitted Austria a completely free hand" none the less.

² D.D., i, No. 58.

³ F.O.D., 63.

If Grey had been able to see the marginal notes of William II, as the documents now reveal them, it would have been obvious that no serious effort to call Austria off was to be expected from Germany. A warning from Grey that the Serajevo crime must not be used—as Austria meant to use it—to undo the peace of Bucarest and raise the whole Balkan issue afresh, elicited this furious comment from his Majesty:

That is a monstrous piece of British shamelessness. I am not called upon to make representations *a la Grey*¹ to H.M. the [Austrian] Emperor where the preservation of his honour is at stake. . . . I mean to have no nonsense. . . . The Serbians are a band of robbers who must be punished! I am not going to meddle with matters which the Emperor alone has the right to decide. I have expected this despatch, and it does not surprise me! Typical of British ideas, and of the British habit of ordering others about, which I don't mean to stand.

These remarks were telegraphed from Norway to Berlin and produced immediate effect. Even more uncompromising were William II's comments on a despatch of July 24 from Tschirschky. Berchtold, it said, had informed the Russian chargé d'affaires—the Russian ambassador had been tricked into going on leave—that Austria did not intend to annex any Serbian territory.

Quite unnecessary! (the Kaiser wrote). Will produce an impression of weakness and making excuses which in dealings with Russia is an absolute mistake and to be avoided. . . . Austria must recover the Sanjak, or else the Serbians will get to the Adriatic. . . . Austria must be preponderant in the Balkans over the other small states, at the expense of Russia; else there can be no peace.²

The German Emperor's own avowal makes it clear that in the Austrian action against Serbia the Serajevo crime was to be used as a pretext for revolutionising the whole Balkan position. This the statesmen of the entente surmised from the first. It was perfectly well known in Berlin that Russia had repeatedly declared any attack such as Austria proposed, on a Slav people friendly to Russia, would bring the Russian army into the field. But the wise men of Berlin pretended to regard this as mere "bluff," since they were aware that Russia was really ill-prepared for war and that her most vital strategic railways were still in the realm of project.

¹ *sic*, in *D.D.*, i, No. 121.

² *D.D.*, i, No. 155.

On July 24 Lichnowsky handed in a note in London, anticipating Austrian military action against Serbia. Similar notes were delivered in Paris and St. Petersburg.¹ The entente powers were told that Austria's controversy with Serbia was "a matter to be settled exclusively between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. . . . The imperial [German] government desires urgently the localisation of the conflict because every interference of another power would, owing to the different treaty conditions, be followed by incalculable consequences." This ominous note stated in diplomatic language that if Russia intervened, Germany would strike. Assertions were made in the note concerning Serbia's alleged misdeeds, which, as Crowe pointed out, "rest at present on no evidence that is available. . . . Time ought to be given to allow the powers to satisfy themselves as to the facts which they are asked to endorse."

At St. Petersburg, Poincaré, before his departure, had spoken very plainly to Szapary, the Austrian ambassador there, who even then had the ultimatum in his pocket. Poincaré told him that Austria would not be justified in holding official Serbia responsible for the Serajevo crime. There were already rumours of what was imminent, and these had reached St. Petersburg. Poincaré further reminded Szapary that Serbia had friends. The Austrian ambassador, with no little effrontery, replied that Vienna regarded the situation calmly, and was convinced that Serbia would not reject the terms which Austria would have to impose. Poincaré was not duped. Before his departure he had arranged with Sazonov to "take action at Vienna with a view to the prevention of a demand for explanations or any summons equivalent to an intervention in the internal affairs of Serbia, which the latter would be justified in regarding as an attack on her sovereignty and independence."² Both the French and Russian governments were agreed as to the obligations of the alliance, and as to the maintenance of general peace and the balance of power, especially in eastern Europe.

Poincaré had sailed before the ultimatum was known in St. Petersburg. But Sazonov, when he had the facts before him, lost no time in warning Szapary, on July 24. "You are setting Europe on fire," he told him. "You want war

¹ *F.O.D.*, 79.

² *F.O.D.*, 80. Diplomatic action was meant.

and you have burned your bridges."¹ In his grave anxiety he begged the British ambassador, Buchanan, to ask England to proclaim "solidarity with France and Russia." The French ambassador, Paléologue, informed Buchanan that France would, if necessary "fulfil all the obligations imposed on her by the alliance." Sazonov thought that English support of Russia—if proclaimed then and there—might prevent war, and informed the entente ambassadors that "he personally thought that Russia would, at any rate, have to mobilise."² Buchanan could not pledge his government which hesitated to declare its attitude, fearing that, if it promised Russia and France armed support, they might stiffen their attitude. Already it seemed to those who were closely watching the negotiations that there was a rift in the entente, and England was drifting away from her friends.

Pourtalès, the German ambassador at St. Petersburg, was still convinced that Russia would threaten, but would not fight. On July 24 he telegraphed an account of his interview with Sazonov, at which he had delivered the German threat of war if Austria was not permitted to work her will on Serbia. Sazonov showed indignation. He said that Austria could not at once be plaintiff and judge; that her quarrel with Serbia concerned all Europe; and that "if Austria is going to gobble up Serbia, then we shall fight her." He ridiculed the suggestion that the Serajevo crime was an attack on monarchical principles—a thesis put forward by both Austrian and German diplomacy. He demanded some international investigation of the charges against Serbia, and asked why Austria had adopted an ultimatum as her form of argument.³

From this Pourtalès drew the conclusion that Russia would only fight if Austria attempted to annex Serbian territory, and that the wish "to Europeanise the issue" indicated that "immediate intervention on Russia's part is not to be expected." William II commented on the despatch in his usual violent marginal notes, and met the warning that Russia might go to war with the jeering remark, "then let us get to it." He concluded by declaring Pourtalès was

¹ *A.R.B.*, ii, Nos. 16, 18.

² *F.O.D.*, 81; Buchanan, i, 190-2.

³ *D.D.*, i, No. 160. It should be remembered that no dynasty had suffered more from Terrorist plots—often hatched in foreign countries—than the Russian. Of this fact Sazonov reminded the German powers.

July 24] ALARM AT ST. PETERSBURG

"right" in saying that Russia would not immediately intervene. Nevertheless, on July 24, an order that seemed to indicate the imminence of war was issued by him to the High Sea fleet:¹ "The All-Highest sanctions the entry into port [in Norway] of the fleet; leave to be given in Norway with a view to the possibility that the visit may be cut short." Here, as so often, William II's words and deeds were at variance. As for his temper at this critical moment, an idea of it is given by his comment on a telegram from Belgrade, reporting the consternation of the Serbian government: "How hollow the so-called Great Serbian state shows itself; it is just the same with all Slav states. Now stamp heavily on the feet of the rascals."²

In Paris the threatening German note was delivered in the afternoon of July 24, while Poincaré and the prime minister were still at sea. Schoen, the German ambassador, reported that the French authorities shared the German wish to localise the war. William II's comment was "twaddle," though whether he meant by this that the idea of localising the war was absurd or that the French attitude was not what Schoen represented it to be, is not clear. The French government suggested that Serbia might wish to discuss certain points in the Austrian demands, whereupon he commented, "ultimata have to be fulfilled not discussed! hence their name!"³

In Germany there were even then some few voices raised against Austria's attitude. The leaders of the German Social Democrat party, in a manifesto published on July 25, condemned the Austrian government for its "frivolous provocation of war," and declared that "not a drop of blood should be shed by any German soldier to aid the Austrian autocracy in its itch for power."⁴ The *Berlin Post*, a conservative organ, sharply criticised the Austrian ultimatum, and argued that it showed Austria "must want to bring on a war with Serbia." But the general attitude was one of bitter hostility to Russia and Serbia.

The German treatment of Grey's two proposals of the 24th was characteristic. The first and most important was that Germany should secure the postponement of the Austrian military measures, and the lengthening of the time limit.

¹ *id.*, No. 175.

² *D.D.*, i, No. 159.

³ *id.*, No. 154.

⁴ Kanner, 324.

This reached Jagow at Berlin at 1 a.m. of the 25th but it was not sent on to Tschirschky at Vienna till 4 p.m. Then it was accompanied by the comment that as the ultimatum expired that day and Berchtold was at Ischl, it would not be possible to prolong the time limit.¹ Nearly two hours earlier—evidently warned by Jagow, Szögyeny telegraphed at 2.12 from Berlin to Berchtold:² "People here consider that any delay in opening military operations brings danger of other powers intervening. We are most pressingly urged to act at once, and confront the world with a *fait accompli*. I entirely share this opinion of the [German] foreign office."

The second proposal which Grey had made was that Germany and Italy should impress moderation at Vienna, while England and France brought influence to bear in favour of peace at St. Petersburg. Though this proposal might well have seemed to play into German hands by disregarding Serbia, William II rejected it offhand. "Superfluous," he wrote. "Austria has already told Russia of her intentions, and Grey has no business to make other proposals. I shall only co-operate if Austria asks me to do so expressly, which is not probable. In questions of honour and existence one power does not consult another." He dismissed a warning from Grey that an Austrian war with Serbia might be long and difficult, and would leave Austria weak and bled white, with the word "nonsense."³

Signs of military and naval preparations for war were multiplying. In the evening of July 25 the calling up of reservists in Austria began for the corps which were to act against Serbia.⁴ On July 25, in a letter written by the manager of the Potsdam branch of the Disconto-Gesellschaft Bank,⁵ and seized by the British more than a year afterwards, in Captain von Papen's papers, is the statement: "We have never before seen such preparations for war as are being made at present." This intercepted letter is important because it answers the charges of Helfferich and other German

¹ D.D., i, No. 171. The delay is difficult to explain if it was not deliberate; F.O.D., 91.

² A.R.B., ii, No. 32. It will be observed that this pressure for immediate military action preceded by nearly an hour the Serbian mobilisation;

³ D.D., i, No. 157.

⁴ F.O.D., 96.

⁵ Von Papen Papers, 2.

propagandists, to the effect that the first military preparations were made by Russia. Both Germany and Russia seem to have acted simultaneously—in the case of Germany the action taken was probably on the initiative of the various local commanders. From the German documents¹ it appears that on July 25 the Bavarian railway authorities were secretly advised from Berlin to give Austrian reservists special facilities. That day, too, serious measures were taken by William II. In the morning he ordered the High Sea fleet, then in the Sognefjord, to "hasten coaling and remain in readiness to depart,"² though from a German secret agent at Portsmouth and from the German naval attaché in London came reports that the British fleet was being demobilised and no special British naval movements were taking place.

The Kaiser's action led Bethmann to telegraph an alarmed protest against German naval movements which might spoil his plans for keeping England quiet, assuming that his master had acted on a telegram from a German news agency which stated incorrectly that the Serbians had mobilised on July 24. William II met this with such an outburst as had preceded Bismarck's fall.³ "Incredible advice! Unheard of! Such an idea never occurred to me!!! It was because my minister at Belgrade reported the mobilisation at Belgrade! This may be followed by the mobilisation of Russia, and will involve Austria's mobilisation!" He went on to say that he must concentrate his land and sea forces in such an event, and that there was not a single German ship in the Baltic. He sneered at Bethmann as a "civilian chancellor," and answered his argument that England seemed to be unprepared and to aim only at localising the war, with the words, "she is already prepared for war as the naval review has shown, and is mobilised. If Russia mobilises, my fleet must be in the Baltic betimes, and so it is returning home."

On the afternoon of July 25 the Russian government ordered certain precautions—"the period of preparation for war," which was to come into force at 3.26 a.m. of the 26th, but refrained from any mobilisation.⁴ Sazonov

¹ D.D., iv, 133; F.O.D., 202, 215.

² D.D., i, No. 174.

³ id., No. 182.

⁴ cf. D.D., i, No. 194; Paléologue, i, 34-5.

again saw Buchanan and Paléologue, and asked Buchanan what England was going to do. Buchanan could only say that England could mediate better as a friend of Russia than as Russia's ally, to which Sazonov replied that "unfortunately Germany was convinced that she could count upon our [British] neutrality. . . . If we took our stand firmly with France and Russia there would be no war. If we failed them now rivers of blood would flow, and we should in the end be dragged into war."¹ To Buchanan the situation looked what it was, desperate. Just at this moment curious evidence was given of the complete surprise that had been sprung upon Serbia. Marshal Putnik, her best general, was at an Austrian bathing resort when the ultimatum was sent and was arrested at Pest. He was released with Conrad's consent—one of the few gracious acts in this period to Austria's credit.

On July 25 Grey made a fresh effort to maintain peace.² He proposed that if Austria and Russia mobilised, Germany, Italy, France and England should "keep together . . . and join in asking Austria and Russia not to cross the frontier till there had been time for us to arrange matters between them." The German foreign office had informed him that "it had no more than other powers to do with the stiff terms of the Austrian note . . . but that, having launched the note, Austria could not draw back." His attitude of detachment from Russia alarmed Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador in London.³ But Lichnowsky warned Berlin that, if the proposal for mediation were rejected or if the German government's attitude led to belief that it wanted war with Russia, "England would be unconditionally forced to side with France and Russia."⁴ Grey's proposal, which was not very definite, was nominally accepted by Berlin, but actually disregarded.

On July 26 Grey made yet a third effort. Berlin, as Sir A. Nicolson⁵ wrote on July 26, was playing with him, yet he still was patient and persisted. He proposed that a small conference composed of the ambassadors of France, Germany and Italy, with himself, should meet and try to find a settlement. He asked that meantime military

¹ F.O.D., 94.
² F.O.D., 88.

³ F.O.D., 97.

⁴ D.D., I, No. 180.

⁵ British under-secretary for foreign affairs.

operations should be suspended by Austria, Serbia and Russia.¹ The conference would act as the conference of ambassadors had done in 1912-13. But this proposal, which France and Italy were ready to accept unreservedly, and Russia, if her direct conversations with Austria failed, found no favour with Bethmann. Though he did not as yet notify his view to the English, he declared that Germany could not drag Austria before a European tribunal for her action against Serbia. Any "mediation" must be between Russia and Austria.² Bethmann came to his decision with a telegram from Lichnowsky before him, further defining the English attitude. If the Serbian frontier were crossed, all would be lost, for no government in Russia could permit that. Tyrrell, at the foreign office, emphasised the "overwhelming importance" of refraining from any invasion of Serbia till the question of a conference had been settled. Lichnowsky added a second warning that "the localisation of the war as hoped for in Berlin [i.e., while Austria was 'gobbling up' Serbia] was altogether impossible, and must be excluded from practical politics."³ Once more Bethmann had his opportunity of frank discussions with Grey, and once more, and deliberately, he threw that opportunity away.

In Paris Schoen, the German ambassador, saw the acting French foreign minister, Bienvenu Martin, on the 26th. "Germany," he said, felt "her solidarity with France in the ardent desire to preserve peace," and he hoped that France would use her influence at St. Petersburg. Bienvenu Martin agreed so to act provided Germany would do the same at Vienna, but it at once appeared that to this Germany would not agree; "Austria and Serbia," she said, "must be left to themselves." Paris was therefore unable to agree to the German suggestion. But that evening Schoen proposed to issue to the press an official statement to the effect that he and Bienvenu Martin had "examined in the most friendly spirit and in the feeling of pacific solidarity" the means of keeping the peace.⁴ Whether consciously or unconsciously this wording was so devised as to shake to its very foundations France's alliance with Russia, and

¹ F.O.D., 100-3.

² D.D., I, No. 248.

³ D.D., I, No. 236.

⁴ *Yellow Book of 1914*, Nos. 57, 61, 62; F.O.D., 127-8.

Bienvenu Martin did not agree to it. On the 27th Schoen returned to the charge with a proposal that Germany and France should jointly intervene¹—a proposal of which there is no trace in the German documents, and which does not seem to have been authorised or approved by Bethmann.

The news from German agents in England was not unfavourable that 26th. Jagow told the French ambassador in Berlin, Jules Cambon,² that day, "You may have your sources of information. We have ours; we are sure of England's neutrality."³ The conflict in Dublin, between British troops and Sinn Feiners engaged in landing arms, probably encouraged the hope that civil war had actually begun, in which case England might well be paralysed for months. Prince Henry of Prussia saw the King at Buckingham Palace and gave this account of his attitude.⁴ The King, according to him, said:

He and his government would neglect no effort to localise the war between Austria and Serbia. For that reason his government had proposed that Germany, England, France and Italy should intervene in an effort to hold Russia in check. He hoped that Germany would be in a position, despite her alliance with Austria, to support this proposal in order to avoid war, to which, he said, we are nearer than ever before. He further said in these words, "we shall try all we can to keep out of this, and shall remain neutral." That this expression of opinion was sincerely intended, I am convinced, as also that England will remain neutral. As to the duration of this neutrality I cannot give a definite opinion. I have my own ideas in view of her relations with France.

In this version, the accuracy of which was afterwards disputed, the King was made to take the distinctively German line of policy—intervention "to hold Russia in check" without any definite insistence that Germany on her part must hold Austria in check. This report had a great influence upon William II. If English neutrality was certain for the initial weeks of war, the entente fell to pieces and Russia and France were threatened with disaster.

¹ *Livre Noir*, ii, 281-2.

² Appuhn and Renouvin, lxxvi.

³ cf. Tirpitz's account of Jagow's attitude on the 20th; *Erinnerungen*, 224.

⁴ *D.D.*, ii, No. 374; cf. *F.O.D.*, 102.

The programme of the German war party was somewhat as follows: First war between Austria and Serbia, followed by the destruction of Serbia. If Russia mobilised, a swift German mobilisation was to take place, for which everything was ready, and the main German force was to deal a terrific blow at France, moving treacherously through Belgium, taking the French in flank and rear, enveloping their armies, and seizing the channel ports before England could act. Such was the plan; it was now time to consider its execution.

That morning Moltke returned from Karlsbad to Berlin and sent to the German foreign office the ultimatum to Belgium which the German staff had previously prepared.¹ This document was subsequently somewhat modified by the German foreign office and by Bethmann, and certain passages were struck out.² It opened with the assertion that "the imperial government has trustworthy information that the French forces intend to move on the line of the Meuse by Givet and Namur [in combination with an English expeditionary corps]. This information leaves no doubt as to the intentions of France [and England] to march through Belgian territory against Germany." The ultimatum had apparently been in existence for years; Tirpitz³ speaks of the German plan as having existed "for decades," and admits that the attack on Belgium was "a brutal act of violence." The untruthfulness of the statements on which it was based was in the highest degree discreditable. The German government and staff had no information that France intended to move through Belgium. It has never since the war been able to produce any; on the contrary, as all the world knows, the plan of French mobilisation was totally different. Moreover on the 26th no great power except Austria had mobilised even partially. The German foreign office and Bethmann must have been accomplices to this ultimatum and its deliberate treachery since they made only the most trifling alterations in it, to suit it to their belief that England was going to remain neutral. Yet, as Schoen⁴ remarks, they had repeatedly assured Belgium that Germany would respect her inviolability.

¹ *D.D.*, ii, No. 376.

² In brackets below.

³ *Erinnerungen*, 244.

⁴ *Memoirs*, 209.

THE WAR GUILT

[July 26]

The document proceeded:

The imperial government cannot but fear that without assistance Belgium, despite the best will on her part, is not in a position to repel such a French [-English] invasion with so great a prospect of success as to afford an adequate guarantee to Germany against danger. It is essential for Germany's defence that she should anticipate the enemy's attack. The German government, however, would feel the deepest regret if the Belgian government regarded as an act of hostility against itself the fact that Germany is compelled by the measures of her opponent to enter Belgian territory in order to defend herself.

But on the 26th, when this document was under consideration, the German government was still professing its confidence that peace would be maintained, and there were no "opponents" and no "measures" taken by them. Then came four declarations:

1. If Belgium would maintain a neutrality benevolent to Germany, despite this entry into Belgian territory, Germany would guarantee the possessions and independence of the Belgian kingdom; and "was ready to treat eventual claims to [territorial] compensation for the kingdom [at the cost of France] benevolently." (The words in the above paragraph in square brackets were inserted by the German foreign office.)

2. Germany was ready to evacuate Belgian territory at the conclusion of peace.

3. If Belgium adopted "a friendly attitude," Germany was ready to pay cash for all supplies requisitioned by her troops and an indemnity for any damage caused by them.

4. If, however, Belgium resisted and destroyed railways, roads or tunnels, Germany would be compelled to treat Belgium as an enemy, and in that event the fate of Belgium must depend on the decision of arms.

There was no mention of the Congo Free State, but German diplomacy seems to have intended to take it from Belgium in return for the vague "territorial compensation at the cost of France." A notice was appended that "an unequivocal answer must follow within twenty-four hours of the presentation of this note, otherwise hostilities will be opened at once." The note was retained by the German foreign office till

July 26] ULTIMATUM FOR BELGIUM

July 29, when its further fortunes will be followed. But its preparation is one more sign that Germany had not the least intention of holding Austria back.

That day movements of German troops towards the Belgian frontier were reported by French agents; and Mudra, commanding the German 16th army corps, took what the German official history¹ describes as "in themselves unimportant military precautions" for the security of Metz and Thionville. On the French side many leading officers had been on leave, among them Foch, commanding the 20th corps, which was of vital importance for the covering screen during the mobilisation; he was recalled on the 26th, on which day all leave was suspended and precautions were taken for the safety of the French railways. The German Emperor that same day decided to proceed to Germany with the High Sea fleet.² Bethmann, in consultation with Moltke, in vain entreated him to remain calm. "Calm," commented William II after his usual fashion, "is the first duty of the citizen. Calm only, nothing but calm! But really a calm mobilisation is something new!" When assured that Russia was showing irresolution, he replied in terms which suggest that he did not expect Russia to "bluff" and run away:

Where does he get that idea? Not from the material laid before me. There is a Russian fleet! There are five Russian destroyer flotillas now in the Baltic on manœuvres, which in whole or part could reach the Belts within sixteen hours and blockade them. Port Arthur ought never to be forgotten. My fleet has orders for Kiel and to Kiel it shall go!

The movement of the High Sea fleet might be the prelude to a sudden attack on the British fleet, such as Admiral Stiege had demanded in 1911. It compelled the British admiralty to stand on the alert. That night the order was issued to the British First fleet, which was then the opposite number to the High Sea fleet, to remain concentrated at Portland and not give leave to its crews. The Second fleet was also to retain its crews on board. This was a less extensive measure than the complete mobilisation of the whole British navy which Crowe had proposed on the previous

¹ *Weltkrieg*, i, 101-2.

² *D.D.*, i, Nos. 197, 221.

day, and it was not known abroad till the 27th, by which time Berchtold had taken steps that made it more than ever difficult for Austria to recoil.

Yet Berchtold's chief problem at this juncture was to prevent peace from breaking out. In the early afternoon of July 26 he saw Conrad,¹ who told him that the Austrian operations against Serbia could not begin before August 12—with such surprising ineptitude had the Austrian military arrangements been made. Tschirschky, who was present at the discussion, pressed on Conrad what Szögyeny had telegraphed was the opinion at Berlin, that "the utmost speed in military operations and quickest declaration of war was desirable."² As Berchtold feared that the "diplomatic situation would not hold out so long," it was settled to issue, as soon as possible, a formal declaration of war, for which a frontier skirmish would give a good pretext.³ On the following day Jagow expressed to Szögyeny his regret that Austria's invasion of Serbia was to be so inordinately delayed.⁴

In Russia, German agents reported that mobilisation had been ordered in the Kiev and Odessa districts, but these reports were premature, and apparently caused by the entry into force of "the period of preparation for war." Sazonov's tone on the 26th was most conciliatory; in an interview with Szapary he proposed to go over the ultimatum with him, and said that only two demands in it (Nos. 5 and 6) appeared unacceptable in their existing form, and even with regard to them it might be possible to secure a pacific arrangement by having recourse to the mediation of the King of Italy or of England.⁵ Szapary received this proposal with cold and evasive language; it almost certainly strengthened the Austrians in their conviction that Russia would bluff but would not fight. But point No. 5 was toned down by Berchtold for the time being,⁶ probably with the intention of keeping Russia quiet.

That day Bethmann telegraphed to Pourtalès at St. Petersburg instructions that any military measures on Russia's part directed against Germany would bring counter-measures which must result in the mobilisation of the German army,

¹ Conrad, iv, 131-2; cf. iii, 444.

² D.D., i, No. 213.

³ cf. Conrad, iv, 137.

⁴ A.R.B., ii, No. 67.

⁵ A.R.B., ii, No. 73 (misdated in the *Red Book*).

⁶ A.R.B., ii, No. 38.



COUNT CONRAD VON HÖTZENDORF.

Born, 1852; died, 1925. Austrian Chief of Staff on the eve of the Great War.

July 26]

BRITISH FLEET READY

and that such mobilisation would mean war with Russia and France.¹ But in view of Austria's declaration that she did not intend to annex Serbian territory, Germany "could not believe" that Russia would precipitate a general war. Unfortunately for this contention, Austria had, so far, carefully refrained from giving definite and explicit pledges about Serbian territory at St. Petersburg. Berchtold had satisfied himself with making vague promises to the Russian embassy at Vienna and with sending a letter to St. Petersburg. In that dilatory missive he said that Austria aimed at no territorial acquisitions, and did not intend to destroy Serbia's sovereignty, but meant all the same to prosecute her demands to the utmost limit, and to shrink before no European complications.² Sazonov, though he was thus left in uncertainty, told Pourtalès that no order for a Russian mobilisation had been issued nor would be issued till Austria assumed a hostile attitude. This attitude he defined as the invasion of Serbia. He did not deny that certain military precautions were being taken, in order that Russia might not be surprised.

These measures appear to have been preliminary orders for the mobilisation of four groups of army corps (Kiev, Odessa, Moscow, Kazan) comprising thirteen corps destined to act against Austria; the promotion of cadets to officers' rank; and the return to their garrisons of troops engaged in exercises.³ They corresponded generally to the measures which Austria had taken when on the 25th she ordered the mobilisation of eight corps, though in Russia reservists were not as yet called up. In the districts of Warsaw, Vilna and St. Petersburg, on the German front, martial law was declared. The publication of military news in the press was forbidden. At midnight of July 26-27 the railways in the Odessa district were placed on a war footing and the officials on leave recalled. During the 26th the German military attaché in St. Petersburg saw the Russian war minister who told him that when Austria crossed the Serbian frontier the four districts supplying troops for action against her would mobilise, but under no circumstances the districts supplying troops for war against Germany. The Russian war minister added that only preliminary measures had, so

¹ *D.D.*, i, No. 219.

² *A.R.B.*, ii, No. 42.

³ *Rapport*, i, 39: cf. Dobrorolski, 18 ff.

THE WAR GUILT

[July 27]

far, been taken in Russia, and that there had been no mobilisation.¹

The key to the crisis was in Berlin as Sazonov remarked. On July 27 the German government in an offhand manner decided to pass Grey's proposals for mediation on to Vienna. Szögyeny telegraphed to Berchtold that these British proposals might possibly be brought by the German government to Austria's attention. But he went on to say:²

The German government offers the most unqualified assurances that it in no way identifies itself with them, but on the contrary is decidedly opposed to their consideration, and only communicates them in order to satisfy the English. . . . The German government is so acting because its point of view is that it is of the utmost importance that England, at the present moment, should not make common cause with Russia and France. Every step must therefore be taken to avoid breaking the wire between Germany and England which has hitherto worked so well. If Germany were bluntly to declare to Sir E. Grey that she declines to communicate to us his wishes in regard to Austria—which England believes would be more likely to receive consideration on our part were Germany to mediate—then this condition [of rupture in the wire] which must at all cost be avoided, would be brought to pass.

This telegram the German apologists seek to explain away by the usual assertion that Szögyeny's intelligence was failing which, if true, would convict both the German and Austrian governments of criminal negligence for tolerating such an ambassador at Berlin in a crisis.³ But in actual fact Szögyeny appears to have given truthful and correct accounts of what passed.⁴ From this telegram it is clear that the German government, far from supporting the English proposals, advised Austria to reject them, while it kept Grey in argument with itself. The German foreign office told the British chargé d'affaires in Berlin that it considered the "very fact of making this communication to the Austrian government implies that they associate themselves to a

¹ A.R.B., ii, No. 61.

² A.R.B., ii, No. 68; cf. F.O.D., 164, and Crowe and Nicolson's minutes.

³ Montgelas, *Leitfaden*, 175-6.

⁴ Szögyeny's reports were very similar to those of the Bavarian Legation at Berlin. See Dirr *passim*. cf. also Lichnowsky's description of him as "shrewd and experienced"; *Times Documentary History*, ix, 9.

GERMAN DUPLICITY

July 27]

certain extent with your hope. German government do not see their way to going beyond this."¹ As Crowe remarked (without having seen Szögyeny's telegram), "very insidious on the part of the German government." It was certainly an odd way of promoting peace, to assure England that its very act of sending on the English suggestions meant that it associated itself with them, while at the same moment it was telling Austria that it was "decidedly opposed to their consideration."

With regard to Grey's proposal of a conference of ambassadors, Jagow at Berlin told Goschen that it could only be accepted if Austria and Russia called for it;² and, as he well knew, Austria had made up her mind to have none of it. But he added that there was a prospect of a direct exchange of views between Sazonov and Berchtold which might lead to a satisfactory result. He mentioned to Goschen that Austria had only partially mobilised, and that if Russia mobilised in the south alone, Germany would not mobilise. If Russia mobilised in the north then Germany would do so, and, the Russian system of mobilisation being complicated, it might be difficult to determine exactly what was taking place; Germany would have to be careful not to be taken by surprise.

On July 27 Grey told Benckendorff of the orders that had the previous night been given to the First fleet to remain ready, but warned him not to treat this as meaning "that we promised anything more than diplomatic action."³ He also drew Mensdorff's⁴ attention to these orders as illustrating the great anxiety that prevailed in Europe. Sazonov had again informed the entente ambassadors at St. Petersburg that Russia would probably mobilise so soon as the Austrian army entered Serbia.⁵ But that day Pourtalès, the German ambassador in St. Petersburg, told the Dutch minister and the Belgian chargé d'affaires that "Russia would give way, and it would be a great triumph for the triple alliance."⁶ German military preparations were now being reported in various quarters. German reserve officers in Basle had already received their orders of recall, and motor car owners in Baden were warned to hold their cars ready. Off

¹ F.O.D., 104.

² F.O.D., 128.

³ F.O.D., 125.

⁴ The Austrian ambassador.

⁵ F.O.D., 120.

⁶ Paléologue, i, 40.

the Russian port of Riga mines were laid by the Russian navy. The Austrian ambassador in Petrograd told Buchanan that "the [Austrian] machine is in motion."¹

In the hope of saving peace, the Italian ambassador at Vienna proposed that Austria should give a positive engagement to the powers not to annex Serbian territory or to crush Serbia or deprive her of independence, but only to obtain guarantees.²

As Crowe pointed out, this was too vague for any useful purpose. Meanwhile Berchtold had once more acted. A memorandum was drawn up by him for Francis Joseph on July 27, calling for an immediate declaration of war on Serbia, on the pretext (which he afterwards confessed was false), that "Serbian troops on board a Danube steamer at Temes-Kubin yesterday fired on our troops, and a sharp skirmish followed when the fire was returned. Hostilities have thus actually been opened."³ Far from "opening hostilities" the Serbian troops had fallen back from the Danube and Belgrade, evacuating, for the time being, the Serbian capital. But on July 28 Francis Joseph with no further inquiry or investigation signed the declaration of war, from which all reference to this apocryphal engagement was subsequently removed. Thus the war party in Austria and Germany now had the war which they wanted.

What had happened evidently startled William II. On his return to Berlin⁴ the Serbian reply to the Austrian ultimatum was laid before him. His comment is remarkable, for it agrees with that of Bethmann⁵ in deciding that Austria had no real ground for making war. "A brilliant performance," he wrote,⁶ "as the result of the 48 hours' time limit. This is more than we could have hoped for! A great moral success for Vienna. With this every reason for war vanishes and Giesl [Austrian minister at Belgrade] might quietly have stayed on in Belgrade"! With reference to the Austrian mobilisation of eight corps which was already taking place,

¹ *id.*, 41.

² *F.O.D.*, 123.

³ *A.R.B.*, ii, No. 78. The Bavarian military representative in Berlin reported that a raid from Temes-Kubin into Serbian territory was planned for the 28th. (Dirr, 222). Margutti (323) draws attention to the deceit which was practised on Francis Joseph.

⁴ He reached Potsdam about 3 p.m. of July 27.

⁵ *D.D.*, i, No. 277.

⁶ *D.D.*, i, No. 271.

he added, "I should never have ordered mobilisation after this!"

In a letter to Jagow he reiterated this view:¹

On all the main points the wishes of the Danubian monarchy have been fulfilled. The few reserves which Serbia makes on particular points can be easily cleared up by negotiations. A capitulation of the most humiliating kind is proclaimed thereby *orbi et urbi*, and with this passes every reason for war.

Unhappily, after this admission that there was nothing for Austria to go to war about, he proceeded to declare that, as the Serbian note was only a "scrap of paper" and the Serbians only orientals, and as it was important to give the Austrian army some satisfaction now that it had mobilised for the third time, it was necessary to apply to Serbia a "*douce violence*." Such would be the occupation of Belgrade. Austria must obtain this or—

The temporary occupation of a part of Serbia, just as we retained troops in France in 1871, until the milliards of indemnity were paid. On this basis I am ready to mediate with Austria for peace. Any proposals to the contrary or protests of other states I would unconditionally reject, and with all the more reason because all are more or less openly appealing to me to help to maintain peace. This I will do in my own way.

It may have been William II's impulsive recklessness and lack of insight into Russian feeling that led him to insist on precisely such action by Austria as would lead Russia to mobilise. That he deliberately sought war is not proved, nor is it probable. But if his zeal for peace had been as great as Helfferich and other of his apologists represent, he would have forthwith recalled the blank cheque he had given to Austria. Had he acted energetically there was just time for him to save his ally. It was the 28th when his comments were written, and Bethmann and Moltke were on that day at loggerheads, Bethmann insisting that Russia would give way, and Moltke declaring war to be inevitable, and calling for mobilisation and an immediate attack on France.² Supposing there was going to be war, it must now have been clear to William that it would be a struggle

¹ *D.D.*, ii, No. 293.

² *cf.* Dirr, 220-1.

for life and death, on two fronts, if not on three. And bent though the Vienna war party were on carrying out remorselessly their plan of falling on Serbia, they would certainly have drawn back had they been given a plain warning that they were rushing to disaster, and that, in view of the Serbian note, Germany could no longer support them in extreme measures. The danger of general war was becoming evident. An allusion of Bethmann shows that on July 28 regular railway traffic between Berlin and Vienna had ceased.¹ Even Holland was getting ready to mobilise. But no clear and definite German warning was given which would have removed the impression produced by Szögyeny's telegram.

Bethmann knew that the Austrian war party meditated declaring war on the 28th, yet not till very late that day did he act.² He then complained, in a telegram to Vienna, of the extraordinary diplomatic difficulties which would be caused by the Austrian plan of delaying active operations against Serbia till August 12; and of the discredit which would fall on both Austria and Germany, if in the meantime proposals for mediation or for the submission of the dispute to a conference were rejected. To avert a war on three fronts, the responsibility for hostilities must be definitely placed on Russia's shoulders. Sazonov had agreed that Serbia must receive a sharp lesson. Russia might, therefore, permit the invasion of Serbia by the Austrian forces when mobilised, provided Vienna gave clear assurances that it meditated no territorial annexations in Serbia, but only the occupation of Belgrade³ and other points as guarantees for Serbia's compliance with the Austrian demands, which points would be evacuated as soon as the demands were fulfilled. Tschirschky was, however, instructed carefully to avoid any appearance of holding Austria back. This very half-hearted and hesitating intervention of the German chancellor was not in the least likely to stop the conflagration. It was probably regarded at Vienna as a subtle move in the German political game.

Before it was received Austria had declared war. Nor

¹ D.D., ii, No. 308.

² D.D., ii, No. 323. Telegram sent off at 10.15 p.m.

³ Conrad's war plan was so devised as to involve the occupation of all western Serbia before Belgrade was approached: he probably wanted to render impracticable in advance any proposal for a "halt in Belgrade." cf. his memoirs, iii, 238.

were Austrian assurances of benevolence for Serbia likely to carry conviction when, as Bethmann lamented in another note next day,¹ Mensdorff, the Austrian ambassador in London, was known to be offering portions of Serbian territory to Bulgaria and Albania, and when Hoyos was predicting the partition and complete destruction of Serbia. The Austrians forgot Melbourne's advice; they did not all "tell the same story." And as Grey dryly remarked when these protests of Austria's good intentions were made to him, it would be quite possible for Austria to reduce Serbia to the position of a vassal state without annexation,² which, we know, was the real purpose at Vienna.

There remained this faint gleam of hope, that direct conversations between Vienna and St. Petersburg might avert war. After the English projects of mediation had been rejected, this resource remained, and had there been a Bismarck instead of a Bethmann at Berlin peace could have been maintained. On the morning of July 29 the German government thought a peaceful settlement might be achieved—by a surrender on the part of Russia³ for at no stage in the negotiations was Austria ready to concede a single point of importance. But the influences hostile to peace were at work in Vienna and Berlin beneath the surface, and at each effort to avert war they came into action. As Conrad's ingenuously frank memoirs reveal, Austria had to gain time while her mobilisation was proceeding. It is highly doubtful whether she would have accepted any concessions that Russia and Serbia might have promised, short of a complete and abject surrender, carrying with it the destruction of Serbian independence, and the organisation of the Balkan states as German feudatories.

Feeling at St. Petersburg, despite the talk of the hotheads who will be found in every country, was not warlike even according to the German reports. German pressure had cemented the dual alliance, but both partners to it wanted peace—as even German critics admit—for the time being, though either was determined to stand by the other, in the event of a quarrel with one or other being picked by

¹ D.D., ii, No. 361.

² D.D., iv, 141-2.

³ D.D., ii, No. 357.

the German states. If Russia was making military preparations, it was, as the German military representative at St. Petersburg reported on July 30,¹ out of fear that she might be suddenly attacked. And the risk was great. It was known in St. Petersburg that the military position in Serbia was desperate. The German minister at Belgrade reported to Berlin that the feeling of the Serbian people and army was very depressed; the mobilisation was proceeding "very slowly as Serbia is entirely unprepared; grave want of munitions."² In two or three days, if Russia took no action, Serbia might be overwhelmed by the masses of men that Austria was supposed to be about to launch upon her.

No one among the entente powers had the remotest conception that when war came Conrad's plans would prove to have been so badly devised that he would not be able to attack for a fortnight. This military secret was strictly guarded by Conrad and Moltke. All the external indications pointed to a carefully prepared and thoroughly organised onslaught on Serbia, swiftly carried out by irresistible Austrian forces which, according to the secret reports that reached the entente powers, had been quietly making ready ever since the Serajevo crime—and perhaps even before it.

In Germany on the 28th, Bethmann sanctioned special measures as laid down in the military plans for the period of tension.³ Additional guards were placed on the railways near the frontiers and in the Berlin district. The recall of troops absent from their garrisons was ordered, where they were required in the event of mobilisation to be instantly or speedily ready for the protection of the frontiers or for special missions—in which probably the disloyal attack on Liège and the equally disloyal seizure of neutral Luxemburg were included. Late on the following day, the 29th, all German troops absent from their garrisons were recalled, and orders were given for the completion of field works at various points on German territory.

In the course of July 28 Berchtold directed Szögyeny to inform Bethmann that Conrad must know definitely, by

¹ *D.D.*, ii, No. 445. cf. Bethmann, *id.*, No. 456.

² *D.D.*, ii, No. 416. cf. Kanner, 184; *Sarajevo*, 130-1, and Margutti, 322.

³ *Weltkrieg*, i, 102.

August 1 at the latest, whether Austria was going to have war with Russia.¹ Berchtold, therefore, suggested that Berlin should notify Russia that, even if a partial Russian mobilisation took place, such as the Russian mobilisation of thirteen corps for action against Austria, it would be regarded as a threat to Austria, and would be answered by "the widest counter-measures" on the part of Germany. Thus the programme which Germany was now to carry out was devised in Vienna. Possibly it had been concerted by Conrad and Moltke when they met at Karlsbad in May, though of this there is at present no documentary evidence.

From the Russian standpoint preparations to prevent the destruction of Serbia were inevitable. But at the Russian court there were still hopes that William II might at the last moment show the desire for peace with which his near relatives credited him. It was impossible, however, to ignore the military preparations which were proceeding on the 28th both in Austria and Germany; there were reports that an order for a general Austrian mobilisation was imminent. No Austrian pledge of respect for the integrity of Serbian territory and the maintenance of Serbian independence had been received at St. Petersburg.² In the afternoon anxious councils began at the Czar's capital. The Russian staff pressed for the mobilisation of the whole Russian army. Just as Conrad found a partial Austrian mobilisation against Serbia too complicated and dangerous, so the Russian staff considered a partial Russian mobilisation likely to be fatal when the intervention of so terrible an antagonist as Germany was possible or indeed certain, at a moment's notice.

Though a partial mobilisation was condemned by Russian experts as lunacy,³ and had not been thoroughly worked out beforehand, Sazonov favoured it. As the result of Austria's declaration of war on Serbia he had lost all hope of a peaceful settlement. But he dreaded any action which would bring the German army on the scene. Two decrees were ready for submission to the Czar. The first was for a partial mobilisation of fifty-five divisions; the second was for the full mobilisation of one hundred and ten divisions.

¹ Conrad, iv, 133-4, 138-9; *A.R.B.*, ii, No. 80.

² Berchtold's letter did not arrive till late on the 28th (*A.R.B.*, ii, No. 93) and meantime Berchtold had sent off another telegraphic instruction not to "enter into any binding engagement" on the subject: *A.R.B.*, ii, No. 75.

³ Dobrorolski, 19.

The first was aimed against Austria, the second was to meet the far graver risk of war with both Germany and Austria. The two orders were submitted because, as Sazonov afterwards told Paléologue, the French ambassador,¹ a partial mobilisation would dislocate the entire machinery of general mobilisation; and, if Germany intervened, would leave Russia powerless to defend herself in the Polish salient. Both the French and British ambassadors were pressing Sazonov to do nothing hasty, and above all to avoid any semblance of threatening Germany. No action was taken by the Russian government with regard to the two mobilisation decrees on the 28th. The choice between them was not made. But Sazonov instructed his ambassadors at Berlin, London and Paris to state that the partial mobilisation would be ordered on the 29th, and that nothing would be done hostile to Germany.

At this precise juncture, when so much depended on England, there was still no definite warning from her. Indeed Bertie, the British ambassador at Paris, according to Berchtold, had told the Austrian ambassador in Paris, Szecsen, that in a war between Germany and Austria on the one hand and France and Russia on the other, "England would look on and only intervene if France were threatened with annihilation."² This was likely to encourage the war-mongers in Berlin and Vienna. Grey's attitude was clearly such as to leave even able English diplomatists in uncertainty. Sazonov's proposal to secure English or Italian mediation had remained unanswered by Berchtold. Very late on the 28th Szapary saw Sazonov and communicated to him Berchtold's declaration,³ that Serbian territory would not be annexed. But this made no great impression on Sazonov, as the other demands of Austria showed no intention to respect Serbian independence. Even Szapary admitted the Russian minister's apparent desire for peace.

In the night of July 28-29 telegrams were despatched almost simultaneously from William II to the Czar, and from the Czar to William II, each appealing to the other to maintain peace, and these telegrams crossed. William II's telegram was sent off at 1.45 a.m. of July 29 as the result

¹ Paléologue, i, 42.

² A.R.B., ii, 83.

³ Whether it was watered down in accord with Berchtold's subsequent telegram is not clear.

of suggestions from high Russian officers who hoped war might thus be averted. It denounced the "unscrupulous agitation" in Serbia and declared:¹

We both, you and me, have a common interest, as well as all Sovereigns, to insist that all the persons morally responsible for the dastardly murder should receive their deserved punishment.

He professed to be exerting his "utmost influence" to induce the Austrians "to arrive to [*sic*] a satisfactory understanding with you." The Czar's telegram was sent off at 1 a.m.² and was received in Berlin at 1.10 a.m. of July 29.

It said:³

An ignoble war has been declared to [*sic*] a weak country. The indignation in Russia shared fully by me is enormous. I foresee that very soon I shall be overwhelmed by the pressure brought upon me, and be forced to take extreme measures which will lead to war. To try and avoid such a calamity as a European war I beg you in the name of our old friendship to do what you can to stop your allies from going too far.

William II's marginal annotations show that he was in no conciliatory frame of mind. He insisted that the Czar's message contained a "covert threat," combined with a confession of weakness and an attempt to thrust the responsibility upon himself; that its note was Pan-Slav; that there was no excuse for a Russian mobilisation as yet; and that it ought to have been addressed to Francis Joseph, not to himself. He suggested that copies of both telegrams should be sent to King George V.

The Kaiser's telegram, from its tone, was taken by the Czar as giving hope for peace, the more so as it was accompanied by an assurance from Bethmann that German influence was being exerted at Vienna to secure regard for Russia in the Austrian measures against Serbia.⁴ But as the Austrian preparations were going forward, and as they were believed to affect some part of the forces in Galicia, near the Russian frontier,⁵ Sazonov saw the German

¹ D.D., ii, No. 335.

² Midnight, German time, which was one hour behind Russian time.

³ D.D., ii, No. 332.

⁴ D.D., ii, Nos. 310, 315.

⁵ F.O.D., 165; on the 27th Austrian cavalry were leaving Budapest for Galicia.

ambassador Pourtalès, early on July 29, intimated to him that Russia must mobilise the districts on the Austrian frontier, and stated that this did not mean war as with Western European armies, because the Russian army might "stand for weeks with grounded arms and not cross the frontier." The Russian minister insisted on the Russian desire to avoid war or any menace to Germany. Pourtalès replied that the danger of such military measures lay in this, that they would challenge counter-measures from the other side, and said that Sazonov ought to know Germany's duty to Austria as an ally.

To Szapary, the Austrian ambassador, Sazonov expressed his regret that Berchtold had refused to discuss with him the note to Serbia, whereupon Szapary assured him that Vienna was "ready to secure contact with St. Petersburg."¹ Sazonov told the Austrian ambassador that an order would be signed that day for a "fairly wide mobilisation"; he added an assurance that Russia's attitude would not be one of attack but of armed neutrality. During this interview Sazonov learnt that the Austrian monitors had bombarded Belgrade, and indignantly declared that Vienna only wanted to gain time by negotiations while pressing forward and bombarding open towns. Sazonov's anxieties were terrible. There was the immense danger to Serbia. There was the peril to Russia both from the German powers and from the revolutionaries. There was the certainty that England would refuse support if he acted precipitately. He was being pressed by the soldiers hour by hour to mobilise completely, but he still fought for a limited mobilisation against Austria only.

That morning the Russian staff for a moment obtained the upper hand against him. A preliminary telegram was sent out announcing the imminence of a general mobilisation. About noon the Czar's signature was secured to the order, but for it to become operative the signatures of three ministers were required as well.² The war minister, Sukhomlinov, signed, though he declared that the struggle before Russia was one beyond her strength; the minister of the interior signed, though he declared that the war would not be popular with the masses, which sought revolution rather than victory over Germany. But the third minister,

¹ A.R.B., iii, No. 19.

² Dobrorolski, 24-7.

Admiral Grigorovitch, could nowhere be found. This was the state of affairs when the Russian chief of staff told the German military attaché on his word of honour that the mobilisation had not as yet been decreed. And this was true; the order had not become operative; it was still in the chief of staff's pocket, lacking the signature of Grigorovitch.

As that afternoon wore on, action was taken by Germany on the lines that Conrad had suggested. Bethmann telegraphed at 12.50 p.m. to Pourtalès¹ "very earnestly to impress on Sazonov that the further progress of Russian measures of mobilisation will compel us to mobilise and then a European war can scarcely be prevented." This message was delivered to Sazonov with the assurance that it was "not a threat but a friendly opinion." Its form, however, was slightly altered by Pourtalès so that it read: "If Russia continues her military preparations Germany will mobilise and mobilisation means war." It rang like an ultimatum, and it required Russia to abandon measures of precaution which she had already notified to the powers and which were essential if she was not to look on while Serbia was crushed. It undoubtedly increased the alarm at St. Petersburg.

Late that evening Paléologue² was informed by the Russian government that it had decided to begin the undisguised mobilisation of the thirteen corps destined for action against Austria the same night, and secretly to order a general mobilisation. Paléologue protested against the general mobilisation, but was told that a partial mobilisation had been rejected by the experts as impracticable. The decisive telegram was about to be sent out. Dobrorolski, the Russian general in charge of the mobilisation arrangements, was at the general telegraph office in St. Petersburg to despatch it; the clerks were ready and waiting with their instruments when, at 9.30 p.m., he was called to the telephone and told that the Czar ordered the partial mobilisation only and countermanded the general mobilisation. Dobrorolski immediately obeyed the Czar's instructions. The French embassy was informed of the change of purpose that night and notified Paris that only thirteen corps were being mobilised.³ Dobrorolski definitely contradicts statements

¹ D.D., ii, No. 342. cf. Conrad, iv, 143.

² *Id.*, 43.

³ *Id.*, 42.

THE WAR GUILT

[July 29]

made in 1917 by Sukhomlinov, the war minister, to the effect that when the Czar gave the order to stop the general mobilisation it was disobeyed. Dobrorolski points out that in 1914 no one would have dreamed of ignoring a definite order from the Czar, and that the idea of such disobedience being possible only grew up in the revolution.

The Czar had been influenced by a fresh telegram from William II, suggesting that, as Austria "does not want to make any territorial conquests at the expense of Serbia," Russia should remain neutral¹—

Without involving Europe in the most horrible war she ever witnessed. I think a direct understanding between your government and Vienna possible and desirable, and as I have already telegraphed to you my government is continuing its exertions to promote it. Of course military measures on the part of Russia, which would be looked upon by Austria as threatening, would precipitate a calamity we both wish to avoid, and jeopardise my position as mediator which I readily accepted on your appeal.

This was at variance with the summons that had been delivered that afternoon by Pourtalès at St. Petersburg. So strange was the difference in tone that the Czar telegraphed for an explanation, and his telegram was among the many documents suppressed by the German government on the outbreak of war:²

Thanks for your telegram conciliatory and friendly. Whereas official message presented to-day by your ambassador to my minister was conveyed in a very different tone. Beg you to explain this divergency. It would be right to give over the Austrian-Serbian problem to the Hague conference.

Bethmann, immediately after the receipt of this message, ordered Pourtalès to see Sazonov and clear up the "divergency," but at the same time peremptorily ruled out any reference of the dispute between Austria and Serbia to The Hague. Yet had the Czar's proposal been pressed by Berlin upon the Austrian government it might even then have preserved peace. That the Czar was in earnest is certain. All the witnesses agree as to his alarm and distress at the mere idea of war. But at the same time he felt himself bound to protect Serbia against utter disaster.

¹ D.D., ii, No. 359.

² D.D., ii, No. 366.

July 29] PARTIAL RUSSIAN MOBILISATION

Thus, late on July 29-30, three mobilisations were in progress. The Serbian mobilisation had been ordered on July 25 at 3 p.m. The Austrian mobilisation of eight corps had been ordered on July 25 at 9.23 p.m. after Szögyeny, at 2.12 p.m., had pressed from Berlin for prompt military operations and the *fait accompli*; Russia began to mobilise thirteen corps about midnight of July 29-30. Precautionary measures were being taken in Germany, France, England, Belgium,¹ and Holland. The first declaration of war had been delivered by Austria to Serbia at 11 in the morning of July 28;² the first shots had been discharged, not by the Serbians, but by Austrian monitors which, early on July 28, fired on and damaged two Serbian steamers at Orsova.³ On July 29 Austrian guns opened fire on Belgrade, and a touch of comedy was given to a tragic situation by the British vice-consul's action in removing the ciphers and secret archives to the German legation.⁴

¹ F.O.D., 160.

² Conrad, iv, 142.

³ F.O.D., 138.

⁴ F.O.D., 168, 174.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MOBILISATIONS

NEITHER France nor England was in any way responsible for the Russian decision to reply with a partial mobilisation to the Austrian partial mobilisation. Both governments had repeatedly advised Sazonov to do nothing which would give Germany reason for action,¹ but both had recognised that Russia could not possibly look on while Serbia was being executed for a crime, her complicity in which was at that date in no way proved, and is even now, when so much more is known, quite improbable. Both governments suspected that Bethmann had done nothing whatever effective to restrain Austria. Both had information that Austria was making preparations for war in Galicia,² and even Berlin admitted that if Austria mobilised in that province, a Russian mobilisation would automatically follow. The French government in its efforts to avert war was greatly handicapped by the fact that the President and the premier were at sea, and that communications with them were being disturbed by the German wireless stations. Not until July 29 did Poincaré and Viviani reach Paris; and then the position was desperate, in view of Austria's attitude and Serbia's danger.

July 29 was a day marked everywhere by grave events. It was the date when, according to Tirpitz,³ Bethmann completely broke down. During the morning Grey saw Lichnowsky and discussed mediation with him, inviting Germany to suggest a means of applying it, if the English scheme was not acceptable. Grey's efforts were in vain.⁴ In the afternoon the news of the Russian partial mobilisation arrived. Grey made a last proposal, that Austria after

¹ The French action is recorded in *C.D.*, 210-11. Grey, on July 25, contemplated the possibility that Russia would mobilise.

² *C.D.*, 203; *Rapport*, I, 41; *F.O.D.*, 165.

³ *Erinnerungen*, 237.

⁴ *F.O.D.*, 171.

July 29]

MEDIATION PLANS

occupying Belgrade¹ should state that she would not advance further, pending an effort of the powers to mediate between her and Russia. He was ready to agree to the infliction of chastisement upon Serbia, provided Russia was not humiliated. And now he gave a warning, lest Lichnowsky should be misled "by the friendly tone of our conversations." He said that if Germany and France were not involved, England would not intervene. But "if the issue did become such that we thought British interests required us to intervene, we must intervene at once, and the decision would have to be very rapid."² Such was the English warning. Was it sufficiently clear and definite? A good German authority³ holds that a British ultimatum to Germany on this fateful day might have saved peace, by making the attitude of the British nation clear to everyone in Germany. But the divided, irresolute Liberal government could issue no such ultimatum. It had faith neither in itself nor in the country which it represented.

Lichnowsky's report was greeted by William II with comments of his usual frantic type:⁴

The greatest and most unheard of piece of English pharisaism that I have ever seen! With such scoundrels I will never conclude a naval agreement! Aha! the mean deceiver! We are to leave Austria meanly and mephistophically in the lurch! A regular English idea. This pack of base hucksters has sought to deceive us with dinners and speeches. The King's message to me through Henry was the grossest deceit: "We shall remain neutral and try to keep out of this as long as possible." Grey convicts the King of lying, and these words to Lichnowsky are the result of a bad conscience, so that even he feels he has deceived us. Actually what he says amounts to a threat, mingled with "bluff" in order to separate us from Austria, delay our mobilisation, and place on us the guilt of war. . . . Mean hound! With England alone now rests the responsibility for war or peace.

Thus Germany had at this moment a half-demented Emperor, and a chancellor who was not in full control of his faculties.

¹ See p. 234. Conrad had taken his precautions against this. Berchtold in any case refused to agree when such a plan was advocated by Bethmann.

² *F.O.D.*, 182.

³ Valentin, 231.

⁴ *D.D.*, II, No. 368.

The heads of the German staff who had been waiting "ready to pounce," had begun to protest strongly against further delay in mobilising, as they had a clear right to do. Just as Conrad plied Berchtold with documents pressing for early and complete mobilisation, so Moltke plied Bethmann and William II. He sent in a long report on the 29th, contending that Russia's secret armaments involved deadly peril for the Austrians, and declaring that Germany's fidelity to her ally must compel her to go to that ally's aid.¹ It was, therefore, of overwhelming importance to ascertain whether Russia and France were prepared to face the risk of war with Germany. The time, in fact, had come to apply the scheme of intimidating Russia and Europe, which was the basis of Berchtold's and Conrad's plans, as approved by William II.

The German staff thought the moment peculiarly favourable, a point to be remembered when German post-war apologists declare the very opposite.² They believed that they could crush France in six weeks. They were afraid that if Austria let the opportunity pass, it would not recur for many years. Neither they nor the German government had apparently considered beforehand the practical difficulties which would be involved in their famous plan for suddenly falling on Belgium and marching through her territory to outflank the French. As the hour for action approached, these difficulties multiplied and some way out of them must be found. The German government could not well deliver its ultimatum to Belgium till a general war had begun and the French army had mobilised. But France had not mobilised; she had only taken precautionary measures of precisely the same character as the German army had taken, and probably on a distinctly smaller scale. The development of the crisis had been so slow because of Austrian hesitations and lethargy that both Russia and France had been given more than a month of warning, thus impairing the advantage which Germany was believed to possess in the lightning rapidity of her mobilisation and her perfect readiness for war.

On the abstract question of the soldier's right to press for precautions or mobilisation, it must be said that chiefs of staff, when they see war approaching with all its appalling

¹ D.D., ii, No. 349.

² D.D., iv, 151; Dirr, 172.

dangers, are justified in taking every possible step to persuade the political leaders to prepare for it. On their energy and vigilance at such times depends the very existence of nations. This principle applies to the Russian measures as well as to German and Austrian ones. If one power were to gain a big start, or even a moderate start, where armies of millions were being handled, that power might secure a great military advantage. But the final decision in such matters must rest with the political leaders, and depend on their political insight and faithfulness to the right. The military leader must obey his political chief and not take matters into his own hands.

The last touches had to be given to the arrangements for the violation of Belgian neutrality. Some time that day, the 29th, the general staff's ultimatum to Belgium was considered and completed, and the passage promising French territory to the Belgians was deleted, together with all reference to England, showing that the heads of the German government still expected England to remain neutral. The document was then sent by a special messenger to the German minister at Brussels, till the time came to explode the bomb. The next step was to sound England and ascertain whether she would remain inert while her friends were being crushed. Bethmann wished to offer the British government a naval agreement as the reward for neutrality. But the Kaiser was in one of his most impracticable moods, and with Tirpitz¹ imperiously rejected such a scheme. The two of them were unwilling to make even that paper sacrifice to secure English neutrality. And yet Tirpitz, writing after the war, insists that no one in Berlin expected anything but defeat!

Late that evening Bethmann saw Goschen, the English ambassador, and said that a "European conflagration" might be "inevitable."² He disclaimed any idea of crushing France. His government "was ready to give every assurance . . . provided that Great Britain remained neutral, that, in the event of a victorious war, Germany aimed at no territorial acquisitions at the expense of France." But in answer to a question from Goschen, he "said that it would not be possible for him to give such an assurance as regards colonies." On the subject of Holland he said that "Germany would respect

¹ *Erinnerungen*, 237.

² F.O.D., 185-6; D.D., ii, No. 373.

neutrality and integrity of Holland, as long as they were respected by Germany's adversaries." As regards Belgium, he "could not tell to what operations Germany might be forced by the action of France, but he could state that, provided that Belgium did not take sides against Germany, her integrity would be respected after the conclusion of the war."

The proposal that England should stand aside and give Germany a free hand to strip France of her colonies was justly characterised by Asquith at a later date as "infamous." But even graver were the German allusions to Holland and Belgium. We know that the German experts regarded a neutral Holland as vital to German victory in the coming war,¹ and that they had therefore abandoned that part of Schlieffen's plan which involved a march through Holland and the seizure of Dutch territory. Bethmann's statement regarding Belgium was a deliberate falsehood. He had just returned from Potsdam where the ultimatum to Belgium had been examined, and he was perfectly well aware that the German staff was getting ready to march through Belgium whatever the attitude of France might be. He knew that the diplomatic document, the delivery of which was to be the prelude to that march, was already on its way to Brussels. His words suggested, and may have been meant to suggest that, if England did not counsel Belgium to abject submission to the German demands and to complicity with Germany in the attack on France, Belgium would be incorporated in Germany. Strange to relate, even after this intimation that Germany intended to violate Belgian neutrality had reached him, Grey gave no strong and definite warning that such a violation would instantly bring England into the field. He did denounce in vigorous terms the disgrace of the proposed bargain at the expense of France who might, as he wisely pointed out, even if the bargain were concluded, "be so crushed as to lose her position as a great power."²

On July 29 the warning telegram was sent in England to the naval and military forces, an indication that war might be imminent. That day the First fleet left Portland and proceeded to the positions at Cromarty and Scapa which it was to take up in the case of war. This movement was

¹ Moltke, *Erinnerungen*, 430.

² *D.D.*, iii, No. 497.

notified by Grey to the German ambassador, who was told that the fleet was proceeding "along the east coast northwards to the Scottish harbours."

Meanwhile from Vienna, on July 30, there had come no sort of response to Bethmann's mild remonstrances with Austria for her "intransigent" attitude or to his plea that she should place the responsibility for war on Russian shoulders. The precise reception given to Bethmann's messages is revealed by Conrad. Berchtold at 3.30 p.m. that day sent for Conrad and in view of the partial Russian mobilisation told him that the order for a general Austrian mobilisation ought to be submitted to Francis Joseph.¹ Conrad showed the Austrian hand very plainly. He declared it was useless to "chastise" Serbia, for that would mean the recurrence of all the trouble sooner or later. Much more than mere "chastisement" was wanted; and he and Berchtold fell to considering what they should do if Serbia submitted. They saw Francis Joseph, and with him decided that Serbia must be compelled to accept the demands of the Austrian ultimatum "word for word," and to repay the full cost of the Austrian mobilisation.

Conrad was further for requiring the cession of Belgrade and Sabatz with the surrounding country, and for the erection in this territory of extensive fortifications, the cost of which Serbia was to be made to pay. And when Francis Joseph said that Serbia would never agree to this, Conrad replied that it was no longer possible to stop military operations against Serbia which were already in progress. Such were the conciliatory ideas of the Austrian government—evidence which there was no explaining away, that it was determined on war and on the destruction of Serbia. The conference ended in the following secret decisions: to order the general Austrian mobilisation next day, after further consultation in the morning; to prosecute the war against Serbia; and to meet the English proposals of mediation with great courtesy, but without in any way accepting them.

From Berlin the Austrian military attaché telegraphed,² after an interview with Moltke, that "Russia's mobilisation was no justification for mobilisation [probably German mobilisation was meant]; the only justification was actual

¹ Conrad, iv, 148-151.

² Conrad, iv., 152.

war. In contrast with the Russian mobilisations and demobilisations which have almost become habitual, a German mobilisation would inevitably be followed by war. Austria should not declare war on Russia, but wait for Russia's attack." Conrad replied with an assurance that Austria would not declare war on Russia, but would "wait for Russia's attack." There appears to have been no little alarm at Moltke's advice among the Vienna war party, which was strengthened by a telegram of William II to Francis Joseph. William II¹ asked the Austrian Emperor to halt and, after occupying Belgrade and other places, to announce the Austrian conditions to Serbia. The wording of the message was weak, yet had William II at this juncture plainly told Francis Joseph what his own verdict on the situation was—that after Serbia's surrender in the reply to the Austrian ultimatum, Austria had no excuse for war—and had he further warned the Austrian Emperor that, if Austria provoked war on such an issue, Germany would refuse support, peace could even then have been saved. The essential point was for him to recall the "blank cheque" which he had given so recklessly on July 5 to Francis Joseph.

If he had done so, it is quite certain that, whatever the fury of Conrad, Austria would have drawn back and accepted the English proposals of mediation. It is also certain that William II would have laid the foundations of a closer understanding with England and of a reconciliation with France and Russia. He had not the strength of character or the energy required in this hour of decision for such an act, and he was undoubtedly afraid of the German military party. Yet the "blank cheque" had been obtained from him by a trick—by the untruthful assertion that all the threads of the conspiracy which caused the Serajevo crime led to Belgrade. Francis Joseph, in making that assertion, had himself been deceived by Berchtold and Conrad, and had chosen to listen to them rather than to Tisza, who told him the truth.

Wanting in energy as it was, William's missive frightened the Vienna advocates of war. The policy it outlined would not have suited them at all. By the publication of conditions such as Conrad, Berchtold, and Francis Joseph had arranged,

¹ D.D., ii, No. 437.

Austria would have been more definitely than ever convicted of a deliberate conspiracy against peace. But late that afternoon there came in a telegram from Szögyeny which put fresh heart into the war party. The German government, it said, had already informed St. Petersburg that a Russian mobilisation would bring a German mobilisation. This telegram is mentioned by Conrad, but it does not appear in the Austrian documents as they have been published.

Even graver was a "most secret" message from Moltke to Conrad,¹ urging Austria "pressingly" to carry out an "immediate complete mobilisation." This was somewhat out of keeping with Moltke's previous advice, and was probably due to William II's reluctance to consent to a general German mobilisation, which was being demanded of him on July 30.² All the 30th, it would appear from a statement made by Zimmermann (the German foreign under-secretary), to one of the ambassadors at Berlin, the military authorities were pressing for such action, and were being told that they must wait till France or Russia had mobilised, so as to place the responsibility on other than German shoulders. In the morning (according to the German pamphleteer "Junius") it was thought that William II had given way, and at 1 p.m. the *Lokalanzeiger* appeared with a special edition, reporting "mobilisation." Then, according to the same authority, Bethmann intervened, much as Sazonov had intervened with the Czar, and secured a reversal of the order. William was thought by Conrad³ to have quailed at the news that Italy was holding back. But if Austria would now mobilise William II's hand would be forced; he would be confronted with the alternatives of abdication or submission to the demands of the general staff. Meantime the edition of the *Lokalanzeiger* was confiscated, but not before the incorrect report had been telegraphed by several of the ambassadors, including the Russian.

Whether it had any influence on events is still a subject of controversy. Sazonov says that the Russian ambassador

¹ A.R.B., iii, No. 34.

² cf. Dirr, 226; the German war party feared the effect of Bethmann's advice to Austria to repeat her promise that she would not annex Serbian territory, thinking it might lead Austria and Russia to hesitate.

³ iv, 151.

in Berlin sent him the news "some minutes after the appearance of the journal" (which would be about 1.15 German or 2.15 p.m. Russian time), and that the telegram reached him two hours later, that is to say about 3.15 German or 4.15 Russian time. He informed the Russian war minister and chief of the staff about it without any delay. According to German authorities, the Russian ambassador's telegram was not handed in at Berlin till 3.28 p.m. German time, or 4.28 Russian time, and did not reach St. Petersburg till the decision had been taken.¹ Dobrorolski, who has been asked whether it affected the Czar's decision to mobilise, states that it was not known to him, and could not have influenced him. There was great delay in putting through a second telegram from the Russian ambassador in Berlin to St. Petersburg containing a contradiction, but this arose from pressure on the German telegraphs, and the barring of the Russian telegraph system after the mobilisation order.

It should not be supposed that there was any great alarm and dismay in Austria and Germany. In Austria the war with Serbia which was to lay that empire in the dust was greeted with extravagant rejoicings.² In Germany, such a cool and competent American observer as Wile³ described Berlin on the eve of the conflict as "hoarse with *Hoching*," and remarked that no "German soldier worthy of the name ever considered Russian movements along the Prussian and Austrian frontiers at the end of July, 1914, a 'menace.' It was only a fortnight previous that the German *Military Gazette*, the official army organ, had laughed the whole Russian army out of court as an organisation hardly worthy of Prussian steel." "Let them all come"—the rash boast of Fisher in 1907—was the temper of Germany in 1914, outside the foreign office.

During the night and early morning of July 30 anxious interviews were taking place at St. Petersburg between Sazonov and the German ambassador. Sazonov told the French ambassador, "I will negotiate up to the last minute," and he was as good as his word. Pourtalès on the previous day had said that Germany was prepared to guarantee that

¹ See Montgelas, *Leitfaden*, 178-9, and for the opposite view *Revue de Paris*, March, 1922.

² *F.O.D.*, 198.

³ F. W. Wile in *The Assault*, 77, 79.

Austria would not violate Serbian integrity. This, as we know, was attributing to Vienna conciliatory intentions which it did not for a moment really entertain. Sazonov replied that Serbia would inevitably become an Austrian vassal, just as Bokhara, though its territory remained intact, had become a Russian vassal; but, despite his misgivings, some time before mid-day he proposed a formula which might avert war:¹

If Austria (recognising that her conflict with Serbia has assumed the character of a question of European interest) declares herself ready to eliminate from her ultimatum points which violate the principle of Serbian sovereignty, Russia engages to stop all military preparations.

Portalès received this proposal coldly; and, as Austria had decided to render her terms more and not less exigent, there was not the slightest prospect of its acceptance by her; indeed nothing more was heard of it.

All the while, William II and the Czar were in telegraphic conversation. At 1.20 a.m. of July 30 the Czar telegraphed:²

Am sending Tatischev this evening with instructions. The military measures which have now come into force were decided five days ago for reasons of defence on account of Austria's preparations. I hope from my heart that these measures won't in any way interfere with your part as mediator which I greatly value. We need your strong pressure on Austria to come to an understanding with us.

The Kaiser's comment on this message suggests that before noon of July 30 he had come to the conclusion that a general war was inevitable. "I cannot have any further share in mediation," he wrote, "as the Czar here admits that he has secretly mobilised behind my back. It is only a manoeuvre to hold us back, and to increase the advantage already gained. My part is over!" The threatening tone of his next message to the Czar, sent off at 3.30 p.m., is specially important; it treats even a partial Russian mobilisation as fatal to any plan of mediation. It opened by a reference to the supposed

¹ *D.D.*, ii, Nos. 412, 421.

² *D.D.*, ii, No. 390.

"divergency" between his previous telegram and his ambassador's language:¹

It is quite out of the question that my ambassador's language could have been in contradiction with the tenor of my telegram. Count Pourtalès was instructed to draw the attention of your government to the danger and grave consequences involved by a mobilisation. I said the same in my telegram to you. Austria has only mobilised against Serbia, and only a part of her army. If, as is now the case according to the communication by you and your government, Russia mobilises against Austria, my rôle as mediator . . . will be endangered, if not ruined. The whole weight of the decision lies solely on your shoulders now, who have to bear the responsibility for Peace or War.

This telegram was not in the hands of the Czar till late in the afternoon of the 30th, so that it did not arrive before the final decision was reached that day to order the general Russian mobilisation.

The struggle between the Russian staff's fears of a German attack and the Czar's yearning for peace continued all the morning of the 30th. At 3.10 p.m. Sazonov reported to the Czar that the German mobilisation was going secretly forward. The hands of the clock were at 4 p.m., Russian time, according to Sazonov, when the Czar at last reluctantly and with intense emotion gave his consent² to the general Russian mobilisation. The telegraphic order to mobilise reached the general telegraph office at 5 p.m. One hour later, Dobrorolski states, "while absolute stillness reigned in the room all the telegraphic instruments simultaneously began to click."³ And so the cold shadow of death began to fall over Russia and over Europe. The Czar's reason for his decision, according to Buchanan,⁴ the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, was a report from the Russian ambassador in Vienna that Austria was determined not to yield to the mediation of the powers, and that she was moving troops against Russia as well as against Serbia. The Russian government also had information that Germany was making active military preparations, and it could not allow her to get a start.

¹ D.D., ii, No. 420.

² Paléologue, i, 45; Sazonov, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, xi, 827.

³ Dobrorolski, 29.

⁴ F.O.D., 218.

Sazonov, Paléologue and Buchanan state that William II's telegram of that day influenced the Czar in his decision, but they must be wrong as the telegram¹ could not have reached Peterhof Palace before 5 or even 6 p.m. The telegram may have removed any doubt and hesitation that the Czar still felt after giving his consent. This time there was no recalling the order, which was posted up in the night of July 30-31 in St. Petersburg and all Russian towns. Bethmann and the Austrian ambassador at St. Petersburg, Szapary, thought that "false news about the German and Austrian mobilisation," such as the Berlin *Lokalanzeiger* had published, had contributed to the Russian action. But, after a critical examination of the facts, that belief is proved to have been without foundation.

William II in his heart held that Russia had no aggressive intentions. On the report of his military representative at St. Petersburg, that "people have mobilised here through fear of coming events with no aggressive purpose, and are already terrified at the result," William II wrote: "Right; that is the truth."² He did not yet know of the general mobilisation, which would naturally be a much more serious matter. But the common German theory, that this Russian general mobilisation was the cause of the war, will not stand. The Austrian government, as has already been seen, had, quite independently of Russia's general mobilisation and knowing nothing about it, determined on the general Austrian mobilisation. Tschirschky provides evidence of this in a telegram sent off late in the night of July 30 from Vienna,³ in which he dwelt on the strong representations he had made, according to Bethmann's instructions, to persuade Austria to agree to mediation after guarantees had been secured from Serbia. For he went on to say that in the Austrian government's opinion any limitation of the military operations was out of the question; and he added: "Conrad von Hoetzendorf will to-night submit to the Emperor the order for the general mobilisation." No "halt in Belgrade" was so much as considered by Vienna.

¹ Sent off 3.30 p.m. German time, 4.30 p.m. Russian time; at least thirty minutes would have been required for transmission and delivery. It was probably the Kaiser's telegram of July 29 that the Czar mentioned, though this had at first made a good impression on Nicholas.

² D.D., ii, No. 445.

³ D.D., ii, No. 465.

In the evening of July 30 William II wrote a long wandering memorandum on a report of the German ambassador at St. Petersburg:¹

Folly and weakness are going to inflict on the world the most fearful of wars, which has for its object the extinction of Germany. I have now no more doubt that England, Russia and France have conspired to wage a war of annihilation against us on the ground that we are confronted by the *casus fœderis* as concerns Austria. Hence Grey's cynical remark to Lichnowsky—"so long as the war is confined to Russia and Austria England would sit still, but if we and France are involved, then he would be compelled to intervene actively against us." This means that we must either basely betray our allies and sacrifice them to Russia, thus destroying the triple alliance, or else, as the result of our loyalty to our alliance, be attacked by the whole triple entente and punished.

The triple entente is to glut its hatred by totally ruining us in a combined attack. That is the real situation created by Edward VII's initiative and systematically prepared by him in the negotiations—which he denied—between England, Paris and St. Petersburg. . . . The net has suddenly been tightened round us, and with scornful laughter England has achieved the most brilliant success in her persistently conducted anti-German policy, against which we have found ourselves powerless. . . . A gigantic achievement which provokes the admiration even of those who are to perish by it! Edward VII in his grave is stronger than I who am still alive.

The German position was difficult. But it was difficult because William II had so rashly given the Austrian government a blank cheque, without studying the consequences, and because Bethmann had proved himself ignorant of Russian feeling. The Kaiser concluded with a characteristic outburst, calling on all German agents to stir up a savage Moslem insurrection against "this hated, lying, unscrupulous people of hucksters." England must lose India as the price of her (purely imaginary) perfidy.

It is sufficient comment on this to repeat the words of Lichnowsky: Berlin—until it was too late—"went on insisting that Serbia must be massacred." The plot, such as it was, was the work of the two Emperors and the men round them. They had manoeuvred Austria into this war. They had declined or thwarted every initiative and

¹ *D.D.*, ii, No. 401.

every offer that might have preserved peace until the twelfth hour was striking. They had stopped effective mediation. They had refused any submission of the quarrel to The Hague. Yet Russia,¹ France, and England were certainly not anxious to ruin Austria, and had all agreed that she must receive satisfaction from Serbia, even though the guilt of Serbia was by no means proved. Russia was ready to go far in the path of concession. To refuse a compromise and insist on a preventive war which, as William II now declared, must ruin Germany, was an act of such folly as seems almost beyond the comprehension of man.

From Italy came a definite warning to the Austrian government. Late on July 29, in a message which reached Vienna in the morning of the 30th, the Austrian ambassador in Rome stated that the Italian foreign minister had told him that, as the triple alliance was purely defensive, and "as we by our violent proceedings against Serbia have provoked a European conflagration, and have done this without consulting the Rome government," Italy was under no obligation to take part in the war.² What line Italy would follow would depend on her interests. The Italian attitude caused intense alarm in the German staff which plied Conrad with entreaties to "square the Italians"—Conrad, who had so frequently himself proposed attacking Italy. At 7.45 a.m. of July 31 a telegram from Moltke reached him. "Russian mobilisation proceeding. Austria must remain firm and mobilise simultaneously against Russia. Germany is going to mobilise. Secure Italy's compliance with her duty as ally by compensation."

Close upon this or simultaneously with it came a further message from Moltke that he would regard the position as critical if Austria did not forthwith mobilise³ against Russia. The Russian declaration [of partial mobilisation, for the general mobilisation was not yet known in Berlin or Vienna] made Austrian counter-measures necessary, and involved Germany under the terms of her alliance. Italy must be induced to remain within the triple alliance so that no single man need be left by Austria on the Italian frontier;

¹ cf. *F.O.D.*, 187, 195.

² *A.R.B.*, iii, No. 38.

³ In his *Erinnerungen*, p. 5, a memorandum of Moltke's, dated July 28, 1914, is printed stating that "the moment Austria mobilises her whole army a collision between her and Russia becomes inevitable."

THE WAR GUILT

[July 31]

England's fresh proposals for maintenance of peace should be rejected.¹ "For the preservation of Austria the only remaining resource is the waging of a European war. Germany unconditionally supports her."

At 8 a.m. Conrad telegraphed to Moltke²:

The All-Highest (Francis Joseph) has decided: To prosecute war against Serbia; to mobilise the rest of the army and concentrate it in Galicia; the first day of mobilisation is to be August 4; mobilisation order goes out to-day, July 31.³ Request date of your first mobilisation day.

This message went through Szögyeny's hands, and he appended to it the words, "the decision was taken yesterday," i.e. July 30.⁴ In Conrad's message is a reference to a "question" asked by Moltke, and the nature of that question is not known, but it was probably a request for information when Austria was going to mobilise completely. Conrad's telegram can hardly have been a reply to Moltke's messages about 7.45, as only a quarter of an hour had elapsed since his receipt of them, which would not give time for consultation with the various Austrian officials.

Moltke's messages of that morning are of extreme importance. They prove that while Bethmann was urging Austria to make at least a semblance of accepting mediation, Moltke was usurping political power and entreating her to reject mediation and embark on a European war. This disastrous advice would have removed doubts at Vienna had there been any. Conrad showed the messages to the various Austrian ministers whereupon Berchtold asked in derision: "Who rules at Berlin? Moltke or Bethmann?" He went on to say that he had previously had the impression that Germany was weakening; now he had "the most reassuring of declarations from the most influential military authority."⁵ Thus an enormous responsibility rests with Moltke for his action at this moment. But, even then, so wanting were the Austrian statesmen in insight and energy that they could not make up their minds to promise Italy definitely Valona.

The news of the Russian general mobilisation reached

¹ Conrad, iv, 152.

² A.R.B., iii, No. 50.

³ The mobilisation order was received from Francis Joseph at 12.23 p.m., of the 31st, and was at once published; Conrad, iv, 155.

⁴ D.D., iii, No. 498.

⁵ Conrad, iv, 153.

July 31] MOLTKE CALLS FOR WAR

Berlin at 11.40 a.m. of July 31, many hours in advance of the time when it arrived in Paris and London.¹ In Paris the telegram announcing it was not received till 8.30 p.m., and though the point is disputed on the authority of the Russian documents published by the Bolsheviks, the evidence is strong that the hour of reception was really 8.30.² If it was earlier then we must suppose that the news was treacherously concealed by the French government from the British government, which is so wildly improbable that it puts the Bolshevik and German contention out of court. The facts about the precise hour of reception have been given by President Poincaré and confirmed by examination of the archives of the former Russian embassy in Paris, when they were not in Bolshevik hands. In London the news was in the foreign office at 5.20 p.m.³ Already the telegraphic service between the entente countries and Russia was working uncertainly, and English messages had to be sent by way of Aden, while French messages went by Bergen.

Vienna did not receive the news from Szapary till 9 a.m. of August 1,⁴ but was apparently informed, about 1 p.m. of the 31st, by telephone or telegraph from Berlin. It was not known to the Austrian council⁵ which sat that day to consider the English proposals for mediation and the question of compensation to Italy. The decision was against any genuine mediation even if Austria were allowed by the powers to occupy Belgrade, because the Serbian army would remain intact; but to tell Grey that the Austrian government was ready to "approach" mediation provided always the operations against Serbia were not interrupted and Russia's partial mobilisation (the general mobilisation was not yet known) was stopped. As for Italy, only if she fulfilled her duty as an Austrian ally was she to be offered Valona, and that not at once.⁶ In fact the pacific powers were to be "spoofed."

At Berlin the German staff was pressing more than ever violently for instant general mobilisation. Its intentions

¹ D.D., ii, No. 473.

² Renouvin, 146; Montgelas, *Leitfaden*, 132; Appuhn and Renouvin, xciv-v; *Livre Noir*, ii, 294.

³ F.O.D., 218. From Berlin the news reached London about 5 p.m., but could not be accepted as authentic till it had been confirmed from St. Petersburg.

⁴ A.R.B., iii, No. 72.

⁵ Bethmann (D.D., iii, No. 513) states that the news arrived during the council, but the protocol of the council (A.R.B., iii, No. 79) shows that this is not correct.

⁶ *Id.*, No. 79.

are believed to have been to deliver an immediate attack on France on August 1, so as to disorganise the French mobilisation and concentration, while a picked force rushed upon Liège and seized it before the Belgians could put it in a posture for defence. All the visible indications suggested that Moltke or his subordinates were seeking to provoke France into some act which would serve as justification for such an onslaught. While the heads of six German columns waited impatiently at the Belgian frontier for the order to advance,¹ German aircraft cruised above the French frontier, crossing it several times. In the night of July 25 a German airship was reported near Toul; on the 29th one of these craft was seen near Verdun and another close to Remiremont; on the 30th an airship passed over Longwy. German patrols of two or three mounted men were seen a short distance inside the French frontier on the 29th, and on the 30th two German non-commissioned officers rode a couple of hundred yards into French territory, while German railway authorities seized the French Eastern railway locomotive, No. 6113, at Amanvillers.

Against these pinpricks was to be set the accidental crossing of the German frontier by a single French aeroplane.² To deprive the German government of any excuse for attack, on July 30 Joffre ordered the French covering troops to withdraw to a distance of ten kilometres or about six miles from the frontier. The measure was a dangerous one for France;³ it abandoned important tactical positions in the Vosges, and a large part of the Briey ironfield. German propagandists⁴ are guilty of mere special pleading when they allege that this precaution was sheer make-believe, because a limited number of customs officials and foresters remained. These men, though armed with rifles, were without artillery and machine guns, and could do little more than watch the German proceedings. The German official history admits that on the 31st an officer's patrol of the 143rd infantry regiment was on French territory.

If these violations of the frontier were meant to precipitate French action, the disappointment of the German staff must have been great. Moltke had hoped originally to secure the

¹ Schwarte, *Grosse Krieg*, i, 108-9.

² *Weltkrieg*, i, 105.

³ Legrand-Girarde, *Operations du 21^e Corps d'Armée*, 19-20.

⁴ cf. Montgelas, 180.

mobilisation on the 29th or 30th, as each hour lost diminished Germany's advantages if there was to be war. At mid-day of the 31st the Kaiser was still reluctant to give the order for mobilisation, wishing to shift the responsibility to Russia. But, as a compromise, he agreed to sign a proclamation ordering the *Kriegsgefahrzustand*, or "state of danger of war." He himself described it as a "preliminary mobilisation," and it called up automatically certain classes of German reservists. The German government, however, protested to France that it was not a mobilisation and asked the French government not to be alarmed by it.

The German action was followed by the French decision to place the five frontier corps as rapidly as possible in a position to cover the frontier.¹

After the *Kriegsgefahrzustand* had been proclaimed, a telegram was despatched from the Kaiser to the Czar. From its phraseology this telegram appears to have been drawn up before the Russian general mobilisation was known, though it was sent off at 2.4 p.m. on the 31st, nearly three hours after the news of that mobilisation had arrived. It complained that while William II was mediating:²

Your troops were mobilised against Austria-Hungary, my ally. . . . I have, nevertheless, continued my action. I now receive authentic news of serious preparations for war on my eastern frontier. Responsibility for the safety of my empire forces preventive measures of defence upon me. In my endeavours to maintain the peace of the world I have gone to the utmost limit possible. . . . The peace of Europe may still be maintained by you if Russia will agree to stop the military measures which must threaten Germany and Austria-Hungary.

This crossed with a telegram from the Czar sent off at 2.55 p.m. which said:³

I thank you heartily for your mediation, which begins to give one hope that all may yet end peacefully. It is technically impossible to stop our military preparations which were obligatory owing to Austria's mobilisation. We are far from wishing war. As long as the negotiations with Austria on Serbia's account are taking place my troops shall not make any provocative action. I give you my solemn word for this.

¹ *Livre Noir*, ii, 293.

² *id.*, No. 487.

³ *D.D.*, iii, No. 480.

But no assurances could stop the war parties at Berlin and Vienna. The German government, according to Tirpitz,¹ had already decided that a general war was inevitable; and the German foreign office was asking the German navy whether it was ready to attack the English fleet. Even William II, after violent changes in opinion during the earlier days of the crisis, was now reported to be "very determined and calm."² Moltke was in good spirits and is said to have talked to friends of the indemnity which would be exacted from France, Russia and Belgium, after the defeat which he was confident of inflicting on them. From the Austrian staff came singularly misleading assurances.³ It declared that it was not only able to crush Serbia but also to concentrate on the Russian frontier a force capable of meeting the Russian armies which were gathering there and numerically superior to them. Such were the eleventh-hour delusions of Conrad.

German wireless messages were intercepted by the British stations that day announcing that war was imminent between Great Britain, France and Russia on the one side, and Germany, Austria and Italy on the other. The German fleet was ordered to prepare for a movement against England with all its forces in the North Sea as rapidly as possible: during the afternoon vessels of the 2nd German battle squadron passed through the Kiel Canal, sustaining some damage to certain of the ships' propellers in doing so.⁴ Bethmann early in the day told the British ambassador that the German government might "take some very serious step," by which he obviously meant a declaration of war upon Russia or possibly upon England. Early in the afternoon arrived a telegram from Francis Joseph, replying to William's message of the previous day and couched in warlike terms, announcing that he could not possibly give way to Russian intervention on behalf of Serbia.⁵ William II replied with a fresh telegram, stating that "definite mobilisation of my whole army and navy will follow at the shortest interval," and urged Austria in the war, which, he admitted, would begin at once against Russia and France, to concentrate

¹ *Erinnerungen*, 238.

² *D.D.*, iv, 150-1; cf. *A.R.B.*, iii, No. 58.

³ *D.D.*, iv, 156.

⁴ Groos, *Krieg in der Nordsee*, i, 24.

⁵ *D.D.*, iii, No. 482.

her main forces against Russia, and not waste them in an offensive against Serbia, which he said was a quite secondary matter.

Thus, now the general war was at hand, and the effort of the German government thenceforward was to put the odium for it, if possible, on the shoulders of Russia, France and England. Serbia and the "punitive expedition" against her had already receded into the background in view of this new and more terrible peril, which had been always there, hanging like a sword of Damocles over Europe. Bethmann at 3.30 p.m. telegraphed a peremptory note to Russia.¹ It was an ultimatum and it stated:

Although negotiations are still pending, and we have up to this hour made no preparations for mobilisation,² Russia has mobilised her entire army and fleet, and hence has mobilised against us. Because of these measures we are compelled, for the safety of our country, to proclaim the state of threatening danger of war, which does not as yet imply mobilisation. Mobilisation, however, must follow if Russia does not stop every measure of war against ourselves and Austria within twelve hours, and if she does not definitely notify us of this.

An ultimatum of the same character was sent simultaneously to the French government,³ but differed in containing the intimation that "mobilisation means inevitable war." France was summoned to state whether she would remain neutral, and was given eighteen hours in which to do so. A secret postscript to the ultimatum required her further, if she pledged her neutrality, within three hours of giving such a pledge to surrender the two great French frontier fortresses of Toul and Verdun. That humiliating demand was probably added because the German staff was convinced that it would force her into war.

The ultimatum to Russia, it will be noted, was much milder in form. It may be, as Kautsky has suggested, that the German staff wished to avoid anything that would increase the Czar's alarm until the German armies were ready; or again Bethmann may have wished to keep the wire to St. Petersburg still working. In everything but name the

¹ *D.D.*, iii, No. 490.

² He admitted subsequently in his memoirs (*Betrachtungen*, i, 152-3) that Germany had taken precautions.

³ *D.D.*, iii, No. 491.

THE WAR GUILT

[July 31]

But no assurances could stop the war parties at Berlin and Vienna. The German government, according to Tirpitz,¹ had already decided that a general war was inevitable; and the German foreign office was asking the German navy whether it was ready to attack the English fleet. Even William II, after violent changes in opinion during the earlier days of the crisis, was now reported to be "very determined and calm."² Moltke was in good spirits and is said to have talked to friends of the indemnity which would be exacted from France, Russia and Belgium, after the defeat which he was confident of inflicting on them. From the Austrian staff came singularly misleading assurances.³ It declared that it was not only able to crush Serbia but also to concentrate on the Russian frontier a force capable of meeting the Russian armies which were gathering there and numerically superior to them. Such were the eleventh-hour delusions of Conrad.

German wireless messages were intercepted by the British stations that day announcing that war was imminent between Great Britain, France and Russia on the one side, and Germany, Austria and Italy on the other. The German fleet was ordered to prepare for a movement against England with all its forces in the North Sea as rapidly as possible: during the afternoon vessels of the 2nd German battle squadron passed through the Kiel Canal, sustaining some damage to certain of the ships' propellers in doing so.⁴ Bethmann early in the day told the British ambassador that the German government might "take some very serious step," by which he obviously meant a declaration of war upon Russia or possibly upon England. Early in the afternoon arrived a telegram from Francis Joseph, replying to William's message of the previous day and couched in warlike terms, announcing that he could not possibly give way to Russian intervention on behalf of Serbia.⁵ William II replied with a fresh telegram, stating that "definite mobilisation of my whole army and navy will follow at the shortest interval," and urged Austria in the war, which, he admitted, would begin at once against Russia and France, to concentrate

¹ *Erinnerungen*, 238.

² *D.D.*, iv, 150-1; cf. *A.R.B.*, iii, No. 58.

³ *D.D.*, iv, 156.

⁴ Groos, *Krieg in der Nordsee*, i, 24.

⁵ *D.D.*, iii, No. 482.

July 31]

MOLTKE CHEERFUL

her main forces against Russia, and not waste them in an offensive against Serbia, which he said was a quite secondary matter.

Thus, now the general war was at hand, and the effort of the German government thenceforward was to put the odium for it, if possible, on the shoulders of Russia, France and England. Serbia and the "punitive expedition" against her had already receded into the background in view of this new and more terrible peril, which had been always there, hanging like a sword of Damocles over Europe. Bethmann at 3.30 p.m. telegraphed a peremptory note to Russia.¹ It was an ultimatum and it stated:

Although negotiations are still pending, and we have up to this hour made no preparations for mobilisation,² Russia has mobilised her entire army and fleet, and hence has mobilised against us. Because of these measures we are compelled, for the safety of our country, to proclaim the state of threatening danger of war, which does not as yet imply mobilisation. Mobilisation, however, must follow if Russia does not stop every measure of war against ourselves and Austria within twelve hours, and if she does not definitely notify us of this.

An ultimatum of the same character was sent simultaneously to the French government,³ but differed in containing the intimation that "mobilisation means inevitable war." France was summoned to state whether she would remain neutral, and was given eighteen hours in which to do so. A secret postscript to the ultimatum required her further, if she pledged her neutrality, within three hours of giving such a pledge to surrender the two great French frontier fortresses of Toul and Verdun. That humiliating demand was probably added because the German staff was convinced that it would force her into war.

The ultimatum to Russia, it will be noted, was much milder in form. It may be, as Kautsky has suggested, that the German staff wished to avoid anything that would increase the Czar's alarm until the German armies were ready; or again Bethmann may have wished to keep the wire to St. Petersburg still working. In everything but name the

¹ *D.D.*, iii, No. 490.

² He admitted subsequently in his memoirs (*Betrachtungen*, i, 152-3) that Germany had taken precautions.

³ *D.D.*, iii, No. 491.

German mobilisation was now proceeding at top speed, as the reports which were pouring into the foreign offices in London and Paris proved; and in every part of Europe military and naval preparations were going forward.

Early in the afternoon of July 31 Pourtalès, the German ambassador at St. Petersburg, had an interview with the Czar, in which he insisted that Germany was "Russia's best friend," and exhorted Nicholas to stop the Russian military preparations. The Czar received him courteously, and pointed out that the English plan of mediation still offered means of an honourable settlement—not being aware, of course, that the Austrian council that very day had rejected any effective measure of mediation.¹ About eleven that evening Pourtalès saw Sazonov and delivered the ultimatum. He stated the German demands and then, with the hands of the clock standing at 11.25, he declared, "the respite expires at noon to-morrow." Thrice he repeated in tremulous tones, himself on the verge of a breakdown at the consciousness of the immense catastrophe which was impending, "Agree to demobilise." Sazonov declared that it was technically impossible to stop the mobilisation but that, so long as negotiations continued, Russia would not attack. Pourtalès left the room with every sign of grief and dismay.

Before this interview, Szapary, the Austrian ambassador, had seen Sazonov and complained of the Russian general mobilisation. Sazonov replied that the mobilisation had no special signification; the Czar had given his word to William II not to move his army while negotiations were in progress.² In any case, Austria had mobilised first. This contention Szapary warmly disputed, whereupon Sazonov suggested that they should "leave this question of chronology"; there was no danger of the rifles going off of themselves with a disciplined force such as the Russian army. Szapary then held out hope of further conversations; Berchtold, he said, was ready to treat with Russia on the broadest basis, and particularly willing to discuss the Austrian note to Serbia so far as it was a matter of explaining its meaning.³ He himself understood that Russia required the terms of the

¹ Paléologue, i, 47-8.

² A.R.B., iii, No. 97.

³ In Paris the Austrian ambassador gave similar assurances (*Livre Noir*, ii, 295) but no importance can be attributed to them in view of the previous day's decisions at Vienna.

note to be softened, whereas Berchtold was of opinion that it might be explained; there was here a discrepancy which was, perhaps, capable of being surmounted. He would communicate to Berchtold Sazonov's wish for the conduct of negotiations at London, not in St. Petersburg. The interview was friendly in form, and (as Szapary himself noted) Sazonov seemed to attach excessive importance to Szapary's dilatory and evasive assurances, which were the veriest commonplaces of diplomatic make-believe.

The last telegram from the Czar to the Kaiser, closing on his side a correspondence of more than twenty years, was probably prepared during that night, though it was not sent off till the afternoon of August 1. It was pacific in tone:¹

Understand that you are obliged to mobilise, but wish to have the same guarantee from you as I gave you that these measures do not mean war, and that we shall continue negotiating. . . . Our long proved friendship must succeed, with God's help, in avoiding bloodshed.

William II's last telegram in reply to this was not sent off till late in the evening of August 1 and said:²

Although I requested an answer (to the ultimatum) for noon to-day, no telegram from my ambassador conveying an answer from your government has reached me as yet. I therefore have been obliged to mobilise my army. . . . Until I have received this answer, alas, I am unable to discuss the subject of your telegram. As a matter of fact I must request you to immediately order your troops on no account to commit the slightest act of trespassing over our frontiers.

This missive arrived after Germany had declared war, and it proves that so late as August 1, William II hoped to avoid a conflict with Russia, as the result of Lichnowsky's telegram from London that day.

That evening at 7.15 Conrad was surprised to receive a telegram from Moltke asking, "Will Austria leave Germany in the lurch?"³ Apparently Moltke was afraid that Germany might find herself at war with Russia and France while Austria backed down.⁴ But that such a message should have been sent proves that no little confusion must have

¹ D.D., iii, No. 546.

² id., No. 600.

³ Conrad, iv, 155.

⁴ cf. Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 243.

THE WAR GUILT

[Aug. 1

prevailed in the German staff at this juncture. For Moltke had apparently forgotten his own request, made on the 30th to Conrad, not to begin the war with Russia, and so had read Conrad's reply, that he would not attack Russia but wait for her declaration of war, as an attempt to avoid participation in a world war.¹ Conrad, in his reply, dwelt on Austria's "will to war," and declared that "we do not know whether Russia is merely threatening us, and for that reason we cannot refrain from our action against Serbia; the situation will be quite different when Germany declares that she will prosecute war with us."

During the night of the 31st the German declaration of war on Russia was in course of preparation and revision. It was drawn up by an official in the German foreign office and was modified by William II and Jagow. It stated that, as the result of the general Russian mobilisation "caused by no military preparations on Germany's part . . . his Majesty, the Emperor . . . in the name of the empire accepts the gage of battle and considers himself in a state of war with Russia." Two slightly different forms were approved. One provided for a flat Russian refusal of the demand made for the cessation of the Russian preparations. The other was to be employed only if the Russian government returned no answer. Both forms were telegraphed to Pourtalès at 12.52 p.m. of August 1. When he reached the Russian foreign office with the declaration, there was a strange scene. He arrived at 7.10 p.m. (Russian time, 6.10 p.m. German, and 5.10 p.m. Greenwich time) and handed in both the forms at once to Sazonov's no small astonishment. His face turned scarlet, his eyes protruded, and his voice trembled with emotion as he presented the document. When Sazonov accepted it Pourtalès went white as a sheet. The Russian minister turned to him with the words: "This is a criminal act of yours; the curses of the nations will be upon you."² Pourtalès replied, "we are defending our honour"; to which Sazonov retorted, "your honour was not involved; you could have prevented the war by one word; you didn't want to. . . . But there is a divine justice." Pourtalès burst into tears, and had to be soothed and helped from the room by Sazonov.

¹ *Anle*, 250.

² *Paléologue*, I, 49.



GENERAL IN CHIEF HELMUTH VON MOLTKE.

Born, 1848; died, 1916. From 1906 to 1914 German Chief of Staff. The nephew of Count von Moltke, famous in the war of 1870-1.

July 31]

A STRANGE SCENE

Later in the evening Buchanan, the English ambassador at St. Petersburg, presented to the Czar a telegram from King George V referring to the German complaints of the Russian mobilisation and stating:¹

I cannot help thinking that some misunderstanding has produced this deadlock. I am most anxious not to miss any possibility of avoiding the terrible calamity which at present threatens the whole world. I, therefore, make a personal appeal to you to remove the misapprehension which I feel must have occurred, and to leave still open grounds for negotiation and peace.

The Czar replied that, if Germany had not that very afternoon declared war, he would gladly have accepted King George's proposals, and briefly recited what had happened, and how Russia had striven to find a pacific solution of the difficulty raised by Austria's ultimatum to Serbia, the object of which ultimatum "was to crush Serbia and make her a vassal," thus upsetting the balance of power in the Balkans. Every proposal had been rejected by Germany and Austria, and "it was only when the favourable minute for bringing pressure to bear on Austria had passed, that Germany showed any disposition to mediate. Even then she did not put forward any precise proposal." It will be observed that up to the very last, and even after the twelfth hour had struck, the English government held aloof and gave Russia no promise of armed support.

Indeed on July 31 the English government's attitude seemed more alarmingly uncertain than it had been before. A personal appeal from the French President² was delivered to King George V, stating what Russia and France had done and warning England "that war would be inevitable if Germany were convinced that the British government would not intervene in a conflict in which France might be engaged," whereas, if she thought England would take the field, "there would be the greatest chance that peace would remain unbroken." Poincaré referred to the fact that the military and naval arrangements left complete liberty to England, but he made a last appeal to the King for English action. "If," he said, "Germany and Austria

¹ *Times Documentary History*, ii, 309-11; Buchanan, i, 205.

² *Times Documentary History*, ii, 304. cf. Sir Henry Wilson's phrase "an awful day."

THE WAR GUILT

[July 31]

can speculate on the abstention of Great Britain, Austria's demands will remain inflexible, and an agreement between her and Russia will become impossible." The reply, officially prepared by the English cabinet, was a cool and formal one, which even now produces a painful impression—promising nothing more than full and frank discussion.

From London Lichnowsky telegraphed at noon that, owing to the greatly improved relations between England and Germany, and the pro-German section in the Cabinet there was a possibility that England in the contingent war might adopt a "wait and see attitude."¹ But in Vienna that evening the intervention of England on the side of Russia and France was thought to be "something more than probable."

In London, all day a great financial panic was in progress engineered by German and cosmopolitan finance houses, with the intention of forcing England to hold aloof. Whereas in Germany there had been prolonged and careful financial preparation for war,² in England there had been none. So great was the uneasiness that Lloyd George, the chancellor of the exchequer, was of opinion that England must remain neutral because otherwise there would be a complete collapse of credit. This argument was even used by Grey to the French government. Crowe, in a memorandum, strongly and justly opposed such a view.³ The panic in London, he pointed out, was "largely influenced by the deliberate acts of German financial houses, who are in at least as close touch with the German as with the British government, and who are notoriously in daily communication with the German embassy." He urged that any official endorsement of the theory that England could not in any circumstances go to war—and this suggestion was being put forward in many quarters—"would be an act of political suicide." That he was right in his view there can now be not the slightest doubt.

On July 31 Belgium began to mobilise, and to take steps to secure her two great fortresses, Liège and Namur, the quick capture of which formed part of the secret German plans. Moltke's uneasiness can be understood; he was risking everything on the sudden stroke which was to give

¹ D.D., iii, No. 484.

² id., 228

³ F.O.D., 205.

July 31]

"WAIT AND SEE"

him Liège, and if the Belgians were prepared and resolute he would have to face an initial reverse, and perhaps a considerable siege with slow siege operations. On July 31 the English government telegraphed to Paris and Berlin requests for a definite pledge from both the French and German governments that they would respect Belgian neutrality, so long as no other power violated it. The French at once gave such a pledge with no attempt at evasion or delay. The German foreign office avoided an answer on the pretext that a reply must "disclose to a certain extent part of the plan of campaign."¹ It is possible that on July 31 the German staff did consider an alternative plan which did not involve the violation of Belgian territory.² But, if so, the alternative was deliberately discarded.

The German government was already attempting to vamp up a case against Belgium. Jagow told the British ambassador at Berlin that Belgium had committed "certain acts which he could only qualify as hostile," and alleged that "the Belgian government had already embargoed a consignment of corn destined for Germany."³ Grey became uneasy at these suggestions, which might serve as a *casus belli* for Germany against Belgium. On August 1 he pressed Lichnowsky for a definite statement, and warned him that, if there were a violation of Belgian neutrality by one combatant, while the other respected it, "it would be extremely difficult to restrain public feeling in this country."⁴ Lichnowsky replied by asking whether if Germany gave a promise not to violate Belgian neutrality the British government would engage to remain neutral, but such a pledge was refused by Grey on the ground that England must keep her hands free. Lichnowsky suggested that in return for a pledge of English neutrality "the integrity of France and her colonies might be guaranteed." In this he appears to have gone beyond his instructions, but Grey refused to give the pledge.

None the less Grey made a final effort to induce Germany to "hold her hand and continue to work for a peaceful settlement." But the staff at Berlin grew hourly more

¹ F.O.D., 234-5.

² cf. Baumgarten-Crusius, *Deutsche Heerführung im Marnefeldzug*, 15. According to the German official history there was no other German plan, but Baumgarten-Crusius speaks with great authority.

³ F.O.D., 235.

⁴ F.O.D., 260-1.

impatient; Moltke's confidence was such that even the more moderate and reasonable Germans were swept off their feet, and it was said by a leading German official to a foreign ambassador that his principal fear at that moment was that Russia might even then give way.¹ If she fought, in the opinion of Berlin and Vienna, victory was certain for the German powers. Jagow told Goschen, the English ambassador at Berlin, on August 1, that Germany could wait no longer.² "She had the speed and Russia had the numbers, and the safety of the German empire forbade that Germany should allow Russia time to bring up masses of troops from all parts of her wide dominions." At 5 p.m. of August 1, after prolonged discussion, William II signed the order for a German mobilisation. He was only induced to do this by a scarcely veiled threat on the part of the staff that, in the event of any further delay in the mobilisation, it would not continue to support its grave responsibility. This was to hold over the sovereign's head the menace of a general resignation of the heads of the staff, in which case it is highly probable that William II would have been forced to abdicate. According to his own account, three times he took up the pen and dropped it in an extremity of anxiety, but in the end he signed—on a table "made of wood from Nelson's *Victory*" with tears in his eyes.³ August 2 was appointed the first day of mobilisation.

On the eve of the German mobilisation William II asked Moltke whether the German staff was prepared to promise that no attack should be made by the German fleet on the French coast in view of the English pledge, under the naval agreement with the French admiralty, to protect that coast. In return for such German abstention from attack, it was presumed that England would remain neutral. Moltke was quite ready to give the promise required; his view was that the struggle with France would be decided on land and naval operations were of minor importance. But on August 1, after many hesitations and wobblings to and fro, the German government came to the conclusion that war with England was inevitable. The German fleet concentrated at Wilhelmshaven and completed its last preparations for

¹ Buchanan, i, 209. So the German military attaché at Sofia was "afraid Russia would funk . . . at the last minute"; *F.O.D.*, 338.

² *F.O.D.*, 265.

³ Helfferich, *Weltkrieg*, i, 228; Zuehl, *Falkenhayn*, 58-9.

battle.¹ From Norway reports came in that four or five English warships were off the entrance to the Cattegat, when a strange chapter of accidents prevented the immediate opening of operations against England.

At 4.23 that afternoon of August 1 a telegram from Lichnowsky reached the German foreign office in which he said that Grey had asked him by telephone whether he thought that, if France remained neutral in the event of a war between Germany and Russia, Germany would refrain from an attack on France.² Tyrrell, Grey's principal private secretary, further impressed on him—so the telegram proceeded—that everything depended on whether the German forces abstained from any violation of French territory. A second section of Lichnowsky's message reached Berlin at 6.4,³ and said that Tyrrell had just been with him to tell him that Grey would make proposals for English neutrality, even in the event of a war by Germany against France and Russia. This was a complete misunderstanding of what had really been proposed by Grey which was that, so long as there was any chance of agreement between Russia and Austria, Germany should refrain from military action and so should France. The two armies were to face one another, neither attacking. As Grey's project was interpreted by Lichnowsky it gave the German staff what that staff wanted, and he had no hesitation in promising that Germany would abstain from an attack.

The telegram arrived just at a time when a heated discussion was proceeding in William II's entourage as to the necessity of a declaration of war on Russia. Tirpitz⁴ and Falkenhayn were against such a declaration. Moltke and Falkenhayn had left the room when Lichnowsky's missive was deciphered. The Kaiser, Bethmann, and Jagow were delighted with the news, and came to the conclusion that the English had not before believed in Germany's determination, and that "the triple entente was by this action shattered." Moltke⁵ was brought back to the council, greatly to his disgust, just as he was satisfied that he had secured his war. William II turned to him with the words, "we can now deploy the whole army in the east"—against

¹ Groos, *Nordsee*, i, 25.

² *id.*, No. 570.

³ *D.D.*, iii, No. 562.

⁴ *Deutsche Ohnmachtspolitik*, 16 ff.

⁵ Moltke, *Erinnerungen*, 19-23.

Russia. Moltke replied that the deployment of forces, millions strong, could not be suddenly altered; the plans for it had been the work of a whole year of effort; and if the German army were sent east at a moment's notice, it would not be an organisation ready to strike and fight, but a mob of armed men without supplies. To this William answered: "Your uncle (the great Moltke) would have given me a different reply."

In the argument Bethmann intervened and the discussion was a bitter one as Bethmann pressed for the suspension of the whole scheme of deployment against France. Bethmann and Moltke each declared he would not be responsible if the other had his way. Tirpitz, when the verbal battle had lost some of its asperity, put forward the suggestion that whether Grey's proposal was a "bluff" or not, Germany ought not to refuse it, as to do so would place her flagrantly in the wrong. William II eagerly agreed; and in the end Moltke prevented any violent change in the deployment by asserting that, when it had once been carried out according to the original plan, the transfer of a large part of the German forces to the east would be relatively simple. Falkenhayn dictated to Jagow the wording of a telegram which William II sent to King George V that night:¹

On technical grounds my mobilisation which had already been proclaimed this afternoon must proceed against two fronts, east and west, as prepared. This cannot be countermanded because I am sorry your telegram came too late. If France offers me neutrality, which must be guaranteed by the British fleet and army, I shall, of course, refrain from attacking France and employ my troops elsewhere. I hope that France will not become nervous. The troops on my frontier are in the act of being stopped by telegraph and telephone from crossing into France.

This telegram was accompanied, as has been seen, by a somewhat similar message from the Kaiser to the Czar, which, since the Czar knew nothing of what had been happening in Berlin, was quite incomprehensible to him.

William II's message to the King is of extreme importance from the military standpoint, as indicating that the German staff had intended an instant attack—perhaps without declaration of war—on France, and that such an attack was

¹ D.D., iii, No. 575.

beginning when the misunderstanding with Grey occurred. William II told the Austrian ambassador in Berlin that night that he meant to impose on France "very severe and definite conditions of neutrality,"¹ presumably referring to the surrender of Toul and Verdun. A fresh storm was provoked by William II's decision that the 16th German division was not to move. Under the mobilisation plans against France it was, on August 1,² to invade and seize the neutral and defenceless grand duchy of Luxemburg. An order was telephoned to this division to abstain from action. Moltke furiously remonstrated; he said he must have the railways of Luxemburg for his mobilisation. William told him that other railways must be employed. Moltke went away, "shedding tears of despair." Jagow, according to Falkenhayn, was in a state of collapse, and as for Bethmann, Tirpitz asserts that he produced the impression of a drowning man.

At eleven that night Moltke was once more summoned to the Kaiser who had received from King George V a telegram that removed all misapprehension. Moltke went on with his mobilisation and deployment on the original lines, and sent immediate orders for the invasion of neutral Luxemburg, with the complete disregard for international law which marked the German staff, not only in its plans for war but also in its measures after war had begun. But as one result of the misunderstanding the order to the German navy which had been issued, to refrain from any threatening movement which might bring war with England, seems not to have been countermanded. Hostile measures had even then been taken against British vessels in German ports.³ Several ships were seized on various pretexts and they were not permitted to depart when Grey protested.

In the afternoon of August 1 the first violation of neutral territory by German armed forces took place, and the victim was little Luxemburg, a country which fulfilled the pacifist's ideal condition of simple trust in the good faith of its neighbours, and entire want of armed forces. A German detachment appeared on Luxemburg soil at the Luxemburg station of Trois Vierges, tore up the rails there, and recrossed the

¹ A.R.B., iii, No. 101.

² F.O.D., 243.

³ *Weltkrieg*, i, 105.

frontier.¹ Yet by the second article of the treaty of London, signed on May 11, 1867, Prussia had recognised the perpetual neutrality of Luxemburg; and the German empire (in the treaty of June 11, 1872, and in the much more recent railway convention of November 11, 1902) had recognised that neutrality, and pledged itself to refrain in war from any action in regard to the Luxemburg railways,² which was derogatory to the duties of the grand duchy as a neutral state. Here was a little country, forbidden by treaty to maintain fortifications or military forces and unable to resist violence—which, according to some theorists, is the surest protection against attack. Yet the first act of Germany, in the terrific struggle that was now beginning, was a foray against Luxemburg territory. The grand ducal government protested³ but, as right was not backed by might, it was put off with an assurance that its territory had only been violated by a mistake—to secure its railways against seizure by the French.

By the terms of the French military convention with Russia France was required to mobilise "if the forces of the triple alliance or of any single power of the triple alliance are mobilised." There was no doubt that Austria was mobilising her whole army; there was no doubt that Germany was about to mobilise as well. At 3.40 p.m. on August 1 (or 4.40 p.m. by German time) the whole French army was ordered to mobilise, August 2 being the first day of mobilisation. Thus the French mobilisation slightly anteceded the German (which was ordered at 5 p.m. German time), but neither staff when the decision was reached knew that the other had mobilised. The French order was inexorably demanded by the German proclamation of the "state of danger of war," under cover of which the German army had begun its mobilisation on July 31. Without incurring the most terrible risks France could hesitate no longer. All that Jagow had said to Goschen with regard to the German mobilisation against Russia applied with redoubled force to France's mobilisation against Germany. A few hours' delay might give the German army such an advance that the French army might be routed and France overrun.

¹ Renault, *Premières Violations*, 13; Garner, *International Law and the World War*, ii, 231 ff.

² The railways were not to be used for the transport of troops, arms, war material and munitions; or for the provisioning of German armies in war.

³ *D.D.*, iii, No. 619.

Already the French government had been confronted with the summons to declare its attitude and promise neutrality. Baron Schoen, faultlessly apparelled in silk hat and frock coat, the courteous and not unfriendly German ambassador in Paris, arrived at the French foreign office about eleven in the morning of August 1, and asked for the French reply to the summons. With remarkable coolness Viviani, the French premier, told him that France would act as her interests required. The reply obviously disconcerted the baron; it was not what he had expected or possibly he read into it an indication that peace—which he probably sincerely desired—might be maintained with a little patience. He went away without securing the rupture which the German staff wanted for its plans against Belgium. For if Belgium was to be invaded on the excuse that France was moving through Belgian territory, a state of war between Germany and France, whether with or without formal declaration, was necessary. Schoen paid a second visit to Viviani in the afternoon, to insist that he must have security for France's definite neutrality. Viviani replied exactly in the terms which he had used in the morning interview.

The conversation continued for some minutes in friendly fashion;¹ when Viviani said that, despite the ultimatum, there was some chance of a result from the English proposal of negotiations between the four powers (England, France, Germany and Italy), Schoen remarked that he saw "a gleam of hope." Thereupon Viviani asked what was the object of the German ultimatum, just when Russia and Austria seemed on the point of agreeing. Schoen excused himself by his ignorance of what was happening and his want of instructions. Moltke afterwards maintained that the time lost between July 30, when he began strenuously to press for mobilisation, and August 3, when war on France was declared by Germany, was the cause of the German defeat at the Marne. The enormous value of cool French diplomacy in this crisis is proved if this was the case. For now, with Germany bent on war, and Austria getting ready to destroy Serbia, France and Russia could do nothing more than place the aggressors publicly in the wrong.

In London uncertainty still reigned. From every part of Europe evidence poured in of armaments going forward or

¹ Viviani, *Réponse*, 204.

THE WAR GUILT

[Aug. 1

measures of precaution. "Supreme confidence reigns in military circles in Berlin," the British military attaché in that capital telegraphed in the early afternoon, and added his belief that part of the German forces would move through Belgium.¹ A meeting of the cabinet was held but no decision for action could be obtained. Indeed the section of the English government which was hypnotised by Germany seemed rather, if anything, to gain ground. Grey that evening told Cambon, the French ambassador, that "the present position differed entirely from that created by the Morocco incidents," in which "public opinion would have justified the British government in supporting France to the utmost of their ability."² Now the position was that Germany would agree not to attack France if France remained neutral in the event of war between Russia and Germany. If France could not take advantage of this position, it was because she was bound by an alliance to which we were not parties."

The words must have sounded almost like a sentence of death or defeat to the French ambassador. And Grey went on to state that, while his declaration did not exclude aid to France in certain conditions, the cabinet had come to one conclusion—"that we could not propose to parliament at this moment to send an expeditionary military force to the continent." It could only be sent if "our interests and obligations were deeply and desperately involved." Cambon reminded Grey that the French coasts were defenceless (he did not say as the result of the compact with the English admiralty), and Grey replied this might alter feeling, as might an attack on Belgian neutrality.

Thus on this day which was one of agony for France, and for all who believed in the justice of her cause, all the indications pointed to England standing aloof and watching the fearful struggle isolated and neglectful of the claims of duty and honour. Cambon reminded Grey that, if this attitude were adopted, the entente would vanish—it would have foundered miserably in the sea of blood. Grey promised to ascertain whether the cabinet could give assurances that the English fleet would intervene if the German fleet came down the Channel to the attack of the French coast.

During the night of August 1-2 a German movement in strength upon neutral Luxemburg began. Before day-

¹ *F.O.D.*, 243.

² *F.O.D.*, 253.

Aug. 2]

BRITISH ALOOFNESS

light German troops were on the territory of the grand duchy; by 8 a.m. of August 2 they had occupied the capital of the duchy, the town of Luxemburg. They brought with them armoured trains and multitudes of motor cars. On July 31 the grand ducal government had inquired of France and Germany whether they would respect the neutrality of the duchy. The French replied at once that they would do so. The Germans evaded reply; the Luxemburg application for an assurance was sent to the German staff, and on it was noted Moltke's decision that "no respect need be shown for the Luxemburg frontiers."¹ The words "in the interest of our operations," were originally written in and afterwards struck out. The Luxemburg government repeated its question on August 1, without eliciting an answer; on August 2 the grand duchess and her chief minister protested against the German action, and asked for explanations, and for respect to be shown for Luxemburg neutrality.

The complete abdication of Bethmann, and his lamentable failure to enforce regard for the public law of Europe upon the reckless war lords of the German staff, was shown by the fact that Moltke dictated the reply to these protests. It was based on falsehoods, on the pretext that the occupation of Luxemburg was inevitable "in view of the information from France which we had that the French forces were in the act of deployment against the Luxemburg frontier."² Neither then nor afterwards were the Germans ever able to produce a scrap of evidence to prove that Joffre intended to violate the neutrality of Luxemburg.³ In France the general staff was under proper political control, and if it had meditated such an act—which it did not—would not have been permitted to carry it out. In the German chaos a Moltke could commit with impunity any deed of violence and cruelty under the plea of military necessity.

The Luxemburg government answered this message of Moltke's by denying that there was a single French soldier on the soil of the grand duchy or any indication that France intended to violate the neutrality of the country. German jurists afterwards endeavoured to justify the German action by alleging that the ducal government had refrained from offering armed resistance to the German troops and had

D.D., iii, No. 486.

² *D.D.*, iii, No. 639.

³ Garner, ii, 233 ff.

accepted an indemnity for the damage committed by the invaders and their use of the railways. But if the duchy did not resist, it was because it had no means of resistance; and the acceptance of an indemnity in no way atoned for the bad faith shown by the Emperor William II and his government to the other powers which had guaranteed Luxemburg's neutrality in falling treacherously upon so small and weak a neighbour. The German military commander, Fuchs, posted up proclamations which had been prepared long beforehand, declaring that "the enemy has forced Germany to draw the sword; France has violated the neutrality of Luxemburg and has begun hostilities on Luxemburg soil against German troops, as has been established beyond any doubt." Every word of the proclamation was false. This, as the French foreign office stated at the time, was one of the many "pre-arranged misstatements" prepared in Berlin.¹

¹ F.O.D., 296. The official German history (*Weltkrieg*, i, 105) reveals that the seizure of Luxemburg was part of the mobilisation scheme (which had been approved by Moltke in March.)

CHAPTER IX

ENGLAND AND BELGIUM

THE seizure of Luxemburg by Germany passed almost unnoticed in the storm which was breaking over Europe. Yet since the darkest years of the Napoleonic era and since the days when Frederick the Great pounced upon Silesia without declaration of war, no greater outrage on international law had been committed. It has been argued that there was justification for Moltke's course in the British seizure of the neutral Danish fleet in 1807. But when the British government so acted, it had definite information that the Danish fleet would be seized by France and Russia and used against England, if England did not lay hands upon it. There was actual evidence that Denmark was to be made to join the enemies of Great Britain in the war which was then in progress. Even so, the verdict of posterity has not been favourable to Canning's act, and it was resolutely challenged at the time by the Whigs in parliament. When the German troops marched into Luxemburg all the smaller states adjacent to Germany had cause to tremble. Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, all were menaced. Yet even after the news had reached Brussels, the Belgian government informed the British minister that it had "no reason whatever to suspect Germany of an intention to violate neutrality."¹ If a violation of its territory took place the Belgians would "rely upon their own armed force as sufficient to resist aggression."

The British standpoint had always been that, as Luxemburg was a purely continental state without a seaboard and the British guarantee of its neutrality was collective, depending on the action of the co-guarantors, intervention by armed force was impossible. Its position differed totally from

¹ F.O.D., 271.

THE WAR GUILT

[Aug. 2

accepted an indemnity for the damage committed by the invaders and their use of the railways. But if the duchy did not resist, it was because it had no means of resistance; and the acceptance of an indemnity in no way atoned for the bad faith shown by the Emperor William II and his government to the other powers which had guaranteed Luxemburg's neutrality in falling treacherously upon so small and weak a neighbour. The German military commander, Fuchs, posted up proclamations which had been prepared long beforehand, declaring that "the enemy has forced Germany to draw the sword; France has violated the neutrality of Luxemburg and has begun hostilities on Luxemburg soil against German troops, as has been established beyond any doubt." Every word of the proclamation was false. This, as the French foreign office stated at the time, was one of the many "pre-arranged misstatements" prepared in Berlin.¹

¹ F.O.D., 296. The official German history (*Weltkrieg*, i, 105) reveals that the seizure of Luxemburg was part of the mobilisation scheme (which had been approved by Moltke in March.)

CHAPTER IX

ENGLAND AND BELGIUM

THE seizure of Luxemburg by Germany passed almost unnoticed in the storm which was breaking over Europe. Yet since the darkest years of the Napoleonic era and since the days when Frederick the Great pounced upon Silesia without declaration of war, no greater outrage on international law had been committed. It has been argued that there was justification for Moltke's course in the British seizure of the neutral Danish fleet in 1807. But when the British government so acted, it had definite information that the Danish fleet would be seized by France and Russia and used against England, if England did not lay hands upon it. There was actual evidence that Denmark was to be made to join the enemies of Great Britain in the war which was then in progress. Even so, the verdict of posterity has not been favourable to Canning's act, and it was resolutely challenged at the time by the Whigs in parliament. When the German troops marched into Luxemburg all the smaller states adjacent to Germany had cause to tremble. Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, all were menaced. Yet even after the news had reached Brussels, the Belgian government informed the British minister that it had "no reason whatever to suspect Germany of an intention to violate neutrality."¹ If a violation of its territory took place the Belgians would "rely upon their own armed force as sufficient to resist aggression."

The British standpoint had always been that, as Luxemburg was a purely continental state without a seaboard and the British guarantee of its neutrality was collective, depending on the action of the co-guarantors, intervention by armed force was impossible. Its position differed totally from

¹ F.O.D., 271.

that of Belgium, as Grey pointed out to Cambon.¹ The seizure of the grand duchy was probably deliberately intended to force France into opening hostilities or declaring war. It was a menace of the gravest character both to France and Belgium, and it was accompanied by a series of attacks by German troops on French troops or French civilians in French territory.

About 9.45 a.m. of August 2 a small post of French infantry at Joncherey, south-east of Belfort and about six miles inside the French frontier as it existed at that date, was suddenly attacked by a German cavalry patrol of five men,² who fired three shots at Corporal Peugeot, in command of the French post. He was killed then and there—the first French blood shed in the war. The French, though surprised, returned the fire, and Lieutenant Mayer, commanding the German patrol, fell, and two of his men were made prisoners. They admitted that orders had come from the head-quarters of the brigade, to which they belonged, to patrol French territory. These orders were secured by the French and they directed Mayer to patrol towards Belfort, passing by Delle, more than six miles inside the French frontier.³

On that same day at no fewer than ten other points in the zone of Belfort German patrols entered French territory, and at Reppe the French armed customs guards exchanged fire with a detachment of German cavalry and took a prisoner. At Suarce the Germans carried off ten civilians whom they did not release.⁴ There were no French troops at hand. At thirteen other points on the Lorraine frontier German patrols showed themselves on French soil and at Coincourt two men (Heck and Haag) were killed on French territory.⁵ In face of these repeated acts of violence, the French government still refused to declare war or to regard war as existing, though, to protect the French frontier villages, the French troops were directed later on August 2 to close up to the frontier, but with the strictest injunctions to refrain from entering German territory, and to do nothing more than drive back any German force that actually appeared on

¹ F.O.D., 275.

² Of the 5th Mounted Rifles attached to the 28th division of the 14th corps.

³ Puaux, *Mensonge*, 266. They dated as far back as 1912 so that the affair was deliberate and purposed.

⁴ *id.*, 301.

⁵ *id.*, 333.

French soil. Yet by the time-table which the German government and staff had arranged, that night the ultimatum to Belgium must be delivered demanding the right to march into Belgian territory to meet the attack of a power—France—with which they were not yet at war.

The hasty declaration of war on Russia had created another difficulty. The treaties of alliance with Italy and Rumania were defensive,¹ and the German declaration of war had an aggressive air which could not easily be disguised. Already both Italy and Rumania had formally intimated that the *casus foederis* did not arise. Italy on July 31 had privately notified to the German government the fact that she could not support Austria,² and on August 1 she again declared her intention to remain neutral, on the ground that the war was not a defensive one. She also warned Rumania of her decision to stand aloof. For this reason Conrad and the Vienna war party were meditating yet another war against her in the future, when they had destroyed Serbia and coerced Russia and Rumania. On August 1 the German government learnt that, despite strong pressure from King Charles, a universally respected Hohenzollern with German sympathies, the Rumanian cabinet had decided that Rumania could not take part in the war, as she had been ignored by the Austrian government in the proceedings which had led up to it; and as the feeling in Rumania was thoroughly hostile to Austria.

In 1870 when Bismarck decided on war with France, by dexterous diplomacy he isolated France, and with the help of the famous Ems telegram contrived to manoeuvre Napoleon III into a rash declaration of war. In August, 1914, German diplomacy had put itself manifestly in the wrong before all Europe, firstly by declaring war on Russia, and secondly by the seizure of Luxemburg. The German government therefore made a desperate attempt to improve its moral position by accusing its adversaries of acts of aggression. It had already begun to prepare a case against little Belgium. It wanted, in the words of the Bavarian minister in Berlin,³ "to represent France and above all England, as the aggressors." It charged Russia with invading German territory; at 4 a.m. on August 2, Bethmann

¹ D.D., iii, No. 582.

² D.D., iii, No. 534.

³ Dirr, 180; cf. Moltke's opinion in D.D., iii, No. 662.

THE WAR GUILT

[Aug. 2]

informed William II an "attempt" had been made by two squadrons of Cossacks to destroy the railway at Johannisburg, a junction twelve miles inside the East Prussian frontier.¹ That frontier was strongly held by the German covering troops who had been in position for at least forty-eight hours, but there was no mention in Bethmann's report of any engagement or any casualties.

Whether this was a genuine attack by Russian troops or an imaginary attack invented for political purposes still remains uncertain. But it is known from Russian sources that late on July 29 the Russian staff sent peremptory orders to the Russian troops to abstain from any act of war and to withdraw all frontier posts from six to ten miles back into Russian territory, and there is German evidence to prove that the orders were carried out, in a complaint which Bethmann made on July 31 to Goschen,² that "Russia has burnt her cordon of houses along German frontier, sealed her public offices in neighbourhood of frontier and carried off her money chests into the interior."³ Further, on August 1 Sazonov had definitely assured the English and French ambassadors in St. Petersburg that though the situation was desperate, now that Germany was mobilising, he was still ready to carry on conversations with Austria, and that "Russia in any case would not be first to commence hostilities."⁴ The Czar's telegram of the afternoon of July 31 had also assured William II that "as long as the negotiations with Austria on Serbia's account are taking place, my troops shall not make any provocative action," and this pledge was implicitly renewed in his telegram of August 1, after the German ultimatum, and his statement to Buchanan late in the evening of August 1 that "mobilisation did not necessarily entail war."⁵ Russia had no interest in attacking Germany prematurely, though war had been declared by the German government in the evening of August 1. If

¹ D.D., iii, No. 629. In William II's careless and excitable mind this at once became the "burning of Prussian villages and the blowing up of railways," id., No. 666. In Jagow's hands the report was translated into the assertion that "Russia yesterday before the declaration of war opened hostilities," id., No. 664.

² F.O.D., 214.

³ According to François, commanding the 1st German corps, on July 31, Cossacks at many points crossed the frontier and "tried to approach the railways"; *Marneschlacht*, 150.

⁴ F.O.D., 266.

⁵ F.O.D., 276.

Aug. 2]

ACCUSING RUSSIA

there were attacks, as the Germans reported, they were in contravention of all orders from the military and political authorities in Russia; and they occurred only at this single point, with no bloodshed. They were much less serious than the German violations of French territory and attacks on French troops.

Bethmann at once seized on the news, and telegraphed it to Rome and Vienna, declaring that now the *casus foederis* had arisen.¹ Austria, it must be remembered, was causing uneasiness in Berlin because she had not declared war against Russia simultaneously with Germany. Bethmann further informed William II that, after conferring with Moltke and Falkenhayn, he had decided that it was unnecessary to declare war on France, and that the declaration of war on France had not been delivered "in the hope that the French will attack us."

The German government's desire for the French to attack Germany was significantly followed by a series of strange tales and imaginary incidents. In the morning of August 2 a high Prussian official at Dusseldorf reported that "eighty French officers in Prussian officer's uniform with twelve motor cars, in vain attempted to cross the frontier near Walbeck, west of Geldern."² What was the object of such a procession, which must have come thirty miles through Dutch territory and 150 through Belgium, has never been revealed. The story was so preposterous that Crowe banteringly asked the German official who brought it to the foreign office in London, whether it was to be taken seriously.³ That it should have been made a cause for diplomatic action suggests that the German foreign office was incapable of distinguishing between fact and absurdity. There may, however, have been something sinister behind the story. It is possible that Moltke wanted to have a pretext for war against Holland in case his plans for the march through Belgium failed, and that this expedition of imaginary motor cars through Holland would have been exploited in that event. That same day, according to another German staff report, "a French airman was shot down at Wesel."⁴ To reach Wesel the airman must have flown some 150

¹ The Italian government treated these tales as "absurd," F.O.D., 308.

² D.D., iii, No. 670.

³ F.O.D., 270.

⁴ D.D., iii, No. 693.

miles. His tomb was never afterwards revealed nor the number and particulars of his machine. Moreover there was not at that date any military aeroplane capable of a flight of 300 miles—150 out and 150 back, or longer if the flight had been over Holland. As for the twelve cars with the eighty French officers the Dutch government at once denied that story, but none the less Bethmann professed that it revealed a gross infraction of Belgian neutrality.

Further charges followed. The commander of the 3rd Bavarian corps, Gebtsattel, reported that on August 2 French airmen had dropped bombs on the more distant environs of Nuremberg,¹ and the news was at once telegraphed to Rome, as proof that France had attacked Germany without declaration of war, and that therefore Italy was bound by her treaty of alliance to intervene, the war being a defensive one. But almost before the telegram had been sent the report was contradicted by the Prussian minister at Munich.² Unknown aircraft had been seen but, he added, "they were obviously not military machines, and the dropping of bombs is not confirmed; still less it is confirmed that the airmen were French." In actual fact the airman appears to have been a Frenchman, Laporte, on a long-distance journey from Paris to Constantinople. His machine broke down and he had to land in Bavaria.³ He was about to proceed on his flight after the damage had been repaired, when the German military authorities refused him permission to leave—action which in a time of tension was justifiable—and detained him for two days. On August 1 they ordered him to depart at once for France, and fixed for him an itinerary which passed over Nuremberg. On his passage he was fired at. But his whereabouts must have been known to the German military authorities, and his appearance ought not to have given rise to any false alarms. Late that afternoon the German foreign office issued a ridiculous report that on August 1 a French doctor at Metz, in the company of two disguised French officers, had attempted to poison the wells at Montigny, near Metz, with cholera bacilli, and had immediately been shot; also that a French corn dealer

¹ *D.D.*, iii, No. 664; Montgelas, 182.

² On August 2, but the message did not reach the Berlin foreign office till the afternoon of the 3rd; *D.D.*, iv, No. 758.

³ Dubail *Quatre Années de Commandement*, i, 12.

in Metz had been caught putting poison into his flour.¹ In fact there seemed no limit to official credulity in Berlin. There was nothing of the kind in Paris, nor, apparently, in St. Petersburg, though detailed information of what was passing there is less abundant.

In the early afternoon of August 2 the German government was still hoping for English neutrality. Lichnowsky, after interviews with Grey and Asquith, telegraphed his "decided impression that England, if it were only possible for her to do so, would remain neutral."² The ultimatum to Russia and Bethmann's threats against Belgian neutrality had not apparently awakened the British lion; and, as such was the temper of London, the German staff decided to abstain from any naval action in the North Sea. The fact was that the English government was still undecided. A strong section in the cabinet sympathised with Germany, and was for leaving France and Russia to fight it out with Austria and Germany. Two cabinet councils were held that Sunday. In the morning Grey secured the approval by the cabinet of the naval agreement which the admiralty had in 1912 concluded with the French naval staff. It sanctioned a British assurance to France (with the proviso that this assurance would require to be ratified by the House of Commons) to the effect that the British fleet would protect the French coast and French shipping against any attack by the German navy.³

Beyond that the peace party in the cabinet, led by Morley and Harcourt, refused to go. Nor was it indeed certain that the Conservatives would support the cabinet,⁴ if it decided at once to enter the war with England's whole strength, or that the dominions would move with the mother country. Their attitude was of supreme importance, as must be remembered by all who consider the British cabinet's policy at this juncture. Though the dreadful suspense inflicted cruel agony on France, the cabinet's caution was on the large view justified, at this particular moment when a plain British declaration would no longer have prevented

¹ *D.D.*, iii, No. 690.

² *id.*, No. 669. His belief was shared by many British officers of high rank, who could not understand the British government's hesitations and changes.

³ *F.O.D.*, 275.

⁴ Liberals have always maintained this, but the Conservatives could have been trusted in a great crisis to support the government—if it acted bravely and faithfully. See, however, Grey, i, 337.

war. For Canada was to place 628,000 men in the field, Australia 416,000, and New Zealand 220,000, these three dominions between them alone supplying a million and a quarter men, among the best troops that fought in the war.

During the afternoon of August 2, mainly owing to the energetic action of General Sir Henry Wilson and Leopold Maxse, the editor of the *National Review*, the heads of the Conservative party gave Asquith a promise of their support, if he would maintain what were generally regarded as the obligations of honour in supporting France to the full.¹ With this vital information Asquith held a second cabinet meeting at which it was definitely decided to treat a German invasion of Belgium as an act of war and to send an ultimatum to Germany, requiring her to state her intentions and warning her that, if she did not agree to respect Belgian neutrality, England would intervene, subject always to this policy receiving the approval of the House of Commons. The mobilisation of the whole British fleet was ordered. Lichnowsky telegraphed late that night that the British measure did not indicate the immediate entry of England into the war, and added "believe in her holding off for a time."² If she held off for a time, the German staff was convinced that it could make an end of France. The British cabinet's decision is believed in part to have been influenced by news of the numerous violations of French territory by German patrols and by the treacherous seizure of Luxemburg. The German government's refusal to reply to the British request for information on July 31, as to its attitude to Belgium, must also have influenced the ministry.

As a last effort Bethmann prepared a message for London, which was not ready for despatch till the following day, asserting that he had "absolutely trustworthy information" that French cavalry patrols had that day entered Alsace at Altmünster; that a French air officer had been shot down at Wesel, in Germany; that two Frenchmen had attempted to blow up the Cochem tunnel—an important tunnel on the Meuse in German territory—and had been shot offhand; and that French infantry had crossed the Alsace frontier

¹ L. J. Maxse, *Politicians on the War-path*, 54; and private information.
² *D.D.*, iii, No. 707.

and fired shots.¹ All these incidents were mythical, and in no case was there mention of German casualties or of French soldiers captured, whereas, inside French territory, the French had sustained several casualties and taken a dozen prisoners, besides killing half a dozen Germans. In short the evidence for the truthfulness of the French reports and against the truthfulness of the German reports was then and still remains convincing to any honest mind. The German official history of the war admits that tales of an advance of whole companies of French troops by Gottestal as also of a host of other alleged frontier incidents, subsequently proved incorrect,² though great play was made with them in Germany at the time.

There are only two explanations possible of the behaviour of the German troops. The first is that they were entirely out of hand, which to those who know the strictness of German discipline does not seem probable. The second is that they were ordered to demonstrate and violate French territory. It is certain that in some cases the orders for the crossing of the frontier came from high up, and formed part of the carefully thought-out mobilisation instructions. And it is quite possible that the German command wanted to keep Joffre's attention fixed on Alsace and the Swiss frontier (which was a conceivable line of German deployment), and to divert it from Belgium. It is worth notice that a German patrol did actually enter Swiss territory near Belfort, and that for this mistake profuse apologies were made by the German authorities.

The time had come to explode the German bomb at Brussels. At 2.5 p.m. of August 2 instructions were sent from Berlin to the German minister in that city to open the ultimatum. He had just before this communicated a vague but soothing assurance of German friendship to the Belgian government.³ He was not to hand in the ultimatum till 8 p.m. (German time; 7 p.m. French or British time) and to demand an answer within twelve hours. Everything was cunningly arranged beforehand so that the very minimum of respite should be given to the Belgians in which to obtain advice. The document caused sheer consternation. But

¹ *F.O.D.*, 294; *D.D.*, iii, No. 693.

² *Weltkrieg*, i, 105.

³ *Belgian Grey Book*, i, No. 19. Promises that Germany would respect Belgian neutrality had been given by Bethmann and Jagow; *id.* No. 12.

in that hour of overwhelming danger, despite its prepossessions against England and France, the Belgian government did not meekly yield to the German threats. The cabinet met forthwith to discuss its attitude. Its proceedings were interrupted by a new and extraordinary communication from the German government at 1.30 a.m. that night (August 2-3). This was a complaint that French airships had dropped bombs in Germany and that a French cavalry patrol had crossed the German frontier "in violation of international law, seeing that war had not been declared." A Belgian official pointed out that this complaint had nothing whatever to do with Belgium, since the alleged incidents had happened in Germany, but he was told that "these acts which were contrary to international law were calculated to lead to the supposition that other acts contrary to international law would be committed by France." Never did the German diplomacy show itself in a more unfortunate light than in this case where it was trying to excuse a great crime by confused imbecility. The German minister must have had very good reason to suspect that the misdeeds charged against France were pure inventions, seeing that the ultimatum to Belgium, which he had had in his possession for four days, was by that very fact proved to be based on "pre-arranged misstatements."

The Belgian government decided to reject the German demand, and to confront the peril of instant attack by an assailant of overwhelming strength, but not to appeal for military assistance to the guaranteeing powers, England and France, until the Germans committed a definite act of war other than incursions by patrols, which had been occurring for the previous thirty-six hours. A French offer of support with five army corps was refused, but King Albert telegraphed to King George V a request for the diplomatic intervention of the British government to safeguard Belgian neutrality, on August 3. Moltke was confident that the German violation of Belgian neutrality would force France to move troops into Belgium, when would come the German opportunity to denounce France as the author of the war.¹

Savage as was the temper of the German war party, Tirpitz admits that "the strategical offensive through

¹ D.D., iii, No. 662.

Belgium was a matter for the gravest misgiving." Yet it is a lamentable fact that even after the war moderate and reasonable German apologists are disposed to defend and excuse it, complaining indeed chiefly that Bethmann and Jagow did not prepare diplomatically for it beforehand. They do not seem to understand that what is morally evil cannot be strategically sound. Moltke's and Schlieffen's strategy failed completely when put to the test, and failed mainly because of this very violation of Belgian territory which was the basis of their whole scheme. A good Swiss military authority, Colonel Feyler,¹ writing during the war and before all the facts were known, nevertheless reached a correct judgment on Germany's conduct from the military standpoint. The first consequence of the German violation of Belgium, he says, was that time was lost, when an instant and violent attack with the heavy howitzers which Moltke had available, might have broken through the centre of the French fortified front. The second consequence was a large immediate addition to the forces opposed to Germany, in the shape of six Belgian divisions and four British divisions, totalling ten divisions with a strength of 180,000 men. The third consequence was that war at sea and the closure of the German coast by blockade were added to the war on land. If the German staff had respected Belgian neutrality and had attacked Russia with one third of its strength, observing France with two-thirds of its army, it is morally certain that the British government and the British House of Commons would not have decided at once to enter the war. As it was, there was considerable resistance within the Liberal cabinet when the final resolve to fight was taken.

Feyler states the truth when he says that every political piece lost by German diplomacy in the long combat with British, French, Russian, Belgian and Italian diplomacy was a strategic piece gained by the adversaries of Germany. With the countenance of the Kaiser, the German staff had been permitted to usurp the government of the country. It guided where it ought to have followed; and events proved that it guided very badly indeed. Under Bismarck, who had a perception of the invisible forces which come into play in this life of man, it is certain that Moltke and

¹ *Problème de la Guerre*, 153.

his officers would have been kept under rigid control, and not permitted to indulge in reckless plans of campaign under the pretext that such plans made victory certain. Bismarck did not believe in the infallibility of these great officers; he had seen too much of them and of war to be easily bluffed. Not once, but repeatedly, he had laid down the principle that political issues must be settled by the political leadership, not by the staff.¹ Even in the conduct of the war the German staff was to show its want of inner judgment by its cruel treatment of Belgium and its ruthless submarine operations, two errors which aggravated the terrible consequences of its initial violation of Belgian and Luxemburg territory. It made the conscience of the world the ally of Germany's opponents.²

One of the many miscalculations of the German staff was that Belgium, "the eunuch state" as Treitschke sneeringly called it, would offer no serious resistance but would merely protest and let the German armies pass.³ The Belgian mobilisation which was proceeding steadily was so planned, in a loyal belief in the honesty of German pledges, as to leave the country peculiarly exposed to a violent and sudden German attack. The 1st division concentrated at Ghent, to be ready to repel a British landing; the 2nd division concentrated at Antwerp (which might also be selected as a British disembarkation point); the 5th division was at Mons, and the 4th at Namur, both places covering the roads and railways across the French frontier. The 6th division was at Brussels, available as a reserve in a central position; and only the 3rd division was in eastern Belgium at Liège, guarding the real danger point. In south-eastern Belgium there was nothing. So scrupulously had the Belgian government behaved that it had arranged larger forces to protect Belgian territory against any infraction by the British or French than against attack by the Germans. Indeed in May, 1914, King Albert had informed the German military attaché at Brussels that he regarded the danger from France as "most serious."⁴ And consequently in the initial fighting the Belgian army was at a grievous dis-

¹ cf. especially his classical despatches in *Grosse Politik*, vi, 24, 58, which are of peculiar importance as comments on German policy in 1914.

² Feyler, 162.

³ Moltke, *Erinnerungen*, 17; *A.R.B.*, iii, No. 114.

⁴ Montgelas, *Leitfaden*, 186.

advantage; before the six divisions could be concentrated on the eastern front, the Germans, in irresistible force, were in the country.

There was some uneasiness, even among the Vienna war party, when the fact (which Conrad had long known) that Belgium was to be attacked, became common property. The Austrian ambassador in Berlin asked on August 3 whether the march through Belgian territory would not immediately force England into the war, and was told that "the military are now in charge and no one can argue with them."¹ Embittered discussions were proceeding in Berlin as to the best means of forcing France into the war, since some of the German officials apparently wanted to have an actual state of war with France before the German troops in force began their invasion of Belgium. The German staff was exasperated at the pedantry of the German foreign office which troubled itself with such an issue at such a moment.

Punctually at 7 a.m. of August 3 the Belgian government replied to the German demand in a note which rang through the world.² It declared that Belgium was determined to resist such a "flagrant violation of international law," and laid down the principle that no strategic interest could justify Germany's conduct in claiming the right to march through Belgium, and to use Belgian territory as a base. The note further maintained that an acceptance of the German demands would mean the sacrifice of the honour of the Belgian people and the betrayal of the duty which that people owed to Europe. So bold and unhesitating was the document and so unimpeachable its arguments that it left the embarrassed German government incapable of any other answer than an instant resort to violence.

That day a letter which King Albert of Belgium had written to William II on August 1 and which had been strangely delayed—apparently by the German authorities—was placed before the Kaiser.³ It reminded him that during the eighty years of her political existence Belgium had scrupulously observed her international duties, and that Bismarck had publicly recognised her correct and impartial attitude in 1870. It called William II's attention to the fact that German

¹ *A.R.B.*, iii, No. 114.

² *D.D.*, iv, No. 765.

³ *C.D.*, 312.

officials of the highest authority had "given us the assurance that in the event of a fresh conflict the neutrality of Belgium would be respected." King Albert appealed to William in the name of "our relationship and our friendship to repeat such an assurance." This letter was referred to Bethmann, and the reply to it was prepared by Jagow. It was brief and almost insulting, telling King Albert that friendly relations between himself and William depended solely upon himself.¹ Little did any of the persons concerned in this strange correspondence imagine that after four years of bitter war King Albert would remain on the throne, honoured by the world, while William II would be living in banishment, a discredited sovereign, without a country and without adherents.

All through August 2 German diplomacy had been striving to secure the support of the various Balkan states against Serbia and Russia, thus giving fresh proof of the fact that a complete transformation of the position in the east was desired and intended by Berlin and Vienna. Only in one quarter were these efforts crowned with complete success. At Constantinople, the Young Turks—whom the German ambassador in that capital had pronounced to be useless as allies—in secret accepted the German alliance on August 2 and began to mobilise their forces.² At Athens Constantine's government had informed the Serbians that Greece would take no part in a war between Serbia and Austria, and had thus begun a long series of diplomatic mistakes by deserting an ally in the moment of acute danger.³ But at the same time Constantine flatly refused to enter the field against the Serbians.⁴ In a message to the Kaiser he said it did not seem possible to him to join the enemies of his ally, and to fall upon that ally with them. He declared for an "absolute neutrality," as being in the best interests of Greece. On his letter William II wrote the usual marginal comments in which, among other things, he declared that the matter at stake was not the balance of power in the Balkans but "to free the Balkans for ever from Russia." It never occurred to William II that the Balkan states were not at all likely to be eager to exchange the Russian King Log for the Austrian King Stork. As for Bulgaria, she avoided pledg-

¹ D.D., iv, No. 783.
² D.D., iii, No. 726.

³ id., No. 660.
⁴ id., No. 702.

ing herself till she had seen how the struggle was likely to go.

In the north of Europe the German staff counted with some confidence on Sweden joining in a war against Russia. The German ambassador in Constantinople, when he persuaded the Turks to ally themselves with Germany, assured them that Sweden would be found on the German side.¹ The utterances of the Swedish foreign minister undoubtedly caused the English government grave anxiety; on August 2 he said that he "greatly feared that, if Great Britain joined Russia, Sweden would be forced to take the other side."² But this statement he subsequently modified, and said that Swedish public opinion made it "impossible for Sweden to fight on the same side as Russia." The King of Sweden then and afterwards was resolutely for peace, and was strong enough to prevent rash action.³ The German documents show that the efforts to obtain the Swedish alliance failed; the two Scandinavian states, Sweden and Norway, decided as long as possible to act in conjunction, and if their ways did come to differ, in no circumstances to fight one another.

The last terrible measures which were to kindle the world war and cover Europe with graves had yet to be taken. At 1.5 in the afternoon of August 3 orders were telegraphed from Berlin to Schoen, the German ambassador in Paris, directing him to declare war on France at 5 p.m. French time (6 p.m. German time). Schoen was late in carrying out his orders—from what cause has nowhere been stated. Probably the reason was that the grounds given by the German government for declaring war seemed to him utterly fantastic. The first clear indication which reached the French government that Germany was about to take the supreme step came at 6.15 that evening when the United States ambassador, Herrick, telephoned to Viviani, the French prime minister and foreign minister, the news that Schoen had already asked him to allow the United States flag to be hoisted over the German embassy.⁴ Alone Viviani awaited the solemn moment. The room was still; the day was declining; the roar of traffic had sunk, and from without came scarcely a sound through the warm evening air, when

¹ F.O.D., 303.
² id., 285

³ id., 305.
⁴ Viviani, 211 ff.

THE WAR GUILT

[Aug. 3]

at 6.30 a door opened and Schoen arrived. As he came in a French official entered from a second door to witness the proceedings. The German ambassador walked quickly to a chair placed ready for him, and made a complaint that people had boarded his motor car when he was on the way to the foreign office. But as the French police had immediately and energetically intervened, he declined to lodge any formal charge against the authorities.

The instructions sent him from Berlin¹ directed him to assert that the German troops had up to that point strictly complied with the orders issued to respect French territory, but that French troops had on August 2 crossed the frontier near Altmünster and in the Vosges and were still in occupation of German territory. (This was entirely untrue.) He was further directed to say that "French airmen" had been shot down at Wesel, attempting to damage the German railways after flying over Belgian territory: that other French airmen had been "indubitably" detected over the Eifel district, and they must also have flown over Belgium; and that French airmen had bombed Nuremberg and Karlsruhe. "France has therefore forced us into a condition of war with her" was the conclusion, after this string of imaginary incidents and transgressions. The German foreign office thought of adding to the instructions a paragraph which was in the end omitted, stating that

We must herewith point out and protest against this breach of peace, this resort to war conditions and this violation of Belgian neutrality on the part of France.

In fact, France, without a scrap of real evidence, was to be accused of violating Belgian neutrality, and war was to be made upon her for that reason. Why all this lying? the world may well ask. If the German government wanted war, all that it had to do was to notify France that, as she was the ally of Russia, the declaration of war on Russia must necessarily involve war on her, without these inventions and tortuous manoeuvres which have so discredited Bethmann's reputation and William II's foreign office.

Schoen did not entirely act on his instructions. As

¹ D.D., iii, No. 734.

Aug. 3] THE SUPREME MOMENT

Viviani watched him and waited, he drew from his pocket a document and read:¹

The German administrative and military authorities have ascertained that a certain number of acts of open hostility have been committed on German territory by French military airmen. Many of these airmen have clearly violated the neutrality of Belgium by flying over the territory of that state. One of them has attempted to destroy works near Wesel; others have been seen in the Eifel district; and yet another has bombed the railway near Karlsruhe and Nuremberg.

I am instructed and have the honour to inform your excellence that, in presence of these acts of aggression, the German empire considers itself in a state of war with France, as the result of the conduct of that power.

Viviani listened in silence and held out his hand for the document which Schoen gave him. The French prime minister then formally challenged the justice and sanity of the German reasons for war. He reminded the ambassador that so far from French troops having invaded German territory, German troops had killed French soldiers on French soil at a considerable distance from the frontier, and that only on the previous day he had handed to him a copy of a protest which was being made by the French government in Berlin. Schoen declared that he knew nothing of this. The interview ended quickly, and he was accompanied by Viviani to his motor car. The relations of the two were friendly throughout, and most effective steps were taken by the French government to secure him a safe journey to Germany—he was despatched through Belgium for which country his own government was professing so tender a solicitude.

Schoen and the German government afterwards maintained that either through atmospheric troubles or deliberate tampering by the French with the cipher messages despatched from Berlin, the telegram giving him the German government's instructions was almost unintelligible. Though in a telegram sent off in the early afternoon of the 3rd he told Berlin that the instructions were mutilated, and asked for their repetition,² of this he said not a word at the time to Viviani. The original document, as it was received by

¹ D.D., iii, No. 734b;

² D.D., iv, No. 809.

Schoen from the French post office, has never been photographed and published by the German authorities. Aulard, the eminent French historian, after critically examining the German statement and the version of the telegram as it is alleged to have been received, has rejected the German account of this mutilation. A duplicate message sent to Schoen by his government through Holland and Belgium arrived in Paris on August 5, and when compared with the original telegram by the French authorities, agreed in its ciphers with those in that document. Again, at 8.20 on the night of August 3, Schoen sent to Berlin a telegram which does not figure in the German documents, and this was afterwards deciphered and read by the French. It makes no allusion to the mutilation of the instructions. The affair is still mysterious, as Schoen has, since the war, protested that the mutilation really occurred, and he is a generally fair-minded witness.

Thus by 6.45 of August 3, a state of war existed between France and Germany. Austria had declared war on Serbia on July 28; Germany had declared war on Russia on August 1; and now France was drawn into the struggle. One hour before the declaration was delivered the German forces committed a fresh violation of international law; at 5.45 p.m. French time, a German aeroplane passed over Lunéville and dropped on that town six bombs which caused some material damage though no loss of life. During this day at ten various points before the declaration of war the French frontier was crossed by German patrols, and six German cavalymen, including one lieutenant, were killed and three wounded on French territory. Yet by the third Hague convention of 1907 Germany had agreed to give "a previous and explicit warning" before beginning hostilities. On August 3 the French covering troops carried out the order of the previous evening to close up towards the frontier,¹ but by that time the Germans had entrenched on the summits of the passes; and the French were forbidden to cross the frontier.

August 3 was a day of notable events in England. That afternoon, before a crowded House of Commons, Grey delivered the greatest and most convincing speech of his political life. It was studiously moderate and avoided

¹ Legrand-Girarde, 21.

everything that might have stirred indignation.¹ He explained what action the government had taken, outlined the promise of naval support given to France, and declared the British attitude regarding Belgian neutrality. He mentioned that if a German ultimatum was sent to Belgium, it would decide the British government's course; and that aid would be given to Belgium if she appealed for it. Mobilisation of the navy had already taken place; mobilisation of the army was in progress.² The final decision was left to the House of Commons.

Bonar Law, representing the Conservatives, promised their full and unhesitating support, which had been already tendered by him in his letter of the previous day. The one discordant note in that historic sitting was struck by the Labour party. Then, as always, its chiefs were subject to obscure alien influences which they themselves hardly understood. On all national issues they were almost uniformly at fault; they saw the world through the spectacles of Karl Marx, which were three-quarters of a century out of focus, and they had not the mental energy to clear their minds of claptrap and cant. Many of them in the end ranged themselves honourably on their country's side, but there remained a small minority which in the hours of terrible danger could only denounce and abuse the British nation and its government.

The charge was afterwards brought against Grey that he misled the House of Commons by omitting the last sentence in the letter which he on November 22, 1912, sent to Cambon, the French ambassador in London, dealing with the conversations between the British and French naval staffs. This last sentence left the British and French governments freedom to decide whether effect should be given to the plans of the staffs. The omission was quite unimportant, and was probably due to the fact that at that particular point Grey was interrupted by Lord Charles Beresford with a question. The letter was printed in full and correctly in the British war documents³ as they were

¹ Grey, ii, 14-15. He was determined to resign if England had deserted France.

² The grievous delay might have led to disaster in France, but in fact probably helped to save the Expeditionary Force from destruction; if it had got far forward in Belgium it might have been overwhelmed by Kluck.

³ C.D., No. 105, Enc. 1.

issued that same week; had it been read out in full, as Grey had intended it should be, the effect would not have been in the least different.

Late in the sitting Grey received from the Belgian minister in London news of the German ultimatum, and of the Belgian reply, and the news was read out to the House. It left no doubt that "war was certain and inevitable." The support of parliament was assured to Belgium. The British government could act, and it was so far unanimous that only two members of the cabinet, both of them men of strong opinions but neither of them in touch with German policy or methods, resigned. Lord Morley and John Burns were widely respected, and on their resignation they acted with true patriotism by refusing to make trouble for the British government in the hour of difficulty and danger.

In accordance with the naval agreement, during the day British destroyers joined the French torpedo craft guarding the channel, and British armoured cruisers proceeded towards the Norwegian coast to stop the egress of German commerce-destroyers which were known to be on the eve of putting to sea. That night the British government drew up an ultimatum to Germany for delivery next day. Strong German influence was being exerted to persuade the British Liberal press that the violation of Belgian neutrality was quite unimportant, provided only Belgium was evacuated when the Germans had beaten France. But this influence never affected the British government. There was no turning back when the decision had once been made.

In the morning of August 4 six powers in Europe were at war. Austria was at war with Serbia; Germany was at war with France and Russia and German troops were pouring into Belgium. Early that morning German detachments entered the small Belgian town of Visé (where they found that the Belgian engineers had destroyed the bridge over the Meuse) and took immediate vengeance on the unhappy inhabitants. No declaration of war had then been presented by the German government. But at 6 a.m. that morning—an hour chosen so as to give the Belgians the minimum of time for preparation—the German minister at Brussels notified to the Belgian government that Germany,

since the Belgians had refused to entertain her "well-intentioned proposals," found herself "compelled to take—if necessary by force of arms—those measures of defence already foreshadowed as indispensable in view of the menace from France." Innocent Belgian blood had already been shed when Jagow sent off a message to Brussels,¹ offering the "hand of brotherhood," and attempting negotiations with the Belgian government about a *modus vivendi*, among the terms of which were to be the opening of Liège to the German troops and abstinence from destruction of roads, railways and bridges. It was an offer which Belgium rejected.

The British government in the early hours of August 4 sent messages to Belgium, Holland and Norway, pledging itself to assist each or any of these three countries in resisting pressure to depart from their neutrality, should it be applied by Germany, and, in common with Russia and France, guaranteeing their independence and integrity in future years.² But in the morning the Belgian government, while intending to resist a German attack, had not definitely made up its mind to call in French and British aid. At 11 a.m. the Belgian foreign minister announced that on that point no decision had then been taken.

Interviews of extreme importance took place on August 4 in Berlin. The previous night the German official white paper was published containing the German version of the negotiations that had led up to the war. In such collections of documents there must necessarily be omissions and alterations for reasons of policy, and from risk of involving other and friendly powers and disclosing the ciphers employed. But the German white paper was a travesty of events as they had happened, and contained not one word about Belgium. All the morning the streets of the German capital were paraded by enormous and jubilant crowds. In the early afternoon Goschen, the British ambassador, handed to Jagow, the German foreign minister, the British demand for an assurance from Germany that she would respect Belgian neutrality.³ Jagow

¹ D.D., iv, No. 805.

² F.O.D., 350 ff.

³ F.O.D., 308.

THE WAR GUILT

[Aug. 4

At once replied that he was sorry to say that his answer must be "No," as in consequence of the German troops having crossed the frontier that morning, Belgian neutrality had already been violated. . . . They had to advance into France by the quickest and easiest way—so as to be able to get well ahead with their operations, and endeavour to strike some decisive blow as early as possible. It was a matter of life and death for them. . . . Rapidity of action was the great German asset, while that of Russia was an inexhaustible supply of troops.

Thus Jagow dropped all the pretences that Belgian territory had been previously violated by the French or that the Belgian government was hostile to Germany. His ground for this treacherous action was really that France had taken an unfair advantage of the German staff by fortifying her eastern frontier.¹

A second interview followed that afternoon in which Goschen, in compliance with fresh instructions from Grey, warned the German government that if it did not give the required assurance in time for it to be received in London at midnight (German time; 11 p.m. Greenwich time) that same night, he was to ask for his passports and to "say that his Majesty's government feel bound to take all steps in their power to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which Germany is as much a party as ourselves."² These instructions did not leave London till 2 p.m. They were handed to Jagow at 7 p.m. He could hold out no hope of compliance, and Goschen proceeded to a last painful interview with Bethmann, who fired off a long speech in English in accents of such passion³ as showed he had lost his self control:

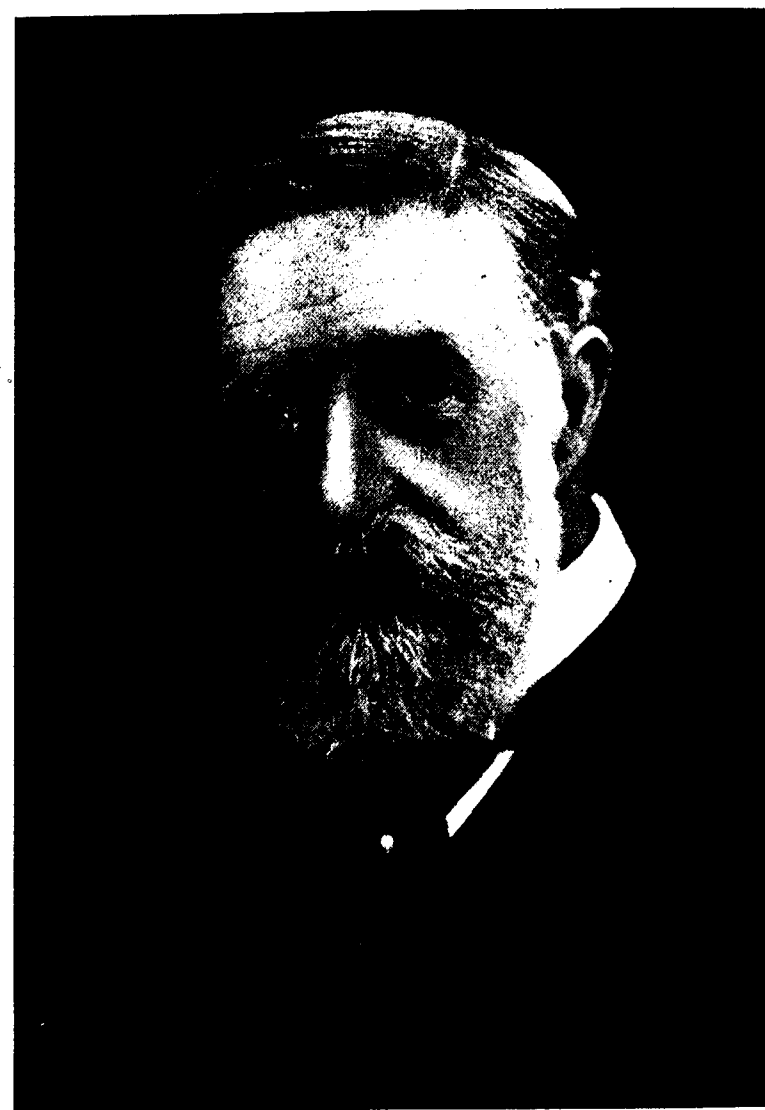
He said that the step taken by his Majesty's government was terrible to a degree; just for a word—"neutrality," a word which in war time had so often been disregarded—just for a scrap of paper, Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her. . . . He held Great Britain responsible for the terrible events that might happen.⁴

¹ Montgelas in his *Leitfaden* practically takes this line (185-6) without realising the effect of his argument.

² F.O.D., 314.

³ According to Hammann the passion was feigned; (*Bilder aus der letzten Kaiserzeit*, 75-6).

⁴ F.O.D., 351.



SIR WILLIAM EDWARD GOSCHEN.

Born, 1847; died, 1924. British Ambassador in Berlin, 1908-14.

Aug. 4] JAGOW'S ADMISSION*

Goschen immediately, and with the utmost vigour, repudiated this extraordinary perversion of history.

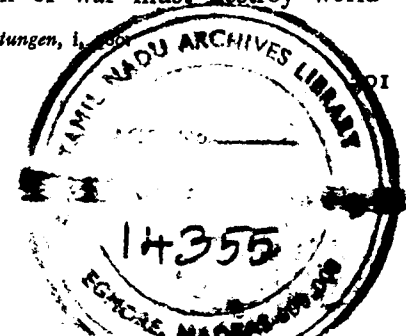
I said that in the same way as he and Herr von Jagow wished me to understand that for strategical reasons it was a matter of life and death to Germany to advance through Belgium and violate the latter's neutrality, so I would wish him to understand that it was, so to speak, a matter of "life and death" for the honour of Great Britain that she should keep her solemn engagement to do her utmost to defend Belgium's neutrality if attacked.

Goschen might have added that the very security of Britain depended on Belgian independence and neutrality. For centuries it had been an axiom of British policy that the Belgian ports and coast must not be in the hands of a strong military power.

Bethmann's reply to Goschen's statement was to ask, with an implied sneer at British military weakness, "But at what price will that compact have been kept? Has the British government thought of that?" The ambassador nobly answered that no fear of consequences could excuse the breach of England's engagements. No one in Germany then dreamed that the British empire could organise and place in the field armies totalling 8,654,000 men, and fight through four years of defeat or partial success to the final triumph of the hundred days' battle, and victory in every theatre of the war.

The British ambassador, in accordance with his instructions, demanded his passports. So damaging had Bethmann's words been that afterwards in his memoirs he attempted most unsuccessfully to explain them away.¹ "I impatiently exclaimed," he says, "when Sir Edward Goschen repeatedly insisted on Belgian neutrality as the decisive issue, that in comparison with the fearful consequences of a German-English war the treaty of neutrality was only 'a scrap of paper.' The phrase may have been a slip. My blood was boiling at the repeated and hypocritical insistence on Belgian neutrality, which was not what had really led England to enter the war, and at the complete want of understanding that the English declaration of war must destroy world-

¹ *Betrachtungen*, I, 1906.



assets, compared with which the breach of Belgian neutrality was a trifling affair." Bethmann's second thoughts were even worse than his original utterance, and prove him to have been entirely without that deeper political judgment which distinguished Bismarck. Bismarck morally disarmed Napoleon III before the world on the opening of the war of 1870 by parading a treaty which he himself had probably suggested, and under which France was to annex Belgium.

Bethmann, ignoring the tremendous effect of that affair, now professed that Belgian neutrality was a trifling matter, and that England ought to have stood by inert and to have condoned the gravest breach of public law in European history, for the benefit of Germany and the ruin of England's friends and allies. And this breach was the second one, for the invasion of Belgium followed immediately upon the seizure of Luxemburg. Goschen left in tears, conscious that terrible events were impending,¹ but in no degree shaken in his firmness, and having upheld the honour of England with signal determination and courage. He received a visit late that evening from Zimmermann, the foreign under-secretary, at which that German minister once more refused any assurance of respect for Belgium. As the night advanced a German mob stoned the windows of the British embassy, and for its own failure to give proper protection the German government subsequently apologised.

At nine in the morning of that eventful August 4 Baron Beyens, the Belgian minister at Berlin, had a not less important interview with Jagow at the German foreign office, which he found empty and deserted. Beyens forced Jagow from point to point. The German minister began by repeating the formula which had undoubtedly been prepared for him by the German staff, that invasion of Belgium was a matter of life and death to Germany.²

We have learnt that the French army is preparing to pass through Belgium to attack our flank; we were bound to anticipate it. . . . It is with death in their hearts that the Emperor and

¹ All who knew him are convinced that Hammann's account of him weeping his eyes out is absurdly overdrawn.

² *Second Belgian Grey Book*, No. 25.

government have found themselves forced to adopt this determination. As for myself it is the most painful decision which I have had to make in my whole career.

Not a word was there in this explanation of any wrongdoing on Belgium's side. Nor did Jagow mention, what he must have known perfectly well, that (as Tirpitz has said) this invasion of Belgium had been "for decades planned" by the German staff.¹ As the German documents show, it had been arranged as far back as 1900.² When there was risk of war with England in 1905 William II was determined to march through Belgium to fall upon France, but was prepared to offer a part of Belgium to France.³ Even in 1905 Bülow and William II had agreed that the Belgians must be hoodwinked and kept in complete ignorance of what was intended for them.

Beyens's reply to Jagow was to ask him:

What would you say of us if we were to yield to a similar menace from France? That we were cowards, incapable of defending our neutrality and continuing independent. . . . France, contrary to what you assert, has promised to respect our neutrality if you respect it. As the reward for our loyalty you are going to make Belgium your battlefield in your struggle with France, Europe will judge you, and you will have England against you as the guarantor of our neutrality.

From Jagow he finally extorted an admission that Belgium could not have acted otherwise than she had done. At every point Beyens was right, and with a firm faith in the future he foresaw that this invasion of Belgium would decide the war against Germany by putting her under the moral ban of mankind.

The war had yet to be formally announced to the German people, and the collapse of German diplomacy explained. As William II wrote in one of his marginal notes on August 4, "our allies are all falling from us on the eve of war like rotten apples; total collapse of the German and Austrian diplomacy. That might have been avoided and ought to have been avoided."⁴ Italy had proclaimed her neutrality, and definitely

¹ *Erinnerungen*, 244.

² Montgelas, *Leitfaden*, 185.

³ *Grosse Politik*, xix, 479-80.

⁴ *D.D.*, iv, No. 811.

refused to join in a war which she condemned as an offensive one. Rumania had also decided to maintain strict neutrality. Sweden had declined to attack Russia, though Swedish sympathy with Germany was strong. The utter incapacity of Bethmann was illustrated by this state of affairs. Bismarck, in 1887, had laid down the conditions in which he would support Austria in a preventive war against Russia.¹ They were first that Austria must be "absolutely sure" of definite support from Italy and England; and secondly that she must be sure of effective Turkish assistance. Bethmann had ignored the warnings of the creator of imperial Germany.

At 2 p.m. the Reichstag met and Bethmann delivered an important speech which, however, perverted dates and documents. He asserted that the British government from the first had held that the Serbian question must be settled by Serbia and Austria alone. This was not the case. Grey, from the moment when he knew the terms of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, had emphasised the risk of a general war, and the fact that Austria's conduct must affect Russia gravely. All that he had said was that, so long as Russia was not drawn in, what happened between Austria and Serbia would not compel England to act. Another of Bethmann's assertions was that Austria, when she partially mobilised, had only mobilised a small part of her army, whereas she actually mobilised eight corps out of her sixteen. He alleged that the Austrian general mobilisation took place after news had arrived of the Russian general mobilisation, whereas the documents now show it to have been ordered (though not publicly announced) before that event was known. He contended that up to July 31 Germany "deliberately refrained from calling up a single reservist," but he did not say what the *Von Papen Papers*, and innumerable German soldiers' diaries captured during the war, subsequently proved, that every kind of military preparation had been going forward from July 25.

He did not mention any Russian attack, which is remarkable, in view of the tales telegraphed to Rome and other neutral capitals. He alleged that while, "with one single exception," the Germans had strictly obeyed the Kaiser's

¹ *Grosse Politik*, vi, 25-6.

orders to respect the French frontier, France "broke the peace and actually attacked us." French airmen "dropped bombs, and cavalry patrols and French infantry detachments appeared on the territory of the Empire," though in Bethmann's own office the official contradiction of the story of the bombing of Nuremberg by the French was lying, and he must have good reason to suspect—if he had troubled to think—that most of the other tales supplied to him by the staff were entirely untrustworthy.

He had then to explain as best he could the attack on Luxemburg and Belgium, and these were his words¹:

We are now in a state of necessity, and necessity knows no law. Our troops have occupied Luxemburg and perhaps have already entered Belgian territory. That is a breach of international law. It is true that the French government declared at Brussels that France would respect Belgian neutrality as long as her adversary respected it. We knew, however, that France stood ready for an invasion. France could wait; we could not. A French attack on our flank on the lower Rhine might have been disastrous. Thus we were forced to ignore the rightful protests of the governments of Luxemburg and Belgium. The wrong—I speak openly—the wrong we thereby commit we will try to make good as soon as our military aims have been attained. He who is menaced as we are, and is fighting for his highest possession, can only consider how he is to hack his way through.

He concluded this extraordinary defence (for which his countrymen never pardoned him) by asserting that "with a clear conscience we enter the lists."

It is a remarkable fact that in an assembly of capable men, representing a country which is proud of its critical acumen, no one asked for full details of the French air raids. In 1870 Thiers had challenged the statements of Napoleon III's ministers on the eve of war. In 1914 the German representatives were content to swallow credulously tales, the improbability of which verged on the fantastic. Eagerly and even joyously, the Reichstag accepted war, and thus solemnly associated the German people which it represented with the German government's guilt. There was no dissentient voice. The Socialists shared in the decision for war and in the universal, overwhelming enthusiasm. Their

¹ *C.D.*, 438.

cheers rose loud from their seats on the left. They raised no protest against the wrong which the German government confessed that it was perpetrating by seizing Luxemburg and invading Belgium.

At midnight of August 4-5, by German time, or 11 p.m. Greenwich time on August 4, the limit given by the British government expired, and automatically England entered the war.

Thus on the part of the British people the obligation of honour incurred to France, to aid her in the event of any unprovoked attack by Germany, was reinforced by the obligation of duty to Belgium. That British security and independence were at stake in Belgium is certain; for no other reason would a British government have joined in guaranteeing Belgian neutrality in an age of non-intervention. Successive British prime ministers and foreign ministers had agreed that British interests and honour were involved in the independence of Belgium, and Gladstone himself, while declining to admit that treaty guarantees in all cases bound England to go to war in their defence, declared that the British obligation to defend Belgium "was required by a policy and a morality that were independent of time or circumstances."¹ His well-known antipathy to every form of militarism or chauvinism invests such a ruling with tremendous force. Asquith on August 6 stated the British grounds for war in two sentences. The first was that England was fighting to fulfil a solemn international obligation, "an obligation which, if it had been entered into by private persons in the ordinary concerns of life would have been regarded as an obligation not only of law but of honour." The second was that she was fighting to vindicate the principle that "small nationalities are not to be crushed in defiance of international good faith, by the arbitrary will of a strong and over-mastering power."

On August 5 the Belgian government formally appealed to the British, Russian, and French governments "to co-operate as guarantors" of Belgian territory, and invited the French military authorities "to prepare at once for the co-operation and contact of French troops with the Belgian army." But—a striking comment on the German charge that the French were prepared to invade Belgium—the

¹ Grey, ii, 8.

French dispositions were such that no speedy aid could be given. Nor could the initial dislocation of the Belgian divisions ever be made good. The Belgian appeal for aid finally decided the British cabinet to send a British expeditionary force to the continent, when only a couple of days earlier it had informed the French that nothing more than naval aid could be given for the time being.

The German excuse of "military necessity," which was invoked by Bethmann, cannot be admitted, unless all treaties—and upon the observance of treaties depend the peace and stability of Europe—are to be violated so soon as it suits a strong power to break them. The same excuse of military necessity was advanced by the German staff to justify subsequent German breaches of the laws of war and the deliberate devastation of French territory. It could be invoked to condone any action, however evil, and if only for that reason it ought never to be allowed. Moreover there were circumstances of peculiar aggravation in Germany's conduct. In 1911 Bethmann had publicly announced that Germany had no intention of violating Belgian neutrality.

On May 2, 1913, in a secret discussion of the German army bill,¹ Jagow most emphatically asserted that Germany would not infringe Belgian neutrality, and Heeringen, the Prussian minister of war, affirmed that the German staff would respect Belgian neutrality so long as Germany's adversaries did so. Below, the German minister in Brussels, on the very eve of the invasion, assured the Belgian government that the sentiments expressed by German officials in 1911 and 1913 had not changed.

As for the "military necessity," in strict truth there was none. Bethmann, Jagow and William II, all, at various times, admitted that the violation of Belgian territory was a mere question of utility to Germany, and was due to a wish to strike quickly at France, surprising her and moving by the Belgian roads and railways which were better adapted to a swift and violent attack than the lines through the Vosges. The German plea of military necessity was coupled with the assertion (which the German staff well knew to

¹ Valentin, 243. While these official assurances were being given German officers were being sent by Moltke to learn the roads and look of the Belgian terrain for the attack on Liège. (*Erinnerungen*, 432).

be false) that the French intended a great movement through Belgian territory. If that had really been the case, then the Germans had only to wait for their cause to be triumphantly justified. When the German government saw the odium which this line of defence brought upon Germany, it began to shift its ground and to argue that Belgium had already destroyed her own legal position as a neutral by the "conversations" between the British military attachés and the Belgian chiefs of staff in 1906 and 1912. In fact, it maintained that Belgium had entered into an offensive alliance with England and France against Germany.

This charge was utterly false. The Belgian staff, says Valentin,¹ "had in no way directed its military manœuvres and fortifications against Germany alone. Its staff rides had dealt in turn with the possibility of attack by Germany, by France, and by England, or with a combined attack by England and France." The conversations which the German government distorted into "conventions" by a grave mis-translation, had reference only to such measures as might be necessary if Belgian territory was violated; and in that case British interests were directly affected. That the German staff meditated such a violation was notorious. The railways required for it had been constructed in western Germany with little attempt at concealment, and German apologists have been found since the war to argue that because the German intentions were so obvious the German invasion of Belgium could not be regarded as treacherous.

If there had really been any military agreement between the Belgian government and England and France, the six Belgian divisions would have concentrated in eastern Belgium, and French troops would have moved up immediately to their aid on August 4 on Germany's declaration of war. In that case it is exceedingly doubtful whether the Germans could have taken Liège; and the whole German plan of campaign would have collapsed. Moreover the fact that so many of the Belgian diplomatists were distinctly unfriendly to the powers of the triple entente—as the subsequent publication of their despatches and reports by the German government showed—affords convincing proof that the Belgian government strictly maintained its neutrality

¹ Valentin, 242. Montgelas completely abandons the thesis of Belgian conspiracy with England and France.

down to the actual violation of Belgian territory by the Germans.

Attempts have been made by German apologists to argue that because the treaty of 1839 guaranteeing Belgian neutrality, was signed by Prussia, it was not binding on Germany. This is a plea which can only be advanced by political sophists, for the German government in the case of two treaties between Prussia and the United States, concluded in 1799 and 1828, claimed or admitted that these treaties applied to Germany, and were still in force in the Great War. No German official in July and August, 1914, ever ventured to advance this particular excuse. Hammann¹ has said that Bethmann devoted much anxious thought to putting the best possible aspect upon the German violation of Belgian territory in August, 1914. If he had seen a way of escape by denying that Germany was bound by the 1839 treaty,² it is quite certain that he would have taken it in his Reichstag speech of August 4; whereas he confessed that the invasion of Belgium was "a breach of international law" and "a wrong." Even if it be conceded that the treaty bound Prussia and not Germany, the fact remains that the troops which began the movement into Belgium were drawn without exception from Prussian corps.

The German government, however, violated not only the treaty of 1839 but also the fifth convention of the Second Hague Conference. The first article of that convention lays down that the territory of neutral powers is inviolable. The second article forbids belligerents to move troops or munitions of war and supplies across neutral territory. The fifth article declares that a neutral power must not allow such movement across its territory, and the tenth article directs that, if a neutral power resists by force attempts to violate its neutrality, such conduct is not to be regarded as a hostile act. It has indeed been argued that the fifth convention did not bind Germany because it had not been ratified by all the states engaged in the war. But this argument is a quibble because all the states engaged in war with Germany in August, 1914, had ratified the convention. And nothing can excuse the orders which were given to the

¹ *Bilder aus der letzten Kaiserzeit*, 72-3.

² He admitted in 1919 that Germany was bound by the treaty. See *Betrachtungen*, I, 168-9.

THE WAR GUILT

[Aug. 5

German troops on entering Belgium¹—"the more terrible you are the more quickly you will cross Belgian territory and the speedier the victory."

Almost alone among German writers and critics Valentin² has had the courage to denounce not only the initial violation of Belgian neutrality but also the subsequent German attempts to justify this act morally and politically by representing Belgium as the guilty party. He accepts the tales of Belgian *franc tireur* methods which, on the almost overwhelming evidence against their truth, are open to the most serious challenge. But, as he says, German methods outraged human sentiment and the feeling of compassion, which are "great allies," and which the German staff utterly disdained.

The violent action of Germany diverted attention from Austria, whose rôle became one of minor importance when once Moltke had forced Bethmann and William II to move. It was not till August 6 that the dilatory Austrian government declared war on Russia; and on August 12 the British government, as the ally of France and Russia, declared war on Austria.

Thus the first indisputable acts of aggression which made the war between Austria and Serbia general, were committed—some of them with full premeditation—by Germany, whose forces at many points entered French territory on August 2, and inflicted and suffered casualties there. The alleged attacks by Russia on the same day upon German railway communications may have taken place, but were of a much less serious character and are not conclusively established. The charges made by the German military authorities and government against France that French troops had entered German territory and French aircraft had bombed German towns are now known to have been false. The German system of alliances had collapsed owing to the aggressive attitude of Austria and Germany. The alliance of Turkey was indeed secured, but against this was the loss of Rumania and Italy, and the refusal of Greece and Sweden to support the German powers. Bulgaria's rôle remained uncertain; she was waiting to see what would happen. The German government had followed up its

¹ Essen, *Invasion and War in Belgium*, 50; Bryce *Commission Report*, 40, 44.
² Brandenburg (450-1) falls back on sophistries.

Aug. 6] AUSTRIA DECLARES WAR

declaration of war on Russia by a declaration of war on France, and by the ultimatum to Belgium which was one of the main causes of the German defeat. That ultimatum forced the hesitating British government to act at once, and averted the collapse of the triple entente. The various German excuses offered for the attack on Belgium can only be described as sophistries and quibbles. Bethmann's handling of German foreign policy in these last critical moments was marked by incapacity, and complete ignorance of Bismarck's principles and the claims of moral justice; and the conduct of the Reichstag was such as to involve the whole German people in the guilt of the war.

CHAPTER X

WHERE THE GUILT LAY

SCHILLER has said that the course of history is the judgment of God; and as the war was decided against Germany and contemporary public opinion condemned her, by this test the responsibility for bringing on the war rested with her. To her and her ally, Austria, it was ascribed by the allies in March, 1919, after a brief inquiry into the evidence then available. That verdict has not, however, been accepted in Germany, where there is a tendency to maintain that all the powers concerned, allied as well as German, were equally responsible, or indeed that the allies really provoked the war. It is, therefore, important here to recapitulate and summarise the evidence.

And first the general position of England must be noted. It was a position which had every possible disadvantage and was mischievous both to the British empire and to Europe. From the enormous and growing strength of the German navy and the inadequacy of the British naval and military measures, the English government had been forced for security into a system of quasi-alliance with France and Russia. The Liberal ministry had not been strong enough to conclude a definite alliance such as the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, the terms of which would have told everyone in Europe what the exact situation was, and under which precautions would have been taken against aggressive wars by a strict definition of the conditions in which the alliance became operative. There were internal political difficulties in the way of an alliance, and there was always the question whether the dominions would have agreed to it. They must necessarily have been consulted. A definite alliance, as Bismarck said when considering the project of one with England, renders war improbable if its terms

ENGLAND'S POSITION

are published, and gives the parties to it security if the terms are kept secret, though in the latter case it does not so effectively prevent war.

Had a definite alliance existed, by the almost unanimous evidence of continental statesmen, both in Germany and in other countries, the war would never have been fought. Germany and Austria would not then have presumed on the weakness of the British Liberal ministry, which they expected to stand aloof at the outset, if not throughout. Again, had a definite alliance existed, plans of war would have been prepared in common, and the French plan, No. 17, which was in some degree the cause of the loss of northern France for four years, and of the fearful cost of reparations, would probably not have been approved. The British semi-alliance with France and Russia placed British policy in dependence on those two powers without giving the British government real control of their action or such partnership in it as a definite alliance secures. They both behaved with loyalty, but the relationship was always difficult, because of the want of precision and definiteness in the vague understandings which linked them to England, and for the vagueness of which they were in no way to blame.

A second point which has to be considered is the probable result had Austria been allowed to carry out her plans against Serbia, and had Germany been able to intimidate Europe at the outset. After a fierce struggle, the Serbian army would have been crushed, and the Serbian territory devastated. The cost to Austria would have been enormous, and there would have been no possibility of recovering it from the ruined and prostrate Serbian people. Austria, as Conrad proposed, would have occupied Belgrade and Sabatz, and would probably have taken steps to secure her hold of the Vardar valley, as her secret aim was to press her advance towards Salonica.¹ She would doubtless have offered portions of Serbia to Rumania, Bulgaria, and Albania. The first consequence of such a change in conditions would have been the shattering of the entente. Russia would have been estranged from England, and England left in a precarious isolation. France would probably have been compelled, by severe pressure, to agree to German proposals

¹ cf. *F.O.D.*, 87, 177; Pasitch in *Deutschland Schuldig?*, 131. She also wished to secure a "sphere" in Asia Minor, in Adalia; Szilassy, 255.

THE WAR GUILT

for the limitation of her land armaments, when German energy and the vast German financial resources could have been applied to the completion of the gigantic navy that would be needed to secure the submission of England. Austria and Germany would have been supreme, and together they would speedily have dealt with Rumania and Italy, both of which states the Austrian war party meant to humble when they had crushed Serbia.

Austria in 1914 was described by the Italian foreign minister as "a corpse,"¹ and if it were a corpse it could clearly not be resurrected by violence. The conquest of Serbia would not have solved the South Slav question. It would merely have made it worse by adding to the number of South Slavs under the Austrian Emperor and including within the Austrian frontier a bitterly hostile but energetic population, thus further complicating the difficulties of nationality which Austrian statesmanship had not been able to overcome. Lichnowsky² warned Berlin in July, 1914, that the national consciousness of the South Slavs and their desire for political union could not be destroyed by a war, but would probably be greatly strengthened by it; and that any Austrian forward move in the Balkans would thrust Rumania and Bulgaria into the arms of Russia, when they were tending to assert their independence of her. As for Russia, the destruction of Serbia must have dealt so grave a blow to the Romanov dynasty that it would probably have fallen before a revolution, whether or not a Russian war with successful Austria had followed. Thus, had Austria been permitted to work her will, there was no prospect of peace for Europe or for herself, but only one of endless wars and fearful confusion and bloodshed. As a shrewd German critic has suggested, if Austrian statesmen had been really far-sighted and had dealt generously with Serbia and with the South Slavs—which the dualism of the Austrian empire rendered extraordinarily difficult—if, for instance, they had allowed Serbia to obtain Scutari as a port on the Adriatic, they would have diverted Italian hostility from Austria to Serbia, and thus have greatly strengthened their position in Europe.³

In the summer of 1914 Serbia had no motive for war. From the military standpoint she was entirely unprepared.

¹ *D.D.*, iv, No. 74.

² *D.D.*, i, No. 161.

³ Wolff, 296.

CASE AGAINST SERBIA

Her people had not recovered from the two terrible struggles of 1912 and 1913 in which their losses had been very heavy.¹ After their brilliant victories, they were convinced that the future was theirs, but they had no reason whatever to provoke a conflict when time was so obviously on their side. The Czar and the Russian government had urged them to be patient. The re-organisation of their army was in progress, but had only just begun. They knew that opinion everywhere gave Austria only a short term of life, and regarded it as inevitable that she should go to pieces, possibly as many Germans believed, at Francis Joseph's death. They were well aware of the exasperation and fear with which official Austria regarded them. In the six years, 1908-14, they had thrice, if not four times, been threatened with attack by her. The advent of Constantine with his strong German proclivities to the throne of Greece rendered effective support from the Greek army in the event of war most improbable. Their position of extreme danger from Bulgaria was such as to deter them from what must be a most desperate adventure—war with so great a power as Austria.

That they or their government or the leading officials and ministers in that government had a share in the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand is altogether improbable, and is indeed not seriously maintained by the more critical German apologists.² Against it is the definite statement of Wiesner, the high Austrian official who was sent to Serajevo to investigate the crime in July, 1914.³ But evidence has been brought forward to support the charge that Colonel Dimitrievitch, who was head of the intelligence department of the Serbian army, was one of the principals in plotting the attack on the Archduke. He was hurriedly shot at Salonica in 1917 for another offence—a military conspiracy to murder the Serbian Prince Regent. If he was concerned in the Serajevo affair, the conditions were parallel to those in 1922 when Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson was assassinated in London by two Sinn Fein Irishmen, resident in London, and acting (as there is good reason to believe) under the orders of a secret society which had relations with some subordinate members of the Sinn Fein

¹ cf. Margutti, 322, and *F.O.D.*, ix.

² cf. Hoyos, 77.

³ *A.R.B.*, i, No. 17; and see *ante* Chapter vi.

THE WAR GUILT

government then in power in Dublin. But while in that case a connection almost certainly existed between the assassins and persons in the government in Dublin, the Irish government was not blamed by Great Britain or held responsible; and no one doubts that Michael Collins did his best to stop such outrages.

The evidence in the case of Dimitrievitch is by no means conclusive, though he was a born conspirator, and a man who showed no scruples. He had been concerned in the plot against King Milan and Queen Draga of Serbia, and in other plots against Francis Joseph of Austria, and he was a prominent member of the "Black Hand," the secret terrorist society which was undoubtedly connected with the crime. That society, however, was in open conflict with the Serbian government, much as the Sinn Fein extremists were in conflict with Collins in Ireland. If Dimitrievitch was one of the guilty parties, and if certain minor Serbian officials were concerned together with him, that does not affect the innocence of the Serbian government.

Since the peace it has been alleged that the heads of the Serbian government and Pasitch, the prime minister, among them, knew that an attack on the Archduke was intended.¹ The Serbian politician Ljuba Jovanovitch, who was minister of education in Pasitch's government, stated in 1924 that Pasitch had, some weeks before the crime, declared that there were people who were going to Serajevo to kill Francis Ferdinand, and said that the Serbian cabinet agreed to issue orders to the frontier authorities to stop these people. He added that the orders were given but were not carried out, through the secret complicity of the frontier guards. This statement, it is to be observed, is not documented, and its truth was publicly denied by Pasitch in April, 1926, though not till nearly two years had passed after Jovanovitch had given publicity to it. If it were true, while it would show that the Serbian government knew something of the plot, it would also prove that that government attempted to stop the assassins. Moreover, as has already been stated, a vague warning was given to Bilinski, the Austrian finance minister, by the Serbian minister in Vienna—that if the Archduke went to Serajevo his life would be in danger.

¹ Gooch, *Recent Revelations*, 118-9, and Durham, *Sarajevo*, 127 ff. cf. the contemporary defence of Serbia in Saintyves, 189 ff.

GERMAN CHARGES

though nothing was said of any definite plot. It probably was never passed on because between Bilinski and Potiorek, the military governor of Bosnia, relations were extremely strained. Or if Bilinski passed the warning on, Potiorek paid not the slightest attention to it.

But if it be agreed that the Serbian government was not directly implicated in the crime, and tried to prevent it (supposing Jovanovitch's story is true) a further charge has been brought against it, that by countenancing the Jugo-Slav agitation in Austrian territory it provoked war, and that its conduct on the eve of war showed that it desired war. Thus it has been argued in Germany and Austria that Serbia was indirectly responsible for the catastrophe. As to the first point, the Serbian government could no more prevent the Jugo-Slav movement in Austria from developing than the Italian government could prevent the irredentist movement in South Tyrol and Istria from spreading. The harsh methods of the Hungarian and Austrian authorities for half a century or more made an explosion of race-hatred inevitable. As for the charge that Serbia's conduct showed a desire for war and a wish to precipitate it, this is mainly based on the assertions of Bogitshevitch, a Serbian diplomatist, who had been brought up in Vienna and whose sympathies were strongly German and anti-Russian.¹ To those who examine his statement impartially, so far as Serbia is concerned, they only show that her government expected sooner or later to have to fight for its life with Austria.

If the Serbian government had sought a war, its conduct after the Austrian ultimatum would not have been what it was. It would have resisted the pressure of the allies in favour of submission, and would have flatly refused to accept conditions which were fatal to the independence of Serbia as a nation. Instead of so doing, the Serbians bowed themselves in the dust, and agreed to such a capitulation as satisfied Bethmann and the German Emperor. They were prepared to yield to what all outside the German states considered injustice, in order to satisfy Austria, with the same serene confidence in the future that they had displayed in the two Balkan wars.

The German allegation that Serbia and Russia entered into a conspiracy against the peace of Europe with Serajevo

¹ Seton-Watson, *Sarajevo*, 56-7.

THE WAR GUILT

as the result is not borne out by the evidence. There was no sign of such a conspiracy in the attitude of Pasitch in his interview with the Czar on February 2, 1914.¹ He then outlined the policy of Serbia as follows: "To maintain peace in the Balkans and avoid fresh complications there," since, he said, Serbia needed peace to recover her strength and to renew her armaments for the defence of Serbian interests. There was clearly, then, no preparation for an immediate war, and the risks of ultimate war had always to be taken into account so long as Conrad was active and powerful at Vienna. Both the Czar and Pasitch evidently thought that Serbia might at any minute be attacked, and this belief was entertained also in Rumania. In considering defensive measures, they were engaging in no plot, but only taking a necessary precaution. They could hardly be expected to show much friendship for Austria after the events of 1909, 1912 and 1913. The Serbian government asked for the delivery of a certain number of rifles from the Russian military authorities, as Austria was known to be providing Bulgaria, her quasi-ally, with rifles, machine guns and guns to replace the loss of material by the Bulgarian army in 1913. Though the request was favourably received by the Czar, the rifles do not appear to have been delivered before war began. It was notorious that the chief danger to peace in the Balkans arose from the Bulgarian desire for revenge on Serbia, and the Turkish desire to be revenged on Greece.

As for Russia, the German apologists fasten on various passages in the documents published by the Bolsheviks or divulged by traitors in the Russian diplomatic service. These documents are selected from a great mass of letters and papers in the Russian archives, which also deal with English and French diplomatic measures and secrets. There is no security that they represent Russian policy fairly, as the aim of the Bolshevik government since the war has been to blacken the reputation of the Czarist government in every possible way and to injure England and France. Until their sources have been critically examined by impartial historians they must be treated with some reserve. Considered dispassionately, they contain little that supports the German theory. They show that the Czarist government sought to consolidate the entente in every possible way,

¹ cf. *Deutschland Schuldig?* 130.

RUSSIA'S ATTITUDE

and to secure a naval agreement with England, which was well known. They show that Russia considered the question of fighting in the Liman von Sanders affair of early 1914, but decided against such a course, on the ground that war would be "the greatest misfortune to Russia." They show that the Russian staff at that date reported that the Russian army was prepared for a war with the German powers (in which, apparently, it was assumed that Russia would have the alliance of France)¹ and that, as far back as 1912, Sazonov regarded war with Austria as the only way out of the incessant difficulties with her. But these disclosures do not amount to a plot, and in assessing their importance it must be remembered that three times at least, in 1909, 1912 and 1913, if not in the spring of 1914, Austria had considered the advisability of forcing on a general war and had sounded her allies as to their attitude in that event.

The Czar and Sazonov were strong friends of Serbia but in Russian aristocratic circles she was regarded with some distrust and suspicion as a democratic state. The fact that she was Slav in race, however, guaranteed her Russian support in case the German powers threatened her with destruction. Yet the Russian diplomats, with the exception of Hartwig at Belgrade and Isvolsky at Paris, were by no means enthusiastic in her cause. Schebeko, the Russian ambassador at Vienna, thought that the Russian government would go a long way to meet Austrian demands on her, even when Austria had declared war on Serbia.² His instructions, according to the French ambassador in Vienna, Dumaine,³ were in no way warlike; they were to avoid a conflict as far as was possible.

That the Czar had any desire for war is disproved by the emphatic evidence of all who knew him and his court in the tragic hours which preceded the great catastrophe, and by the reports of Austrian agents at St. Petersburg.⁴ The influence of that sinister charlatan, Rasputin, was exerted to maintain peace and induce Nicholas II to yield to the German threats. For though Rasputin was, during July and August, 1914, in Siberia, recovering from a wound inflicted on him in an attempt on his life, he had creatures

¹ *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 538-9; Stieve, vi, 234-60.

² *F.O.D.*, 187, 262.

³ *Dernière Ambassade*, 103.

⁴ cf. Conrad, iii, 454-5, for the Russian court's attitude.

THE WAR GUILT

of his own about the court, and was able to advise them by telegram. He boasted that, if he had been in St. Petersburg, he would have prevented war, and he may quite sincerely have believed that war would be disastrous to Russia and to the Romanov dynasty, and ought, therefore, to be avoided at whatever sacrifice.

Witte, a bitter enemy and critic of the Czar, has described Nicholas II as "in his secret heart desiring an aggressive policy, though his mind in this respect as in most others was a house divided against itself."¹ According to the same authority, Nicholas disliked William II from the first, in part because of his scornful treatment of the Czar's Hessian relatives,² but in part because of William's singular letters and telegrams and his constant sneers at Russia's alliance with France. Yet the Czar was not hostile to his cousin; we know that in July, 1914, he thought William II had no real intention of making war, and William II, who had good sources of information when he chose to use them, was convinced that the Czar desired peace. And indeed Nicholas had every possible motive for maintaining a cautious and prudent policy. In 1913 he said to Gottfried Hohenlohe that if war with Austria came both he and the Austrian Emperor would lose their thrones.³ He had told Stolypin, years before the war, that he was in a special sense unlucky. He had good reason for his statement. From his accession to his murder misfortune dogged him—the death of hundreds at his coronation fêtes on the Khodinsky plain; the physical weakness of the Czarevitch; the disasters of the war with Japan when his armies were defeated and his fleets sunk; the revolutionary outbreaks which followed, and endangered his throne; and, accompanying them, the terrorist movement which brought the murder of his ablest minister, Stolypin. He realised, possibly better than any of his advisers, the risks which a protracted war with Germany must bring. His experiences in the war with Japan were not such as lightly to tempt him into a great conflict with the most formidable army on the continent. He was anxious in the critical hours of 1914 to secure the military support of England. For that reason he was certain to act with caution, as Grey was known to

¹ *Memoirs*, 186.

² Szilassy, 236.

³ *Id.*, 405.

CZAR PACIFIC

be determined to avoid all provocation to Germany, was still hoping for a friendly agreement with her, and had, moreover, to reckon with a powerful pro-German section in the English cabinet.

The Russian imperial family, with few exceptions, disliked and distrusted William II. The two Montenegrin Grand Duchesses were undoubtedly eager for war, but their influence was small. The Empress, according to those about her, had strong English proclivities and sympathies,¹ despite her German birth, but from her very affection for her husband and son she would have been the last person to urge the Czar into a war which, from her knowledge of Germany, she must clearly have understood would be terrible, and possibly disastrous. It is quite certain that she had no burning sympathy for democratic France.² Even among the Grand Dukes there were influences favourable to Germany and the policy of Witte. Indeed, if Lichnowsky is right, Sazonov inclined to this view.³

The very reasons which made July, 1914, an opportune moment for the German staff to fight, made it a most inopportune moment for Russia. Her strategic railways were not complete; the most important new works had hardly been begun. Her fortresses had not been reconstructed to meet the heavy artillery which Germany was known to have provided and were almost without exception incapable of a serious defence.⁴ Her own heavy artillery was not to be ready till 1917 or later. The increase in the reserves which was in progress, and would have added 900,000 men to them, could not take complete effect for several years. The internal situation was bad, and the disastrous events which had followed the war with Turkey in 1877-8 and with Japan in 1904-5 were not likely to inspire any hope of obtaining relief by external diversions.

So manifest was the Russian need for peace that the German ambassador at St. Petersburg, Pourtalès, reported that an immediate move by Russia was not to be expected;⁵ and Bethmann appears to have assured Vienna that Russia would do nothing but demonstrate and "bluff." Supreme

¹ Sokoloff, *Enquête Judiciaire*, 90.

² *cf.* *D.D.*, ii, No. 291.

³ See also Conrad, iii, 454.

⁴ *cf.* Knox, i, 326. They fell in 1915 with terrifying speed.

⁵ *cf.* Buchanan, i, 198; *D.D.*, i, No. 160; Saintyves, xii.

THE WAR GUILT

confidence, as we know from the Bavarian documents, reigned at Berlin in military quarters. Indeed the belief of German and Austrian statesmen¹ that Russia was in no position to fight in July, 1914, was one of the chief causes of the war, taken in conjunction with the idea that in 1917 and afterwards her military strength would become extraordinarily dangerous and that she would then attack.

This was a view which Lichnowsky combated, in vain:²

I do not believe that Russia means to fight (he wrote), certainly not so long as it is perfectly obvious that France will only remain a vassal of Russia, and England shut her eyes to Russian advances in Asia, while we keep the attention of both these powers fastened upon ourselves. What interest has Russia to serve by making war? So long as I can remember, that is to say so long as I have been in contact with diplomacy—which is now about thirty years—I have never failed to hear the story that Russia is not ready but will be in a few years, and that the general staff is uneasy. And yet when the years passed Russia was still unready, and so it will be in the future. . . . I do not believe to-day that we are bound to have a war with Russia if our policy is wisely directed, and least of all do I believe that we shall obtain anything by a preventive war, even if we are fortunate, except the irreconcilable enmity of another neighbouring state.³

The Russian army suffered from want of education and lack of initiative and though extensive Russian military preparations were in progress on the eve of war, they were the natural answer to the sudden German threats in 1909 and the far-reaching German army acts of 1912 and 1913. They had not brought the Russian army anywhere near the German, and such soldiers as Denikin and Soukhomlinov were quite aware that the conflict was going to be one beyond Russia's strength. Instructed opinion, whether in England or elsewhere, never regarded the Russian army as a "steam-roller."⁴

The thesis which for several years was the basis of German apologies, that when Russia mobilised, Austria was giving way, is now known from Conrad's memoirs to have been quite unfounded. The Austrian delay in attacking Serbia was due to the Austrian military arrangements, not to any

¹ cf. *F.O.D.*, 361.

² *D.D.*, i, No. 161.

³ This was much the view of Pourtalès, the German ambassador at St. Petersburg; *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 548, 550.

⁴ Knox, i, xxxii.

RUSSIA'S MOBILISATION

peaceful intentions on the part of Berchtold, Conrad and Francis Joseph, who were indeed preparing to add to the severity of their demands on Serbia, if she had humbly submitted to the ultimatum. That Russia made preparations for war before definitely ordering her mobilisations is certain; but then so also did Austria, and Germany on the evidence of the *Von Papen Papers*.¹ That the French government advised Russia to prosecute her armaments in secret is not true,² though it had every reason to believe that Germany was quietly arming, and the very existence of France might depend on the readiness of Russia. If there had been any real desire at Berlin or Vienna to avoid a great war the Czar's proposal to refer the dispute between Austria and Serbia to The Hague offered a way out with honour. It would have enabled Europe to ascertain whether the actual responsibility for the Serajevo crime rested with the Serbian government and people. Had that been proved, Austria's position would have been unimpeachable.

As for France, the recent attempt to prove that M. Poincaré deliberately forced on the war rests on no better basis than the German charges against Russia. If the French President had really sought a conflict he would not have chosen a moment for it when his country was at a grave military disadvantage. The contemporary German documents, dealing with the origin of the war, contain numerous German opinions that France was, in July, 1914, in no position to fight a great war and only desired peace.³ That was the belief of William II, of Moltke, of Ballin, of Schoen, and also, it would appear, of Bethmann and Jagow. Frobenius's view, that the recent introduction of the three-years system of military service had so disorganised the French army as to make it "almost impossible" for her to fight at an early date, is particularly important and to some extent was confirmed by the earlier events of the war. These revealed a want of solidity in some of the French units due to the incorporation of two classes of recruits in October, 1913, which brought serious consequences. The French lack of heavy guns, which were being constructed, was a second reason why the French authorities should have been anxious to maintain peace.

¹ cf. also *F.O.D.*, 236, Crowe's minute.

² cf. Dirr, 148, 154.

³ Poincaré, iv, 408.

THE WAR GUILT

The French government in office was, moreover, a Radical and Socialist one. Like the British government it was full of generous hopes for the future, and some of its members believed that a reconciliation with Germany was not altogether out of the question. Benckendorff's statement in February, 1913,¹ that France was the only power which would see war without great regret is not corroborated by authorities who were in closer touch with French affairs than he.

If the French government had meditated war, the last thing that the French President would have done would have been to go on a voyage by sea with the French prime minister to St. Petersburg, after the murder of Francis Ferdinand. The mere fact that M. Poincaré and Viviani made this journey is proof that they did not expect Germany and Austria to take any violent steps. It excludes any possibility of French complicity in the plot which some German apologists have accused the allies of devising. Another fact as fatal to this theory of a plot was the financial position of the French republic with its large unfunded debt, which proved a source of difficulty and danger when war came.

That French diplomacy was eager for peace is indicated by Ballin's report on his return from London to Germany, on July 27, 1914.² "The French government," he said, "is so far from being anxious for war that its embassy in London had made itself 'very small' and would do everything to avert war." But it was not prepared to abandon Russia if an Austrian attack on Serbia led to Russian action and that again to German intervention; and it regarded the Austrian proceedings against Serbia as being a challenge to the triple entente. That this view was not an extravagant one is proved by contemporary evidence.³ When on August 1 England was supposed to have abandoned Russia, we have seen that William II, Bethmann and Jagow came to the conclusion that "the triple entente was by this action shattered."⁴ And all through the crisis popular opinion both in the German states and in the triple entente and neutral countries regarded the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia as a challenge to the entente.

¹ *Livre Noir*, ii, 304; cf. Poincaré, iii, 143; *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 250.

² Ballin, 301.

³ cf. *D.D.*, i, No. 58, and *Paléologue*, i, 40.

⁴ *Ante* p. 271.

CHARGES AGAINST FRANCE

The seizure of important strategic points in neutral territory on the French frontier, such as Luxemburg, and the violations of French territory by the German troops before the declaration of war are facts which the German apologists have dismissed as unimportant. They were not unimportant, and if France had been thirsting for war and engaged in a plot to precipitate it, they would have led her instantly to reply. The French withdrawal of the covering troops to a distance of six miles from the frontier, as has been seen, was a much more serious matter than German apologists admit, losing hold as it did of the Vosges passes, of positions like the Mont d'Amance,¹ and of the Briey ironfield. And if in ordering it the French government did so with diplomatic aims, to put Germany clearly in the wrong and secure English support, why did Germany allow herself to be put in the wrong? The German propagandist charge, that France mobilised before Germany, has this much truth, that the French mobilisation was ordered twenty minutes before the German one, though both French and German governments acted independently and neither was influenced by the other's act. The fact of the French mobilisation was not known in Berlin when the German mobilisation order was signed, and the French government knew only that the German general staff had been for days pressing for a general mobilisation.

The Austrian mobilisation was in the same way simultaneous with the Russian mobilisation, in this sense that both were determined about the same time. Conrad states that the Austrian mobilisation was decided on July 30, and this is confirmed by a message to Berlin, though the actual order did not leave Francis Joseph till 12.23 p.m. of July 31. The Russian mobilisation was finally ordered by the Czar at 4 p.m. on July 30, but the news of it did not reach Vienna till noon or 1 p.m. of July 31, and consequently did not influence the action of the Austrian government. While the German charge that Russia mobilised first is strictly true, the fact remains that the Russian mobilisation was not the cause of the Austrian mobilisation or of the war, as Austria had already decided to reject mediation.

As for England, the German apologists generally complain that Grey did not bring strong enough influence to bear at

¹ The strongest point in the Grand Couronné defending Nancy.

THE WAR GUILT

St. Petersburg to induce Russia to yield to Austria, and that he set the maintenance of the entente above the preservation of peace. But here, too, we have seen that Russia was repeatedly refused British support up to the very outbreak of war, and was left in complete uncertainty as to what England would do. Nor was it any business of Grey to facilitate the destruction of Serbia by a German power; and lasting peace would certainly not have been served by such a policy on his part. He did not believe that Serbia as a state was in the wrong, and most people do not believe it to-day, now that so much more is known. The destruction of the entente would have been of no more benefit to Europe than the destruction of Serbia; it would have meant the victory of violence over reason and political justice.

Two other items of evidence have been brought forward against England in Germany. The first is the statement contained in a document published by the Bolsheviks, that in September, 1912, the King told Sazonov that in case of war with Germany "we shall sink every single German merchant ship we shall get hold of."¹ If the King was correctly reported he would only be describing what would happen in war when hostile merchant vessels are liable to capture or destruction, and the utterance has no special political importance. The second piece of evidence is that the British navy was mobilised on the eve of war. That mobilisation, we have seen, was announced in the House of Commons on March 17, 1914, when Churchill stated that it would take the place of grand manœuvres for the purpose of saving £180,000. To justify the German thesis we must suppose that before March, 1914, England had decided upon a war with Germany and Austria, and that all her subsequent actions were part of a cunningly devised plot. This theory is so obviously absurd and so entirely unreconcilable with the facts that it can only be advanced by very ignorant people.

If the British government had imagined a European war to be probable or even possible, it could never have been so mad as to force the Irish question to a head, and thus to incur the risk of civil war. Further, Lichnowsky's, Ballin's and House's testimony to the pacific tendencies of the leading English statesmen must be decisive to all who trouble to weigh evidence. That the rapid growth of the German

¹ Stieve, ii, 291.

ENGLAND FOR PEACE

navy caused grave disquietude in England is true, but, despite this disquietude, the British cabinet was still apparently hoping against hope for a naval agreement with Germany. The real danger to peace in England as we have seen was that the British government was believed everywhere to be pacifist, not that it was warlike.

Who in the British government was the instigator of war, supposing the German propagandists are right? Not Grey, whom Bethmann on August 4, 1914, publicly thanked for his efforts in the cause of peace, at a date when Germany was attempting to place the guilt of war upon Russia. Grey had been unwearied in projects to save peace, and all had been shattered on the resistance of Germany or her ally, Austria. On July 24 he had proposed a simultaneous effort by England, France, Germany and Italy at Vienna and St. Petersburg, in favour of moderation, and asked Germany to induce Austria to give time for it by extending the forty-eight hours' time limit given to Serbia in the ultimatum.¹ Germany had passed on this proposal too late for it to have any effect.

On the 25th he had proposed that if Russia and Austria both mobilised, England, France, Germany and Italy should "keep together," and ask Austria and Russia "not to cross the frontier till there had been time for an endeavour to arrange matters."² On July 26, after Serbia and Austria began their mobilisations, he proposed a conference of ambassadors in London to find a pacific solution.³ Germany, while professedly accepting this proposal, did not press it upon Vienna, and Austria announced her determination to proceed to action against Serbia. On the 28th he suggested that other schemes of mediation should be postponed till it had been seen whether Russia and Austria could reach a settlement by a direct exchange of views.⁴ On the 29th he asked that if mediation between Russia and Austria by the four powers was agreed to, Germany "should suggest any method by which the influence of the four powers could be used together to prevent war between Austria and Russia."⁵

Later in the same day he suggested the plan of a "halt in Belgrade"—that Austria, after occupying the Serbian

¹ F.O.D., 78.
² id., 88.

³ id., 101.
⁴ id., 149.

⁵ F.O.D., 171.

THE WAR GUILT

capital, should state that she would only hold it till she had secured complete satisfaction from Serbia, and would not advance farther pending an effort of the powers to mediate between her and Russia.¹ This proposal the Austrian staff rendered impossible by its military arrangements. Before anything further could be done Germany had issued an ultimatum to Russia calling on the Russian government to demobilise in twelve hours or accept war; issued a second ultimatum to France; and sent to Brussels to be handed to the Belgian government at a moment to be afterwards notified, a third ultimatum.

On July 31 the Austrian government informed the British ambassador at Vienna that, while Austria deplored the Russian mobilisation, to which she had been compelled to respond, "on neither side was mobilisation to be regarded as a necessarily hostile act."² Whether this was honestly meant or was only a diplomatic move to throw dust in the eyes of the entente remains uncertain, but Russia, on her side, had engaged "not to move a man across the frontier so long as conversation with Austria continued," when Germany declared war.³ On August 1 Grey made a last suggestion, that "after mobilisation French and German armies should remain, neither crossing the frontier as long as the other did not do so," provided always that such a course was consistent with French obligations under the alliance with Russia;⁴ England would engage to be neutral, if the French government did not object, so long as the German army remained on the frontier on the defensive.

These seven distinct efforts on the part of peace, some of them made after war between Austria and Serbia had begun, prove that Grey was not seeking a conflict, but was trying by every conceivable device to save Europe from its horrors. Every expedient of which he could think was applied in vain; the one real deterrent—a plain and public warning given in good time that if Germany made war she would find England against her—was withheld, yet this was not from malice but because of the delusions and inner political difficulties of the British government.

No one even in Germany seriously suggests that Asquith, Haldane or Lloyd George had any desire for war. Churchill,

¹ *id.*, 182.
² *id.*, 223.

³ *id.*, 239.
⁴ *id.*, 250.

NO BRITISH WAR PARTY

as Ballin's letters show, was against it, though he was never for the desertion of France and, when the crisis became acute, manfully exerted all his power in her support. The other prominent members of the cabinet were notoriously pacifist in tendency. Ballin, a trustworthy witness (if he had an anglophil bias) on July 27, 1914, only a week before the war, reported that "England and the leading British politicians were absolutely pacific,"¹ though he added that England was definitely pledged to stand by France in the event of war and would never tolerate the violation of Belgian territory. In saying this he went beyond the facts so far as British support of France was concerned; the cold and curt reply to Poincaré's appeal of July 31 by the King's advisers over his Majesty's name, gave the French government no ground for confidence.

In the city the influence of the cosmopolitan financiers, who were nowhere more powerful, was exerted to secure British neutrality; they even threatened *The Times* with an advertisement boycott if it maintained its support of France. Four-fifths of the British press was for neutrality. The only London morning dailies which were throughout for supporting France and Russia were *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Morning Post*. The Liberal press was for neutrality almost without reservation, and a good part of it even after the German movement into Belgium had become known. In no newspaper in England during those tremendous hours was anything provocative or aggressive in tone published.

Nor was there any class which desired war or had anything to gain by it. Soldiers were well aware of the utter inadequacy of the British army, and the leading officers of the staff were sceptical as to the wisdom of the French plan of campaign. They did not exaggerate the fighting power of Russia, and they recognised the strategical superiority of the German position in central Europe with the interior lines. The ablest naval officers were painfully conscious of the weak points in the British navy—the lack of large docks, of protected bases, of destroyers, of sea-keeping submarines, and of a trained war staff. The business world dreaded the financial risks of a collision; property generally realised that any great war must bring terrific burdens. The Labour party were set upon peace abroad as they had prepared a

¹ Ballin, 301.

THE WAR GUILT

programme of "direct action" and class war at home for the autumn of 1914, to which war abroad would be fatal. England, indeed, had everything to lose by war as the Hungarian statesman, Andrassy, admits.

Thus of the states in the entente none in July, 1914, had any motive to make war, and all of them had strong reasons for avoiding it, if it could be avoided without complete disaster. The idea of an entente plot is therefore absurd.

As for Austria, whose precipitation was the immediate cause of war, there is now documentary evidence that her war party had for several years been seeking an armed conflict with Serbia, quite reckless as to whether that conflict involved war with Russia. The main agents of the war party at Vienna in 1912-14 were Conrad and Berchtold egged on after the Serajevo affair by the German ambassador, Tschirschky, who in July, 1914, incessantly pressed the Austrian ministry to violence.

Tschirschky declared himself so convinced of the necessity of crushing the Serbians that he would not have hesitated to go beyond the instructions of his government. In the words of the French ambassador—and the British ambassador's estimate agrees—"he constantly proclaimed himself to be an irreconcilable adversary of Serbia, and on his own confession strove with all his power to inflame the animosity of the Austrians which had already reached the point of exasperation."¹ He was in a position of special authority because he enjoyed the favour of William II, and was supposed to represent his opinions. At one of the most critical moments, unless Berchtold has lied, he threatened Vienna with the withdrawal of the German alliance if it neglected its "opportunity of dealing a blow." In the Austrian council of ministers which finally decided on war stress was laid on this point, and on the German advice to "act without delay." Of the Austrian statesmen, Tisza, at the outset, was alone against an immediate war with Serbia, and if he had had his way might have averted the supreme disaster.

The old emperor, Francis Joseph, was, as Conrad's memoirs show, one of the chief factors in the final decision to fall upon Serbia and well knew what he was doing.² He accepted the proposals which were put before him, not

¹ Dumaine, 132.

² Margutti (305) declares that he would never have started a war or dreamed of the ultimatum if he had not been incited by Germany to attack Serbia.

AUSTRIA'S RESPONSIBILITY

mechanically, but after full consideration and with thorough cold-blooded approval, though he had no belief in the capacity of his generals or the quality of his army. He had a personal dislike for the Serbians, but never seems to have understood that his anti-Slav prejudices would not be shared by the Slavs in his empire, who were in a distinct majority of 50 per cent. He regarded himself as a German prince, and dreaded the expansion of a Slav state across Austria's line of advance to the Ægean.

That he knew well the ultimatum to Serbia meant war with Russia is proved by his remark to Bilinski,¹ and by his decision to secure a definite pledge of German support before any move was made. It was in the highest degree discreditable to him and to his government that in the letter which he sent to William II for that purpose, he allowed the untruthful statement as to Serbia's complicity in the Serajevo crime to be made. As a sovereign, he stands convicted of involving his country in a war in which it had little prospect of success, since he was aware that in Conrad's opinion a conflict in which the German powers would have to meet France, Russia, Serbia, and possibly England, Italy and Rumania as well, meant defeat.

The responsibility of Austria as the chief cause of the conflict is indisputable. German apologists in their contention that when she declared war on Serbia and bombarded Belgrade, she acted in the belief that the war could be localised, ignore such facts as Francis Joseph's and Tisza's statements, and the discussions at the councils of ministers, which dealt with the risk of general war and showed that it was well known to exist. But at every point she acted with German approval, if not under German dictation,² except at one moment (July 30) when she resisted Bethmann's appeal to her to open discussions at St. Petersburg, a request which, however, reached Vienna simultaneously with a demand from Moltke, that she should mobilise her whole army. Moltke's demand she immediately complied with: in the discussions at St. Petersburg she imposed such conditions as would have rendered any agreement with Russia impracticable if Germany had not declared war and precipitated the world conflict.³ Her diplomatic proceedings were

¹ p. 204.

² See in particular Gooss, 112-4.
³ cf. *F.O.D.*, 249.

THE WAR GUILT

directed, not to maintain peace, but to keep the entente powers quiet till the long period which Conrad required for his military measures had elapsed. This could not be known at the time, and the absence for a week of any advance into Serbia after the brutal terms of the ultimatum bore a delusive appearance of moderation on Austria's part and of anxiety to reach a friendly settlement.

In mitigation of the verdict against Austria, it has been urged that no great power could overlook the murder of the heir apparent to the throne by a plot which had its base in a foreign country. The plots against the Hapsburgs, however, were not more serious than the plots against the Romanovs; and, as has been pointed out, the closest analogy with the crime of Serajevo is to be found in the assassination of Sir H. Wilson, which did not lead to war. At Serajevo all the assassins were Austrian subjects, and the conspiracy was on such a scale in Bosnia, with so many accomplices, that it was obviously a Jugo-Slav and not a Serbian movement. There was, for example, an "underground railway" by which the conspirators could travel from the Serbian frontier to Serajevo, just as in the United States, before the civil war, there was a similar line of escape for slaves from the South to Canada through the northern states.

A second point which has been urged in favour of Austria is that she was "doomed to perish" if she did not clear Serbia out of her way and put down the Jugo-Slav movement.¹ Every state, it has been maintained, has the right to fight sooner than sacrifice its existence. But was Austria doomed to perish if she had handled the Jugo-Slav question as England, for example, handled the Irish question, and the Indian question after the war? Her experiences in Italy in 1815-66 should have shown her statesmen the impracticability of holding down indefinitely a nationality which does not feel that it is being governed in consonance with its own ideas and ideals. The first hours of the war which she precipitated in 1914 proved that, to win against Serbia and Russia, she must hand over the Trentino and Istria to Italy and Transylvania to Rumania, thus dismembering herself. There was, further, great unrest in what is now Czechoslovakia and Bukovina, which was aggravated by the ever-growing ascendancy in Austria proper of the Magyar

¹ cf. Hoyos, 74-5.

GERMANY'S CONDUCT

magnates who dominated Hungary and were bitterly anti-Slav. So dangerous did the Archduke Francis Ferdinand think their oligarchy that he was preparing for a military stroke against it when he perished,¹ a fact to which his death has been ascribed by those who think that Potiorek deliberately betrayed him.

The absence of German responsibility in the conflict has been the theme of many German writers. Kautsky, who as an internationalist and Socialist was distinctly prejudiced against the Hohenzollern régime, and has shown no tendency whatever to suppress truth or to gloss it over, considers that though Germany's action was insanely provocative, she did not want war. Such a verdict must be received with deep respect. But there are three undisputed facts with regard to Germany's responsibility. She declared war on Russia on August 1; she declared war on France on August 3; she declared war on Belgium on August 4.

No doubt it is sometimes true that a state which is really on the defensive may be manœuvred by adroit diplomacy on the part of the aggressor into a declaration of war. The case of France in 1870 is an example of this. No doubt, too, the war with Russia inevitably, in view of the conditions of the dual alliance, brought war with France. But these arguments, which might have satisfied a good many critics had there been only two declarations of war, do not apply to the declaration of war upon Belgium—an act of the most brutal aggression and of the extremest injustice. The attempt to palliate this crime is as transparently absurd as the plea offered that the only plan of campaign against France involved a movement through Belgium. We have seen that this was not true. The elder Moltke was not afraid of a possible French attack through Belgium, and had thought out effective measures with which to meet it.

It hardly speaks well for the complete innocence of Germany that so many most important documents were suppressed when the German version of the diplomatic correspondence which had preceded the war was published on August 3, 1914. The telegrams exchanged between William II and Nicholas were confused and misdated; one of the most important of them proposing a reference to The Hague was entirely withheld. Many other documents were concealed, obviously because of their compromising

¹ cf. *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 359, 364.

THE WAR GUILT

nature.¹ No doubt, as we have already said, on the outbreak of war a government must be careful in giving material to its adversaries; and in preserving the secrecy of the ciphers on which so much depends, it may have to paraphrase and slightly alter state papers. But whereas the British government published everything of real importance, except the minutes and comments of officials in the foreign office on the outbreak of war,² and whereas France withheld little, Germany published only material which fills thirty-nine pages in the *Times Documentary History*. The British material fills 136 pages and the French *Yellow Book* 173 pages in the same type and format. Either, then, the German government had a secret consciousness of guilt or it felt that its diplomacy had been singularly at fault. Much has been made in Germany of the so-called falsifications of the Russian *Orange Book* issued on the outbreak of war, but, so far as they have been published hitherto from Bolshevik sources, they are not of vital importance, and were certainly much less serious than the German *White Book* falsifications.

The evidence compels the conclusion that the German government, having made up its mind that the Serbian nation must be drastically dealt with by Austria, was quite prepared to run the risk of a general war in supporting her. If the German government had other intentions, then Bethmann's failure to do what he said he was going to do, consult Grey in case new Balkan troubles arose, is inexplicable. It is possible that he personally may have believed that Russia would yield, because his ignorance of Balkan affairs and Russian policy was remarkable. Or again he may never have thought things carefully out. There is nothing to show that he wanted a general war, though he was ready to risk everything when it became clear that Russia meant business. But undoubtedly there was at Berlin a powerful war party, Tirpitz's *Einmarschpolitiker*, which had for some time been determined to wage a preventive war upon Russia on the first favourable opportunity.³

The existence of such a party, influencing William II, was indicated by the appeal which he made to the King of the Belgians late in 1913, and by King Charles of Rumania's disclosure in July, 1914, that the German government

¹ cf. Renouvin, viii.

² cf. Wile, 27 ff.

³ F.O.D., vi.

GERMAN WAR PARTY

intended a general European war some time before 1917. House had no doubt as to the influence or attitude of this party in Berlin.¹ In the spring of 1914 he reported that "the militaristic oligarchy was absolutely in control," that it was "determined on war," and that "the whole of Germany is charged as with electricity; everybody's nerves are tense; it needs only a spark to set the whole thing off." He was further convinced that the military party was resolved to have its will "and would dethrone the Kaiser the moment he showed indications of taking a course that would lead to peace." The impression of other foreign residents in Germany or visitors was the same. Wile's remarkable account of Germany on the eve of war, and in the first hours of the war, supports House at every point. Reading the apologists and such works as *Die Grosse Politik*, an unwary person is apt to forget the passionate, domineering temper that the Germany of 1914 showed. The German Crown Prince was prominent, as the documents prove, in calling for war, though since 1914 he has endeavoured to dissemble his responsibility. It may be pleaded in excuse for him that he was a young and inexperienced prince who had spent his life under the influence of the *Adjutantur*, but his influence was thoroughly mischievous.

In the Morocco affairs of 1905-6, 1908 and 1911 there had been uncertainty whether the Austrian government would support Germany in a diplomatic rupture, because no Austrian interest was involved. Many close students of German policy believed that resentment against Austria because of this attitude influenced the conduct of the German government in the Austro-Serbian crisis of 1912-13. The crime of Serajevo supplied a *casus belli* which directly involved Austria, and left no doubt what she would do if turned loose. To the staff before the war it must have looked as if the chances of German victory were the best possible; and we must be careful to correct propagandist statements made by German soldiers after the war by reference to the pre-war documents.² The French army was in a transition state, without heavy artillery and a

¹ Hendrick, *Life of W. H. Page*, i, 295-6; cf. *Grosse Politik*, xxxix, 109 ff., where a not very successful attempt is made to explain House away.

² See *D.D.*, iv, 151, 158 and cf. Wile, 18. It seems certain that in August, 1914, William II expected to banquet in Paris at the Hotel Astoria in September, 1914. cf. Florent-Matter, 267-8.

THE WAR GUILT

sufficiency of boots; the French finances were in disorder. The Russian army, as we have seen and as the German contemporary documents show, was unready. The new army corps which were to be created were only in project, and a serious strike was in progress in St. Petersburg. Serbia had not recovered from the exhaustion caused by the two Balkan struggles. Belgium had only just begun the reorganisation of her army and the rearmament of her fortresses, measures which, when they were carried through, would invalidate the Moltke-Schlieffen plan of campaign. In England the government was (as most people on the continent imagined) on the verge of civil war.

As for Germany, her army was strong and perfectly organised, and the Kiel canal was almost complete. The navy alone had not attained the strength required to meet England, and a few years' delay would certainly have placed it in a better position. Austria had carried out a military reorganisation which had greatly added to her fighting strength, and four of her Dreadnoughts were complete or on the verge of completion. Italy, with a considerable part of her army in Tripoli, was not in a position to take up any strong attitude at the outset, but Moltke declared himself certain of military aid from her. "These [naval and military] agreements with her," he wrote in 1914,¹ were so clear and stringent that it was scarcely possible to entertain a doubt as to Italy's loyalty to the [triple] alliance." King Charles of Rumania, whose devotion to German interests was well known, was an old man in precarious health. His successor was thought at Berlin to favour an understanding with Russia; and thus in a few years Rumania would probably be ranged against the German powers.

Among the war party, besides the Crown Prince, were such soldiers as Ludendorff and Falkenhayn, with the Bernhardis, Keims and Frobeniuses. Whatever Moltke's attitude had been till the summer of 1914, his messages to Conrad in the crisis show that he was striving for a general war. Tirpitz's influence was not generally used for peace, seeing that with House he spent much of his time "denouncing England and all its works"; but, because his navy was not ready, he was probably not, at the last moment, for extreme measures. The Kaiserin and the other members of the

¹ *Erinnerungen*, 9.

WILLIAM II'S WEAKNESS

imperial family were eager for a settlement with France by arms. The officer class was overweeningly confident in the ability of the German army, with its allied forces, to crush Germany's opponents as the Prussian and German armies in earlier days had crushed Denmark, Austria and France. It suffered from the defect which Ballin, a Jew, noted in the Prussian character—ignorance of foreign nations and an extravagant estimate of German strength. German strength, as the war proved, was enormous, but it was not sufficient to secure victory when German methods united against Germany the rest of the world.

William II was impulsive and weak, but he was not deliberately wicked. That he of set purpose planned the war, as was at one time maintained in entente countries, is quite improbable. But he knew what the consequences of the Austrian action might be. In the hurried interviews at Potsdam when the "blank cheque" was given to Austria, he spoke to Falkenhayn of the "very grave results" which might follow Austria's measure against Serbia, and he asked his war minister if the German army was ready. This shows plainly enough that he thought a general war was possible, and did not mean to advise Austria to flinch before it. He did not order any special military preparations, but to Zenker, of the German admiralty staff, he said that, while war with Russia and France was not to be expected, its possibility was not to be ignored, and was to be taken into account in naval dispositions. The first order which indicated the probability of a general war was one given by him on July 19,¹ to the German fleet to keep concentrated and be ready for speedy orders to leave Norway. His own plea that between 1905 and 1913 he had exerted a pacific influence on German policy is on the whole borne out by the documents. But he had piled up explosives by his incendiary speeches, and steadily aggravated the international position by the distrust which he aroused with his quick changes and somersaults.

According to Ballin, he never intended war with England, and such acts as the dispatch of the Kruger telegram were merely the consequences of his mental instability. There are passages, however, in the German foreign office documents which do not altogether bear out this charitable view. His own character was so unbalanced and changeable that

¹ *D.D.*, i, No. 80.

THE WAR GUILT

no one could be certain what he would do. He was undoubtedly reluctant, in the later days of the crisis, to order the general German mobilisation and this fact may be counted to his credit. Contemporary evidence, however, goes to show that he believed, in common with most Germans, that, if England could be kept quiet, the war would be brief and brilliant, crowned by complete victory in the east and west, and that it would give him undisputed dominion on the continent and in the world. For the reduction of France to a vassal state of Germany and the annexation of Belgium, while Austria pushed to Salonica, must inevitably have brought the early collapse of the British empire, and the subsequent subjection of the United States to German influence.

The final responsibility of Germany, therefore, cannot be denied, and William II, as "the supreme and all-highest war-lord" must bear his full share in the load of guilt, even if he did not desire war, and, as the documents and the evidence of his entourage indicate, trembled when he was confronted with the consequences of his policy. His responsibility was not so great as that of Francis Joseph, Conrad, and Moltke, but these three would never have acted without his approval.

Other pleas which have been urged on behalf of Germany must now be considered. The first is that she involved herself in the war because of the incapacity of her diplomacy. That her diplomacy was bad may be granted at once, though such ambassadors as Lichnowsky in London and Schoen in Paris, appear to have been honest and fair-minded men, and to have warned their government of the consequences of its action. The bad diplomacy may be ascribed to the interference of the staff in political affairs, the defective organisation of the German government, and the want of backbone in German statesmen. Bethmann's memoirs and papers show a mediocre intelligence, and a strange ignorance of right and wrong, as in their arguments on the subject of the violation of Belgian territory. As Ballin said at the time, it needed no Bismarck to prevent a great war; any reasonable, resolute and intelligent statesman in Berlin could have secured a peaceful solution.

The second plea is that all the powers were in the right, each from its own standpoint. There is undoubtedly a field for force in the decision of international disputes. The real tragedy of war lies in this, that the final right may in

some cases be determinable only by a trial of strength. It is too often assumed that all questions are capable of settlement by a tactful diplomacy, though diplomacy in important issues is the use of argument with the veiled threat of force behind it. Diplomats unsupported by armies and fleets, as Frederick the Great declared with his usual directness, are like musicians without instruments. And it might be said that right for which men or nations are not willing to suffer and die, in the last resort, is not right at all. Pascal has noted that right is invalid without the resolution to support it. Could such an issue as the right to self-determination, claimed by the Confederate States in 1861 against the United States, have been settled without an appeal to arms?

But while the cogency of this plea may be granted, the nation which proposes to resort to the arbitrament of force must remember the moral *imponderabilia* and not defy them. To assume that might is always right, as there was a distinct tendency to do in Germany before the war and even after it, is to go wrong. A German decision to try the strength of the central powers against Russia, France and Serbia would have borne a far different aspect to the world if it had not been opened by the attack of an overweeningly strong power upon two such weak states as Luxemburg and Belgium. The danger to the world might have been even greater, the ultimate result could hardly have been different, but the Germans would not have stained themselves with a great crime. So, too, the Austrian attack on Serbia opened with grave misrepresentation, in the face of Wiesner's report that there was nothing to connect the Serbian government with the Serajevo crime, and that the complicity of that government in the crime was improbable.

This tendency to exalt force and resort to violence had further lamentable consequences in the cruelty with which the German command treated the Belgians and French in the earlier weeks of the war. There can be no doubt as to the main facts; the evidence is overwhelming, and, since the war, has been strengthened by the exhumation of the corpses of British and French soldiers killed behind the German front in 1914. The numerous cases where bodies have been found with the skulls fractured confirm disclosures contained in the German press early in the

THE WAR GUILT

no one could be certain what he would do. He was undoubtedly reluctant, in the later days of the crisis, to order the general German mobilisation and this fact may be counted to his credit. Contemporary evidence, however, goes to show that he believed, in common with most Germans, that, if England could be kept quiet, the war would be brief and brilliant, crowned by complete victory in the east and west, and that it would give him undisputed dominion on the continent and in the world. For the reduction of France to a vassal state of Germany and the annexation of Belgium, while Austria pushed to Salonica, must inevitably have brought the early collapse of the British empire, and the subsequent subjection of the United States to German influence.

The final responsibility of Germany, therefore, cannot be denied, and William II, as "the supreme and all-highest war-lord" must bear his full share in the load of guilt, even if he did not desire war, and, as the documents and the evidence of his entourage indicate, trembled when he was confronted with the consequences of his policy. His responsibility was not so great as that of Francis Joseph, Conrad, and Moltke, but these three would never have acted without his approval.

Other pleas which have been urged on behalf of Germany must now be considered. The first is that she involved herself in the war because of the incapacity of her diplomacy. That her diplomacy was bad may be granted at once, though such ambassadors as Lichnowsky in London and Schoen in Paris, appear to have been honest and fair-minded men, and to have warned their government of the consequences of its action. The bad diplomacy may be ascribed to the interference of the staff in political affairs, the defective organisation of the German government, and the want of backbone in German statesmen. Bethmann's memoirs and papers show a mediocre intelligence, and a strange ignorance of right and wrong, as in their arguments on the subject of the violation of Belgian territory. As Ballin said at the time, it needed no Bismarck to prevent a great war; any reasonable, resolute and intelligent statesman in Berlin could have secured a peaceful solution.

The second plea is that all the powers were in the right, each from its own standpoint. There is undoubtedly a field for force in the decision of international disputes. The real tragedy of war lies in this, that the final right may in

GERMAN LAWLESSNESS

some cases be determinable only by a trial of strength. It is too often assumed that all questions are capable of settlement by a tactful diplomacy, though diplomacy in important issues is the use of argument with the veiled threat of force behind it. Diplomats unsupported by armies and fleets, as Frederick the Great declared with his usual directness, are like musicians without instruments. And it might be said that right for which men or nations are not willing to suffer and die, in the last resort, is not right at all. Pascal has noted that right is invalid without the resolution to support it. Could such an issue as the right to self-determination, claimed by the Confederate States in 1861 against the United States, have been settled without an appeal to arms?

But while the cogency of this plea may be granted, the nation which proposes to resort to the arbitrament of force must remember the moral *imponderabilia* and not defy them. To assume that might is always right, as there was a distinct tendency to do in Germany before the war and even after it, is to go wrong. A German decision to try the strength of the central powers against Russia, France and Serbia would have borne a far different aspect to the world if it had not been opened by the attack of an overweeningly strong power upon two such weak states as Luxemburg and Belgium. The danger to the world might have been even greater, the ultimate result could hardly have been different, but the Germans would not have stained themselves with a great crime. So, too, the Austrian attack on Serbia opened with grave misrepresentation, in the face of Wiesner's report that there was nothing to connect the Serbian government with the Serajevo crime, and that the complicity of that government in the crime was improbable.

This tendency to exalt force and resort to violence had further lamentable consequences in the cruelty with which the German command treated the Belgians and French in the earlier weeks of the war. There can be no doubt as to the main facts; the evidence is overwhelming, and, since the war, has been strengthened by the exhumation of the corpses of British and French soldiers killed behind the German front in 1914. The numerous cases where bodies have been found with the skulls fractured confirm disclosures contained in the German press early in the

THE WAR GUILT

war.¹ I heard myself on the spot in eastern Belgium soon after the armistice accounts of what had happened at Andenne, Dinant and Namur at first hand from eye-witnesses in the ruins which then existed.

Terrible deeds are, no doubt, done in war on the battlefield; but in some part the cruelty of the German command may be ascribed to the false philosophy which held that force was the real arbiter and not right or reason. Darwin's hypothesis of the survival of the fittest had been perverted in Germany into the theory that the strong have the right to destroy the weak. This train of thought, as Dr. Chalmers Mitchell has shown in a most penetrating analysis of it, does not correspond with the facts as they are known to us: "the moral law is as real and external to man as the starry vault." *Oderint dum metuant*, was the German principle. Germans forgot the comment of a civilisation nobler and older than their own—*vox dira et abominanda*.

So it was that German soldiers and statesmen accepted the teaching of Clausewitz that "in war the errors which proceed from a spirit of benevolence are the worst; he who uses force unsparingly without regard to the amount of bloodshed must obtain the superiority if his adversary does not act likewise. War is an act of violence which, in its application, knows no bounds." Germany overlooked the fact that in her war with Russia in 1904-5 Japan had recognised the bounds which the moral law and the system of international law impose. She had not suffered by her conduct; her victory had been achieved largely because she won the sympathy of the western races which she would have forfeited had she applied the cruel methods of Moltke and Bülow² in 1914. There was nothing in her case resembling the German orders to submarines, to "sink without trace" neutral vessels. It is because the brutal and violent temper shown in the war illustrated the German mental attitude before the war that all these facts are of relevance, and, indeed, of vital importance, in assessing the responsibility and the guilt.

A third plea is that the entente powers forced the competition in armaments which preceded the war, and that, as one result of this competition, Europe was divided into

¹ cf. *Facsimile of the Jauersches Tageblatt* for October 14, 1914, in Bédier, *Crimes Allemands*, 32-3.

² The army commander who ordered the slaughter at Andenne.

THE RACE OF ARMAMENTS

two armed camps, and an explosion sooner or later rendered inevitable. The doctrine of the balance of power is also blamed. But the competition in armaments on the continent had existed for centuries. The two-power naval standard for England dated back to 1750—a time when she had to be prepared to face the Bourbon powers, France and Spain united. On land Frederick the Great owed his conquests mainly to the great standing army which his father created in Prussia, and to its efficiency. The victories of the French revolutionary troops were in large measure the result of the system of national service which the revolution introduced in France. Napoleon, in 1809, suggested to Alexander I of Russia that when they had jointly induced England to make peace they might abolish the system of large standing armies which he said Prussia had introduced.¹ After the Napoleonic wars Prussia carried the organisation of her army to the highest pitch, and subsequent to the Prussian army act of 1860 and the defeat of Austria in 1866, could place in the field much larger forces than France. French proposals for reciprocal disarmament were rejected. The German armies in 1870 crossed the frontier with about 550,000 men, against whom the French could bring up at the outset only 250,000 to 300,000 men. Yet the peace strength of the French army was larger on paper than the German. The defeat of the French was in great part due to their numerical weakness at the opening of the war; and after the war they naturally did the utmost in their power to remove that weakness. In the opinion of such a good judge as Morier they armed in sheer desperation, dreading from day to day a fresh German attack. And as he wrote in 1875 with a judgment and prescience that explain many subsequent events²: "There is no denying that the malady under which Europe is at present suffering is caused by German chauvinism, a new and more formidable type of the disease than the French, because, instead of being spasmodical and undisciplined, it is methodical, calculating, cold-blooded and self-contained."

Other powers in Europe, alarmed at the ease and speed with which the German military machine had struck down Austria and France, increased their armies so as not to be

¹ *Cambridge Modern History*, vi, 216, where it is pointed out that Louis XIV of France was the real creator of the large standing army.

² Morier, ii, 346.

THE WAR GUILT

war.¹ I heard myself on the spot in eastern Belgium soon after the armistice accounts of what had happened at Andenne, Dinant and Namur at first hand from eye-witnesses in the ruins which then existed.

Terrible deeds are, no doubt, done in war on the battlefield; but in some part the cruelty of the German command may be ascribed to the false philosophy which held that force was the real arbiter and not right or reason. Darwin's hypothesis of the survival of the fittest had been perverted in Germany into the theory that the strong have the right to destroy the weak. This train of thought, as Dr. Chalmers Mitchell has shown in a most penetrating analysis of it, does not correspond with the facts as they are known to us: "the moral law is as real and external to man as the starry vault." *Oderint dum metuant*, was the German principle. Germans forgot the comment of a civilisation nobler and older than their own—*vox dira et abominanda*.

So it was that German soldiers and statesmen accepted the teaching of Clausewitz that "in war the errors which proceed from a spirit of benevolence are the worst; he who uses force unsparingly without regard to the amount of bloodshed must obtain the superiority if his adversary does not act likewise. War is an act of violence which, in its application, knows no bounds." Germany overlooked the fact that in her war with Russia in 1904-5 Japan had recognised the bounds which the moral law and the system of international law impose. She had not suffered by her conduct; her victory had been achieved largely because she won the sympathy of the western races which she would have forfeited had she applied the cruel methods of Moltke and Bülow² in 1914. There was nothing in her case resembling the German orders to submarines, to "sink without trace" neutral vessels. It is because the brutal and violent temper shown in the war illustrated the German mental attitude before the war that all these facts are of relevance, and, indeed, of vital importance, in assessing the responsibility and the guilt.

A third plea is that the entente powers forced the competition in armaments which preceded the war, and that, as one result of this competition, Europe was divided into

¹ cf. *Facsimile of the Jauersches Tageblatt* for October 14, 1914, in Bédier, *Crimes Allemands*, 32-5.

² The army commander who ordered the slaughter at Andenne.

THE RACE OF ARMAMENTS

two armed camps, and an explosion sooner or later rendered inevitable. The doctrine of the balance of power is also blamed. But the competition in armaments on the continent had existed for centuries. The two-power naval standard for England dated back to 1750—a time when she had to be prepared to face the Bourbon powers, France and Spain united. On land Frederick the Great owed his conquests mainly to the great standing army which his father created in Prussia, and to its efficiency. The victories of the French revolutionary troops were in large measure the result of the system of national service which the revolution introduced in France. Napoleon, in 1809, suggested to Alexander I of Russia that when they had jointly induced England to make peace they might abolish the system of large standing armies which he said Prussia had introduced.¹ After the Napoleonic wars Prussia carried the organisation of her army to the highest pitch, and subsequent to the Prussian army act of 1860 and the defeat of Austria in 1866, could place in the field much larger forces than France. French proposals for reciprocal disarmament were rejected. The German armies in 1870 crossed the frontier with about 550,000 men, against whom the French could bring up at the outset only 250,000 to 300,000 men. Yet the peace strength of the French army was larger on paper than the German. The defeat of the French was in great part due to their numerical weakness at the opening of the war; and after the war they naturally did the utmost in their power to remove that weakness. In the opinion of such a good judge as Morier they armed in sheer desperation, dreading from day to day a fresh German attack. And as he wrote in 1875 with a judgment and prescience that explain many subsequent events²: "There is no denying that the malady under which Europe is at present suffering is caused by German chauvinism, a new and more formidable type of the disease than the French, because, instead of being spasmodical and undisciplined, it is methodical, calculating, cold-blooded and self-contained."

Other powers in Europe, alarmed at the ease and speed with which the German military machine had struck down Austria and France, increased their armies so as not to be

¹ *Cambridge Modern History*, vi, 216, where it is pointed out that Louis XIV of France was the real creator of the large standing army.

² Morier, ii, 346.

THE WAR GUILT

taken at a disadvantage. Russia, in particular, to overcome the difficulties caused by her enormous size, the inadequacy of her system of communications, and the configuration of her western frontier, developed her armaments on an extensive scale. Between 1913 and 1916 she expected almost to double her forces.¹ In the last two or three years before the great war, in the opinion of impartial judges, she was arming rather to be prepared for the break-up of Turkey than with any view to an attack on Germany and Austria.

There is violent controversy as to the exact facts and figures of the competition in armaments between the entente states and the German powers. On paper the peace strength on land maintained by Germany and Austria, according to German authorities² was, in 1914, 1,237,000 officers and men; the French, Russian and Belgian, excluding coloured troops, 2,400,000, but of these 1,581,000³ were Russians, much inferior in organisation, energy and intelligence to German or western European troops. The effectives for war are given by the same German authorities at 3,547,000 officers and men, with 8,400 guns, against (for Russia, France, England, Belgium and Serbia) 5,379,000 officers and men with 12,900 guns. But the value of the Russian troops who formed more than half this enormous mass of men was discounted by inadequate artillery, want of munitions, lack of trained officers, and a low standard of education.

Nor could France or Russia, when making their military plans and preparations, know that they would have the support of England, Belgium and Serbia, while their governments always feared that Sweden, Italy,⁴ Rumania and Turkey might be ranged against them. That the German staff was not dissatisfied with the strength of the German army is shown by the fact that Moltke finally precipitated war, and this he would never have done if he had not believed that victory was secure. At the outset the German troops were victorious both in the west and east, though in both fields they were inferior in numbers. It does appear to be true

¹ F.O.D., 53. But Russian forces on paper were almost invariably far in excess of the actual strength as speculation and corruption were widespread.

² Kronprinz Wilhelm, *Ich Suche die Wahrheit*, 247; *Weltkrieg* (official German history), i, 21-2.

³ Knox, who had good Russian information, gives the Russian peace force in 1914 as 1,320,000. (*With the Russian Army*, i, xviii.)

⁴ Friction with France and England regarding the Dodekanese caused anxiety among the entente powers in 1912-14 as to Italy's attitude.

SWEDEN AND TURKEY

that the German armaments on land were not in excess of those of the entente powers, and that the German provision of munitions was no larger than the French. But the enormous industrial development of Germany gave the German staff the power to make good the expenditure of munitions much quicker than France, and out of all comparison quicker than Russia.

At sea the German powers were building on a scale that threatened the position of the British navy. Their expenditure was much lower than the British because of their system of compulsory service which radically reduced the cost of their personnel and was an indirect tax that is ignored in German comparisons. An indication of the "scale on which German naval expansion was being planned" was given by Churchill in the House of Commons on March 17, 1914, when he stated that 440 naval cadets were that year entering the German naval colleges as against 225 at Osborne for the British navy. There were other sources from which officers for the British navy were drawn, but these figures are sufficiently eloquent.

In the air Germany was able to take the field with 232 mobile aeroplanes on the outbreak of war attached to the army,¹ which points to a total effective air force, naval and military, of about 500 machines; in addition to thirteen airships, mostly of Zeppelin type and fit only for land service. The Austrian air force is believed to have been about half as strong as the German. The British military air force had only about 75 effective aeroplanes and no serviceable airships²; the navy had another 60 or 70 machines but no trustworthy airship. The number of effective French aeroplanes has been the subject of much controversy in France, but Palat's verdict³ seems the correct one that the French strength in aircraft was "very markedly inferior to the German." Dargon⁴ states that the effective French military aeroplanes numbered only 138. The Russian strength was inferior to the Austrian, as of the 320 aeroplanes in the country many were obsolete; and the German command of the air on the eastern front was unchallenged till 1917.⁵

¹ Hoepfner, *Deutschlands Krieg in der Luft*, 7; Neumann, *Deutschen Luftstreitkräfte*, 19.

² Raleigh, *War in the Air*, i, 411.

³ *Grande Guerre sur le Front Occidental*, i, 212.

⁴ *Aviation de Demain*.

⁵ Knox, *With the Russian Army*, i, xxiv-v.

THE WAR GUILT

In estimating military strength regard must be paid to the peculiar advantage of central position enjoyed by the German powers. Their forces could act on interior lines, and, owing to the excellence of the German railway system, which had been specially developed with an eye to military manœuvring, army corps and divisions could be transferred from east to west or from west to east as occasion demanded. Or, again, when a Balkan front developed, German forces could be dispatched to it in one third the time, and with enormously less effort than was required to move allied forces to it by sea.

The doctrine of the balance of power which is blamed by hasty thinkers for the war, was in reality a force making for peace. Bethmann, in his memorandum on the Austro-Serbian conflict, contends that Germany was compelled to support Austria because if she had not done so, either Austria would have turned to the entente and Germany would have been left entirely isolated in Europe; or else Austria would have been destroyed, and in that event again Germany would have been left isolated. But in these arguments he forgot that no one at that date wanted to destroy either Austria or Germany, in order to make Russia supreme. What the entente powers did undoubtedly want was to get rid of the perpetual alarms and excursions to which Germany and Austria subjected the peace of Europe; and, had there been any risk of Russian domination, British influence would have been thrown into the German scale, so soon as the British people had been relieved of the incessant anxiety caused by the ominous growth of the German navy.

The meaning of the balance of power is simply that no one state should preponderate, but that all states should have fair play; it is not a menace but a guarantee of safety to the weaker states. Three times in modern European history the balance has been disturbed; by Louis XIV in the early eighteenth century, by Napoleon in the early nineteenth century, and by William II in the early twentieth century; on each occasion English armies have appeared on the continent to restore equilibrium. It is a principle as important for the world after the war as at any time in the past. As there are "many mansions" in the Kingdom of Heaven, so, for the welfare of mankind it were well that

BALANCE OF POWER

many types of state should exist and develop on earth, and that no one state should be able to impose its will on the others, or act unjustly by reason of its overwhelming strength or size or wealth.

So soon as such a preponderant state arises and shows aggressive purposes by its armaments or its actions, other states will be forced to group themselves into ententes or alliances against it, as the alternative to surrendering their liberty and submitting to injustice.

APPENDIX I

§ 1—GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS ON THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WAR. Only a brief selection can be given, as the number of such works is very large.

Die Kriegsschuldfrage. Verzeichnis der Literatur. Leipzig, 1925.

§ 2—DOCUMENTS.

Collected Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Outbreak of the European War. London, 1915. An official British collection of the various official collections of papers issued by the powers engaged early in the war. One of the editions contains a valuable introductory summary. (Cited as *C.D.* Contains the French *Yellow Book* of 1914.)

Times Documentary History of the War. Vols. 1, 2, and 9. London, 1917-9. Contains the documents as above with the official summary, cross references, and additional matter such as Lichnowsky's pamphlet.

J. W. HEADLAM-MORLEY. *The Outbreak of War. Foreign Office Documents.* Vol. II of *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, edited by G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley. London, 1926. Contains a brief but most valuable introduction. Indispensable for a study of the history of war and most ably edited by the historical adviser of the foreign office.

(Cited as *F.O.D.* without number of volume.)

G. P. GOOCH and H. TEMPERLEY. *British Documents on the Origins of the War.* Vols 1- . London, 1927- . Foreign office documents, from the year 1898. Most important.

(Cited as *F.O.D.*, i and ii.)

K. KAUTSKY, M. MONTGELAS and W. SCHÜCKING. *Die Deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegausbruch.* 4 parts. Charlottenburg, 1919. The official German collection of documents issued after the war by the republican government; material prepared by the Socialist Kautsky. Of the greatest value and importance.

(Cited as *D.D.*)

Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges 1914. Vienna, 1919. 3 parts. The Austrian diplomatic correspondence before the war, published by the republican government. Very important.

(Cited as *A.R.B.*, Austrian Red Book.)

Deutschland Schuldig? Berlin, 1919. An official publication challenging the verdict of the allies at the peace conference—that Germany had prepared and willed the war.

Official German Documents Relating to the World War. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Translation of papers published by the Reichstag Committee of Inquiry. 2 vols. Oxford, 1923.

THE WAR GUILT

- P. DIRR. *Bayerische Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch und zum Versailler Schuldspruch*. 3rd edition. Munich, 1925. Contains additional documents to those given in *D.D.* with a preface by the editor maintaining the innocence of Germany.
(Cited as Dirr.)

§ 3—RUSSIAN DOCUMENTS, as divulged by former Russian diplomats or published by the Soviet.

- F. STIEVE. *Diplomatische Schriftwechsel Iswolskis*. Vols. 1-5. Berlin, 1924-5. Important Russian documents among Isvolsky's papers, translated into German. Isvolsky was regarded by the French government as meddling and not to be trusted unreservedly, and his statements are not always strictly accurate.
(Cited as Stieve i-v.)

- B. VON SIEBERT. *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente-politik der Vorkriegsjahre*. 2 vols. Berlin, 1921. Secret documents from the Russian embassy in London to which Siebert says in the preface that he was for many years attached. These documents were apparently sold to agents of the German government, and were known to it before the war.
(Cited as Siebert.)

- G. VON ROMBERG. *The Falsifications of the Russian Orange Book*. Translated by Major C. Bridge. London, 1923.

- R. MARCHAND. *Un Livre Noir*. *Diplomatie d'avant-Guerre d'après les Documents des Archives Russes*. 2 vols. Paris, 1921-2. Not so complete as Stieve, but contains a large number of Russian documents published by the Soviet. The animus throughout is against the allies.
(Cited as *Livre Noir*.)

§ 4—BELGIAN DOCUMENTS seized by the German government at Brussels in the war and published by it.

- Belgische Aktenstücke 1905-14*. Reports of the Belgian Ministers in Berlin, London and Paris to Brussels. Berlin, 1917.

§ 5—EARLIER DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS.

- J. LEPSIUS, A. B. BARTHOLDY and F. THIMME. *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette*. 1871-1914. 40 vols. Berlin, 1922-7. The official German collection of foreign office documents with notes. Indispensable for pre-war policy, but requires to be used with some caution. See Appendix II.
(Cited as *Grosse Politik*.)

- A. F. PRIBRAM. *Die Politischen Geheimverträge Österreich-Ungarns, 1879-1914*. vol. 1. Vienna, 1920. Gives the text of the various treaties of alliance with the editor's comment. Of great importance.
(Cited as Pribram.)

- N. F. GRANT. *The Kaiser's Letters to the Tsar*. London, 1920. Authentic letters, published by the Bolsheviks.

§ 6—FRENCH OFFICIAL YELLOW BOOKS. *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris*.

- L'Alliance Franco-Russe*. 1918.
Les Affaires Balkaniques. 1912-14. 2 vols. 1922.
Affaires du Maroc. 1901-12. 6 vols. 1905-12.

APPENDIX I

The Yellow Book issued on the outbreak of war is in the British *Collected Documents (C.D.)*.

§ 7—OFFICIAL HISTORIES.

Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918. Bearbeitet im Reichsarchiv. Berlin, 1925-. The official German military history of land operations.
(Cited as *Weltkrieg*.)

E. V. MANTREY. *Der Krieg zur See*. O. GROOS. *Der Krieg in der Nordsee*. Berlin, 1920-. The official German naval history.

§ 8—MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHIES.

GREY OF FALLODON (Viscount). *Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916*. 2 vols. London, 1925. Gives Lord Grey's own account of his negotiations and his impressions of German policy.
(Cited as Grey.)

G. BUCHANAN (Sir). *My Mission to Russia*. London, 2 vols., 1923. The pre-war negotiations are not dealt with in any great detail but there are important indications of the Russian attitude.
(Cited as Buchanan.)

HALDANE (Viscount). *Before the War*. London, 1920.
(Cited as Haldane.)

R. POINCARÉ. *Au Service de la France*. Vols. 1-4. Paris, 1926-7. The volumes which have appeared make short work of the charges brought against the French ex-President by his assailants in Germany and France.
(Cited as Poincaré.)

R. POINCARÉ. *The Origins of the War*. London, 1922. Very valuable.
(Cited as Poincaré, *Origins*.)

EX-KAISER WILLIAM II. *My Memoirs, 1878-1918*. London, 1922. Contains little of importance, but illustrates the ex-Kaiser's credulity and carelessness of statement.

EX-EMPEROR OF GERMANY. *Comparative History*. London, 1922. Insignificant.

R. VIVIANI. *Réponse au Kaiser*. Paris, 1923. The prime minister in France at the opening of the war in this book replies to William II's statements.

WILHELM KRONPRINZ. *Ich Suche die Wahrheit!* Berlin, 1925. Mainly controversial and a defence of German policy, but contains much information.

B. HENDRICK. *The Life and Letters of W. H. Page*. London, 3 vols., 1922-5. Page was the United States ambassador in London, and his papers give valuable information as to the British and German attitude from the standpoint of a capable neutral observer.

M. PALÉOLOGUE. *An Ambassador's Memoirs*. 3 vols. London, 1923-5. The evidence of the French ambassador at St. Petersburg, and of the greatest importance.
(Cited as Paléologue.)

T. VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG. *Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege*. 2 vols. Berlin, 1919-22. Gives the German Chancellor's defence of his policy.
(Cited as Bethmann.)

G. VON JAGOW. *Ursachen und Ausbruch des Weltkrieges*. Berlin, 1919. Jagow was foreign minister on the eve of the war.
(Cited as Jagow.)

G. VON JAGOW. *England und das Kriegsausbruch*. Berlin, 1926. Criticises Grey's memoirs.

THE WAR GUILT

- S. SAZONOV. *Les Journées tragiques de juillet 1914. Revue des Deux Mondes*. August, 1927. Paris, 1927. Throws some new light on the Russian action, though its statements are not always in accord with the evidence of the documents.
- V. CHIROL (Sir). *Fifty Years in a Changing World*. London, 1927. The former correspondent of the *Times* in Berlin, and foreign editor of that newspaper, throws much light on the secret hostility of the Kaiser to England.
(Cited as Chirol.)
- S. LEE (Sir). *King Edward VII. A Biography*. 2 vols. London, 1925-7. Contains documents and letters of the first importance, not all of which have been published elsewhere. Deals in particular with the alleged "encirclement policy" of King Edward.
(Cited as Lee.)
- H. VON MOLTKE. *Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente*. 1877-1916. Berlin, 1922. Preface supervised by his wife, Eliza von Moltke. Great care has been shown in publishing as little as possible that bears on the Great War, but there are some facts of importance disclosed.
(Cited as Moltke.)
- A. VON TIRPITZ. *Erinnerungen*. Leipzig, 1919. Of great importance, as Tirpitz was in a position to know most things that happened; he colours events to justify his own naval policy.
(Cited as Tirpitz.)
- A. VON TIRPITZ. *Der Aufbau der Deutschen Weltmacht*. Berlin, 1924. Documents and reports of which some are contained in *Die Grosse Politik*.
(Cited as *Aufbau*.)
- A. VON TIRPITZ. *Deutsche Ohnmachtspolitik im Weltkriege*. Berlin, 1926. Mainly concerned with events after the war began, but a little new material bearing on the outbreak of war.
(Cited as *Ohnmachtspolitik*.)
- H. VON ECKARDSTEIN. *Lebenserinnerungen und Politische Denkwürdigkeiten*. 3 vols. Leipzig, 1919-21. Of importance as showing the English efforts to obtain an alliance with Germany, before entering the entente.
- W. VON SCHOEN. *The Memoirs of an Ambassador*. Translated by C. Vesey. London, 1922. Schoen was the ambassador who declared war on France.
- K. HELFFERICH. *Der Weltkrieg*. 3 vols. Berlin, 1919. A German financial authority and minister, whose evidence is important as showing German financial and economic strength.
- MAX VON BADEN (Prince). *Erinnerungen und Dokumente*. Berlin, 1927. Some important admissions coming from a German prince, but mainly concerned with the war period.
- A. HOYOS (Count). *Der Deutsch-Englische Gegensatz und sein Einfluss auf der Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns*. Berlin, 1922.
- F. CONRAD VON HÖTZENDORF (Count). *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*. 5 vols. Berlin, 1922-6. Vol. 4 deals with the opening of the war, and is indispensable.
(Cited as Conrad.)
- R. GOOSS. *Das Wiener Kabinett und die Entstehung des Weltkrieges*. Vienna, 1919. Contains much information; Gooss prepared the Austrian documents, and on one or two points supplements the *A.R.B.* He was in the confidence of the Austrian foreign office.
(Cited as Goosa.)
- O. HAMMANN. *Der missverständne Bismarck*. Berlin, 1921. The work of an important official in the German foreign office, who speaks with special authority, and is fair-minded.

APPENDIX I

- O. HAMMANN. *Bilder aus der letzten Kaiserzeit*. Berlin, 1924. Character sketches of leading German statesmen, including Holstein.
- M. BOGITSHEVITCH. *Kriegsursachen*. Zurich, 1919. By an ex-Serbian diplomatist who has quarrelled with his government, and accuses Serbia of causing the war. Contains important documents.
- B. HULDERMANN. *Albert Ballin*. Berlin, 1922. Much interesting material.
(Cited as Ballin.)
- A. KNOX (Sir). *With the Russian Army*. 1914-17. 2 vols. London, 1921. Excellent account of the Russian military position by an expert.
(Cited as Knox.)
- S. DOBROROLSKI. *Die Mobilmachung der russischen Armee* 1914. Berlin, 1922. By the Russian officer in charge of the mobilisation, with comments and appendices by various German authorities on Russian affairs.
(Cited as Dobrorolski.)
- A. VON MARGUTTI (Baron). *The Emperor Francis Joseph and his Times*. London, 1921. Personal information as to the attitude of the Austrian emperor, of considerable importance.
(Cited as Margutti.)
- E. JÄCKH. *Kiderlen-Wächter der Staatsmann und Mensch*. 2 vols. Berlin, 1924. Important for German policy in the Agadir crisis and Balkan troubles.
(Cited as Jäckh.)
- M. VON AUFFENBERG-KOMAROW (Baron). *Aus Österreichs Höhe und Niedergang*. Munich, 1921. Information as to Austrian relations with Serbia.
(Cited as Auffenberg.)

§ 9—AUSTRIA AND SERBIA.

- H. WENDEL. *Der Kampf der Sudslawen um Freiheit und Einheit*. Frankfurt, 1925.
- R. W. SETON-WATSON. *Sarajevo*. A Study in the Origins of the Great War. London, 1926. A masterly work by the greatest English authority on the subject, with bibliography.
(Cited as *Sarajevo* or *Seton-Watson*.)
- M. EDITH DURHAM. *The Serajevo Crime*. London, 1925. A bitter indictment of Serbia.
- H. KANNER. *Kaiserliche Katastrophenpolitik*. Vienna, 1922. The author was editor of the Austrian newspaper *Die Zeit*, unfavourable to the Austrian policy.
(Cited as Kanner.)
- H. W. STEED. *The Hapsburg Monarchy*. 2nd edition. London, 1914. The standard work on Austria-Hungary before the war.
- J. VON SZILASSY (Baron). *Der Untergang der Donau-Monarchie*. Berlin, 1921. By a Hungarian diplomat who points out some of the mistakes of Austrian diplomacy. Much information.
(Cited as Szilassy, or *Untergang*.)

§ 10—GENERAL WORKS.

- G. P. GOOCH. *Recent Revelations of European Diplomacy*. London, 1927. Indispensable as a guide to the literature on the subject, and the contents of the various works.
- P. RENOUVIN. *Les Origines Immédiates de la Guerre*. Paris, 1925. States the allied case against Germany and Austria clearly and moderately.
(Cited as Renouvin.)

THE WAR GUILT

- M. MONTGELAS (Count). *Leitfaden zur Kriegsschuldfrage*. Berlin, 1923. A strong defence of German action, contains a vast amount of material and information summarised, but has propagandist tendencies.
(Cited as Montgelas.)
- A. FABRE-LUCE. *The Limitations of Victory*. London, 1926. Translated from the French by C. Vesey. This is an indictment of Poincaré, and puts the worst interpretation on the action of the allies. M. Poincaré has to a great extent answered it in *Au Service de la France*.
- VEIT VALENTIN. *Deutschlands Aussenpolitik, 1890-1918*. Berlin, 1921. Moderate and very valuable.
(Cited as Valentin.)
- E. BRANDENBURG. *Von Bismarck zum Weltkriege*. Berlin, 2nd edition, 1925. Specially valuable as the author had access to German documents, some of which still remain unpublished.
(Cited as Brandenburg.)
- T. WOLFF. *Das Vorspiel*. Munich, 1924. One of the most brilliantly written and most moderate books on the subject of German policy before the war.
(Cited as Wolff.)
- W. S. DAVIS. *Europe since Waterloo*. London, 1927. An excellent short account, written with great insight.
- A. WARD and G. P. GOOCH. *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*. Vol. 3. 1866-1919. Cambridge, 1923. Useful summary.
- H. E. BARNES. *The Genesis of the World War*. New York, 1926. Hostile to the allies, and accepts every statement against them.
- F. STIEVE. *Iswolski und der Weltkrieg*. Berlin, 1924. A summary of the material unfavourable to Russia and the entente powers contained in Iswolsky's correspondence, the five volumes of which have been edited by the same author.
(Cited as Stieve, vi.)
- § 11—MISCELLANEOUS.
- F. FEYLER. *Le Problème de la Guerre*. Paris, 1918. By a distinguished Swiss soldier.
(Cited as Feyler.)
- J. W. HEADLAM (HEADLAM-MORLEY). *The History of Twelve Days*. London, 1915. A very valuable analysis published before the German and Austrian documents had been disclosed, but still of importance from its insight into German and Austrian policy. New edition in preparation.
- J. W. HEADLAM. *The German Chancellor and the Outbreak of the War*. London, 1917. Supplements the preceding volume.
- C. OMAN (Sir). *The Outbreak of the War*. London, 1919. Also valuable, though much has been revealed since 1918.
- H. W. STEED. *Through Thirty Years. 1892-1922*. 2 vols. London, 1924. Gives an admirable picture of the German attitude on the eve of the war, by a former correspondent and editor of *The Times*.
(Cited as Steed.)
- E. DENIS. *La Guerre*. 14th edition, Paris, 1915. An excellent statement from the French point of view by a distinguished historian.
(Cited as Denis.)
- E. BOURGEOIS and G. PAGÈS. *Rapport Fait au Nom de la Commission d'Enquête sur les Faits de la Guerre*. Vol. i, Paris, 1919. Official report drawn up by the two historians mentioned for the French Senate as to its causes and German diplomacy preceding it.
(Cited as *Rapport*.)

APPENDIX I

- C. APPUHN and P. RENOUVIN. *Introduction aux Tableaux d'Histoire de Guillaume II*. Avant-propos de R. Poincaré. 2 parts, Paris, 1923. Contains some facts and documents not as yet elsewhere published.
- F. W. WILE. *The Assault*. London, 1916. The author was correspondent of the *Daily Mail* in Berlin for eight years before the war and down to its outbreak. He speaks with great authority as to the German temper.
(Cited as Wile.)
- Die Kriegsschuldfrage*. Monatsschrift für internationale Aufklärung. German periodical of a propagandist character, published monthly, 1923. Berlin.
- P. SAINTYVES. *Les Responsabilités de l'Allemagne*. Paris, 1915. A propagandist book of the war period, but contains a good deal of information and extracts from newspapers.
- A. A. W. RAMSAY. *Idealism and Foreign Policy*. London, 1925. A most valuable and penetrating criticism of British foreign policy between 1860 and 1878, written with insight and humour.
- FLORENT-MATTER. *Les vrais Criminels*. Paris, 1926. Contains many quotations and facts to prove French desire for peace, though it makes no profession of impartiality.

APPENDIX II

The vast collection of documents published between 1922 and 1927 by the German foreign office under the title of *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914*, is of great value for the study of the inner history of this period from the official German point of view. But it must be remembered that the papers contained in such a work must be a selection; the number of documents in any foreign office which has to do with great affairs and with many countries is so large as entirely to preclude exhaustive publication. There are obvious gaps in this particular work, especially as regards the crisis of 1875. There is no reason to believe that the eminent German officials responsible for the choice of the papers printed have been guilty of political dishonesty. But a great deal of the business of every foreign office is carried out by private letters or conversations, and details of these are only occasionally included in the official records. Thus the official documents contain little about the Anglo-German alliance negotiations of 1898.

Bismarck, in a famous passage, perhaps went to extravagant lengths in deriding the importance of diplomatic documents, but what he says is worth remembering:

For the most part they are just paper smeared with ink. The worst of it is that they are so lengthy. . . . As for using them some day as material for history, nothing of any value will be found in them. . . . Even the despatches which do contain information are

THE WAR GUILT

scarcely intelligible to those who do not know the people and their relations to each other. . . . It is easier to find out something from the newspapers, of which indeed governments also make use, and in which they frequently say much more clearly what they want. But that also requires a knowledge of the circumstances. The most important points, however, are always dealt with in private letters and confidential communications, also verbal ones, and these are not included in the archives. (Busch, *Bismarck*, i. 559-60.)

An incidental reference by a German police authority, Tresckow,¹ reveals the fact that Prince Hohenlohe removed from the German foreign office a number of compromising documents dealing with the Eulenburg affair; and a good many papers are mentioned in the notes of *Die Grosse Politik* as not having been preserved in the official archives. Memoirs of the period do not always confirm the views put forward in *Die Grosse Politik*, and show that its documents and notes require to be supplemented and checked from other sources.

The confidential Russian documents which have been published by the Bolsheviks require to be treated with greater reserve than the German documents. There is no security, in view of the well-known hostility of the Moscow government to the allies and its habits of misrepresenting facts, that papers have not been garbled or unfairly selected.² One or two of the Isvolsky letters or reports have been reproduced in the original Russian in facsimile and agree with the printed German translation and others have been compared with the old Russian embassy archives in Paris and found correct, but until the good faith of the authorities who have issued these documents has been proved, statements made in them must be handled with caution, except where they run contrary to the general Bolshevik propaganda against the allies.

¹ *Von Fürsten und anderen Sterblichen*, 153.

² cf. Poincaré, ii, 336, who points out one serious omission in Stieve.



INDEX

For the spelling of names the system employed in the documents of the country of origin is usually followed. For the transliteration of names from Russian and Serbian, in some cases the Germanised spelling is used where Russian works are cited from German translations. To avoid confusion with initials of Christian names M. is not inserted before foreign names.

- ADJUTANTUR, (military household), 28
- ADRIATIC, 150-3
- AEHRENTHAL, Baron and later Count, 107 ff., 113, 115 ff., 121, 135, 139, 146
- AGADIR, 132-5
- AGRAM, trials, 117, 121
- AIRCRAFT, German over French territory, 155, 260; alleged French over German territory, 283-4, 288, 296; comparative strength, 343
- ALBANIA, 49, 148-9, 152-3, 160, 170-1
- ALBERT I of Belgium, interview with William II, 159; appeal to George V, 288; distrust of France 290; letter to William II, 291-2
- ALEXANDER, Prince of Bulgaria, see Battenberg.
- ALEXANDER II, Czar, (1818-81), action in 1875, 8-11, attitude to France, 5; to German-Austrian alliance, 14-15
- ALEXANDER III, Czar, (1845-94), in three Emperors' alliance, 16; French proclivities, 22; dislike of the Battenberger, 24; on William II, 32; William's letters to, 38; concludes dual alliance, 42-4; visit to Kiel, 43; death, 46
- ALEXANDER, King of Serbia, 88
- ALGECIRAS, conference, 100, 103, 106
- ALLIANCE, Bismarck's system, 5; overtures to England, 12, 14, 31; Three Emperors', 16, renewed, 18; German-Austrian, 14-5; Triple, 16-7; complicated German system, 17, 34; Franco-Russian, 42-4; German-British discussions, 60, 62, 71-2, 76, 80; Anglo-Japanese, 83; Franco-British, 100, 104; Balkan, 146-7; Bismarck on, 312-3
- ALSACE-LORRAINE, annexed to Germany, 1-2; French attitude, 39-40; 53, 75, 159-60
- AMANCE, Mont, 325
- ANDENNE, 340
- ANDRASSY, Count J., 29, 122, 330
- ANGLO-FRENCH, agreement of 1904, 90; convention of 1899, 68
- ANGLO-ITALIAN, understanding, 22, 55
- ANGLO-JAPANESE, alliance, 83, 146
- ANGLO-RUSSIAN, agreement, 109-10; proposed naval convention, 165 ff., 191
- ANTWERP, 129, 157
- ARMAMENTS, competition of, 2, 6, 9, 20 ff., 57, 109, 142-3; on eve of the war, 340-2
- ARMENIAN massacres, 48-9
- ARMY, German bill of 1912, 153; French bill, 154-5, 163
- ASIA MINOR, 32, 122
- ASQUITH, H. H., later Earl of Oxford and Asquith, British

INDEX

statesman, 134, 141, 248, 286, 306, 328
AUFFENBERG, Baron, Austrian general, 174, 177
AUSTIN, Sir Alfred, 21
AUSTRIA, Bismarck's policy to, 5, 12; German alliance with, 14; occupies Bosnia, 15; convention with Serbia, 16; in Triple Alliance, 16-8; alliance with Rumania, 17; Balkan crisis of 1885, 20; convention with Britain, 26; understanding with Russia, 56; Münzsteg agreement, 88-9; and South Slavs, 107-8; Bosnia annexed, 116 ff.; war party's plans, 118, 121-2; ambition in Asia Minor, 122; builds Dreadnoughts, 129; in Agadir crisis, 135; Bethmann reproves, 148-50; Magyar problem, 153, 332-3; Balkan war, 155-6; ultimatum to Serbia, 160; Kono-pischt, 169-70; Serajevo affair, 173 ff.; war council, 191-2; ultimatum to Serbia, 208 ff.; partial mobilisation, 211; declares war, 232; Bethmann warns, 234; fresh demands for Serbia, 249; jubilant at war, 252; general mobilisation, 255-8; mediation rejected, 259; confident in victory, 262; against attack on Belgium, 291; if she had won, 313-4; responsibility, 330 ff.
BAGHDAD railway, 32, 57, 72, 89, 111, 122, 126
BALANCE OF POWER, destroyed in 1870, 1; 69-70; 344
BALKANS, Bismarck's policy, 12, 24-5; German in 1896, 56, 88-9; Russian alliance with Bulgaria, 124; alliances of 1912, 146; war of 1912, 149 ff.; of 1913, 155-6; trouble in 1914, 170; Austrian programme, 182-3; European interests, 187-8; German alliance efforts, 292-3
BALLIN, German shipowner, 140, 213, 324, 329, 337-8
BALTIC, 89
BARNARDISTON, Col., 104
BATTENBERG, Prince Alexander, of Bulgaria, 20, 24, 25
BAUMGARTEN-CRUSIUS, Gen. German soldier, 269
BAVARIAN Reports, 200, 221, 281

BEACONSFIELD, see Disraeli
BECK, Baron, Austrian chief of staff, 56
BELFORT, 4, 280, 287
BELGIUM, threatened by Bismarck, 7-9; Gladstone and, 7, 306; Disraeli's hint, 12; fresh German threats to, 21; Salisbury's attitude, 21; change in German plans, 22; Schlieffen decides to violate, 86; William II wants to invade in 1905, 101; Barnardiston affair, 104-5; friction with England, 105; Pan-German demands for annexation, 110; danger to, 134; Bridges affair, 144-5; signs of danger, 151, 156; new military law, 157; William II's threat in 1913, 159; German ultimatum to, 225-6, 246-7; Bethmann refuses to promise respect for, 248; mobilises, 268-9; German difficulties, 275; German ultimatum delivered 287-8; consequences of German action, 289 ff.; army how disposed, 290; fear of France, id.; invaded, 298-9; British action, 300-3; Bethmann admits the wrong, 305; appeal for aid, 307-9; false German charges against, 307-8; German excuses, 333; unready for war, 336
BELGRADE, 204 ff., 232; "halt in Belgrade," 234, 244-5, 255, 328; bombarded, 240
BELOW-SALESKE, German minister in Belgium, 287-8
BENCKENDORFF, Count, Russian ambassador in London, 128, 199, 222, 231, 324
BERCHTOLD, Count, Austrian Foreign Minister, 146, 158, 170, 179 ff., 188, 191, 193-4, 197, 204, 228-9; lies to Francis Joseph, 232; action at Berlin, 237; and Moltke, 258-9
BERLIN "POST", 9, 22, 219
BERLIN, Treaty of, 13-14
BERTIE, Sir F. and later Viscount, 82, 238
BERTRAB, Gen., German soldier, 186
BESSARABIA, 13
BETHMANN HOLLWEG, (1856-1921), German Chancellor, appointed, 119; friction with Tirpitz, 127, 135 ff., 247; in

INDEX

Agadir affair, 131; threatens resignation, 144; charge against England, 148; promise to Grey, 167-8, 181; gives Austria blank cheque, 185; instructions to Tschirschky, 187, 193; and the ultimatum, 203-5; 215, 221; refuses a conference, 223; 225, 227-9, 233 ff., 241 ff.; breaks down, 244, 273; sees Goschen, 247-8; action at Vienna, 248-9; 272, 277, 283, 286-7; scrap of paper, 300-1; Reichstag speech, 305; 331
BEYENS, Baron, 302-3
BIENVENU - MARTIN, French Minister, 223-4
BILINSKI, Austrian Finance Minister, 173, 203, 316-7, 331
BISMARCK, (1815-98), Prince, German Chancellor, policy to France, 3-4; to England and Russia, 5; and Belgium, 7-8; crisis of 1874-5, 8-12; overtures to England, 12, 14, 32; duplicity, 14; system of alliances, 16-8; incites France against England, 17; Heligoland, 18 colonies, 19; refuses Austria support, 20; reinsurance treaty, 25; against war with Russia, 26; denounces France, 27; quarrel with Switzerland, 33; dismissed, id.; on William II, 38, 45, 56; and naval plans, 58; death, 64; 122, 281, 289-90, 302, 304, 312
BJÖRKÖ, 100-3
BLACK HAND, 178-9, 316
BLACK SEA, 18, 91, 108
BLANK CHEQUE, 184-5, 194, 200, 250
BLOWITZ, *Times* correspondent at Paris, 6, 11
BOERS, see South Africa
BOISDEFFRE, Gen., French soldier, 43-4
BOLSHEVIK DOCUMENTS, 38, 353-4
BONAR LAW, British Minister, 297
BOSNIA, offered to Austria, 13; Russia accepts Austrian occupation, 15; gives Austria right to annex, 16; railway affair, 113; annexation, 116 ff.; Serajevo affair, 173 ff.
BOULANGER, Gen., French War Minister, 20, 23, 32
BOXER Rising, 77
BRIDGES, Gen., British soldier, 144-5
BRITISH ships seized in Germany, 273
BUCAREST, Treaty of, 156
BUCHLAU, meeting, 116
BUCHANAN, Sir G., British Ambassador in Russia, 218 ff., 222, 254, 267
BULGARIA, 16, 20, 25, 34, 56, 116 ff., 124, 145-7, 149, 155-6, 161, 163, 292, 318
BÜLOW, B. von, Count and later Prince, 61, 71, 74-5, 76-8, 80, 82 ff., 91, 94, 97 ff.; and Belgium, 101, 102, 106, 110, 115, 119; and the ultimatum to Serbia, 211
BÜLOW, K. von, German general, 340
BUNDESRAH, 73
BUNSEN, Sir M. de, British diplomatist, 191, 204
BURNS, J., 298
BUSCH, quoted, 18, 19, 24
CABRINOVITCH, 175, 177
CAILLAUX, French politician, 130, 132 ff.
CALMETTE, 212
CAMBON, Jules, French Ambassador in Berlin, on William II, 29; 132, 224
CAMBON, Paul, French Ambassador in London, 150, 276, 280, 297
CAMPBELL BANNERMAN, Sir H., British Prime Minister, 104; CAPELLE, German Admiral, 186
CAPRIVI, Count, 33-4, 45-6, 48
CASABLANCA, 118
CASSEL, Sir E., 110, 112, 114
CAVOUR, Count, 39
CHALMERS MITCHELL, Dr., 53, 340
CHAMBERLAIN, Joseph, 38-9, 55, 60, 62, 68, 71, 80, 82, 85, 89
CHAMBORD, Count de, 3, 7
CHARLES I, King of Rumania, 134, 147, 151, 157, 170, 195, 281, 334
CHARLES, Archduke, 191
CHINA, 47-8, 77-8
CHIROL, Sir V., foreign editor of *The Times*, 35, 51, 52, 82
CHURCHILL, Lord R., 19
CHURCHILL, W. S., 123, 134, 136, 141-2, 156-7, 162, 326, 328-9

INDEX

GLADSTONE, British statesman, Bismarck's dislike of, 18-19; and Belgium, 7, 306
 GOLUCHOWSKI, Count, Austrian statesman, 56, 107
 GORDON, Gen., 19
 GORTCHAKOV, Prince, Russian statesman, 3, 8, 16
 GOSCHEN, Sir W. E., British diplomatist, 117, 231, 247, 270, 299, 300-2
 GRABEZ, 177
 GRANVILLE, Earl, British Foreign Secretary, 7
 GREAT BRITAIN, see England
 GREECE, 147, 156, 170, 292
 GREY, Sir Edward, later Viscount, and mobilisation, 44; attitude of Germany, 45, 104; discussions with French staff, 104, 150; warning to Metternich, 114; Metternich threatens war, 121; naval competition, 129-30; Agadir crisis, 133 ff.; Sazonov interview, 148; Balkan wars, 150 ff.; and Russian naval agreement, 165, 167; Bethmann's promise to, 167-8; eve of Great War, 190-1, 199, 202, 208 ff.; silence, 213 ff.; mediation efforts, 215 ff., 219, 222, 230, 235; "halt in Belgrade," 244-5; and Belgium, 268-9; Cambon interview, 276; war speech, 296-8; German charges against, 304, 325 ff.
 GRIGOROVITCH, Adm., 240-1
 GROSSE POLITIK, 353-4
 HAGUE, The, first conference, 69; second conference, 109; Czar proposes reference to, 242, 257, 333; conventions, 296, 309
 HALDANE, Viscount, 104-5, 109, 140, 213, 328-9
 HAMMANN, Dr., German Foreign Office official, 6, 61, 64, 72, 74, 99, 115, 300
 HARCOURT, L., 285
 HARDINGE, Sir C., British diplomatist, 115-6
 HARTWIG, 195
 HATZFELDT, Count, 54-5, 61, 63
 HAYTI, 59
 HEECKEREN, Van Kell, Baron, 94
 HEERINGEN, Adm., 143
 HELFFERICH, Director of Deutsche Bank, 190, 220, 233
 HELIGOLAND, 18, 38
 HENCKEL VON DONNERSMARCK, Prince, German diplomatist, 99
 HENRY, Prince, of Prussia, 85, 224
 HERRICK, 293
 HINTZE, Capt., 126
 HOHENLOHE, Prince C., German Chancellor, 8, 10, 48, 51, 53, 76
 HOHENLOHE, Prince G., 152-3, 320
 HOLLAND, 86, 94, 110, 129, 201-2, 234, 247-8, 283
 HOLLWEG, see Bethmann Hollweg
 HOLSTEIN, F. von, 35-6; on William II, 31, 57; 29, 48, 53, 56, 61, 80, 97; retirement, 106
 HOUSE, Col., 166, 335
 HOYOS, Count, Austrian diplomatist, 184-5, 191, 199, 235
 HUMBERT, 198
 HUN speech, 77
 HUNGARY, 70, 165-6, 333
 INDIA, 256
 IRELAND, 162, 212, 224
 ISVOLSKY, Russian statesman, 108, 114, 116 ff., 126, 131, 135, 139, 139, 147, 319
 ITALY, estranged from France, 16, 41; enters Triple Alliance, 16-18; and England, 17, 22, 41; convention with Spain, 41; alarm at William II's attitude, 50; Abyssinian difficulties, 55; understanding with France, 84; at Algeciras, 103; naval programme, 108; Racconigi meeting, 124; war with Turkey, 138-9; and Albania, 153; relations with Germany, 162, 188, 201, 204; Austrian assurances, 205; warning to Austria, 257; refuses to join in war, 281, 303-4
 ITO, Prince, 83
 JAGOW, G. von, German diplomatist and Foreign Secretary, 194, 201-2, 205, 214, 220, 228, 233, 266, 270, 272-3, 287, 299-303
 JAMESON, Dr., 51
 JAPAN, war with China, 47-8; alliance schemes, 61; Anglo-Japanese alliance, 83; Russia and, 87 ff.; Russo-Japanese war, 89; peace, 100; British alliance renewed, 103; understanding with Russia, 110

INDEX

JOFFRE, Gen., later Marshal, 260, 277, 287
 JOHANNISBURG, 282
 JONCHEREY, 280
 JOVANOVITCH, 316
 JUGOSLAV, (see South Slavs, Serbia, Bosnia), 332
 JUNGBLUTH, Gen., 144
 JUNIUS, 251
 JUTLAND, 112, 136, 143
 KANNER, Dr., Austrian journalist, 117, 122, 203, 214
 KAUTSKY, K., German Socialist, 263, 333
 KIAOCHAU, 48, 59-60
 KIDERLEN-WAECHTER, A. von, German Foreign Minister, 29, 130 ff., 147, 148, 158
 KIEV, 33
 KIRK KILISSE, 149
 KONOPISCHT, 169-70
 KOREA, 13, 88, 89
 KOWEIT, 89
 KRIEGSGEFAHRZUSTAND, 261
 KRUGER, President, 50; William II's telegram to, 51-4
 KÜHLMANN, R. von, German diplomatist, 97
 KUHL, Gen., 22, 190, 212
 KUMANOVO, 149
 KUROPATKIN, Gen., 88
 LABOULAYE, 22
 LADO Enclave, 46
 LANSDOWNE, Marquess of, British statesman, 79-81, 87, 90, 99
 LEE, Mr., and afterwards Baron, British Minister, 94
 LIBERIA, 67
 LICHNOWSKY, Prince, German diplomatist; British naval understanding with Russia, 167; conveys Bethmann's promise, id.; on Serajevo affair, 176; action by, 190 ff.; 214, 217, 222, 230, 244, 256, 268-9, 285, 314, 321, 338
 LIEGE, 21, 105, 236, 260, 268-9, 308
 LIMAN VON SANDERS, Gen., 160-1, 165, 319
 LIMPUS, Adm., 160
 LLOYD GEORGE, Mr., 114, 123, 133, 268, 328
 LOBANOV, Prince, Russian diplomatist, 47
 LOCALISING THE WAR, 187, 192, 203, 214-5, 216, 219, 223
 LOKALANZEIGER, 251-2
 LONDON, Declaration of, 124-5; Conference of, 1913, 153; 1872, 274
 LOURENCO MARQUEZ, 50, 55
 LUDENDORFF, Gen., 157, 163, 336
 LUDWIG, Dr., quoted, 5, 10, 20, 32
 LUNÉVILLE, 296
 LUXEMBURG, 236, 273-4, 276-7, 286, 305, 325
 LYONS, Lord, 6
 MACEDONIA, 152, 162, 171
 MCKENNA, Mr., 120
 MACMAHON, Marshal, 8
 MAHAN, Capt., later Adm., 39, 129
 MALET, Sir E. B., British diplomatist, 50
 MALMEDY, 144
 MANILA, 67-8, 85
 MARAMAROS SZIGET, 161
 MARGUTTI, Baron von; 232
 MARSCHALL VON BIEBERSTEIN, Baron, German diplomatist, 51-2, 55, 145-6
 MAXSE, L. J., Mr., editor of the *National Review*, 286
 MEDIATION, 214-6, 223, 230-1, 235, 255, 259, 267
 MEDITERRANEAN, 137, 143-4, 154, 162
 MENSENDORFF, Count, Austrian diplomatist, 203, 213, 231, 235
 MEREY, Austrian diplomatist, 205 ff.
 METTERNICH, Count Wolff, German ambassador in London, 80, 85, 100, 104, 114, 120-127, 134
 METZ, 284-5
 MILAN, King of Serbia, 20
 MILITARY NECESSITY, 307-8
 MILITARY PREPARATIONS, 220-1, 227, 229, 231-2, 236, 239, 261-3, 304, 323
 MIRAMAR, 165-6
 MOBILISATION, 43-4, 145, 151, 153, 162; Serbian, 210; partial Austrian, 211, Kaiser on, 233; reports of Russian, 228, 231, 237; Russian partial, 238, 241; German staff and, 246-7; Moltke and, 249-50; German discussions, 251-2; Russian general, 254-5; Austrian general, 258; German

INDEX

CHUSAN Is., 48
 CIGANOVITCH, 178, 209, 210
 CIPHERS, 126-7, 154, 167, 291-6
 CLAUSEWITZ, 340
 CLEMENCEAU, 98, 118, 120
 COLOGNE GAZETTE (Kölnische Zeitung), 9, 164
 COLONIES, 19
 COMPETITION OF ARMAMENTS, 2, 142 ff., 340-2
 CONFERENCE OF AMBASSADORS, 151-2, 223, 327
 CONRAD, Baron and later Count von Hötzenndorf, 108, 115, 117, 122, 124, 126, 139, 151-2, 155; interview with William II, 158; 162, 169 ff., 173, 177, 188-9, 192, 204-5, 228, 235-7, 241; 245; for destruction of Serbia, 249; 251, 255, 258, 262, 265-6; responsibility, 330, 338
 CONSTANTIA, 170
 CONSTANTINE, King of Greece, 156, 292
 CONSTANTINOPLE, 56
 COPENHAGEN, 279, cf. 93
 CRISPI, Italian statesman, 41
 CRONSTADT, 42
 CROWE, Sir E., British Assistant-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 209, 211, 215, 217, 231-2, 268, 283
 CROWN PRINCE, German, 132, 139-40, 162, 166, 202, 335
 CYPRUS, 16
 CZERNIN, Count, 174, 177
 "DAILY MAIL," 329
 "DAILY TELEGRAPH," 119
 DARDANELLES, 16, 45, 124, 139, 168
 DECLARATION OF WAR, Austrian, 232, 235; German on Russia, 266-7; on France, 293-6; Tirpitz and Bethmann against, 271, 283; on Belgium, 299; Austrian on Russia, 310
 DELAGOA BAY, 50, 52, 55, 73, 75
 DELCASSE, French statesman, 68-9, 90; Tangiers crisis, 99 ff.; 130
 DENIKIN, Gen., Russian soldier, 322
 DENIS, Prof., 40
 DENMARK, 89-90, 102, 278
 DERBY, 15th Earl of, on Bismarck, 10; Bismarck's dislike for, 19

DEWEY, Admiral, 67
 DIMITRIEVITCH, 178, 315-6
 DINANT, 340
 DIRR, Dr., quoted, 230, 281
 DISRAELI, afterwards Earl of Beaconsfield, Bismarck's regard for, 6; and Belgium, 8; suggests Russian alliance, 11; at Berlin, 13-4; and German overtures, 14
 DOBROROLSKI, Gen., Russian soldier, 237, 241 ff., 252
 DODEKANESE, 139
 DOGGER BANK, 92
 DOMINIONS, 285-6
 DRAGA, Queen, 316
 DREADNOUGHT, 105-6
 DREYFUS, French soldier, 46, 48
 DUAL ALLIANCE, 41-2; conditions, 43-4; modified, 69-70; out of action, 102; fresh agreement, 106
 DUCARNE, Gen., Belgian soldier, 104
 DUMAINE, French ambassador in Vienna, 319, 330
 DUPLICITY, German diplomatic, 14, 26, 54-5, 61, 63, 74-5, 81, 88, 101, 103, 197, 200-1, 220, 225, 230, 278, 287, 292
 EASTERN RUMELIA, 16, 20, 25
 ECKARDSTEIN, Baron, German diplomatist, 61, 79-81, 83, 85, 86
 EDWARD VII, and Bismarck, 14; for a German understanding, 17, 30, 80; and William II, 38, 80; visit to Paris, 86-7; at Kiel, 91; promises France support, 99; and Tweedmouth letter, 114; Kronberg visit, 115; at Ischl, 115; on Aehrenthal, 117; warned by Clemenceau, 120; visit to Berlin, 122; death, 125; 181, 256
 EGYPT, 16, 90
 EINMARSCHPOLITIKER, German war party, 213, 334, 336
 ENCIRCLEMENT, 63, 87, 110
 ENGLAND, Bismarck and, 5-6, 31-2; and Belgium, see Belgium; Italian agreement, 22, 55; and dual alliance, 45; Transvaal crisis, 50-3; overtures to Germany, 60-1, 80; Fashoda affair, 68; South African war, 72 ff.; Japan-Russia war, 87-8; agreement with France, 90; with Russia, 109-10; crisis of 1909, 120-1; attitude in 1914, 312,

194-5, 202, 211-2, 215, 224, 267-8, 276, 285; orders to fleet, 227; decides to aid Belgium, 298; ultimatum to Germany, 300-1; enters war, 306
 ENTENTE, (England, France and from 1907, Russia), 90, 99, 104, 109-10, 150, 165-8; German efforts against, 215, 223-4, 231, 271, 324
 ENVER Pasha, 138
 EULENBURG, Prince, 29
 EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, 104, 150, 276, 307
 FALKENHAYN, Gen., German soldier, 186, 271-3, 283
 FALSIFICATIONS, 333-4
 FERDINAND I, King of Bulgaria, 24, 56, 88, 116, 156
 FEYLER, Col., Swiss soldier, 289
 FEZ, 131
 FISHER, Sir J., later Lord, British First Sea Lord, 92-3, 105, 112, 120, 127, 136
 FOCH, Gen., later Marshal, French soldier, 227
 FOREIGN LEGION, 118, 160
 FORMOSA, 47
 FRANCE, position after 1870, 2-5; crises of 1874-5, 8-11; quarrel with England, 15; Schnaebelé affair, 23-24; Russian overtures, 42; alliance with, 43 ff.; intervenes in Far East, 47-8; in Kruger telegram crisis, 52-3; Fashoda affair, 68; S. African war, 74-5; Italian understanding, 84; Edward VII and, 87; agreement with England, 90; Tangiers crisis, 96 ff.; Agadir crisis, 131 ff.; ill pacific feeling, 162, 219, 324; ill prepared, 186, 198, 162-3; German plans against, 260; territory violated, id., 281; German summons to, 263, 275-6; German charges against, 283 ff.; declaration of war on, 293-6; attitude to Belgium, 306-7
 FRANCIS FERDINAND, Archduke, 108, 117, 151, 158, 163, 165-6, 169 ff., 199
 FRANCIS JOSEPH, Emperor, on William II, 29; and Edward VII, 115; ready for war, 158, 163, 166; 169, 177, 182; signs ultimatum, 199; remark to Bilinski, 203, 331; correspondence with

William II, 250, 262; responsibility, 330-1, 338
 FRANCO-GERMAN WAR, 1-3, 341
 FRANKFORT, Treaty of, 3
 FREDERICK, Emperor, 11, 27; Empress, 28, 40
 FROBENIUS, Col., German soldier, 162-3, 202, 323, 336
 FRONTIER INCIDENTS, 260, 280, 282, 286-7, 296, 304-5, 325
 FUCHS, Gen., German soldier, 278
 GACHINOVITCH, 177
 GEBSATTEL, Gen., 284
 GEORGE V, King, 128, 165, 224, 267-8; William II's telegram to, 272-3; King Albert's appeal, 288; 326, 329
 GERMANY, position after 1870, 1-4; war threats in 1874-5, 8-12; Triple Alliance, 16-18; Schnaebelé affair, 23; overtures to England, see Alliance; defective constitution, 36-7; naval expansion, 39, 58, 72-6, 105-6, 111 ff., 119, 141-4; intervenes against Japan, 47-8; Kruger telegram, 51-3; Portuguese colonies, 63; Kiaochau, 48, 59-60; S. African war, 71; Bundesrath crisis, 73; Manchurian treaty, 78; Japan-Russia war, 88; and Morocco, 91-2; crisis of 1909, 121-2; Agadir, 133; army increase, 138; Haldane's visit, 140; war feeling, 164; preparations, 188-190; threats to Entente, 217; war party's programme, 225; and mediation, 230; mobilisation crisis, 246 ff.; confidence, 252; Kriegsgefahrzustand, 261; attacks on France, 287; declares war on her, 293-6; responsibility, 333 ff.; strength of, 336 ff.; armaments, 340
 GERMAN NAVAL AGREEMENT with England rejected, 247
 GERMAN NAVY ACTS, aimed against England, 81, 93
 GERMAN NAVY, orders to, 186, 219, 221, 262, 270-1, 273
 GERMAN NAVY LEAGUE, 57, 73
 GERVAIS, Adm., 42
 GIESL, Baron, 208-10, 232
 GIOLITTI, Italian statesman, 156

INDEX

GLADSTONE, British statesman, Bismarck's dislike of, 18-19; and Belgium, 7, 306
 GOLUCHOWSKI, Count, Austrian statesman, 56, 107
 GORDON, Gen., 19
 GORTCHAKOV, Prince, Russian statesman, 3, 8, 16
 GOSCHEN, Sir W. E., British diplomatist, 117, 231, 247, 270, 299, 300-2
 GRABEZ, 177
 GRANVILLE, Earl, British Foreign Secretary, 7
 GREAT BRITAIN, see England
 GREECE, 147, 156, 170, 292
 GREY, Sir Edward, later Viscount, and mobilisation, 44; attitude of Germany, 45, 104; discussions with French staff, 104, 150; warning to Metternich, 114; Metternich threatens war, 121; naval competition, 129-30; Agadir crisis, 133 ff.; Sazonov interview, 148; Balkan wars, 150 ff.; and Russian naval agreement, 165, 167; Bethmann's promise to, 167-8; eve of Great War, 190-1, 199, 202, 208 ff.; silence, 213 ff.; mediation efforts, 215 ff., 219, 222, 230, 235; "halt in Belgrade," 244-5; and Belgium, 268-9; Cambon interview, 276; war speech, 296-8; German charges against, 304, 325 ff.
 GRIGOROVITCH, Adm., 240-1
 GROSSE POLITIK, 353-4
 HAGUE, The, first conference, 69; second conference, 109; Czar proposes reference to, 242, 257, 333; conventions, 296, 309
 HALDANE, Viscount, 104-5, 109, 140, 213, 328-9
 HAMMANN, Dr., German Foreign Office official, 6, 61, 64, 72, 74, 99, 115, 300
 HARCOURT, L., 285
 HARDINGE, Sir C., British diplomatist, 115-6
 HARTWIG, 195
 HATZFELDT, Count, 54-5, 61, 63
 HAYTI, 59
 HEECKEREN, Van Kell, Baron, 94
 HEERINGEN, Adm., 143
 HELFFERICH, Director of Deutsche Bank, 190, 220, 233
 HELIGOLAND, 18, 38
 HENCKEL VON DONNERS-MARCK, Prince, German diplomatist, 99
 HENRY, Prince, of Prussia, 85, 224
 HERRICK, 293
 HINTZE, Capt., 126
 HOHENLOHE, Prince C., German Chancellor, 8, 10, 48, 51, 53, 76
 HOHENLOHE, Prince G., 152-3, 320
 HOLLAND, 86, 94, 110, 129, 201-2, 234, 247-8, 283
 HOLLWEG, see Bethmann Hollweg
 HOLSTEIN, F. von, 35-6; on William II, 31, 57; 29, 48, 53, 56, 61, 80, 97; retirement, 106
 HOUSE, Col., 166, 335
 HOYOS, Count, Austrian diplomatist, 184-5, 191, 199, 235
 HUMBERT, 198
 HUN speech, 77
 HUNGARY, 70, 165-6, 333
 INDIA, 256
 IRELAND, 162, 212, 224
 ISVOLSKY, Russian statesman, 108, 114, 116 ff., 126, 131, 135, 139, 139, 147, 319
 ITALY, estranged from France, 16, 41; enters Triple Alliance, 16-18; and England, 17, 22, 41; convention with Spain, 41; alarm at William II's attitude, 50; Abyssinian difficulties, 55; understanding with France, 84; at Algeiras, 103; naval programme, 108; Racconigi meeting, 124; war with Turkey, 138-9; and Albania, 153; relations with Germany, 162, 188, 201, 204; Austrian assurances, 205; warning to Austria, 257; refuses to join in war, 281, 303-4
 ITO, Prince, 83
 JAGOW, G. von, German diplomatist and Foreign Secretary, 194, 201-2, 205, 214, 220, 228, 233, 266, 270, 272-3, 287, 299-303
 JAMESON, Dr., 51
 JAPAN, war with China, 47-8; alliance schemes, 61; Anglo-Japanese alliance, 83; Russia and, 87 ff.; Russo-Japanese war, 89; peace, 100; British alliance renewed, 103; understanding with Russia, 110

INDEX

JOFFRE, Gen., later Marshal, 260, 277, 287
 JOHANNISBURG, 282
 JONCHEREY, 280
 JOVANOVITCH, 316
 JUGOSLAV, (see South Slavs, Serbia, Bosnia), 332
 JUNGBLUTH, Gen., 144
 JUNIUS, 251
 JUTLAND, 112, 136, 143
 KANNER, Dr., Austrian journalist, 117, 122, 203, 214
 KAUTSKY, K., German Socialist, 263, 333
 KIAOCHAU, 48, 59-60
 KIDERLEN-WAECHTER, A. von, German Foreign Minister, 29, 130 ff., 147, 148, 158
 KIEV, 33
 KIRK KILISSE, 149
 KONOPISCHT, 169-70
 KOREA, 13, 88, 89
 KOWEIT, 89
 KRIEGSGEFAHRZUSTAND, 261
 KRUGER, President, 50; William II's telegram to, 51-4
 KÜHLMANN, R. von, German diplomatist, 97
 KÜHL, Gen., 22, 190, 212
 KUMANOVO, 149
 KUROPATKIN, Gen., 88
 LABOULAYE, 22
 LADO Enclave, 46
 LANSDOWNE, Marquess of, British statesman, 79-81, 87, 90, 99
 LEE, Mr., and afterwards Baron, British Minister, 94
 LIBERIA, 67
 LICHNOWSKY, Prince, German diplomatist; British naval understanding with Russia, 167; conveys Bethmann's promise, id.; on Serajevo affair, 176; action by, 190 ff.; 214, 217, 222, 230, 244, 256, 268-9, 285, 314, 321, 338
 LIEGE, 21, 105, 236, 260, 268-9, 308
 LIMAN VON SANDERS, Gen., 160-1, 165, 319
 LIMBUS, Adm., 160
 LLOYD GEORGE, Mr., 114, 123, 133, 268, 328
 LOBANOV, Prince, Russian diplomatist, 47
 LOCALISING THE WAR, 187, 192, 203, 214-5, 216, 219, 223
 LOKALANZEIGER, 251-2
 LONDON, Declaration of, 124-5; Conference of, 1913, 153; 1872, 274
 LOURENCO MARQUEZ, 50, 55
 LUDENDORFF, Gen., 157, 163, 336
 LUDWIG, Dr., quoted, 5, 10, 20, 32
 LUNÉVILLE, 296
 LUXEMBURG, 236, 273-4, 276-7, 286, 305, 325
 LYONS, Lord, 6
 MACEDONIA, 152, 162, 171
 MCKENNA, Mr., 120
 MACMAHON, Marshal, 8
 MAHAN, Capt., later Adm., 39, 129
 MALET, Sir E. B., British diplomatist, 50
 MALMEDY, 144
 MANILA, 67-8, 85
 MARAMAROS SZIGET, 161
 MARGUTTI, Baron von; 232
 MARSCHALL VON BIEBERSTEIN, Baron, German diplomatist, 51-2, 55, 145-6
 MAXSE, L. J., Mr., editor of the *National Review*, 286
 MEDIATION, 214-6, 223, 230-1, 235, 255, 259, 267
 MEDITERRANEAN, 137, 143-4, 154, 162
 MENSENDORFF, Count, Austrian diplomatist, 203, 213, 231, 235
 MEREY, Austrian diplomatist, 205 ff.
 METTERNICH, Count Wolff, German ambassador in London, 80, 85, 100, 104, 114, 120-127, 134
 METZ, 284-5
 MILAN, King of Serbia, 20
 MILITARY NECESSITY, 307-8
 MILITARY PREPARATIONS, 220-1, 227, 229, 231-2, 236, 239, 261-3, 304, 323
 MIRAMAR, 165-6
 MOBILISATION, 43-4, 145, 151, 153, 162; Serbian, 210; partial Austrian, 211, Kaiser on, 233; reports of Russian, 228, 231, 237; Russian partial, 238, 241; German staff and, 246-7; Moltke and, 249-50; German discussions, 251-2; Russian general, 254-5; Austrian general, 258; German

INDEX

- general, 276; French, 274-5; British naval, 286; British military, 297; dates of, 325; Austria and the Russian, 328
- MOLTKE**, Count von, German chief of staff (1800-91), Bismarck's relations with, 7; crisis of 1875, 10-11; threats to Belgium, 21, 34, 189-90
- MOLTKE**, H. von, Gen., German Chief of Staff (1848-1916), 30, 150, 152-3, 157, 159, 162, 164, 186-7, 189, 225, 233, 237, 246, 247, 249-50; secret message to Conrad 251; urges Austria to mobilise, 257-8; 262, 265, 270-3, 275-7, 288 ff., 307, 331 ff., 338
- MONTENEGRO**, 118, 121, 147, 152-3, 170-1
- MONTGELAS**, Count, 70
- MORIER**, Sir R., British diplomatist, in 1875, 9; quoted, 6, 9, 11, 341
- MORLEY**, Viscount, 285, 298
- "**MORNING POST**," 329
- MOROCCO**, 41, 49; Germany disclaims interest in, 82, 85, 87, 90
- Tangiers affair, 97 ff.; Algeciras conference, 103; Casablanca, 118; expedition to Fez, 131; Agadir, 132 ff.
- MUDRA**, Gen., 227
- MÜNSTER**, Count, 23
- MURAVIEV**, Count, 56, 68, 75
- MÜRZSTEG**, 88
- NAMUR**, 21, 105, 268, 340
- NANCY**, 155
- NAPOLEON III**, 2, 281, 302
- NARODNA ODBRANA**, 178
- NAVAL AGREEMENT**, Triple Alliance, 154; German with England rejected, 247
- NAVY**, William II's interest in, 30; in 1870-1, 59; German Acts, of 1897, 57-9, 62; of 1900, 73, 75-6; aimed against England, 81; English fears, 93; of 1906, 105; of 1908, 111-2, 116; of 1912, 135, 138; naval competition, 119, 123, 143-5, 326-7; German strength, 343; orders to British in crisis, 227-8, 248-9, 326; orders to German, 186, 219, 221, 262, 270-1, 273
- NEGOTIATIONS**, Russian promise to continue, 264, 282
- NEKLUDOV**, Russian minister at Sofia, 146
- NEUTRALITY**, German proposals of 1912, 140-2; in 1914, 271-2; violation of, 273-4, 276-7, 287
- NICHOLAS II**, Czar, succeeds, 46; relations with William II, 31, 46; visits England and France, 56; on British alliance offer, 61; in S. African war, 71, 75; advises Entente, 85; North Sea incident, 92 ff.; Björkö Treaty, 100 ff.; Reval meeting, 114; Racconigi, 124; Potsdam, 125-6; Hohenslohe's mission to, 152; Pasitch's visit, 161; Constanta meeting, 170; and Serbia, 210; William II's telegrams, 238 ff., 253-4, 261, 265; stops general mobilisation, 241-2; and general mobilisation, 254; pacific, 319 ff.
- NICOLSON**, Sir A., British Permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 222-3
- NORTH SEA**, Canal, 111; Incident, 92, 96
- NOTE**, Austrian to Serbia, 208-9; Serbian reply, 210; Germany and terms of Austrian Note, 197, 199; Francis Joseph on, 203
- NOTHOMB**, Baron, Belgian diplomatist, 10
- NUREMBERG**, 284, 305
- OBRUTCHEV**, Gen., 43-4
- OSTEN-SACKEN**, Count, 74
- PALÉOLOGUE**, French ambassador in St. Petersburg, 222, 238, 241, 252, 255
- PALITZIN**, Gen., 106
- PALLAVICINI**, Marquis, Austrian ambassador at Constantinople, 166
- PAN-GERMANS**, 50, 57-8, 67, 110, 150, 158, 202
- PANTHER**, 132
- PASITCH**, N., Serbian Premier, 151, 161, 208, 316
- PAUNCEFOTE**, Sir J., 66
- PERSIA**, 128, 139
- PETER I**, of Serbia, 88, 190
- PEUGEOT**, Corporal, 280
- PHILIPPINES**, 67-8
- PLAN No. 17**, 313
- POINCARÉ**, R., French statesman and president; quoted, 13, 46,

INDEX

- 135, 153-4, 259; his attitude, 146-7, 150; visit to Russia, 196 ff., 204; wirelets for jammed, 206-7; policy, 217; reaches Paris, 244; letter to George V, 267-8, 329; attacks on, 323 ff.
- POLLIO**, Gen., 162, 182
- PORT ARTHUR**, 47-8, 60
- PORTUGAL**, 63-4
- "**POST**," Berlin, 9, 22, 219
- POTIOREK**, Gen., Austrian governor of Bosnia, 174 ff., 192, 317, 333
- POTSDAM**, meeting, 125-6, 128, 185
- POURTALES**, Count, German diplomatist, 164, 218, 228-9, 231, 241 ff., 252-3, 264-7, 321
- PRECAUTIONARY PERIOD**, 221-2, 227-9, 236, 248
- PREVENTIVE WAR**, Bismarck and, 8-12
- PRINCIP**, 176
- PRUSSIA**, franchise, 157
- PUTNIK**, Marshal, 222
- RACCONIGI**, meeting, 124, 139
- RADOLIN**, Prince, German diplomatist, 90
- RAILWAYS**, 221, 227, 229, 234, 236, 274
- REDL**, Col., 156
- REICHSTAG**, 305-6
- REINSURANCE TREATY**, 25; dropped, 34; 56
- REVAL**, 84, 114
- REVENTLOW**, Count, German naval writer, 58, 102
- RHODES**, Mr., 50-1
- RIVIERES**, Gen. Seré de, 6
- ROJESTVENSKY**, Adm., 91-2
- ROOSEVELT**, U.S. statesman, 103
- ROSEBURY**, Earl of, overtures to Germany, 45
- ROSYTH**, 90
- ROUVIER**, French statesman, 96 ff.
- RUMANIA**, alliance with Austria, 17, 34, 149; in 1912, 151; in 1913, 155-6; in 1914, 170-1, 180-2, 184, 193-5, 206; neutrality of, 281, 303-4
- RUSSIA**, action in 1874-5, 8-11; German understanding, 5; Bismarck holds cannot be crushed, 12; three Emperors' alliance, 16; crisis of 1885, 20; Bismarck supports in the Balkans, 24; reinsurance treaty, 25, 34; enters dual
- alliance, 42-4; intervenes against Japan, 47-8; against intervention in S. Africa, 52; seizes Port Arthur, 60; rejects British overtures, id.; in S. African war, 74-5; war with Japan, 87; North Sea incident, 92, 96; defeat at Mukden, 96; peace with Japan, 100; understanding with England, 109-10; German ultimatum of 1909, 121-2; Bulgarian alliance, 124; armaments, 126; naval programme, 138; Dardanelles, 139; Balkan alliances, 145 ff.; French warning to, 147-8; tension with Austria, 149; concessions to, 152; Liman von Sanders affair, 160-1; Russia is ready, articles, 164, 166; naval convention with England, 165, 167-8; unready for great war, 184; military precautions, 221-2, 229; pacific, 235 ff.; mobilisation discussed, 237 ff.; general mobilisation, 254-5; not aggressive, 255; German declaration of war, 266; innocence of, 318 ff.; military weakness, 321, 336
- SALISBURY**, 3rd Marquess of, Bismarck's esteem for, 6; approves Austrian German alliance, 14; and Belgium, 21-2; attitude to William II, 31; rejects German alliance, 31-2; Turkish projects, 49; Kiaochau affair, 60; overtures to Russia, 60; and Portuguese colonies, 63-4; Fashoda, 68; Samoa, 70; Manchurian treaty, 78-9; attitude to Austria, 81
- SALONICA**, 118
- SAMOA**, 46, 70-1
- SANDERSON**, Sir T., Permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 49
- SAN GIULIANO**, Marquis of, 205
- SANJAK**, 113, 122, 124, 148, 188, 196, 216
- SAVERNE**, incident, 159-60
- SAZONOV**, Russian Foreign Minister, 126, 146-7; in England 148; 161, 165, 169, 203; advice to Serbia, 210; 217 ff., 222, 228, 237-8, 251 ff.; 264-7; ready to negotiate, 282; 319, 321, 326
- SCHEBEKO**, Russian diplomatist, 191, 319

INDEX

SCHIEMANN, German historian, 126, 156
 SCHILLER, 312
 SCHNAEBELÉ, 23-4
 SCHOEN, Baron, German diplomatist, 117, 219, 223-4, 225, 275; declaration of war by, 293-6; 338
 SCHOUVALOV, Count, 11
 SCRAP OF PAPER, 300-1, 309
 SCUTARI, 152-3
 SECRET DOCUMENTS, 126-7, 166, 197. See also Ciphers
 SERBIA, in Austria's sphere, 15, 16; Austria supports, 20; Bismarck's dying warning, 64; King and Queen assassinated, 88; Austrian antagonism, 107; Bosnian crisis, 116 ff.; peril, 121 ff.; Balkan wars, 145-6, 149-50; crisis with Austria, 150-3, 155-6; William II for action against, 158; 169-71; Serajevo charges, 178, 183-4; Austrian programme against, 192-3; ultimatum to, 208-9; reply, 210; military position, 236; treatment of territory intended by Austria, 249-54; general position, 314; responsibility, 315-8
 SERAJEVO, 173 ff., 218, 314-8, 335
 SETON-WATSON, Dr., 151, 158, 173 ff., 178
 SHIMONOSEKI, 47
 SIAM, 45
 SIEBERT, Russian official, 126-7
 SOCIALISTS, German, 219, 305-6
 SOUTH SLAVS, 15, 107, 117, 160-1, 165, 174 ff., 314, 332
 SOUTH AFRICA, Kruger telegram, 50 ff.; 63; Boer war, 71 ff.
 SPAIN, convention with Austria, 24, and Italy, 41; war with United States, 66-8; treaty with France, 90
 STAFF, German and political administration, 7, 35, 186-7, 190, 246, 266, 269-70, 277, 289-90
 STANDARD, and Belgium, 21
 STEED, Mr. H. W., former editor and correspondent of *The (London) Times*, 56, 102, 107, 116, 130, 158, 173, 175, 203
 STIEGE, Adm., 136
 STOLBERG, Prince, German diplomatist, 198-9
 SUDAN, 55
 SUKHOMLINOV, Gen., Russian War Minister, 164, 240, 242, 322

SWAINE, Col., 50
 SWEDEN, 165, 293, 304, 342
 SWITZERLAND, 33, 84, 287
 SZAPARY, Count, Austrian diplomatist, 217 ff., 228, 238, 259
 SZECSEN, Count, Austrian ambassador at Paris, 238
 SZILASSY, Baron, Austrian Foreign Office official, 147, 149
 SZÖGYENY, Count, Austrian ambassador at Berlin, 182-5, 193-4, 203, 205, 220, 228, 230, 236, 251, 258
 TAKE JONESCU, Rumanian statesman, 213
 TANGIERS, William II at, 96-7
 TANKOSITCH, Major, 178, 209, 210
 TATISCHEV, Gen., Russian diplomatist, 253
 TELEGRAM, German confused, 295-6
 TEMES KUBIN, 232
 THREE EMPERORS' ALLIANCE, 5 (1873), 16 (1881), renewed, 18
 TIME, varying hours, 239 (When noon at Greenwich and Paris, 1 p.m. at Berlin and 2 p.m. at St. Petersburg)
 "TIMES, THE," 10, 12, 183, 329
 TISZA, Count, Hungarian Premier, 165, 179 ff., 182, 191-2, 195, 330
 TIRPITZ, German Grand Admiral and Naval Minister, 30, 55, 57-9, 72, 76, 91; secret intentions, 111; and the danger zone, 114; Bülow's appeal to, 119; against naval disarmament, 127, 137, 140-1, 144; naval agreement with Italy, 154; at Konopischt, 169-70; absent from Berlin in war crisis, 186; on German Foreign Office plan, 201-2; condemns attack on Belgium, 225; rejects naval agreement with England, 247, 262, 271-2, 288-9, 393, 336
 TITTONI, Italian statesman, 153
 TOUL, 263, 273
 TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY, 42
 TRANSYLVANIA, 332
 TREITSCHKE, (1834-96), German historian, 18, 290
 TRENTINO, 332
 TRIALISM, a system proposed in Austria, which would have given

INDEX

the Slavs equal privileges to those of Germans and Hungarians, 117
 TREUTLER, German diplomatist, 169
 TRIPLE ALLIANCE, concluded between Germany, Austria and Italy, 16-8; relations with England, 17, 81; renewed, 22; Spain included, 24; renewed 1891, 41; renewed 1896, 55-6; renewed 1902, 83; rifts in, 108; renewed 1912, 151; naval agreement, 154; military agreement, 162, 188; defensive, 281
 TRIPLE ENTENTE, of England, France and Russia, early, 7-12; see Entente
 TRIPOLE, Italian claim to, 22, 41, 49, 84, 90, 124; seizure of, 138-9
 TSCHIRSCHKY, German Ambassador in Vienna, 158-9, 169, 176, 180-1, 183, 187, 193-4, 197, 204, 228, 234, 255, 330
 TSUSHIMA, 100
 TUNIS, French in, 15-16, 41
 TURKEY, and three Emperors' alliance, 16; Bismarck's attitude to, 18; Salisbury's partition scheme, 49; a German vassal, 57; Young Turk movement, 116; war with Italy, 138-9; Balkan alliance against, 147 ff.; defeated, 149, 152; Liman von Sanders in, 160; crisis with Greece, 170; alliance with Germany, 292
 TWEEDMOUTH, Baron, British politician, 113-4
 TWO IRONS, policy of, 5
 TWO POWER STANDARD, 109
 TYRREL, Sir W., British diplomatist and private secretary to Sir E. Grey, 223, 271
 ULTIMATUM, to Serbia, 197-9, 203; terms, 208-9; German opinion of, 219; Serbian reply, 210, 232-3; German to Belgium, 225-7, 287, 291; German to France and Russia, 263 ff.
 UNITED STATES, 51, 56, 61, 66-8, 85, 103, 146, 338
 VALENTIN, V., German historian, 57, 76, 310
 VENEZUELA, 51, 85
 VERDUN, 263, 273
 VICTORIA, Queen, letter to William I, 8; to Alexander II, 11; prefers German alliance, 13; William II's letter to regarding Kruger telegram, 54-5; abuse to her of Salisbury, 70, 130; request to Nicholas II, 56
 VIOLATION OF NEUTRALITY, see Belgium, Neutrality, and Luxemburg
 VISE, 298
 VIVIANI, French Premier, 196 ff., 244, 275, 293-6, 324
 VOLKOV, Capt., 167-8
 VON PAPEN PAPERS, 220, 304, 323
 WÄCHTER, See Kiderlen-Wächter
 WALBECK, 283
 WALDERSEE, Count, (1834-1904), German soldier, 4; favours preventive war, 20-2, 26-7; on William II, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 40, 43, 45
 WANGENHEIM, Baron, German Ambassador at Constantinople, 198
 WAR, Franco-German, 1-3, 341; Russo-Turkish, 13; Serbo-Bulgarian, 20; Japan-China, 47-8; United States and Spain, 66-8; South African, 70 ff.; Boxer rebellion, 77 ff.; Russo-Japanese, 89 ff.; Italo-Turkish, 138; First Balkan, 149; Second Balkan, 155-6
 WAR PARTY, German, see EINMARSCHPOLITIKER
 WAR CRIMES, 339-40
 WEI-HAI-WEI, 60
 WESEL, 283-4
 "WESTMINSTER GAZETTE," 202
 WHITE, Arnold, British publicist, 93
 WIDENMANN, Comm., German Naval Attaché in London, 127, 130, 134, 137, 143
 WIED, William of, 161
 WIESNER, Austrian diplomatist, 179, 315, 339
 WILE, F. W., United States publicist and newspaper correspondent 252, 335
 WILLIAM I, Emperor, (1797-1888), Queen Victoria's letter to, 8; fears war, id.; against preventive war, 12; against Austrian alliance, 15; and Bismarck, 18; death, 27
 WILLIAM II, Emperor (born 1859), character and education,

INDEX

27 ff.; dismisses Bismarck, 33; letters to Alexander III, 38; crisis of 1891, 40; visit to Russia, 41; in Siam crisis, 45; Ladow affair, 46; Willy-Nicky letters, 46-7; plans in China, 47; Yellow Peril cartoon, 48; Transvaal intrigues, 50; Kruger telegram, 51 ff.; letter to Victoria, 54-5; Cretan affair, 57; Cologne speech, 58; on British alliance offer, 61; threatens England regarding Portuguese treaty, 63; hostility to United States, 66-7; Stettin speech, 68; Fashoda intrigues, 68; Palestine tour, 69; abuses Salisbury to Victoria, 70; in S. African war, 71-2; Hamburg speech, 72; overtures to Russia, 74-5; ultimatum to England, 75; Hun speech, 77; sneers at British Ministers, 80; and Anglo-Japanese alliance, 83; "Admiral of the Atlantic," 84; anti-British coalition plans, 89-90; Morocco policy, 91; incites Czar against England, 91; in North Sea incident, 92; at Tangiers, 97-8; Björkö Treaty, 100-3; threatens suicide, 102; Holstein on, 106; and Haldane, 109; visits England, 110; Tweedmouth letter, 113-4; Kronberg interview, 115; Bosnian annexation, 117 ff.; "Daily Telegraph" interview, 119; Potsdam meeting, 125-6; betrayed Russian documents kept from him, 126; last visit to London, 130; naval plans, 135, 143-4; and Balkan League, 149-51; friendly to Serbia, 156; urges on Conrad, 158-9; for war, 159-60; and King Albert, 159; Miramar and Konopischt, 165, 169; for war, 169; comments on Tschirschky, 180; Francis Joseph's letter, 182; blank cheque, 184-5; war preparations, 186 ff.; incitements, 195; first war orders, 201; comments, 216; rejects Grey's proposals, 220; Prince Henry's report, 224; returns to Berlin, 227; no ground for war, 232; on Grey and England, 245; telegram to Francis Joseph, 250-1; telegrams to Czar, 252 ff.; assurances to Francis Joseph, 262; on Russian mobilisation, 256, 265; declaration of war on Russia, 266; orders mobilisation, 270; conflict with Moltke, 271-2; King Albert's appeal, 291-2; and Constantine, 292; on German diplomacy, 303; family for war, 336-7; responsibility, 337-8

WILSON, Sir A. K., British Admiral, 127

WILSON, Sir Henry, British Field Marshal, 267, 286, 315, 332

WINDSOR, Treaty of, 64

WIRELESS, jamming of, 206-7

WITTE, Count, Russian statesman, 47, 69, 320

WOHLGEMUTH Affair, 33

YOUNG TURKS, 116

ZANZIBAR, 39

ZENKER, Capt., 186

ZEPPELIN Z4, 155

ZIMMERMANN, German Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 131-2, 183, 186

ZUCCARI, Gen., Italian soldier, 162

DIGITIZED

